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HIDDEN, MOVED, FORGOTTEN: THE BUILDING OF THE DAM EL ZAPOTILLO EN JALISCO, MEXICO

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I - Introduction

Since the mid 80's in the past 20th century the term “development-induced displacement” (Cernea 1991) has been consolidated as a valid category to analyze the social consequences of a specific type of obligatory migrations that derived from the construction of public infrastructure. Literature studying this specific type of “environmental refugees” has increased notoriously (Terminski 2012). In particular the displacements of millions of people who have had to abandon their land and dwellings flooded by great reservoirs of water has attracted the attention of many researchers. Nevertheless, for the most part, these studies have focused in cases that affected hundreds of thousands people (for instance the Three Gorges dam in China), that were suffered by historically marginalized towns, such as indigenous groups, or towns with a certain type of historical social segregation. It has been less usual to pay attention to the uprooting and economic, cultural, and social marginalization groups seemingly integrated in the dynamics of relatively prosperous areas have been condemned to. Particularly if this dispossession is a consequence of political decisions that entail a flagrant violation of human rights. This is, precisely, the case of the inhabitants of Temacapulín and other small villages such as Acasico and Palmarejo, emplaced in the Jalisco area of the basin of the Mexican Río Verde.

The existence of an assumed hydrological deficit in the region Los Altos de Jalisco (The Jalisco's Highlands) that crosses this river, and especially in close metropolitan areas has been the pretext claimed by Mexican political authorities to build a dam: El Zapotillo. Firstly, this decision has avoided the possibility of such a shortage being the result of inappropriate management, rather than an incontrovertible physical fact. Secondly, it has dramatically overlooked that the immediate effect of this construction is the expulsion of the population out of the land that is going to be flooded. As if they were not there. As if these areas were uninhabited. However, against what authorities expected, in Temacapulín a social emergency of great dimensions raised defending the rights of those who considered themselves unfairly despoiled. An emergency that has

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been converted in an immediate political and social conflict which we have ethnographed thoroughly. The next pages present a concise analysis of the process occurred to stop the violation of some of the human rights of these Mexican villages' inhabitants. That is, we are presenting, as Velasco and Díaz de Rada would put it (2004: 173), "a tale organized around scientific arguments", resulting from the appropriated combination of techniques used during the participating observation realized in the field work. The development of this participating observation was initiated in a systemic way according to the standards established by contemporary anthropology in 2012, even though there were preliminary phases since 2008, and it implies the constant presence of at least one researcher, among the inhabitants of the places we will be discussing below. That is why the developed ethnography has been only possible through the relations established *de près et de loin* (from nearby and far) with the neighbors of Temacapulín, Acasico and Palmarejo. These relations have been necessarily articulated as to avoid a distortion of the results caused by the combination of empathy and estrangement. What follows is not, therefore, the position of the totality, or even part, of the inhabitants of these areas. It is what ethnography discovers through them and with them, once the numerous socio and ethnocentric prejudices are eliminated.

II - The Highlands of Jalisco and the problems with water

It is difficult to disassociate the region of Los Altos of Jalisco from the topics which identify Mexico abroad. The *charros* and *rancheros*, along with tequila make of this region their more habitual habitat. But even though the ranch base, which has historically conditioned this area, from kinship structures to economic production, is still present and greatly influences both social relations and the cultural imaginary, the past decades have brought a great transformation of the region. Massive migrations of a great part of its population to and from the United States, the emergence of a modern, competitive agricultural industry, along with the transformation of what was once small rural nucleus into large metropolis are at the same time cause and effect of new changes. To generate this "modernization", presented by political authorities as a political and economic success, the constant drilling of deeper and deeper wells has been necessary, as a consequence of the weakening of the water table; this access to underground water has allowed for the expansion of the tequila industry, as for the farming industry in charge of meat, eggs, dairy products, and fodder production among others. On the other hand, the urban expansion has been possible due to a public management characterized for the permanent increase of water offer and the systemic oversight of demand control. Both processes have been ultimately settled on the generalized idea that the offer of water can be extended *ad infinitum* maintaining its economic and sumptuary uses, since, in the case of a shortage, they can resort to the construction of increasingly bigger dams. In fact, according to official data, in the Río Verde basin there are already 58 dams and *bordos*—local name given to small dams built for watering livestock—with a capacity superior to a million cubic meters.

