Narcotrafficking, Migration, and Modernity in Rural Mexico

by
Victoria Malkin

Narcotics production and trafficking in the developing world are frequently conceptualized in the framework of rural underdevelopment, economic inequality, and globalization (Hargreaves, 1992; Painler, 1994; Smith et al., 1992). In this scenario, marijuana and coca become commodities that articulate rural producers to larger global economic processes. Narcotics production is understood as a logical response of rural peasants to economic problems.[1] According to this view, if the income disparities between rural producers and other sectors of society decrease, narcotics production will decline. While this argument may hold at the macro level, it still leaves several issues unanswered. Narcotrafficking is an important business in large regions of Latin America, but it is by no means present throughout the region, nor does it necessarily gravitate to the poorest regions. Clearly, a variety of factors need to coincide for a particular region or social group to participate in it. Success for narcotraffickers requires the ability to funnel local producers into the industry at all its different levels of production and distribution. It also depends on the narcotraffickers' ability to generate a status for themselves that can counteract the messages disseminated by the government and other media. These more mainstream messages stress the illegality of narcotics production and attempt to construct narcotraffickers as a group that can endanger national development and progress. If rural producers choose to participate in narcotrafficking as an alternative income strategy, this choice will involve a cultural struggle over the meaning of narcotrafficking. This will be even more evident in regions where drugs have never been present

Victoria Malkin is an anthropologist currently working at the Center for Violence Research and Prevention, School of Public Health, Columbia University. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropólogos, Nayarit, August 1996. The fieldwork in Mexico and the United States took place from October 1995 to March 1997 and was funded by the Mexican government, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, and the Department of Anthropology, University College, London. The author thanks John Gledhill, Department of Anthropology, University of Manchester, for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper and Luz Pérez Prado for her insights about the Tierra Caliente. All names of people and towns and pseudonyms.

LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 119, Vol. 28 No. 4, July 2001 101-128
© 2001 Latin American Perspectives

than in those where they have played an important role in indigenous cultural practices.

National governments can also benefit from narcotrafficking and the income it generates. The state will need to control narcotrafficking only if it impinges on its ability to function, either in the national space or in an international arena.[2] In many cases, however, the increased law enforcement and crop eradication schemes destined to control narcotrafficking have done little to stem the flow of illegal drugs. Indeed, as Toro (1998) argues, this strategy can result in an increase in production, albeit somewhere else. The success of the "war on drugs" in Colombia encouraged the rise of cocaine trafficking in Mexico and consolidated Mexican traffickers' relationships with the Colombian cartels. This allowed the Mexican narcotraffickers to expand and diversify their activities. Furthermore, as the danger increased, narcotics shipments also grew as insurance against the potential loss in transit (Toro, 1998). In other words, controls have only made traffickers even more professional and entrepreneurial in their efforts to build an economy of scale that can ensure adequate compensation for their risks.

While narcotrafficking plays a growing role in Mexico's political and economic life, it is local political and economic structures alongside local history that will determine whether and how it takes hold of an area. Rural poverty has been increasing throughout Mexico. Changes in agrarian policies have provoked widespread structural changes. Since 1994 the Mexican government has encouraged the privatization of communally owned ejidal land and abandoned the previous model of state-sponsored agricultural production. These changes envision agricultural producers, using their comparative advantage to compete in a global context. The success of these reforms has been mixed; well-organized northern producers are benefiting from their strategic geographic location, their previous organization, and their privileged access to state and private credit, but other regions have been less successful (Myhre, 1998), and rural poverty has increased throughout the country. Over the past few decades, narcotrafficking groups have become consolidated in the context of these structural changes, and the most famous cartels operate out of the northern states (Massing, 2000).

The arrival of narcotrafficking will reorganize class and social relationships at the local level. Local elites will be threatened if narcotraffickers do not emerge from their ranks, and different groups will have to work alongside each other in a regional space. While these struggles may seem self-evident, they are rarely addressed in the literature, and when they are it is frequently only within a discussion about the overt violence that narcotrafficking generates (for exceptions see Hargreaves, 1992: chaps. 2 and 3; Healy, 1991; Súarez

Salazar, 1993). Here, therefore, I try to address this issue to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and economic processes that are at play. The aim is to complicate the prevailing version of narcotrafficking that so frequently associates it with rural underdevelopment, marginalization, and "peasants." Below, I examine the local history and the cultural processes that contribute to the proliferation of a narcotics industry in the Tierra Caliente region of Michoacán. This ethnographic approach highlights the local identities and changing social relations that emerge alongside these structural changes (Appadurai, 1996; Pred and Watts, 1992). I show that narcotrafficking has arisen alongside a long history of capital investment and modernization and argue that it is because of the previous state interventions in this region encouraging agroindustrial production and entrepreneurial behavior that narcotrafficking could emerge so forcefully. I then describe some of the cultural practices of traffickers and their followers to illustrate how they have come to be seen as a group within the local space.

My case study is the arrival of narcotraffickers in the town of Mayapan. The information was obtained through informal conversations, prompted if the situation permitted.[3] My research does not place narcotrafficking within the local political struggles as they are played out in party politics, although this is an increasing concern as the industry infiltrates both local and national politics (cf. Andreas, 1999; Mastretta, 1990), nor is it specifically focused on uncovering drug routes and illegal activity (cf. Hargreaves, 1992; Morales, 1989). Instead, I concentrate on the local context in which the narcotics industry has emerged. I then examine how different social actors perceive the narcotraffickers and describe how the cultural practices that are routinely associated with this group have come to represent many of the larger changes that local residents are confronting.[4] In Michoacán's Tierra Caliente, narcotraffickers are an integral part of everyday life and figure in the worldview of all its social groups.[5] While many object to the arrival of narcotrafficking, objections differ according to social position. The illegality of the process is the concern for some, mainly because of its link with the increasing presence of a militarized force in the area. The social changes that the narcotraffickers represent are what trouble others. The region has experienced many changes over the past 50 years. Many can no longer see a clear path to progress and modernity within the current economic climate. The narcotraffickers have come to symbolize many aspects of modernity that challenge older social relations, and as such they have become accepted by some groups looking for change. As they are seen as a new social group that is part of modernity, they become better able to recruit a stream of workers ready to take the risks that the drug trade involves.

ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE TIERRA CALIENTE AND THE GROWTH OF MAYAPAN

The town of Mayapan (hereafter Mayapan unless the *municipio*[6] itself is specified) is in the Tierra Caliente area of Michoacán, a semiarid lowland valley in the southwestern part of the state. To the northeast is the *meseta tarrasca*, a mountainous region that concentrates the state's indigenous population alongside small mestizo towns and ranchos (hamlets). Beyond this are the densely populated fertile farmlands of the Bajío in western central Mexico. Separating the Tierra Caliente from the Pacific coast is the Sierra Madre del Sur. The valley is notorious for its hot, semitropical climate and arid vegetation. A hostile climate and the prevalence of insect-related epidemics left the region relatively sparsely populated until the 1950s. Haciendas covered 36 percent of the area at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Early hacienda owners were forced to rely on African slave labor to consolidate the commercial production of indigo and sugarcane (Leonard, 1994; Pérez Prado, 1996; Tutino, 1986: 184-202). In-migration to the region began to increase in the late eighteenth century when economic and social conditions in the Bajío forced many peasants to seek their fortunes in this lowland valley (Cochet, 1991). As a result, the region developed a heterogeneous array of social actors: slaves, freed slaves, elite hacendados concerned about the fluctuating colonial economy, and angry ranchero peasants who arrived in search of land and remained trapped in insecure tenancy situations or worked as day laborers on estates while the free mulattos and local mestizo communities held onto their land. It was this varied group that backed José María Morelos's insurgency movement in 1810 when he returned to Apatzingan after Miguel Hidalgo's defeat (Tutino, 1986: 184-189).

