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The Built Environment and Migration: A Case Study of Mexico

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The Built Environment & Migration: A Case Study in Mexico

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Abstract

Through the prism of the built environment, my aim in this research is to broaden the understanding of remittance expenditures –be it collective or familial. My concern here is to analyze the transformation of the physical environment brought on by transnational practices, specifically in a migrants' community of origin. The study investigates the following question: What is the material impact of migration in a migrants' community of origin? Sub-questions include: How is migration, namely, the uses of collective and individual remittances, changing the village's townscape? Are architectural aesthetics and the use of materials being transformed? Is the built environment reordering and/or reinforcing social relations?

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All photographs by Rosa L. Ramirez unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

The built environment expresses the changing character of social relations (Corner, 1999; Spirn, 2002; Potteiger and Purington, 1998). It is "an ongoing medium of exchange, a medium that is embedded and evolved within the imaginative and material practices of different societies at different times" (Corner, 1999). In this thesis, I argue that a careful reading of the built environment can tell us a lot about the local history and the multiple particular stories constituting social change, power struggles and tensions, and, more generally, the way in which people's connections with other localities and societies affect their own milieu. I would further argue that the analysis of the built environment provides an effective way to understand and analyze a world in motion brought by the movements of people across national and international borders. This study proposes an alternative way to look at the relationship between migration and development. Specifically, I seek to examine the built environment of a community whose roots lie in central Mexico and explore the physical ramifications of migration and transnational activities. In particular, I investigate the impact of remittances on a migrant community's townscape.

Although, numerous studies have been conducted on various aspects of the migrant phenomenon by government agencies, global institutions, social action groups, as well as social scientists in the United States, few have explored the physical changes ensued by the migration process. Moreover, research overwhelmingly has focused on the migrants' countries of reception, the socioeconomic problems that they face in these 'developed' countries, modes of adaptation to new environments, and the impact of workers (particularly undocumented workers) on labor markets. Less emphasis has been placed on examining the effects of U.S.-bound migration on Mexican sending communities, or those places from which migrants originate and with which they often maintain strong relations. In large part, the one-dimensional aspect of migrant research stems from the misconception that migration from Mexico to the US., is a one-way process in which migrants rupture their ties with their communities of origin.

The research that does seek to describe and analyze how migration impacts the very places these people leave behind often is limited to narrow economic concerns. Increasingly, the flow of migrants' monetary resources to their communities has garnered the attention of researchers and policymakers, who see remittances as a critical

development tool to combat poverty in the countries of origin (Orozco M. , 2003; Fajnzylber & Humberto, 2007; Orozco M. , 2002; World Bank , 2006). Remodeling, upgrading, or building new housing, are the most common activities in which migrants' remittances are used (Fajnzylber & Lopéz, 2008). However, the study of the architectural forms generated by migration and their sociocultural and economic implications for the communities of origin have been neglected. This research focuses on the relationship between migration, remittances and the built environment within the theoretical framework of transnationalism.

The study is divided into six chapters. First, a review of the literature examines the built environment as a text and site of changing social relations, remittances and the migration process in general, and the migration-development relationship with an emphasis on remittances. Following, is a discussion of the methodology guiding the inquiry at hand. Next, is a description of the research setting. Then, findings are presented followed by a discussion and a concluding chapter.

Chapter 1 Review of the Literature

The Built Environment

One of the most basic forms of cultural expression in any society can be found in its built form and all encompassing landscape. The character of a particular townscape reflects times of growth and prosperity, the values of its inhabitants, changing demographics, and a multiplicity of uses, some of which have almost disappeared from sight and others, which are only now making their impression on the town. Complex and dynamic, the built environment is a form of language, text, and a narrative. However, the settings in which we live, is not merely a passive container receiving what is cast upon it, but creates social relations, as well as reflects them.

Several scholars set out the claim that landscape, including its built environment, is a symbolic system that inherently has meaning. It is a text that is open to interpretation and transformation and exists as both the ground and geography of one's heritage and change (Corner, 1991). Landscapes are "the first human texts, read before the invention of other signs and symbols" because it is the scene of life and cultivated construction and meaning (Spirn, 2002). It is a human-made projection, both text and site, serving to clarify ones world and place within it (Corner, 1991). Yet, the built environment cannot be reduced to a singular and static text, but rather should be conceptualized as temporary and unstable 'throwntogetherness' of a multiplicity of trajectories or 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey, 2005). Additionally, the ever-important role of the reader in producing meaning recognizes that as a spatial narrative it is shaped by ongoing processes, multiple authors, competing discourses and change (Potteiger and Purington, 1998). All landscapes, at all scales, express the changing character of social relations. Either at the scale of a mega city, such as Mexico City or smaller locales like remote rural villages, the built environment embodies, produces, and reproduces social relations.

To know Mexico, one must know Mexico City. The architectural and social value of Mexico City, Mexico's capital, is omnipresent throughout the rest of the country. Mexico City is the hub of decision-making and for most of the country's history, the consequences of those decisions reached the most remote places of the country. Consequently much can be learned about Mexican design, values, and power holders by observing the built environment of the city. The landscape of Mexico shows three main layers of time,

namely, indigenous, colonial, and modern, with each speaking to specific historical transformations and continuities (Herzog, 1999; Fry, 2008; Nunez & Arvizu, 2007). The physical environment showcases the power and influence of different social groups that occupied Mexico City.

If you travel along *Paseo de la Reforma*, the great avenue of Mexico City, you will pass through modernist towers, numerous over-scaled monuments, neoclassical and neocolonial structures, baroque churches, and other built forms, like the popular art deco style that integrates pre-Hispanic ornamentation and vernacular styles (Mutlow, 2005). Upon closer scrutiny, the built environment reveals much about Mexico's past and present. In the distance, the defeated Aztec empire, Teotihuacan, and its pyramids loom in the sky. The pyramids' differing platform heights and the orientation of the site's main center, denote the cosmology of a past civilization and the importance of worship to specific gods or goddesses and constellations (Nunez & Arvizu, 2007). Bounded to Mexico City's historic city centre, the heart of the Spanish colonial city is Tenochtitlan, once the Aztec city center, now buried underneath. With the conquering of Mexico by Spain, Mexico City continued to be the center of rule. The Spanish built their own buildings, centers of worship, and imprinted their own social values atop the defeated Aztec empire.

Mexico's centralized political system, which dates from ancient times, has determined the country's spatial configuration to a great extent (Nunez & Arvizu, 2007). Spanish colonial powers ordered a hierarchy in the urban context with the implementation and enforcement of a building code to be emulated throughout the country: there had to be a main plaza and a set of secondary plazas at appropriate distances with streets controlling circulation to and from various plazas (Nunez & Arvizu, 2007). The building code, known as the Royal Ordinances of 1573, resulted in a strictly hierarchal organization of space dominated by a central plaza with a church – reaching outwards from the town's center to the surrounding *pueblos* (Yampolsky & Sayer, 1993). Producing such a space accomplished a social and economic structure, generating a specific set of social relations that helped determine the mode of occupation of Mexican territory by the Spanish (Lefebvre, 1991).

The thirty years of "Porfirian progress", highlights another example of rationalized and theorized form serving as an instrument for specific end goals. The dictatorial rule of Profirio Diaz beginning in 1857, brought to Mexico City a particular development revealing a specific ideology. Architecture influenced by European trends was borrowed

by an elite group of local architects commissioned to cast off Mexico's 'backward' image and present an image of modernity through new buildings. Neoclassical buildings, like the *Bellas Artes* (Fine Arts Theater), were built to showcase modernity and euro-centricity, but at the cost of forced "civilization" or "removal of embarrassing signs, of traditional cultures and impoverished groups such as Indians, Africans, and poor immigrants" (Leer, 2001).