Now then, this conception of water as an economic resource and the principal supportive element of social and natural life entails a disdain for the Los Altos de Jalisco's

ranchers' ethnoecologic knowledge, as they are used to managing uncertainty through the signals of "the third revolution of water" (Casillas 2013). The arrival of storm clouds full of electricity and rain in the month of May, announcing the arrival of the annual, imprecise precipitations was called by *alteños* "the revolutions of water". Their wisdom to interpret the local meteorology, product of the experience of past generations, indicated that "at the mark of the third revolution of water the rainy season starts and it is the right moment to start sowing." (Casillas 2002:13). This was the time peasant activity would be planned around, albeit with an irregular rate of success, as the erratic conditions of the weather would not let this so called "revolution" bring any certainty. But once the ranchers became capable of generating sustainable systems for storage and began building bigger dams and irrigation channels, this "third revolution" of water remained not exclusively as a meteorological prediction system. It was, basically, a system of social relationships established in the region through a particular use of water in conditions of hydrological shortages. The *alteños* stockbreeders built dikes in streams and rivers to make troughs for livestock, which they called *bordos*; dams in the larger aquifers; they made farms arise in the interference of natural springs and crossroads. They created in this way a ranch sustainable cultural ecology: a territorial constellation of scattered population that combined livestock landscapes and peasant life.

In opposition to it, the growing urbanization process required new and larger dams without increasing the flow of water to the region. Furthermore the increasing provision of water that reached the cities was dissimilar to the one rural communities received. Whereas the former grew, the later found their limited ground water being directed to promote urban development. With that, the management of water gradually became subordinated to the combination of infrastructure constructions which helped transport it to urbanization and industrialization centers. The price that had to be paid, especially in a sum that grows exponentially since the ending of the decade of the 70s of the 20th century, was that water stopped being considered a vital resource articulating landscapes, territorial, social and cultural identities to become exclusively a productive resource. That is, a merchandise linked to the law of supply and demand. With this, springs, rivers, and over ground currents disappeared from the landscape, that progressively substituted them by wells and dams. Moreover, soon nearby metropolitan areas, particularly cities such as Guadalajara in Jalisco and León in Guanajuato, and their urban areas in spite of not being located in the Río Verde basin, claimed a part of its water, in order to maintain their urban and industrial lifestyle.

On top of finding itself between these urban nucleuses that need water but do not have it, the Verde river basin hosts 21 municipalities of Los Altos de Jalisco. Some of them very populated, like Lagos de Moreno (more than 150,000 inhabitants) or Tepatitlán de Morelos (almost 140,000). The rest of the population, up to the 750,000 inhabitants counted by the Geography and Statistics National Institute (INEGI; Population and Housing Census 2010, which is the source demographic data in this article are based on), is divided among smaller towns. Nevertheless, farms that form rural domestic unities scattered during the mid 20th century are on the edge of extinction due to the progressive process of urban concentration (Cabrales 1990). In fact, in Lagos de Moreno the 2010

census registered 117 ranches “with no residents” and 353 communities with less than 100 inhabitants. Something similar happens in Tepatitlán de Morelos, where 102 rural communities “with no residents” and 286 with less than 100 inhabitants were listed.

Adjacent towns are not the only ones consuming water the people need: the egg production in the periphery of the three biggest cities in Los Altos de Jalisco boasts around one million tons per year, which supposes, other than high imports of grains, the consumption of more than 16 million liters of water per day to guarantee the sustenance of no less than 50 million hens. Water needed to maintain the milk production in Arandas, Lagos de Moreno, San Juan de los Lagos, and Tepatitlán de Morelos is also abundant; as it is the one that guarantees the production of bovine and porcine meat. In addition to this consumption we must count the millions of liters of drinkable, distilled or demineralized water, necessary to support a tequila production that exceeds 300 million liters per year (and that multiplies tenfold the liters of contaminated water). And so, water from runoffs has turned into, due to its treatment by industry and urban consumption, has turn into “exclusionary waters” (Aboites 1994), since its degree of contamination is such that this water would require expensive treatments in order to be re-used. In short, the rivers, troughs, springs and fountains, once the pride of the ranchers, have become but a memory and, as much for urban uses as for the agricultural and livestock industries, the *alteños* have had the necessity of building artisan wells which have weakened the subterranean aquifers in such a way that in some of the places where there was water until very recently, nowadays it is necessary to dig 300 meters deep to find it.

