

Mexico's Two Principal Hydro-Agricultural Policies from a Gender Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers some of the changes that have occurred in the Mexican rural land tenure pattern, resulting from the recently established policies geared to the hydro-agricultural sector, and how these policies could affect women's roles as rural landowners and, consequently, as water users. The economic model adopted in Mexico as well as in other Latin American countries has as its main objective the reduction of the government's role in economic activities and the increase in participation of private enterprises, as the necessary means to reduce public investment and attain economic growth of the country.

As part of this objective, the Government of Mexico has implemented several decrees such as the National Plan for Development: 1989-1994 (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*) that was later included in the National Program for the Modernization of the Rural Area: 1990-1994 (*Programa Nacional de Modernización del Campo*), the Amendment of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution (*Artículo 27 Constitucional*), and the National Water Law (*Ley de Aguas Nacionales*). Each of these laws affects the traditional land tenure system called *ejido* or the so-called social sector, because it was this social group that had the right to inherit and work a small plot of land. Individuals and families that established themselves in these ejidos received the land under a concession. Therefore, the land could not be sold, mortgaged, or embargoed. But in January 1992, the Government of Mexico decreed that all land belonging to the ejidos would no longer be under concession but rather would belong to the individual *ejidatarios*. This legal amendment did away with all the decrees that protected this social sector and their families.

Another law that has had a great impact is the National Water Law under which the transfer of the irrigation districts to the users is a major objective. This transfer establishes a new legal system that allows users to operate, maintain, and administer the infrastructure through a user association, organized by the users in each district, to encourage involvement and district financial self-sufficiency.

This paper points out the effects of these decrees on the rural areas, especially in those areas where *ejidatarios* and small landowners work together in irrigation districts, to see how

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it is leading to important transformations in the socio-organizational behavioral patterns of the producers, and especially in the land tenure relationships in which women have been at a disadvantage from the very beginning.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico, as well as other Latin American countries, has an urgent need to reduce public spending to achieve economic growth. Consequently, the federal government has decided to reduce the state's role in all economic activities and, in its place, to stimulate the participation of private entrepreneurs. To achieve these objectives, the government has seen a need to change its economic policies for the rural areas. For example, since the beginning of the decade, there has been a clear reduction in the financing of all agricultural projects, a suspension of almost all rural loans, and the privatization or closure of several state enterprises. These strategies can be understood as an invitation to greater involvement of the private sector. However, the absence of government-financed technical assistance in the management and administration of water and soil used by peasants in the implementation of modern technological projects, as well as in support of the rural sector, is notable. Such technical assistance is essential to prevent a widening gap between agricultural productivity and the needs of national and international markets.

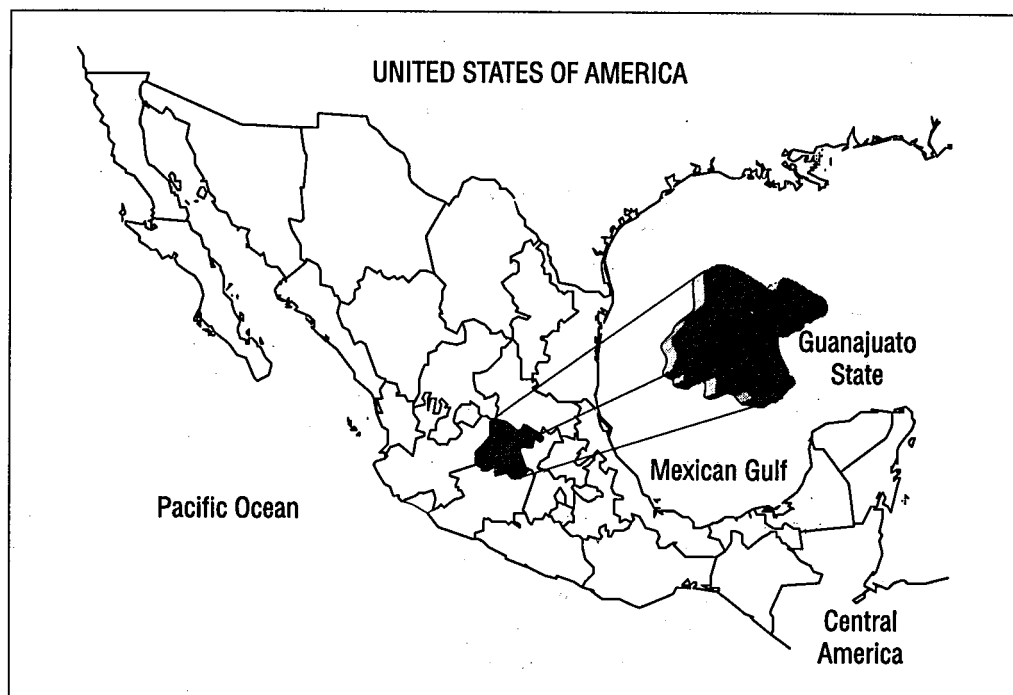
These changes were reinforced through several decrees and constitutional amendments such as the National Program for the Modernization of the Rural Area: 1990-1994 (*Programa Nacional de Modernización del Campo*); the National Plan for Development: 1989-1994 (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*); the Amendment of Article 27 of the National Constitution (*Artículo 27 Constitucional*), the National Water Law (*Ley de Aguas Nacionales*), and others.