In addition to formal actors such as architects and elites, ordinary people are equally important in producing the setting in which we live, space. Mexico City is a prime example of self-building practices producing a substantial component of the city's housing stock. Between 1920 and 1970, Mexico City's rapid growth was accompanied by an outward sprawl of neighborhoods and vast informal settlements. Squatter or spontaneous settlements "do not just happen; they are designed in the sense that purposeful changes are made to the physical environment through a series of choices among the alternatives available" (Rapoport, 1988). The materials and building designs of such homes elucidates the social histories affecting the self-builders. For example, Matthew Fry (2008) demonstrates that informal settlers use concrete building materials over others because it allows them to build incrementally, reflecting their infrequent and unstable source of income. The panorama of informal villages, characterize a country whose accelerated economic growth was accompanied by the concentration of its population into urban centers, and where internal rural migrants seldom found stable employment. While in the past rural migrants built their informal homes using a mix of vernacular housing styles from their place of origin and available materials, recent informal settlements are built through a variety of influences, increasingly including U.S. based designs stemming from relatives living abroad (Fry, 2008). Poignantly illustrating a phenomenon of 'cultural mixing and global blending' (Herzog, 1999) that is taking place worldwide are the physical landscapes of growing border towns located on the Mexico-U.S. border. In particular, Josiah Heyman (1997) focuses on a particular aspect of a town's landscape –housing and associated construction practices. He argues that the Mexican border town's capitalist development, in the form of wage labor and commercial agriculture, has caused changes in housing construction. The materials and designs used to build houses have shifted from using adobe to bricks; cane roofs to sheet metal roofs, flat roofs to peaked roofs. Heyman argues that the development of capitalism in this town has transformed residents' access to housing resources and also changed status referents of material goods used for building.

The increase of consumption and its changing patterns, is reflected in the town's housing forms, and therefore embodies changing social relations, which Heyman argues derive from capitalist development.

In short, the built environment of Mexico City and of smaller locales has much to reveal about Mexican society and of changing social relations. Mexico City's built environment reveals social histories, continuities, and change. Symbols of wealth and authority, such as the Cathedral, the National Palace, and skyscrapers dominate the city's landscape. Elites have always imported designs, this process is not new, but rather what is unique are the classes, the types of people, that are importing international styles. Through transnational processes migrants are able to also partake in the project of modernity, which involves importing international styles. The transformation of border towns and of other small locales can be extremely useful in understanding the complexities of mobility. Migration, the movement of people from one place to another, is a long enduring phenomenon that theoretical models have struggled to capture. A townscape's specificity highlights global processes occurring in a distinct place and at certain historical moments.

Migration and Remittances

Migration intrinsically cuts across all disciplines of research: history, demography, anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, geography, psychology, and law, among others. All contribute to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of migration research (Brettell & Hollifield, 2008). Therefore it is crucial to conceptualize migration as a complex process in which economic, political, social and cultural factors all work together (Castles & Miller, 2009). Migration system and networks theory emerges from various critiques of other theories attempting to explain international migration. It seeks to provide a comprehensive dialogue across disciplines to explicate the complex migration process occurring worldwide. At its core, it examines both ends of the migration flow and explains migratory movement as the result of interacting macro and micro structures, including the political economy of the world market and geopolitics, but also the informal network developed by migrants themselves (Castles & Miller, 2009). Migration system and networks theory is sensitive to the global context of unequal distribution of economic and political power, deriving from a legacy of colonialism, but also to human agency, which is often, based in the family and community networks of migrants.

However, dominant theories of migration often suffers from the limits of the prevailing perspective of the 'container society', which holds a particular nation as a constant unit of observation throughout historical transformations (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The conventional questions concerning academics in the global Northern countries receiving immigrants have mostly been framed within a nationalistic framework, what Wimmer and Glick Schiller have dubbed 'methodological nationalism.' In other words, the lens for analysis is restricted by equating territorial borders as the equivalent to the sum of a society. Although there is a rich history of practices transcending international borders initiated by migrants, systematic blindness failed to acknowledge the continuities between current waves of immigration and previous ones (Morawska, 2001).

Scholars of transnationalism have produced a body of work dismantling the assumption that a country's borders is an appropriate unit of analysis and present evidence arguing that social, political, and economic practices exist across borders. Transnationalism is a theoretical construct encompassing sociocultural, political and economic practices that are carried out by different actors –be it at the most global or local level– moving across borders and facilitating the movement and renegotiation of values, culture, symbols, ideas, and the like. Some migration scholars have dubbed this kind of long-distance interconnections "transnational social fields". As Nina Glick Schiller explains the concept of transnational social fields, they are networks of networks, multi-layered and multi-sited, stretching across the borders of nation-states, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind, and serve to further the development of a concept of society (Glick Schiller, 2005; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

These studies have focused primarily on the cross border life spaces of migrants themselves –their economic pursuits, social relations, support networks and civic national identities and involvements. It has been undertaken by scholars concerned with the emergence of unique transnational societies (Guarnizo L. E., 1994; Guarnizo L. E., 1998); with the exchange and renegotiation of transnational values, practices, and activities (Levitt, 2001); the consequences of mobile monies in transnational communities (Conway & Cohen, 1998; Orozco M. , 2002); and the transnational political grassroots mobilizations (Smith & Bakker, 2008).

Forged by migrants, transnational connections and practices have taken a variety of forms. They include international telephone calls, exchange of email or other communication media, frequent traveling between the two countries, the creation of

nonprofit organizations to facilitate betterment projects in their communities of origin, and the flow of monies. For a long time, migrants' cross-border activities and practices, such as sending remittances and investing in the homeland, were ignored and undertheorized. Remittances and their economic implications have increasingly garnered the attention of governments, policymakers, researchers and global entities. Yet the discourse of remittances is presented in narrow economic terms and fails to capture the complexities and broader implications that are brought on by the migration process in general, and transnational practices in particular.

The uses of remittances by Mexican migrants and its implications have been widely documented in the literature. There are three commonly accepted typologies of remittances: family, collective, and, most recently, entrepreneurial. The highest share of family remittances is spent supporting households' recurrent costs, including education, health, and housing (Goldring, 2004; Fajnzylber & Humberto, 2007). Additionally, studies have highlighted the growth of collective remittances, through which migrant-initiated grassroots organizations pool their resources to leverage resources to improve their home communities by implementing a variety of infrastructure projects like the paving of roads, the building of sewage and drainage, potable water or electricity, among other community-oriented projects. Mexican grassroots associations, commonly termed hometown associations, raised about $20 million for development projects in their homeland in 2005, which was matched with a reported $60 million from public funds (SEDESOL, Gobierno Federal de Mexico , 2009). At first glance, this amount of migrants' collective development contributions appears impressive. However, when looked in relation to the total amount of family remittances that migrants send annually to Mexico, the picture dramatically changes. Collective contributions represent around 0.1% of the total remittances, which exceed $20 billion per year (Castles & Miller, 2009; Quirk, 2007).

