THE MULTIPLE FACES OF THE IDEOLOGY OF INTERVENTION
A STORY OF ADMINISTRATORS' FANTASIES AND IMPLEMENTORS' ANXIETIES

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Introduction

This article is concerned with the multiple and contradictory effects of state development programmes. Special reference is made to the implementation of an Integrated Rural Development Programme in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica. It is argued that development intervention entails the production, transformation and appropriation of particular models of intervention by which state functionaries conceive of their role as representatives of the state and as agents of development. The view is adopted that, rather than taking the rhetorics of planned development at face value, we have to study in detail how bureaucratic actors deploy discourses of intervention in social situations in which differing interests, views and commitments are at stake.

In developing the argument reference is made to recent works which are highly critical of the role of the state in development programmes, highlighting the 'hidden' agendas of state bureaucrats and the instrumental role of state intervention in establishing effective modes of social control. However, while agreeing with the critical thrust of such works, the article criticises their implicit assumption that bureaucratic activity is underpinned by a specific logic of state penetration or social control. By adopting an actor-oriented approach the analysis centres on how bureaucratic actors hold to ideologies of intervention in order to deal with the conflictive and contradictory character of state intervention. It is argued that such ideologies are not grand mental schemes or manifestations of false consciousness, but rather loose sets of beliefs and practices geared to resolving very practical problems in very mundane administrative contexts. This dismissal of 'externalist' explanations is important as it enables us to tackle the issue of responsibility for the deleterious effects that state intervention often has for large groups of beneficiaries.

It is precisely at this point that a link can be established with the theme of community justice and its relation to state intervention.[1] This article suggests that notions of community justice may, in many cases, be viewed as responses of villagers to state authorities' attempts to regulate their lives. In other articles (de Vries 1992a, 1995) emphasis is placed on the strategies farmers develop in order to delegitimize the discourses of state intervention. Here I set out to demonstrate how government officials devise and deploy views about farmers as lazy and unreliable, in short as undeserving. Modes of labelling, however, do not come out of the blue, but are the results of state officials' need to deal with complex situations arising from the contradictory character of state intervention. Labelling devices, it is argued, manifest their limitations when officials encounter villagers in non-bureaucratic settings. It is then that officials are most vulnerable to villagers' notions of community justice.

The Critique of Development Intervention

The practice and discourse of planned development intervention has lately been the subject of a thorough demythologization in the fields of development sociology and administration. Thus Long and van der Ploeg (1989) argue that the discourse of 'development' conceals a number of interested practices by administrators and academicians that have little to do with the theories they put forward. In their view planned intervention should best be viewed as an ongoing process of social construction in which bureaucrats, beneficiaries and third parties are involved. Although highly critical of the administrative models by means of which development programmes and projects are prepared and evaluated, they retain a belief in the capacity of social science to improve the practice of development intervention. Thus in the conclusion of their article they argue for new kinds of impact studies which take into account the contrasting - and often conflicting - interests of the different actors involved.

Highly critical of the role of development intervention in the upholding of old and new modes of political hegemony are authors such as Apthorpe (1986), Schaffer (1984, 1986) and Wood (1985; 1986) who draw upon post-structuralist (and in the case of Wood perhaps also on Habermasian) insights in their concern for how policy languages, techno-administrative rationalities and administrative access

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[1]   Lately a number of articles have appeared which argue that everyday encounters between bureaucrats and villagers play a significant role in shaping popular representations and notions of corruption, and of people's rights and obligations (Gupta 1995; Orlove 1991; and for a theoretical rationale for such an approach from an actor-oriented perspective, Long 1989).

systems are shaped by alliances between bureaucratic systems and scientific knowledge. They argue that development intervention is accompanied by forms of labelling which stigmatize people - as 'poor', 'resourceless' and 'dependent' - and hence reduces their capacity to engage in local forms of organization. In their view the administrative project model mainly serves to legitimize state intervention while concealing the interests of the state in imposing a bureaucratic order. Thus, by bestowing on entire categories of people an identity as 'clients', the 'hidden agendas' of planned state intervention are obscured. This is apparent when individuals are forced as 'clients' to adopt the discourse of bureaucrats in order to express their needs. The science of development administration, then, cannot be viewed as external to the problem of 'development' but is itself constitutive of it. Indeed it is argued that it has a significant function in depoliticizing the relationship between people and the state.[2]

Others have gone further in their application of post-structuralist themes to development thinking by conceptualizing the power of the development bureaucracy in terms of techniques of subjection and 'normalization', by which poor people are transformed into state-subjects and eventually transmuted into docile bodies, or passive agents (Escobar 1992, Ferguson 1990). Such a perspective is highly suggestive as it teaches us to be suspicious about development discourse, about its tendency to make invisible what in fact are ways of deploying power. However, it is my view that the claims post-structuralist theories set forward are formulated at such a general level that they become an obstacle to a detailed analysis of complex social relations between different sets of actors. Here I discuss critically one such work, that of Ferguson (1990).