This paper starts by describing the amendment to Article 27 of the Constitution or the land tenure inheritance pattern, then proceeds to briefly analyze the National Water Law, to see how and which of these laws has a greater impact on the rural sector, and especially on the right of women to inherit land with access to irrigation water.

THE LAJA RIVER BASIN

The Laja River Basin begins in the northeastern part of the State of Guanajuato and runs through the southeastern part, covering a small part of the State of Queretaro; its waters join the Lerma River in the southern part of the State of Guanajuato (see figures 1 and 2). The population that lives in this river basin is settled in places that fluctuate between 2,430 and 3,650 meters above sea level. Its atmospheric conditions are predominantly dry, with an annual precipitation of 450-600 millimeters and a temperature that fluctuates between 12 °C and 24 °C.

Figure 1. Guanajuato State.



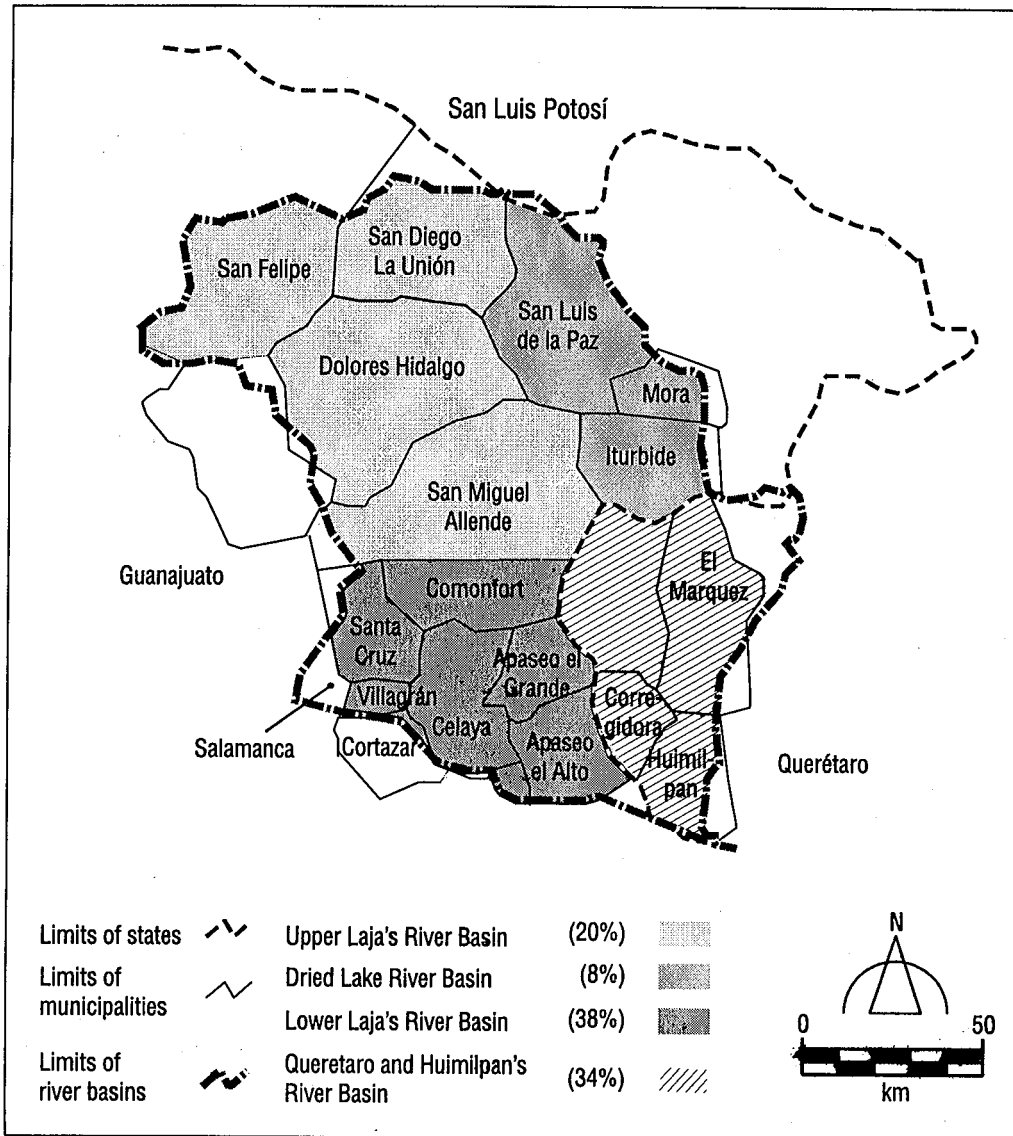
The Laja River Basin has a total area of 25 km² and provides water to 18 municipalities: 14 in the State of Guanajuato and 4 more in the State of Queretaro (see figure 2). Because of the great social diversity among the water users of this river basin, the Laja River Basin was divided into four main areas called: the Upper Laja River Basin, the Dried Lake River Basin, the Lower Laja River Basin, and the Huimilpan and Queretaro River Basin. This division took into consideration aspects such as the river's watercourse as well as population density and socioeconomic factors.