The region has always had connections to central power, but it was not a major focal point until after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1930). From the 1950s on it was the subject of large-scale state interventions that built up its infrastructure and transformed it into one of the largest experiments in agrarian and agricultural reform. This project owed much to Lázaro Cárdenas's personal interest and intervention in the Tierra Caliente, where he spent almost a third of his life (González y González, 1982: 130). In 1938, during his presidential term (1934-1940), he was personally involved in the expropriation of two of the largest haciendas in the Republic, Nueva Italia and Lombardia, both located in the Tierra Caliente (González y González, 1982: 128-129). In 1947 he became the executive voice of the newly set-up Comisión de Tepalcatepec, which transformed the area. The two main rivers, the Tepalcatepec and the Cupatitzio, were used to create extensive irrigation canals. By 1957, ten years after it began its work, the Comisión had opened

up new land to irrigation, built hydroelectric dams, and provided 72 communities, including Mayapan, with electricity (*Excelsior*, February 26, 1957). Between 1950 and 1976, the amount of irrigated land increased from 45,000 hectares to 116,136 hectares (Agustín et al., 1994: 96). Roads were paved, and Apatzingan, the region's main center, was connected to Uruapan in the north and then to the main port of Lázaro Cárdenas. Later, a railroad through the Tierra Caliente connected this port to Mexico City. Schools and other educational institutions were constructed to train the population in the latest agricultural techniques.

The region became an experimental ground for new agricultural technology. In 1957, President Adolfo Ruíz Cortines (1952-1958) opened a new rice mill in Nueva Italia that was the first of its kind in Mexico. Other processing plants were built for cotton, limes, and other fruits (*Excelsior*, February 26, 1957). The Tierra Caliente was incorporated as an integral part of the national project, as *Excelsior* reported: "It can be seen that in a specific area of our country, namely, the Valley of Tepalcatepec, a new mode of life has been provided for 200,000 Mexicans." Many of these changes were seen to be due to the personal work and devotion of Lázaro Cárdenas (cf. Gledhill, 1996; González y González, 1982; Pérez Prado, 1996). Local mythology in Mayapan sees Cárdenas as solely responsible for bringing piped water to the town after he was petitioned by a group of women. His involvement in the region was known to many (*Excelsior*, October 10, 1952):

> The General Don Lázaro Cárdenas moves constantly throughout the region. He is not inactive for a minute when he is in his office in Uruapan. Dozens of people visit his office in order to solve their problems; he sees them and goes to the works. He knows the region by heart and there are times when he even acts as a guide to the engineers.

The region's differential access to resources and varied geographic terrain continued to complicate its social structure and foster the emergence of new social groups. By 1970, 70 percent of all land was ejidal land (Durán Juárez and Bustin, 1983: 68). In global terms, the *ejido* sector appeared favorable: 80 percent of all land available for cultivation was distributed as ejidal land, and ejidatarios controlled 73 percent of all irrigated land. Nevertheless, the sector was stratified; a large number of ejidatarios had access to rain-fed land alone, and in many cases the amount of irrigated land available to ejidatarios was insufficient even for subsistence (Durán Juárez and Bustin, 1983: 69). In reality, the ejido sector was divided into two groups, an elite group that could capitalize on its land and the rest. Among private landowners, plots were larger, but again this group was stratified: 5 percent of private landowners occupied

30 percent of the irrigated land. The majority had smaller plots, but, with an average plot size of 64 hectares, these were still far larger than those in the ejidal sector (Durán Juárez and Bustin, 1983: 70). Finally, in spite of the new infrastructure, 70 percent of the land continued to be used only for grazing.

Until the 1980s, government policies encouraged agroindustrial production for internal and external markets. During this period the region experienced a series of boom-and-bust cycles. The first and biggest boom came from cotton. In 1965, its peak year, 40,000 hectares of land were planted with cotton (Agustín et al., 1994: 96). Poorly managed producer organizations, corrupt credit schemes, poor use of pesticides, and plagues led to cotton's disappearance by the early 1990s (Agustín et al., 1994; Stanford, 1994a; 1994b). After cotton, melons arrived. The region produced more melons than any other in Mexico from 1970 to 1988, and 40-60 percent of all cantaloupes exported to the United States were produced in the Tierra Caliente (Stanford, 1994b: 101). To this day ventures in mangoes, limes, chiles, and even cotton continue (Appendini, 1995; Stanford, 1994a; 1994b). The state organized this production among ejidatarios and other producers through the distribution of credit, permits, and inputs channeled through different producer associations (cf. Stanford, 1994b). Until the current emphasis on agricultural privatization, agroindustrial companies were obliged to negotiate with producer organizations to obtain their produce. In all these cases, the possibilities for abuse and corruption were extensive. Nonetheless, the switch to neoliberal solutions has not improved the situation for many rural producers. In the case of melons, Stanford (1994b) shows how the changes implemented during administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) left ejidatarios in a precarious situation, indebted to the transnational companies that financed their production costs while offering to buy their produce at rock-bottom prices. Many producers broke their contracts and sold to the highest bidders. This resulted in the companies' refusal to negotiate with producer organizations and a subsequent decline in melon production. In 1991-1992, only 800 hectares of land were planted with melons, in comparison with the 10,000 hectares that had been planted in the past. Currently, the state allows producers to negotiate with the companies of their choice. This has resulted in the expansion of a few commercial investors (from the United States and Mexico) into the local industry, where they control production and prices (Stanford, 1994b). Small local producers are suffering as the state withdraws its support from peasant organizations and producers lose whatever leverage they had. Farmers compete with those in other regions, and private agricultural credit favors northern Mexico (Myhre, 1998). Even more land is being rented to commercial investors from elsewhere, and in many cases this income is used to finance a household member's international migration.

The agroindustrial transformation of the region required labor for its success. The Tierra Caliente became an important zone of colonization as day laborers arrived from near and far in search of work. Cotton growers recounted how they had had to recruit workers from other states during the "golden years." While many individuals and agroindustry capitalized on these commercial ventures, the population as a whole failed to benefit from the inflow of capital, in particular because many of the investors came from elsewhere (Gledhill, 1996; Pérez Prado, 1996). The economic changes in the rural sector mean that few possibilities are available for many rural residents. In 1995, day laborers in Mayapan earned between 20 and 50 pesos (U.S.$3-6) a day, depending on the harvest and their speed.

Local history in the municipio of Mayapan has paralleled these regional changes, albeit with its own specific twists. Older residents frequently discuss the town as they remember it, "nada más un pueblo, sólo, con unas cuantas casas" (a town all alone with a few houses). Before its explosive expansion over the past three decades, the town was anchored by the old church and one main road, Calle Madero. Much of the initial population traces its origin to Los Altos de Jalisco and the Cotija region of western Mexico (see Cochet, 1991). Mayapan, in contrast to other areas in the Tierra Caliente, has always had a complex system of canals and irrigation from a nearby river. Prior to the agrarian reform, this prime land sustained two large haciendas that produced sugar and indigo. One hacienda, El Molino (San Pablo), belonged to a member of the Medina family and the other belonged to the González family. Both these families trace their ancestry back to an original landowning family, the Cervantes. Intermarriage between these older families is common, and the consolidation of landholdings through marriages and other strategies has created winners and losers among the older hacendado class. Mobility between smaller ranchos and the haciendas was common throughout the century. As many older people comment, food and work were never lacking. Demographic growth and in-migration increased even more dramatically after the region was transformed (see Table 1). Many day laborers arrived with the hope of receiving plots of land in the new ejidos. Migrants were also attracted by Mayapan's improving facilities, its clean water supply, and its river breeze. Nevertheless, in spite of the agrarian reform that took place, many private landowners managed to hold onto their prime land.[7] Other small investors also arrived from elsewhere and bought or rented medium-sized plots.

