

**UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG**

**Master Thesis in Global Studies**

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**THE NEOLIBERAL REFORMS AND THE CRISIS ON  
THE MEXICAN COUNTRYSIDE  
- An analysis from Food Sovereignty and dependency**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For more than twenty years Mexican governments have implemented neoliberal reforms which totally have changed the conditions for the people living on the Mexican countryside. This investigation provides an analysis of the consequences of the neoliberal reforms from the aspects of Food Sovereignty and dependency. With using these notions the connection between international capital flows and the effects on a local level is highlighted. The increase of deepened dependency due to the expansion of capital and individualism into areas before having a collective foundation in this investigation is illustrated as a further direct consequence of the neoliberal reforms. The investigation is made on both a macro and a local level; analyzed with the concept from the theoretical framework. In amplifying the perspective of the local level interviews have been made to understand the people's perception of the neoliberal reforms.

This thesis illustrates the political restructuring in Mexico which has been carried through with the justification that the economic growth generated will benefit all parts of the society. The actual consequences have been devastating on the local level due to the destruction of Food Sovereignty and the amplified dependency. The access to adequate food and reproductive resources has been obstructed. The amplified exterior dependency and increased international economical asymmetries for the Mexican people generated by trade liberalization, privatization and promotion of foreign direct investments are here clearly demonstrated.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today the neoliberal theory still is validated as feasible and promoted of, for example, international institutions such as the World Bank, and that is why it is eminent to thoroughly study the consequences from distinct aspects. This particularly in the case of Mexico since the theory has been utilized as the foundation of implemented policies for more than 20 years. The implementation of the neoliberal reforms had its culmination in Mexico with fundamental changes in the Constitution; the modification of article 27 in 1992 which, amongst other aspects, changed the conditions for property of land, followed by the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; Mexico, Canada and United States). NAFTA has fundamental implications since United States is Mexico's most significant trading partner (about 85 % of the Mexican exterior trade is with United States) and the agreement has left the Mexican campesinos<sup>1</sup> designated to compete with transnational corporations and subsidized farmers. The justification of NAFTA was, amongst other things, the access to United States' market and creation of jobs.

Because of the structural transformations the conditions for Mexican campesinos have changed since they during centuries have lived of the land and totally depend on the products they cultivate. It is possible to maintain that since the neoliberal reforms are such significant and fundamental changes in the political system they are a major contributing factor to the drastic changes in the conditions for the campesinos. Now the neoliberal reforms have eliminated the state's protection from the international market.

Asking people on the Mexican countryside about how they perceive the political changes will amplify the image of the consequences from the neoliberal reforms since aspects are maintained that can not be reached by investigating only on a macro-economical level. In this way the local level perspective of the research is indispensable. The theoretical framework used to analyze the results will be founded in Food Sovereignty and dependency, completed with theory about commoditization, to further illustrate the local consequences of the capital

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<sup>1</sup> Campesino is utilized in this thesis with the definition: a person who lives in the countryside, in accordance with Norstedts' Spanish dictionary, edition for students (2002), without any negative implications. The English direct translation, peasant, is a class connected concept used in a disparaging way, informally related to "an uncouth or uncultured person" (see for example [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)) which is not suited for my investigation.

expansion due to the reforms. The interconnection between the restructuring neoliberal reforms and the local consequences on the Mexican countryside will in this way be illustrated.

“Food Sovereignty is the right of people to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries- based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of people to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.” (Jonsen and Windfuhr, 2005: 11)

Amongst social movements all over the world the notion Food Sovereignty has become a sustainable alternative to the neoliberal paradigm which currently exists as the solution for crisis since the 1980's. Nevertheless, it can also be utilized as an indicator of how people's life's at local level is affected by the consequences of the neoliberal reforms implemented in many countries. This because it has a perspective which departure from the people and illustrates aspects that a classic economic departure point never could highlight. The existence of food in the stores do not show if the people have access to it since money are needed to buy. The actual access must be investigated from the people's perspective which the notion Food Sovereignty contributes to. By adding the concept dependency in analyzing the consequences of the neoliberal reforms further aspects from a local perspective are highlighted since this can illustrate how the peoples' room to maneuver has been affected. With increased dependency the power over deciding and controlling ones life could be seen as reduced or eliminated.

### **1.1 Objective and research questions**

The objective with this thesis is to illustrate how structural changes, such as neoliberal reforms, are affecting the people on the countryside and the Mexican agriculture. In obtaining this the notions Food Sovereignty and dependency is the departure point when investigating the consequences on a macro level, then connecting these to the local level and finally analyzing the campesinos' perceptions from these notions. This will give the thesis an amplified but also concentrated image of how the policy changes and international capital flows are affecting on a local level. Certain aspects of the consequences will be brought up, thoroughly explained and analyzed.

The theoretical framework is constructed by concepts from Food Sovereignty, commoditization and dependency theory, used to analyze and illustrate the local effects of the neoliberal reforms. Using these theories new aspects of the consequences will be brought into light which are disregarded with a neoliberal theory foundation. In general the objective is:

**Analyze the consequences of the neoliberal reforms on the Mexican countryside both at the macro and micro level using dependency theory and Food Sovereignty.**

Guiding questions used during the investigation as particular objectives:

- *How have the neoliberal reforms affected production and consumption from a dependency and Food Sovereignty perspective?*
- *How has the neoliberal reforms affected land tenancy?*
- *Are neoliberal reforms and their effects reflected at a local level?*

## **1.2 Method and methodology**

The investigation is based on a qualitative research; the result from interviews with Mexican campesino is the fundamental empirical source but also quantitative sources are used. Macro-economical analysis of the consequences from the neoliberal reforms in Mexico served as a first step directing the investigation towards where the effects clearly are shown. Further macro analysis and other second hand sources are used as empirical departure point when analyzing the consequences on a macro level in the countryside departing from Food Sovereignty and dependency. The interviews with campesinos were made to understand and create empirical material utilized when analyzing the campesinos' perceptions of the consequences.

This process will have the notion Food Sovereignty and dependency as a foundation concentrating the research in a viable direction. The choice of qualitative method is based on that the objective is to create new knowledge about the consequences rather than test a theory. Even though, some quantitative aspects such as statistics and macro economical analyses are used when needed to confirm aspects or statements of the interviews. These kinds of sources are also utilized in analyzing macro level consequences that can be connected to Food Sovereignty and dependency. Utilizing qualitative method is the first deliberated step away from the "natural science way" of seeing the world as patterns and general theories that are to

be invented or discovered since it values the individuals' interpretations instead of just sources based on statistics. This method could be seen as including the necessity of individual perceptions to create a multidimensional picture (Bryman 2004).

Nevertheless the epistemological and ontological aspects are controlling the outcome and that is why it is important to highlight and explain them. Without this contextualization it could imply that the researcher implicitly maintains that she "assumes" certain aspects and concepts as true or natural. But as Maiguasha (2006: 126) puts it; no definite objective truth will be created but rather that "*each vantage point provides different horizons within which we construct our interpretations*".

An interpretive epistemological position consciously is taken since I have chosen to complete macro analyzes level with the campesinos' perception, their interpretation of the social world. The critic towards the positivistic position is that it does not include the social action as a part in the construction of knowledge. Considering something "objective" might be an error since then the person's perspective is excluded which always affects the definition of knowledge. By taking an interpretive epistemological stand it is admitted that the knowledge is subjective and depending on the departure point (Bryman 2004). Here the campesinos' perceptions are treated as information without maintaining this as an objective, absolute truth or possible to generalize as foundation for creating universal laws. It is rather maintained as an indication of how Mexican campesinos are affected by the consequences of the neoliberal reforms from their perspective.

The ontological aspect should also be maintained since it further shows, in this case, the negation of an existing "truth" disconnected from the context since here the perspective of constructivism has been selected. This means that the phenomena is constantly produced and re-produced in the social context; the categories and objects are socially constructed. Investigations are, in this point of view, always carried through in a version of reality since the practice is acknowledged not existing without the surrounding which here is seen as a part in defining the subject. The opposite position, objectivism, maintains that it is possible and always feasible to study the phenomena as being absolute and "true" in their definition (Bryman, 2004).

During my internship in Mexico City with Red Mexicana de Acción al Frente del Libre Comercio<sup>2</sup> (RMALC) the initial phase of the investigation was carried through. This implied reading about the consequences of the neoliberal reforms and using these analysis to find people which could have perceptions of the consequences. Three interviews with leaders from campesino organizations were made in Mexico City but the perspective of the campesinos themselves was lacking. The interviews only contributed with aspects that were already written in reports of the consequences.

These conditions and the notion of Food Sovereignty directed the investigation towards the countryside in Mexico. The decision was made that the investigation should also take in consideration the campesinos' point of view and contact was taken with different civil society organizations in Oaxaca and Chiapas (south-east of Mexico) who were in touch with RMALC. Because of limited amount of time (three weeks) the organizations visited were narrowed down to four; Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos (CACTUS, Oaxaca), Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo (UCIZONI, Oaxaca), Centro de Investigaciones Economicas y Politicas de Acción Comunitaria (CIEPAC, Chiapas) and Comité de Derechos Humanos Fray Pedro (Chiapas). The organizations contributed to establish contact with the people who were interviewed; not as representatives of the organizations but more as representing themselves and their communities. In this way the investigation got at least a few different perspectives which of course would be feasible to enlarge if more time was available.

In total 15 interviews were carried through, unfortunately only three of them were with women. This is problematic since men tend to have different perceptions than the women. In the Mexican society such as elsewhere men and woman have diverse gendered roles and because of this different points of views and experiences. I kept this in mind while conducting the interviews trying to develop the questions to include the woman's perceptions. This become more complicated in a country where men are accustomed to speak and give their point of view instead of the woman's. My appearance as white European foreigner added to the obstacles in the interview situation given the suspiciousness (highly understandable)

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<sup>2</sup>A network of civil society organizations which work to strengthening the civil society in trade agreement negotiations with, amongst other things, analyzing the consequences of neoliberal reforms such as free trade agreements and megaprojects ([www.rmalc.org.mx](http://www.rmalc.org.mx)).

towards foreigners asking questions. Nevertheless, it is possible that as a women introduced by people from the organization they are affiliated to or familiar with made their suspicions decrease.

The questions were structured from how the campesinos and their communities have noticed the implementation of the neoliberal reforms. The semi-structured interviews gave the informant an active part and ability to choose the direction guided by the questions. The interviews' objective was to find out the campesinos' *perceptions* of the aspects that have changed in their lives; how it was before the reforms, what changed during the implementation and how it is now. In this way trying to understand how the consequences have affected their living situation; how changes of conditions for international trade affect the people on local level.

These fundamental assumptions, consequences on a macro level and the results of the interviews, backed up with quantitative figures are the empirical base for the analysis. The notion of Food Sovereignty and dependency gives the investigation a local based perspective of the consequences from the national policy changes and "global" capital flows. The connections between how the global is seen and affected the local will be clearly emphasized. The results are analyzed and discussed with the concepts, from the theoretical framework. This is to highlight and illustrate further aspects that are not taken into account in liberal theory.

### **1.3 Existing literature about the consequences of neoliberal reforms**

There is a lot written about the negative effects and the consequences from macro economical and empirical perspective of the neoliberal reforms (for example Arroyo Pickard et al 2001, Andersson et al 2003, Audley et al 2004, Wise 2003). These are all highlighting issues such as fewer jobs in the agricultural sector, out-competition of small and medium scale producers in farming, high environmental costs, and higher increases in prices of food than in salaries, more power to the transnational companies; less to the people and consumers, continued high rates of migrating people. These investigators are maintaining that these aspects are direct effects of the implementation of NAFTA or other neoliberal reforms implemented since the beginning of the 1980's. According to them NAFTA has had a great impact since United States is Mexico's most important trading partner, as mentioned above. They also are, for

example, criticizing the quality of the jobs that has been created in the manufacturing sector. This since it is mostly jobs that have low salary, with bad working conditions, required flexibility etcetera (see for example Wise 2003).

There are further important examples in the context of this thesis of how the agriculture sector has changed since the Mexican revolution and how it has been affected by the neoliberal reforms. In *Reforma Agraria: de Latifundo al Neoliberalismo* (2003) Jesús Carlos Morett Sánchez clearly is explaining how the agricultural sector has developed with the agrarian reform during the 1900's and up to the neoliberal reforms. From a juridical point of view the jurist Carlos Humberto Durand Alántara (2002) makes an amply description of the legal changes in the conditions for the agriculture in Mexico. He is maintaining, amongst many other aspects, how the land tenancy legally has developed from the creation of the Constitution 1917 up until the neoliberal reforms. This process has resulted in legal simplifications of privatize land.