Ferguson in his study of a World-Bank funded Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Programme in Lesotho sets out to demonstrate that, through the deployment of the current discourse of development, a particular representation of the 'development problematic' is produced which has nothing to do with the 'reality' of Lesotho, and even blatantly contradicts mainstream academic discourse. Yet, as he argues, this simplified understanding of the 'development problematic' is not accidental as it underpins actual practices of intervention as in the case of the IRD Programme he studied. Such projects, he argues, have distinctive 'instrument-effects' in practice, namely the expansion of state power and the depoliticization of planned intervention.

Ferguson borrows the notion of 'instrument-effect' from Foucault's discussion of

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[2]   Thus Schaffer (1986) argues that scarcities are constructed through discourses of development along with social practices of administration, and that they lead to a specific mode of social control and legitimacy.

prison reform to account for the paradox that development failures are so readily replicated.[3] An 'instrument-effect', as he defines it, is the *unintended, yet strategically coherent effect* of planned intervention which comes about through the deployment of what he calls 'the development apparatus'. He concludes that it is not accidental that planned intervention leads so often to failure. Indeed, failure is a logical concomitant of planned state intervention, which he graphically depicts as an 'anti-politics machine'[4].

However, in my view Ferguson's perspective, in spite of its conceptual innovativeness, has serious limitations as it presents us basically with a linear model of state intervention. Later in this article it is argued that an uncritical adoption of post-structuralist views in which state intervention is conceptualized in a quasi-conspiratorial way, as the source of evil, is an analytical strategy which adds little to our understanding of the contingencies of localized struggles between bureaucrats and beneficiaries. Another point of criticism is that it obscures a number of issues pertaining to the issue of responsibility, and thus of agency.

I elaborate my critique by concentrating on a case study of an Integrated Rural Development Programme - called the 034 Programme - in a colonization and banana plantation area in the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica. The gist of the argument is that, in addition to conceptualizing intervention in terms of sets of (discursive) practices of governability geared to converting rural people into

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[3]   As Ferguson puts it, Foucault (1979) argues that the instrument-effect of the prison, as a correctional institution, lies in the fact that it does not lead to the rehabilitation of transgressors but, on the contrary, to the constitution of delinquency as a mode of subjectivity disconnected from its social origins. Prison reform, then, appears to be an element within a set of techniques of exercising social control, a part of a strategy for "taming 'popular illegalities' and transforming the political fact of illegality into the quasi-medical one of pathological 'delinquency'" (Ferguson 1990: 19).

[4]   Thus he argues:

> [B]ecause 'failed' development projects can so successfully help to accomplish important strategic tasks behind the backs of the most sincere participants, it does become less mysterious why 'failed' development projects should end up being replicated again and again. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that it may even be because development projects turn out to have such uses, even if they are in some sense unforeseen, that they continue to attract so much interest and support. (Ferguson 1990: 256)

bureaucratic subjects - the post-structuralist argument - it is important to study what intervention comes to mean to different actors in particular power contexts. This, in short, implies developing a notion of intervention as ideology.

The 034 Programme

The failure of the programme

The 034 IRD Programme was designed and funded by the United States Agency for International Development, USAID. It was intended to be a response by the Costa Rican state to a highly disturbing set of events: the invasion by militant leftist peasant unions of a number of large cattle ranches - often belonging to the banana plantations - at a time when the revolutionary aspirations of radical political sectors were at their height owing to the seizure of state power by the Sandinistas in the neighbouring country of Nicaragua. These invasions, which took place in 1978, were the last of a series of sometimes very explosive land occupations in the '70s. Bananas being Costa Rica's major export commodity, it is not surprising that these peasant mobilizations were seen as a threat to the economic and political interests of the state, the (foreign) plantation owners and the USA State Department.

The major goal of the 034 Programme was "to develop lower cost, more effective mechanisms for establishing productive, profitable, and environmentally sound *campesino* farms on former *latifundios*". Its major components were (1) the establishment of three model settlements in former invaded *haciendas*, and (2) the strengthening of overall administration of the IDA (Development Institute) through the introduction of a computerized data management system and a cadastre. Here I concentrate on the first and largest component, the establishment of 'model settlements' and particularly on the oldest and most conflictive settlement, Neguev. It must be stressed, however, that the establishment of settlements was part of a wider, unspoken, goal of rationalizing the workings of the Land Development Agency by eradicating clientelistic relations - and thus politics - from its functioning.

