Community projects in the era of globalization: The case of a local rural society in Mexico

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Abstract

This paper is a proposal for an anthropological analysis of the cargo system in Mexico, including both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. From the understanding of the cargo system as an essentially heterogeneous institution, this paper suggest as its main hypothesis that this institution is the origin of other mechanisms in the interaction of the members of the communities. First, the community institutions promote the participation of the largest number of people. Second, interactions' scenes are constantly created and recreated by the community members. Third, the roles' rotation, as a product of a tacit agreement into community members, is fundamental in assuring social participation. The proposal is structured in three parts: the composition of the cargo system as a *continuum* that explains the differences between individual and collective behaviour; the idea of *community* as a fundamental concept in understanding the cargo system;as a conclusion; the idea of a *communitarian project* becomes the common characteristic of all the communities (native or non-native) in the Mesoamerican area.

KEYWORDS: community, cargo system, social project, globalization, Mexico

Introduction

This paper is the result of broader collective research[1] examining rural transformations under the effects of so-called globalization. In this case, particular attention has been paid to the diverse phenomena whose axis resides in several issues studied by political anthro-

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[1] We refer to the investigation projects *Continuidades y transformaciones socioeconómicas y culturales en el municipio de Nativitas, Tlaxcala ¿Hacia la conformación de una nueva ruralidad?* which is financed by the program PAPIIT from UNAM (Key IN302709); and Repensar lo rural y el concepto de nueva ruralidad comopropuesta para entender las transformaciones contemporáneas en el Valle Puebla-Tlaxcala, financed by CONACyT (Key 98651).

pology, in particular, the ways of community organization and the denominated *cargo systems*. Motivated by the fact that most papers and research on the structures of local power have been centred in Mesoamerican indigenous communities, we join the authors who include non-indigenous groups in the analysis (Bonfil 1988: 238; Robichaux 2007: 25; Korsbaek 2009a: 49).

Therefore, we have researched communities that could be catalogued as half-breed,[2] in which we have found the specific characteristics of the cargo system[3] and even, as will be seen, the strengthening of some of them. Jesús Tepactepec is one of the sixteen villages that make the municipality of Santa María Nativitas, Tlaxcala. Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the place was occupied by aboriginal populations. Placed in a region with abundant and valuable natural resources (land and water) and adequate weather for agriculture, it was colonized early on and the population began to fuse. Without losing its agricultural drive, during the colonial epoch and even more so towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was organised under the hacienda system; nevertheless, the distribution of agricultural land and the building of the *ejido* in 1918 were the triggers of important changes during the twentieth century.

Nowadays, Jesús Tepactepec is made up of 120 *ejidatarios*, five possessories and 92 neighbourhoods, which adds up to a total of 217 families and 900 inhabitants. Most of its land is cultivated, mainly with maize, beans and silage. However, the main sources of income and support for the families come from activities outside agriculture, so its inhabitants are employed in the nearby industrial corridors, in commerce and other services, thus accessing the flexible and unstable work markets that include several forms of regional, national and international migration.

This time, derived from qualitative information and ethnographic observation obtained from anthropological field work, we pose a proposition for the analysis of the cargo system that includes both indigenous and non-indigenous communities, obviously acknowledging its origin in the Mesoamerican cultural tradition (Robichaux 2007: 27). By no means will we be trying to make a list of the characteristics available in any other community, as does Korsbaek in the previously mentioned model of a typical cargo system. Departing from the recognition of the cargo system as an heterogeneous institution, we hereby suggest studying it as an empirical structure that can be directly seen in the field and that, as our main hypothesis, feeds a series of mechanisms that, by themselves, favour interaction settings[4] whose main characters are the members of the community through the conjunct exercise of roles (cargos included) in the following way: encouraging that the scenes be attended by the *largest* number of the *whole* of members possible, propitiating the articulation of such scenes as *frequently* as possible, all of it with the tacit agreement between the main characters that there is a *rotation* of roles between scenes.

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[2] Utilizing the Indian/half-breed continuum from Robichaux (2007: 23), the half-breed pole is identified as the national Mexican culture.

[3] The studied community cargo system presents the corresponding elements of what is known as the typical cargo system, which, according to Korsbaek (2009a: 41–3), are: a number of clearly defined trades, rotation amongst the community members, hierarchy of cargos, includes all or almost all of the members, non-profit compensation (but compensated with prestige), and two separate hierarchies: political and religious.

[4] The concept allows planting a proposal that links the structural analysis to the action analysis. At the same time, this makes it possible to consider the territorial dynamic and temporal variable.

For this research, four seasons of field work were carried out between 2008 and 2011, with other isolated visits, according to the agricultural cycle, the ritual calendar and the family organisation. During these visits, it was possible to participate and see the cargo system and the political and religious organisations at work, in preparation for and during the most important festivities of the community, in neighbour gatherings, and in family parties, in Tepactepec as well as in the neighbouring communities of the municipality of Santa María Nativitas. In addition to this, we conducted ethnographic interviews with the highest ranking cargos in the religious, fiscal and political hierarchy (the auxiliary presidents) of those years, people in cargo of lower ranked positions at different times; to the highest rank within the *ejido* organisation (the *ejido* commissary), and more than ten adult heads of family inhabitants.

Along this paper, our analytical proposal is structured in three blocks. First, the framework of the study, in which we intend to place the sociocultural phenomena registered around the cargo system in a behavioural *continuum* aimed at individuals in one of the poles, and of conduct that tends to be collective on the other extreme. Second, we analyse the concept of *community* as the basic element to observe and interpret the cargo systems. Finally, we propose the idea of the community project as a common denominator between what has been seen and written regarding the cargo systems. We purposely avoid the debate on the different interpretations that anthropology has posed to the cargo system,[5] even though, logically, diverse positions will make appearances throughout the paper. The information presented allows the understanding of the four dimensions of the cargo system to which we have paid attention: political-judicial, economic, religious and social.

The individual-collective continuum

Within the intercultural and holistic level, we hold a discussion around the concepts of community and individual (collectivism–individualism), trying to avoid idealisation[6] and confusion[7] of the first one; in this sense, we are talking about the human ways of organised life together (Delgado 2009: 51).

[5] With no claims of completeness, Korsbaek (2009b: 376–7) and Castro (2000: 503–11) highlight several theoretical models to explain the cargo system of the Mesoamerican tradition: the levelling model, discussed by authors such as Eric Wolf, June Nash, Pedro Carrasco, Fernando Cámara, Manning Nash, James Dow, etc.; the stratification model, following the contributions of Frank Cancian and Marvin Harris; the redistribution model, led by Aguirre Beltrán and Ángel Palerm; the social control model, composed of works by Sol Tax, Ricardo Pozas, Ana M. Portal, etc.; the external shocks model, pointed out in the works of Jan Rus and Robert Wasserstrom, Waldemar R. Smith, Hugo Nutini and Barry Isaac, James B. Greenberg, etc.; the modernization model, in which Bonfil Batalla is located; the informal education-model, suggested by Ulrich Köhler; and the historical model, in which several of the previously mentioned authors are positioned.