Further Kirsten Appendini has made multiple important contributions about the crisis on the Mexican countryside and the consequences of the fundamental changes in the agriculture sector, food security and land tenancy (see for example Appendini et al, 2003, Appendini, 2008a, Appendini, 2008b, Appendini, 2001). One of the most fundamental books in the aspect of this investigation is *Desde Los Colores de Maíz* coordinated by J. Luis Seefoó Lujan which is 950 pages about the Mexican countryside and the deep problematic from different angles. This book covers a wide spectrum, from the consequences in corn cultivation to the increasing migration from the Mexican countryside.

These reports and additional empirical material served as guidelines while conducting the interviews and then when making the analysis since they have different perspectives; structural, regional, national, and from different sectors and organizations. Nevertheless, what these reports and books are lacking is a point of view on an individual level, an emphasized interrelation between structural changes and local effects. Essentially, what the actual experiences and perceptions of the people most affected by the consequences are.

Another significant example in the context of my research is *Mexico in Transition: Neoliberal Globalism, State and Society* edited by Gerardo Otero (2004). This book brings up many distinct perspectives from different authors of how the Mexican civil society has been affected by the implemented neoliberal reforms. One chapter is particularly interesting since it

maintains how labor and Food Sovereignty has been affected. The author demonstrates that the consequences have been apparent ever since the neoliberal reforms were implemented and the production was exposed to the international market. This shows how the neoliberal reforms have been devastating for the grass root people in Mexico but does not illustrate how the consequences differ for different parts of the civil society, for example men and women.

The contribution of this thesis, which is lacking in the existing literature, is to problemize the consequences of neoliberal reforms by adding the notions of Food Sovereignty and dependency. Also adding the campesinos` point of view in the analysis using the concepts from the theoretical framework is giving new perspectives. There is a definite lack of literature investigating the consequences of the neoliberal reforms from the affected peoples` perspective. Using this perspective will broaden the information of the neoliberal empirical effects.

#### **1.4 Disposition**

To explain the theoretical context and illustrate the foundation of the policy changes in Mexico the neoliberal theory first briefly is explained. This since it is the paradigm controlling and justifying the implementation of the reforms. It will contribute to an amplified understanding of the theoretical arguments behind the structural changes. The neoliberal theory will not be used in the analysis since other aspects are feasible in this investigation.

The antecedents of the constitutional article 27 as legal base for the agrarian reform carried through the twentieth century departing from the Mexican revolution 1910 are then highlighted. There is an essential significance of the Mexican agriculture sector in this investigation that is why a more thoroughly explanation of its development is necessary. The practical fundamental policy changes in Mexico from the 1980`s then are demonstrated due to that they have generated the structural changes in, above all, the agriculture sector, and are affecting the campesino communities on a local level.

After this the theoretical framework is developed departing from the notion Food Sovereignty and dependency theory. This is the starting point which is founding the theoretical base when analyzing the macro consequences and illustrating the campesinos` perceptions from the consequences of the neoliberal reforms. Further, theory of commoditization will be explained to theoretically illustrate capital expansion. Concepts from these theories are utilized for

constructing a theoretical framework which can demonstrate the consequences from the campesinos' point of view. The construction of the theoretical framework with these concepts will contribute to amplify the illustration of the consequences from the campesinos' perspective.

To back up the statements from the interview, broaden the base for the analysis and create an overall picture the macro economical consequences and further effects of the neoliberal reforms from second hand sources are demonstrated and analyzed in the empirical part. Finally, with the theoretical framework perceptions from the interviews are analyzed and after this conclusions are drawn. This will demonstrate how the structural changes and local experiences are interrelated.

## **2. THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR AND NEOLIBERAL REFORMS**

It is fundamental to begin with how the paradigm and the theoretical arguments behind the neoliberal reforms implemented in Mexico have been theoretically developed and argued. This is to fully understand why they for decades have been the justification of radical adjustment reforms promoted by international institutions. That is why the essential and relevant parts of neoliberal theory here are explained to demonstrate the theoretical context.

The illustration of the empirical background to the neoliberal reforms is departing from the changes in the agriculture sector after the Mexican revolution 1910 and the creation of the Constitution 1917. This since it is where the agrarian reform has its legal origin with the necessary conditions to start the redistribution of land; mainly practically initialized in the 1930-40's. Reaching the 1980's general neoliberal reforms are highlighted, particularly in the agriculture sector, since these are the antecedents to the empirical context of the structural changes in Mexico.

### **2.1 Neoliberal theory**

The solution to poverty and starvation is, according to neoliberal theory, economic growth. Economic growth is generated by deregulating the market; demolishing trade barriers both national (such as privatizing state owned corporations, eliminating subsidizes and labor rights) and international (such as eliminating tariffs on import and export). The production should be directed towards the manufacturing sector, in the case of Mexico, and merchandize for export in areas were it is possible to compete on the international market (Romero Sánchez, 2001). Here it is fundamental to concentrate on products which have comparative advantages. For example merchandize that demand a considerable amount of man/woman labor because of the significantly lower wages compared to, for example, United States.

The Industrialization Substitution Import (ISI) model, which was used in Mexico before the neoliberal, promotes adjusting the production to the domestic consumption. With ISI it is therefore feasible creating capacity to consume nationally, even for the corporations. During this model it was therefore viable canalizing capital for benefitting larger parts of the population so that a demand is created. Instead of this departure point the neoliberal paradigm is assuming that economic growth generated by the expansion of the market will improve the

living situation for a larger part of the population. This because it will benefit everyone and a social welfare system is not necessary since people will work and make their own living instead of being forced to survive on the state (Romero Sanchez, 2001).

The liberalization of capital flows is considered as a crucial factor to create economic growth. This means eliminating trade barriers such as tariffs, environmental regulation etc. According to neoliberals it should be discussed and agreed between states how to demolish the barriers of the capital flows and opening up the markets since it will benefit all parts. These agreements (free trade agreements such as NAFTA) are the roots of re-producing and strengthen the neoliberal system on a global scale since they protect and enhance the liberalization of trade. David Harvey (2005: 75) emphasizes the example of states that integrate in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

According to neoliberal theory (in contradiction to, for example, dependency theory) there are no limits to economic growth; the market can generate infinite growth as long as the nation-states do not restrict it with obstacles. The problem of poverty is not due to that other countries are economically benefited or more “developed” but because of that the state has too much power over the market. The governments are filled with corruption and there has been no market stimulants, the state is hindering the market from developing, not helping it with regulations. This leads to that the reduction of state influence will create economic growth. The tariffs and other trade barriers are controlled by the state and must therefore be eliminated as much as possible; trade liberalization reforms are needed to stimulate the market and initiate its growth. With this the nationally produced merchandize are able to compete in and getting access to the international market; the efficiency will increase since the production must adjust to international demand (Todaro et al, 2006).

Nevertheless, the state still has an essential role in protecting the individual rights. This means that there should be a system in amplified protection of the individual property rights since they are fundamental for neoliberal theory and contribute to the creation of a “free” market. Other individual rights which should be protected are the liberty of expression, action and election since the individuals are the agents in the neoliberal state and therefore need the conditions that allow them to act “freely” (Harvey, 2005). It is interrelated to that incentives making economic growth must be created for generating development.

This leads to that a further fundamental part of the neoliberal theory is the private corporations which are seen as the engine in the society; promoting technological progress and creating incentives for development. Therefore laws that protect, for example intellectual rights, which give individuals and corporations the possibility to own patents, should be created. This generates that private corporations have the control over the distribution of for example a particular kind of seed since they can through intellectual property own the genetic structure and decide who are allowed to employ it. By the protection of intellectual property rights the incentives that supposedly will lead to elevated living standards for everyone are planted. Not having clear and strong individual rights are by neoliberals seen as one of the greatest barriers for economic growth and development of individual welfare (Harvey, 2005).

Resources which in many countries are considered as communitarian such as water and land, in this point of view, should be privatized since the competition between individuals, corporations and other sectors in the society are essential for generating development. In this way transforming them into merchandize and give them a capitalistic value. Privatization and deregulation will lead to more efficient production and increase the productivity, improve the quality of the merchandize and decrease the costs. From this perspective the role of the state is mainly to increase its ability in competing with other nation-states on the global market (Harvey, 2005).

The neoliberal reforms also are supposed to make the national sector more attractive for foreign direct investments. To promote the feasible climate for transnational corporations the labor and environmental issues should be treated as merchandize which tend to make the structural conditions for the private corporations more important than, for example, the working conditions. This hinders the state from making labor right reforms since it could prevent the accumulation of capital; the labor market should be “flexible” to increase the profit and therefore contribute to economic growth. The notion of “flexibility” has in practice become to signify labor insecurity, decreasing wages and lost of benefits for the workers. The state, in neoliberal theory, should also reduce its role in social issues such as in sanitarian questions, education and social services to decrease the public spending, leaving the responsibility of welfare to the individuals. Then it will be up to the individual to control its situation, individual “liberty” is fundamental (Harvey, 2005).

## 2.2 The neoliberal project and its antecedents in the agriculture sector

The origin of agriculture politics in Mexico will here be explained departing from the fundamental agriculture reform in the Constitution of 1917, originated in the Mexican revolution 1910. This became the first actual attempt in Latin America to thoroughly redistribute territory through an agrarian reform and it is highly relevant in the Mexican context. When moving into to the 1980's the neoliberal reforms are emphasized in illustrating the antecedents to the structural changes with consequences for the campesinos on local level.

The Mexican revolution 1910 was founded in a deep dissatisfaction of the extremely unequal distribution of land. In the year 1905 0.2% of the land owners possessed 87% of the agriculture areal (Morett Sánchez, 2003: 45). The outcome of the revolution was theoretically a victory from the campesinos' perspective since it ended in something that could be interpreted as a constitutional compromise between the revolutionary leaders Emilio Zapatas and Pancho Villas' demands of redistribution of land, and the post-revolutionary governments. Article 27 in the Constitution created 1917 was supposed to be the foundation of a fundamental agrarian reform. It was implied to give back territory that had been expropriated from the campesinos and indigenous people in Mexico. Particularly the divestment of land from the middle of the 1800's which had resulted in the close to disappearance of collective property. The article 27 mainly explained the new forms of property possible.

With article 27 the collective property was legally recreated providing tools to break up the "hacienda system" which was founded in huge farms owned by a small percentage of the population. The reform constructed two types of agricultural production sectors when implemented under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40). The campesino type of production which in practice became to signify *ejido*<sup>3</sup>, *communities*<sup>4</sup> and private *minifundistas* (small

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<sup>3</sup> During the implementation of the agrarian reform in the 1920's the *ejido* was created; a defined part of land which were common property, and before the reform of the article 27 in 1992 it could not be sold or rented (this to prevent the concentration of ownership which was also the reason for *limited* small properties). All the members of the community had a fundamental right to usurpation of the land. It was created as something temporary as a step towards private property. This form of land tendency does not exist in any other part of the world (Morett Sánchez, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The communities (las comunidades) refer to collectively owned land with personal or family based usurpation right and has its origin in the indigenes people's community forms (Morett Sánchez, 2003).

scale campesinos), and further the modern agrarian capitalistic which was limited *small properties*<sup>5</sup>. Article 27 gave the state a right to redistribute private property into ejido for benefitting small-scale producers and increase the access of the resources for a bigger part of the population (Morett Sánchez, 2003: 11).

Up until 1934 the redistribution of land had been minimal and rather part of a discourse used to calm down the population and cover up the continued structural concentration in ownership of land. But there still existed a widespread dissatisfaction with the so called agrarian reform in the country; the land was not distributed in the pace neither to the extent which had been hoped for. Cárdenas was the only president in Mexican history that actually applied the agrarian reform from 1917 in practice and contributed with structural transformation in the land tenancy. Cárdenas saw the agrarian reform as the main project for development and without it the Mexican industrial sector would never had been able to develop with the velocity it did. When he entered the presidency the reform project was in crisis due to the failures of the former post-revolutionary governments' export directed political models (Morett Sánchez, 2003).

The reason for implementing the agrarian reform; redistribution of land and end the "latifundo system" (big estates with few owners) was for Cárdenas essentially political with two main aspects. Firstly settling the existing discontent on the countryside and secondly, perhaps even more significant was that huge farms were an obstacle to the capitalistic modernization process Cárdenas wanted to generate. This signifies that the goals were to demobilize the campesino movement and create an agriculture sector which could provide the necessities for an industrial development (Morett Sánchez, 2003).