Some scholars claim that Mexican migrants have brought much needed resources to their locales, and in doing so they have strengthened claims to community membership and reinforced their cultural identity to the very places they have 'left behind' (Aparicio & Meseuger, 2008; Smith R. C., 2006; Smith & Bakker, 2008). In addition, along with the increasing flow of remittances, it has become commonplace for governments, policymakers, and global entities to champion the transfer of these monies for "productive" uses as they see them as an opportunity for development and to combat

poverty in the countries of origin (Orozco M. , 2003; Fajnzylber & Humberto, 2007; Orozco M. , 2002; World Bank, 2006). The trend is indicative of a growing remittance-based component of development and poverty reduction planning. Development has conventionally been associated with economic growth and the reduction of poverty. The remittance-based component of development derives from a long history of policies, discourses, and actions implemented and aimed at the betterment of ex-colonial nations. Reflecting on the origins of 'development' practices, Leys (1996, 7) states:

> *It is not a great oversimplification to say that development theory was originally just theory about the best way for colonial, and then ex colonial, states to accelerate national economic growth…the goal of development was growth; the agent of development was the state and the means of development were these macroeconomic policy instruments.*

As such, development has been narrowly understood as a hierarchal economic-focused process driven by national governments, multilateral financial organizations, and international agencies. Leys argues that development theory throughout time has been reduced to mean that a society's ability to improve their circumstances is allotted to market forces, which, present day, these countries have in general little or no control upon (Leys, 1996). Furthermore, he argues the fragility of economies of ex-colonial countries and subsequent poverty, inflation, and at times collapse of governments, was not due to impersonal market forces, but rather specific policy decisions rationalized through development theory. Today this reality is ever present in Mexico.

Positive outlooks on the impact of remittances seem to assume that higher and more regular reliance on the transfer of these monies represent an opportunity for a country to be less vulnerable to poverty and its associated risks. However, others have problematized the very existence of remittances and argue these flows of monies do not offset inequality and poverty but rather exacerbate it and create larger dependency on outside sources (Reichert, 1981, 1982; Wiest, 1984; Binford, 2003; Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, the coupling of international migration and development has caught the attention of governments and international organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Mexico is often cited as a successful example implementing the remittance-based component of development.

The United States is Mexico's largest trading partner, buying 85% of Mexican exports in 2006. Mexico, in turn, is the United State's third largest trading partner, after Canada and China (Embassy of the United States, 2009). Because of the historical Mexico-U.S. structural interdependence, certain events and policies in one place tend to be felt in the other. For example, the socioeconomic effects of WWII in the U.S. resulted in the implementation of the *Bracero*[1] program. The Bracero Accord, established in 1942, was a formal, temporary-worker arrangement between Mexico and the United States in response to labor shortage engendered by the U.S. massive engagement in the war. This accord, which lasted over twenty years, allowed millions of Mexicans to move north to work legally in the United States as temporary workers. In some of the remotest locales of Mexico, inhabitants were lured to work in the U.S. One of the most significant unintended consequences of the Bracero program was the formation of strong social and economic relations and expectations connecting hundreds, if not thousands, of remote localities in Mexico with the United States. Such relations became the bridge for the growth of the massive U.S.-bound Mexican migration after the program was terminated in 1964. Since then, migration has continued transforming the places where the migrants originate, while contributing to the change of Mexico as a whole. The sheer volume of U.S. workers sending remittances to families left behind, and Mexico's growing dependence on these monies, if anything, highlights Mexico's continued dependency on the United States. In 2003, remittances had become the nation's second-largest source of external finance, just behind oil exports, and ahead of tourism and foreign direct investment, and a critical factor for the country's macroeconomic stability (Quirk, 2007).

More so, transnational grassroots initiatives have been institutionalized through policies such as the *3x1 Program for Migrants,* in which municipal, state, and federal governments match migrants' collective contributions to community betterment projects, ushering in greater dependency on the transfer of remittances, which are inevitably changing the character of Mexican life. Mexico has embraced a market approach seeking to maximize the flow and control of family remittances by reducing transfer costs, facilitating access of the banking system to the remittance market, and promoting the incorporation of migrants into the formal financial market. Additionally, community development, through collective remittances, is being exercised from those living thousands of miles away. The co-optation of migrant grass root efforts by the Mexican State,

[1] The word bracero refers to one who works with his arm or hands; brazo is Spanish for arm.

through official initiatives such as the *3x1 Program for Migrants*, rests on migrants' long-known and well documented transnational loyalty to their families and communities of origin (Guarnizo L. E., 1998; Smith & Bakker, 2008). The Mexican government launched a series of public relations campaigns and pursued a systematic policy offensive to secure investment of remittances into formal channels, thus re-envisioning migrants not as a *pocho* (a disdainful term applied to outsiders, 'Americanized' Mexicans), but rather as a fellow *piasano* (compatriot) that is part of the "Mexican Global Nation" (Smith & Bakker, 2008).

In sum, the investigation of Mexican remittances has much to offer to existing information regarding migration and development. The economic explanations of remittances are useful to understand the uses of these monies and the scale and intensity of their existence. But a narrow economic analysis is not enough to understand the complexity of the migration process in general and in particular the socioeconomic and cultural implications of transnational practices. Again, one of the most common uses of monies remitted by migrants from abroad is household expenses, specifically the remodeling, upgrading, or new construction of housing (Fajnzylber & Lopéz, 2008). Yet, almost no study has ever undertaken the analysis of the implications of the actual forms, designs, spatial usage, and social symbolism engendered by migrants' monetary transfers. Overall, studies on remittances gloss over, if not completely miss, an analysis of the physical transformations of place caused by the monies sent to migrants' community of origin. Geography and its spatial perspective is fertile ground to expand the study of migration on a variety of scales. Remittances are one aspect of the migration process that can be elucidated through the analysis of its spatial dimensions.

The Built Environment & Migration

The historically unprecedented number of people migrating across countries complicates notions of home. Home is a place in which we live, but is also an idea that is permeated with feelings, thus home is a "spatial imaginary" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Migrants motivated to help their families left behind and stay connected to their homeland, send money. The economic resource of remittances has allowed migrants and their families to finance the construction and/or remodeling of houses in their community of origin. What results is a mixture of different notions of home; some stemming from U.S. based experiences and others prompted by nostalgia, which are manifested in the built environment. Few studies investigate the spaces that migrants, coupled with remittances, are producing. Understanding (social) space as a (social) product (Lefebvre, 1991)

encompasses understanding space not as an independent material reality existing "in itself", but rather as fundamentally bound up with social reality. Space, grounded in concrete materiality, is an "experience" shaped by senses, ideologies, superstructures, and culture. The changing townscapes of Mexican villages are the material manifestation of global and local social relations. And, to some extent, the space produced is also reordering social relations.

Some scholars have documented how transnational connections, specifically remittances, are profoundly changing the materials, designs and the use of space in the migrants' communities of origin. From the early emigration flows of the 1980s to a southern Mexican village's most recent context as a mature migrant community, Robert Smith (2006) highlights the shift from the preponderance of traditional adobe houses to three story houses some with American-style pitched roofs instead of the flat ones typical of the region. Additionally, Shenglin Chang (2006) highlights how Taiwanese migrants working in the high tech fields of the U.S. have engaged in building a science park in Taiwan that exhibits very close characteristics to that of its California counterpart. She explains that along with the creation of Hsinchu Science Park, other characteristics have become prevalent, such as, low residential density, car oriented paved roads, large shopping centers, and luxurious green spaces, all stemming from efforts to recruit high-tech Taiwanese engineers from Silicon Valley back to Taiwan. Similarly, Peri L. Fletcher (1997) argues that for many residents of a rural village in central Mexico, migration to the United States equips migrants with the opportunity to build 'the house of their dreams'. She examines how the new houses break with tradition in many ways, but at the same time they also represent continuity with the past. Thick insulating adobe walls made of local material gave way to houses of brick and concrete and two-story additions, often connected to old adobe structures reinforced with steel and concrete. Also, because most of the village's residents have migrated to Los Angeles, houses being built by migrants reflect the suburban styles of Southern California mixed with the middle class urban style of Mexico (Fletcher, 1997).