In this paper, I use examples of what is happening to the rural sector in the Lower Laja River Basin or the municipalities of Celaya, Apaseo El Alto, Comonfort, Apaseo El Grande, and Juventino Rosas de Santa Cruz (see figure 3). The reason for selecting the Lower Laja River Basin is because it best represents the entire river basin. It has the highest population density and the greatest concentration of economic activities, as well as different types of water users: from urban users to industrial sectors as well as the agriculture sector with its small irrigation units and Irrigation District 085.

Within the municipality of Celaya, I focus on Irrigation District 085, La Begoña, which is located in the mid-eastern part of the state of Guanajuato (see figure 4) and covers an area of 12,390 hectares that are irrigated with an allotment of 124 million cubic meters from surface streams and 60 million cubic meters from underground streams.¹⁶

¹⁶Data from the National Water Commission for State Headquarters (Gerencia Estatal) of the State of Guanajuato. Results of the agricultural cycle 1992–1993, Irrigation District No. 085 "La Begoza, Guanajuato," February, 1994.

Figure 2. Municipalities within the Laja's River Basin.



Irrigation District 085 began operations in 1969. Its main sources of water are the Ignacio Allende Dam with a storage capacity of 251 million cubic meters for the Celaya Valley, and the Isidro Orozco Portugal (Neutla) Dam with a storage capacity of 5 million cubic meters conveyed for the users of Irrigation Module 1. The District receives the overflow from the Laja River, an annual average of 182.6 million cubic meters, and 38 million cubic meters from 132 wells (21 wells operated by government agencies and 111 wells owned by the private sector). Furthermore, it has two diversion dams (Soria and Guadalupe), 164 kilometers of main and secondary canals, 155 kilometers of drains, and 1,262 structures.

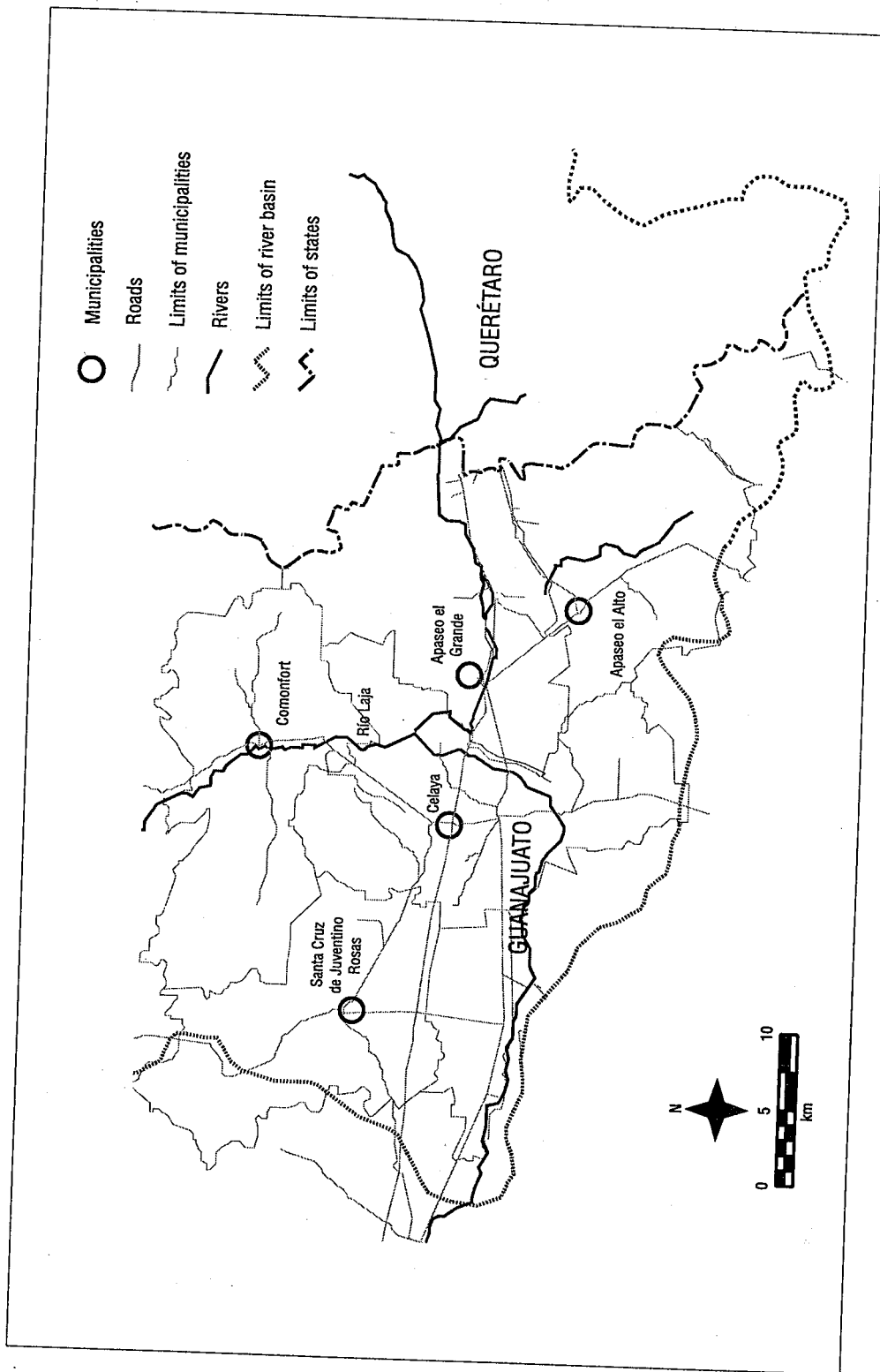
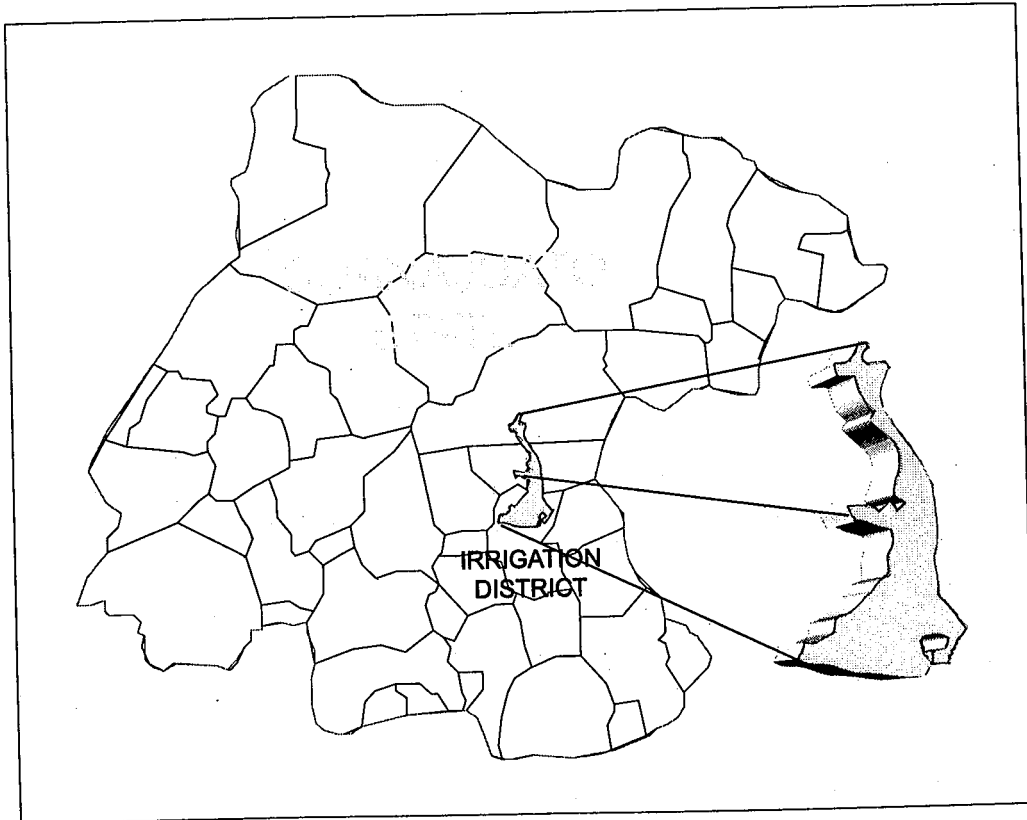


Figure 3. Lower Laja River Basin.

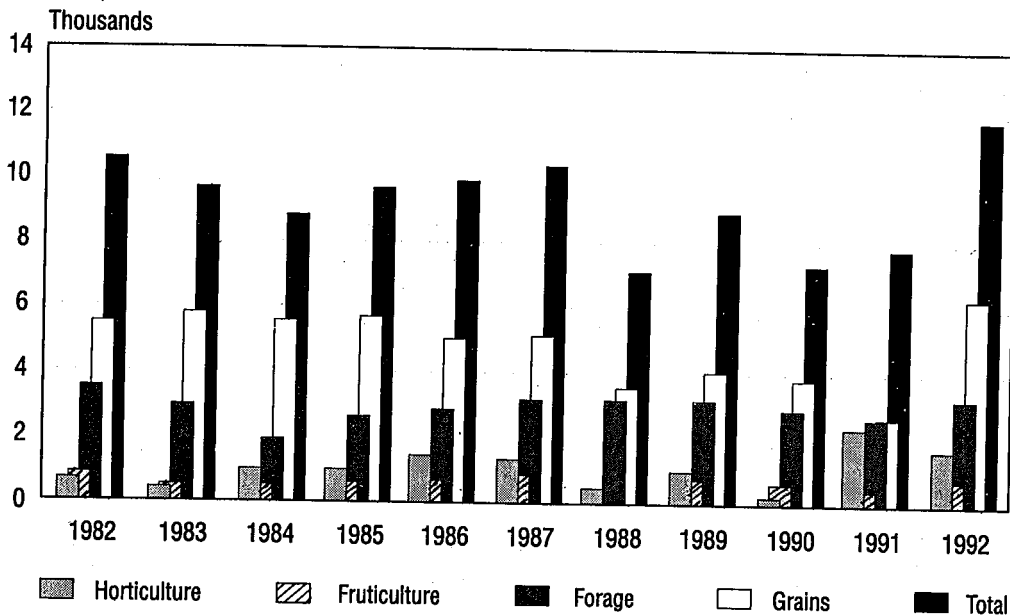
Within the transfer program for the district, four irrigation modules were created: Neutla, Comonfort (with water pumped from Laja River), Left River Bank, and Right River Bank (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Irrigation District in Guanajuato State.



One peculiarity of this irrigation district is that the social stratification of the users is mainly determined by access to water sources. Another is the overexploitation of the underground water. In other words, the potential of farmland within the district is determined by the use and management of the surface water and the extraction of the underground water. As a result, users farm an average of 4 hectares, irrigated with surface water. Any amount of land above or below this average places them in a higher or lower status. Another characteristic of this district is that most of the farm surface is used for horticulture and perennial farming (see figure 5). These products require great volumes of water in a state where the scarcity of this vital fluid is a critical factor.

Figure 5. Irrigation District 085, LA Begoña, cropped area (ha).



Source: Irrigation District Headquarters, CNA. Agricultural Statistics System (Sistema de Estadística Agrícola, SEA).

THE AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLE 27

After several coup de etats and peasant uprisings under the slogan: "the land belongs to those who work it," on January 6, 1915, Mexico was the first Latin American country to institute agrarian reform, through the creation of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. In this article, the State declared itself the owner of the land, while the ejidos and comunidades or indigenous communities had the right to use the land in usufruct.

This kind of land tenure pattern, called ejido, and the formation of indigenous communities, were seen as the legal entities that had to integrate the productive, social, and cultural dimensions, and provide for the economic growth of the peasant families. Therefore, from 1915 to 1983, there were 25,589 ejidos and 1,486 indigenous communities throughout the country, with 2.8 million heads of households that benefited from 103 million hectares (Arizpe and Botey 1986:135).

In the Lower Laja River Basin, the total population is 594,400 of which 48 percent are men and 52 percent women, and an ejido population of 89,359, of which 49 percent are men and 51 percent women (see table 1). The large number of ejidatario women is because most of these ejidos observe an inheritance pattern for the productive land in which traditionally, the first heir was the wife, then the oldest son, and only if there were no males in the family, could the oldest daughter be the heiress of the land.

Table 1. Population by municipalities.

Municipalities	Population			Ejido's Population		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Woman
Apaseo el alto	54,190	26,456	27,734	14,017	6,874	7,143
Apaseo el grande	62,225	30,270	31,955	22,025	10,800	11,225
Celaya	354,085	171,265	182,820	25,688	12,703	12,985
Comonfort	61,995	29,756	32,239	15,999	7,877	8,622
Santa Cruz de Juventino Rosas	61,905	30,423	31,482	11,130	5,489	5,641

Source: Instituto Nacional de estadística, geografía e Informática. Anuario estadístico del estado de Guanajuato 1996 and from INEGI. Datos por ejido y comunidad agraria VII censo agropecuario, 1991.

When women inherited the land, usually as widows, they had to decide when and what was going to be sown, to determine who was going to work the land—having the possibility to choose among any of their family members or to give it to somebody else—as well as who should inherit their land. When a daughter inherited the land, there was a similar phenomenon, because all young men saw the heiress as the most eligible fiancée, because it gave them a chance to improve their position within the ejido, either as ejidatarios or as peasants without land. In either case, the husband took care of the plot and decided when and what was going to be planted, but the women retained the right to decide who was going to inherit their land.

This land tenure inheritance pattern gave women a way of becoming empowered within their families and among the ejido members, because it gave them a chance to participate with men in the community at the general meetings, where decisions were made about the administration of the ejido. At the same time, they bore the responsibility of deciding all the administrative aspects concerning their plot of land. This turned out to be a kind of guarantee for the women, since all the possible inheritors took care of them, even if it was with the only purpose of obtaining the first place in their will.

On November 14, 1991, the then President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in a speech to the Permanent Agrarian Congress, mentioned ten reasons for introducing an Amendment to Article 27 of the Constitution. The core of his speech was geared to show that with these changes the rural sector would have greater justice and liberty. For example, he said that the ejidos as well as the indigenous communities would have more protection with this amendment, because the village area—where the people live—could not be sold.

To support this, he argued that if this area could be sold, the community's identity as well as its traditions would be jeopardized. He went on to say, "for these reasons we will give our support with health and educational services, with loans for productive projects, with financial resources to all equitable associations, with answers for peasant women" (*La Jornada*, November 15, 1991). At the same time, President Salinas said that the plot used for agricultural production could be sold if two thirds of the qualified people from the ejido or community approved the sale of his or her plot of land. To support this argument, he said, "the purpose of amending this Article is to give the ejidatarios the freedom of choice to decide over his or her plot of land" (*La Jornada*, November 15, 1991).