Mayapan's geographic position as a major crossroads allowed many rural producers to make their money by combining agriculture with distribution. Land and pickup trucks have therefore always been one key to success, and many discuss their ventures in the buying and distribution of agricultural

TABLE 1
Population Change for the Municipio of Mayapan 1950-1990

Year	*Total*	*Change %*	*Density/km*
1950	6,246	—	9
1960	14,100	8.54	20
1970	23,768	5.56	33
1980	30,676	2.49	43
1990	36,214	1.71	51

Source: CONAPO (1994).
Note: By comparison, the rate of change for Michoacán was 2.66 percent for 1950-1960, 2.38 percent for 1960-1970, 2.05 percent for 1970-1980, and 2.20 percent for 1980-1990.

products throughout Mexico. Many members of elite families who remain prosperous have become entrepreneurs. Some older families took advantage of the town's rapid growth and used their property to open businesses. The two major businesses for construction supplies are owned by older families that benefited from the rapid growth and from international migrants' dollars invested in new homes. Some of the largest supermarkets are also controlled by the old elite. Even so, many small businesses are owned by ejidatarios who used their surplus income from the boom years to open small stores or by international migrants who provided the capital to establish small businesses. Other stores are run by ranchero families who sell their produce in Mayapan.

The cotton crops and agroindustrial boom permitted the emergence of new social actors throughout the municipio, and power struggles continue to this day. The changing economic structures not only weakened the powerful hacendado class but also permitted some of the rancheros and ejidatarios to consolidate their economic and social gains into political power. The power and wealth of the older landowning families have been challenged from all sides: by the successful international migrants, by the ejidatarios who managed to benefit during the agroindustrial booms, and by the *rancheros* from elsewhere. Currently one cannot realistically speak of a hacendado class in economic terms; the hacendados' children are indistinguishable from the successful rancheros, and all remain grouped as *pequeños proprietarios* (private landowners). Older families that did not pursue other ways to supplement their income are visibly poorer. This is particularly the case of the Medina family, the past caciques of the municipio. As one of their sons told me with some irony, he had just joined a group to petition for a further extension of the main ejido and was now an ejidatario.

The Tierra Caliente has always been a frontier region, and waves of newcomers—from African slaves to U.S. businessmen looking to buy agricultural produce—have been a norm. The successive in-migrations into Mayapan have generated networks throughout the Tierra Caliente and beyond. These changes have meant that groups have continuously had to create and maintain their "privileged" positions or construct new statuses for themselves. This fluidity has led to a sense of "Us" and "Them" that distinguishes people who claim links to the older landowning families of Calle Madero, colloquially referred to as *la calle de los ricos* (the street of the rich). New *colonias*[8] have emerged to accommodate the population growth. One of the largest was established on land previously owned by the Medina family. Older residents frequently bemoan these changes, recalling how they all used to be family in the past and complaining about the arrival of "mucha gente de los ranchos" (many people from the ranches). While local discourses construct the colonias as populated by outsiders from the ranchos, many residents in Mayapan, including the older residents, have family, friends, and fictive kin in these neighborhoods.

At present, a new class made up of those who are involved in the narcotics industry is emerging to join this varied landscape. During my time in Mayapan it appeared that much of the economy was kept afloat by drug money. Local residents often discuss the narcotraffickers. While there are no hard data on their contribution to the economy, the owner of a recently opened money exchange cited a bad day's business as U.S.$20,000 and told me that in many cases people exchanged U.S.$15,000 in cash. The rest of this article describes how this industry manifests itself in the town and how this group has managed to insert itself into the social landscape.

THE DRUG TRADE AND LOCAL HISTORY

The narcotics trade has been transformed over the past few decades. While Mexico has produced marijuana for the U.S. market for some time, the 1980s and 1990s saw the expansion into other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine (Andreas, 1999). In 1980 no cocaine shipments were seized by the Mexican police, whereas in 1990 49 tons were seized (Toro, 1998). Mexico emerged as a primary transit route for Colombian cocaine as other routes were blocked. Some 50 to 70 percent of all cocaine entering the United States is thought to pass through Mexico (Dermota, 2000; Massing, 2000). Mexican and Colombian traffickers consolidated links when law

enforcement made previous routes more difficult and costly to use. Mexican cartels have been increasing their power ever since (Andreas, 1999). The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) claims that Mexican traffickers virtually control the methamphetamine market (Andreas, 1999: 56), and this is dominated by the Amezcua Contreras brothers, who operate out of Guadalajara (Massing, 2000). In the course of the 1990s, crackdowns on drug routes through Mexico have led traffickers to favor the Pacific states for transport as opposed to Yucatán and the Gulf states.

Conversations with town residents suggested that these changes were also reflected in the local narcotics industry. I was informed that marijuana crops had dominated production in the 1970s when the narcotraffickers arrived to recruit ejidatarios for harvests.[9] Individuals said that traffickers now also worked with cocaine and, most important, methamphetamine, colloquially called *cristal*. Some said that connections existed with Colombian groups and recounted how planes had arrived in the neighboring town of La Perla to transport drug lords. While this may be an exaggeration, it is not improbable given the changes taking place in Mexican trafficking organizations. Methamphetamine appears to have changed the face of the drug industry. It is manufactured as opposed to grown. In contrast to marijuana production, which requires access to land, methamphetamine production requires access to the appropriate ingredients and technology. Thus, given the correct connections and disposition, anyone can become involved, and distribution networks will be the key to becoming a drug lord. Once routes were established to transport cocaine, including methamphetamine would have been just one more step.

Local conversations indicated that the most significant narcotraffickers were concentrated in La Perla. The most notorious of these was known as El Guero (the white guy). He had given many of my informants legal and illegal work both in Mexico and in Los Angeles, where he had found employment in a restaurant for at least one couple I knew. But while La Perla is considered the narcotraffickers' headquarters, Mayapan is not immune. During my research there were several murders attributed to drugs. The police have raided a pharmacy and found prohibited chemicals (epiphedrine, which is used to make methamphetamine) and the owner's son is now on the run. I heard of at least two cases of migrants arriving in Los Angeles and being murdered almost immediately because of their involvement with the drug trade. The local priest has condemned the narcotraffickers, and after Bible class women pray that their sons don't go down the wrong path and will do honest work when they are in the United States. I encountered several younger men who told me of their involvement as *camellos* (camels) delivering drugs to the border, as employees in the United States, or as bagmen.

NARCOTRAFFICKING AND CLASS CONFLICT

The arrival of the nouveau riche continually reminds the older rich of their precarious status. This is further confirmed by the newcomers' obvious presence and the visible changes in the local landscape. New cars and trucks—many painted with bright images and with mirrored or dark windows—cruise the streets looking for girls and playing loud music, in much the same way that others walk around the main square on Sunday nights. These trucks continue to have symbolic status; trucks were the route to economic mobility in the past and continue to be coveted by migrants and residents. This display of new wealth in Mayapan is helped by its newly paved roads. In 1995 many roads (in particular those in the older part of town) had been paved using funds from a rural antipoverty program. Paved roads were not yet in place in La Perla or many of the other surrounding ranchos, so it was easier to display oneself and one's car in Mayapan. Drivers of these new cars are frequently accused of being narcotraffickers: when in July 1996 a pickup crashed into the school wall in the middle of the night the owner of the local pharmacy blamed it on young narcotraffickers and complained that the municipal president had not installed enough roadblocks in the main square to control their crazy driving practices.

