

**La actividad agrícola y el proceso de conurbación. Caso
Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala**

*The agricultural activity and the concurring process. Case Santa María
Texcalac, Tlaxcala*

*A atividade agrícola e o processo de conurbação. Case Santa María
Texcalac, Tlaxcala*

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Resumen

El objetivo del presente trabajo consiste en analizar la situación actual de la actividad agrícola en el contexto geográfico y social de una localidad rural en vías de incorporación económica y territorial a procesos ciudadanos. En Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, se encuentra un ejemplo patente de estos cambios, de ahí que se haya seleccionado como caso de investigación. Para obtener esta información, se realizaron entrevistas de profundidad con informantes clave y la aplicación de un cuestionario a una muestra representativa. Los resultados obtenidos en los cuestionarios y en las entrevistas coinciden en que la práctica de la agricultura en Santa María Texcalac ha disminuido significativamente debido a que, a nivel ejidal o pequeña propiedad, ha dejado de ser una actividad económica que proporcione ingresos suficientes para mantener a una familia. En la actualidad, la agricultura solo es practicada por personas mayores de edad; los padres no tienen intenciones de inculcar la agricultura en sus hijos; los terrenos en el presente se venden, sobre todo, para destinarlos a otro uso diferente al agrícola; además de que al Gobierno mexicano solo le interesa apoyar a los grandes productores agrícolas: el campesino pequeño no existe en sus planes.

Palabras clave: actividad agrícola, actividad económica, conurbación, localidad rural.

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze the current situation of agricultural activity in the geographical and social context of a rural town in its economic and territorial incorporation to city processes. In Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, a clear example of these changes was found, which is why it was selected as a research case. To obtain this information, in-depth interviews were carried out with key informants, as well as the application of a questionnaire to a representative sample. The results obtained in the questionnaires and interviews show that the practice of agriculture in Santa María Texcalac has decreased significantly because— at common level (ejidal) or small property— it has ceased to be an economic activity that provide enough incomes to support a family; agriculture, currently practiced only by elder people; parents do not intend to inculcate the practice of agriculture in their children; lands are now sold, above all, to be used not for agriculture; the Mexican Government is only

interested in supporting large agricultural producers: the small peasant farmers do not exist in its plans.

Keywords: agricultural activity, economic activity, conurbation, rural location.

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar a situação atual da atividade agrícola no contexto geográfico e social de uma cidade rural no processo de incorporação econômica e territorial aos processos da cidade. Em Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, há um exemplo claro dessas mudanças, razão pela qual foi selecionada como um caso de pesquisa. Para obter essas informações, entrevistas em profundidade foram realizadas com informantes-chave e a aplicação de um questionário a uma amostra representativa. Os resultados dos questionários e entrevistas concordam que a prática da agricultura em Santa Maria Texcalac diminuiu significativamente porque, para ejido nível ou pequena propriedade, deixou de ser uma atividade econômica que gera renda suficiente para suportar uma família. Atualmente, a agricultura é praticada apenas por pessoas em idade legal; os pais não pretendem inculcar a agricultura em seus filhos; as terras no presente são vendidas, principalmente, para serem destinadas a outro uso diferente ao agrícola; Além disso, o governo mexicano está interessado apenas em apoiar grandes produtores agrícolas: o pequeno camponês não existe em seus planos.

Palavras-chave: atividade agrícola, atividade econômica, conurbação, localização rural.

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Introduction

The uncontrolled, and much less planned, growth of urban spots involves an increasingly common process that, due to the contact and coexistence with this process, seems natural. This happens specifically with the economic and territorial incorporation of peripheral communities - eminently rural - that upsets their entire history, their customs, their traditions and their economy, creating new needs and satisfiers. Do not think that the rural communities that are annexed to urban dynamics are the only ones that suffer the consequences of this process, also the urban stains that they annex suffer serious consequences with this incorporation, delaying or hindering, to a large extent, a sustainable urban development. This problem is experienced both in Central America (Valladares, 2008) and in South America (Moreno, 2004) or Europe (Naredo and Frías, 2003, Pozo, 1987), which denotes its universality.

By definition, it is known that conurbation is the conjunction of two or more populations (INEGI, 2010), in such a way that a conurbated area is one in which the visible limits disappear and only the administrative remain, that is, de jure are two or more populations; de facto is only one. The consequences of the conurbation that reaches mainly rural societies is ambivalent: on the one hand, it substantially mutates the "being and doing" of the rurality of these localities and, on the other hand, also the city -which extends as an urban stain before the the need for space for commercial, industrial and service activities, mainly for housing use-suffers the consequences of its own growth, because, in addition to not being ordered, lacking any planning action, it cuts -at least partially- its own supply of agricultural products nearby, having to look for other sources of supply, in addition to increasing the needs of infrastructure and services that are not always provided, forming belts of misery.