Perhaps more importantly, the changes evident in the built environment of transnational communities have caused changes in the use of space. For example, in the case of the Taiwanese village, bicycles and people walking on foot were commonplace. However, with the advent of the science park, automobiles now dominate the landscape and are almost necessary to get from place to place (Chang, 2006). Also, Robert Smith

(2006) explains that the houses of the southern Mexican village reflect its incorporation into the global economy and its transformation into a source of transnational migrant labor, resulting in a quasi-empty town. Meanwhile, Fletcher (1997) explains in detail how new houses designed and built by migrants encourage new types of social interactions between community members. Specifically, the introduction of a formal 'living room' in new homes has discouraged the casual visiting done in traditional homes, making for awkward and brief visits (Fletcher, 1997). Ellen-J. Pader (1993) illustrates the reordering and reinforcement of social relations through space in her comparison of the U.S. homes into which Mexicans move as well as the relations in the homes from which they came. Pader argues the main difference between both homes is the strong tension between familism and individualism. To illustrate, influenced by the U.S. mainstream idea of having a bedroom for each child, a migrant family chose to build a new home for themselves in Mexico with sufficient bedrooms so that each daughter could have their own. However, bedrooms remained empty, as the daughters wished to share a room. Pader documents through a variety of examples that the Mexican practice of sharing beds and bedrooms is not just a condition of financial necessity, but rather is mediated by sets of attitudes toward the individual in society that are starkly different from the common U.S. perception of "one person bedrooms as personal and as part of a child's right in the quest of self-definition" (Pader, 1993).

The built environment is also a compelling narrative of the transformation of social relations in specific locales, specifically the marginalization of places. Robert Smith (2006) in researching the same community for fifteen years documents how the town's economy has become dangerously dependent on the initiatives of migrants, so much so that one of the few remaining occupations is in masonry, specifically building houses for migrants. Smith argues that a remittance-based economy exacerbates inequalities by "dollarizing" the town's economy, escalating prices as migrant families pay for goods in U.S. currency, and polarizing class differences, which become delineated by whether one has relatives in the U.S. and how much they earn and remit. Additionally, Fletcher (1997) provides evidence that while the new houses themselves are not a cause for the eradication of a Mexican village's subsistence economy, they are detectable symbols of new class differences and "a reminder that to pursue agriculture in the community is to remain poor". In Taiwan, Cheng argues that the science park and its ideals have marginalized long time residents of the area by destroying their places of worship and their rice-field and angler

associated livelihoods, making way for new construction associated with the park, contaminating nearby waters and siphoning water for the science park.

Always in tension, the built environment and its spaces, reinforce and reorder social relations as well as reflect them. In our increasingly mobile world, the spatial and the material demonstrate changing social relations caused by migration processes in particular places and moments. How does one begin to map a townscape's multidimensionality? Can one detect any particular visual symbols associated with migration? More importantly, how does a researcher arrive at finding these symbols and understanding their meaning? These questions will be taken up in chapter two.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Statement of Focus

Through the prism of the built environment, my aim in this research is to broaden the understanding of remittance expenditures –be it collective or familial. My concern here is to analyze the transformation of the physical environment brought on by transnational practices, specifically in a migrants' community of origin. The research site is the birthplace of my father, who migrated to the U.S. in the 1970s. The personal connections and distance to this place spurred my interest, which coalesced into this research. More on this will be discussed in the following sections. Focusing on the situation in the "home" community of Santa Lucia[2], my father's community of origin, I illustrate the multifaceted consequences of the migration process in general, and remittances in particular by emphasizing the transformation of a place and its space. I acknowledge that transnational communities are heterogeneous, located in more than one national territory, embodied in specific social relations sustained between specific people, and situated in specific localities at particular times. Therefore, the study of a particular locale, Santa Lucia is just that of a case study not meant for generalizing, but rather to contribute to existing knowledge and provide new vistas and novel paths for future inquires to take into account.

The study investigates the following question: What is the material impact of migration in a migrant's community of origin? Sub-questions include: How is migration, namely, the uses of collective and individual remittances, changing the village's townscape? Are architectural aesthetics and the use of materials being transformed? Is the built environment reordering and/or reinforcing social relations?

The Variables

I attempt to measure the impact of migration through the prism of the built environment by focusing on the use of collective and familial remittances. The variables under study include: transnational connections, use of remittances, and change in the built environment. In order to grasp a deeper understanding of these variables, three kinds of data were collected –primary, secondary and tertiary sources. Primary sources include

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[2] Alias name to ensure confidentiality of participants.

interviews, photographs, and field observations. Secondary sources consist of scholarly journal articles, books, newspaper articles and other sources of information publicly available through database websites. Tertiary sources comprise fact books and census information providing a descriptive context of the region and the locale of the case study.

Although my study is grounded in a specific place, the transnational lens allows me to investigate connections and practices that are sustained across national borders. Accordingly, I use a transnational approach in that my fieldwork is multi-sited, as data was collected in two locales, Chicago and Santa Lucia, which belong to the transnational space concerning migrant's community of origin. To understand the specific impact of individual remittances in Santa Lucia, I interviewed community members residing in Mexico and inquired if they received remittances from family members abroad and if so what were the primary uses for these monies. The data collected were also complemented with an array of existing literature focusing on the use of private remittances in Latin America. Collective remittances were measured by data reporting monetary flows, specifically from the 3x1 Program for Migrants, a federal-level program housed under the Social Development Secretariat. However, data sources are limited since it was not until early 2000s that these monies were being documented. To counter balance this challenge, I interviewed community leaders involved in the early efforts of collective-remittance funded projects to document the amount and uses of donations aimed for community projects from migrant associations located outside the countries of origin, commonly known as hometown associations –HTAs. In addition, the volume and use of individual remittances were primarily investigated through snowball semi-structured interviews.

Change in the built environment was investigated also through a variety of interviews and documentary photography. In this case, the built environment is operationalized to mean the townscape of Santa Lucia. A townscape generally means the character and appearance of spaces and buildings in an identified town. Through the existing built environment literature, past and current photographs, interviews, and my own memory of this place I investigate change in the built environment ensued by migration and transnational connections. Again, a discussion explicating the basis for my personal knowledge of Santa Lucia is undertaken in the following section. A scan of existing literature focusing on Mexican vernacular and modern landscapes, as well as literature investigating imported designs in the building of Mexican houses was thoroughly analyzed. In particular, studies documenting the rural building heritage belonging to the

western states of Mexico, where Santa Lucia is located, serves as a strong platform to investigate findings prompted by photographs and interviews. Archival photographs obtained through family members and current photographs obtained during fieldwork constitute a visual inventory documenting the majority of the small town of Santa Lucia. These photographs document public spaces such as roads, parks, the plaza, the Church, and private spaces like homes and businesses. Further, the combination of semi-structured interviews, photo-inventory interviews, and community mapping exercises with community members lift up information concerning the physical transformation of a place. In addition, my own field observations as a researcher and my own memory as an insider of this community have contributed to investigating these variables in question.

Techniques

The techniques used to collect the data include semi-structured interviews, multi-sited field observations in Mexico and in the US, and documentary photography. The flexibility in how questions are worded and the order questions are asked, as well as, what probes are asked characterize a semi-structured interview. Please see appendix for interview protocol for identified interviewees. Beginning with general questions or topics concerning kin ties and demographic information, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a fairly open framework, which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. Relevant topics were identified throughout the interview, but were also guided by categories of questions and probes (sub-questions) formulated in advance.