A further attraction on Calle Madero is a telecommunications shop opened by a member of the younger generation of one of Mayapan's elite families. Its primary business is the installation and repair of car radios. Its clients came from all over, and locals frequently asserted that they were involved in narcotrafficking. One handicapped woman sat in front of the shop daily, and she is rumored to have received as much as U.S.$100 from benevolent narcotraffickers. As residents sat outside in the evenings they would critique these young men and comment on their cars, their owners, and the teenage girls who gathered to watch the action. These critiques reflect the unease of residents confronting an uncertain vision of Mayapan's future while remaining aware that they are dependent on these newcomers' income. Larger landowners watch as young men display their new symbolic status. Many also know that their children are not immune. A younger son of the Medina family informed me that he had returned after 12 years in the United States because cocaine, which he claims was not his but was stored there by some friends, was found in his garage. The head of the Asociación de Pequeños Proprietarios (Association of Small Landowners) is known to have lost his land when his son got involved with the trade; the son is said to have forged his parents' signatures and then lost everything when the "partner" disappeared.

The arrival of new money has created new patron-client relationships that upstage the older rich. In the past the upper classes[10] used their status and money to maintain a patronage system. Some of the larger landowners continue. Trusted clients live in their bosses' houses and depend on loans before payday. Now, however, the narcotraffickers have gained the reputation of giving away money to their followers. Furthermore, they are seen to be the town's principal benefactors, in stark contrast to the older elites and even the state. Schoolchildren who were stopping cars to collect money for a new sports field one day greatly improved their take when a presumed narcotrafficker drove by and donated U.S.$100 in cash; otherwise they would have collected only 200 pesos. The *marijuaneros* were reported to be behind the church renovation in La Perla, where the priest was reported to have said, "When I die I may go to hell, but if I wait to build the church from contributions, it will never be built." The notorious El Guero is the mastermind of a new disco that is claimed to be as high-tech as many discos in the state's capital, Morelia. He owns a swimming pool (open to the public) between La Perla and Mayapan and uses the water to irrigate his lime orchards. He also owns of one of the best mango groves in Mayapan, on 36 hectares of irrigated land. That land had previously belonged to the old González family, a family that, rumor has it, lost all its wealth through family feuds and excessive gambling. Even one woman who frequently complained about narcotraffickers and was considering migrating to the state of Washington to keep her sons away from their influence praised El Guero for being "a simple man—you used to see him on his donkey in sandals; of course, now he has a house and the rest but he is still a simple man, not pretentious like those you see nowadays." She also admired his investments and discipline. Unlike the older rich or younger hotheads, she told me, he had not wasted his money on gambling, cockfights, and fast cars. Changes are increasingly visible in Mayapan. In 1996 a new swimming pool, again public, was said to be the investment of a narcotrafficker from an outlying ranch. It was readily welcomed by town residents and the owners of all the nearby small shops, even the older evangelist woman, who sold basic groceries and beer to her new clientele.

Discourses used to criticize the narcotraffickers in Mayapan must be understood in the context of the municipio's structural changes and local history. They highlight the economic decline of the older rich and the emergence of new social groups. The most frequent criticism of the narcotraffickers made by those who live on Calle Madero is that they come from the ranchos, echoing the discourses that circulate about the colonias. On Calle Madero the town's social problems and drug trade are frequently attributed to the ranchos and to the people *sin cultura* (without culture). This idea was also used to explain why narcotraffickers were dominant in La Perla, whose status as a

rancho was stressed even though it is similar in size to Mayapan. La Perla is frequently described as "pura ranchería, mucha pelea" (just like a rancho, always fighting). Mayapan, in contrast, is imagined as more peaceful and civilized; this is attributed to its being the cabecera municipal and to the strong presence of the church. It is also argued that Mayapan is more "connected" to other urban centers and "civilization" than La Perla, which remained at the end of the line. In these conversations, individuals attempt to devalue the narcotraffickers through the suggestion that they are degenerate and uncivilized and that they lack the cultural capital to function anywhere else but in the ranchos. They also suggest that the vision of progress offered by the narcotraffickers cannot help the region to reclaim its role in Mexico's development because it relegates the region to rancho status. The loss of a national role is felt by many, in particular the landowners, who reminisce about the cotton years. While these elites attempt to assert their cultural capital, residents in the colonias, many of whom continue to lack water, electricity, and any source of income, frequently accuse the old rich of having wasted their money and of not having helped the town. They may also criticize the ranchos for their harshness, violence, and isolation, but they contrast this with a celebratory image of the rancho identity, as well as the rancheros' survival in the face of all odds—a theme that is now prominent in popular songs (*corridas*) that make the narcotraffickers heroes.

Even though La Perla is constructed as a rancho by many in Mayapan and especially by the hacendado families, local history links these two towns. La Perla lacks an old landowning class. It was an arid area devoted primarily to ranching until the first ejido was founded in 1956. Many of the original ejidatarios were peasants from Mayapan, and many residents in the two towns are related. La Perla is a product of the region's transformation. It has nine ejidos with rich irrigation facilities from the nearby dam, Piedras Blancas, constructed in the 1950s. Rivalry between the towns is exacerbated by the fact that Mayapan's Medina family was ousted from power by an alliance of groups from the surrounding ranchos in the 1970s. The new municipal president came from La Perla, and it was only in the mid-1980s that a president from Mayapan reemerged. Power struggles continue to this day. In the 1994 local elections, the candidate of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution—PRD) came from La Perla. Attempts to challenge her platform focused on her origins, suggesting that she came from a family involved in narcotrafficking. In the end, the current PRD municipal president (from Mayapan) was replaced by a candidate, also from Mayapan, who belonged to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary party—PRI) and had campaigned as an honest landowning campesino. Debates over the meaning of the narcotraffickers are

now also incorporated into social struggles over political power and status that long precede their arrival.

The disappearance of economic mobility and the conviction that an honest job will get you nowhere mean that moral sanctions against narcotrafficking are conflicted, in particular for the poorest, who lack assets and migration networks. One separated mother from the local Bible group told me of her dilemma in allowing her son to migrate. He would not go without her permission, and she knew that he planned to work for a local narcotrafficker when he did, but she relented, saying that she did not see any other way he could marry and have his own house. Her son went to Seattle and shortly thereafter was charged with the possession of drugs and U.S.$5,000 in cash. He sent her a Mother's Day card from prison telling her not to worry because it had both a priest and a soda vending machine. His mother worried constantly. "The boss never told him the danger he was letting himself in for. I saw [the boss] and got angry. He looked upset, but he told me that he only wanted to help, he only wanted [my son] to have a house and the chance to marry."

International migration is undertaken by members of all social classes. In the present context, going to the United States is one of the few ways left to get ahead. However, residents are also aware that migration is not a guaranteed alternative. Many return migrants complain about the social and economic conditions in the United States. One frequently hears how difficult life is, especially for the undocumented. Wages are low, jobs are disappearing, and migrant communities are becoming even more fluid as they confront changing labor markets, local economies, and social problems (Bustamente, 1990; Gledhill, 1997; 1998; Latapí Escobar, 1993). Media reports frequently remind viewers how difficult migrant life in the United States can be. Images are presented of high-tech border controls, and examples such as the Riverside beating (in 1996) and other deaths on the border are frequently aired. In Mexico, however, these complaints are now counterbalanced by the presence of returning migrants displaying the material symbols of success. This success is often attributed to drug money, regardless of the truth. But these two circulating viewpoints give two opposing narratives: that migrants suffer and work just to get by or that one can become a narcotrafficker and obtain material success and everything else that goes with it. Indeed, as one 17-year-old told me, drug dealing is considered just like gambling, and if you win you can return with a full pocket and the ability to build a house, not just put up a few bricks.