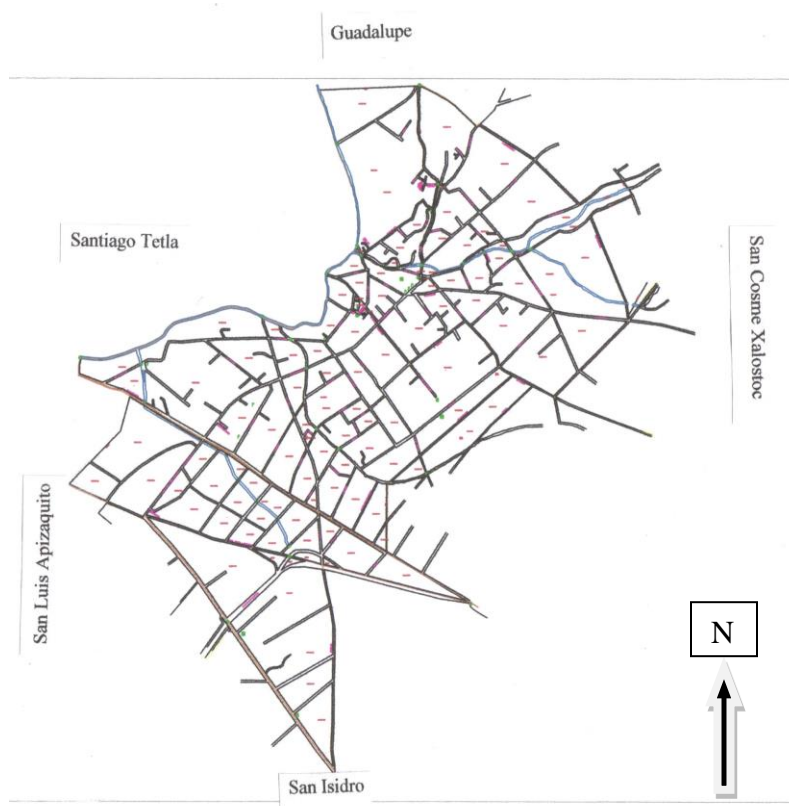
In a process of conurbation of rural localities, the agricultural activity -which means the center in which all the economic activity turns- is the first one that suffers a state of crisis, preamble of the imminent change that implies the adoption and adaptation to another rhythm of lifetime. New opportunities are presented to those who, throughout their life, the field

represented their only alternative to obtain income. The supply and demand of the field is no longer what it produces. The interest now falls on the soil itself; This is the one that is bought or sold with other objectives unrelated to agricultural production. The diversity of activities is a variable whose scope and meaning in an eminently rural community reach dimensions capable of contaminating not only the hegemonic economic activity of the locality but also its social and cultural environment.

Santa María Texcalac, belonging to the municipality of Apizaco, Tlaxcala, was the community chosen for the study. It is a town that 30 years ago could still be classified as predominantly rural, in which its agricultural activity represented the axis of its economy. Now it is a locality immersed in the dynamics of the conurbation process; It is not yet a totally conurbated locality, but neither is it an eminently rural locality. Its agricultural activity can not be considered hegemonic. The sectorization of its activity in the economically active population has undergone a spectacular turnaround, as evidenced by the data compiled by the X General Population and Housing Census of 1980 compared with the results of the following censuses. The study of this community can provide valuable information to understand and understand the stimuli and triggers that drive the changes involved in a conurbation process in localities of this type.

Santa María Texcalac is located geographically in the center of the state of Tlaxcala, slightly to the northeast. Its geographical limits are determined as follows: towards the north it borders the town of Guadalupe; to the south it borders the community of San Isidro; towards the east with the population of San Cosme Xalostoc and towards the west with the town of Santiago Tetla and San Luis Apizaquito.

Figura 1. Sta. María Texcalac: colindancias



Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en cartografía del INEGI (2000)

Texcalac is a town that has undergone changes that, while they should not be strange, if they are for the short time in which they have developed. It is a locality that is not located in the limits of the city of Apizaco, that is, its periurbanity is relative, geographically speaking, but it is a community that economically, socially and culturally manifests rural characteristics in the process of conurbation, because its inhabitants - given the proximity to the city of Apizaco and its communication with it - they exercise most of their activities in the municipal capital, gradually losing their identity and independence in all these fields.

One of the variables that have most influenced this community to undergo drastic changes is the Mexico-Veracruz highway, which in the section Apizaco-Huamantla at approximately kilometer 3, passes through the land that is still within the limits of Texcalac. At this height, there is the entrance to the town; This circumstance has contributed to the

establishment of residential and industrial human settlements along both sides of the road. Very few sites remain unoccupied in the mentioned path.

This growth is chaotic. It does not respond to any territorial planning or any urban development plan. Its municipal head is using this rural town in the process of conurbation to decentralize industries that, in some way, have a high degree of contamination. On the other hand, the settlement of industries, at least at first sight, does not seem to have a minimum of sustainable planning.

In this locality, the process of conurbation is not a finished process, but it is in its infancy, but the speed at which it advances is visible and quantifiable by the aforementioned signs. Time is appropriate to know, through research, the thinking and knowledge elements provided by the inhabitants of the community, who are present and active actors in this process.

The problem with this research is to know precisely if, in a social and economic geographical context that characterizes rural communities in the process of conurbation, as is the case of the town of Santa María Texcalac, agricultural activity is marginalized and unstructured, with little economic importance, buried by the influence of urban processes or, on the contrary, it is an activity that has found adaptation mechanisms not only to survive, but to become more dynamic by taking advantage of the new city elements that its context offers.