Interviewees were identified across three categories: Community Members, Community Leaders, and Public Officials. Beginning with kin ties and their contacts, community members were identified as people living in either the United States or Mexico that maintain ties to Santa Lucia. Through snowball sampling, community leaders were identified. Leaders, such as long-time residents involved in a variety of initiatives and board members of a hometown association were interviewed. Lastly, public officials involved in Mexican public policy programs encouraging migrants to send remittances to their community of origin were interviewed. These included the Director of Regional and Social Development overseeing the state's 3x1 program, the Director of the State Migrant Institute, and the Municipal President, where Santa Lucia is located. Overall, 30 interviews were conducted both in the United States and in Mexico. The majority of interviews took place in Mexico, during peak times when migrants return for the holidays. Specifically, fieldwork was conducted during the month of December of 2008 and throughout the

beginning months of 2009. The data collected were also supplemented with ongoing communication via phone or in-person interviews with migrants in the U.S. The duration of all interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours and were conducted in the Spanish language.

Positonality

Landscapes, by themselves, do not tell stories. People give meaning, tell stories, and construct histories out of the selective interpretation of landscape. As a daughter of migrants, I am a veteran in the relentless traveling back and forth momentum that exists between the United States and Mexico. On countless family caravan drives and trips from Chicago to Mexico, I am always amazed by the varied landscapes and the physical changes revealed year after year. I am connected to the research site because it is my father's birthplace. I am interested in it because of the various practices activities and traditions sustained across borders concerning this locale. As a researcher it is important for me to interrogate and examine my own multiple social positions throughout the research process. The research stance of neutrality serves to hide inherent privilege in the research process (Fine, 1994).

In contrast to the major researchers and theorists of the European immigration who were most often 'outsiders', neither having a vested personal interest in, nor members of the groups they studied, today's cohort of researchers are often 'insiders', sometimes coming from the very ethnic groups they are studying and/or personally concerned with the survival of these groups (Gans, 1999). Through an introspective process of questioning my own operating constructs and multiple positions, and referring back to my cultural socialization, I was able to understand some of the inter-subjective data and meanings arising from fieldwork. I find it useful to appropriate Delgado-Gaitan's (1993) insider/outsider concept and apply it to my emerging and changing identity as a Mexican-American researcher. Delgado-Gaitan argues that as researchers, we can be insiders and outsiders to a particular community of research participants at many different levels and at different times. Mainly what characterizes an 'insider' is the sharing of collective experiences and collective space with research participants, such that one is accepted as a member of that particular community.

The site of study is a tangible yet an imagined community of mine. Through familial ties and my own experiences within Santa Lucia it is a concrete place that has shaped my life. It is tangible because it is the birthplace of my father, grandfather, Great

Grandparents, and other ancestors. Spending countless summers and holidays in Santa Lucia and the region it is a real place that shaped my younger years and a place I can recall through memories, photographs and videos detectable through my senses. However, as I have grown older and distance has grown between this tangible community and me, it has become more of an imagined place, partially created and rooted by a mix of nostalgia, sense of responsibility and most importantly as a perceived vehicle for cultural survival. I am cognizant of the multiplicity of self and identity and the nuances as a Mexican-American researcher in relation to the place of study, Santa Lucia. In problematizing my relationship as an insider and outsider it highlights my belonging in different groups and their overlapping boundaries. In reexamining my own identity in particular contexts, I come to an acceptance that I am both an insider and outsider at different moments and in different places.

I am an insider in the Latino community and embedded within that sphere there are other distinguishing layers such as, birthplace, generation, education, gender and class. Specifically, I am an insider in the community of Santa Lucia based on familial ties but, I am also an outsider due to my American birthplace and the differentiated experiences packaged with being a Mexican-American, including generational, educational, class, national and regional experiences. The role of researcher is twofold: a) as an insider based on a shared Mexican heritage and affiliation within the Santa Lucia community and b) as an outsider stemming from education, national, and regional differences. In being aware of these realities and cognizant that I possess my own agency, I engage in a research process that is sensitive to the multiplicity of identities and that aims to prevent the "othering" of a community and of individuals, including myself.

Strengths & Limitations

Ethnographic data collection begins with a framework directing the researcher's attention to certain aspects of situations and certain kinds of research questions (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). The role of theory has been instrumental in guiding observations and deciding what kinds of evidence are likely to be significant in answering research questions posed at the beginning of the study and developed while in the field. In following an explicit theoretical framework, I was not solely guided by my own "implicit ontology", my own values, attitudes, and assumptions concerning this research. There are some strengths and limitations of the data gathering strategies employed.

An obvious strength, greatly facilitating finding willing participants is being personally connected to Santa Lucia. In reaching out to participants I found them to be willing to share and disclose information due to the perceived trust communicated in my standing as a daughter of a respected community member. The familiarity of the case study coupled with the fluency of Spanish facilitates the transmission of information, the ability to locate new sources of information, and to gain entry into other settings like obtaining interviews regarding household expenses or with politicians. Additionally, I also have familiarity with the emic or culturally specific framework used by the members of the village of study. This facilitated understanding culturally based perspectives, interpretations, and the particular ways in which people refer to delicate issues related to social difference, social normativity, morals, and so forth accepted and used by members of the group of study. I also have first hand knowledge of the town since my childhood. Moreover, as an insider I was aware of timing; knowledge on the flows of population during certain times enabled me to conduct site visits at appropriate times.

However, a limitation is that familiarity with the case study sometimes is a source of blindness. The issues investigated are so close and personal to me that at times I struggled with digging further because I perceived some information as commonplace, normal or as a given. At times questions about certain processes did not even occur to me to ask, precisely because of my closeness to the reality under examination. However, discussing this project with my faculty advisors, taking some distance, and actively talking about my project with both family and friends that may or may not be intimately involved with the study was useful in not missing important pieces of information. In fact throughout this research process, I realized I was not as close as I thought, especially examining Santa Lucia from a totally different angle, as a researcher that happened to be the daughter of my father, not as the visiting Mexican-American daughter of my father. The elders of the community perceived my research work as interesting and unobtrusive because it was grounded in documenting a way of life in Santa Lucia, which is important to them to be passed on to other generations.

Furthermore, the relative small sample size and the limited amount time dedicated as a researcher in the place of study are additional shortcomings. Overall, one must be cognizant that a qualitative case study cannot be used as a tool for generalizing but rather it substantiates the existence of certain relationships and determinants affecting specific processes. This kind of research can provide significant insights that can be used as

building blocks for in-depth analysis and novel theoretical contributions. Findings from this study can provide a guide for future research looking at the relationship between migration and development. Although very small in size this in-depth inquiry about such a small village allowed me to access a microcosm of social relations that served me to highlight the effects of the migration process in general and the implications of remittances in particular.