[6] The ideology of the 'modern communalism' alludes to the opposition between community and individual, 'usually placing the community over the individual.' In this way, we share the defence that Zárate (2009: 69) makes of modern community that accepts the 'possibility of deterritorialised communities [and] individualism within the inside of the community.' In the same way, we defend the existence of collective senses within modernized societies.

[7] Delgado (2009: 53) claims that one cannot confuse 'the common' with 'the collective.' The common 'may be everyone's … that with which everyone has communion, and that encloses its components [from the community] in a world-view and organizational order which would not know nor should escape.' By contrast, the collective 'is associated with the idea of a meeting of individuals who become aware of what is convenient from their presence' ... and 'is organized from communication [communication exchange].'

According to Bonfil (2003: 57), one of the main objectives of a community is to lead a self-sufficient and autonomous life. For such a purpose, among other elements, the importance of encouraging family and community relationships is enhanced, as to have order when a larger number of individuals are cooperating. This continuous collective relationship has its foundation in practice: the bigger the interaction scenes between a larger total of people to be rotated in the starring roles, the bigger the possibility of behaviours being executed, not for the benefit of the individual but for that of the community. In this direction, following Bonfil, the cargo system would be the skeleton, the common denominator, the structure that produces and reproduces the intense relationships. Even though this idea will be dwelled upon along the paper with several examples, here is a preview: the institution of the party can be characterised as the one setting different scenes, whose frequency is generated by the ritual and community calendar, that have the participation of a considerable part of the community and extended family, where they sometimes are the guests and others, the hosts, besides other roles that could be played before, during, and after the celebration.

In the context of modernised societies, Bonfil reinforces (in a highly dualist manner) the existence of an 'individual and accumulative perspective' (ibid.: 68) bonded to the occidental capitalist society. Opposite to it, the communitarian is the result of the continued and frequent interaction between the members of a group, and such interactions are caused by the cargo system institution. As to make explicit this relation between individuals and the collective, it is necessary to place the social phenomena observed within a continuum of behaviours tending to individualism and those tending to the collective.[8] Bonfil (ibid.: 84) talks about this continuity by pointing out the nature of the poles that define it as:

> different cultural orientation: one corresponding the predominant individualism of the modern occidental civilisation, and the other pointing to a local society in which neighboring bonds play a more important role … and that allow the gestation of own cultural forms in a wider daily level than what the nuclear family offers.

Without falling into the author's dichotomist position, we can assume that people, in everyday activities, could have better chances of being individualistic if they shared fewer interaction scenes with their neighbours; conversely, the collective is built on continuous forms of interaction. In this regard, we start from the hypothesis that one of the central ways in which local societies with Mesoamerican traditions secure a larger number of interaction scenes (and with that, have a community project securing behaviours towards the collective) is the cargo system.

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[8] This continuum proposal is purported to be useful to calibrate the possible transformations within the communitarian institutions derived from the processes related to modernization. Such a proposal does not bind the way Nutini and Isaac (cited by Robichaux 2007: 23) "secularized" communities to the half-breed opposite. It associates determined institutional mechanisms to the collective, versus other mechanisms that promote individualist behaviours. The proposal does not assume Cámara's conclusions (2009: 398) in which 'centripetal communities' are constituted by culturally indigenous inhabitants. On the contrary, 'centrifugal communities', composed of an equal number of ladino and/or half-breed aspire to the change (modernization and urbanization).

This paper traces how the cargo system, through the institutional mechanisms that project it, actually tries to build scenes characterised by putting into interaction the largest possible number of members of each community and reinforcing the relationships among them; by doing it as often as possible; and by assuring that each member has a chance (not necessarily the same one) of taking the different roles that are being played in these scenes. All of it as opposed to local societies without a community project that is not shared by the population.[9]

The community

Once we have framed the analysis within the individual-community *continuum*, it becomes necessary to pause to analyse what a community is.[10] In this line, Korsbaek (2009a: 32), when digging into the study of cargo systems, has dealt with defining it. It is, according to the author, about 'finding a definition for community which is both precise and operational,' so he defines it as 'a group of people in tight adjacency regularly with known geographical or political boundaries' (ibid.: 33). In another paper, he talks about the six characteristics that make up a community:[11] a process carried out by the community, frequently but not necessarily within a territorial frame, with horizontal coherence, vertical coherence and a history. He adds that, given the aforementioned operative sense of the concept, what makes them different from the non-communities, is that they have a 'social project' in the sense of 'having an obligation towards the community.' Hereby, 'the cargo system is an institution apt for the formulation of a social project, thus creating a community' (Korsbaek 2009a: 36). In this definition, it is irrelevant what the size of the community is, or whether it has a shared history or not.

In the same perspective, Sandoval (2005: 266) adds that the roles played in a studied community, Mazahua, strengthen the cargo system 'with the fulfilment of tasks and with everyone's participation, making for an interacting and coherent system … with a constant feedback.'

With these antecedents, we hereby propose the following operational definition of *community*: a social group generally within a territory, whose main characteristic is that most of its relationships are channelled by institutions[12] that generate, maintain, and

[9] May it act as an extreme example, in the opposite case, documented by Anthropologist Paz Moreno (2004: 378), around which the atomization of relationships between concentration camp prisoners in Auschwitz and dignitaries, with the purpose of avoiding any relationships between them: amongst other actions, the interaction was forced down to the minimum and so there would not be rotation in the self-vigilance roles.

[10] For a contemporary discussion on the concept of community, see Delgado (2009) and Cámara (2009).

[11] Bartolomé (2009: 105–6) proposes ten characteristics of the modern communities: a territory assumed as own; the area control from the inhabitant members of such; an own political organization; certain level of control over the production process; articulation with the job market that coexists with the redistributive economical and reciprocal forms; existence of a collective work; the possibility of being linked to the State in a collective way; sharing a history; constitute a ritual community around a holy patron; and that an assumed religiousness is shared as beyond that of the dominant confessions.

[12] With the purpose of easing the analysis, categories of political, social, economic and religious institutions are created; however, it is assumed that a greater number of categories could be generated and that, in any case, such institutions would act interrelated.

reproduce interaction scenes (set of roles), starred by the largest number of neighbours possible. In other words, a community is a social group articulated by relationships of co-operation and conflict, whose institutions promote direct and constant contact between as many as possible of the members of the group and as frequently as possible. The debate on whether the individual is or not active is something else,[13] the important point here is that communal institutions sought after the direct or indirect participation of all its members, without losing sight of the limitations in access to certain roles: some of them (those of highest social hierarchy) are forbidden to certain members of the community according to gender, age, civil status, place of birth, type of property, religious practices, etc.

From this perspective, we suppose that the cargo system shall be a vigorous part in human groups that want to, and need to be a community, i.e. having a "community project". In the words of Delgado (2009: 56), the components of a community want to be so when they 'agree on the most important part: living together. What happens is that this project … cannot hide the existence of those social structures that are unequal and unfair.'