On the other hand, the water used for agriculture and livestock production does not stay in Jalisco, either: most of it, assimilated in the different products, leaves Los Altos de Jalisco towards big cities like Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco, and León in the state of Guanajuato, which do not only boast a leading role in the economic and social life of the region and being an attractive market for the aforementioned products, they are also the gate to the national and international ones. These receive every year, together with tequila, eggs, and meat, millions of liters of water, unnoticed by most of the population. Guadalajara and León, in addition to attracting these goods, reclaim the arrival of water from Los Altos de Jalisco, to be able to maintain their powerful industries. The businessmen of León demand the water to defend their self-proclaimed condition of “shoe capital of the world”. Others in this city’s metropolitan area—particularly those from Silao and San Francisco del Rincón—, for the private industrial parks promoted by public institutions thanks to the presence in the region of one of the foremost political parties in Mexico, whose main example is the former president, in office between the years 2000 and 2006, Vicente Fox Quesada. The city of Guadalajara exerts no less pressure on Los Altos de Jalisco, possessing one and a half million inhabitants (in 2010), plus other three millions in its conurbation with Zapopan, Tonalá, Tlaquepaque and Tlajomulco. Guadalajara is not only the political capital of Jalisco, but the historical, economic, and administrative center for West Mexico. But not even in León, with its industrial strength, nor in Guadalajara, the “Mexican Silicon Valley” (according to a billboard displayed at the exit of the airport), can rain alone satisfy the needs of population and industry. For this reason, the history of these two cities in the last century is one of daring attempts to accumulate water.

In this time frame, the demand of reservoirs has been a constant so reiterated over the last hundred years as the failure of all attempts to comply with it. In 1956 the construction work initiated to build a dam –La Zurda– in the Río Verde, was stopped shortly after being started. It also failed the the following attempt to solve the demands of water issued in Guadalajara with the so called Calderón Dam (official name, “Elías González Chávez”), which was to be connected with an aqueduct to its urban net in 1988. The same situation occurred with the construction of the El Salto dam. The frustration would increase even more with a new investment in the old dam of La Zurda, when construction was stopped again shortly after being started. The 21st century began with no solution to the water supply problems and with slight threats of a political conflict when the populations of Guadalajara noticed the yearned for water of the Río Verde could change its path due to the drive of some cities in the state of Guanajuato, conveniently supported by the political powers of the country. In any case, while León and Guadalajara dispute the ownership of water from Los Altos de Jalisco, sometimes with the added competition of the nearby and no less industrialized city of Aguascalientes (in the state of the same name), quality and quantity of water from Los Altos de Jalisco decreases at a great speed.

Despite so many failures, the solution some would like to implement already in the present century to resolve the demands of these cities, where political (or economic) power sits, is to increase the offer through mega-dams. Even though this entails the transference of billions taken from public capital towards private, big multinational companies. The possibility of transferring the development and potential users to the water source, rather than carrying water to distant places from these, is not even considered, since this would become detrimental for the building sector. In fact, construction companies, albeit indirectly, since it would be legally impossible to do it in a direct way, finally come to take the absolute control of water management. With this maneuver, economic benefits become the exclusive goal of the possible water usage. Seen from this perspective, those elements considered a burden to this purpose, are considered discardable. Even when they are people. They are thrown out and compensated miserably after hard bargaining. They are condemned to cultural margination –because they will always be “displaced”, that is with no “place” or “settlement” of their own, as chroniclers would put it. They are punished by being forced to carry out new jobs in locations that have previously sustained an inevitable ecological damage by introducing in them new towns, which alter them significantly. But, for those who design the hydraulic management, intertwining it with public policies resulting in private benefits that dye its development with the color of construction, the displaced are an acceptable cost. One that, in addition, is hypocritically justified arguing that water is a human right: relieving a few of it guarantees, they say, the right to have water of many. Regardless of where the ones or the others might be. This provides for a hierarchy of rights in which some are considered as such, since they are being institutionally defended, while others are considered merely desirable and, therefore, not necessarily achievable. In the same way, if the displaced people are to be granted any rights, those will always be subordinated to the ones inhabitants of the urban majority boast. Thus, they put face to face the right to have water—and the subsequent economic production—of the city dwellers, with the right to live where you were born

of those who are about to see how their homes and lives are flooded. Moreover, they simultaneously contrast an urban lifestyle, with all its amenities, with another one that is considered outdated—a rural one—, one that, to them, is a mere vestige of a time gone by and with the maintenance of this way of life's associated ecosystems, which will disappear irretrievably. With no possibility of return. In the heights of iniquity, from this perspective of a false human rights conflict, the villagers about to be relocated—as if they were but a product of merchandise—are depicted as “lacking in solidarity”, because they deny the cities their economic development.