In brief, the 034 Programme was a failure. When it finished in 1987 most settlers/beneficiaries were deeply indebted while many others had been compelled to sell their plots. Moreover, only a small minority of the farmers were able to live off their farms while the large majority depended on off-farm work. (For a detailed description of the programme see de Vries 1992b). The outcome of the programme was not only disastrous for the farmers but also left an imprint on the manner in which the administrators and the extension workers conceived of the

'agrarian question' in the Atlantic zone, and especially on their views regarding the capacity of settlers to become entrepreneurial farmers. Also, the implementation of the 034 Programme went together with a series of bureaucratic practices by which settlers were labelled recalcitrant, uncooperative and opportunistic, if not outright lazy and parasitic.

Certainly, the way in which the 034 IRD Programme was executed could be analyzed in terms of Ferguson's notion of 'instrument-effect' as being geared to (1) the expansion of the state-bureaucracy in order to ensure a degree of control over the settler population, and (2) the depoliticization of the relationship between peasants and the state with a view to debilitating the role of independent peasant unions. Programme failure in this view was but a financial cost of bringing about these 'instrument effects'.

Ferguson's analysis is, as argued, powerful for its clarity and conciseness. It has also strong political and policy implications. Interestingly, it coincides with the analysis of radical settlers and peasant leaders who argued that the 034 Programme had been intended, from its inception, to create a pool of poor and indebted settlers in order to force them to sell the land to city speculators. In this way the social basis of independent peasant organisations would be disarticulated, while the power of the state bureaucracy was strengthened.

Although there is no doubt that the 034 Programme was directed to depoliticizing the relationship between peasants and the state and that it led to an enhancement of the power of the bureaucracy, it is in my view simplistic to argue that these were 'unconscious' effects. The issue is not only theoretical but has also political importance as it touches upon the attribution of responsibility concerning the failure of the 034 Programme. To begin with, to blame some abstract 'anti-politics machine' for the marginalization of the settlers absolves a number of actors who might, rather consciously indeed, have been in favour of such an outcome, and others who did not care very much about its consequences. The policymakers, planners and front-line workers involved in the design and execution of the programme were not naive since they were aware of the political character of intervention, of the necessity to control a 'difficult' social situation. Failure did not occur beyond the powers of human agency. As Schaffer (1984) argues, there is nothing inevitable in policy. Things could have happened differently.

Second, to blame the 'anti-politics machine' for the failures of state intervention unnecessarily reduces the options of peasant organisations to two possible alternatives, that of engaging in political action against the state by forming organisations ready to confront it; and that of submitting to it. This, in fact, is not the political strategy that radical peasant unions in the Atlantic zone follow, as

they are always ready to negotiate with some state agencies while attacking others. The radicalism of peasant unions had its limits and for good reasons also. State intervention through the 034 Programme had been massive and highly repressive and the peasant union which organized the invasion, UPAGRA (the Union of Small Producers of the Atlantic Zone), came to the conclusion that confronting the state head-on was too painful. As a result UPAGRA changed its strategy and decided to spend much effort on establishing connections with national and international NGOs, and also with some state agencies. There was indeed some room left for manoeuvre.

Concerning the issue of attribution of responsibility for the failure of the 034 Programme it must be noted that other explanations were offered, both by the settlers and the bureaucracy. Some settlers, those who had been able to establish a preferential relationship with the state, were ready to share the responsibility with the bureaucrats and dismissed the radicals' arguments as communist propaganda. In defense of the bureaucrats the following arguments could be put forward. Technical errors were made in the process of implementation; there was a lack of training of the extension workers; there was little knowledge of agronomic and economic conditions; the programme managers were pressed to spend the monies in a short period of time; there was a major opposition to the Programme from conservative sections in the institute. However, these contingencies do not absolve those who were in charge, for the simple reason that even when they knew that the programme was heading for disaster they did not take steps to stop it. In the case of the policymakers not only their reputations were at stake, since they also saw the programme as a stepping stone in their professional careers. The 034 Programme in becoming an arena of struggle between different institutional factions acquired an importance which was at a far remove from that of the objects of development, the settlers. Furthermore, those responsible for the programme did not want to partake in failure and, indeed, those in charge of the programme never admitted that it was a failure. In showing evidence for this viewpoint they claimed that it had had positive 'learning' effects. It is not surprising, then, that critical evaluations concerning credit recovery and production levels were concealed or even destroyed.

The issue of attribution of responsibility, I think, is important. This is not because it might change the behaviour of bureaucrats, since I think that they had strong reasons for acting as they did, but because it might help us to identify a series of beliefs and practices underpinning state intervention, which might have very deleterious effects for peasants. Thus instead of viewing bureaucratic actors as determined by external forces I am intent on inquiring how they shape, adapt and transform particular administrative models with a view to making them fit their own socio-institutional activities and commitments. I call such a set of beliefs and practices an ideology of interventions.