The community project

With these antecedents, the main characteristic strengthening the presence of the cargo system in numerous regions of the Mexican territory today is that its protagonists both implicitly and explicitly pursuit a *community project*, i.e. the members of the community that regularly inhabit a place with known geographical or political boundaries, endow themselves with institutions (the cargo system among others) destined to 'guarantee diverse community projects' such as 'the gifts of life, health, welfare, jobs, good crops, timely and sufficient rainfall, and so on' (Topete 2005: 293), which allow the creation and reproduction of social interaction scenes as well as identity mechanisms that reinforce the different groups interacting in said space.

As much as the population of Jesús Tepactepec is mostly inbred,[14] it is outstanding what they share with the indigenous populations, i.e. their members share a community project that provides certain vitality[15] to all of them. Moreover, the study of communities such as Jesús Tepactepec, which is an urbanised locality, culturally heterogeneous, and clearly influenced by global processes, is important in as much as it has left behind an agricultural past centred in the figure of the collective common land tenure, which ordered the economic life and was the articulating axis of the socio-political processes, to make way for a society connected to flexible work markets and precarious industrial, commerce and utility sectors. It is fundamental to pay attention to the community projects within populations incorporated into industrial work and participating in capitalist economy, a field of action where communal institutions could be redefined accordingly to the function of the conflicts and struggles inside and out of the community (Zárate 2009: 83).

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[13] Following Sullings (2004: 88), we consider that the social institutions must guarantee that all those willing to participate, the opposite of guaranteeing 'that everyone participates' closely related to the 'calling for the social activity' of the more active citizens.

[14] As for the ethnic adscription of the population, the municipality of Nativitas stands out, as only 98 of the 18,463 inhabitants (0.53 per cent) of five years old and more, speak an indigenous tongue (Nahuatl) (INEGI 2003: 25)

[15] Robichaux (2007: 26) refers to the perception of the cargo system in Southeast Tlaxcala, so that 'the community organizing structures … keep strong, they are capable of reproducing and even expand and flourish.'

From the conceptual consideration made thus far, one of the purposes of this research is to look for and find a *common denominator* in order to consider a group as constituent of a community. That minimum is exactly whatever the groups want it and need it be to consider it a community, for them to share a community project, or for them to interact structurally with the largest amount of members of the group possible, that such interaction scenes are systematically given, as frequently as possible, and that the basic *contract*[16] among parts warranties a regular exchange of roles (rotation). According to that objective, the main hypothesis which has thus far guided this work is that a social group has a community project when a large portion of its institutions work as mechanisms (on a social, political, economic and religious level) that in one way or another tend to: 1) favour heavily populated interaction scenes (*plurality*[17] variable: tending to *many*); 2) ensure the summoning of every member of the community to the played scenes (*totality* variable, tendency of *everyone*); 3) promote the highest possible frequency of such scenes (*frequency* variable: tendency to the smallest time interval possible between one scene and another);[18] 4) to be conductive to role exchange among participants with the necessary frequency according to the general consensus (*rotation* variable: a tendency to increment everyone's chance to hold the most possible parts in the social interaction scenes within their particular history in the community).

From that hypothesis, and without losing sight in the individual-collective *continuum*, we present the following statements, through which the following information has been arranged: 1) the larger the number of members of a community interact, and the greater the frequency of these interaction scenes (assuring the role exchange), the greater the chances are for the reinforcement of the collective economic, politic, social and religious behaviours of the community (the material and symbolic benefit of the set opposite the individual benefit);[19] 2) the lesser the number of members of the community interact and the less the frequency of the interaction scenes happen, given that the role exchange is not guaranteed, the more the possibilities the economic, political, social and religious behaviours of that community tend to benefit but the individual.

These hypotheses certainly set off from the aforementioned fact that rural communities can and want to be self-sufficient; they want and need to share a social project; all these not leaving out the fact that there are collective and individual behaviours looking after private benefits. As well see later on, the modernising movements, some of which

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[16] Delgado (2009: 55) speaks of 'minimal but sufficient agreements' among the members, that 'of course … are or can be considerably different between each other and even incompatible.'

[17] Plurality refers to the meaning of 'multitude, largest number of things, or the majority of them.' Totality refers to the meaning of 'group of all the things or people which form a class or species.' Frequency refers to the meaning of 'largest or smallest repetition of an act or event' (RAE 2001).

[18] We consider it fundamental to demonstrate that the community institutions are those that favour the constant, regular and frequent interaction of its members.

[19] The comment of an inhabitant of Jesús Tepactepec results explanatory, who affirms that, product of the continuous interaction between the members of a community, we 'all help each other … I am the dean of a school and I help the neighbours by placing their children, and they help me in return in other aspects' (interview in Jesús Tepactepec, Nativitas, and July 2010).

promote individualism, and in practice, reduce the continuity of scenes for *many* from *all*, are achieving diverse results: some community institutions are disappearing, yet other instances of these traditional institutions are being strengthened by this coexistence. In the particular case of Jesús Tepactepec, those interviewed have pointed out the disuse of farm work and the informant or the *tequihua* for the last fifteen years,[20] while the election assemblies and the mechanisms to control personal ambitions to access cargos are still valid, and have even been strengthened (González 2011).

> So, as assumed by Korsbaek (2005: 137), Mexican communities:
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> > are permanently under modernity's great pressure, and in direct contact with it … The community lives thus in a permanent state of tension that possesses multiple dimensions and aspects … because it is a historical product of a series of processes that work at a very different rate, handing the anthropologist a very complex situation that crystalizes in the ethnographic present.

Korsbaek talks about long, medium and short duration forces, amongst which (for the purposes of this paper) we want to draw attention to the generalised result of poverty stemming from political non-distributive policies of wealth and surplus, salaried employment belonging to the modern world,[21] migration, transportation and communication infrastructures, tourism, etc.; all of them 'strongly supported on promises made by the television, education and the government' (ibid.: 139).

It is of interest then, to characterise the cargo system as a set of tools to assure (on the economic, political, social and religious levels) the interaction scenes in which the majority of the total of members can actively participate, that such scenes are executed as frequently as possible, and that the majority has the certainty that, sooner or later, they will be in every role within the interaction scenes, regardless of whether those parts are at the top of the hierarchy or not. There are several reasons that promote the community project and they have been thoroughly studied by anthropology, even though what matters in the end is the understanding of the cargo system as an institution that generates and reproduces tools that encourages collectiveness.

The cargo system as the vertebral axis of the collective

In order to corroborate the hypothesis suggested in prior pages, we have selected several institutional mechanisms analysed throughout anthropological literature and that we have ethnographically registered in Jesús Tepactepec and other communities in Nativitas[22] in

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[20] A prosecutor of Jesús Tepactepec thought that such institutions were disappearing due to the 'government strategies, which are determined to divide us by providing help so that we fight for it' (interview in Jesús Tepactepec, Nativitas, July 2010).

[21] Modern employment is characterized, according to Korsbaek (2005: 138) as submitting the employee to a new work culture, in the shape of new disciplinary demands, 'with its own values [competiveness, productive specialization, work-home separation, flexibility, control of the co-workers, etc.] frequently opposite and incompatible with the traditional values of the community [solidarity, control of the whole production, family organization, permanence, self-control, etc.].'