Twenty years ago, the landscape of the town of Santa María Texcalac was eminently agricultural. The use of the land outside the spaces occupied by the houses and by the cattle pens was intended for agricultural work. At this time, where there were labor camps, there are now established and established industries, as well as housing units built and under construction as can be seen in the following figure.

Figura 2. Industria y unidad habitacional establecida



Fuente: Elaboración propia, trabajo de campo.

In the same way, it is interesting to analyze the behavior of economic activities in a rural population in the process of conurbation as is the case of the locality that concerns here. Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, has undergone drastic changes in the last 30 years in terms of its economic activities, as can be seen in the following table.

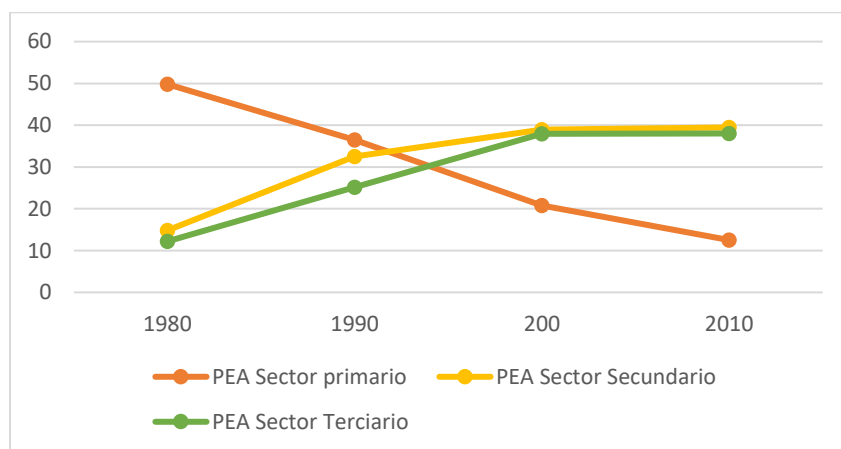
Tabla 1. *Ocupación de la PEA en Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, en los sectores económicos*

	1980		1990		2000		2010	
Población Total	3300		4780		5284		6279	
	Número	Porcentaje	Número	Porcentaje	Número	Porcentaje	Número	Porcentaje
Población económicamente activa (PEA)	990	100	1170	100	1734	100	2354	100
PEA Sector primario	493	49.8	427	36.5	361	20.82	295	12.53
PEA Sector Secundario	147	14.85	380	32.48	675	38.93	929	39.46
PEA Sector Terciario	121	12.22	294	25.13	658	37.95	895	38.02

Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos del INEGI del X, XI, XII y XII Censo de Población y Vivienda (1980, 1990, 2000 y 2010)

This situation is only explained in a population in the process of conurbation, where the Economically Active Population (EAP) changes in such a radical way and, therefore, significantly. It is interesting to note how, in a period of 20 years (1980 - 2000), the PEA totally invested the figures in its activities by sector. In 1980, Santa María Texcalac still did not enter the career of the conurbation and its EAP in the primary sector significantly exceeded that of the secondary and tertiary sector. However, for the year 2000, the EAP of the primary sector -which represented, in 1980, 50% of the total- only represents 20.8%, while the EAP in the secondary sector -which, in 1980, only represented 15 %- up to 39% for the year 2000; The same applies to the EAP in the tertiary sector, which, in 1980, barely reached 12% and, by the year 2000, already has 40%. In 2010, the trend remained the same, observing some stability in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Graphically, it is more representative as illustrated in the following figure.

Figura 3. PEA de los sectores primario, secundario y terciario



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos del INEGI del X, XI, XII y XII Censo de Población y Vivienda (1980, 1990, 2000 y 2010)

The graph shows the behavior of the PEA in each of the three economic sectors. In a natural way, the growth that the same community has in terms of its population is reflected in the growth of the general EAP. It is illustrative the increase of this in 1980 was 990 employed, in 2000 it was thousand 734 employed and for the year 2010 of two thousand 354 employed, that is, in 30 years, the PEA grew by 238%.

Regarding the growth behavior for the EAP divided into economic sectors, it is perceived that the same behavior is not registered for each of them. When observing the growth recorded by the general EAP of the community, it would be expected that the behavior for the EAP by sector would be the same, that is, that in some way the three economic sectors would have an increase, perhaps not more than twice as much. its original value, but an increase was observed. However, the graph shows the opposite. On the one hand, it is observed that the EAP of the secondary sector in the year 1980 meant a total of 147 employed persons, but for the year 2000 we found an employed population of 675 inhabitants. On the other, establishing the trend with the data from the previous censuses, for 2010 there is an occupied population of 929 inhabitants, which speaks of the fact that the EAP in this sector grew in a notorious manner; For its part, the EAP of the tertiary sector also shows considerable growth, since - as can be seen in table 1 - for 1980 it shows a total of 121 employed persons, while for the year 2000 the total is 658 employed and for the 2010, of 895 employed, which also represents a considerable increase, that is, both sectors have an impressive growth. These increases suggest the existence of a change in agricultural activity to another type of economic activity. On the other hand, the PEA of the primary sector -of that economic sector in which the majority of the inhabitants of Santa María Texcalac performed their main economic activity- presented a quite noticeable decrease: already in 1980 it was 493 employed persons and represented more than half of the total EAP. However, in the year 2000 there were only 361 employed persons and in 2010, 295 employed persons included in this sector; according to the people who inhabit the community, it continues to decrease significantly.