But before continuing I want to add a caveat. Ideology here is not used in the sense of 'false consciousness'. Yet it is conceptualized in terms of illusion, though an illusion which makes it possible for us to accomplish a multitude of mundane activities. In other words 'knowing' that our actions do not correspond with our ideals does not necessarily stop us from engaging in certain kinds of social practices. We might come to the conclusion that our views are false but it is much more difficult to discover what is false in our practices, since this requires that we should recognize that these are structured by ideology. Or, as Eagleton (1991) drawing upon Zizek (1989) puts it,

> [o]ne traditional form of ideology critique assumes that social practices are real, but that the beliefs used to justify them are false or illusory. But this opposition … can be reversed. For if ideology is illusion, then it is an illusion which structures our social practices; and to this extent 'falsity' lies on the side of what we do, not necessarily of what we say. Ideology, in other words, is not just a matter of what I think about a situation; it is somehow inscribed in that situation itself. (Eagleton 1991: 40)

This was exactly the paradox of the large majority of policymakers, administrators and front-line workers involved in the 034 Programme. Although they knew that their actions contradicted a number of views which were dear to them, such as that of improving the lot of poor peasants, they continued drawing upon the same ideological beliefs and practices by which a great diversity of farmers with different backgrounds, aspirations and commitments were labelled traditional, dependent and incompetent. Intervention was not ideological because the bureaucrats were unable to distinguish between the truth and the falsity of the discourses they deployed but rather because it structured their intervention practices. Next, I want to analyze the ideological fantasy which structured these practices.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. First, the administrative context wherein practices of labelling are sustained is examined. Second, the genealogy of a particular model of the ideal farmer - as a client who has the right to state services and goods in return for his commitment to, and active participation in his transformation into an entrepreneurial farmer - is presented. It is shown that this model stems from programme planners' attempts to depoliticize institution-client relations. Finally, it is argued that the model is transformed by front-line workers into a protective device for dealing with unruly beneficiaries.

The local and administrative context

Neguev, before becoming a settlement, was a *hacienda* devoted mainly to beef cattle breeding and fattening, and one of the largest ranches in the Atlantic zone. In 1978 it was invaded and a year later an agreement was reached between UPAGRA and the IDA to purchase it. In 1980, when the 034 Programme started, the IDA's presence became widespread all over the settlement. The IDA's intervention was massive and, as argued, was directed towards converting the settlement into a demonstration project.

The Neguev administrative office is located in the Neguev settlement which has a total area of 5,340 has. Later, in 1987, it became a regional office covering five settlements with a total area of 12,724 has. and 1,294 settlers.

The main activities in the administrative office are:

> (1) The promotion of agricultural development via the supply of credit and the provision of extension.

> (2) The achievement of effective control in the settlement through the regulation of access to land. This, it must be noted, was a generally accepted, though not openly admitted objective of the 034 Programme. It was never explicitly stated in IDA or 034 Programme documents. However the IDA's and USAID policy makers made no secret of the fact that the Programme was also directed to the normalization of social relations between squatters and the state in conflictive areas such as Neguev.

For reasons which I cannot explain here but which had much to do with the contradictions of state intervention at the local level, the administrative process in the Neguev office was characterized by little work motivation.[5] Work activities are little structured and much freedom is allowed to front-line workers to carry out their tasks as they like. This results in a situation characterized by few work incentives and no reward system. Accordingly, one recurrent field of dissatisfaction in the Neguev office concerns what is perceived as 'the arbitrary

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[5]   For lack of space I cannot go into the institutional struggles which had a marked effect on the administrative process in Neguev and which led to a sharp division among the front-line workers along ethnic, residential and functional lines. In my dissertation I argue that these divisions were an expression of the contradictions of state intervention at the level of implementation (de Vries 1992b).

character of policy'. As one extension worker put it,

> … at Neguev there is no stimulus. If you get promoted it is
> because of your political connections, not because of your
> capabilities. Successes at the technical level are always claimed
> by the chief. For example, when presentations have to be made
> about the goals achieved by the administrative office it is always
> the chief who does it. There is anyway no acknowledgement of
> your role.

Yet this provided the context in which a large number of important decisions were
made as to who would receive credit and who not, about how problems over land
adjudication would be dealt with, and others. The way such decisions were made
appeared to be quite arbitrary as no clear criteria existed, for example, for allocating
credit. What is interesting, then, is that issues of service delivery were dealt with
within an administrative context in which distrust was general. It is not surprising that
the front-line workers showed little inclination to reflect on the reasons why the 034
Programme resulted in increased poverty among the settler population. In fact, when
discussing problems of individual settlers they drew upon an impersonal and
bureaucratic language by which the settlers were transformed into administrative
cases. In this way the front-line workers were insulated from the contradictory and
contingent character of state intervention.

Indeed, it struck me when talking with the front-line workers that reference was
always made to a particular, very negative, set of views of the farmer: he was seen as
an individual who was not commercially-minded, not entrepreneurial, not capable of
running a farm. Indeed, in spite of their divergences and dissatisfactions, and of the
feelings that their work was not much valued, they all shared this way of talking of
the beneficiary when dealing with everyday service delivery issues, in what was
basically a form of labelling.