During this time period almost twice as much land was redistributed than all the Cárdenas' predecessors before had carried through together. A period of so called development directed toward the inside began and during his presidency the ejido became the nuclear of the rural model; it remained so up until the year 1992 (Morett Sánchez, 2003). In 1930 the ejido represented only 13 % of the productive land area and in 1940 it had been extended to 47 %.

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<sup>5</sup> Article 27 in the Constitution from 1917 did not define ejido or limited property (ejido was not even mentioned), the practical significations were established later when Cárdenas was president but the legal constitutional foundation was created in 1917.

A further essential reform Cárdenas carried through was the profound expropriation of the natural resources, above all the petroleum which had been in the hands of foreign capital. He emphasized that all resources above and below ground belong to, and should therefore benefit, “the nation” (Bizberg, 1990: 37-38).

Breaking up the oligarchic ownership of land prevented a small group of people from maintaining high prices on the agriculture products. The state, with the control over campesino organizations, could keep the prices of agriculture products down. Cárdenas created the highest instance for the ejidos on a national level: Confederación Nacional Campesinos (CNC). The CNC was closely connected and controlled by the state; with this the state control over the campesino movement was officially established. The institution organized the campesinos with a corporative structure and integrated them under the power of the state. This new structure of land tenancy generated that the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and its leader could keep the control over the campesinos and the country during 70 years.

The system was indirectly subsidizing the industrial urban growth since the food became cheaper due to the through CNC controlled prices. Nevertheless, in the same time eliminating the ability of the ejido dwellers to save and invest profits; hindering them to develop. This leading to that the domestic industry was developed at the expense of the agriculture sector. From the end of the Second World War the agriculture sector in Mexico was financing the ISI model which was the foundation of the industrialization process in the country (Halperín Donghi, 1993). This system worked more or less up until the mid sixties when the signs of failure started to show, and the profound crisis were initialized in the seventies.

What could be called the counter-reforms against the nationalization process began in 1947 with the Miguel Alemán (1946-52) government. He, amongst other things, re-established the protection of rights for resources in large properties; enhancing the private property rights over state property. In the 1960's the fall of the agriculture accumulation model began which was shown in the disappearance of the basic grains and food products. The agro-industrial corporations controlled by the transnational capital started to appear in Mexico. These were moving the production away from staple food and merchandize for the domestic market, instead promoting for import to fill up the population's needs. It was a contributing factor to

the food crisis in the end of the 1960's and put the nation in dependence of the international oligarchs controlling the food production at a global level (Durand Alcánatara, 2002).

In another aspect this also contributed to that the campesinos' movement began to rise up and become more independent from the state. Fore example was el Frente Campesino Independiente and Central Independiente de Obreros y Campesinos (CIOC) created. They started to use methods of occupying land which in some cases ended with violently confronting the military (Durand Alcánatara, 2002). Nevertheless, due to the control the state had over the campesino organizations these were only minor resistant movements in comparison with, for example, Movimento dos Trabalhadore Rurais Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil.

That the expansion of capital into new sectors and areas will benefit everybody was the discourse planted when the neoliberal reforms were introduced as a recipe for creating economic growth. The neoliberal theory in practice entered into the Mexican agenda the first half of the 1980's (Dussel Peters, 2003). The ISI model was characterized by an amply foundation of state owned companies which supported the domestic production above all the industries but also the farmers. In the 1970's 32 % of the public sector spending was devoted to these types on companies. The policies had a protectionist character and allowed state interventions aimed at substitute the imports with the development of the domestic industries (Lopez Paniagua, 2004).

In 1980 about half of the land in Mexico was ejidos or public property, because of the agrarian reform. There was a significant national control over the commercialization and finance in the agriculture sector since it was regulated by state owned companies. These companies, like the CNC, not only kept the prices down but also helped to guarantee minimum wages for campesinos devoted to certain production. Campesinos could get support from Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural (Banrural) even though this institution was highly criticized for the lack of honesty and efficiency. During 1980-82 the first implementation of reforms directed towards "economic liberalization" in the agriculture sector began. As an example taxes were lowered to increase the employment and/or production for agro-industrial corporations. The neoliberal reforms in the agriculture sector were initialized with the addition, Ley Federal de Reforma Agraria (LFRA) in 1984 to the article 27 adjusting it for the

process of creating conditions for “evolution” the economic growth that the neoliberal reforms were supposed to generate in the country (Durand Alcántara, 2002).

Opening up the national market, commencing the liberalization, started with the Mexican integration of General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1984. The initializing changes here were founded in the minimizing, in accordance to neoliberal theory, the role of the state. These changes were promoted by international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but also by the Mexican political elite who was convinced that the neoliberal reforms was and is the best solution for the country.

The ISI model was abandoned much due to the crisis culminating in 1982 which was marked by the commercial deficit of the agricultural sector, and the increased foreign debt. The main idea with the implementation of the neoliberal reforms was saving the economy by initializing Mexico’s integration into the world market. The aims were to concentrate the production on profitable merchandize, beginning the process of open up the domestic market. In this way creating economic growth, theoretically more thoroughly explained in the previous chapter (López Paniagua, 2004).

The drastic change in the role of the state was illustrated with decreasing the central government’s role as a producer, consumer and regulator; which meant reducing the public spending significantly (Bailey, 2003: 17). The administration of president Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-88) began the structural adjustment reforms with privatizing many before state owned unities, nevertheless, without touching the most important ones such as Aeroméxico (Suarez Mier, 2001).

Between 1983 and 1988 subsidizes and state owned unities were reduced significantly in number. For example in 1984 subsidizes were eliminated for products like oil, rise and eggs to 67 private and state owned companies. It continued with taking away the price controls which meant demolishing the minimum guaranteed prices of many products in the agriculture sector. This has been replaced by punctual aids for the economically poorest people. A radical transformation in the agriculture was the change in the concept of development, as part of neoliberal theory; development is suppose to be promoted with capitalization and utilizing the instrument of private ownership (Undo, 2003: 17-21).

Further privatization of state owned companies created during ISI were carried through during the 1990's because of the feasible and general reduction of the state's economical activities. For example the state managed company La Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (CONASUPO) was gradually eliminated which had been deciding minimum prices on certain agriculture products, giving supports to campesinos in form of subsidizes etcetera. With the same purpose the commercial banks, significant parts of the state owned industries, now including the airline companies, cars, fertilizers and distribution of food etcetera were privatized (Suarez Mier, 2001). The year 1981 12.1 % of GDP was invested in the public sector and in the main part of the 1990 it had been reduced to 4 % in trying to eliminate the public spending deficit. The manufacturing sector with a neoliberal departure point is seen as the engine that is supposed to generate economic growth. A great part of the protecting tariffs were reduced so that products can be imported and exported freely; in this way competing on the international market (Dussel Peters, 2003: 41-48).

During his presidency the years 1988-1994, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, backed up by the World Bank, continued with the reforms; privatizing the Mexican countryside and planting the necessary juridical foundation for the final constitutional change. With the final change in article 27 he stopped the redistribution of land (and ended the agrarian reform) to secure the land property, in this way intending to attract capital investments. The justification of the reforms was to "supply the rural demand" and solve the problem with density of population on the countryside. The implementation of the neoliberal reforms was accelerated and extended with special focus on the liberalization of the market. The market was recognized as a fundamental part in the economic development and eliminating trade barriers was started. The reforms also included trying to control the rising inflation and financial deficit and reducing the public debt; external as well as internal (Suárez Mier, 2001).<sup>6</sup>

The radical change of article 27 in the Constitution was carried through the year 1992. The purpose of "La Nueva Ley Agraria" was to create a lucrative market with implementing the possibility of privatized ownership of land. According to Jesús Carlos Morett Sánchez (2003:

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<sup>6</sup> In 1983 the inflation was almost 100 % and the Mexican peso had been devaluated six times; the economy had closed all the international trade in a failed attempt to eliminate the unsustainable external equilibrium and Mexico was totally incapable to pay its the foreign debt (Suarez Mier, 2001: 71).

167) the modification of the article 27 has resulted in the mechanisms and ways of how the ejido system should be replaced to enhance the productivity of the land and so that “an unavoidable process of modernizing the countryside” can be carried through. The law today is supposed to stimulate privatization, renting and selling of land. Two aspects in the new law are the possibility to sell properties between ejidatarios, and the increasing opportunity to have association between ejidatarios and, for example, corporation. The change in article 27 also emphasized that the state should promote the conditions for “integrated rural development” which in practice signifies that the ejidos, communitarian property and communities are opened up for capital investments. If, for example, the ejido’s assembly agrees there is now a possibility to divide it and make it private property. This means that the fundamental reform generated the right to sell and rent the land for the individuals.

In summing up the new agrarian model was and is based on the privatization of the Mexican countryside with four basic elements which synthesize the neoliberal theory in practice; 1) a new role for the state in the economy; 2) prioritizing the macro-economical development; 3) a significant openness towards the international market and towards the international capital flows 4) the idea to fight the extreme poverty on the countryside with augmented efficiency. The foundation of a capitalistic development in the agriculture sector which was planted in the constitution 1917 (with *pequeña propiedad*), was in 1992 completed in opening the land to be more efficiently used with help of the capital. Programa de Certificación de los Derechos Ejidos y Solares Urbanos (PROCEDE) was created to put in practice the implementation of the new agrarian model and “help” campesinos receive private ownership of the land and secure the land tenancy. Through the PROCEDE ejidos were measured and divided amongst the members so that they can make it private property (Durand Alcántara, 2002: 414-421).

The Mexican government, in search for economic growth, started the negotiations of a trade agreement with USA and Canada in 1989, the result, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), was implemented in 1994. This followed by trade negotiations with almost every country in Latin America. With Israel and the European Union agreements were negotiated and implemented the year 2000. This supposedly put Mexico in a privileged position of, at this time, being the only country with access to the two greatest markets in the world; United States and European Union (Suarez Mier, 2001).

NAFTA could be seen as an extension of the agreements within World Trade Organization (WTO). It retains additional aspects in questions such as interventions, intellectual property rights, solutions of disputes and telecommunications. This is also the first free trade agreement in the world that at the same time has created parallel agreements in labor rights and environmental issues. The tariffs between the three countries were to be eliminated gradually in 15 years and the last protections, tariffs on specific agriculture merchandize such as beans, were eliminated in January 2008 (Baley, 2003). This implies that NAFTA contains a gradual elimination of all fees in trading agriculture products; abolishing the protection of the products grown by Mexican campesinos and exposing them to international competition.

What is differing NAFTA from a customs union is that the states included do not have a common border towards third countries. Instead the agreement is filled with complicated “rules of origin” for preventing other products from having the same benefits as the ones produced in the states that are included in the agreement (as opposite to Mercado Comun Centroamericano (MCCA) where the states have a common boarder). The distinction from having a “common market” is that NAFTA does not allow the “free movement of labor” between the three countries (which, for example, the European Union does). The free trade agreement does not include any supranational institutions which mean that the national governments still have the last word and responsibility in the implementation of NAFTA<sup>7</sup> (Baley, 2003).

Unfortunately the comparative advantages are differing greatly between the three countries incorporated in NAFTA. Mexico has significantly less developed technological conditions compared to the other two countries which contribute to make the agriculture sector more vulnerable in Mexico. But the most significant aspect is that United States and Canada canalize huge amounts of capital to their agriculture sector in forms of subsidizes. This generates the fact that the agriculture producers in these states have significantly lower production costs and can sell their products for prices sometimes under the production cost (Durand Alcántara, 2002).

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<sup>7</sup> The president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, of United States George W. Bush, and the prime minister of Canada Paul Martin could therefore without consulting other institutions sign La Alianza para la Seguridad y Prosperidad de América del Norte (ASPAN) in the year 2005, an extension of NAFTA into issues as improving the security inside of North America (see Sandoval Palacios (ed), 2008).

Many laws and institutions have been created to protect and enhance the neoliberal reforms with the intention to make the neoliberal project irreversible. In December 1994 the peso was devaluated from being 3.2 pesos per dollar to 8 pesos for one dollar which made the inflation in 1995 rise seven times higher than in the previous year (Suarez Mier, 2001: 82-83). The beginning of the year 1994 arrived with high hopes of an initialized economic growth but what the year had to offer was one of the most fundamental and disastrous crisis in the history of Mexico with, amongst other things, the lost of all the reserves of the central bank (Suarez Mier, 2001: 77). From 1994 to 2000, when Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon was president, the neoliberal reforms continued with Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (1995-2000). The main idea for this was operating to benefit the market and not the ejidos or communities. With the Programa de Apoyos a la Agricultura (PROCAMPO) the final price guarantees and participation of the government in the production process was eliminated (Durand Alcántara, 2002).