The processes of conurbation must be considered as a consequence of the natural growth of the population: urban spots are common that end up joining together in one, usually following communication routes, while the territorial limits are almost completely lost. However, there is another process of conurbation suffered by rural localities absorbed by a nearby urban area. The phenomenology that occurs when this type of process is developed is multifaceted and any angle that wants to be studied provides important knowledge to understand the naturalness of the mutations suffered by this type of society. To pretend that the rural localities and, even, the cities preserve the same panorama that 20 years ago is totally

inadmissible. Change is the product of history, it is the product of natural evolution; the rural localities like the *ciudades* are active and dynamic entities. Statism does not exist under any concept where the categories of time and space are present.

These two types of conurbation generate their own problems. In the case of urban spots, it is characteristic that the discussion falls on administrative aspects, but a conurbation between a city that absorbs a rural community profoundly transforms all aspects of the rural population. At present, the conurbation process demands more and more information that supports the decision making of those responsible for local and regional development. In a process of this type, the rural localities change -especially their economically active population-: they change the use of land, they increase their population, they change their habits, customs and traditions, their natural environment is modified, as well as their territorial profile. This process is an event that acutely changes the environment in which it develops.

The state of Tlaxcala is subject to conurbations that develop in a present and acting manner. Human settlements are densified in such a way that - as predicted by Garza (2007) - in a non-long period of this century, the population will be compacted, in such a way that it will form an urban mega-mancha that will encompass, in the form of a polygon, cities of Huamantla, Tepeaca, Atlixco, Tlalancaleca and Texmelucan with the city of Tlaxcala. This urban megamancha will have as its center and economic-political axis the city of Puebla, which, by then, will be linked to the urban sprawl of the metropolitan area of Mexico City.

The process by which an eminently rural location is conurbated with a nearby locality is multifaceted. Although common elements to these processes underlie, the individualization of the intervening variables that accelerate or retard this process, as well as the adequate or inadequate management of them, produces a "beneficial" conurbation for the conurbated locality and for the city that conurbates; otherwise, the result is translated into a deconstructed urban conurbation, with loss of identity and unbalanced economic activities, in which the big loser is agricultural activity. On the other hand, a city was found that does not have projected

growth plans, insufficient services and lack of capacity to provide economic and social satisfaction.

When we talk about common elements that underlie as a result of a process of conurbation of rural localities, we appeal, among other things, to the panorama, to the change of landscape that has been alluded to, but that coincides faithfully with what Mendoza Arroyo comments on. refer to the changes suffered in an ejido conurbation: "The objective is to show how these transformations modified the landscape, once characterized by its diversity and forest wealth" (2001, p.133).

It is interesting to observe the series of phenomena and events that take place during the process of conurbation of an eminently rural community. The change, in the end - although it is still an interesting object of study - is not the protagonist in this proposal, but the process, the steps, the events, the points or phases that happen during this evolution. It is important to recognize that the transformation suffered by these societies in this conurbation process is not only peripheral or external, geographical or physical; this transformation goes further: they change their traditions, their mental categories, their way of life, their uses and customs, their socialization, their morals and their own cosmogony. The community suffers such a profound upheaval that, as in the case here referred to, the inhabitants of the place, the oldest ones, claim to ignore their own community.¹

Serious studies - led by the work of González (2002) - affirm that, in the process by which eminently rural communities are incorporated into the urban dynamic with all its consequences, there is no acculturation phase, but the rural community is strengthened, emerge as defense mechanisms a reinforcement of their customs and traditions that are imposed on the features or cultural elements that come with urbanization. This position affirms that this process becomes a "negotiation of culture" in which the involved cultures contribute their elements and enrich themselves in some way without abandoning a tacit struggle in which the cultural elements become -especially in the community absorbed by the city- an element of defense of its territorial patrimony. González's conclusions are logical

¹ Testimonios orales del señor Virgilio Huerta, Guadalupe García y otros entrevistados.

if one considers that they are the result of a case study whose subject was the municipality of Huixquilucan -particularly, the Otomí peoples bordering Tacuba and Tacubaya in Mexico City-. We can not lose sight of the fact that this conurbation has a well-defined causality: these people become recipients of immigration. The need for housing in the then Federal District forces builders to create huge multi-family buildings and housing units that demand that the services provided by the metropolis expand, considering these towns within the urban sprawl. In these cases, it is understandable that the cultural defense mechanisms of the invaded community flourish and that the rural communities defend their autonomy, both political and axiological, in addition to selling their uses and customs as an attraction of the area.