[22] The municipality of Nativitas consists of 16 localities (thirteen towns-ejido; one neighbourhood; two ex-hacienda colonies) that work through the authority of the "community president".

which cargo systems are present with certain strength. To facilitate the analysis, such mechanisms have been categorised in four larger dimensions: political-judicial, economic, religious and social, which are obviously strongly related; in this sense, the cargo system is fundamental as it frequently and simultaneously enables several of these institutions. As we have being pointing out, within the religious sphere the following cargos exist: a ministerial officer, a major, a gatekeeper and two bell-ringers; and in the public arena there is a community president and a limited number of "sheriffs" or "commandants".[23]

It is in this way, every case of those small sociability roles over which the community is built (which shall be presented) tries to answer how it is that the cargo system invigorates the collective opposite the individual (restricting but never cancelling the individual interest), and in such manner, how the community project is held. In practice, it is said that such formulas have the cargo system as a vehicle and main warranty in common, which systematically assures the frequent interaction and role exchange between the largest possible numbers of participants in a community. In any case, attention is also paid to the possible changes of globalisation on the mechanisms of the collective, which, can lead to their weakening and disappearance, as well as be derived in the articulation of traditional mechanisms with the modernising institutions in such way that they are strengthened.[24]

Political-judicial level

In Tepactepec, we have found four political-judicial institutional mechanisms on which we can apply the variables of plurality, totality, frequency, and rotation: the assemblies, the political 'president of the community' cargo, the command, and the embargo. Every single possible scene generated through those devices is guaranteed, as shall be described, through the cargo system, the first one being the way in which functions are elected, the two following cargos actually, and the last in a traditional judicial system associated with various cargos.

Assemblies are the mechanism of consultation, debate, decision and election of the community of Jesús Tepactepec, and many others along the Mexican Republic. They can be categorised in ordinary assemblies (the general assembly included) and extraordinary assemblies. The first ones are a space where the majority of the community participates, both in taking decisions and in the organisation of numerous activities (the religious included) that are in a par with the whole community. In Tepactepec, the general assembly is the one in which every December 31st, three candidates for president are put forward among its members, to then be selected by majority (with the members of the assembly

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[23] Specifically, regarding the religious sphere, the ministerial officer or prosecutor is the main responsible person for the administration of the budget destined for religious activities; the mayor oversees the efficient operation of the liturgical events; the gatekeeper protects the church where he resides with his family; and the two bell-ringers are in cargo of ringing the church bells throughout the day. Regarding the political sphere, the community president (also referred to as auxiliary) serves to mediate between the municipality and the people it represents, in this way, helping the municipal president or major; the commanders engage in monitoring the safety of the community and distribute notices to each head of the family.

[24] It is assumed that the study of the impact of the phenomena linked to the globalization on the community institutions requires a detailed analysis of each case. Even so, it is understood that it is worth relating, as following, each mechanism with the overworked phenomena by the social sciences.

behind the candidate they support), who cannot refuse the offering. The two not-chosen candidates can be so again in future summons.

From our analysis perspective, we hereby understand the general assembly as an interaction scene in which, every year (*frequency* variable), a larger number of members (*plurality and totality* variables) of a group can express their opinions, choose, be chosen and decide upon matters affecting the community, both on a political and a religious level; furthermore, those actors can actively participate in the different roles represented: speaker, eligible candidate, elected candidate, elector, organiser, vigilante, and so on (*rotation* variable).

The assembly mechanism is receiving very important modernising effects as a result of the ways of constitutional suffrage, mainly the secret nominal vote as an individualised election mechanism. In the case of Tepactepec, it can be said that both mechanisms are positively articulated and even, or so they say in town, the assemblies have grown when it comes to participants in recent years due to the main cargos (ministerial officer and auxiliary president) handling considerable budgets.[26] In spite of this, most of the time those occupying such cargos are forced to abandon them during the corresponding period, due to their own jobs and many of their daily productive activities.

In this sense, the political position of "auxiliary municipal president" (the second institutional mechanism referred) is traditionally in the cargo of the civic sphere of the community. This cargo is made up as the centre of the public political decision, i.e. as a representative and/or executive organ in which the truly crucial options that will inevitably affect the life of the whole political community (Spencer 2004: 60) are formulated, created and applied. On a local level, these centres imply disputes among the different factions and, perhaps, conflicts between the different local office holders, such as the case of the secular and religious (Gledhill 2000: 234).

Following the particular schemes up to this point, we can assure that such cargo can be occupied annually (*frequency*) by any member with active participation in the community activities (*totality* and *plurality*): the candidate selected has a history of lesser cargos in the community, system that ensures the rotation of roles in the diverse interaction scenes starred by the community throughout its existence. This assembly filter reduces the possible impact of political parties in as much as the selection of similar candidates as in their role as administrators of the public money. One of the most recent cases to demonstrate this control device is that of a former ministerial officer in Tepactepec in 2010, who deliberately

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[25] The last extraordinary assembly in Jesús Tepactepec took place in 2010 to release the prosecutor from his duty to the next, due to financial fraud in the accounts of its main festival.

[26] Aguirre (1991: 39) defends the largest democratization that historically represents the forms of indigenous government against the occidental cultural patters, due to the fact that a larger number of individuals carried out, along time, governmental activities. In the specific case of this investigation, one cannot argue that, the more individual members of a group interacting (and with the highest frequency possible)the higher the chances that they behaviours tend towards collective benefit.

wanted to immediately become community president, skipping lesser cargos, which would have implied more effort and community service; this provoked sanction from the assembly towards his ambitions; he was chosen for the minor role of a bellman, momentarily (or perhaps forever) damaging his political aspirations. In any case, inhabitants are aware that assembly participants pick their candidates regarding their party preferences, with a tendency to select community presidents similar to the mayor, under the idea expressed by some inhabitants that it is 'the most convenient thing for the town.'

In a different order, the main political cargo is being formally transformed by the allocation of a public budget, which in Tepactepec has not meant a weakening of the position; in contrast, it has activated the participation of a larger number of members. In any case, the community presidency has always controlled a considerable budget due to the leasing of spaces for small commercial outposts during the most important fairs that take place in the community year round, parallel to the patronal celebrations.

Carrying on with the analysis of the political-judicial community, the commander cargo exists in numerous localities as a figure in cargo of the public vigilance and security of the community (in particular of the auxiliary president).[27] It is a lesser position that can be annually held by every active member of the community, to take care of everybody: 'we are all the police' said the president of the contiguous community San Miguel del Milagro (interview in Nativitas, July 2008). Usually, these "policemen" are in the cargo of distributing the summons to *each* head of family and avoiding that *any* member of the community be left uninformed, e.g.of the assemblies of the quotas allotted to each head of family.

