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Ending the Ejido: The Socio-Economic Consequences of Agrarian Reform on Mexico's Indigenous Populations

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Ending the Ejido:

The Socio-Economic Consequences of Agrarian Reform on Mexico's Indigenous Populations.

Charlotte Kingston

Political Science Undergraduate Honors Thesis



Introduction

In 1992 a constitutional amendment ended the Mexican government's commitment to the redistribution of land, and sought to allow for the titling and privatization of previously inalienable community held ejido land.

In the mid nineties social scientists predicted that these reforms would either save the ejido by increasing efficiency or reproduce heavy concentration of land through mass privatization.

In contrast to these dire predictions the rates of participation and privatization, and their effects, have varied considerably across the nation. Now more than a decade after the reforms, scholars are seeking to understand the reasons for the uneven implementation and consequence.

Approach

Past scholarly research has focused on the peasantry as a homogenous group characterized by sets of economic qualifiers. One important distinction lacking focused analysis has been the difference between primarily indigenous ejidos and non-indigenous ejidos.

Indigenous ejidos are guided by different cultural norms, and legal codes. Resultantly, a lack of focus on these distinctions has led to an incomplete analysis of the issue.

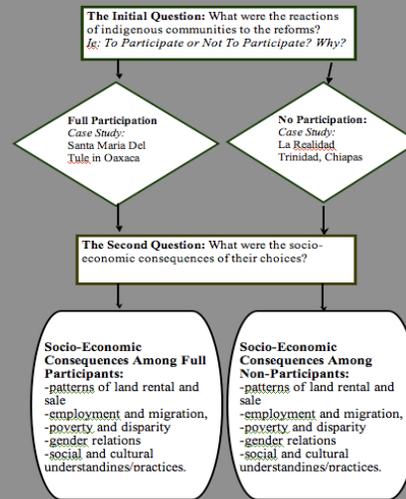
Rather than looking at Mexico's indigenous communities as passive recipients of these policies, this analytical framework seeks to show how the divergent responses and outcomes of Mexico's agrarian policy shift result directly from the individual complexities of communities and their respective cultures.

Thesis Question

What were the reactions of Mexico's indigenous communities to the 1992 changes to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, and what socio-economic consequences have these reactions engendered?



Method and Organization



Conclusions

How did Indigenous communities react and why?

- > There is a broad continuum of reactions toward the agrarian reforms among indigenous communities.
- > Their reactions are informed by:
 - > Local Cultures/ethnicities.
 - > Ex: Primarily Maya communities who practice swidden agriculture on rotating plots have more reason to resist individualization of plots in any form.
 - > Local Histories
 - > Ex: in Chiapas past dealings with agrarian officials have primarily dispossessed indigenous peoples, in Oaxaca the experience with agrarian officials has been largely beneficial. Chiapas is thus more reticent to take part.
 - > Local Politics
 - > Ex: Backlog of land petitions; infighting means many ejidos reach a roadblock before the initial phases of the reform. Clientelism, and ability to leverage other government programs has an important effect on the willingness of communities to take part.

What were the socio-economic consequences of their choices?

Few widespread privatization schemes have taken hold among Mexico's indigenous communities whether they completed some levels of the reform or none at all. Among those ejidatarios who did privatize: small farmers were more prone to rent out their land, while larger farmers would rent in. Suggests processes of land concentration. Those who did not participate in the reforms have pursued a broad range of alternatives (such as communal forestry, sustainability stewardship grants and migration). As a result, there is little continuity among their experiences.

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