But not all eminently agricultural rural communities are conurbated by causalities related to immigration. There are other cases in which the cultural changes suffered by rural communities -whether they are in the process of conurbation or not- are due to the productive forces that are installed in the community or close to it. To the forces of political power, which facilitates or conditions this diversity of productive forces -especially when production is mainly agricultural and permeates a particular product that guarantees attractive profits-, the inhabitants of these communities establish coexistence mechanisms in their economic activities, working as workers in the industries that are established in their community and renting cheap labor from other states for their agricultural activities (Lomnitz, 1982).

As can be seen, these cases of balance between culture and production are also characteristic of eminently rural rural localities that undergo changes due to the diversity of productive forces, due to the installation of industries that settle in or near the community. In addition, there are other factors that particularize their evolution: they are agricultural communities in which a product that is profitable predominates and, on the other hand, the community has a strong tourist attraction, as is the case of Tepoztlán, subject of the Lomnitz study.

Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala - as the subject of this research - is, although individual, mostly common to rural eminently agricultural communities, sharing characteristics of crop

products, traditions and customs that are in a situation of conurbation to an urban area of the Typical Tlaxcala cities.

If the result of the investigation is what appears as a total modification suffered by these communities in their cultural elements due to their process of conurbation, it can be affirmed that, in the cultural aspect, these rural communities referred to suffer a true cultural erosion due to productive diversity that disrupts their economic activities, services and satisfactions, but, above all, the creation of new needs imposed by the arrival of the city to its own land (González, 2002).

Describing the benefits or problems generated by a conurbation process, emphasizing the importance of one or the other, depends on the optics and the goals pursued. The important fact that underlies any analysis that is attempted of this process is that it causes territorial administrative, political and cultural changes, that is, the existential dynamic is completely changed. A conurbation process modifies the landscape, modifies the economic activity and modifies the uses, traditions and customs of the localities absorbed by the urban sprawl. Mendoza (2001) makes a description-narration of the process of ejidal conurbation, territorial change and revaluation of natural resources in the ejido of San Francisco Uruapan from 1977 to 1997. In this work, they highlight, in addition to the physical changes suffered by the areas In a process of conurbation, the political-administrative relations that the ejidatarios themselves modify with interests and objectives different from the original ones, "defining and redefining in a contentious way the criteria of inclusion and exclusion to the ejidal territory and its resources" (p. 133).

The conurbation process of the rural localities, whose economic activity historically was agriculture, immediately produces a change of landscape that is the result of the change of land use. As one of the first consequences of this process, the conceptualization of the relationship between urban spots and peripheral rural localities absorbed by urban processes changes radically. The urban-rural dichotomy disappears, not only conceptually but territorially, relations of interdependence become radicalized. However, in this change, the rural localities are always at a disadvantage because they are neither cities nor are rural

localities, their subsistence relationship is made difficult by the irruption of other economic sectors that are alien to their historicity. The change is not easy to digest for the inhabitants of these localities. Some adapt to the development and testing of non-traditional agricultural activities or abandon their traditional agricultural activity to opt for different economic activities, or emerge in a process of coexistence between various activities.

The occupation of traditional rural areas by industrial or urban activities has meant that agricultural activity is only one and not the most important of the economic activities of rural life. This has been termed as "new rurality" or "rurbanization" by Delgado (1999), who cites other authors such as Bertrand and García handling the same concepts. Authors such as Pacheco (2002) also speak of the concept of "new urbanity". The process of urbanization of rural societies is currently not exceptional; affects every rural area peripheral to urban spots on a daily basis. This process is so widespread that the quantity and quality of change that it brings requires a reconceptualization of the classical theories that distinguished "rural" from "urban". Traditional concepts no longer explain reality and a large number of processes generate substantial changes that require an axiological and semantic rethinking of the conceptual duality of "rural" and "urban".

The current structural interdependence of fields such as economic, political, cultural, social and, even, religious - interpreted as a sign of these times - has generated currents or political-economic positions such as globalization and neoliberalism dictate the fate of the productive forces of a country (Ramírez, 2003). The new rural scenario, product of globalization -which, inevitably, goes hand in hand with neoliberal policies-, is increasingly crude and devastating. In the new conception of agricultural economic activity there is no place for the small producer. In eminently rural communities, the proliferating appearance of microtiendas is evident at first sight. The interrelation of subsistence among the inhabitants of these communities becomes complex. The agricultural producers - who, in these communities, were always the "biggest" and the "strongest" because of the extension of the land they owned - strengthen their greatness and strength for two obvious reasons. In the first place, an escalation of purchase is launched to the smallholders who know that they are condemned to extermination: now they also add to their properties what they obtain by

buying ejidos that were previously untouchable, but that, from the modification to Article 27 Of the Constitution, were made available to these landlords. Second, government policies launch "field aid" programs, whose recipients can only be those who own large tracts of land.

A smallholder is not subject to programs to obtain agricultural machinery. Also, why would he need it? It is not granted special credits nor is it supported with programs for the disposal of seeds or chemical fertilizers. Currently, the smallholder or the ejidatario does not have proposals for support but for purchase.