Next, I contend that labelling was not a local invention, but that it was a local
adaptation of the USAID planners' model of the 'client' by front-line workers and
administrators. To that end I describe how the model of the 'client' was fabricated by
USAID planners as a result of their problematization of prevailing institution-client
relations in the IDA, and how it was appropriated by bureaucrats at the regional and
local levels.

The genealogy of the model of the 'client'

As argued, one of the two components of the 034 Programme was the
strengthening of the operational capacity of the IDA. The USAID advisor to the

034 Programme argued that political clientelism was a fundamental problem in Costa Rica as it generated patterns of transactions between politicians who used state institutions to obtain electoral support from groups of beneficiaries. In his view, the political use of institutional resources thwarted their effective utilization for development purposes. This emphasis on institutional efficiency and administrative reform, it must be noted, did not mean that USAID planners did not take the view that some mode of social control in rural areas, directed against organisations such as UPAGRA, was required.

In a context of increasing land scarcity and budgetary constraints in the IDA the agrarian problematic came to be perceived, under the influence of USAID, more and more as a problem of effective institutional intervention, in which administrative reform was viewed as central to a 'modern' approach to land reform. This entailed that the solution to the problem of landlessness and rural unrest was conceived by the USAID programme designers in terms of the 'depoliticization' of institutional developmental activities, rather than in terms of the need to accommodate oppositional political groupings within the mainstream political system.

It is not surprising, then, that the agrarian problem in Costa Rica is conceptualized in the 034 Programme documents in terms of the effectivity of particular types of institution-client relations. Thus it is argued that in the past IDA-client relations were permeated by 'paternalist and clientelist practices'. In effect, in the project document of the 034 Programme we see that the farmer is referred to as a 'client', which prior to the 034 Programme was not the case. We see also that the term 'client' appears in different forms, as when a classification of the clientele is made, or a description of the 'total client pool' is given, or reference is made to particular types of institution-client relationships. Paternalism is mentioned as a danger which has to be combatted through the 'rational choice of a clientele' (USAID-IDA 1980[6]).

The problem then was conceptualized by USAID planners as that of how to establish a type of institution-client relationship which would eschew the customary patterns of political clientelism while maintaining a certain capacity to exert social control on particular populations, such as politically motivated squatters. The answer was to institute a mode of institution-client relations in which the beneficiary was viewed as an individual with certain rights, but also with distinctive obligations towards the state. In contrast with the practice of

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[6]   This 'Project Paper' was published as an unclassified document. It provides a description and appraisal of the project as well as detailed project analyses.

political clientelism, these rights and obligations did not entail a political transaction, but a commitment to a particular pattern of smallholder 'development'. Thus central to this model of the 'client' was the conferment on the relationship between the institution and the beneficiary of a distinctive institutional, as against a political, significance. The client was treated as an individual who had the right to state services and goods in return for his commitment to, and active participation in his transformation into an entrepreneurial farmer.

The essence of the model of the 'client' was that s/he established a relationship with the IDA as an individual, not as a member of a larger group. This for the IDA was a very different policy from the previous one of engaging in negotiations with organised pressure groups. Hence, by allocating resources such as credit to individuals only, and refusing to engage in negotiations with groups, the power of organisations such as UPAGRA was undermined.

In the 034 IRD Programme the individualization of the relationship between the IDA and its clients was reflected in the following sets of activities.

> (1) A beneficiary selection system geared to choosing potentially entrepreneurial farmers.

> (2) A system of guided extension by which the beneficiary received credit on an individual basis.

> (3) A focus on individual farm development plans.

In effect, through these individualization practices all kinds of negotiations with independent peasant organizations could be avoided.

In the remainder of the article I argue that this model of the 'client' worked out in a rather special way in the process of implementation. By front-line workers and administrators the model was endowed with a different, 'local' meaning, with the result that it became an element in a local ideology of intervention. The notion of the 'undeserving client' was, in effect, employed by the Settlement Head to force settlers to comply with the IDA policy. For the front-line workers the view of the 'undeserving client' became a tool for explaining the contradictions of state intervention as well as a 'labelling device'. The transformed view of the '(undeserving) client', then, became at the local level an instrument of social control.

The ten commandments of the 'real entrepreneurial farmer'

The model of the client reflected on the ways in which front-line workers differentiated between good and bad farmers. One standard measure in such a practice was the view of the independent and entrepreneurial yeoman of the central plateau. Deviations from this model were seen as pathological and originating in a deleterious way of life. Thus it was common to explain the problems of the 034 Programme in the settlement by arguing that alcoholism and lack of commitment and discipline among settlers were a major problem. On the basis of extensive conversations with front-line workers about how an entrepreneurial farmer should be, I was able to discern the following rules that such a farmer should observe[7]:

> (1) He should live on the farm, and not engage in off-farm work outside Neguev.
> (2) He should not grow traditional crops such as maize.
> (3) He should show the devotion and commitment of a 'real farmer'.
> (4) He should show respect to IDA officials.
> (5) He should follow the advice of the extension staff.
> (6) He should be imaginative and be able to improvise.
> (7) He should not be an ex-plantation worker.
> (8) He should not drink.
> (9) He should not participate in activities organised by leftist groups.
> (10) He should not be an evangelical (because evangelicals spent too much time in church).