Chapter 3 The Research Site

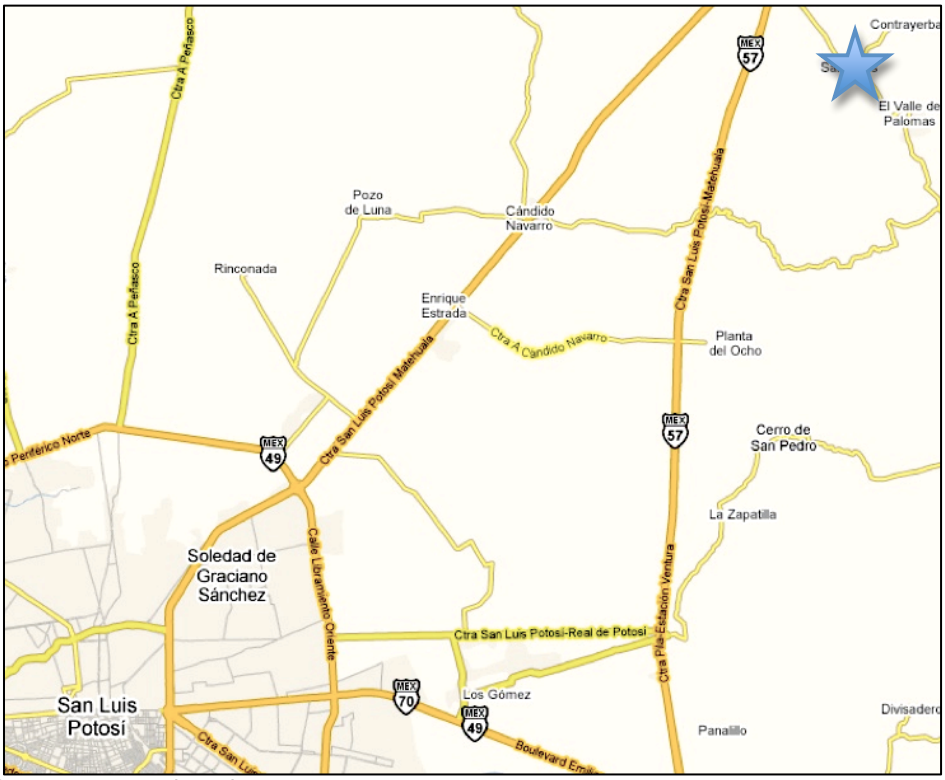
Geographic Setting

The community of study is located in the north central region of Mexico in the state of San Luis Potosi (see figure 1). The state is often recognized alongside its northern and northwestern neighbors of Mexico, as the traditional region for migration to the United States. The historic heartland for migration from Mexico to the United States is composed of nine northern and western states including: Aguascalientes, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas (Durand, Massey & Zenteno, 2001). Located in the altiplano (high plateau) region of the state of San Luis Potosi, Santa Lucia belongs to the Armadillo de los Infante municipality (analogous to county). The municipality is about 39 miles east of the state's capital (see figure 2). Housed within the municipality's borders are about 56 localities with a majority having less than 500 inhabitants. The area is surrounded by mountain ranges mainly, Sierra Madre Oriental. The region's geography is characterized by its arid desert-like climate, agricultural productivity and rich mineral deposits. Throughout the state there are rich mineral deposits that have been exploited since colonial times. During pre-Hispanic times, the Chichimeca tribes exclusively inhabited the altiplano region. Many of the towns located between the capital, San Luis Potosi (same name as the state), and the state's borders have its origins in the exploitation of mineral deposits.

Figure 1. The State of San Luis Potosi.

Source: pickatrail.com

Figure 2. Location of research site (star) in proximity to state's capital.



Source: www.googleearth.com

Historical Roots of Santa Lucia

Some trace Santa Lucia's origins to a nearby mining town, Cerro de San Pedro. Elders recount that many left the visible Cerro de San Pedro to hide in the sierra from the chaos of revolution, thus establishing Santa Lucia. Communities, like Santa Lucia were granted land as part of the reforms enacted after the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and again during the presidency of Cardenas in the 1940s. Many members of Santa Lucia have belonged to the *ejidatario*, an agrarian community that exploits the land, water and surroundings for subsistence. The plots of land themselves exist around or nearby the town's center. On these lands villagers harvest the traditional *milpa* (maize, beans, and potatoes) grown on rain-fed lands and sustain their cattle. Many worked tirelessly to maintain their land and cattle, but often they had to supplement their livelihoods with additional income. Located nearby, a then new *calera* (limestone quarry) was established and many of the village's men would walk by foot or by mule to work in the *calera*. Prior to its closing in the late 1970s, the calera was a source of income for several generations.

Figure 3. Ariel view of Santa Lucia with demarcated roads.

Source. www.googleearth.com

Historical Roots of Migration

Santa Lucia is one of the thousands of small Mexican villages sending people to the US. As in 1900 with the expansion of U.S. railroads, the advent of the Great Depression in late 1929, the Bracero Accord of 1942, and at the onset of World War II, the United States actively sought or inadvertently attracted Mexican immigrant workers from the historic heartland of western Mexico (Cardoso, 1980; Durand, Massey, & Zenteno, 2001). Although new migrant-sending communities have emerged in the recent past, several studies confirm that mass migration from Mexico to the United States has grown through century old social networks linking specific immigrant communities in America to their hometowns in Mexico (Massey, Alacron, Durand, & Gonzalez, 1990). For the state of San Luis, its population is spread diversely in the U.S. but most recently people from there are going to new locales, such as, Georgia, Nebraska and Washington (Torres, 2008). By way of specific policies and efforts to attract Mexican workers to the United States and through the powerful social networks of the residents of Santa Lucia, a traveling back and forth momentum has become an accepted fixture in the character of the town.

The migratory experience of my own family perfectly illustrates these processes. Through the Bracero program, labor recruitment was promoted by American contractors in the early 1940s. My grandfather, as a young man, decided to go work in the tomato fields of California. However, not liking the treatment of workers in California he decided to return to Mexico. Years later, as his sons got older, they began to venture into the U.S. One went to Texas where there already was a relative working in the citrus farms. Meanwhile, my grandfather's eldest son, my father, traveled to Chicago and stayed with another relative that was already established and working in the train yards and factories. My father's girlfriend at the time, my mother, migrated to Chicago with her family and my father motivated to stay connected, followed her to the U.S.. After marrying my mother, they settled in Chicago, where they have lived for the past 30 years. Throughout those years, three of my father's four brothers relocated to Chicago, while the fourth went to live in Texas. Despite the time and geographical dispersion, all the siblings have kept their connection with Santa Lucia until today.

Many of the town's men traveled to work in the tomato fields of California, the citrus farms of Texas, or the factories and railroads in Chicago, among other sources for work. Some returned immediately, others eventually later in their life course, some

continue to live a number of months in Mexico and the remainder of the year in the U.S., but all were lured or helped lure someone to the U.S., contributing to the growing communities, stemming from Santa Lucia, in places like Chicago, Dallas, Houston and Los Angeles. Many of the relatives that happened to be there when my father and his brothers traveled to the U.S. are now living in Mexico. Many, having retired, are supported by monthly U.S. social security checks from their years working in the U.S. Unlike the generations that migrated prior to Operation Gatekeeper[3], who were able to unite their families, division characterizes the lives of recent migrants. Men and, less frequently, women are separated from their children and families when they go work in the U.S., while a new generation of children are being raised without their parent(s). These children, my younger cousins, some who are now young adults, are beginning to venture North in search of an idealized U.S. and family life. The multiple stories and histories embedded in a small section of my family's history ground the migration phenomenon and showcases the reproduction of migration and the creation of new consequences. There are millions of examples similar to the migration history of my family demonstrating the aftermath of historical and current economic policies and the power of social networks. Although, very small in size it is a microcosm of social relations changing due to an increasingly global and mobile world. The investigation of such a village highlights the effects of the migration process in general and the implications of remittances in particular.

[3] A 1994 U.S. national strategy achieving historically unprecedented levels of enforcement along the U.S. –Mexico Border by curbing illegal immigration away from popular migration routes and into dangerously harsh and desolate areas.

Chapter 4 The Transformation of a Town

Today, Santa Lucia, a center of transnational connections, is a mature migrant village –meaning most of its population has migrated out to the US to states like Illinois, Texas, and California, among others. In the midst of the migratory momentum accelerating through time, Santa Lucia has struggled to remain a subsistence-farming village. It is a place where a community is renegotiating its identity. Some villagers rely on the traditional *milpa* (maize, beans, and potatoes) grown on rain-fed lands; however, the majority has migrated to the nearest cities or to the United States in search of employment and opportunity. At present, it is a place, as the elders describe it, "where there are no children".

Table 1 shows the current demographic profile of Santa Lucia. By 2005, the officially reported population for Santa Lucia is at a remarkable low number of fifty people and the majority of its population is elderly.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Santa Lucia, 2005

Demographic Profile, Santa Lucia, 2005	
Gender	
Female	29
Male	21
Age	
0-14	12
15-24	6
25-49	4
50-59	14
60 and older	14
Total Population	50

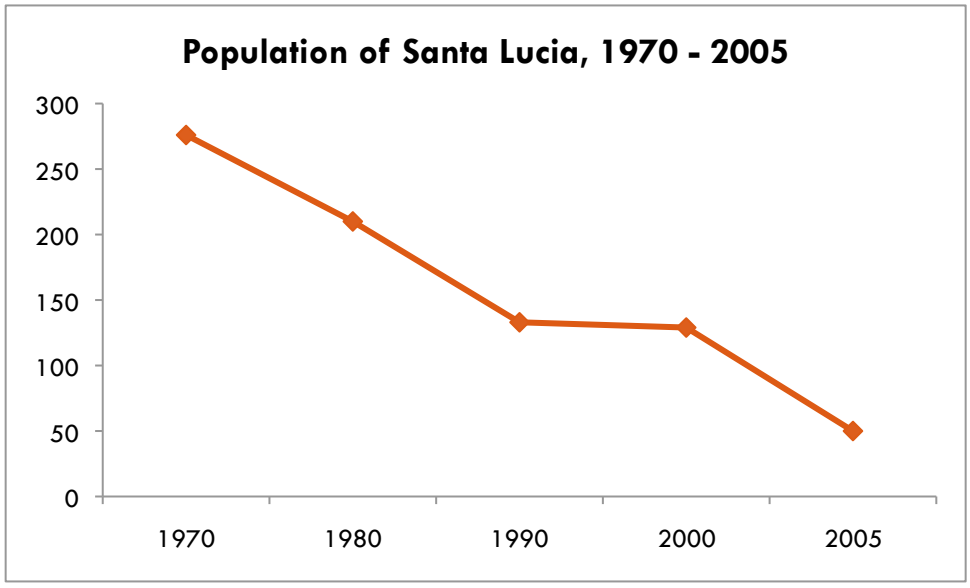
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia (INEGI)
Conteo de poblacion y vivienda, 2005

The 1990s is imprinted in the minds of the village elders as to when 'everything began to change'. When pressed to elaborate further, the elders pointed to physical markers of change. For example, one elder elaborated about the trials and tribulations involved in building a bridge connecting the town in 1991. Another elder spoke about when the roads were beginning to be paved and electricity was being brought into the town. Others highlighted similar examples. The elders consistently spoke of the 90s

decade, a time when resources stemming from financial contributions and organizing efforts from migrants were starting to be available. Migration is an accepted fixture in the community because of historical policies like the Bracero Accord, thus the elders regard their town beginning to change in this decade, even though dramatic population decline occurred during the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 4).

Santa Lucia has always been a small village. However, recently it has become rapidly even smaller almost to a point of having no permanent residents. Figure 4 displays the dramatic population loss felt in this community since 1970. Between 1970 and 2005, Santa Lucia experienced an 82 percent population loss. Like many parts in Mexico the state of San Luis Potosi and its village Santa Lucia, are characterized by a high rate of out migration to the North.

Figure 4.



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia (INEGI),
Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2005

Santa Lucia also mirrors the municipality in which it is located. Within the municipality of Armadillo de los Infante, from 1980 through 2005, the region experienced a 32 percent decline in population. Strikingly, as less and less people live in these places, the Mexican government's indicators measuring the grade of marginalization in locales have also dramatically changed. Specifically, in 1980 Santa Lucia was categorized as a place with 'high marginalization' and in 2005 it had improved to a place with 'very low marginalization' (Consejo Estatal de Poblacion San Luis Potosi, 2009). Many attribute the

betterment of this locale to the works of migrants living abroad. Paralleling the dramatic depopulation of Santa Lucia, is the increase of monies invested in the locale, both collective and individual.

Remittances: An Economic Resource

Despite the long distance between San Luis Potosi and the United States, some migrants forge and maintain strong transnational connections across national borders. The flow of remittances highlights one aspect of activities maintained across borders that facilitate and constitute the transnational connections, migrants engage in. Thirteen percent of the 1,108 households in the municipality of Armadillo reported receiving remittances from those living in the United States. All households interviewed in Santa Lucia reported receiving remittances. In Santa Lucia, information regarding the exact number of households receiving private remittances was not available, as government data was not collected in smaller units than that of a municipality. However, field interviews with participants living in Mexico offered insight to the common uses of remittances. Like the many communities documented in the literature, the majority of familial remittances in Santa Lucia go towards household consumption. Respondents consistently stated that through remittances they were able to send their children to private schools in the main city, pay for the construction or upgrading of housing, and to pay utility bills. The three highest shares of remittances were allocated to: education, housing, and paying bills. Also, a vast majority reported that remittances allowed for the maintenance or the construction of a secondary home. Many living in Mexico, had moved to an urbanized area, namely a nearby town called Soledad, but continue maintaining their home in Santa Lucia.

Prior to the government's threefold matching contribution to the migrants' donation, the *3x1 Program for Migrants*, a variety of projects had already been initiated and completed solely by migrants. Since the early 1980s, collective organizing had been going on without the formal involvement of the Mexican government to finance infrastructure, beautification, and community-oriented projects. These include the construction of a bridge connecting part of the town divided by a deep arroyo, construction of an open-air community theater, renovations to the Church, the paving of main roads, and other miscellaneous charity initiatives such as, food and clothing drives. With the resources available from the *3x1 program for Migrants* a series of infrastructure projects were strengthened and completed including: potable water, electricity, and the

paving of all remaining roads. About $137, 000 dollars have been given by migrants to support community betterment projects in Santa Lucia between 2005 and 2007 (SEDESOL, Gobierno Federal de Mexico , 2009). However, interviewees report larger sums stemming from projects accomplished prior to the implementation of the *3x1 Program for Migrants* in the state of San Luis in 2001. Consequently, data on collective remittances was not documented formally until the year 2002.

There are over 325 hometown associations, functioning in the United States supporting communities in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosi (Torres, 2008). Between 2002 and 2007, these organizations have leveraged about $20.5 million pesos or about $2.7 million U.S. dollars to be invested in projects in their specific communities (SEDESOL, Gobierno Federal de Mexico , 2009). Regarding Santa Lucia, a main conduit of transnational connections is a long-standing umbrella organization, The Association of Clubs and Organizations of Potosinos in Illinois (ACOPIL), which operates out of Chicago, Illinois. It is composed of 13 *clubes*, or 13 organizations, representing unique villages located in San Luis Potosi. One of the 13 clubs is Club Social Potosino, the lead organization that spawned ACOPIL. It was founded in 1992 and is one of the first pioneer organizations to aide communities in the state of San Luis Potosi. Club Social Potosino represents and serves the entire state, but since its original founders have familial ties to 3 villages, the club early on focused projects in the villages of Palomas, Contra Yerba, and Santa Lucia. Three rural hamlets, in close proximity to each other, have strong ties formed by kinship and/or necessity. All are located in the same municipality.