The official discourse contains a very high degree of ethical, moral and true vocation content, considering as a primary objective the fight against poverty. However, policies applied explicitly to the countryside, on the contrary, are generators of poverty. The problem is complicated because this scenario, due to a natural inertia, transfers a part of this problem to the cities, creating a new relationship between the rural and the urban that, depending on the perspective from which it is to be observed, represents a serious problem.

When these reflections are placed in a concept such as the "new rurality", it is necessary to fall into a series of questions whose answers do not always seem to be in favor of the parvifundistas. On the one hand, the small owners of agricultural lands, in addition to the ejidatarios, assure that the agricultural production -which was once sufficient for family maintenance- has ceased to be so since the agricultural policies decided that whoever wants to live in the countryside should own agrarian extensions that make him subject of strong and sufficient supports to be considered as one of the integrating elements of the national economy. In these cases, is the new rurality exclusive of the large food corporations and the landowners? The inhabitant of rural areas who "loves" his land refuses to die, refuses to abandon his agricultural activities, but lives the reality that agricultural production is no longer sufficient for an elementary sustenance of his family, so he is forced to search for other economic activities that, in some way, guarantee an available income.

So, the new rurality will be for the small owner to use his agricultural production for self-consumption, converting it into a complementary activity of the income obtained through other activities of different sector? Attentively, a document from the Inter-American

Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) states: "It is a convincing fact that rural space in the American countries has been evolving, confronting us today with a new rural scenario, based on a territorial character, which allows visualize human settlements and their relationships in a rural-urban continuum expressed, among other aspects, in a progressive development of non-traditional agricultural activities and non-agricultural activities in rural areas "(IICA, 2000).

To all this, there is another approach to the "new rurality": an approach that, by its objectives, might seem idealistic, however, is based on the objectivity of present reality. For no one is it hidden that the rural scenario is in a process of profound modification and is changing. This reality obliges us to reconceptualize rurality in a profound but, above all, functional way. Public policies can not remain stagnant about their agricultural conceptions.

The awareness that manifests itself internationally on the chronic problem of poverty is praiseworthy; in organizations and pronouncements worldwide there are always declarations and calls to the governments of the countries to decisively combat the poverty suffered by large sectors of the population throughout the world. It is true that poverty is not exclusive of the rural environment, but it is in this scenario that it becomes more scandalous. The worrying thing is that the different governments of the countries - participants of summits, congresses, agreements and joint declarations that are pronounced on the adoption of strategies and programs with objectives of fight against the poverty - do not carry out of an effective way what they approve and what they claim to be convinced of. The new rurality is not a problem, it is an inescapable reality, product of the socioeconomic evolution of the world directed by the owners of political and economic power. The option is to accept it as a challenge in which the integral participation of the whole society, of all public and private organizations, but, above all, of the governments is combined so that they decide once and for all to adopt effective policies that consider human integral development as a priority.

International organizations are insistent on this foundation: to integrate the inhabitants of the rural environment to be protagonists of their own development, identifying potentials

that can be translated into endogenous elements as integrators of local and regional development (UNDP, 2008 and 2010).

From the above, we can conclude that the new rurality represents an opportunity to regain the value of the countryside and combat rural poverty through programs with a high content of integral human development. The new rurality requires the generation of jobs through a profound innovation in the countryside, based on the diversification of agricultural production. It is precisely a change according to the new rural scenarios, accept and promote it through new productive forms.

The accelerated growth of the urban population is directly proportional to the decrease in the rural population (Giraldo, García, Bateman and Alonso, 2006), and this phenomenon is already a concern of international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Agriculture (FAO) that diagnoses this event as an increase in hunger and malnutrition in the world (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2013). The migratory and conurbation processes not only increase the dimensions of the urban sprawl, but also cause the abandonment of agricultural activities, which translates into reduced availability of these products. The shortage of agricultural products impacts both the population that stops producing them and those that stop obtaining them.

Method

The methodology used in this project took care to follow the techniques of scientific research in the social area. Its application was carried out to the extent that the local authorities facilitated the development of the different study activities in their community.

1. Documentary research: served as the reference framework, whose content was demography, land use, land change and diversification of activities.
2. Field research: it constitutes the central axis of the investigation, since it provided living and experiential testimonies of the process of incorporation into the city, how the consequences of this process have been assimilated, to what extent the integrated areas have been affected and how they qualify The tools used were the analysis of the

universe population, sample for questionnaire application, design and application of questionnaire, as well as interviews with authorities and significant local characters.

In field trip, you can see the almost perfect division in the town. From south to north it presents characteristics that exemplify and instruct on the effects of a conurbation process, which - slowly but surely and irreversibly - is changing the landscape of the panorama that incorporates its very special dynamic: the southern part of the locality is the one that is suffering an invasion of industries and work centers equivalent to workshops of all kinds. This is explainable because it is the part of the population that is crossed by the Mexico-Veracruz federal highway. The central part of the population is the one that presents a more urban panorama without fully reaching these characteristics, but it is the closest thing to a trace of this type. On the other hand, the northern zone is the one that has the characteristics closest to agricultural rurality, not only because of the fields that are still dedicated for sowing, but also because of the characteristics of housing, roads and paths, among others.