### 3. THEORIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework is constituted by fundamental concepts from the theoretically normative notion *Food Sovereignty*, but also with the both explicative and normative *dependency theory* and *commoditization*. These theories are here explained and are being utilized to demonstrate the consequences of the neoliberal reforms from a general to a local perspective.

#### 3.1 Food Sovereignty

In accordance with Duchrow and Hinkelammert (2004) a brief theoretical departure point is developed for the term Food Sovereignty, provided to amplify the theoretical foundation. Then the empirical elements of the notion are explained since it is a normative theory.

According to this point of view the capital based, today globally existing system in itself is destructive for all the societies affected in the cohesion of social and human life. This since the capital always strives for increasing profit. It is meaning, for example, that cheap labor force with bad working conditions are feasible factors for reducing the production costs. Investing in protecting the environment and paying taxes will not make the profit enhance and are therefore not viable for the capitalist. Due to the “free” competition created with eliminating trade barriers the elements (which are viable due to the creation of market economies with little state influence) efficiency and capital accumulation are dominating. Nevertheless, the base of the ethics and development, instead of being driven forward and constructed by the capital, should be the common good and defined with the participation of the affected people; “*a society with place for everybody in harmony with the environment*” (Duchrow and Hinkelammert, 2004: 220, my translation).

Further the interpretation of personal property is reformulated where the person is understood as a part of the community in a relation of reciprocity (not as individuals with the essential right to own property). In this way the foundation of the capitalistic society is reconstructed to create Food Sovereignty for all levels in the society. The personal property, with this perspective, is defined by the value of personal use for a dignified life. This is why the notion departs from the subject, not from capital accumulation and profit maximization which a capitalistic theory departing from individual property such as neo-liberalism could be

interpreted doing. This might sound abstract and theoretical but is nevertheless possible to apply in practice which is illustrated here with the notion of Food Sovereignty.

In being able to investigate how Food Sovereignty is affected by the neoliberal consequences it is necessary to further in detail explain what it means empirically and in this way illustrate the indicators that will be used to demonstrate the impacts. The notion was introduced 1996 on the World Food Summit and since then it has had an important significance for a growing number of civil society movements and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These are starting to utilize it in their main discourse as a solution to starvation and hunger; a feasible alternative to the neoliberal paradigm (Jonsén, 2005: 9).

Food Sovereignty is directed towards how the domestic sector should change its way of production to prioritize the national and local consumption. Taking as a point of departure the conditions and traditions of the communities which means that:

- The prices of merchandize should be just and able to cover the cost of production, in this way allowing the producer to have a dignified life.
- The access to the local markets for the small-scale local farmers should be guaranteed so they will not be out-toughed by big-scale agriculture industries.
- The food, with this perspective, is seen as a human right which should be nutritious, good for the health, appropriate according to the culture and locally produced. This opposed to the existing paradigm where food is seen as solely merchandize and no concern is taken to the content since the market and demand controls the production and therefore the consumption.
- The production is, in this perspective, a fundamental right for the rural communities.
- The hunger exists due to the lack of access and social inequalities, not a lack of productivity; what is therefore viable is not increased production but a political will to eliminate starvation.
- Food security is reached when the production of the food is in the hands of the economically poor themselves.
- The productive resources ought to be regulated and controlled by the local communities.
- The access to land should be assured with a genuine agrarian reform since it is the foundation of surviving for the campesinos. A further example of goods that must be

communitarian owned are seeds since it would benefit everybody instead of the access being restricted by property owner rights.

- Credits and interventions should come from the public sector and invested in small scale farming.
- Social dumping of agriculture products ought to be forbidden since these are destroying the domestic market and production.
- Since monopolies might concentrate the power of food production to a few transnational corporations it must be prohibited.
- Policies preventing overproduction are necessary since it is not only a waste of natural resources, it also lower the prices to levels where local production can not compete.
- A threat towards the environment and human health is the genetically modified seeds which should to be eliminated and forbidden.
- What should be developed are sustainable agro-ecological methods which do not use or produce genetically modified products (de la Tejera et al, 2008: 283-284).

These factors, according to the content of the notion Food Sovereignty, are what are needed to eliminate the hunger crisis in the world. In what way these aspects are affected by the neoliberal reforms can not be measured with economical or neoliberal theoretically based concepts since the frame of reference is totally different. That is why the theoretical framework is constructed with concepts from other perspectives as departure points.

### **3.2 Commoditization**

According to theories promoting the expansion of the market (such as the neoliberal) human beings and nature should be exposed to supply and demand which means that they should be treated as merchandize. This is what happens in practice when the reach of capital is expanded. For example the neoliberal reforms; human beings are treated as solely labor force and nature (land and other resources) can and are traded universally in the capitalistic system. They have become *commoditized* and given a market value. With the intention of preventing the exploitation of these “goods” laws protecting the environment and cultures have been developed. For example taxes and trade barriers that are hindering the capital’s movement and therefore the exploitation of land or labor rights which could be interpreted as a second movement going against the capitalization. Commoditization is based on an individualist point of view since it departs from the individual as owner of property (Polanyi, 1992). Using

the concept here is feasible because it theoretically can highlight important aspects of the consequences generated by the neoliberal reforms.

The theory is fundamental since it explains how the capital has expanded into areas which before were not seen or treated as merchandise. David Harvey (2004) describes how there is a commoditization of nature, empirically meaning natural resources which up until now has been communitarian or publically owned. These are transformed into products that can be sold or rented; examples maintained are water, land or air. This is, amongst other aspects, promoting intensive agriculture cultivation of land since it is the most “profitable” way of produce competitive merchandise.

Harvey (2003) also emphasizes that the commoditization of cultural heritage and intellectual creativity further generates valuable losses. For example, the exploitation and appropriation of popular music which has constructed a gigantic industry based on huge capitals. Another example is the privatization of state own unities and communitarian handled issues such as water and other public goods. He implies that these processes are undermining the protection of the environment and labor rights historically reached during difficult struggles. Opening up these areas for commoditization has been necessary for the continued accumulation of capital; expansion of the space where the capital can reach increasing and promote economical development, in accordance to neoliberal theory. It is a way of creating solutions during crisis of accumulation. Opening up territories for sale, privatization, with the argument that this will make them more productive is a method that can be used and give the capital more “room to maneuver”, absorbing the excess of capital to be invested in the “new merchandise”.

The capitalistic system is constantly looking for the most “profitable” space or territory, with lower wages or other suitable conditions, to invest and expand the capital into where the competition is most valid. If the conditions change, or the resources end, the capitalist can move on and begin a further search for feasible investments without considering the local consequences. A transnational company could in this way use the commoditized land for intensive agriculture by renting it until it is destroyed and then the capitalist can move on. This is an indefinite continuous process of searching for more profitable resources or expansion of the capital into “new” areas of further commodification since there is always more profit to desire (Harvey 2003).

The theoretical foundation also separates itself from the neoliberal in the aspect that here it is not assumed an economic rationality between the production of merchandise and the price it is sold for. The capitalistic trade has many times in the history generated displacements and collapses of the space borders which in turn has resulted in new spaces for developing trade, beyond what could be called rational. A current example in this point of view is the ongoing financial crisis. According to Harvey (2003: 84-85) the exchange, production, distribution and the capitalistic consumption are never in equilibrium and this is why the economic rationality neoliberals' emphasis becomes impossible.

When the land or other parts of the nature is commoditized the right to use it is based on the necessity on paying to get access to the land and the resources attached to it; either by renting or buying it. This would be impossible without laws that control the private access to the land which is the foundation of making the land a product like others (Harvey, 1982).

A further aspect is that the private ownership of land easily can become monopolistic since, for example, where one is building its fabric no one else can build, have access to or benefit from the land. The capitalist will, due to this, prefer the monopolistic view since competition will decrease the profit; with monopoly it has secured its position. The capitalists has come up with many different ways of re-producing these monopolies such as concentration of capital, control of technological development and, regulated in trade agreements such as NAFTA and rights to intellectual property (Harvey, 2003).

### **3.3 Dependency theory**

The definition of *dependency* used here is originated from the dependency theories formed in Latin America during the 1960's intending to explain the development patterns in the region. These types of theories have been thoroughly criticized and they will not be used here as generally applicable theories but to illustrate certain effects generated by the neoliberal reforms in Mexico. The aspects relevant in this thesis are here emphasized. The dependency theories were created as a critical the point of view in illustrating the limits to capitalistic development for some parts of the world. It was also maintained that the existing development paradigms were unable to explain the development patterns in Latin America (Kay and Gwynne, 2000).

The Latin American dependency theories have distinct directions which is feasible to highlight. The two most fundamental differentiations, that Cristóbal Kay (1991) has distinguished, are reformists and Marxists. The reformist is interpreted as a development of structuralism in the context of the crisis in the ISI model. This perspective is emphasizing the possibilities to change the dependency patterns with reforms. One of the Marxists or rather neo-Marxists is Theotonio Dos Santos, his theoretical departure point is explained and used in this investigation. What he has in common with other neo-Marxists in dependency theory, like André Gunder Frank, Ruy Mauro Marini, Vania Bambirra and Aníbal Quijano is the criticism towards that foreign capital has a progressive role in the depending states which is assumed by neoliberals (Kay, 1999: 11).

According to Dos Santos' (2002) aspect of dependency theory the reason for the international dependency relationship between states is that the capitalistic economic system was initialized on an already established order where huge hegemonic economical powers and imperialistic forces existed. When capital originated in the central states (center – peripheral in an economic sense) further penetrates the peripheral states they become increasingly dependent on for example United States or transnational companies.

The concept dependency here implies that the “underdevelopment” of states is connected to the economical expansion of central states whose growth is feeding from other states' resources. Nevertheless, the economical growth of the peripheral states also is dependent on the central states since these possess viable markets and capital. The relationship between the states is interpreted as part of a colonial project based on processes of capital accumulation, reproducing power relations. This is essential in this point of view for explaining the modern mode of production. As a result; due to the increased economic concentration towards the central states, or transnational corporations, and rising social inequality a tendency towards augmented social exclusion exists, according to Dos Santos (2002). The development for peripheral states is characterized by dependency, subordination, capital concentration and exclusion. The static dependency for the peripheral states is also partly founded in the technological dominance which the states or transnational companies have power over.

Further, the concept development in the capitalistic (and neoliberal) system is treated as equivalent with the concept growth. The central states are dependent on an intensive increasing growth which requires almost infinite technological development and new spaces, productive or speculative, to invest in. Without new spheres to invest in growth will become impossible since it would prevent the capital from expand. This might be the explanation to why privatization and opening up further spaces for investments still are promoted by international institutions backed up by transnational companies (Duchrow and Hinkelammert, 2004).

Due to the expansion of capital originated in the central states the peripheral states have since the 1980's become increasingly dependent on these external forces. It has led to increased vulnerability toward changes on the international market and diminished political room to maneuver for the peripheral states. This means the continuation of profits for the central states through exploitation of the peripheral due to that the continuation of reproducing and amplifying the existing international inequalities (Kay and Gwynne, 2000).

A development of the dependency theory to fit into the current "globalized world", made by Duchrow and Hinkelammert (2004), emphasizes how the development built on (economic) growth in it self is an impossibility to generate benefits for larger parts of the population. Constructing the system on comparative advantages have made it destructive since the "free trade" is eliminating the possibilities of, for example, increased salaries due to that the competition requires cheap products. This leads to that the merchandize can be purchased for a lower price but the opportunity of higher incomes for the workers is demolished to keep the merchandize competitive. It could theoretically be avoided if no subsidizes are permitted according the rules of free trade schemes applied to the peripheral countries but not to those in the center states. If the production mode is not developed towards new more productive and efficient ways of producing, or further resources, are the incomes lost which results in that buying cheaper becomes more expensive. The workers salaries in the peripheral countries can be kept low since the industries are not dependent on their consumption because the commodities are being exported.

### **3.4 Theoretical framework**

The most fundamental issues constructing Food Sovereignty are used as indicators in the analysis: the *access to adequate food* (nutritious, locally produce, culturally appropriate etc.) and the *access to productive resources* (such as land and seeds). In being able to practically measure how these aspects and the dependency have been affected by the consequences of the neoliberal reforms, the macro level consequences and the campesinos' perceptions are further analyzed with the concepts *privatization, capital expansion, liberalization and consumption*. These concepts with the theoretical foundation from dependency theory and commoditization explained above compose the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, important to emphasize is that the *dependency* concept also will be used to illustrate how Food Sovereignty is affected and not solely connected to international dependency as in accordance to dependency theory. The theoretical connection is in this way constructed which is necessary to illustrate how the structural changes can be seen and analyzed in the campesinos' perceptions.