The quick accumulation of wealth, often through luck and/or clever schemes, is a frequent theme in Mayapan's local history. Myths abound about hidden treasure left behind by the Spaniards when they fled during the wars of independence. Local lore often attributes the older families' wealth to buried

treasures and golden coins even though the families themselves emphasize their hard work. The wealth that arrived through the corrupt credit schemes and agroindustrial business further followed this pattern. In this context, the arrival of narcotraffickers who have managed to make money quickly is nothing new. Get-rich-quick stories only emphasize for the rest how "el dinero en México no alcanza para nada" (money in Mexico isn't worth anything). That hard work and honesty are the route to self-improvement is a disappearing discourse in Mayapan. Residents have become accustomed to a boom-and-bust economy that results in the rapid accumulation of wealth over short periods of time.

Narcotrafficking represents both continuity and change with regard to previous economic models. On the one hand, the traffickers are simply looking for business that can ensure short-term profits in an economic climate that makes long-term planning almost impossible. They follow the logic that economic mobility comes from entrepreneurial innovation. The change that they generate is a threat to the established social order, but this order was already breaking down. The traffickers are also part of an ongoing change in a region that has seen waves of newcomers over time, where each wave provoked a threat to the existing order. While they fit into this history, they cannot succeed unless they can be seen as an emblem and not a stigma (Astorga, 1995). The struggle to define narcotraffickers as positive occurs at the economic level with the construction of new swimming pools and bars, but it is more importantly a cultural battle. The narcotraffickers need to define themselves within a cultural arena that will stress their cultural and symbolic capital.

"AQUI ESTAMOS ATRASADOS": CONTESTED VISIONS OF MODERNITY

Those who colonized the Tierra Caliente came for new opportunities, but the progress generated during the Cárdenas regime quickly disappeared. Blame is endlessly attributed to different groups. Landowners say that the ejidatarios drank away most of the money; the ejidatarios and day laborers accuse the elites of having squandered their money without contributing to the town's development. Mayapan's residents now see themselves excluded from the national project and as having lost their connection to central power. Many describe the community and its practices as *cerrados* (closed), *atrasados* (backwards), and *solos* (alone). Progress is no longer secure in the Tierra Caliente.

Mayapan's residents all require progress in terms of development (schools, infrastructure, employment), and it is part of their image of modernity. Many

use a metaphor of traditional versus modern to explain their current predicament and partly blame their "traditions" for the region's failure to progress in spite of its agroindustrial wealth. While many residents point to the government, self-blame persists. In reality, the situation cannot be understood through a traditional-versus-modern dichotomy. The Tierra Caliente has long been articulated to capitalist modes of accumulation. Social networks have connected individuals to networks throughout Mexico and beyond. Mayapan could never be described as a closed corporate community. But for residents, the path to modernity remains unclear. Modernity has been separated from the larger national project of development and progress that they experienced in the past. What is clear, however, is that progress appears to happen elsewhere. For some, modernity is to be found in the United States, but even this path remains ambiguous. The United States presents progress alongside a potential for severe social problems and violence. Life as a migrant threatens many individuals' concept of moral personhood (Malkin, 1998). Meanwhile, modernity in the local context now includes narcotrafficking. While many remain uncomfortable with this, they also see that it may be the only way they can achieve the progress they desire. Individuals may condemn narcotraffickers or international migration, but most remain unclear about how the progress they all require, both individual and communal, can take place without either.

Narcotrafficking is not only linked to material progress but also interwoven into an image of modernity that includes individual consumption, leisure, and *diversión* (fun)—concepts that contribute to the individualization of the self that challenges a coherent family ideology, older forms of social control, and clearly defined gender roles. The narcotraffickers' investments in swimming pools, discos, and bars fit into the younger generation's desire for diversion, the lack of which they complain about bitterly. The youth are more conscious of change passing them by than proud of their campesino history. While many items such as clothes, sunglasses, flashy watches, and cellular phones are constructed as part of a narco uniform, they are now desired by many, the younger generation in particular. On one pilgrimage I accompanied an 18-year-old who brought along her brother's cellular phone (he is a migrant) even though she was unsure how to use it to phone her mother when we arrived.

Rumors abound about narcotraffickers and women. I was told that they would return to La Perla, "steal a woman at gunpoint and dress her in gold, return to work in the United States and later come back and steal another." Mayapan has a large number of abandoned women, single mothers, and *casa chica*[11] arrangements. Women may contest these situations, but many remain vulnerable. Some scorn this behavior and the women who tolerate it, par-

ticularly when it is in exchange for gold and dresses. Others, especially the younger generation, remain impressionable. Teenage girls know all the passing cars and many of their drivers, what their supposed business is, and where they come from. Popular songs played on the street and the buses and blasting from the pickup trucks glorify the narcotraffickers' way of life and its challenges. One girl told me about her relationship with a previous boyfriend who was in a Mexican prison, having been caught driving cocaine across the border, "My friends didn't worry. It's normal here, and a lot of us have boyfriends like that."

For most rural men, jobs are too temporary and poorly paid to permit them to fulfill the idealized role of a breadwinner. Earning respect through being a provider is nearly impossible, even though social codes still see this as one principal way of "being a man" (see Boyer, 1989; González de la Rocha, 1994; Jelin, 1991; Lavrin, 1989).[12] Women who know that some of the family income may come directly or indirectly from narcotrafficking often stress their husbands' role as a provider and in this way try to play down any moral judgment against them. One way that men can be "more men" is to have more women, and providing for them all is a double coup (Melhuus and Stolen, 1996). Meanwhile, the stories about narcotraffickers providing gifts to different women is in stark contrast to the reality for men who can hardly provide for themselves.

Aside from providing for women within the household context, many younger men also engage in other acts of generosity. The generosity of returning migrants is nothing new (López Castro, 1988; Lozano, 1994; Massey et al., 1987),[13] but it has become more expensive and flamboyant. Young men often give money to friends and family alike after they return from the United States. Hugo, a 22-year-old, said that he had no desire to go north because he would have to work; his brothers and sisters sent money for the household and friends returning to Mexico gave him money and took him traveling. Another young migrant who had the symbolic items of a narcotrafficker regularly gave his younger cousin money and bought her clothes (all *norteña* style) on his frequent visits to Mexico. These practices of generosity reflect an available income that can be used for the consumption of new symbols of modernity (leisure time, fashionable clothes) as opposed to items concerned with household consumption and family status, and they tend to be associated with narcotraffickers. Generosity has always been a valued practice, and this association helps the traffickers construct themselves as a group that both gives respect to others and is worthy of even more. Respect is also a theme that stands out in many of the popular songs that are either written by the bands or commissioned by traffickers wishing to tell a particular story. Astorga (1995) shows that the protagonists of these stories are invariably

poor and of rural or semiurban origin. The narratives stress how these characters have fought against all odds, even when society has rejected them, and emphasize the respect that they merit. These songs also combat the government version of the narcotraffickers, which stresses their lack of education and presents them as *nacos* (unsophisticated) (Astorga, 1995: 40).