Despite it being an exceptional mechanism, Davinson and Sam (2003) describe the practice of embargo in a community next to Jesús Tepactepec, Santa Apolonia Teacalco, as a politic-judicial element.[28] "Embargo" refers to the system through which inhabitants self-obligate to pay the allowances established by the town. The system consists of 'seizing property of a resident who refuses or fails to pay into economic cooperation.' In general terms, the withdrawal of goods starts with the town's men meeting with the authorities. The block chief (also a *rotating* cargo) to which the arrested person belongs asks for the debt to be paid and, in case of refusal, they proceed to the embargo: 'We turn to a neighbour's house and seize any type of property possessed, enough to cover the amount of debt.' The authors point out that such system 'makes no exceptions' (*totality*) when it comes to a representation 'of the right of the community over the individual.' Even when the inhabitants of Tepactepec cannot remember when this mechanism was last used, they know of its existence and take it as a warning. There are other mechanisms, as we shall see next, of collective pressure towards those in debt.

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[27] friends, who usually support each other during the assemblies, as to distribute the cargos along the years.
[28] The town of Santa Apolonia Teacalco was part of Nativitas until 1995, the year in which it became a municipality.

Economic level

In the economic field, there are two institutionalised mechanisms that can promote the collective opposed the individual: community jobs and allowances. The first are part of the work organisation of the communities, closely related to the civil hierarchy; the latter exist through-among other aspects, i.e. the whole structure of the religious ceremonies.

Those community jobs, which have several names according to the region (chores, labour, employment, devoir, errands etc.) are cooperative work mechanisms, collective in as those in which *every* adult male[29] of the community mandatorily participates and which are used for public works, such as construction and road maintenance, building school, and repairing temples and other community buildings (Bonfil 2003: 61).

In the community of Jesús Tepactepec, a progressive weakening of these kinds of institutions can be seen, amongst which those interviewed say they have stopped functioning since just about fifteen years ago: 'the dirt-bag did not want to go, he bought it out with cement,' pointed out an inhabitant to express that formally it was about voluntary cooperation, but in reality, there were mechanisms to prevent *anyone* from skipping community work.

According to the members of the fiscal team in Tepactepec, these ways of collective work were 'a way to relate, collaborate, feel more identified with the others' and, if they have weakened it has been because of 'city ways' (interviews in Nativitas, July 2010). In this same sense, the community president of Tepactepec stated in 2009 that beforehand more tasks were assigned, but now 'the way of living in the countryside has changed; people have other jobs and have no time' (interview in Nativitas, August 2009). As it has been already pointed out, changes in the economic life of the town have transformed the ways of cooperation: the loss of agriculture as the centre has left something like cleaning the canals, a necessary task in which everyone participated; or the 15th of May celebration, the day of San Isidro Labrador, patron of the peasants, in which rituals where oriented towards the fertility of the soil and pleas for rain, which nowadays has been reduced to a mass amidst the agricultural fields.

The processes that have had the greatest impact on community work are those of urbanisation and wage-earning: the idea of a wage impacts straight onto the idea of collective work, in which 'there is no pay but retribution, obligation is acquired to do the same as others [a *majority* of *everyone*] did for you [*rotation*], when the moment comes [*frequency*]' (Bonfil 2003: 61). Changes in modern global labour paradigms (still not stated by Bonfil) have forced the inhabitants of the community participate in individual work markets, individualised, flexible and occasional, that promote the emphasis on personal projects, pushing aside those activities that required collective support, such as agriculture.

Allowances themselves are a mechanism that has been described within the economic level, despite their involving every dimension of social community life (political, religious, and family) whose main objective is to socialise the income of a particular group by means of monetary contributions and/or goods, which assumes the form of a 'monetary contribution collectivism and of ritual reciprocity' (Sandoval 2005: 270). As has been previously stated, Jesús Tepactepec has a total of 900 inhabitants, out of which 217

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[29] Women participate by preparing meals that are distributed between the job participants.

heads of families regularly cooperate in defraying several expenses related to the political and religious spheres of the cargo system, as told by the inhabitants: 'I have property', 'You married, and you cooperate', etc. So, for instance, from the political point of view, cooperation can finance a collective work and, especially, assure the arrival of public services such as water, vigilance, trash collection, public works such as the maintenance of the main town square, among others; this more demanding cooperation has the purpose of defraying the Roman Catholic ritual calendar; and there is everyday cooperation between relatives to celebrate any relevant happenings inside the kinship network, such as birthdays, anniversaries, baptisms, girls' *quinceaños*, weddings or school graduations, and so on.

Specifically, we now present the joint mechanism of cooperation-commission in order to apply the variables handled throughout this paper. Allowances, through commission (which shall be studied as a social mechanism later on) are generated so that each on allows for the *rotation* of several neighbours (a commission in Jesús Tepactepec is usually formed of six members: president, secretary, treasurer and three vocals) who visit every single household, or all the neighbours of the community (*plurality* and *totality*) and, besides learning with relative anticipation of the departure of those who have migrated, or have separated from their spouses or are facing severe economic difficulties, they ask for monetary cooperation. These visitations, in order to sustain the expenses of floral ornamentation in the church, music, pyrotechnics and fireworks for the religious parties, happen in Tepactepec at least eight times a year[30] (*frequency*), generating authentic censuses of who has paid and who has not. In fact, such lists are presented in the church atrium, thus making public which heads of family have eluded certain contributions. Besides the implicit moral sanction result of the publicity, the fiscal office of Jesús Tepactepec has its own punitive mechanisms: as long as they do not pay, those members do not have the right to any church services (Eucharist for baptisms, communions, *quinceaños*, etc.). If someone continues in indebtedness, the community (through the assemblies) picks them for certain roles on next year's commission, as retribution for what has not been paid.

In spite of the strong impact on the population due to migration particularly to the United States, Canada and other states in the Mexican Republic (Federal District, Puebla; and in a lesser way, those who have converted to other religions,[31] who stop contributing, cooperation still includes those who have migrated, through representatives (almost always someone in the family) in order to continue cooperating and carry on belonging to the community, i.e. to the *all*.

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[30] According to the chronological calendar: 1. New Year; 2. Carnival; 3.Feast of the fifth Friday of Lent, which is the patronal and most important celebration in Tepactepec; 4. Easter; 5. Easter Sunday; 6. Children's Day (April 30th); 7. Virgin of the Ascension (August 15th); 8. Virgin of the Nativity (September 8th). Besides these, the ejidatarios must cooperate for the celebration of San Isidro Labrador (May 15th); guards, for the Precious Blood of Christ; and depending on the block where the house is located, for the Posadas, celebrated during each of the four weeks before Christmas.

It is taken into account that some of these festivities need the services from three different committees (fireworks, drinks and music) and that each committee consists of six members, so it can be deducted that each head of family participates in some committee in relatively short time intervals.

[31] According to the data in INEGI (2003: 26), 93% of the population of five or more years old in Nativitas, is Roman Catholic.

Just the same, both the tasks and the cooperation-commission, and in general, the institutions that allow for the articulation of individual and collective benefits are permanently under great pressure of healthcare, whose dynamics respond to individuals' behaviour patterns, which benefit only small groups. In this way, communities lose unity of action, and in consequence, a breakage is produced in the motivation necessary to contribute to community resources.