These ten rules, or commandments, which the settler should follow in order to conform to the front-line workers' views of what a 'real' entrepreneurial farmer was, composed a powerful labelling device. Given the failure of the agricultural development programmes in Neguev, and the fact that no more than 10% of the farmers were able to derive a sufficient income from their farms without having to engage in off-farm work in some banana plantation or other farm, it was quite impossible for farmers to conform to this model. Moreover, the only three settler families in Neguev who according to the front-line workers did conform to this model, and who could thus be considered real entrepreneurial farmers, had never received IDA credit nor extension[8]. On the other hand, those settlers who were

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[7]   A female in the front-line workers' view was not capable of running a farm. Women who did not have grown-up sons who could take care of the farm had difficulties obtaining title to land.

[8]   I do not want to go into the analysis of why the programme ended a failure. It suffices to mention that to a large extent the soils in Neguev were not

viewed as the best in Neguev did not conform to this model either; of the three, one was an ex-plantation worker, one an occasional alcoholic, and one a Jehovah's Witness.

Ironically, the integrated rural development programme, instead of creating wealthy smallholders, created a pool of poor, indebted and dependent clientele. Settlers, then, were labelled, virtually by definition, non-entrepreneurial or traditional farmers. In this way they got the blame for the failure of the 034 Programme. But labelling had also a more practical function as it became a device for excluding 'troublesome' settlers or *problemáticos*. Indeed, the labelling of a settler as a *problemático* signified that it would be difficult for him to gain access to credit.

The Model of the Client Transformed into a Labelling Device

The question to be addressed now is, how is this mode of labelling related to the model of the 'client' which was introduced by USAID? This model, which was employed by top level officials and programme designers, conceived of the settler/beneficiary as a client who had to be provided with the necessary conditions - land, credit and an appropriate technological package - to become an entrepreneurial farmer. As argued next, this model became transformed at the level of implementation into a labelling device in which the client was viewed as undeserving. Thus the model of the 'client', which originally was meant to depoliticize institution-client relations, became an instrument in the hands of the local administrators for fighting 'undeserving clients'. And since, as argued, most farmers were seen in some way or another as troublesome - as they did not conform to the ten commandments of the ideal farmer - the view of the 'undeserving client' became a central element within the local officials' discourse and imagery.

As we noted, the 034 Programme had two main goals: that of providing settlers with the necessary conditions to become commercially minded settlers, and that of overcoming what was perceived as a politically delicate situation in Neguev. Indeed, it can be argued that one major contradiction in the 034 Programme lay in the fact that it was designed to confront a very conflictive situation in the Atlantic zone by combining a policy of careful beneficiary selection and an approach geared to transforming settlers into entrepreneurial farmers in order to fight the influence of leftist organisations such as UPAGRA. At the same time a large

suited for agriculture. In addition major errors were made concerning extension and technology transfer.

number of UPAGRA sympathisers passed the beneficiary selection system. This caused a major problem to front-line administrators which can be formulated in the following terms: How to transform unruly clients, such as UPAGRA followers, into entrepreneurial farmers? We will next see that the Settlement Head viewed this as a contradiction in terms.

The model of the client as transformed by the Settlement Head

The Settlement Head had a distinctive theory of how a peasant should look. This conception of the beneficiary was not unique to him, though, and later I learned that it was quite characteristic of many administrators in the area. On this subject he once confided to me:

> If you want to tell a real farmer from someone who is not, look straight into his eyes. A farmer will lower his sight, will become shy, for he is not accustomed to dealing with people from the city, they are humble, speak with respect. A banana worker is something else, direct in his conduct, insolent. That is the result of the plantation culture and the ideology of the unions which always stresses the negative aspects of everything.

According to him the union leaders in the plantations would tell the plantation workers that they were poor because others were rich, that they were stupid because others were intelligent, that they were ugly because others were beautiful. In his view plantation workers developed an inferiority complex which expressed itself through envy. And he warned me:

> If you meet them they will try to mislead you and tell you stories about their extreme poverty. But the truth is that they are ex-banana workers, people who cannot manage a farm autonomously. They are accustomed to receiving everything from the boss, a cheque every month, a house with water and electricity. They dress well and drink and do terrible things to their wives and children. It is really awful. In return they work a few hours, from 6 to 11 in the morning. They have a lot of free time. They become conceited, rebellious, have no respect for authority. Instead a real farmer works the entire day. And if necessary also at night. If the cow is sick he will not sleep at all.

This 'cultural problem' had according to the Settlement Head played a central role in the 034 Programme. He commented that the squatters had received beautiful

schools and meeting centers, excellent roads, even a housing programme had been initiated. Yet they had never shown any gratitude. Hence he complained that "unfortunately that is the human material we have to work with in the settlements". At the same time, he had a clear theory of a settlement's growth and development in terms of stages, with a strong social Darwinist bent. Once he explained to me:

> You see in Neguev like in so many other settlements that after the political situation has been normalized, a mechanism sets in of natural selection. Settlers who are not real farmers are forced to sell out because they accumulate debts. Although they receive credit and extension, many of them, maybe a majority, have not the ability to develop the enterprise. So they are forced to sell out. Others take their place, often people with more resources. They are obliged to take on the debts their predecessors incurred. So they are better motivated to develop the farm. In fact they have a more entrepreneurial outlook. The result is that after some years a majority of the original population will have disappeared. Only then will the conditions be fulfilled for achieving the objectives of the institution. This process is irreversible, it is a law of nature. The only thing we can do is to alleviate the lot of those who suffer most.

According to the Settlement Head the problem was that peasant unions such as UPAGRA targeted their actions to a particular type of individual, who due to his plantation mentality was not able to become an entrepreneurial farmer and therefore was prone to enter into clientelistic relationships with radical organisations and eventually with the IDA. The question as to 'how to transform unruly clients into model beneficiaries' was viewed by him as a contradiction in terms. Such 'human material' was not fit to become entrepreneurial farmers. In fact, the Settlement Head sustained a genetic conception of the farmer which, it must be emphasized, was not shared by the front-line workers.

The upshot, then, was that for the Settlement Head the model of the 'client' was transformed into a core element in an ideology of intervention which was meant to confront 'unruly clients'. In effect, the model of the 'client' was transformed by front-line administrators from a device for depoliticizing institution-client relations into an essentially political instrument for marginalizing 'troublesome' beneficiaries.

Next I want to show that the view of the 'undeserving client' was more than a cognitive construct intended to marginalize radical settlers. It is my argument that this view was part of an ideology of intervention which also included practices of

labelling.

An ideology of intervention can be seen as an action-oriented set of beliefs associated with specific practices of social control (labelling, legitimization), rather than as a coherent normative framework. Ideologies are pragmatic insofar as they serve to shape an understanding of the world which is useful within particular social contexts; in the case of front-line workers that of implementation. An ideology of intervention is not so much false in that it obscures the complex reality of the farmer, but is an interested simplification of the conflictive nature of state intervention. That becomes clear to the front-line worker him/herself when confronted with the contradictions of implementation, compelling him/her to develop an operational style for dealing with conflicting social and moral commitments. The force of the ideology of intervention, then, is that it is able to produce useful interpretations for the ongoing problems of implementation, as well as practical ways to handle them, yet without being able to mask the power relations underlying such problems.

Next I discuss the workings of this ideology of intervention as manifested in the front-line workers' dealings with beneficiaries within the administrative domain.

The model of the 'client' as transformed by the técnicos

With respect to the radical leftist settlers the model of the 'client' played an important 'protective', role. It should be noted that interaction between officials and radical settlers was rare and when it took place it was for the largest part in the field domain. Indeed, the *técnicos* or extension workers in charge of agricultural development programmes had evident difficulties in coming to terms with the peasant union UPAGRA and displayed a curious ambiguity in relation to them.

When discussing the role of UPAGRA as a peasant union the *técnicos* would stress that they respected and even admired its efforts to defend the farmer's interests, and that they found it totally legitimate and even necessary that such an organization existed, as they recognized that the IDA's interests were not necessarily the same as those of the settlers. At the same time, they argued that they did not agree with their means and their intransigent position. In fact, they were highly critical of their mode of operation. As one extension worker put it:

> UPAGRA has its own ways of dealing with *técnicos*. When you
> visit them they receive you in a very polite manner, and by
> telling you a lot about themselves they try to get information out
> of you. They are aware that you might write a bad report on

them. However, they do not seem to mind. When they attend meetings they are surprisingly friendly, while seeking ways to criticize all the institute's ideas. They hope that the official will lose his temper in order to create a conflict, so that they can transform the character of the meeting into one of a tribunal against the institute.

When referring to individual activists they were remarkably negative. Thus they would account for the 'negative attitudes' of the UPAGRA leaders by referring to personality failures, like drinking habits and their smoking of marijuana. This view of UPAGRA leaders and sympathizers as irresponsible settlers was general among the *técnicos*. Settlers who indulged in collective actions like marches and blockades could not be good farmers. In their view they were almost never at their farms, and thus there was not much sense in visiting them. UPAGRA, in their view, channelled the feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction of settlers arising out of their personal inabilities. The extension workers, then, would select unproblematic settlers and not UPAGRA followers.

It must be stressed that this fear of UPAGRA was in the case of most *técnicos* not so much a political stance but more a result of an attempt to keep delicate political issues out of their direct relationship with settlers. The *técnicos* were perfectly able to consider general explanations of settlers' life conditions in terms of a wider political framework. Yet these explanations were of little use within the implementation context. Although officials would, outside the administrative domain, readily recognize the general validity of 'radical' claims, such views were experienced as annoying within the day-to-day context of service delivery.

Summary and Conclusions

It has been shown how a model of the 'client' - or the model of the farmer as a client who has to be serviced and provided with a package in order to encourage him to become an entrepreneurial farmer - was used by different groups of actors in differing ways. For USAID it was an element in a strategy of depoliticizing the functioning of the IDA and eradicating clientelistic and paternalistic politics. For the front-line administrators the model of the 'client' was used for combating the influence of leftist organisations such as UPAGRA. And finally, when the programme proved to be a disaster this view of the '*undeserving* client' served as a 'rationalization' for failure, and as a way of casting the blame onto the farmer.

The model of the client, then, changes from being a core element of an attempt by planners to change the current pattern of client-institution relations into an element of an ideology of intervention which serves to conceal the contradictory and

conflictive character of state intervention, which is reflected in:

(1) major errors made in design and implementation; and

(2) the impossibility of denying the political character of state intervention in a plantation area such as the Atlantic zone of Costa Rica where resources such as land and capital are monopolized by the banana transnationals, and where state intervention serves as an instrument for social control.

Thus the failure of the 034 Programme was ascribed to the fact that the settlers were not entrepreneurial farmers. In this way it was not necessary to inquire into the major errors in programme planning, implementation and technology transfer.

It has also been argued that the administrative process consisted of an intrinsically fragmented and conflictive reality in which a host of petty struggles took place. Yet it is important to stress that it is precisely within this administrative reality, and in response to the daily problems and conflicts front-line workers are engaged in, that an intervention ideology is sustained.

It is important to emphasize that the ideology of intervention was not imposed from the top onto the thinking of the front-line workers and administrators responsible for programme implementation. It did, however, bring together different worlds of experience and forms of socio-political commitment: of front-line workers, administrators and institutional managers. In effect, it provided various actors operating within institutional worlds a common language for talking about and assessing intervention problems.

An ideology of intervention, then, is not false in the sense that it clouds the thinking of the actors drawing upon it. It derives its power from its usefulness for accomplishing particular bureaucratic tasks, even when the actors themselves are constantly confronted with the fact that they are simplifications, if not caricatures, of a more complex reality.[9]

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[9]   As Zizek (1989) puts it:

The illusion of [ideology] is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality itself, of what the people are doing. What they do not know is that their social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion. What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real

It has also been argued that the ideology of intervention in Neguev encompassed a particular view of the '(undeserving) client', and practices of labelling. Among other things through the intervention ideology the world of the 'clients' was kept apart from that of administrative life. This was the case as settlers were seen as clients who had to be serviced, and not as individuals who often shared the same local preoccupations of the officials. But the ideology of intervention was also instrumental in achieving quite practical effects such as protecting front-line workers from 'troublesome' settlers. It also served as a guide for selecting cooperative beneficiaries. We can, then, pinpoint five different ways in which the ideology of intervention worked:

> (1) As achieving a neat separation between the administrative and the field domains. In this way front-line workers were insulated from the conflicts in the 'field'.

> (2) As concealing the contradictions of state intervention by providing easy explanations for current and ongoing problems concerning programme implementation.

> (3) As a way of rationalizing programme failure. Thus it was argued that the 034 Programme failed because of the lack of an entrepreneurial mentality on the part of the settlers. The errors which occurred during programme implementation and the use of credit as an instrument of social control, as major factors in programme failure, were concealed.

> (4) As a way of protecting front-line workers from 'troublesome' settlers such as *Upagristas* who were out to politicize what the front-line workers viewed as 'technical issues'.

> (5) As a way of selecting 'cooperative beneficiaries'.

As a final conclusion it can be argued that conceptualizing state activity in terms

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> social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know....

> The fundamental level of ideology, [then], is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself (Zizek 1989: 32-33).

What I have designated the ideology of intervention functions as Zizek's ideological fantasy.

of a bureaucratic logic may lead to the obscuring of the issue of responsibility. This article has pinpointed the ideological illusions by which bureaucratic actors deceive themselves when carrying out their duties and which, though contradicting their views, are instrumental for carrying out very mundane tasks. Paying attention to these ideological fantasies points to the fact that development intervention is by definition a contested domain of activity. Or, in other words, that it is an ongoing process of social construction. And, as argued in the introduction, it is precisely through such processes of social construction that notions of community justice are (re)-produced.

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