Although the narcotraffickers are devalued as individuals from the ranchos, given the town's changing class and social relations it is hard for a united protest against them to emerge. Furthermore, there is no coherent public discourse that associates them with social problems or the underclass as in the United States. While debates in urban areas are emerging regarding the danger of drugs for young people and others, particularly in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana (Massing, 2000), no such debate had emerged in Mayapan. In Mayapan, people discussed the smoking of marijuana, and some younger men described how it helped during their long hours of work as day laborers, but it was rare to hear people discuss the actual consumption of narcotics as a social problem; alcohol occupied this role, particularly in terms of its association with violence, domestic and otherwise. National debates on narcotics in Mexico focus predominantly on how the trade will add to the corruption of institutions and politics (cf. Andreas, 1999). In Mayapan, most individuals justify narcotics production with a supply-and-demand argument. As one mango producer told me, "It's the best business there is." The construction of narcotrafficking as a problem in Mexico differs from that in the United States. Here, drug consumption is used to separate the poor from the undeserving poor. The problem is seen as a problem of an underclass, of whole neighborhoods that have been consumed by drugs at both the consumption and the distribution level (cf. Bourgois, 1995).

Narcotrafficking presents a dilemma for those who have always been poor. Some residents, in particular women, and the church attempt to counteract its growth by stressing the illegality of the business and the problems it brings to the community. Nevertheless, protests tend not to isolate it as a particular moral dilemma. The social changes that it encourages, such as an increased emphasis on consumption and modernity as an individual project, are changes seen throughout Mexico. Narcotrafficking cannot be isolated as their sole cause. This cultural change is part of a larger debate over what it means to be modern and how this can take place. There are, however, other offshoots of narcotrafficking that could present more cause for concern and have the potential to produce more unified protest—the increased police presence and violence. But while narcotrafficking may engender violent clashes both among narcotraffickers and between them, the past has had its own violence, from the insurgency that Morelos crystallized to the Cristero wars. Local stories of violence in the context of land disputes, political

problems, and domestic violence are often told. The elite González family had been involved in a long-standing feud with another local family. No single explanation of its beginning existed, although land was usually cited as the cause. The last chapter of this feud had occurred a decade before I arrived during the annual celebrations of Mexican independence, when everyone gathers in the main square and men often carry their guns and fire into the air. A shoot-out between these families had taken place, and three people had been killed. This had sparked a series of revenge murders and finally forced the other family to leave town. Memories of this event were strong, and the story was retold on many occasions. Some women resisted attending public celebrations out of fear. Political violence throughout the region was also visible after the 1988 elections. One journalist reported the local problems that had arisen when the opposition party, the PRD, won 12 of the municipalities in the region and protesters had had to confront local police for access to the town halls (Mastretta, 1990). Local stories about murders abound, and Mastretta (1990) recounts similar stories in which victims haunt the town and are often seen as responsible for other outbreaks of violence.

In this context, the violence engendered by the narcotraffickers is not a new experience. This is not the arrival of a group that brings violence to an otherwise peaceful community. While many of these violent episodes may be interconnected (i.e., land, political violence, domestic violence, and violence from narcotraffickers[14]), the point here is that local residents have experienced violence for some time. The fear of being involved in narcotraffickers' disputes may leave certain areas out of bounds—for example, the river where people say the marijuaneros gather, or the cantinas and the ranchos, where they also congregate. Violence is a reality, as it has been for most residents ever since they were young, but individuals do not see their lives as subject to violent encounters on a daily basis. Most individuals' lives have already been structured in such a way as to avoid such encounters. While discussions about violence in the Tierra Caliente are prominent, the anxiety that people express is not something that has emerged from narcotrafficking alone.

Narcotraffickers has, however, promoted an increase in the presence of law-enforcement agents. Residents know that their region is under surveillance (indeed, I was assumed by some to have been sent by the Drug Enforcement Administration). The story told by one woman when we were discussing what the government does for women illustrates the importance of this presence:

> Here you go to the Town Hall and you put in a complaint [about domestic violence] and nothing. . . . A few years ago the *judiciales* [national police] came to the river because that's where a lot of the marijuaneros go after the harvests;

> they go there to drink, and other people go there to wash if they don't have water. . . . Well the judiciales . . . took out their guns and started to fire, and off they went, and in all of it two little boys got killed, brothers, and the judiciales went without anything. . . . The Town Hall did nothing, just paid for the coffins of the two children, and the mother was left with nothing. The municipal president is afraid of the judiciales, and he wasn't going to get them, and the marijuaneros threaten the municipal president. And do you think that in all that they are going to worry about something as simple as a few blows to a woman?

This story is obviously a gendered critique of narcotraffickers and government at the local and national level, but the two are seen as equally detrimental. (This woman, it should be noted, later also told me that she has a husband who looked after land for a narcotrafficker.) Narcotraffickers here only serve to reinforce the idea that the government fails to act on the behalf of the hard-working—women, day laborers, campesinos alike. When it does intervene in local matters, it now concentrates most of its efforts on controlling narcotraffickers. Indeed, government interventions are guaranteed to provoke more violence while offering little compensation for local residents as the state withdraws its support for the region and leaves it to private enterprise.

CONCLUSION

Economics alone is not sufficient to understand narcotrafficking. An analysis of local history and the cultural struggles that take place when narcotraffickers enter a region may help complicate some of the frameworks we use to conceptualize these events. Two major points emerge from this study. One is that a history of state intervention and capital investment laid the social and economic foundations for the emergence of narcotrafficking. Agroindustrial production in the region encouraged transnational connections of which the narcotraffickers could take advantage. Indeed, Dermota (2000) argues that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has played a major role in the rise of narcotrafficking cartels in Mexico, as trade routes could now be used to smuggle narcotics across the border with much more ease. Narcotraffickers follow an economic logic that has flourished in the region and is reinforced by the current neoliberal policies, which reward entrepreneurial solutions. The economic risks and the organization of the narcotrafficking industry fit into the local history of a boom-and-bust economy. This history permits the drug trade to be seen as another example of a large-scale export-based industry that generates easy money, often through corrupt schemes, and resonates with income-earning strategies that the residents have already experienced. The particularly fluid networks and the large

number of impoverished day laborers in the region ensure a labor supply. Other areas of Michoacán are known for marijuana cultivation but to my knowledge are not involved in the large-scale organization and distribution of drugs in the same way. This further suggests that the agroindustrial past has encouraged the confluence of factors that facilitates narcotrafficking.

The importance of the state in creating frontier areas conceived of as new national projects for agricultural production should not be underestimated. The Chapare region in Bolivia and the Upper Ituallaga Valley in Peru are major focal points for narcotics production (Riley, 1996), and they are also frontier regions that were part of failed state-sponsored colonization programs. From these examples it seems that narcotraffickers have profited from the state-sponsored infrastructure installed to promote development. These interventions also encourage the emergence of a heterogeneous array of social actors who will be vying for social positions and challenging older elites, and narcotraffickers can benefit from the declining power of elites and fill a vacuum. The northern regions of Mexico in which the most notorious cartels are located have several features in common with Michoacán's Tierra Caliente. They are renowned for agroindustrial production, an abundance of day laborers from all over the country, and established links across the border. Different types of local histories will generate different collaborations with narcotraffickers. The narcotraffickers in the Tierra Caliente have not had to incorporate local elites as they may have been forced to do where local elites retained social and economic power. Few studies really consider these issues. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the role that narcotrafficking has played in local political processes, but the rise of opposition parties in the Tierra Caliente may be linked to the arrival of narcotraffickers where the local elite is mostly linked to the PRI. In other areas where local elites are closely involved in narcotrafficking, alternative political scenarios may present themselves.