Tomé & Fábregas (1999) verified the existence of these “Hidden Altos” next to the river inside of the Rio Verde ravine. Opposing the interweaving of the elite owners of the farming industry with their global capitalist strategies, even more so after the North American Free Trade Agreement (TLCAN-NAFTA), set off in 1994, there were some whose lives seemed not to change, even if that meant remaining unseen. Or at least, the changes were slower. If in the “higher Altos”, to keep using Tomé & Fábregas' terminology, crossed by modern (and expensive) transportation infrastructures connecting urban centers with the great extra-regional cities, life is becoming more similar to that of other “globalized” places, in the “Hidden Altos”, it lingers a slow peasant life that adjusts itself to the rhythm of the river, where fishermen turn to, as well. A life that, maybe due to the zone's orography, or maybe due to a personal choice, joins into national and international dynamics at a different speed than the one the telephone and internet interconnections establish. But building the El Zapotillo dam will not only turn its inhabitants into “refugees” or “displaced people”, it will erase this “bioregion” (Tomé 2008) for ever and will transform it from “hidden” to “missing”. With this, the hegemony of the Altos elites, which were hoping to see the region coming together around their own interests since the times of the colony (Fábregas 1986), will have achieved, thanks to the management of water as a good in a globalized context, what it could not before or after the independence. At the same time, a lifestyle attached to nature will disappear with the El Zapotillo dam. Just as if cultural diversity were irrelevant to humanity.

Differently to the administrative, political, and economic hustle that articulates Tepatitlán de Morelos and Lagos de Moreno, and the full range of municipalities depending on these two poles, in the “Hidden Altos” the inhabitants group around small rural communities devoted to agriculture and fishing. They are not, by all means, peasants living a pastoral existence, frozen in time, like the defenders of some lost identities would have it. What they have is a different kind of modernity that has eliminated some of the uncertainties derived from the oscillations of the seasons: their economic production is intimately related to the sustainable use of springs, with the watering of vegetable patches and the appropriate management of Rio Verde. This, on its part, has become in focal point of all polluted runoffs and urban drainage. However we cannot idealize the social life of the base of Rio Verde's valley: the extraction, not completely in compliance with the law, of sand and gravel from the riverbed is slowly changing its course and modifying fords and river-crossings.

Nonetheless, without considering that the notion of “dessert” is a political category (Tomé 2013) there are those who, using the demographics of the base of the valley as

a tool, intend to present the “Hidden Altos” as a deserted space. Certainly, part of its population has migrated to the cities (Cabrales 1997), keeping its demographic dynamics in line with those of the rest of the small highlander villages. It is no different to what is happening in other points of the region where, when it comes to population, less is less, and more, even more. However, as Tomé notes (2013), to claim that a location is a dessert invisibilizes its inhabitants, allowing afterwards appropriating their territory with varied goals. In other words: even though it is being presented as an available dessert, the riverbanks of Río Verde still boast a social life developed by different human groups. A social life that, for the most part, has the municipality of Temacapulín as its axis.

III - The Emergence of the El Zapotillo Conflict in Temacapulín.

Set in the Altos triangle that in proportion has forced more people out from the *rancherías*, Temacapulín is the town articulating the “Hidden Altos”. Their inhabitants are part of the 4,151 that, according to the INEGI census lived in 2010 spread across the 111 towns that shape the municipality of Cañadas de Obregón, with 2,625 registered in its head. In addition to this head, Temacapulín is also close—not only geographically—with the municipality of Mexxicacán. This one shares with Cañadas de Obregón the type of population settlement, as, out of the 6,034 inhabitants it included according to the 2010 census, 3,250 did so in its head, while the 61 other towns shared the rest of the population. It is also worth noting that, on top of these, 68 other towns exists devoid of inhabitants, according to the census. This is a similar number to that “maintained” in the same situation in Cañadas de Obregón, where 66 towns had no registered inhabitants.