Religious level

In order to understand the religious dimension of most both indigenous and non-communities of the Mesoamerican area, an analysis of the Roman Catholicritual calendar according to which every religious cargo is organised is necessary (the office in the case of Jesús Tepactepec). Within this ceremonial cycle, we need to approach the servant system as a mechanism that favours social interaction scenes, and as a 'structure that dialogues with the local authorities, the degree of the cargos and the patronages are often confused terms' (Millán 2005: 227).

Roman Catholic holidays allow for the systematisation of the *frequency* of socialisation of most neighbours (*plurality* and *totality*) to be continuous year round. In the municipality of Nativitas, one can attend a festivity every single day of the year,[32] including pilgrimages (to other communities), processions, fixing and cleaning of the churches (picking up flowers, floral arches), car blessings, the reception of incoming pilgrimages, the switch in the temporary residence of the corresponding religious statue, changing the robes of the patron saint, and a long so on. A particularly interesting mechanism (especially in terms of what is being presented here) is that of the *perpetual adoration chapel*, in the community that the municipality is named after: it is an interaction scene (a small Roman Catholic temple next to the parish) which must permanently hold the presence of a member of the community 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Also worth mentioning are all those interaction scenes starring members of several communities, such as the pilgrimages or the intercommunity processions (firewood collection carried out by the members of Jesús Tepactepec to Santa Apolonia Teacalco). Salas (2010: 153) saw a territorial network of social relationships within the pilgrimages, which refers to an invitation and assistance system to the patron saint festivities of the neighbouring villages or distant ones, constituting a mechanism that allows the strengthening of the communities' relationships with the regional surroundings, such as those built in the pilgrimage to and from the neighbouring village of San Miguel del Milagro. The members of the community of Jesús Tepactepec currently keep intercommunity relationships (meaning they receive visits that they promptly reciprocate) between 10 to 15 communities attracted by the figure of Father Jesus, inviting the inhabitants of Tepactepec to return the visit. One that stands out is the reciprocal visits with the neighbours of Santa Catarina del Monte (State of Mexico): when they are the hosts, the neighbours of Tepactepec mention how they want the visitors to 'stop by every house' (*totality*), scenes in which situations

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[32] Medina (2009: 136) equally perceives that 'the towns in the South of Mexico City have more celebrations than days in the year.'

arise 'to be known' (particularly if one accompanies the pilgrims as part of the office) and perhaps one can obtain a job or it works for 'political interests.' Undoubtedly one of the changes seen in these networks is that nowadays they have a much more political functionality than they did before, when they had a sense of cooperation.

Despite of the impact the labour calendar has on the ceremonial cycle related to productivity (with leisure and free time associated with the weekends and vacation periods), those institutions keep the same force as in earlier times (sometimes with different meanings), which in Tepactepec is related to the image of Padre Jesús de los Tres Caminos, one of the most visited (along with alms and donations) in the municipality and the whole state, next to San Miguel del Milagro.

It is fundamental to introduce at this point the figure of the sponsors or servants, in the case of Tepactepec we need to talk about the sponsorship of religious cargos. Even when most festivities are sponsored through the economic contributions of a majority of the members of the community, the servant system is another fundamental expression of the community's ceremonies. Unlike parties paid between all the participants, servants assume expenses that, in many cases, are above their economic possibilities; in this sense, they are usually those outstanding members of the community that have amassed enough money to resolve the expenses that come with the imposed cargo.[33] It is therefore an institution of selective character 'that when you reach the top of the community hierarchy, it is only the privilege of a few,' as stated by Millán (2005: 27).

The community of Jesús Tepactepec does not have exactly stewards but several ecclesiastic sponsorships, among which the godfather of the 'the laying of the Niño Dios' stands out,[34] whose costs are around one million pesos[35] according to several of those interviewed. In concrete, they have to pay for the dressing of the "child" and the floral ornamentation of the church, for two days, December 23 and 24th, besides the food, beverages, music and pyrotechnics for the crowd, between members of the community and visitors.

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[33] Sandoval (2005: 272) explains that in the case of the Mazahua, such behaviour is a form of 'avoiding economical build up that provokes social and power differences … This is the demand of a cultural formation which original value is socialization, very different from the exaggerated individualization and accumulation of money that rules the lifestyle of the occidental world.' This is not equally produced in the studied community, where the access to income sources of industrial, commercial and service nature, has generated a significant economic and social difference.

[34] What stands out from this celebration is that amongst the sponsors there may be people that do not belong to the community. In any case, the requests to sponsor the "laying of the child" are so meaningful that an inhabitant of Tepactepec made his request in 1967 to carry out the party in 1981, and are currently defined until the year 2027, which reflects the social importance of such designation.

[35] During the research time, 12 Mexican pesos were equivalent to an American dollar, so that a million Mexican pesos would equal approximately 83,500 US dollars. Recovering the example of the previous footnote, the inhabitant recalls that, in 1981, the organization of the party meant his family an investment of approximately 150,000 pesos, which in comparative terms, is equivalent to the current cyphers.

Social level

This fourth dimension contains the collective mechanisms that encourage collectivism and are precisely characterised by being present in the other mentioned dimensions. Consideration is given to three key institutions: the commissions and/or committees, cronyism and parties, besides two less institutional mechanisms, but very explanatory: the culinary act with *mole* and the bell ringing.

Commissions and/or committees are essential in the daily functioning of communities: they are a core composed of persons who are intended to the help those responsible for organising activities, both political (as noted, they are responsible for the drinking water, school maintenance, public works, etc.) and religious (patron parties, ceremonial cycle, etc.). In fact, recalling the existing interconnection between committees and partnerships, 'the compulsory model of cooperation in the cargo system has extended to the civilian. One way or another, no one [*totality*] escapes from the community cooperation' (Robichaux 2007: 24). According to what was pointed out previously, the members ought to *rotate* through most of the commissions before attaining the position of president of the community. According to a conversation held with the treasurer of the water committee of Tepactepec, the community uses the commissions for those who are willing to soon climb to the top of the hierarchy, jumping over public service positions so as to 'the one that speaks up in the assemblies, a *bone* [commission] ought to be given' (interview in Nativitas, July 2010).This form of social service acts as a mechanism to test those who want to occupy higher cargos of more responsibility and budget management.

Cronyism, or ritual kinship, fosters the existence of figures that can substitute for birth relatives in the case of absence (widowhood, separation, divorce, emigration, etc.). It is notable in this social level because, according to Bonfil (2003: 58), '[it] allows ordering the cooperation of a large number of individuals [*plurality*] for certain tasks in which the members of a domestic unit turn out to be insufficient', tasks that include all related cargo systems(including those that have been commented on).[36]

The number of sponsorships that Nutini and Bell (1981) recorded only for the state of Tlaxcala is convincing for this proposal. It consists of 27 forms of cronyism that are shared with other regions of the country, amongst which baptism, communion, confirmation, the *quinceaños* of girls, marriage and the different school graduations stand out; others less used but still in use, include the sponsorship of a priestly ordination, the three years of a child, or the wedding of silver and gold. More specifically, the authors recorded Tlaxcaltecans' Stop of the Burial Cross, the Lying of the Christ Child, the Coronation of the Holy Virgin, the Coronation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Taken to Mass, etc. In short, if we consider that 'without food or drink, there is no party', we have a wealth of scenes that, with such prominent feature, exponentially multiply the interactions between individuals and groups, as well as contribution to the local economy.