This example shows us, once more, that the private or domestic issues are still considered to be women's sphere of action. This is why Salinas' speech ends with the phrase that says his government will give *answers* to peasant women without specifying what their needs are. Furthermore, he takes for granted that women are responsible for the identity of communities as well as their traditions, and, therefore, he took for granted that by protecting the piece of land where the village is settled, his government would be responding to women's needs.

On the other hand, the fact that the agricultural plot of land—which is the profitable area—can be sold, gives us an idea of how the land tenure inheritance pattern, previously described, could leave women completely unprotected, since the legal and mercantile sphere of action is entirely unknown to them, even to their spouses, who for the first time have the possibility of selling their land. To this we must add that since 1994, Mexico has been going through one of the worst depressions in its history.

On January 6, 1992, exactly 77 years after the implementation of agrarian reform, President Salinas finally obtained Congressional approval of the Amendment to Article 27 of the Constitution, in which Paragraph VII specifies:

Considering the need to strengthen the community life pattern of the ejidos and indigenous communities, the law will protect the land where there are human settlements, and will regulate all productive land, the forests and the water for common usage. It will also provide the necessary actions to encourage and improve the living conditions of its people.

With respect to the desire of the ejidatarios and indigenous groups to adopt the conditions that are more appropriate to the use of their productive resources, the law will regulate and enforce their rights over the plot of land (Diario Oficial, 6 de enero de 1992).

When this amendment was made public, most of the young male ejidatarios and peasants considered the possibility of selling their plot, while the older people—men and women—were against it, because as an ejidatario said, "our ancestors had to fight for many years to obtain this plot, how could I sell it and leave my family without the only dowry I can give them?"³

With respect to the decision to sell or rent the land, Miguel Murmis states that the agriculture sector in Latin America is going through the process of accumulating more capital, and he goes on to explain the different strategies implemented to achieve this objective. Among these strategies, Murmis analyzes a variety of hiring procedures, from family labor to paid work, in several countries. He also mentions the buying and renting of land. In discussing the sale of land, he only gives an example of wealthy farmers who are stimulated by the increasing demand for their products to extend their properties and therefore are willing to buy the land of their poor neighbors. With respect to the phenomenon of land rentals, he recalls the case of an ejido in the State of Michoacan where ejidatarios had rented up to 10 or 20 additional plots of land (Murmis 1986:51).

³Interview of an ejidatario in the State of Guanajuato, November 20, 1994.

All of the above, coupled with the severe economic crisis as well as the unequal competition in the production and marketing of the agricultural goods, seem to have discouraged many people from buying land, and instead, they prefer to rent land that has water for irrigation. As we can see in table 2, out of 11,276 irrigated hectares given to the Right Bank Module in 1992, only 4,895 hectares were cropped and from this amount, 1,152 hectares (24 percent) were rented.

Table 2. Total and rented surface Irrigation District 085.

Section	Total	Total irrigated	Cropped area		Rented area	
	hectares	hectares	hectares	%	hectares	%
1	1,178	1,176	554	47	168	30
2	804	804	404	50	226	56
3	1,730	1,730	380	22	138	36
4	1,704	1,704	495	29	78	16
5	892	892	511	57	3	1
6	889	889	373	42	114	31
7	1,183	1,183	435	37	25	6
8	2,952	2,898	1,743	60	400	23
Total	11,332	11,276	4,895	43	1,152	24

Source: Data from users' association of Irrigation District 085.

Although it seems to be true that only a few ejidatarios have sold their land, our main concern is related to the possibility of selling the land and leaving the women unprotected. However, this is not the only issue, because there are other parts to this Amendment, such as Paragraphs IV, VI, VII, and others, that allow the creation of Mercantile Societies between ejidatarios and private entrepreneurs or government enterprises, that warrant close scrutiny since they can seriously jeopardize women's land tenure.

These Mercantile Societies are slightly different from other kinds of business associations, due to a clause that establishes a legal requirement for their constitution. This clause specifies that anybody who does not belong to the ejido cannot own a plot of land. Furthermore, the participants who are not ejidatarios can invest capital and offer technology, while the ejidatarios have to participate with their land and labor (Dávila-Poblete 1996:178-181). This kind of association may seem fair at first glance, if as partners they could deal under equal circumstances. But that is not the case. Ejidatarios and small landowners are at an educational disadvantage in dealing with professionals involved in business who are knowledgeable about the law. In addition, the recently introduced amendment states that the ejidatarios' and the small landholders' land can be mortgaged or taken over by their creditors.

The first experience of this kind was in a vast area that shared a common watershed in the States of Sinaloa and Sonora. At the beginning, many people wanted to participate in these associations, but as soon as they learned that in the constitutional decree of these societies, there was a clause that said that their land was their contribution and guarantee within the association, they realized that they could lose their land. At that point, many people decided to look for other alternatives.

All these considerations have led many ejidatarios to pursue different kinds of strategies. The most prevalent one is to rent out the land. The second most common is to participate in associations with private entrepreneurs, and the last is to obtain a loan by mortgaging their land (Hoffman 1996:53-62).

The need to follow one of these strategies is common to almost all the ejidatarios—men and women. Therefore, we can see how the option of renting the land and settling for a salary is the least detrimental for them and for their heirs. The other options are a way of losing their land, because on the one hand, they are completely dependent on their partners, and on the other, their possibilities of paying off their loans are minimal. This scenario allows us to understand the migration that is part of a process of expelling the labor force from the rural area to the cities or to other countries, including Mexico's neighbor to the north, the United States of America.

NATIONAL WATER LAW

In 1926, Mexico promulgated the first Law for Irrigation which was in effect until 1972, when the government replaced it with what was called the Federal Water Law. Twenty years later, on December 1, 1992, the National Water Law was officially declared to supersede it. The new law had two goals. The first was to provide for "administrative modernization, planning and programming," and the second, to reinforce a more "efficient and rational use of the natural resources" (CNA, *Ley de Aguas Nacionales* 1994:8)⁴.

The National Water Law has ten titles or sections. Here I consider title six which deals with the transfer of the irrigation districts, and title four, which is concerned with the creation of a water market. Before the transfer of the irrigation districts, the agriculture sector was suffering a significant deterioration in productivity. Some of the main socioeconomic problems included: farm productivity stagnation, shrinkage of harvested areas, constant price decreases of several agricultural products, and reduction of available water for the irrigated areas resulting from poor maintenance of the hydraulic infrastructure. Some causes of these problems were the income reduction in the agriculture sector resulting from constantly falling profits (lower prices for the products and higher prices for inputs), little or no access to credit and technological renewal, distancing of farm production from national and international market requirements, inefficient management of water and soil resources and, last but not least, lack of user involvement in operational costs, as well as in the maintenance and administration of the irrigation districts (FAO 1994 a-f; Marsh and Rusten 1996; INEGI 1990a, b, 1991, 1995, 1997).

Under these circumstances, the government assigned the National Water Commission (Comision Nacional del Agua-CNA) the task of creating a program to stimulate farm production, giving special consideration to the need to decentralize the irrigation districts, to rehabilitate the infrastructure, and increase water user participation in administrative procedures as well as in the water use efficiency programs.

⁴Introduction to the National Water Law given by its Director, Fernando Gonzalez Villareal.

With this fundamental responsibility, the new legal system was established on December 1, 1992. A decree allows users to operate, maintain, and administer the infrastructure through a user association, organized in each irrigation district. Initially, the transfer was viewed with skepticism because the water users knew that once the government transferred the irrigation districts, the repairs of the deteriorated infrastructure would be their responsibility. The users felt that their first task was to stimulate users' involvement and to ensure the district's financial self-sufficiency.

To better understand the transfer process and its relationship with the National Water Law, I mention here a few examples of what happened in Irrigation District 085, La Begoña, in the municipality of Celaya, Guanajuato. The Begoña Irrigation District's Users Association, in conjunction with other associations, decided that to achieve its goals, it had to begin by updating its list of the irrigation water users. In the process, they asked themselves who had the right to be on the lists and who was going to pay the quota: the people who owned the property rights or those who worked the land? These questions were raised because in the case of the women and the elderly, these were not necessarily the same individual. As discussed earlier, women and the elderly had the right to decide what they were going to plant and to whom they were going to give their land, but for reasons of age and gender, they did not work directly on their plots.

Furthermore, with the Amendment to Article 27, these questions had greater significance, because now the *ejidatarios* and the small landholders could rent or sell their land, the new renter or owner would decide what to plant, and she or he (instead of the legal owners) had to pay the irrigation water quota assigned. The second task that the user association had to perform was the distribution of water according to the type of product permitted for the plot of land. This task was made more difficult because Irrigation District 085, La Begoña, had to implement a series of restrictions in response to an ongoing water shortage. Each plot was assigned a volume of water based on the type of crop the owner was going to cultivate. In addition, it was only in long-standing plots of alfalfa and others with a higher water demand that cultivating these crops was permitted. Alfalfa needs to be irrigated at least seven times a year, while corn is irrigated only twice.

Because the Irrigation District 085, La Begoña has water restrictions, the owners and renters have to abide by the new water permits given to the plot of land, which brings a new dimension to the question of land. Now, in places where there is water scarcity, the rental price has to be coupled, not only with the access to the resource, but also with the type of permit assigned to it.

All of this is complicated because today anybody working a plot of land in an irrigation district no longer has to prove ownership. The only requirement is to register his or her name with the user association and to specify the periods in which he or she will be using the water. The implications of this can be seen by examining the overall demographic figures of the *ejido* population in Mexico as well as in our area of study (the Lower Lajas River Basin). While women represent more than half of the population in this irrigation district—as well as in others—only 708 (22 percent of) users are women, out of a total of 3,171 users (see table 3). This can be understood as a way of pushing *ejidatario* women out of the irrigation districts from the very beginning when they have to register in the user association, and it can also be seen as part of an overall process in which the small and poor *ejidatarios* or peasants

Table 3. User classification and irrigated areas in irrigation district 085 "La Begoña."

Module No. and Names	Users		Surface Total	Users		Surface Total	Users		Surface Total	
	Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women		
No. 1 Neutla	203	38	241	8	1	9	211	39	250	877.05
No. 2 Comonfort	106	17	123	296	107	403	402	124	526	1,172.24
No. 3 Left River Bank	372	113	485	36	12	48	408	125	533	2,052.97
No. 4 Right River Bank	1,349	385	1,734	93	35	128	1,442	420	1,862	8,287.24
Total	2,030	553	2,583	433	155	588	2,463	708	3,171	1,2389.5

Source: Form C-1. State headquarters (Gerencia Estatal), Irrigation District 085, Feb. 1994.

have to abandon their land to sell the water that is paired to that given plot of land, and work as field workers in the same ejido or somewhere else.

This leads us to the last issue we wish to underscore: title four of the National Water Law, concerning the creation of a water market. While this title has not yet come into effect, it has the support of some wealthy landowners and some governmental officials. The core of this policy is to introduce water as an exchange commodity, subject to market supply and demand,⁵ in which the owner of a plot of land could sell his or her water supply.

With respect to the water market, Dourojeanni states that "societies around the world necessarily (explicitly, implicitly, or by default) establish institutional arrangements that govern water use. Some systems utilize markets with various degrees of imperfection and efficiency." Furthermore, he mentions the far-reaching doctrine of "absence of damage;" according to him, "this principle dictates that the appropriation of a new water right cannot in any way damage existing rights ... existing water users can be secure in the knowledge that subsequent right holders cannot adversely affect the quality or quantity of stream flow available to them" (Dourojeanni 1994:24).

Chile is one of the first Latin American countries to establish water markets with the following broad characteristics: government authorities assign permanent water rights to the users; the amount of water given is not a fixed amount but is rather determined by its availability; these rights are subject to commercialization; and the trading transactions are the responsibility of the water user associations (Roemer 1997:254).

The Mexican case is similar to the Chilean, because their administrative structures are very similar and laws in both countries stipulate

the water rights acquired by the concessions or the assignments given for the exploitation, usage and utilization of the national superficial waters within the same river basin or the water used from the same groundwater, can be transferred when this can be recognized and registered in the Public Register for Water Rights (Reglamento de la Ley de Aguas Nacionales 1994: Chapter V, Art. 62).

According to Dourojeanni, the implementation of the water market in Chile has created several problems such as social conflicts within the associations, as well as with other users who live in the upper and lower part of the river basin. Other problems arise when some water users who have a given amount of water agree among themselves to store the greater amount of water and release it when it is really scarce. These experiences underscore the possibility of creating a system of secure water rights. (Course given by Axel Dourojeanni in Lima, Peru, July 1996).

If such water markets were to operate in Mexico, above all in places with restricted water supplies, we would face one of the most serious economic gaps that can occur between the wealthy and the poor. In other words, even though it seems logical to believe that this is a way in which the ejidatarios or small landholders can obtain a certain amount of extra income, the Chilean experience and the lack of a secure water rights system have shown that a natural resource cannot become a commodity, because in places where there is scarcity or in

⁵Chile had created a water market. In 1996, the majority of the Chilean Congress representatives requested that this law should be studied and, if necessary modified or replaced.

the dry seasons, it will be regulated by the law of supply and demand. In this scenario, the wealthy sectors will be able to buy the resource at higher rates than all the other agricultural producers combined (Roemer 1997; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 1996).

I believe that with the implementation of this kind of water market, many—if not all—small landholders and ejidatarios will be left out of the market, because they cannot buy water at high prices. At the same time, the agricultural producers who buy expensive water will pass on these costs by increasing the price of their products. All these factors will increase the cost of living for the Mexican population. Once again, women and the lower income groups will be the hardest hit.

HYPOTHETICAL CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper, we have seen that the implementation of these new policies imply important transformations in the legal, productive, and economic sectors. At the same time, they represent a serious disruption of traditional and organizational patterns of the producers' families as well as in the lives of the ejidatario women.

These changes are reflected in the diversity of organizational strategies developed by the producers and their families, all of whom live around and within the irrigation districts. Another significant change is the transformation of the usual traditional inheritance pattern at the local, regional, and national levels, which does not bode well for women and small producers.

Yet, all the efforts and strategies implemented by the ejidatarios and small landowners can become meaningless and ineffective under the current economic model implemented in Mexico as well as other Latin American countries. This model is geared to eliminating the State's participation and, at the same time, increasing the private entrepreneurs' involvement in economic activities. The negative aspects of these goals are magnified by the recent world globalization process, in which the lower income social sectors cannot compete with large-scale entrepreneurs. At the same time, small-scale producers face the possibility of a water market that would force them to sell their water and land and become salaried employees on their own land. And as has been true so often in the past, women would once again be left with no possibility of owning land with access to irrigation water.

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