#### 4. CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEOLIBERAL REFORMS

The consequences of the liberalization process in Mexico, initialized in the eighties, are multiple. In creating an overall picture some general macro-economical consequences first are briefly highlighted. Then the consequences of the neoliberal reforms in the agricultural sector and on the countryside are explained with different perspectives. Firstly the consequences are analyzed from dependency at the production level and then at consumption level, further also connected to Food Sovereignty. The effects on land tenancy due to the reform in article 27 are then illustrated and analyzed. After this the campesinos' perceptions from the consequences of the neoliberal reforms are analyzed from Food Sovereignty.

One overall consequence on a macro-economical level is that the productivity and export in the manufacturing sector have had a significant increase from 10 427 million dollars in 1987 to about 95 564 million dollars in 1997. During the years 1994 to 2004 the average annual growth of Gross National Product (GNP) was 3.3% respectively 1.9%<sup>8</sup> per capita. This is below the figures from the years 1940-1980, before the neoliberal reforms, when the growth was 6.4% and 3.1% per year. The low growth could be caused by the economic crisis in 1994 but the structural changes of the conditions for trade and the market have been so profound that it is possible to maintain these as connected to the neoliberal reforms (Dussel Peters, 2003).

The export sector of manufactured goods has become the motor of the Mexican economy, in accordance with neoliberal theory; it augmented with 11.90% in 1987 and around 20.5% in 1997. The liberalization of the export sector and due to this generated enlargement of export has come with a relatively concentrated ownership in the manufacturing sector; 300 corporations own about 60% of the manufacturing sector. According to Enrique Dussel Peters (2003: 49-51) the development of the manufacturing sector has demanded more imports for the production than generated exports and this commercial deficit was one of the contributing factors to the emerging economic crisis in 1994.

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<sup>8</sup>These last figures are taken from: <http://www.fao.org> (14/4-2009)

#### **4.1 Dependency at a production level**

The privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization has augmented the Mexican people's dependency of private corporations, monetary income, transnational capital and United States from different perspectives which here are presented and analyzed. The increased dependency, in accordance with dependency theory, could be seen as reproducing and amplifying the international economical asymmetries since the diminished trade barriers eliminated the protection and exposed agricultural production, with different essential preconditions, to international competition. These augmented asymmetries are occurring between the countries but also at a national and local level. Here it will be clearly illustrated how the expansion of capital with the neoliberal reforms has resulted in deepened dependency at a local but also structural level. The dependency on exterior capital is connected to dependency theory while the amplified dependency on a local level of national private corporations and monetary income will be analyzed with Food Sovereignty.

According to Edmar Salinas Callejas (2008: 292-3) the consequences of the neoliberal reforms in the agriculture sector have been characterized by profits for a reduced number of private big-scale corporations with production directed towards exports. He maintains that the indicators of these consequences, amongst other aspects, are the reduction of cultivated areas; the stagnation of production in the sector of basic grains; the slow growth of the agricultural GNP and the breakdown of the investments in the countryside for small- and medium scale producers. The reforms also have contributed to social polarization in the society through increased unemployment, augmented migration, poverty for the majority of the campesino producers and the concentration in the ownership of the agricultural production. Here it will be illustrated how these factors have increased the dependency and decreased opportunities to create access to adequate food for Mexican campesinos.

The neoliberal reforms have generated a doubling of agriculture exports between 1988 and 2005 from an average of 3 000 million dollars per year to 6 000 million dollars. This although many ejidatarios and other campesinos have abandoned their agriculture activities and sold the land or kept the rights over the land without utilizing it in waiting for better conditions (Salinas Callejas, 2008: 232). It could be maintained as reflecting the concentration of the ownership in agriculture production because of the neoliberal reforms. This has the increased

dependency for Mexican campesinos on transnational capital and national agro-industries in distinct ways from a Food Sovereignty perspective.

Firstly from the aspect that today when the state owned companies, which were managing the credits, such as CONASUPO, have been eliminated the conditions for small agriculture producers have changed. These companies were an essential instrument to distribute the subsidies in general. Now the access to the financing resources has been reduced and in particular for the agricultural sector (Tavera Alfaro, 2008). Due to the deregulation and privatization the banking system have directed their credits (used as a form of subsidizes) towards big-scale producers with higher productivity leaving out significant parts of the producers in need for credits. This has resulted in reducing of agricultural support to minor producers and that more intense high technological production in big-scale farming has been encouraged. The finance system is fundamental for the campesinos to develop their production; they need to be able to mobilize their savings, obtain finance and direct their investments in the most efficient way. Benefitting big-scale production in the striving for capital accumulation the competitive merchandize produced by these actors are threatening the local production for local consumption (Arias, 2008).

Related to this Patricia Arias (2008: 369-370) emphasize that with the retreat of the state as the promoter of economic development the campesinos have lost their political power and therefore also amplified there dependency which is negative from a Food Sovereignty perspective. According to her the agricultural corporations now are the main associates with the state and the direct benefactors of the public policies concerning the countryside, as illustrated above. These private corporations are not interested in either owning land or establishing closer relationships to small-scale producers other than renting their land or contracting them as workers.

This leads to that the campesinos have less and less opportunities to obtain their incomes in agriculture activities since the access to financing has diminished. Also significant in this perspective is the overall decrease in rural employment since it makes it harder for the campesinos to cover up the lost incomes in their own agriculture activities. Today agriculture production is more of a supplement to the multiple income sources for the families in the countryside. To sum up the concentration of ownership would imply that the access to

adequate food at a local level has decreased since the opportunities for the campesinos creating it have diminished. In this way the dependency of transnational corporations or agro-industries also has augmented since these provide the only available jobs. From a gender perspective the dependency at a production level have also been further amplified.

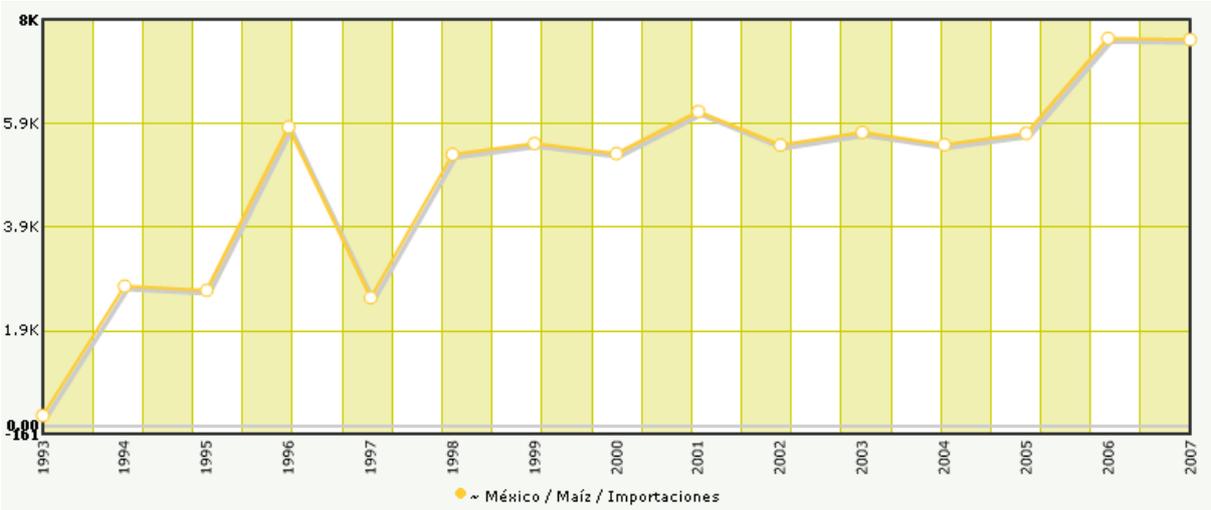
In intending to highlight the different implications for consequences of the neoliberal reforms for women the phrase “feminization of labor” has been used. This implies the enlarged workload for women and is utilized as describing the growing presence of women in activities that were not open to them before. Now the incorporation of women is massive in different types of production; trade and services, with variations depending on the region (González Montes and Salles (ed.), 1995).

The “feminization of labor” has become more common with the increase of commercial agriculture, agro-industries and manufacturing industries. This implies an increased dependency of transnational capital since the woman often ends up working for these. But the women also have an augmented importance in the role of agriculture tasks within the families and the feminine presence in the trade of agriculture products is intensified. Two reasons for pressuring women to work in the productive sector can be identified. A survival strategy when the masculine incomes decrease and secondly the raise of demand for especially feminine workers since it is cheaper than the masculine and considered more flexible (González Montes and Salles ed., 1995). In this way the consequences of the neoliberal reforms are significantly different for men and women in the aspects of conditions for labor, including the salaries and the workload since the productive work is to a further extent added to the reproductive.

The dependency for the Mexican campesinos has also been deepened in accordance with dependency theory. During the 1990’s foreign direct investments in Mexico grew drastically from 3 000 million dollars to 20 000 million dollars per year which were one of the purposes with the neoliberal reforms. There is a connection between promoting capital expansion with the facilitation of foreign direct investments and an amplified dependency of exterior capitalistic forces for the surviving of the Mexican population. The power and control over this capital invested in Mexico are in the hands of transnational corporations. Since the unemployment and social polarization on the Mexican countryside have risen and the profits

made by these corporations are not benefitting the campesinos the increased dependency on foreign capital could be interpreted as a threat to the access of adequate food for Mexicans. The profit from using and exploiting the Mexican resources, in this aspect, is benefitting the accumulation of capital in accordance to neoliberal theory, but not the campesinos. This is amplifying the international economical asymmetries; reproducing and producing amplified exterior dependency for the Mexican people.

Further, in Mexico the import deficit in comparison with the export of agriculture products is immense, -3 146 million dollars (140%) in the year 2001 which means that Mexico import 1.4 for every peso exported. The imported merchandize, above all corn from United States sold for prices below production cost, is making the competition very asymmetric (Seefoó Lujan, 2008: 12-13). This is one of the reasons why the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has provoked an increase of the preexisting economic asymmetries between Mexico and United States, in accordance to dependency theory. From 1993 the import of corn, mainly from United States, has augmented drastically in Mexico. The import of corn is almost four times as high now compared to before NAFTA was implemented which is illustrated in the diagram below.



Import of corn in Mexico the years 1993-2007, million tons (source: [www.cepal.org](http://www.cepal.org)).

To keep the low prices of basic agriculture products and being able to compete on the international market United States has kept their national prices below the prices on the international market. For example, flour for a price 40 % less than the international and 25% below in the case of corn. While United States has augmented its support to the agriculture

sector with 48%, the year 2004 it reached 840 000 million dollars, Mexico has reduced its agriculture support with 39% to 842 million dollar the same year (Wise, 2008: 167). With opening up the Mexican market for free import of these merchandizes the transnational corporations can sell their products at “dumping” prices and are being compensated by the United State’s government with subsidizes (Rubio, 2008: 33).

Confronting unfair competition the price of corn in Mexico has decreased almost 50% between 1994 and 2000 provoking that 2.5 and 3 million Mexican campesinos had to confront a bigger economic pressure through the competition (Wise, 2008: 168). The import of cheap corn from United States has been devastating for small scale farmers and campesinos in Mexico; it has damaged the national production, according to de la Tejera et al (2008: 279).

It is calculated that since 1994 1.5 million campesinos have abandoned their land in trying to find other income sources. Nevertheless, the agriculture sector is still highly significant for the Mexican economy in general since a significant part of the population still is devoted to cultivation, especially corn. Timothy Wise (2008: 168) maintains that increased poverty, emigration from the countryside and the abandonment of corn-cultivation are direct effects of liberalizing the Mexican market and NAFTA. Local production for local consumption has been nearly wiped out.