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[36] Bonfil (1988) pointed out the importance in which the cargo system strengthens family relationships and how it induces the establishment of cronyism relationships.

In the described context, the system of cargos is a structure that promotes and maintains interactions of kinship, friendship and cronyism, which ensure, among other things, the consolidation of mutual aid networks. In this scheme of representation, each individual and each village, guild, group, association, community group that trades products and beliefs, favours and services, is embedded in a system of interactions with other individuals and towns forming a social network that is territorialised within the community. This creates intended social units and, thus, the collective identities are reinforced. It is therefore appropriate to refer to a network of relationships as a forum for exchange and social integration, where the collective identity provides access to networks of belonging, of belonging, that according to Giménez (2007), it is the inclusion in a collectivity to which senses of loyalty are experienced. All forms of mutual aid refer to particular forms of reciprocity, which promote new spaces of interaction, which, in turn, allow the existence of social belonging networks (Salas 2010).

It is important to acknowledge the existence of forces that can slow down the institution of cronyism, and the institutions in general that hold community projects, as we have described in this paper. The proposal of 'liquid relationships' by Bauman (2000) speaks of the fragility of human relationships in a present age, of widespread individualisation in the sense that we have increasingly fewer ties to the people around us, or at least, these are not unbreakable; individuals looking for "pocket relationships", shallow and more numerous, a phenomenon that would explain the success of virtual relationships. These studied communities, apparently isolated from modernising movements, have experienced severe changes that display the gradual entry of social relations in this Baumanian fluidity.

The party is one of the institutions that exist in all the studied communities, vigorously present in Tepactepec. It constitutes a fundamental space for social practices in public spaces, which encourages participation and enhances the communicability between various individuals. Celebrations in a community may differ between family parties related to the rites of passage for members of an extended family (baptisms, communions, confirmations, graduations, birthdays, anniversaries, *quinceaños* and even wakes ups) and those which also tend to be include the community, such as friends and godfathers; and community festivals linked to the Roman Catholic ceremonial cycle, borne, as seen above, by the community in the form of cooperation or by a member (steward or sponsor) with more resources than the average population.

There are several family and community celebrations observed in Nativitas communities. First, family parties are a platform that generates and maintains ties of kinship, patronage, and friendship. Along with the extended family, through which we acceded to the field, the annual celebrations emphasised are the birthdays of the male breadwinner and the preparation of *mole*, parallel to the big celebration on September 8th. In the family mentioned above, eight being the number of children, 28 of grandchildren and nine that of the great grandchildren, such celebrations concentrate a majority of the family. *A priori*, all the heads of household (married) equally cooperate in buying food and drinks to be used at the feast; moreover, a member of the family makes a greater effort to hire the services of a *mariachi*. Similarly, we note the case of the quinceaños party for girls of the neighbouring municipality of Santa Apolonia Teacalco, who have their family workplace

in Nativitas. Attention is brought to the organisation of the celebration in the number of "sponsors" that deal with the expenses for the event. To begin with, godparents, who must be married, undertake payment for the party dress. The food is provided by the parents, who may accept cooperation from other family members in the form of animals for the kitchen. Drinks are paid by some relatives, and if they run out, everyone collaborates to buy more. Moreover, other relatives, friends and cronies are responsible for sponsoring arrangements for the church, hall and its fixes, the cushion, the medals, slippers, *mariachi*, music group, invitations, souvenirs, the crown, and so on.

There is an interest to be found in these examples (as well as their interrelation with the economic mechanism of cooperation and economic benefit to the small local businesses that depend on this kind of celebrations): the high number of participants, or in other words, the tendency for the party to have the largest possible number of possible guests[37] (*plurality*), including all members of the community (*totality*), which will be in the position of hosts (*rotation*) when they experience an equivalent situation, i.e. a daughter turning fifteen (*frequency*): 'You have to invite everyone who invited you', according to the principle of reciprocity.

Second, community festivals stand out and are recognised as they are always accompanied by food, drink, music, fireworks or rockets, popular dances, collective masses, bulls, rodeos, sport competitions, etc. As commented on the Roman Catholic ceremonial cycle, the cost of the holidays can be borne by *the entire* community and /or on behalf of the stewards, who change (*rotate*) from party to party (*frequency*). They favour all kinds of interactions, including the exchange of food and drink with family, friends and godfathers. We find it interesting to include in the analysis the recent (2011) establishment of the saint's feast in the adjacent town jubilee of Santo Tomás La Concordia. Sharing with the rest of Roman Catholic festivity features referred to above, oneof the reasons given by residents to add a new party to the cycle stands out: 'because we are many.' A number or elements are perceived in the response, among which are: Santo Tomás is the community with the largest population in the municipality of Nativitas; however, the revenue generated by their parties does not reach those of the neighbouring communities of San Miguel del Milagro and Jesús Tepactepec. Being definitely a case of rent-seeking, interest in this context to reflect that the project of the holy jubilee is undertaken collectively: the community believes that the joint effort will bring more profit to each of its members than if the task was independently initiated by each of them. It is reiterated that such reflection does not disdain the existence of individuals who want to act on their own (negotiating with the budget, not cooperating, etc.).

The parties frequently promote behaviour in favour of the collectivity, explained in different ways by anthropology, but always under the premise of being scenes in which *everyone* can participate: they foster social cohesion, as *everyone* fraternises (Montes &

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[37] The people interviewed correlate 'prestige' and 'having resources' with obtaining the most number of guests: 'There are people that close down the street and make one great dance!' commented a neighbour on the last wedding he attended (interview of an adult inhabitant in Jesús Tepactepec, Nativitas, July 2010).

Galinier, cited in Castro 2000: 510); they are a social control mechanism because *no one* escapes from cooperation (Robichaux 2007: 24); they inhibit the accumulation of power in *any* individual or group (Wolf, cited in Chance & Taylor 1987: 2); they legitimise the differences of wealth because *everyone* goes through the service of the cargo system (Cancian 1965), etc.