For the calculation of the sample, the total of Santa María Texcalac households were considered, applying maximum variance, a reliability of 95% and accuracy of 10%; a total of 88 respondents were obtained.

Results

In Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, agricultural activities are currently practiced mostly by older people; Young people do not seem to be attracted to this productive sector. The reason is because the field-at the level of small landowners or ejidatarios-is not profitable or provides income to support a family. For these same reasons, older people encourage other economic activities in their children. Therefore, the younger the interviewee, the less likely that their main activity is agriculture decreases significantly.

Tabla 2. Actividad económica principal

Edad de las personas entrevistadas	Actividad económica principal				Total	
	Agricultura		Otro			
	#	%	#	%	#	%
20 - 44	11	32.4	23	67.6	34	100
45 - 84	32	62.7	19	37.3	51	100
Total	43	50.6	42	49.4	85	100

Fuente: Elaboración propia (trabajo de campo)

It is imperative not to lose sight of the fact that this dynamic of change in economic activity-observed in the locality-occurs in a scenario of conurbation process; the access that the inhabitants of this locality have with the city of Apizaco and the proximity of means of communication with other cities, such as Huamantla, has facilitated and -in some way- induced to the search of other economic activities that provide them another type of satisfiers.

Another important element - which has helped to facilitate the search for other economic activities to the detriment of those of the primary sector - is the settlement of industries of all sizes that are beginning to characterize part of the town's panorama. This process has two consequences: on the one hand, it offers young people access to other types of economic activities other than agricultural activities; on the other, the peasant offers his land for the construction of industrial or housing infrastructure.





Another interesting fact that must be rescued is that almost 50% of young people engaged in agriculture have another economic activity, while, of the older ones, only 25% have a complementary activity, which in 90% of cases turns out to be the Commerce. The data is reversed when we analyze the information corresponding to the interviewees under 45, whose main activity is not agriculture. Of these, only 17.4% have been dedicated to agriculture in the past, while 42.1% of the older ones that are not currently engaged in agricultural activities, in the past, were peasants.

The numerical data confirms that agriculture is being gradually abandoned in the town of Santa María Texcalac, because in the group of people older than 45 who are not currently engaged in agriculture, most of them (42.1%) are located previously they were dedicated to it and that has suffered a setback.

As a complementary information to this item, it is necessary to say that the information obtained regarding the mobility of land indicates that 50% of the land that belonged to the people who were engaged in agriculture and now do not do it, continue to be destined to this activity, while the other half underwent a change of land and currently have built houses or industries.

The farmers who said they had a complementary economic activity (25%) were asked what reasons they had to look for. The answer was unanimous: 100% of the respondents answered that: "Because it does not reach what the field leaves". This result fits with the general feeling of all the people to whom the questionnaire was applied, and who, at the time, expressed the opinion that the future of the peasant in this town is to remain a peasant, but looking for another complementary activity. Of the total interviewees, as stated, 56 practice agriculture now, either as a main activity (77%) or as a complementary activity (23%). From these data, it turns out that currently 29 interviewees do not practice agriculture neither as a main activity nor as a complementary activity.

The 41% that if practiced agriculture in another time, the reasons that had to leave this activity were:

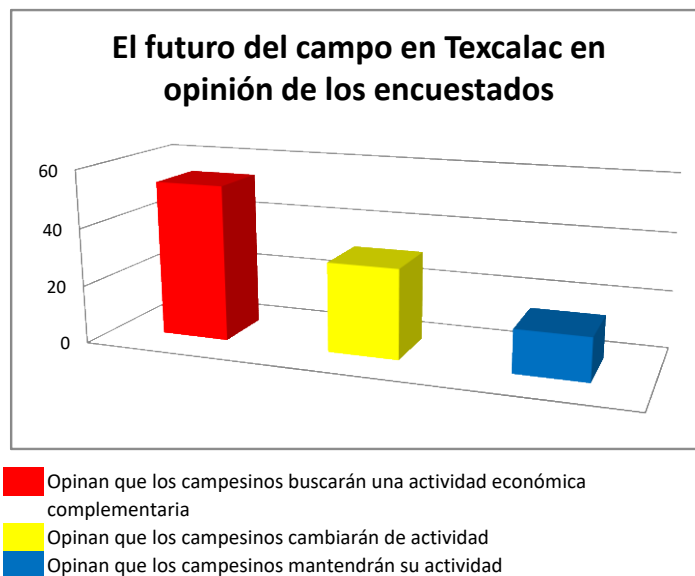
-  50% because agricultural activities became unprofitable.
-  25% because he sold his land.
-  17% for reasons of illness.
-  8% by age.

To know the alternatives that agriculture has in a rural society in the process of being absorbed by urbanity, the perspective of the inhabitant regarding this activity was questioned, obtaining the following answers:

1. Stay in the agricultural activity.
2. Find another activity without abandoning the work of the field.
3. Change activity.

The answer to this question reveals the opinion of the inhabitant of the locality under study. On the one hand, 54% of the respondents are convinced that the local farmer will seek another activity without abandoning the work of the field; 31% of respondents believe that the local farmer will change activity; 15% consider that the farmer will stay in the agricultural activity. These data are illustrated in the following figure.