Also according to Timothy Wise (2008) further effects of NAFTA is a threat towards the genetic biodiversity of corn in the world. The genetically modified seeds of corn are prohibited in Mexico but not the final product. Nevertheless, Monsanto have recently been granted to experimental cultivation of genetically modified corn in the north of Mexico, according to la Jornada (Mexican newspaper). The transnational corporation have invested 300 000 million dollars in the project and it is initialized in September-October this year (2009).<sup>9</sup> Monsanto is a huge agricultural company which, because the internationally protected rights of intelligent property, owns and controls significant parts of the genetically modified seeds production and selling in the world.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/05/20/index.php?section=sociedad&article=046n1soc> (21/5-2009)

La Jornada also has maintained that 80% of the corn imported from United States to Mexico is genetically modified<sup>10</sup>. The first corn contaminated with genetically modified products was found in Oaxaca, south-east of Mexico, the year 2001. Corn has its origin in Mexico and it is the most important agriculture product in the country's staple food consumption. Corn also is one of the most significant cultivated food products in the world. In Mexico there are more than 40 variations of traditional kinds of corn cultivated (Wise, 2008: 167). The genetically modified corn is more resistant and could take over the genes of the original corn. The biodiversity of corn as food and plants are seen as a fundamental part of the Mexican cultures, the local effects of its disappearance would be devastating. If the diversity disappears it is not just a change in the identity of the Mexican people but also destruction of the main corn biodiversity in the world.

The Mexican campesinos are increasingly using the so called improved varieties of corn-seeds (*semillas mejoradas* in Spanish). Improved varieties of seeds are not genetically modified in a laboratory but developed by choosing the best and most suited seeds which have given the seeds specific characteristics. Just like the genetically modified seeds they are fit to plant one year but the campesinos can not utilize the seeds from the plants the next year, they have to buy new seeds. This aspect was raised in the interviews and is illustrated in the quote below:

“Now they are selling these improved varieties of corn (...) they are saying that it can be cropped after two months but one can not keep it to plant the next year, only one time nothing more.”<sup>11</sup> Man, Ocosingo, Chiapas (My translation)

The main idea with the use of modern varieties is to generate elevated production by increased tolerance in the plants through: more resistance towards plagues and diseases, a higher return, etcetera. According to Espinoza Calderón et al (2008: 233-5) about 25% of the corn cultivation in Mexico is from improved varieties. Before the neoliberal reforms the commercialization of seeds was managed by state controlled corporations, these were eliminated and replaced by private corporations during the nineties. Today 92% of the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/03/21/index.php?section=opinion&article=021a2pol> (14/4-2009)

<sup>11</sup> “Ya venden este maíz mejorada le llaman... dicen que en dos meses ya dan producto pero no sirve para que lo guardas, para sembrarlo el otro año, una vez nada más.”

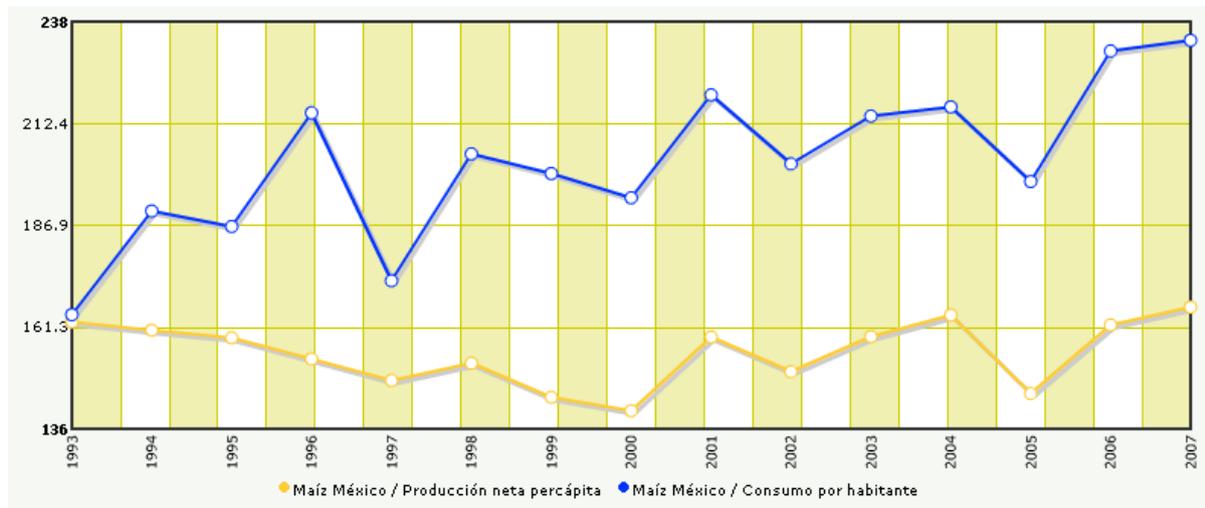
commercialization of seeds comes from big private corporations, which means that they control the selling of these seeds, only a minor percentage comes from governmental institutions.

This would imply that a part of the base for food production in Mexico is in the hands of private interests due to the capital expansion into commercialization of seeds and the augmented use in improved varieties of seeds that most often require new seeds every year. The local effects of this capital expansion are increased dependency from a Food Sovereignty perspective. The campesinos need access to capital in financing the purchase of seeds and in this way become more dependent on monetary incomes. They also are dependent on the private corporation in being able to produce food for their own consumption or to sell. The accesses to productive resources, in this case the seeds, is reduced for the campesinos and increased for the capital interests. People in this perspective have less power over their production and food since the private corporations controls the distribution of the ability to produce.

#### **4.2 Dependency at a consumption level**

Here the augmented dependency at a consumption level in Mexico is explained and exemplified. Firstly it is highlighted from how the consequences of NAFTA can be analyzed with dependency theory. Followed with a demonstration of how this dependency also is interconnected to Food Sovereignty. Further the example of how the dependency has increased on the countryside due to the extended poverty and at the same time raised prices of basic food products is maintained. Finally how the dependency has been affected due to the changes in the consumption patterns is analyzed.

In 1993 before NAFTA domestic local production covered national needs regarding corn. As already noticed since the implementation of NAFTA import has augmented, although the Mexican corn production has been maintained. The population has increased and with this an enlarged demand. The gap between the national consumption and production illustrated in the diagram below has been covered up by import.



*Production and consumption of corn per capita in Mexico, 1993-2007 ( source: www.cepal.org)*

This means an increasing dependency on external sources to cover up basic need, in accordance to dependency theory. From the year 2002 the corn imported was separated by color to establish which kind of corn that was imported. 12.1% (2002) of the imported corn was white designated to make flour and tortillas (a sort of bread made of corn, an essential part of every Mexican meal) which illustrates that the domestic corn production can not cover up the human consumption (Luz González and Chauvet, 2008: 200). The international dependency means that when the international price of corn is rising the Mexicans might not have enough income to buy it and in this way no opportunity to get access to adequate food.

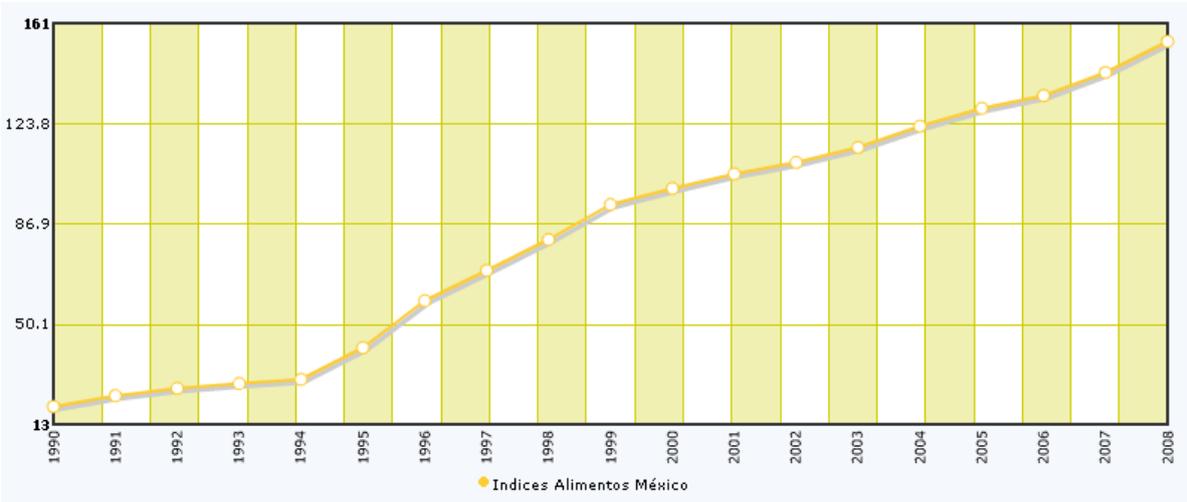
At the same time the dependency of private interests and with this a monopoly situation has been developed which also is negative from a Food Sovereignty aspect. During the gradual liberalization of corn import, due to the implementation of NAFTA, the industrializing corn corporations in Mexico lobbied for larger imports of corn then allowed. Maseca is a Mexican corporation with transnational interests. With cheap corn imported from United States it has managed to create a monopoly in the industrialization of flour to processed corn.<sup>12</sup> Maseca became the biggest corporation in the industrialization for the fabrication of cornstarch in the world. It controls 70% of the demand in Mexico, 75% of the market in United States and 80% of the market in Central America (de la Tejera et al, 2008: 267-8). This means that the

<sup>12</sup> In Spanish: "maíz nixtamalizada". It is a process of boiling corn which is used when making tortillas in Mexico.

national production of tortillas has been concentrated to fewer producers, which is threatening the access to adequate food for the Mexican people.

The amplified exterior dependency is illustrated in how the national price of tortilla in Mexico is affected by the international price. Between 2000 and 2006 the price of corn increased with 3.2% because of the alternative use to produce energy. In June 2006 the international price for corn was 109.6 dollars per ton and in December the same year it cost 160.7 dollars per ton (Rubio, 2008: 47). The real price of tortilla in Mexico also has constantly risen since the 1990's. In January 2007 the prices of tortilla increased with between 42% and 67%, the price of corn augmented with 75.5%. This showed that the price of corn was directly connected with the price on the international market (Appendini, 2008b: 8). It is additionally making the campesinos more vulnerable since their production is insufficient to cover up their own needs.

Further the campesinos are also made more vulnerable due to the extended economic poverty in Mexico. A research made between 1992 and 2004 shows that more than half of the households in the countryside lack the ability of cover up their basic needs. The research demonstrates that poverty and social inequality have augmented with the economical neoliberal reforms especially in the countryside (Hernández and Froilán Martínez, 2008). The diagram below illustrates the index of prices for staple food in Mexico the years 1990 to 2008. As it shows the food consumption prices have had a drastic increase during the years of implementing the neoliberal reforms which implicate further vulnerability for the campesinos.



Index for consumption prices on food, average/year. Base year 2000 = 100 (source: www.cepal.org)

With the lack of a sufficient income the increase of staple food prices, from Food Sovereignty, has severe consequences on the local level since the countryside population might not afford to buy adequate food for their survival.

Finally, the dependency can also be analyzed in the consumption patterns. Beans were, until a few decades ago, the second most important grain in the Mexican food consumption structure but the consumption has started to decline drastically. The year 1990 a Mexican consumed 17 kg of beans and in 2007 it had decreased to 9.4 kg.<sup>13</sup> This implies a fundamental change in the consumption patterns for the Mexican people. While the consumption of beans mostly produced in the country drastically has decreased the general consumption of fast food imported from United States, in particular Maruchan<sup>14</sup> has had a significant increase which has been emphasized in the interviews. The change of consumption patterns in Mexico has been gradual during many years but with the neoliberal reforms it has extended significantly. This has different implications for the Mexican campesinos from a Food Sovereignty and dependency perspective. It could also be seen as a process of commoditizing the Mexican food structures since the fast food industry is totally capitalized while the bean is natural.

To begin with it has created an amplified dependency on food produced by foreign capital since the products are bought from transnational corporations. For example, the year 2006 the fast food “instant soup” was sold to a value of 2.9 billion dollars in Latin America, and 80% of this was in Mexico. The content of the fast food products lack the amount of nutrition provided by the traditional staple food and therefore could not be defined as adequate food because of this is threatening the public health.<sup>15</sup> The Maruchan (and other fast food products) is cheap and demands less time to prepare than traditional food. The augmented consumption of it implies deepened exterior dependency in accordance to dependency theory.

In the year 2001 Mexico had a 141% increase in the consumption of “instant soup” which implies a significant increase in the consumption. 68% of the “instant soup” was Maruchan which started to be introduced to the Mexican market in 1999, imported from United States,

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<sup>13</sup> [www.cepal.org](http://www.cepal.org) (14/4-09)

<sup>14</sup> “Instant soup”; powder with noodles that only need hot water added to become a “soup”.