Temacapulín does not only establish relationships with the towns of these two municipalities. The road, just a dirt track until not long ago, communicating Valle de Guadalupe with Mexxicacán through a bridge located close to Temacapulín has brought its inhabitants nearer to the other *alteñas* localities and, with them, to the rest of the world. If this infrastructure connects the villagers of Río Verde in a positive manner with the others from the Altos de Jalisco, there is another, even closer relationship with these people in a more negative light: as the years have passed, the Río Verde has turned into a giant sewer pipe where the waste of all villages and ranches above Temacapulín is spilled. Rather than unease or indignation, this provokes in the neighbors of Temacapulín the decision to turn these landscape of their lives, where their ancestors inhabited since at least mid 16th century, in a water storage zone for other municipalities and the metropolitan areas. On April the 7th 1995, the then president of Mexico Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León presented the Río Verde shallow water reservoir for domestic usage and the urban public.

Of the annual 504,576 millions of cubic meters of water, 119,837 millions of cubic meters were to be reserved for the Estate of Guanajuato and the other 384,739 for Jalisco (National Commission of Water). This decision was modified by the same president two years and a half later, decreasing the usable amount in Jalisco but keeping the one in Guanajuato intact (Ferrer, 2012). Assuming these choices, the successor in the Presidency of the Republic, Vicente Fox Quesada, would sign on December 14th 2004 an “Agreement for the Coordination and Negotiation on the Distribution of the Shallow Waters of

the Lerma-Chapala Basin” (Olguín, 2004) which legally allowed the transfer of water to Guanajuato from the Río Verde. For this, it was going to be necessary to build a dam – San Nicolás – with a duct that would carry water up to Guanajuato. The villages threatened by the construction of this infrastructure (San Nicolás de las Flores, San Gaspar de los Reyes y Rancho Nuevo), immediately expressed a categorical opposition (Hernández & Casillas, 2008). The still president Vicente Fox tried to calm down the complains by announcing on May the 1st, just before the beginning of the election campaign, fabulous hydraulic investments that would guarantee drinkable water for the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Querétaro, and San Luis Potosí, as well as a special Water Supply Program for the Altos of Jalisco and León (Olguín, 2006). Amongst these announcements, in a completely unexpected and unforeseen manner, the federal authorities opened for bidding on May the 3rd 2006 a new dam, El Zapotillo.

The justification for this uncanny measure, conveniently sheltered by the law, was to be an alleged lawsuit initiated by the state of Guanajuato. According to the official data of the Jalisco Estate Commission of Water (*Comisión Estatal del Agua*, CEA), of the 20,500 km² conforming the Rio Verde basin, 57% of the territory would be in the State of Jalisco, 21% in Aguascalientes, 15% in Zacatecas, where the river is born, and only 7% in Guanajuato (Jalisco Estate Commission of Water). Although the percentage of the runoffs that feed into the river and pass through the state of Guanajuato is minimal, its government reclaimed the federal one its exploitation, on the terms of the 1995 decree that guaranteed for their usage 119,837,000 annual cubic meters of water (EuropaPress, 2011).

Beyond this formal excuse, the construction of the El Zapotillo dam obeys to a reason expressed before Guanajuato’s claim for water. We mean the building industry’s repeated demand of building a dam in order to economically stimulate the sector. That is, the construction of the dam, building a dike, forging concrete mixed with steel, has become a goal in itself for the companies of the sector, whether it regulates the river or not. The construction of the shutter as keystone of a water storage zone will raise even more the need for building investments, since said storing would be useless without the kilometers of infrastructure that will take the water across the whole territory of the Highlands up to León, Guanajuato. However, the governmental intervention and the project resulting from the 2006 official decree roughed up and disrupted the people of Temacapulín, for one, as well as the other *alteños*. Social protest was the answer to this threatening plan, presented to the public as a score for change. Powerful actors and different kinds of intervention saw how, in spite of everything, the steel and concrete for the dike were deployed. President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) articulated a political block between Jalisco and Nayarit that set a budget with a generous initial federal investment; he carried out the project with the economic participation of Jalisco and Guanajuato. With all these different plans and public-private schemes, deals in the upper echelons, and decision making, the will of the *alteños*, who were never even consulted, was overlooked. In fact, the governments involved, never considered that their arbitrary calculations for the expropriation of land and water distribution could be ever be altered by the intentions of, for them, a miniscule number of people, living in a valley so “hidden”, they could as

well be invisible. The benefit it would bring to capitals and industry would be legitimization enough. The sacrifice—with hardly any payment in return—of Temacapulín and the significant alteration of the other *alteños*' lives was considered an acceptable price for the gains it would bring to national and multinational companies. However, for those who saw the construction works advance, and heard the announcement of a broad 139 kilometer long aqueduct, pump houses, a treatment plant, to make polluted water into drinkable water in a 3,800 liters per second ratio, a 100,000 cubic meter storage tank, a 40 kilometer distribution circuit in León, etc. The expropriating project became increasingly evident (EuropaPress, 2011).