While the narcotraffickers may flourish under these structural conditions, to ensure their success they will have to consolidate themselves as a social group. They do not emerge in a vacuum, nor are they universally welcomed. Their economic status goes hand in hand with the pursuit of symbolic and cultural capital, and they rework existing social practices to construct their new status. Other social groups may devalue them but rarely with a moral argument against drugs. Many of the poorer workers value the investments of the narcotraffickers and the opportunity to establish new patron-client relationships, especially when they have had no previous connection to the old rich or landowning class. The older elites may idealize the past, but the younger generation remains more trapped and tends to be recruited for the dirty work. It even seems that the younger they are, the better; narcotraffickers, one

local teacher told me, are aware of the potential in recruiting minors, who will not be penalized as heavily in the United States if caught. In his words, "If I ask most of the kids here what they want to be, seven out of ten want to be narcotraffickers." From the perspective of Mayapan this is understandable: most of the dirty work and violence happen elsewhere; there have been a few murders that seem to be drug-related, but one is never sure how much may be gossip and murders are nothing new; drug consumption is not a major problem; the reality of what the work may involve in the United States is unclear; and narcotraffickers have status, money, and women. Added to this is the growing discontent with migrant life in the United States, the increasing hostility toward Mexicans and the undocumented coming over on the media, and the idea that a short stint in the United States working "honestly" will no longer necessarily allow one to fulfill the previous migrant dream of returning with enough money to build a house and get married. All this combines to encourage members of the younger generation to try their luck in a new world.

The emphasis placed by the United States and to some extent the Mexican government (e.g., see Toro, 1998) on drug enforcement may be somewhat misplaced in terms of national priorities. Massing (2000) argues that Mexico is hardly comparable to Colombia in terms of the narcotraffickers' potential to threaten the state. The drug trade is limited to specific regions. Violence is limited to these regions and tends to be exaggerated by the U.S. press. For example, in the case of the discovery of the burials on the border last year, the press began by announcing that some 100 bodies were found in mass graves, but only 9 were found after days of excavations (Massing, 2000: 24). In a recent poll most Mexicans were more worried about public safety and crime, poverty, and corruption (Massing, 2000: 28). While these issues may be linked to narcotrafficking, in many areas it is a different mix of factors that causes such insecurity. Finally, the revenues generated by narcotrafficking are far less important than may be imagined; Massing estimates that they amount to 2 percent of the country's GDP. Even if this is conservative, this is certainly a different situation from that of Colombia and the Andean countries. At the local level, however, narcotraffickers have managed to establish themselves as a group and in doing so have become part of a larger project of modernity for many residents. While such a project may cause anxiety, neither internal nor international migration offers any clearer vision of progress. As narcotraffickers become part of a new, if problematic, image of modernity, any attempt to eradicate narcotrafficking will have to work at a cultural level, for this image has now become integrated into individuals' image of themselves, their path to progress, and their idea of modernity. Furthermore, controlling narcotrafficking through law enforcement may only serve to

exacerbate local residents' discontent with government in general. In Mayapan the government has lost its role in residents' ideas of progress and modernity, and these are increasingly individualized projects. As law enforcement increases it only serves to remind local residents that they have been abandoned by central power; these measures bring more violence to an already troubled region in exchange for little compensation, and they only confirm what many residents have already suspected—that they have been excluded from any national role in development and modernity, whichever party holds power.

Many may reject the narcotraffickers and continue in their daily business. Most blame the United States and international migration: "They go there as young kids and learn how to harvest it and then they return here and go into the business." Others are aware of the implications for all migrants; time and again stories are recounted of problems with the police in the United States, and with some bitterness people say, "Por unos cuantos sufrimos todos" (Because of a few we all suffer). Many people go to the United States and work in legitimate jobs, but the links between narcotrafficking and migration need to be addressed. The study of Mayapan as a town on the edge can help to show how this business is integrated into the daily practices and worldview of a community and finds a readily available labor force whose biggest dream may just be a bit of respect.

NOTES

1. Studies about the drug trade often investigate the larger political processes, in particular with relation to the war on drugs (cf. *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 30, no. 2/3 [1988]; Riley, 1996; Walker, 1996). These analyses focus on the impacts of political initiatives on narcotics production. Studies that look at the "culture" of drug production tend to focus on the indigenous values associated with drugs, for example, coca leaves in the Andes (Morales,1989; Riley, 1996; Smith et al., 1992) or the poppy fields introduced by the Chinese in northern Mexico (Walker, 1996). Here production is explained by the fact that the drugs were previously part of local cultural practices and then became valuable commodities and that landless peasants will migrate to these regions in search of an income—as exemplified in the case of Bolivia (Painler, 1994). Such approaches do little to explain drug production in regional areas that have not displayed a "drug culture" prior to the contemporary demand.

2. Currently, an annual "certification" procedure takes place in the U.S. Congress that requires the president to certify a country as a reliable partner in the war on drugs. Decertification means that a country loses its access to U.S. nonmilitary aid, weakens its potential for receiving loans from multilateral banks, and becomes less desirable for foreign investment. This process, however, remains divorced from reality. Colombia was decertified in 1988 even though the government had jailed several Cali capos and eradicated more opium and coca plants than any other nation. It was President Ernesto Samper's acceptance of over US$6 million in donations for the presidential campaign that caused decertification. In contrast, although several members of Con-

gress argued for Mexico's decertification and the Drug Enforcement Administration had itself produced a document that was highly critical of Mexico's efforts in the drug war, Mexico was certified because binational trade and relations were too important to jeopardize (Dermota, 2000).

3. Aside from observing the narcotraffickers and their practices and listening to many discussions in which the topic came up, my research focused on gender issues and migration. Much of the information here was gathered while women were discussing their sons. After my friendships developed, some of their sons would then discuss the situation with me.

4. "The perceptions of the local actors and the *particular*, along with the conflicts and contradictions, give us a fuller understanding of the processes involved both at the local and supralocal level. . . . Looking at the facts as well as fictions, the precarious as well as the certain, the idiosyncratic as well as the shared, one goes from trying to establish foundations for knowledge to an exploration of the circumstances under which different modes of experience arise in the course of life" (Jackson, 1996: 25). This is not to discount the larger structural changes but to give equal importance to the social actors that shape these structures.

5. My use of the concepts of ideology and worldview is similar to that of Nash (1979: 8): "Ideologies are not just distortions of other people's thoughts but orientations that underlie all analysis. I prefer to use the word ideology when I refer to areas where there is greater codification of thought leading to action and the term world view when I discuss general perspectives."

6. States in Mexico are divided into *municipios*, which are administrative units (similar to a county). Each municipio has a *cabecera municipal* that houses the municipal administrative offices. Mayapan is the cabecera municipal of the municipio with which it shares its name.

7. Mexico's land reform program was consolidated after the Mexican Revolution under the leadership of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). Ejidal land was communally owned and gave peasants usufruct rights to their allocation. The expropriation of land from the landowners and the allocation to peasants was uneven. Landowners were allowed to keep cultivated land and plots under 100 hectares. Many transferred their land to other members of the family and thus managed to hold onto it. In Mayapan, the initial reform broke up the haciendas in the 1940s. Reforms continued with three successive extensions before 1965 and a new ejido in 1985.

8. *Colonias* is the term used for the new neighborhoods that have arisen with demographic growth.

9. Leonard (1994: 247-249) argues that the arrival of marijuana further accentuated class differences in the Tierra Caliente because rancheros with large landholdings could better conceal their production and had contacts with the authorities that could protect them.

10. "Class" here is not an economic category, which is particularly difficult to identify in rural areas, but a status group that occupies a certain social position within the local social structure. Class is not only determined by economic capital and a relationship to the production process but also an interrelation of cultural, symbolic, and social capital, as suggested by Bourdieu (1977) and others.