<sup>15</sup> In the year 2004 62.3% of the Mexican population over the age of 15 was overweight (<http://stats.oecd.org>) (14/4-2009).

and today is dominating the market.<sup>16</sup> In 2004 the Mexicans ate four million Maruchan every day which represent 15% of the consumption of this soup in the world.<sup>17</sup>

“Our young people will depend a lot of these products that comes from the industrialized countries, and these are also who are making huge profits, the only thing we are gaining are more diseases and more expenses.”<sup>18</sup> Man, El Lleno Mixtepec, Oaxaca (My translation)

The quote shows that this is seen as a clear threat to the access of adequate food. Additionally this means that the dependency on monetary incomes, instead of self-sufficiency, is amplified since money is needed to buy the product.

### **4.3 Consequences on the access to land**

With the change of the Constitution, in article 27, 1992 the agrarian reform of redistributing land was legally and officially ended; the privatization of land, and due to this the liberalization of territory markets, was facilitated. When the capital is let in to the ownership of territory the land is commoditized since it is given a market value and officially can be traded. As a continuation of the fundamental constitutional change in the process of dividing the land and give titles to the owners, the Programa de Certificación de los Derechos Ejidos y Solares Urbanos (PROCEDE) was created to officially divide the territory and give the individuals titles as landowners (see page 23 in this thesis). In the year 2006 the PROCEDE was ended with 90% of the ejidos registered and it was concluded that all had been informed of the possibilities and the ones missing was because of juridical problems or that they refused the program (Appendini, 2008a: 14).

The change in article 27 was justified with the necessity of modernizing the Mexican countryside by increasing the opportunities for interventions etcetera. This has not been the result, according to Patricia Arias (2008). Ten years after the changes the institutions that are

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<sup>16</sup> [www.euromonitor.com](http://www.euromonitor.com) (14/4-2009)

<sup>17</sup> [www.consumer.es](http://www.consumer.es) (14/4-2009)

<sup>18</sup> “Nuestros jóvenes van a depender muchos de estos productos que vienen de estos países industrializados, y estos son lo que están llevándose fuertes ganancias, nosotros lo único que estamos ganando es más enfermedades y más gastos.”

suppose to stimulate the production have not been strengthened and the access to credits has not increased. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

“(46.9%) of the ejidos and communities have had problems with the financing; 86.6% had not received any type of further education (capacitación) during the last two years; the proportion of ejidatarios that did have formal access to credits fell with 31% and 18% between 1994 and 1997, the ones with access to technical assistance had been reduced with 10% and 7% during the same period (Mohar, quoted in Arias, 2008: 368, my translation).”

There are different aspects in the consequences of this reform. Firstly, for the 1.4 million campesinos who had become registered as ejidatarios in 2007 and given legally rights as land owners the reform of article 27 has been positive (Appendini, 2008a: 15). This, though, excludes the perspective of the people still left outside of the system and who are now legally and formally excluded. In the interviews the informants have maintained that the reform has left people without land and that the access to land is reduced. Although there is no empirical evidence as to how much the privatization process has advanced, according to Kirsten Appendini (2008a), but an increased social exclusion can be noted.

This exclusion is based on restricting the formal rights to the land to fewer people. Today there are more than four million campesinos without land in Mexico which is a greater number than before the agrarian reform and the revolution 1910 (Morett Sánchez, 2003: 21). This would imply that the access to land has not improved with PROCEDE and the legal opportunities to privatize land. Further it is shown that the commoditization of land, by legally create and intending to secure the individual access to reproductive resources with the ability of land privatization, has not increased the access of land for the campesinos.

The PROCEDE provides the official and legal registration of landowners. Nevertheless, it only recognizes the ejidatarios as owners and gives them the title rights of land. The ejidatario do not have the right to divide the land between children which has generated that the access of land for young people is difficult. With the dividing of ejidos and communities the access to land for younger people is reduced since the ejidos are mostly put in the name of the father, before the collective rights were extended to the whole family.

This has created the problem that the campesino landowners are getting older. The average age of the ejidatarios, the owners of private property and communities, is 50 years and a

fourth of these are over than 65 years. The young people need other economical alternatives and abandon the countryside to migrate, above all to the United States. This is a contributing factor to the immense migration from the Mexican countryside. Between 2001 and 2005 close to 700 000 Mexican workers emigrated to the United States and Canada every year (Robles Berlanga, 2008: 340-342).

Further the consequences in the access to land differ between women and men. It is highly significant to analyze the consequences from a gender perspective in general of the neoliberal reforms but in particular the change of the article 27. The expansion of capital with the neoliberal reforms could be seen as a *formal* reduction of the woman's access to land due to that the creation of individual rights in ownership legally has excluded the woman from access to the ownership and in this way the decision making over the land. With the traditionally origin that women are not ejidatarios the reform legally has created the exclusion of access to land for the women.

For example, in the ejidos' assemblies the women do not have the right to vote which results in that the change in article 27 has generated that when the land is divided the men can sell it without asking for or considering the women's and children's opinion. In this way the women are not legally recognized as campesinos (González Montes and Salles, 1995). Only 17.5% of the total members in ejidos are women which exclude the rest to take part directly in the decision making about the future of their lives and communities. The changes in article 27 leave the female campesino without a protecting legal framework to guarantee their access to the land (Deere and León, 2002). This is with a similar logic as the exclusion of young people to the access of land, explained above. The individualization of land tenancy without particular rights for woman in this way has practically and *formally* marked the marginalization of half the population.

#### **4.4 Consequences for the communities and the culture**

Here the departure point for the analyses is the campesinos' perceptions obtained through the interviews as to how they have been affected, how their conditions in the aspect of culture and their communities have changed due to the neoliberal reforms. The interviews were carried through during January 2009 with slightly over middle aged campesinos representing communities in Oaxaca and Chiapas. These states in the Mexican south-east are economically

poor and have significant populations of indigenous people. Most of the informants are members or leaders in social movements, such as campesino- or Human Rights organizations, which is important to emphasize since it can affect their perspective.

“Food Sovereignty signifies that everybody has adequate food to eat, but the communities do not have enough, they do not have what they need, there is no adequate food. Sometimes the land does not produce, the harvests are not good and the salaries are very low and do not cover the basic needs. We can not buy what we want; it is not enough to maintain our children. This is what is happening in the villages, there is no adequate food as it should be...”<sup>19</sup> Man, Ocosingo, Chiapas (my translation)

The quote above illustrates how the informant perceive that today there is not enough access to adequate food in the communities, as local production is insufficient and salaries are not enough to cover up their basic needs. Because of the neoliberal reforms the conditions for the Mexican campesinos have changed and here it is shown that the local effects are perceived as devastating for the communities in obstructing their ability to survive.

The interviews have created an image of how the neoliberal reforms have had local effects, based on the informants’ perception. One part of this is that the campesinos have been forced to migrate and abandon the countryside in a greater extent since the access to base products has been diminished through increased prices and less employments. The quote below illustrates the informant’s perception of the privatization of state owned companies, and how it has generated difficulties to survive on the countryside.

“Before 1980 things were different, the prices of the products were low since the power of the companies was in the hands of the government; they were private owned by but under the control of the government. But the neoliberal reforms, which meant selling the state owned companies in Mexico to foreigners, have meant a huge change, the prices of base products have increased, they are cutting the budget for everything and firing people. Because of this a movement of migration from here has began, the people do not find work, they do not have food, no money and they migrate to other states, or out of Mexico, for example to the United States, they are going for the dollars that are worth more when they bring them back here.”<sup>20</sup> Man, El Llano Mixtepec, Oaxaca (My translation)

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<sup>19</sup> “La Soberanía Alimentaria significa que todos tenemos de comer, y que es adecuado, pero en las comunidades no alcanzan, no llega a tener todo lo que necesitan, no hay una alimentación adecuada. Por lo mismo que ya comentamos que a veces la tierra no produce, la cosecha no esta bien, y los salarios o los trabajos que se pagan son bajos y no cubren las necesidades necesarias, y por lo mismo no se puede comprar lo que queremos, no alcanza para mantener nuestros hijos, esto es lo que esta pasando en las comunidades, no hay una alimentación adecuada como debe de ser...”

<sup>20</sup> “1980 para atrás las cosas eran distintas, el precio de los productos eran baratos porque las empresas estaban en las manos del gobierno, eran propiedad de los empresarios pero bajo control del gobierno, pero a raíz de las

In the context of their lives the surviving of the communities for the Mexican campesinos seems fundamental, according to the interviews. Concerning what has changed in the conditions for the communities and how they are affected by the neoliberal reforms one informant has perceived:

“...before it was not like this because the assembly was stronger, stronger since it was not possible to sell the land which are ejidos because it is not personal. But now we can see the consequences of the agreements, the reforms which are reaching the communities, and many of the communities do not notice what is happening from the top and down. Well, when the communities are selling the land people leave to look for work, we see them go to other states, other countries, many goes to United States. Because they do not have anything left to do here, they do not have any work...”<sup>21</sup> Man, Ocosingo, Chiapas (My translation)

This implies the occurrence of people being left out when the ejidos are divided and sold, not being able to access the land. The informant is maintaining that when the land had collectively based usurpation rights the access to it was more amply. It is here identified that the privatization of land is the main reason for diminished access to it. The structural changes have in his point of view resulted in commoditization of land and it has had a negative impact for the people; many people are due to this forced to migrate.

When the men migrated before there was more of a certainty that they would return to their families and wives but this has changed since they now can decide to sell their land. Men more often abandon their women and families which, for example has increased the migration of women to United States (Arias, 2008: 374). In the interviews the perception has been maintained that the male migration often leave the women in a more vulnerable situation, as demonstrated in the quote below.

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reformas del neoliberalismo que significa vender las propiedades estatales o particulares de México a los extranjeros ha venido un cambio tremendo, suben precios de todos los productos de primera necesidad y cortan presupuesto de todo y corren gente. A raíz de este ha venido un movimiento migratorio de aquí, la gente ya no encuentran trabajo, ya no encuentran de comer, no hay dinero, y emigran a otros estados y a fuera de México como Estados Unidos, van por los dólares porque valen más a traerlos por acá.

<sup>21</sup> “...antes no porque la asamblea estaba más fortalecida, fortalecida en que no se puede vender las tierras que es ejido no es personal pero ahora pues se ve que tiene consecuencias los tratados, las reformas se va llegando a las comunidades y muchas de las comunidades no se dan cuenta lo que esta pasando, desde arriba hacia abajo. Pues, y cuando las comunidades venden las tierras que hacen, ya salen a buscar trabajo vienen aquí del municipio, a Cancún, se van saliendo a otros estados, otros países, muchos compañeros se van a Estados Unidos. Pues, porque ya no tienen par hacer ya no tienen trabajo...”

“There are many male migrants who abandon their homes, abandon their families, some that go away and do not come back, and others come back with a different family. It is hard (for the wives)...emigrated men comes back and want the money, when they send money they are expecting the women to save it (...) this is why I tell you that the economic violence is much harder.”<sup>22</sup> Women, Matías Romero, Oaxaca (My translation)

This perception implies that the women are not “only” left with an enlarged workload in maintaining the family but some also are obligated to return money that was sent from their husbands when they were away. In this situation the access to adequate food for the women and children is threatened. A further perception emphasized in the interviews is that the neoliberal reforms have created conflicts inside the communities.

“This (the change in article 27) has facilitated the foreign investments...it has created the despoliation of the communities’ patrimony. In various communities people are fighting with each other due to this situation. On one side there are people resisting and fighting to keep the communitarian hegemony, but there is another part of the communities who are more interested in money without considering the damage that is generated. We see this as a project with the bad intention of destroying the original villages since as indigenous people we are owners of these lands and the economic potential they have. We are a disturbance; we are a burden for the transnational investments and the federal government if we continue having the right of the land, of the territory. The objective of the state is to demolish the indigenous people.”<sup>23</sup> Man, Matías Romero, Oaxaca (My translation)

As the quote above demonstrates the neoliberal reforms have arrived with a change from the before essential collective fundament to an individual, personal, departure point. Even though there are no deliberate ideas of destroying the original communities and villages with the neoliberal reforms, such as the change in article 27, it could be an unintended effect which has become evident in the interviews. Here the informant, though, is maintaining and feels that the neoliberal reforms are conscious actions of the Mexican government to demolish their communities and cultures. This since they are an obstacle to the capitalistic development. The

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<sup>22</sup> “Hay muchos emigrantes que abandonan sus casas, abandonan sus familias, algunos se van y no regresan u otros se regresan con otra familia. Allí esta duro (para las mujeres)...Llegan los señores y ya están peleando por el dinero, cuando mandan dinero quieren que uno lo guarde todavía... por eso digo es más duro la violencia económica. Ha habido parejas, ha habido mujeres que han sacado de su casa porque no guardó el dinero.”

<sup>23</sup> “Eso ha facilitado mucho la entrada inversión de otros países...han hecho en gran escala el despojo de los patrimonios de las comunidades. Ahorita en varias comunidades hay enfrentamiento entre la misma gente en una misma comunidad por esta situación. Por un lado hay gente que se resiste y lucha por conservar todavía la hegemonía comunitaria, pero hay otra parte de la comunidad que les interesa más el dinero sin importar el daño que esto esta generando. Entonces, nosotros entendemos que es un proyecto con toda la mala intención de destruir a los pueblos originarios porque nosotros como pueblos indígenas somos dueños de todas estas tierras y todos los potenciales económicos que ellas se generan. Somos un estorbo, somos una molestia para las inversiones transnacionales y para el gobierno federal de que nosotros sigamos teniendo derechos sobre las tierras, sobre el territorio. Entonces este es el objetivo del estado; acabar con los pueblos indígenas.”

capital expansion into land tenancy is emphasized as creating divisions and argumentations inside the communities and assemblies which is further illustrated in the quote below.

“The communities’ structure was based on the indigenous people’s perspective; the decisions were taken collectively with taking into account the continuation of the cultural values. In preparing the entrance for big foreign capital in our country the federal government began a series of national modifications, in particular the change of article 27. This modification brought as a consequence the institution or creation of a program to give the power to every ejidatario (the PROCEDE), every member of the communities, to every citizen, over their land and over the territorial goods. What happened in reality were the destruction of the people’s original organization patterns...and the creation of the concept individualization. The personalized managing of titles was commenced, now no collectivity is found in the communitarian assemblies. This has on one hand generated a social conflict and on the other facilitated despoliation, the destruction of the people’s/ villages originally territories.”<sup>24</sup> Man, Matías Romero, Oaxaca (My translation)

This perception is demonstrating how the individualistic point of view with personalized gain has replaced the traditionally collective departure point amongst parts of the villages while the community as a collective is desired to be maintained by others. Here it is emphasized that the entire organizational structure is not comparable with the neoliberal reforms. The commoditization of land arrives with an individualistic perspective implemented from the top down. This is creating disagreements when the members of the assembly together are supposed to take the decision about dividing the land or not. The disagreements are threatening to indigenous people cultural and traditional foundation, from the campesinos perceptions, since it has been constructed on a collective point of view.

Another aspect is that the cultural inheritance and costumes could be in danger if the big-scale production entirely would take over the agricultural sector in Mexico. This due to that the type of production directed towards few products for export produced in the most efficient way disregards traditions or care for the environment. As David Harvey emphasize (see page 27 in this essay) the environmental sustainability and natural resources are in danger when corporations take over the production since these have no further interest than expand their

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<sup>24</sup> “La estructura de las comunidades era de base de perspectiva como pueblos indígenas, las decisiones se tomaban en la colectividad, con la mira de la continuidad de los valores de la cultura. Con la preparación del gobierno federal para la entrada de los grandes capitales extranjeras en nuestro país hace un serie de modificaciones nacionales, particularmente la modificación en el artículo 27. Esta modificación trajo como consecuencia la institución o creación de un programa para darle el poder a cada ejidatario, a cada comunero, a cada ciudadano, sobre sus tierras y sobre sus bienes territoriales. Con esto lo que sucedió en realidad es destruir este patrón organizacional originaria de los pueblos...y se empieza a crear ya el concepto individualización, y se empieza a manejar las decisiones a título personal, ya no en la colectividad, las asambleas comunitarias. Entonces, eso a un lado ha creado un conflicto social, y por otro lado a facilitado el despojo, la destrucción de territorios de los pueblos originarios.”

capital. Further, these corporations have no interest in creating sustainable production since they can move on if the conditions stop being profitable. They do not even have to own the land but are rather striving for renting it since this implies facilitation when they decide to find other spaces for further capital accumulation. This expansion of capital is often at the expense of the nature and exploitation of natural resources; the interest of preserving can be maintained with the small-scale production. The perception below illustrates that the corporations mainly are interested in capital accumulation and not in establishing sustainability.

“...the owners of the land are supposed to be a partner (of the corporations that rent the land) which is a lie since when the land is rented they can not enter their territory because there are guards that do not allow it; the contracts are 30 years and practically in favor for the corporation.”<sup>25</sup> Man, Matias Romero, Oaxaca

With renting out their land during a period of, for example, 30 years the dependency of capital interests for the campesinos is further established, in accordance to dependency theory. This since with these conditions the campesinos are depending on the private corporation to receive an income and do not have any agency in deciding to how to utilize the territory. The agreement also gives the corporation no reasons to preserve the conditions or generating sustainability since it has a time-limit. The corporations' presence is solely justified with capital accumulation in accordance with neoliberal theory.

The culture has in other ways been maintained in the interviews as affected by the neoliberal reforms as the perception below illustrates, here with the change of consumption patterns.

“The food has changed a lot due to the introduction of fast food, like the Maruchan soup, now people are forgetting what is traditional for us Mexicans, corn, beans, chili, what is characterizing us and this is getting lost”<sup>26</sup> Man, Matías Romero, Oaxaca (My translation)

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<sup>25</sup> “...los dueños de la tierra son socios (con las empresas que rentan tierra) cual es mentira porque una vez que rentan las tierras ya no pueden entrar a sus terrenos porque hay un vigilante que no permiten, los contratos hacen por 30 años, y allí prácticamente, lo convenio es en el favor de la empresa.”

<sup>26</sup> “La alimentación ha cambiado mucho por la introducción de comida rápida, como las sopas de Maruchan, ya se está olvidando lo que es tradicional para nosotros como mexicanos, el maíz, el frijol, el chile, lo que caracteriza nosotros ya se está perdiendo.”

As demonstrated in the quote the informants' perception of the increased consumption of Maruchan is contributing to the disappearance of significant parts in the traditions and culture since the food is an essentially important part of it. Changing the consumption patterns is in this way undermining the importance of traditional food. Here the neoliberal reforms, which have facilitated the import of prepared fast food, are shown to have an important impact in the culture on a local level. The perception that the expansion of capital has undermined the traditions also was emphasized in the way that

“before the culture, everything, was communal, communal in a collective way, the communitarian way, all the decisions were analyzed in a meeting with an assembly, it was planted, dialoged, where all situations were debated, all social issues, the majority of the village was taking decisions (...) it is communitarian; the power, the labor, the festivals and the land, these are the four elements which we see as fundamental elements in the social life, all this, according to me, has changed due to it has penetrated the system we live in, today more than nothing else the capitalism”<sup>27</sup> Man, Matías Romero, Oaxaca

This perception finally illustrates how the culture and traditions have been commoditized when the capital has been let further into its space. It is implied that it fundamentally goes against the indigenous traditions since they have been constructed on reciprocity and collectivity.

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<sup>27</sup> “La cultura antes, todo era comunal, comunal nos decimos de manera colectiva, de manera comunitaria, cualquier decisión es una asamblea en una reunión donde se analizan, donde se plantean, donde se dialogan, donde se debatiran cualquier situación, cualquier asunto social, la gran cantidad de pueblos ciudadanos son los que deciden para tomar una decisión (...) es comunitario; el poder, la fiesta, el trabajo y la tierra son los cuatro elementos que nosotros vemos como los elementos fundamentales en la vida social, todo esto, digo yo, se ha cambiado porque ha permeado por el sistema social que vivimos, el capitalismo más que nada hoy en día”

## 5. CONCLUSION

The neoliberal reforms have generated increased dependency for the Mexican campesinos at a production level. With the concentration of ownership the local production for local consumption is threatened since it has become harder for small-scale production to survive due to the reducing of government support and trade liberalization. The opportunities in creating access to adequate food at a local level are in this way diminished. Increasingly the only opportunity for the campesinos to earn their living on the Mexican countryside is by being employed by the agro-industries, but the rural employments are at the same time decreasing.

The foreign direct investments are creating an increased dependency on foreign capital which is reproducing the international economic asymmetries. The Mexican people are more and more dependent on exterior capital for their surviving, foreign capital which is exploiting Mexico's resources, in accordance to dependency theory. Since the profits made by these transnational corporations do not benefit the Mexican campesinos it also could be seen as a threat to the access of adequate food.

The economically based asymmetric relation between Mexico and United States is amplified and reproduced due to the enormous increase of the imports of corn which is the main staple food in Mexico. The former national self-sufficiency in corn production has been replaced by food dependency. The increased import has generated unfair competition for the Mexican campesinos since they receive reduced or eliminated state support and have less advanced technological conditions. This while United States farmers receive huge subsidizes and can keep their prices below the international markets.

The genetically modified corn could be a threat towards the Mexican biodiversity of corn. It has already been shown that the genetically modified product has contaminated corn in the country; in taking over the genes corn that has not been made in a laboratory could be extinguished. Making experimental cultivation of genetically modified corn is further enlarging the risk. This is a danger towards the most important biodiversity of corn in the world which is postulated in Mexico.

The increased use in improved varieties of seeds that cannot be replanted the next year and the commercialization of seeds also has deepened the dependency for Mexican campesinos from a Food Sovereignty perspective. This dependency is a threat towards access to adequate

food since the private corporations now are the controlling the distribution of seeds. The campesinos must in this way afford to buy the seeds every year to cultivate. The access of reproductive resources is depending on the capital and access to financial resources is necessary.

The dependency for Mexican campesinos has grown on a consumption level. The growing demand of corn in Mexico is filled up with corn from United States. This means that Mexico is increasingly dependent on United States to cover up their basic needs. The food security is controlled by the international market and if the price goes up the access to adequate food decline. From a Food Sovereignty perspective the dependency for the Mexican campesinos also has been deepened. This since the private corporation Maseca has with cheap imported corn created a monopoly in the industrialization of processed cornstarch which is a part of staple food in Mexico.

The poverty and social inequalities on the Mexican countryside which have augmented with the neoliberal reforms are threatening the survival of the people and the staple food prices at the same time have increased significantly. This is an additional threat to the access of adequate food.

The consumption patterns have changed; a significant decrease in nutritious traditional bean consumption and an increase of fast food consumption. The introduction of the instant soup Maruchan produced in United States could be seen as a sign of commoditization of the consumption structures since the consumption of this product has become significant. This has increased the dependency on transnational corporations and also diminished the access to adequate food.

The neoliberal reforms have diminished the access to land for significant parts of the countryside populations. The reform of article 27 in the Constitution has facilitated commoditization of land. In the process of dividing the ejidos people now are formally and legally excluded from the usurpation right to the land since the rights are individual and only include some people; the ejidatarios. Before the rights were collectively based and therefore not formally excluding. The young people and the women are the ones negatively affected by this since the ejidatarios mostly are the older men. The men can now, for example, sell the land and migrate without asking the women or children.

The perceptions of the informants in this investigation have been that there is no access to adequate food in the communities on the Mexican countryside and the salaries cannot cover up their basic needs. They also perceive a threat towards the surviving of the communities in the aspect that the neoliberal reforms have generated the official dividing of the territory and some people are left without land. People are forced to migrate and the male migration often tends to leave the women in a more vulnerable situation. This since the women is left with an augmented workload of taking care of the family and creating access to adequate food. One perception raised in the interview is that some men want their money they sent home back from their wives when they return which puts the woman in a difficult situation.

A further perception is that the neoliberal reforms have created conflicts inside the communities and also in this way are threatening to destroy them. The reforms have come with a fundamentally individual departure point while the communities have had a collective. The disagreements are generated when some people want to maintain the collective and others do not. One informant maintains that the government intends to destroy the indigenous communities because they are obstacles to the capitalistic development. The perception is further emphasizing that the whole organizational structure of the communities are not adjustable to the neoliberal reforms structures.

It has also been shown in this investigation that there is a threat towards the nature and environment on a local level if the private big-scale corporations take over. This is since the private corporations have no interests in developing sustainable relationships either with the people or towards the natural resources. When the natural resources run out or they are not profitable anymore the corporations can move on which could be a danger toward cultural inheritance and customs. With renting out their land the campesinos are more dependent on the private interests.

The informants have maintained that their culture has been undermined by the neoliberal reforms in other ways also. With the change of the consumption patterns the perception that the culture is forgotten and totally changed due to the increased consumption of Maruchan has been emphasized. According to one informant; when the capital has been let into new spaces and therefore commoditized them; the land, the power, the labor and the festivals, the cultural essence has fundamentally been demolished which traditionally has been constructed on reciprocity and collectivity.

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