Moreover, the builders tried to incite national pride in order to play down the protests: the “monumental” El Zapotillo dam would be the biggest in all of Mexico and one of the first in the world. Euphorically they presented alternative designs and governmental plans dressed with all sort of impressive numbers enough to make the untrained mind spin. And accompanying these numbers, the accustomed ritual mix of political and economic arguments: an extremely low estimated cost; an almost laughable 8,700 million pesos price. But these investments, disguised as favorable, are unabashedly covered by other variables: the flooding of a “low agricultural production” surface, all 4,816 hectares of it, solely inhabited by “scattered” settlers in “isolated” ranches (Jalisco Estate Water Commission). Then, to establish a possibility of criminalization and accusation for these communities, the epitome of “nobodyism” with all its technical arguments, they added that in the area intended for the dam there only lived 1,500 people, but not all of them would be affected. Of them, merely 500 were neighbors of Temacapulín. Hardly comparable to the millions of citizens that would benefit from these monumental construction works and these intelligent investments. The federal government kept to itself the details of the El Zapotillo System and only allowed the spillage of a few generalizations during this conflicted decade. Or rather, it repeated to death the same advantages: the alternative and the technical solution to maintain the urban lifestyle and promote the industrial growth of West Mexico. All this, as part of an aggressive, provocative paraphernalia for the people and the communities used to the disinterest and silence of the Estate and national governments.

Submerged in the production of this deliberate ceremony of confusion, the governments could not foresee the birth of an important social protest movement, fighting to avoid the flooding of Temacapulín. But born it was, from the depths of the valley. A movement that gained weight and magnitude when it achieved in court, through legal means, the arrest of the dike's construction at 79-70 meters high—when it was only thirty centimeters away from the maximum legally allowed height—. It was a short distance, true; but the dam could not fulfill its purpose of stocking up the water from Río Verde. At the same time, numerous social actors from outside of the community of Temacapulín joined the protest against the flooding: migrants, journalists and the media, scholars and different kinds of activists. Internal and external social actors, many of them Temacapulín's “absent children” or people with family ties within the community, who maintained different lifestyles, but shared the defense of this land, “inwards” and “from without” against the threat of the dam. The echo of the valley started being heard loudly

in the outside, for it was this participation of outsiders that allowed formal and informal alliances supporting the goals of the social protest movement. But some of these external social actors tried to participate “inwards”. Both supporting and attacking the protests. In any case, these alliances served as an excuse for those who maintained the necessity of building the dam to disregard the opposition of Temacapulín’s villagers and to go on defending their interests, ignoring the social consequences of their decision.

It must be mentioned, however, that not every victim of the dam joined the movement against its construction. What is more, just as the near municipalities saw in the dam an unexpected political opportunity to reclaim compensation and infrastructures so often denied in the past, some viewed its building as an unbeatable chance to sell their lands. That is, one of the effects of the conflict was the transformation of the physical space that hosted into an “ambivalent landscape” (Johnson & Miemeyer 2008): for some, it was valuable as a receptacle-space where water could be stored, for others, it put Temacapulín “in the map” effectively turning it into a “place” in the anthropological sense (Augé 1993). Either way, the social, political and economical consequences of this territorial revaluation were perceived “inwardly”, making other internal social actors incorporate to this terrain their parents’ and grandparents’ history.

Against those reluctant and those who sought to take advantage of the individual opportunities the construction brought, social actors protesting in Temacapulín showed the voice of social emergence. These inhabitants’ protests reclaimed respect for the human rights, recognized or not in any of the several declarations that enumerate them, due to their history and culture. Soon, they realized that, even though not all of their rights are infringed, as they kept some of them, power relationships invoke a conception of justice that seems to be inclined to perpetrate the despoil of the people, their history, the water and its territory, through management mechanisms implemented by different proceedings carried out by the three levels of the Mexican government. Opposing this conception, they raised another idea of justice, based not exclusively on the satisfaction of the majority, like classical utilitarianism would have it. A kind of justice supported through the combination of different means of dialogue, negotiation, and confrontation, which demands the rights of the citizen (Castro 2006; Fox 1998). That is, a kind of justice based on the regards of the citizenship, and one that considers that under those so-called “Estate reason” the political authorities put forward, there hides an understanding of human beings as political clients and users of public services that are being sold as merchandise.