11. *Casa chica* is the term given to a household maintained by a man who has another (principal) household. In Mayapan the most notorious example was a man who had three households and rotated among them. Usually the arrangements are slightly more discreet.

12. Respect is implicit in the honor/shame framework described in Latin American gender ideology (cf. Arrom, 1985; Melhuus and Stolen, 1996; Stevens, 1979), in which men derive their honor and therefore other men's respect through women and their shame and thus become "more men" (Melhuus and Stolen, 1996: 28). While this framework is too rigid for reality (cf. Malkin, 1998; Stern, 1995: 13-18), respect is a value aspired to by all members of the community (Malkin, 1998).

13. The literature on migrant towns sees a division between towns that show increased class differences as a result of migration and also encourage economic stagnation, termed "the migrant syndrome" (Reichert, 1982), and others that display an overall reduction of class divisions (for a summary, see Durand and Massey, 1992). Whatever the case, migrants are noticeable and create a distinctive material culture within these towns. Whether migration increases class differences or not, all the research finds an increase in new houses, household appliances, televisions, and changing fashion.

14. Steve Stern's (1995) book on violence in colonial times shows that domestic violence and land disputes were frequently interrelated.

REFERENCES

Agustín, Jorge Andrés et al.
1994 *La producción agropecuaria de la región valle del Tepalcatepec, Michoacán*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Chapingo.

Andreas, Peter
1999 "U.S.-Mexico: open markets, closed borders." *Foreign Affairs* 103: 51-69.

Appadurai, Arjun
1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appendini, Kirsten
1995 *Revisiting Women Wage-Workers in Mexico's Agro-Industry: Changes in Rural Labor Markets*. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research.

Arrom, Silvia
1985 *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Astorga, Luis
1995 *Mitología del narcotraficante en México*. Mexico City: UNAM/Plaza y Valdez.

Bourdieu, Pierre
1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourgois, Philippe
1995 *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in the Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyer, Richard
1989 "Women, *la mala vida*, and the politics of marriage," pp. 252-286 in Asunción Lavrin (ed.), *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Bustamente, Jorge
1990 "Undocumented migration from Mexico to the United States: Preliminary findings from the Zapata Canyon Project," pp. 211-226 in Frank Bean et al. (eds.), *IRCA and the experience of the 1980s*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Cochet, Hubert
1991 *Alambrados en la sierra*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán.

CONAPO (Consejo Nacional de la Población)
1994 *La población de México 1950-1990*. Mexico City.

Dermota, Ken
2000 "Snow business: Drugs and the spirit of capitalism." *World Policy Journal* 16 (4): 15-24.

Durand, Jorge and Douglas Massey
1992 "Mexican migration to the United States: A critical review." *Latin American Research Review* 27 (2): 3-42.
Durán Juárez, Juan and Alain Bustin
1983 *Revolución agricola en Tierra Caliente de Michoacán*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán.
Gledhill, John
1996 "Tierra Caliente: Perspectivas antropólogicas sobres cambios económicos, sociales y políticos en un complejo espacio regional." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Nayarit, August.
1997 "El reto de la globalización: reconstrucción de identidades, formas de vida transnacionales y las ciencias sociales." Paper presented at the conference "Fronteras Fragmentadas," El Colegio de Michoacán, October.
1998 "The Mexican contribution to restructuring U.S. capitalism: NAFTA as an instrument of flexible accumulation." *Critique of Anthropology* 18: 279-296.
González y González, Luis
1982 *La querencia*. Morelia, Michoacán: Secretaría de Educación Pública.
González de la Rocha, Mercedes
1994 *The Resources of Power: Women and Survival in a Mexican City.* London: Blackwell.
Hargreaves, Clare
1992 *Snowfields: The War on Cocaine in the Andes*. London: Zed Books.
Healy, Kevin
1991 "Political ascent of Bolivian peasant coca leaf producers." *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 33: 87-122.
Jackson, Michael
1996 "Introduction: phenomenology, radical empiricism, and anthropological critique," pp. 1-50 in Michael Jackson (ed.), *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Jelin, Elizabeth
1991 *Family, Household, and Gender Relations in Latin America*. London: Kegan Paul International.
Latapí Escobar, Agustín
1993 "The connection at its source: changing socioeconomic conditions and migration patterns," pp. 82-112 in Abrahim Lowenthal et al. (eds.), *The California-Mexico Connection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Lavrin, Asunción
1989 "Introduction: the scenario, the action, and the issues," pp. 1-43 in Asunción Lavrin (ed.), *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
Leonard, Eric
1994 "Los rancheros del medio balsas entre la hacienda y el TLC," pp. 237-249 in Esteban Barragán Lopez et al. (eds.), *Rancheros y sociedades rancheras*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán.
López Castro, Gustavo (ed.)
1988 *Migración en el Occidente de México*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoácan.
Lozano Ascencio, Fernando
1994 *Bringing It Back Home*. La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego.

Malkin, Victoria
1998 "Gender and family in transmigrant circuits: transnational migration between western Mexico and the United States." Ph.D. diss., University of London.
Massey, Douglas et al.
1987 *Return to Aztlan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Massing, Michael
2000 "Mexico: The narco state?" *New York Review of Books* 47 (10): 24-30.
Mastretta, Sergio
1990 "Tierra Caliente, la cuenca cardenista." *Nexos*, no. 154 (October).
Melhuus, Marit and Kristianne Stolen
1996 "Introduction," pp. 1-27 in Marit Melhuus et al. (eds.), *Machos, Mistresses, and Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*. London: Verso.
Morales, Edmundo
1989 *Cocaine: White Gold Rush*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
Myhre, David
1998 "The Achilles' heel of the reforms: the rural finance system," pp. 44-63 in Wayne Cornelius and David Myhre (eds.), *The Transformation of Rural Mexico: Reforming the Ejido Sector*. La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego.
Nash, June
1979 *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Painler, James
1994 *Bolivia and Coca: A Study in Dependency*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
Pérez Prado, Luz Nereida
1996 "La Tierra Caliente en perspectiva: revisión de estudios y enfoques analíticos." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Nayarit, August.
Pred, Allan and Michael Watts
1992 *Reworking Modernity: Capitalism and Symbolic Discontent*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
Reichert, Joshua
1982 "A town divided: economic stratification and social relations in a Mexican migrant community." *Social Problems* 29: 411-423.
Riley, Kevin J.
1996 *Snow Job? The War Against International Cocaine Trafficking*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publications.
Smith, Michael L., et al.
1992 *Why People Grow Drugs: Narcotics and Development in the Third World*. London: Panes.
Stanford, Lois
1994a "Facing the global economy: the impact of privatization on Mexican peasant organizations." Paper presented at the invited session "NAFTA in the Making" at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Atlanta, GA, November 30–December 4.
1994b "Transitions to free trade, local impacts, and changes in Mexican agrarian policy." *Human Organization* 53 (2): 99-109.
Stern, Steve
1995 *The Secret History of Gender, Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Stevens, Evelyn
1979 "Marianismo: the other face of machismo in Latin America," pp. 89-102 in Ann Pescatello (ed.), *Women and Men in Latin America: Essays*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Súarez Salazar, Luis
1993 "Drug trafficking and social and political conflicts in Latin America." *Latin American Perspectives* 76 (1): 83-98.

Toro, Maria Celia
1998 "The political repercussions of drug trafficking in Mexico," pp. 131-145 in Elizabeth Joyce and Carlos Malamud (eds.), *Latin America and the Multinational Drug Trade*. London: Institute of Latin American Studies.

Tutino, John
1986 *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence 1750-1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Walker, William, III (ed.)
1996 *Drugs in the Western Hemisphere: An Odyssey of Cultures in Conflict*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc.