The Imperfect Use of the Past in Resettlement

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Abstract. *This chapter discusses the use of the past in the implementation, knowledge production, and evaluation of resettlement projects. It argues that heritage and memories are neglected resources, and necessary analytical elements of the sociocultural dimensions of resettled societies. Sociocultural dimensions are the tangible and intangible resources that constitute everyday routine culture, supported and molded by the social relations, memories, heritage, and emotions that are attached to the landscape and environment. These dimensions are the least studied and the least understood in resettlement. It is further argued that the present resettlement models are insufficient to grasp the longitudinal consequences of resettlement. A consideration of heritage and memory would improve the model. The use of the past from a longitudinal perspective is explored through the ethnography of the Zimapán resettlement project.*

"Every society is a battlefield between its own past and its future"
—Eric Wolf (1959, 106)

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The focus of the special session on resettlement at the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) Bangkok conference in 2015 was to "look back to shape the future." This is both a theoretical and a practical challenge, as has been well documented, and has been expressed as "lessons learned" in resettlement literature and policy reports. Resettlement is not the only field that struggles with how best to accept the past. For peace work, it is of pivotal importance to recognize the past, as it is expressed in collective memories and traumas, in the process of reconciliation. Cultural heritage is another field whose theoretical focus and professional praxis is the past. The idea of a past to be used for present and future needs is also captured in the expression "learning from history." Its lack of success is well known, and these endeavors have failed to implement the old advice of "do no harm" reintroduced in this context by Anderson (1999). In development forced displacement and resettlement (DFDR), the difficulties are visible in the implementation, where dissonance prevails between the stakeholders.

As demonstrated from the 1950s on, DFDR projects are difficult to design, implement, assess, monitor, and evaluate, as the literature convincingly shows. Most recently, Smyth et al. (2015) have once again brought this to our attention, in their article outlining five "'big' issues" for livelihood restoration that echoes requests of an urgent need to mitigate the negative consequences of resettlement. At the IDEAS conference, this ongoing problem was channeled into the resettlement evaluation thematic group led by Susan Tamondong.

This chapter addresses the special challenges attributed to the sociocultural dimensions of resettlement, which are "soft," "fuzzy," and difficult to discern, identify, and handle during implementation, using the present project models. They are related to economic recovery, but how and why they are is less known. Foremost, they are interconnected with the past routine cultures of society that the project is attempting to rebuild as a joint enterprise. International specialists have comparative and wider knowledge of DFDR, while local experts have in-depth knowledge about their life-world. These are the realms that knowledge production and the ensuing evaluation consist of.

Sociocultural dimensions are meant to include the tangible and intangible resources that constitute people's everyday, routine culture, which is supported and molded by the social relations, memories, heritage, and emotions that are attached to the landscape and the built environment. These resources are the peoples' livelihood and life-worlds, and they are governed by "heritage as life-values" (Josefsson and Aronsson 2016) and "heritage as ambivalent" (Aronsson 2013). They are conveyed and framed by both spatial and temporal orders. They are both material and immaterial—they are concrete, visible, and durable as well as fuzzy and subtle, but they can be observed, recognized, and studied. There is nothing mystical, metaphysical, or esoteric about them. When a society is displaced and resettled, it "falls apart from within" (Aronsson 2002), and these are the orders that have to be reconstructed and reconstituted. These sociocultural dimensions are not static and cannot be frozen in time to easily fit a compensation matrix or an evaluation scheme.

THE PAST IN RESETTLEMENT

To explore the use of the past in resettlement, I will share my deep ethnographic knowledge of the Zimapán resettlement project in Mexico, which was executed 20 years ago. I have lived through this resettlement together with the people in the valley, whose landscape and society was inundated by the Zimapán hydroelectric dam in 1994. I returned there in 2013, and have had regular contact with the people. I have never been part of any executive power structure that has shaped my data. My perspective is longitudinal, with an emphasis on the reconstruction of society, and I explore the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective. The ethnographic context is pivotal, and I have tried to understand how and why certain choices and decisions were made, using the lens of heritage, collective memories, and collective traumas. This has triggered questions about what kind of knowledge was produced during the negotiations between the main stakeholders, and what bearing this knowledge had on the longitudinal results of the resettlement project.

Complex sociocultural data are the building blocks of society, and they frame knowledge production as well as the rebuilding of the resettled society. These building blocks are fluid, intangible, and embedded in a material world. How can we ethnographically describe these sociocultural building blocks, which are embedded in the cultural heritage of a resettled society undergoing rapid, induced change? What are the challenges for evaluation? These are the questions that are discussed here. The combination of theoretical concepts I have drawn on emanates from my background in anthropology and resettlement, humanitarian action, and cultural heritage.

THE ZIMAPÁN SCENARIO

The villages of La Vega, Vista Hermosa, and Rancho Nuevo in the Ejido Vista Hermosa, in the state of Querétaro in Mexico, were involuntarily resettled in the 1990s because of the building of the Zimapán hydroelectric dam. The reservoir is located on the border of Querétaro and Hidalgo: the dam wall is 203 meters high and 80 meters wide, and was built in a 400-meter deep canyon where the San Juan and Tula rivers join the Moctezuma. The reservoir covers 22 square kilometers and has two arms, each 12 kilometers long. One stretches up the Tula River and the other follows the San Juan River. The water level is calculated to be 180 meters at the highest point, and the dam was estimated to run at full capacity in 1998 in order to pay off the investments. However, this was not the case, according to local informants in July 2013, because of a lack of rain. They reported that they could see rain on the other side of the mountain range as usual, but when the clouds approached the reservoir side, they dissolved. During my fieldwork, I noticed a gap of an estimated 20 meters between the water surface and the indicated full-water level of the reservoir.

Traditionally, the people in the valley lived between two spheres of cultural heritage. Hidalgo is known for its Otomi heritage, but on the Querétaro side, the picture is less clear. The identity of the valley people is a mixture of Otomi, Spanish, and *mestizo* cultural heritage, but also with a claim to

Chichimecas heritage. The kinship ties to Hidalgo were extensive. Spanish was spoken, but with Otomi and Nahuatl words used for everyday, routine culture. The elderly generation spoke Otomi at home, but seldom in public. In 1994, I asked the villagers about their identity, and they said that they could not be Otomi because "we have forgotten how to speak this language" (Aronsson 2002). Instead, they identified themselves as "mountaineers" and "*ejidatarios*."[1]

Their livelihood was based on agriculture, combined with seasonal migration work in the United States. Religiously, they were divided: but Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists lived side by side, and were roughly distributed between Rancho Nuevo (Adventists), Vista Hermosa (mixed), and La Vega (Catholic).

The number of resettled people varies from 2,152 (in 1991) to 2,452 (in 1996).[2] Counting people in a resettlement project is difficult, because no community is spatially closed: family constitutions and homesteads are only stable at certain points in time.

In Zimapán, the gates of the dam were closed on November 27, 1993, at five o'clock in the morning, without prior notice. This was an emergency measure no one had wanted. The people had refused to move, and after countless negotiations, there was no other recourse than to close the gates and let the water fill the valley. Some families still refused to go: the water rose, and there were no roads, no drinking water, and no electricity. The animals were dying or fleeing. The remaining families were forced to move when the water level rose. A lifestyle had come to an end, and something new had to begin.

BELLA VISTA DEL RÍO

The valley people chose to move to the nearby semidesert plateau, Mesa de León, within the boundaries of the *ejido,* where they still had some rain-fed land. The new village of Bella Vista del Río consists of the three former villages, with each village demarcated, and clearly divided by wide concrete avenues. When the new village was built, it became a hybrid urban enclave within a rural environment. There was a strong economic contrast between the receiving homesteads and the new village.

Twenty years later, in 2013, the border between the new village and the plateau had become blurred. The resettlement had transformed the settlements and the previously simple and nonpermanent homesteads on the plateau. The old houses had been enlarged, and new houses had been added along the main road, and new houses encroached on the plateau´s remaining *ejido* land. The spatial order of the plateau had thus changed, and was consolidated by the material manifestation of permanent houses. In addition,

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[1] An *ejidatario* is a member of a collective agricultural community established after the Mexican revolutions.

[2] Data are from unpublished reports by the Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE) in 1991 and 1996.

new enterprises had been established. There was a hotel, restaurants, car mechanics, hardware stores, information technology shops, butchers, mobile food trucks, and typical small *tiendas*, and the old church had been improved. All of this indicates an economic upswing.

In the new village, which is still encircled by a high fence, I was told by the resettled people that the people on the plateau had gained, at their expense. To understand this statement one must know the history of the place. Before the resettlement, the valley had functioned as a node in the region: and the people who lived on the plateau were landless squatters who had arrived, one family after another. The *ejidatarios* had allowed them to build nonpermanent houses, each one surrounded by a small garden, and as long as they themselves did not need the land, they allowed the landless occupants to have small herds of goats. There was no water on the plateau: therefore, the squatters were allowed to come down to the valley to fetch water once a week, to wash their cars and clothes, and swim in the river (which "belonged" to the valley people). They also received or exchanged products such as prickly pears, for the fruit and vegetables that grew in the valley, with its three to four harvests a year of corn, beans, tomatoes, and thousands of fruit trees. The valley people had a high socioeconomic status, which was directly linked to the richness of the valley.

The resettlement changed all of this: the former valley people lost status and reputation, while the former squatters on the plateau gained status, and became more self-assured. Tough negotiations followed between the valley people and the former squatters, who did not want to leave their houses and lots. They came to an agreement, and the people stayed. By 2013, some families from the new village had also moved to the plateau.

The decision to place the new village on the semidesert plateau was a joint one, decided with a majority vote. The villagers had the option of moving down to the town of Ezequiel Montes, which was closer to the planned res-titution of their inundated farmland, but that option was rejected for several reasons. The main argument was that they wanted to keep their villages, with its social matrix of landless people and landowners, intact: this is in line with anthropological theories on social coherence and solidarity. Later on, the landowners rejected the restitution farmland, and instead accepted large cash compensation (Aronsson 2002). The Comisión Federal de Electricidad resettlement team had argued against cash compensation, but in vain. A few years later, many of the families had lost their money due to unwise invest-ment and consumption.

The village soon became known as the "women's village" because the men had left for the United States to find work. The migration cycle had thereby changed from that of the 1990s, when the men had migrated in harmony with the agricultural cycles. After the resettlement, they stayed in the United States much longer, and finally they did not return at all. By 2013, more than 1,000 people had left, including entire families and single women.

The name Bella Vista del Río means "beautiful view of the river," but there are no signs of the former river. Names, places, and landscapes in Mexico (and elsewhere) are usually coherent: they support narratives and function as social memories. In this case, however, there is a cognitive

dissonance between the name and its environment. My interpretation of this is that the only thing left for the people now was a cognitive category of a beloved landscape, which was etched into their minds and bodies. They felt they needed to bring this with them, but if so, it was an unconscious process on the deepest level of collective memories. I have formulated this earlier as:

> Consequently, naming was a strategy aimed at reconstructing and upholding a socio-cultural continuity. People brought with them the mindscape of the valley, loaded with emotion, and transformed it into names. This may also have been the beginning of a process of encultura-tion into the new life in the new village... (Aronsson 2002)

Further research is needed to see how this process of enculturation is formulated and expressed. In 2016, Bella Vista del Río can be followed on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media, and is well integrated into the global communication network. It is mainly the younger generation that is connected. The Google street-view camera car team has also visited the new village. As my task here is to analyze a cultural trans-formation, this could be highlighted as something extraordinary, but I am hesitant to do so. It would be a form of "exoticizing" the village based on an outsider´s stereotypical view of rural peasant society. The Internet and social media would inevitably have found their way down to the valley with time. It is the speed and the profoundness of the changes that creates a dissonance between the generations and between families that stands out. Any resettled society will be exposed to this kind of dissonance, and there is less need to problematize modernity as such than to figure out how to get the pieces to fit together: because in 2013, there was a general feeling that the new village was in a state of disharmony.

THE PLACE OF HERITAGE IN RESETTLEMENT

Heritage has never been applied to resettlement, except in its narrowest sense of archaeological sites. A working definition of heritage is that heri-tage is about using the past as a resource for present needs. Consequently, a selection of the past is singled out, elevated, and labeled "heritage" in an institutionalized setting. This selection also includes "difficult" or "dark" her-itage that has been translated into popular tourist sites.[3] Within this field of "difficult" heritage, there are various types, such as dissonant, unwanted, and "uninherited" heritage. The terms dissonant and unwanted heritage refer to contested heritage. Uninherited heritage is heritage that exists but that does not seem to have any value. A dissonant heritage carries the burden of history, the mistakes and atrocities that at any time can burst open again, and cause open conflict: it is always present beneath a calm surface. Both

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[3] Numerous sites of dark and difficult heritage have become tourist hot spots, e.g., Dachau concentration camp in Germany, Terror Haza in Budapest, and the site of the destroyed Buddha statues in Afghanistan.

low-intensive and long-lasting conflicts are examples of this. I have discussed the heritage concept elsewhere and have accepted its ambivalence, but also its omnipresence (Aronsson 2013; Josefsson and Aronsson 2016). Hence, heritage is grounded in both space and time: and this is fundamental to our understanding of the resettlement process.

The power of heritage is that it connects us to the past and makes us believe that there are existential, "God-given" values that can help us return to and restore lost values and collective memories from the past. These urges to reconcile with the past and make it comprehensible are so strong that people who have been forced to migrate due to armed conflicts try to rec-reate their past, sometimes in a way that denies reality. An example of this is Palestinian families living in refugee camps in Lebanon, who have kept the house keys to their long-gone homes in occupied Palestinian territory. The key is a materialized memory made sacred. The past has been frozen in time and made sacred, and is therefore beyond renegotiation and reconstruction. There are qualitative differences between a refugee setting and a DFDR dis-placed community, but I assume, despite the lack of ethnographic evidence from longitudinal resettlement research, that making selected elements sacred also takes place in the latter.

The link between prevalent resettlement theories (Cernea 1997; Downing and Garcia-Downing 2009; Scudder and Colson 1982), and heritage would thus lie in a processual view of a past that would offer a framework for the understanding of social disarticulation; and a reconstruction of routine culture with reference to collective memory and collective trauma as signify-ing practices. Evaluation practices would gain by learning to use these highly qualitative dimensions in resettlement projects.

The Intricate Use of the Past

As in the case of the Palestinian refugees who hold onto their house keys—frozen in time, sacred, and beyond reconstruction—it can be assumed that people in DFDR projects suffer from similar dissonances that hamper them in the reinvention of new routine cultures, and thereby influence the process of transformation. In Zimapán, the different types of heritage (dissonant, unwanted, and uninherited) were all at play in the reconstruction and rein-vention processes before, during, and after the physical displacement of the people.

Different types of heritage always coexist in a society, but the differ-ence lies in the intensity of the selection process evoked by the resettlement. Under normal circumstances the selection process is slow and well marked: this house, tree, site, bridge, temple, and ritual. In DFDR projects, the reset-tled people have to make these decisions and selections, not only for singular objects, places, and traditions, but also for all their heritages and memories, in an all-embracing enterprise, during a very short time period (in Zimapán, four years). This is of course riddled with conflict, which adds an additional dimension to the displacement and resettlement process.

A particular heritage always belongs to someone, which implies that someone else will be disinherited. The selection of the past always signifies a

power dimension. The disinheritance of a particular group may be short-term, and a mistake in the process of selection, but it may also be long term, widespread, intentional, important, and obvious (Ashword and Tunbridge 1996). Whoever has the power to legitimize the selection is crucial when a particular place, monument, tradition, and/or memory is elevated and made into heritage. The process usually goes hand in hand with the institutionalizing of a particular heritage. The status, legitimization, elevation, and use of the past as a resource may lead to *dissonant* heritage, which is a vital part of being assigned the status of heritage (Smith 2006). Who is doing the interpretation, and how it is received by the people, is also decisive (Ashword and Tunbridge 1996).

There is a built-in tension associated with the creation and definition of the values, meanings, and symbols of a particular heritage. In Zimapán, the resettlement triggered several processes associated with this array of different heritages: some of them were contested, others were accepted, but none were harmless. The resettlement also trigged a political turnover, with the political power being transferred from the smallest, oldest, Catholic village La Vega, to the biggest, newest, Adventist village Rancho Nuevo. This power struggle was deeply anchored in history.

Politics and Legacy

La Vega claimed to be the oldest settlement in the valley and the bearer of a heritage going back centuries. The villagers tied this legacy to the Otomi identity, the Catholic religion, and their economy. The people insisted that they originated from the Otomi town Tecozautla in Hidalgo, the traditional marketplace of the valley. They had settled in the valley because of their kinship with the Otomi families across the river in Hidalgo. They had built a cable car that carried goods, people, and animals across the river, and had sustained a walking path to the market in Tecozautla, which was used by all. In the valley, they controlled the water through a small irrigation dam behind the village, which was occasionally used as a weapon in conflicts with the other villages. A spatial analysis reveals that in the past, La Vega was at the front of the valley; they were thus the gatekeepers and guardians of the valley.

The political *ejidal* structure confirms this. La Vega had upheld the office as *ejidal* president in the majority of the mandate periods (9 out of 12), since the official foundation of the *ejido* in 1937 (Aronsson 2002). This legacy was broken with the resettlement, when the *ejidal* president was shot and killed during project implementation. This human tragedy is forever documented in "The Ballad of Zimapán," which was written and performed by the La Vega brothers (Aronsson 2002, 285). From here on, La Vega began to withdraw from the negotiations, and the power was transferred to Rancho Nuevo.

In the negotiations, La Vega was depicted as the most "traditional" of the three villages, while Rancho Nuevo became the "progressive" one. Somehow this generated the idea that Rancho Nuevo was better able to cope with the resettlement and future needs. This impression influenced the negotiations and informed the design and idea of the new village.

From a heritage point of view, however, La Vega *was* the traditional village. For one thing, in contrast to the other two villages, it had never changed its name. Place names are not random, and they are ethnographic evidence of an unbroken continuity with the past. Furthermore, this sense of continuity was combined with a strong identification with the landscape, in accordance with Wolf's "bundle of relationships" and Ingold's "unfolding fields of relationship" (Ingold 2000; Wolf 1959, 106). Although all three villages paid deep attention to the landscape, there was something that made La Vega claim that their land was more productive than that of the others, and that therefore they were entitled to more compensation. This claim can be seen as an economic argument, but it might also be part of a feeling of alienation in the resettlement process that stressed "progress" without consideration of a more comprehensive understanding of the past.

In the new village, the La Vega sector seems to have reinvented (or never lost) the routine cultures of the valley to a greater extent than the other sectors. Only time will tell, but after 20 years there are signs that La Vega has found a way forward by balancing new and old structures, a way that promotes a reestablishment of routine culture that is "calmer" and more adapted to the past routine cultures that existed down in the valley. The spatial reinvention of the section confirms this—there are *milpas* with all kinds of vegetables, prickly pear, fruit trees, and animal corrals in conjunction with the houses. The spatial analysis also reveals an adaptation of scale: the school with a well-kept garden (La Vega had the first school in the valley), and a small church. The built environment is in harmony with the size of the village, and lacks the grandeur of the rest of the new village. Furthermore, there are no high walls surrounding the houses, and they are not as massive as in the other sections; the people can see and talk to their neighbors from their porches.

This familiar *ambiente* has been consolidated by the fact that the new village extends beyond the La Vega sector, where the villagers build their own houses, streets, paths, and gardens. Everyday activities were familiar, and included such mundane tasks as the burning of garbage, the hanging of laundry, chatting with the neighbors over the fence, parking the car, and attending to the animals. These routine cultural activities have created a familiar sound and olfactory landscape. The silence and desertedness that dominated the other sections of the new village are absent.

One tentative interpretation is that the other two villages, Rancho Nuevo and Vista Hermosa, have become too different from their past, and thereby have lost viable elements for repairing and consolidating themselves to the same extent that La Vega has done.

The focus of the negotiations was, thus, not the past, but the future, which was accentuated by the fact that the power to legitimize the past was put in the hands of Rancho Nuevo, whose past had been driven by radical change, revolution, and the liberation from the hacienda in the valley, and the adoption of a new religion, Seventh Day Adventism. A low-intensive power struggle had always existed between La Vega and Rancho Nuevo, with Vista Hermosa functioning as the mediator.

A resettlement triggers and reinforces the existing sociocultural elements that rest deeply in the spatial and temporal orders manifested in

heritage and memories. Along these lines, the political turnover reconnected to intricate past sociopolitical structures, and directed Rancho Nuevo into a position—and maybe a perceived right as well—to define and interpret the past for the present and future needs, which culminated in the strains of the resettlement. The struggle between La Vega and Rancho Nuevo was therefore more than a struggle over political and economic resources. It was a struggle about the right to define the future by the use of the past, which was articulated in the sociocultural dimensions of the society. The resettlement "unfolded" the past. To reduce it to a struggle over resources is to diminish its potential. This could have been used as a creative force in the rebuilding of the society: the ethnography was there, but it was neither seen nor used. An opportunity was lost.

The Devil as Heritage

Heritage is always present, even if the society denies its past, because the process of remembering is also a process of forgetting. In other words, part of remembering the past is selecting which memories to forget. This creates not only a *dissonant heritage*, but also an *unwanted heritage* and an *uninherited heritage* (Grydehøj 2010). In the valley, there were all kinds of heritages. Here I will briefly discuss "the heritage of the devil."