Figura 4. El futuro del campo en Texcalac en opinión de los encuestados



Fuente: Elaboración propia, trabajo de campo

On the other hand, the inhabitants of Santa María Texcalac, Tlaxcala, are convinced that the small farmer - the ejidatario - is not attractive to the government. They are convinced that good supports are only for the owners of large areas of land. Therefore, they also think that the only peasants who have a future in the locality are those who are monopolizing land through the purchase of small properties. They were asked what would be the measures to avoid the abandonment of agricultural activities, obtaining the following results:

Tabla 3 Opinión sobre medidas que eviten el abandono de actividades agrícolas

	#	%
Apoyos del gobierno	70	79
Mejorar sustancialmente el precio del maíz	14	16
Otras	4	5

Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de la encuesta

Conclusion and discussion

The exposed elements lead to conclude that the fall of the EAP in the primary sector causes its own increase in the secondary and tertiary sector, generating abandonment of agricultural activities. In this town, there is also a close relationship between the visible beginning of the gradual abandonment of agricultural activities and the implementation of neoliberal policies. This relationship is reflected, above all, in the clamor of small landowners to government support that is only available to large agricultural producers. The agricultural activity in this locality is progressively decreasing, not only due to the effects of the conurbation process, but also as a consequence of these liberal policies when they privilege the import of food free of tariffs. This type of decision making definitely pushes the small farmer to abandon his agricultural activity and look for another economic activity that allows him to survive.

On the other hand, the rupture of the traditional concepts of the dichotomy of the rural and the urban finds in this locality an exemplification of a new mental category. It is a process that removes rurality from this type of locality, but without giving it a defined urbanity, without the relations of all kinds -economic, social, cultural and even religious- being defined concretely and definitively.

This community must be classified as a rural town in the process of conurbation. It is not properly peri-urban, because it is not located within a ring of human settlements in the city of Apizaco. In addition, it still retains characteristics of a rural town in the northern part of its territory.

In this conurbation process, authors such as González (2002) refer specifically to the socio-cultural responses that rural localities give to a process of this type. In the case of Santa María Texcalac, it must be concluded that cultural negotiation is not taking place, since there is a manifest cultural erosion that translates into the abandonment of uses and traditions that meant the locality

Santa María Texcalac is a typical example of what scholars call "new rurality" (ICA, 2000, Delgado, 1999). It presents a physical scenario in which a panorama is confused with industries, condominiums and planted fields, and a labor panorama in which agricultural activity has ceased to be the most important economic activity, as it now struggles to survive. If it does not find elements, factors or conditions of coexistence with the other economic activities, it tends to succumb.

The causal factors of the abandonment of agricultural activities in Santa María Texcalac are both endogenous and exogenous. Among the first, there is the factor that shows that "young people are not interested in agricultural activities"; 70% of the farmers in Santa María Texcalac are elderly people (over 45 years old). Among the exogenous factors are the economic policies; that "the field at the level of ejido or small property is not profitable"; the demand for land for industrial infrastructure and housing; the insufficiency of governmental support, as well as climatological phenomena.

Perhaps one of the signs that openly reflects this conurbation process is the excessive growth of the transport sector in the community. The time in which it has increased does not coincide with the increase in population or with the development of other items within the community itself. For example, the health sector, the infrastructure that aims to promote culture and entertainment, as well as other sectors, seem stalled for a long time, however, the daily flow of the population to the urban sprawl throughout the day he realizes that this city

has become the center of activities of a population that is already beginning to be considered as a peripheral annex.

We conclude that the alternatives that agriculture has - in a society with these characteristics - to survive are not as feasible as one would like, and they are not because both endogenous and exogenous factors are not conducive. On the one hand, the attitude of the peasant of the town is one of resignation: it no longer intends to reactivate agricultural activities and, on the other hand, the government policy that prefers to buy food to produce them is combined to stop any attempt at reactivation. The small peasant is helpless before the neoliberal economic policy. It only remains to continue being a peasant for love of the land, which is shown in the different testimonies, both in the interviews and in the survey.

The small producer is at a total disadvantage in order to become competitive with the market. The small peasant of Santa María Texcalac prefers to use the corn he has left - after satisfying his self-consumption needs - as animal feed rather than "squandering it", because the guarantee price is derisory when this corn should be paid at a special price for be a product of craft work. The disenchantment of the peasants is such that Mr. Roberto Flores García declares: "If the government does not interest us, it should once and for all implant in our town industries that give our children jobs and forget about the countryside."

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the peasants of the locality are not in a situation of hunger or malnutrition. Hence, his position is not the desperate claim of an extreme circumstance. The peasants of this town have learned not to live exclusively in the countryside, either through the adoption of a complementary activity or because other members of the family provide economic resources. However, the specter of hunger and malnutrition should not be dismissed, considering it as a future possibility. Consequently, under these considerations, it can be said that the times are appropriate to take preventive measures that prevent rural communities -which are in these urbanization or conurbation processes- from losing sight of the risks involved in the abandonment of agricultural activities for the future, and the advantage of keeping them to guarantee security and, above all, food sovereignty.

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