It is because of this reason that the goals of Temacapulín’s protests have transcend the very construction of the dam to become a sort of denouncement of economic marginalization, poverty and the historical lack of attention towards rural communities. That is, the claims of justice caused by the conflict overtook the particular elements of the same in order to generate an argument about legality itself and the relationship this could have with a transitional, all-understanding, intergenerational and globally equitable justice (Beneite 2013). In other words, the argument on the region’s economical development the dam was to promote has given way for Temacapulín’s inhabitants to the debate on how said development could affect the life of riverside peasants who could not expect an egalitarian distribution of possible economical benefits. At the same time, it appears a

discussion on the legitimacy of basing regional economic growth on the degradation, or even outright destruction of the natural environment. With this, the social emergence inherent to this particular political conflict has brought to the foreground of the debate the way in which the so called economic development can affect plants, minerals, and animals that do not have a voice to reclaim or protest, even though they had always been part of these people's social life. Considerations on this social life did not only reach the environment. Other generations became involved as well. Those gone by, with their remains buried in the pantheons of the valley, as much as those to come. The discussion about the legality of the actions of institutional powers and their economic supporters became an instrument to show how legislations can entail a skewed vision of justice. The protest demanded, therefore, the consideration of differentiated conceptions of what is "just". The neighbors of Temacapulín discovered a transitional, all-understanding, inter-generational justice, in search for global equity. Against them, the Estate opted to keep a narrowed vision of justice: in its judicial actions in favor of a dam it showed, on the one hand, how legality could be breached without having to break the law, and on the other hand, how the judicial approach could be used to criminalize the protests.

IV - Conclusion

Although it is not possible to present definitive conclusions, as the social emergency is still ongoing and the results of the political conflict are uncertain, the social organization of the inhabitants of Temacapulín, Acasico, Palmarejo and numerous other *Rancharias* against the building of the El Zapotillo dam, has exposed how the despoiling of lands, water, resources from an ignored, disregarded population can be adduced as an argument in favor of a judicial system that is exposed completely and paradoxically as unjust. We do not intend to present a Manichean conception that assumes the population is endowed with legitimacy in their fight against a despotic government that closes its eyes to them. Rather, in opposition to the idea of justice being satisfaction for the majority, those affected by the dam uphold that, to be fair, political decisions must generate the less amount of damage to the biggest amount of people and, on the other hand, observe territorial and environmental equity. From this point of view, the welfare of the inhabitants of the populous extra-regional and regional cities and the satisfaction of the interests of those who defend it, should not be obtained through the suffering of a few, and the rise of social and territorial inequality. And so, the villagers of Temacapulín have made their Bixi Boehm's idea that water shortage has nothing to do with how much it rains, but with the "interests that guide the application of technologies to bring locally scarce water, on the one hand, and that allow human density on the other" (Boehm 2007:16). For this reason, they suggest that, before making a decision about the flooding of their territory that is being pushed, the Estate and the institutions in charge of water management should have explored thoroughly other alternatives, in order to foresee the most efficient and fair ways of water usage, even when it is contemplated as a regionally limited and disputed resource. This conviction is supported on a better-aimed one: the building project of the dam as a reason of Estate implies that the inhabitants of Temacapulín and

their way of life can be considered as expendable when the dam floods the planned area of this territory. As the aforementioned Boehm claimed, “from the point of view of the city dwellers, it seems, water extraction in the surrounding areas in exchange of dumping contaminated where they could not see it affected no one, or at least, only human groups insignificant because of their number and respective needs” (Boehm 2007:17). In sum, the inhabitants of the riverside denounce the totalitarian notion that upholds that the welfare of a few—even when these are many—can be obtained at the expense of the life of other human beings. Thus, access to water using designer technologies that guarantee better cities and industries that generate jobs and wealth is not seen by the inhabitants of this valley as a symptom of development, but as a display of an injustice that threatens the dignity of a group of people who are being deprived of their rights.

On the other hand, the political conflict and the social emergency have taken the inhabitants of the territory to be flooded, along with those who support them from other stages, to become aware that Temacapulín is not just a “place”, in the anthropological sense of the term, but a space of dispute against the globalization of certain ideas. And so, it has come to their attention that “the things happening in Mexico coincide with the global neoliberal process, that is, of the limitless expansion of the capital in its corporative stage. This occurrence triggered a growing complicity between *political power* (Mexican governments and *economic power* (national and transnational). This process that has brought in equal instances ecological deterioration, social exploitation and cultural marginalization, has increasingly faced, each time stronger, the resistance in every level of the citizen or *social power*, particularly in rural areas and in the territories of indigenous, peasant and artisanal fishermen communities, which usually are not taken in consideration (López-Bárceñas, 2013)” (Toledo *et al.* 2014:117).

And so, the conflict born in Temacapulín does not only present a way of transforming communal good into private ones (Weber & Puig 2013), it also situates the people inside an international chessboard where the fight does not always follow the good customs expected from the dialogue between supposedly equal contenders. For, if one side is occupied by the villagers and their supporters, the other is not only covered by political institutions, but also with multinational companies like *Waters of Barcelona* (property of the French group *Suez Environment* and with Catalonian participation of *La Caixa*). Companies whose shareholders and ownership change so quickly in a transnational speculative economy that it is almost impossible to determine, and not only to those in Temacapulín, who is being faced. Companies, also, that manage water, gas, or oil with no criteria other than commercial ones. In this sense, say those from Temacapulín, those in power want the construction business, justified by the cities’ water supply, to govern their future following the idea that human beings are not citizens (with the rights this entails) but, in the best possible scenario, clients (product buyers). Thus, in the end, the social emergence unleashed in “the hidden Altos” is not only the fight of a quixotic little town for their rights against the gigantic multinational windmills: it reveals two different conceptions of the world, one based on the values that derived from human rights, and one that considers that society should be solely sustained by mercantilist principles. This is why, according to the villagers of Temacapulín, when the government infiltrates their

protest or fosters a dirty low intensity war to silence the developed social emergency it is not only acting against forcibly displaced people, but against that making us human beings.

V - References

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HIDDEN, MOVED, FORGOTTEN: THE BUILDING OF THE DAM EL ZAPOTILLO EN JALISCO, MEXICO

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Can a small village of 500 inhabitants resist the joint attacks of their country's government and those of several multinationals? This article will analyze the social emergency raised in Temacapulín, a small town in Jalisco, Mexico, against the government's desire to build a mega dam to bring water to remote cities, which would mean the disappearance of the village and the displacement of its inhabitants. The ethnographic work shows that the resistance of the villagers brings to light the existence of different ways of managing water, linked to different conceptions of water itself, the rest of nature, and of how relations between human beings should be developed. The resulting political conflict shows as well how these different positions conceal distinct ideas about where human dignity resides, and what and which are the rights of men and women.

Keywords: Displaced by development, water management, human rights, Jalisco, Mexico.

¿Puede un pequeño pueblo de 500 habitantes resistir los embates conjuntos del gobierno de su país y varias multinacionales? Este artículo analiza la emergencia social en Temacapulín, un pueblo de Jalisco, en México, que se ha levantado contra el deseo del gobierno de construir una mega presa para llevar agua a ciudades alejadas, con la consiguiente desaparición del pueblo y el desplazamiento forzoso de sus habitantes. El análisis etnográfico muestra que la resistencia de los vecinos pone de manifiesto la existencia de diferentes modos de gestionar el agua, vinculados a concepciones diferentes del agua misma, del resto de la naturaleza y de cómo deben relacionarse los seres humanos. El conflicto político surgido muestra también cómo a estas diferentes posiciones subyacen ideas distintas tanto de en qué consiste la dignidad humana como qué y cuáles son los derechos de hombres y mujeres.

Palabras clave: Desplazados por el desarrollo, gestión hidráulica, derechos humanos, Jalisco, México.

Pode uma pequena aldeia de 500 habitantes para resistir aos ataques conjuntos do governo de seu país e várias multinacionais? Este artigo analisa a emergência social em Temacapulín, uma aldeia de Jalisco, no México, que se levantou contra o desejo do governo de construir

uma mega barragem para levar água para cidades remotas, com o desaparecimento de pessoas e a deslocação forçada de seus habitantes. Análise etnográfica mostra que a resistência dos vizinhos revelou a existência de diferentes formas de gestão de água, ligados a diferentes concepções da própria água, o resto da natureza e como os seres humanos devem se relacionar. O conflito político surgido mostra também como a estas diferentes posições subjazem ideias diferentes tanto de em que consiste a dignidade humana como que e quais são os direitos de homens e mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Deslocados pelo desenvolvimento, gestão da água, direitos humanos, Jalisco, México.