In Mexico, the devil is frequently mentioned in the ethnography of resettlement (Barabas and Bartolomé 1973). The devil is also a recurrent theme in South America: it is associated with the fetishization of evil, and is seen as a mediator in conflicting views on the objectification of the human condition (Taussig 1980).

According to local tradition, the Devil lived in the canyon that bears his name, and his body constituted the symbolic landscape of the valley. The dam wall was built in his canyon, and that disturbed him deeply. When the construction of the tunnels in the mountain began—the "opening up" of the mountain—he appeared before the dam workers in the shape of a huge woman dressed in black in 1989 and said that the mountains were his children (Aronsson 2002, 158).

The Devil's body symbolically constituted the natural and cultural landscape in the valley by lying down outstretched in the valley in a northeast to southwest direction, with his head as the village La Vega to the southwest, his stomach as the village Vista Hermosa (in the middle), and his legs as the village Rancho Nuevo to the northeast. His feet faced his canyon.

In the new village, the Devil reappeared in the village's symbolic spatial outline, but with one crucial difference. Instead of lying outstretched, he is now in a fetal position. The spatial order corresponds to the positions in the valley: the head is the La Vega sector, the stomach is the Vista Hermosa sector, and the legs are the Rancho Nuevo sector, but now the Devil is cringing. This was brought to my attention in a spontaneous discussion that took place in the new village. The story was told accompanied by big smiles, as if the people were distancing themselves from this information. Surprised, I asked what they meant by this, and I was told that even the Devil had to give in to the World Bank. The symbolic representation was hence not questioned

per se: the important thing was seen as, rather, the change in the Devil's body posture. Is this ethnographic evidence of a transformed and reinvented expression of a diminished routine culture? Or is it just another esoteric ethnographic anecdote? In any case, what makes it conspicuous is that it is a dissonant and unwanted heritage made visible, and maybe in the future it will be an uninherited heritage as well, present in the collective memory of the resettled society.

The Villages' Spatial Orders as Heritage

In this project, the World Bank recommended that the resettled villages should be lifted up and placed in the same spatial order as they were in the original village outline. For Bella Vista del Río, the placing of the three villages was preceded by tough negotiations between the villagers without the involvement of other actors. The negotiations resulted in a spatial order that placed Rancho Nuevo and Vista Hermosa closest to the main road and the main entrance. La Vega was placed at the back of the village, farthest away from the main road. The village sections were thus placed in accordance with the valley's spatial outline as it appeared at project start.

The past tells us, however, that La Vega had once been the gatekeeper of the valley, located at the front, facing Hidalgo, before it was spatially turned around in favor of Rancho Nuevo in the 1960s. This happened when the new road was built to Cadereyta in Querétaro. Rancho Nuevo had promoted the road, and La Vega had argued against it, and refused to collaborate. The road was built with state money and labor from the valley, and it entered the valley in Rancho Nuevo, which therefore moved into the front position, while La Vega was demoted to the back. This was the spatial order that was recreated in the new village.

Twenty years after the resettlement, the pieces of the new village do not seem to fit together harmoniously, echoing an early ethnographic observation I had made. In 1994 I saw a truck parked in the new village in the La Vega sector. A motto painted on the truck stated, "My village is in agony" (Aronsson 2002, 195). A message like this makes it clear that any "lesson learned" policy has failed utterly in this situation.

The Ballad of Zimapán as Intangible Heritage

Another example of heritage that appeared during the resettlement was "The Ballad of Zimapán." The heritage of a place is maintained and reproduced across the generations through stories, songs, and poetry. In "The Ballad of Zimapán," which was composed and performed by the La Vega brothers in 1994, the collective trauma of the society has been documented forever. The ballad consists of nine verses that describe the agony of having to leave the valley of *Ejido* Vista Hermosa, the feeling of being betrayed, and the anger of being targeted by the state, forced to move, and be "developed" in Ezequiel Montes, a town located closer to the main national culture and the majority society. The ballad was attainable for analysis during the implementation, but it was not used. It was not even considered to be of importance for the

understanding of the cultural response to the displacement. In 2013, a fol-low-up video, *Dueto C.V. Bella Vista del Río*, was available on YouTube.[4]

Both the ballad and the statement painted on the truck are cultural expressions of a collective trauma that these villages experienced and lived through. This goes beyond individual pain, depression, and memory, and has made its way to a higher level of abstraction. This pain belongs to the collective memories of the community, and its heritage. The collective trauma and the feeling of victimization go hand in hand.

LOST AGRICULTURAL LAND AND NOTIONS OF FREEDOM

As mentioned earlier, the new village was built on the plateau with the argument that the villages wanted to preserve their social cohesion, and not separate the landowners and the landless. The *ejidatarios* rejected the replacement land located closest to the town Ezequiel Montes. This was a majority decision taken at a general assembly. In 2013 the reasons for the rejection had been reformulated, and the matter of social cohesion was no longer mentioned. The new statements were: "they wanted their freedom," "their independence," "they were used to dealing with their own stuff," "it is too crowded," and "it is too close to the municipal authorities." But these arguments mirror the arguments of the conflict about the road in the 1960s. The citizens of La Vega insisted then that "they did not want the law of the municipality to enter the valley" (Aronsson 2002, 77).

These arguments could be attributed to the place-attachment model, but I find that they rather express underlying existential themes, such as a hesitation to come too close to the national society with its values, lifestyle, and demands from authorities. There is a perceived ontological distance between the valley and the national culture that is connected to a long-term strategy of retaining a heritage, collective memories, experiences, and notions of freedom that go far back in history. In 2013, other voices were heard, claiming that it might have been a mistake not to accept the replacement land.

CONCERNS ABOUT MEMORY AND SACRALIZATION

In DFDR projects different types of heritages and memories are at play in the reconstruction and reinvention processes. An understanding of the past is needed for a reinvention of routine culture, but at the same time a sacralization of the past could block its transformation through generations. The structures at play, heritages and memories, are not passive, but active, agents that either impede or speed up the reinvention and reconstruction processes. I suspect that people in DFDR projects live for years with a dissonant, unwanted, and uninherited heritage that they are forced to make livable and adapt to a new life-world. They have to learn to forget to remember, and

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[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIOA-9uwsC0.

remember to forget, while they fight for their livelihood. They have to learn how to practice selective forgetfulness for the benefit of their community.

The Zimapán resettlement shows that the creative forces of society and the components of reinvention are connected to these intersubjective memories, but more research is needed to exploit its full potential for policy and evaluation. For example, Misztal, with reference to Halbwachs, points out that memory is a community issue that is embedded in societal values rather than merely a psychological function of cognitive capacities (Halbwachs 1941/1992; Misztal 2005). This line of thought entails that memories have a stabilizing effect on societies because of their normative and calming functions; memories give people a sense of meaning and place in the world (Schwartz 2000).

In DFDR projects, a focus on memories could, however, be both sensitive and dangerous. I am concerned that if the "wrong" memories are triggered, we might end up with a very complicated resettlement, with a sacralization and freezing of the past, similar to what displaced people in conflict zones experience. Furthermore, efforts to mitigate this might even create a state of mind that would be part of this "freezing" and dwelling in the past and a sense of victimization. The victimization syndrome has been a problem for a long time in resettlement.

Finally, I encountered methodological problems in the field when I tried to ethnographically document memories in Bella Vista del Rio in 2013. I did not seem to be able to formulate the right questions: and people did not relate to my question, "What do you remember from the past in the valley?" However, a breakthrough moment came early one morning in a villager's kitchen, when I was told that when they talked about the valley and their past life, they "cried and remembered the food, fruit, vegetables, smells and sound, all down there."[5] These are sensory memories, bodily experiences, and emotions felt and explained in a holistic view of the past. I realized that the cognitive approach I had been using was insufficient. I concluded that the use of a phenomenological methodology is more suitable in approaching the memory complex. This would challenge any evaluation scheme for resettlement, because the data that is produced with such a methodology is qualitative.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND EVALUATION

During implementation, a complicated kind of knowledge production is generated between the local people and the implementing company. The quality of this knowledge governs the outcome, and badly implemented projects have severe consequences, as can be seen by studying the World Bank Inspection Panel (which had 106 cases in 2016).[6] I have argued elsewhere that DFDR projects are so complex that they have similarities to art installations, and

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[5] L.C. Bella Vista del Rio, personal communication, July 2013.

[6] The World Bank Inspection Panel, http://ewebapps.worldbank.org/apps/ip/Pages/AllPanelCases.aspx.

performances that result in ad hoc solutions (Aronsson 1992). de Wet has also observed this complexity, but relates it to the capacity of the stakeholders to create a "moral space" for meaningful communication (de Wet 2009, 86). In a similar vein, Hermans, El-Masry, and Sadek (2002) discuss participation by stressing the pedagogical aspects of communication. My objection to these approaches is that knowledge production in resettlement must never be reduced to a pedagogical training exercise between more or less rational agents. There are aspects of the pedagogical methods that need improvement, but that is not all that is needed. We need to recognize how the past is embodied in material objects and expressed in the intangible narratives that determine the knowledge product that is to be executed and evaluated. The past has to be critically evaluated and reflected upon during implementation, as well as in its evaluation.

In Zimapán, during the implementation the main stakeholders became engaged in a ritual dance that had less to do with solving the project's everyday problems than with the upholding of self-defined positions. The stakeholders were locked into past structures and positions that regulated their behavior and attitudes. The behavior became routine, and the understanding and competencies became self-generating categories, similar to performative rituals that influence praxis, resulting in the standards (policy) not informing and shaping praxis. Standard policy guidelines and praxis had failed to build a problem-solving platform for the purpose of generating operationally useful knowledge for all stakeholders. The knowledge was there, but policy and praxis did not interlock.

Knowledge is not only linked to power: first and foremost it has an ability to make itself "true" (Foucault 1977, 27). For resettlement implementation and evaluation, this is relevant, because all classification schemes (understood as spatial-temporal segmentations of the world) have a tendency to become "true" and taken for granted with time. They become standards.

The knowledge produced during resettlement is always categorized and put into boxes to become operational entities. The problem arises when a knowledge category becomes "true" without any consideration of its potential value for the project. The principle must be that in a participatory-informed project all knowledge (both local and expert) must be scrutinized and assessed from a systematic perspective. The romanticizing of local knowledge, based on a relativistic view of culture, can be devastating. Equally devastating is blind faith in blueprint knowledge, based on a classification scheme that has become "true in itself." Instead of either of these, all knowledge produced must prove its solution value regardless of whose knowledge it might be. The challenge is in dealing with contradictory knowledge, and finding ways to identify, analyze, and address it.

In the goal-free evaluation method, power and self-generating categories are in focus, because it is assumed that if an external evaluator "intentionally avoids knowledge of and reference to the program's stated or official goals and objectives" neutrality could be upheld (Youker, Ingraham, and Bayer 2014). The evaluator moves backward in the project to discern the effects of the implementation without any informed knowledge about the project goals. Goal-free evaluation is mainly associated with qualitative

data collection methods, a multilayered approach, and evaluation indicators. However, in DFDR projects the stakes are high, and when the project moves forward, everything is intensified: there is therefore a risk that these soft life-skills indicators may be set aside in favor of the material and compensatory aspects crucial for livelihood.

Participatory methodologies aim to incorporate local knowledge and empower local people. This requires that the locals be trained in participatory methods, and that they build their capacity. Participatory evaluations have shown, however, that there is a clear division in the tasks and responsibilities: program staff design evaluation and data analysis, while local participants collect the ethnographic data.

The intricacy of DFDR projects inevitably leads to complexity theory and its application for evaluation. Briefly, complexity theory is not one single, coherent body of thought, but rather consists of bundles of interacting stakeholders, objects, and processes bound together by interest or functions. These interactions are nonlinear, open to feedback, and difficult to predict. Because of their uncertainty and nonlinearity, complex social systems are difficult to evaluate, and there is no consensus in the research literature about what can be useful for their evaluation (Walton 2014).

A final observation from the praxis in Zimapán involves the monitoring team. With time, their reports came to evince strong similarities with the implementer's reports. In fact, it became almost impossible to see the difference between a monitoring report and a management one. The World Bank conclusion was that the team was young and inexperienced, and therefore could not uphold their position in the face of the management of the Comisión Federal de Electricidad (World Bank 1997). From my everyday experiences with the team, I think this had to do with their lack of trust in their own knowledge. Much of this knowledge belongs to the "soft" sociocultural dimensions, and thus did not fit the matrix—the expected (or "true") knowledge categories. Most of this tacit knowledge was related to the past and how to live a good life, but it did not find its way into any of the reports, whether they were management, monitoring, or evaluation reports. There was no appropriate language, no classification schemes that could be used, and these observations were therefore left aside. If we add to this complexity the knowledge that "open-ended, non-fixed, non-politicized collective memory is good for cooperative relationship" (Misztal 2005), we are faced with an even more complex system, which nevertheless might be a step closer to introducing the use of the past in resettlement—although it will undoubtedly still be an imperfect use of the past.

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