One of the major potential effects of the modernising processes on the party, as a community institution, come from the needs of leisure associated with high levels of productivity in industrial societies: for decades, inter-group transactions between hosts and guests (predominantly based on reciprocal and redistributive swaps)have been displaced by the creation of "tourist areas" (Nash 1989: 80), whose essential characteristic is the increased commercialisation of relationships (interactions and /or transactions) between hosts and guests (relations to recover the individual, i.e. the tourist, as a central figure and that do not involve the agreed rotation of roles).[38]

Another excellent example is the preparation of the *mole*; its being the ritual meal to be offered to guests at certain festivals (*frequency*) is also noteworthy. We would like to emphasise here its perception as culinary representation in which many people participate in preparation (more than any other Mexican "dish") (*plurality*), for a relatively long time (usually more than 24 hours) and a considerable reversal of roles: there can be different cook, helpers, sponsors of money or spices, diners, etc. (*rotation*). In Jesús Tepactepec and Nativitas, women and men participate in the *mole* elaboration "party", the first cooking and the latter performing tasks such as collecting firewood, culling and grinding of the seeds and chilies. Large amounts of *mole* are prepared to sample, both at the time of the celebration and for guests to take home: the moment before departure ('I will give your *mole*') is of great symbolism, leaving the visitor pledged to 'do what I saw wherever I went', for when the now-host attends their party.[39]

There are several factors associated with globalisation that directly impact the food and nutrition of the communities. Following Vargas (2001: 5–6), some highlights include: 1) the centralisation of the distribution of consumer goods through transnational corporations, which often means that local products travel to large centres and return to their producing sites to be consumed with the consequent increase in price; 2) the promotion of the need to consume goods, regardless of the true value they have (fast food restaurants), 3) the decrease in the range of foods consumed by the population,[40] due to interest to produce edible plants and animals with high economic returns.

Likewise, the communication mechanism through "the ringing of church bells" is distinct. In the community of Jesus Tepactepec, there are at least four forms of ringing

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[38] Such a theoretical perspective suggests new research for Nativitas in two complementary ways: on one hand, the cases of San Miguel del Milagro y Jesús Tepactepec as places of a continuous process of touristisation; and on the other hand, the special transcendence of the community party institution as a response to such mercantilisation.

[39] Many of the informants estimate that 'the simplest of parties with mole, drink and dance' may cost 20,000 Mexican pesos (interviews to the heads of family in Jesús Tepactepec, Nativitas, July, 2010).

[40] In the case of mole, for example Oaxaca style, there is a recipe of about 30 or more ingredients (Vargas & Casillas 2004: 277–304).

the bells, besides the two daily ringings at 5 am, as a wake-up sign and getting out into the countryside to work, and at 8 pm, as a return signal: the "toll" to announce the death of a member of the community, the "praying" to ask the saints to end a natural disaster such as heavy rain, storms, droughts and storms; the "summons" to call the faithful to mass; and the ringing only the largest bell in the bell to warn of impending danger to the community such as the theft of images from the church.

Needless to say, this is one of the mechanisms that may suffer further weakening given from the extraordinary momentum that new technologies have provided to communications, to the point that 'in contrast with the face-to-face interaction … mass communication involves people for production and transmission or diffusion usually lack of immediate feedback from the receptors' (Thompson 1990: 218–24). However, the bell ringing in Tepactepec manages to collect in a short time, in the case of notice of danger around the church, anyone who can hear the sound of the bell (*plurality*), can maintain direct interaction with the bell ringers. Regardless, most notice calls (for meetings or to participate in a pilgrimage) are made by speakers, whose sound reaches out to every residence.

Final thoughts

Throughout the text, and particularly the previous section, we have defined and described, according to anthropological literature and field experiences in the town of Jesús Tepactepec, Tlaxcala, different institutionalised mechanisms that can be found in many of the local communities (including some urban neighbourhoods) of the Mesoamerican tradition. They are all, one way or another, related to the cargo system, so they are considered to be the backbone each of these mechanisms. Of course, if it is true that each of them could function independently (and even does sometimes), it is also true that the present system and its own inertia produces and reproduces the mentioned institutions, which, from the point of view emphasised in this text, foster interaction scenes in which most community members can actively participate. They seek that these scenes take place as often as possible, and they encourage the exchange of roles, which allows community members to participate in the schemes with all the possible roles; this reality creates active citizens who make sure that the system is functional despite the phenomena linked to globalisation and modernisation.

These considerations do not seek to either generalise or present the cargos systems as mechanisms of social cohesion; on the contrary, this recognition does not mean in any way the lack of conflict between members of the community.[41] In other publications of this research, we have highlighted how the ethical-political community allows the articulation of 'significant groups of people' through 'rules of social coexistence,' which do not delete or erase the socioeconomic and cultural differences (Salas, Rivermar & Velasco 2011: 18).

The direct, necessary and desired interaction, considering the devices also make it mandatory, is to implicitly and explicitly justify what we call "community project", in other words, the *least common denominator* of some Mexican rural communities, whether

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[41] We do not obviate the importance of these systems as mass control media or even domination of the population.

the population is of the majority and ethnically original, racially mixed (in no case are there entirely homogeneous groups): its members want and need to belong to the community, or whatever it is, believe in continuous contact with the people who live together as generator, most of the time, for common benefit and/or articulated to the own individual benefit of *modern* societies. All of this is under the premise that the more times an individual can interact with their neighbours, the more likely that 'we help one another' in search of employment, cooperation for a celebration or for the support to get to the United States as a new immigrant.

It is very difficult to conjecture how the cargo system will evolve in the changing socioeconomic and political context in which rural communities operate in 21st century Mexico. Social transformations resulting from globalisation and modernity have penetrated so deeply into the social, political, economic and religious communities, that it would be easier to think that they may disappear or be transformed to lose their essential characteristics and basic than define them. However, we have demonstrated in this investigation that people keep grouping into territories, which are related through institutions that create, maintain and, in documented cases, enhance social interaction scenes and cooperative relations that exist alongside those of conflict, so that communities not only persist, but in some aspects their behaviour is strengthened.

We may conclude that human groupings, given the need to find meaning to their existence have preserved, as means of resistance, some elements belonging to them. Although dealing with processes that seem so disorganising to the community, such as migrations and population dispersion across different markets, societies of origin give a sense of "community" that allows the individual to direct its own identity, i.e. define its self within a collectivity: it is in the origin communities where life projects that allow members to articulate the global order through forms of appropriation of space are conceived, or ritual landscapes and items that order the lives of every subject and every society.

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POVZETEK

Članek prinaša predlog za antropološko analizo kargo sistema v Mehiki, ki vključuje tako domorodne kot tujerodne skupnosti. Z razumevanjem kargo sistema kot heterogene institucije, članek prestavlja glavno hipotezo, da je ta institucija izvor drugih mehanizmov interakcije članov skupnosti. Prvič, skupnostne institucije spodbujajo sodelovanje največjega števila ljudi. Drugič, člani skupnosti nenehno ustvarjajo in poustvarjajo prizore interakcij. Tretjič, so vloge rotacij, kot produkt tihega soglasja med člani skupnosti, ključnega pomena pri zagotavljanju družbene participacije. Predlog je sestavljen iz treh delov: sestava kargo sistema kot kontinuuma, ki pojasnjuje razlike med vedenjem posameznikov in skupin, ideja o skupnosti kot temeljnemu konceptu v razumevanju kargo sistema; kot zaključek, ideja o skupnostnem projektu postane skupna značilnost vseh skupnosti (domorodnih ali tujerodnih) na srednjeameriškem področju.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: skupnost, kargo sistem, družbeni projekt, globalizacija, Mehika

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