In addition to Club Social Potosino, migrants have individually or collaborated in smaller groups to send their share of remittances to their loved ones or to maintain certain traditions. Migrants are deeply involved in the sponsoring of *fiestas* (festivals) in Santa Lucia, usually held in the early summer or winter months. They work to collect contributions from individuals, both in Mexico and the U.S., but also look to businesses, organizations like ACOPIL, to sponsor a portion of the fiesta's cost. Moreover, some living in Mexico that are connected to Santa Lucia have also engaged in soliciting donations and investments from Mexican organizations, businesses, and at times ACOPIL, to sponsor projects or initiatives of interest to them. Specifically, a Mexican-based organization called El Comité, mainly steered by community elders, is working to maintain the customs, traditions, and values of Santa Lucia. In fact, they are often raising funds locally and abroad to underwrite the costs associated with the holidays, such as toy drives, communal dinners,

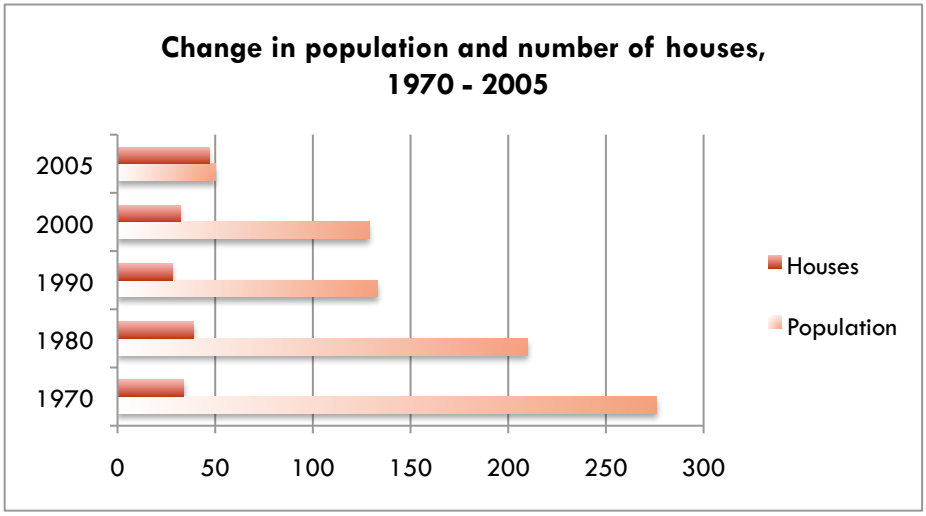
pyrotechnics, but also development projects they deem important. For example, Mexican residents connected to Santa Lucia have proposed (and succeeded) building a *Casa de Retiro* (retreat house) where space is designated to hosting youth retreats or religious conferences. Beginning with familial remittances and followed by collective remittances, the details of the changes prompted by these monies are discussed below.

Changes in the materials, construction, and design of the house

Private remittances, like other studies have documented elsewhere, are changing the townscape of Santa Lucia. In particular, change is most apparent in the construction or renovations of homes. As the town became more dependent on wage labor and later more so with a major source of income constituting family remittances, materials for building homes changed. Again, many of Santa Lucia's men had worked at the nearby calera to supplement their subsistence-farming lifestyle until it closed. From then on the town's people became increasingly incorporated into a wage economy with a significant portion of its men and women traveling, relocating to urbanized areas or eventually migrating to the United States. In conjunction with internal changes to vernacular architecture brought on by industrialization in Mexico and the high proportion of private remittances appropriated towards house construction or remodeling, a shift in the use of materials and the ways in which houses are being built is most evident in the houses built by migrants.

In 1970 there were thirty-four dwellings housing two hundred and seventy six people. In the most current survey conducted in 2005, forty-seven houses are reported while the population has decreased to fifty people –almost one house per person! Figure 5 demonstrates that the depopulation of Santa Lucia coincides with an increase in the total number of houses.

Figure 5. Changes in population and number of houses, 1970 – 2005, Santa Lucia



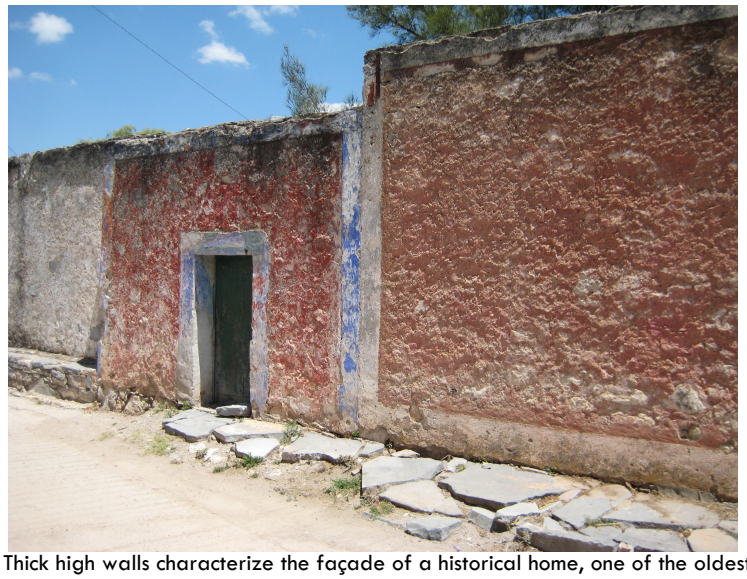
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Censo general de población y vivienda 1970, 1980, 2000, II Conteo de Población y Vivienda: Viviendas habitadas y deshabitadas por localidad, 2005.

Historical, climatic and socio-cultural forces have shaped the architecture of Santa Lucia. A historical Santa Lucia home was oriented around agricultural activities. It was used as a place in which to sleep, store and clean food, and corral animals. The house was small, especially when compared to the expansive plots of land used to harvest the *milpa* and sustain cattle. The materials chosen to build houses were shaped by climatic conditions and the availability of materials in the region's geological formation. Historically, the materials residents used for building their houses usually came from resources locally available. The most sought after, least-expensive, and 'best' materials for building houses were those that were light-weight, naturally sorted, and did not require grinding or processing. Some used adobe, air- or sun-dried blocks made from a mixture of clay, sand, water, and sometimes straw, in combination with other dominant surface materials in the central region of Mexico. *Caliche*[4], often used as construction aggregate in the central Mexican region (Fry, 2008), was widely used as a surfacing material, or, used as building blocks for a house or fence surrounding a property because it has the property of gaining strength over time. Additionally, all historical homes are characterized by their design. They are one-story constructions that have thick walls, flat roofs, small windows, one entrance that opens to an outdoor patio, which is the central focus of the house, around

[4] Caliche is a cement-like layer of deposited calcium carbonate (lime) found usually in subsoils in desert climates (Blake, 2002). The calcium carbonate (lime) cements together other materials, including gravel, sand, clay, and silt when mixed with small amounts. It is found a few inches, or a few feet, beneath the surface-soil.

which the bedrooms and the kitchen are located (see Figure 6). These homes were often built using the Mexican age-old tradition of *autoconstrucción* or self-building[5]. Family members, led by older males and assisted by extended family, build the house in a lengthy process determined by the availability of resources. The self-building practices emphasize that constructing a house was a collective, non-specialized, volunteer endeavor, which also provide incentives for social cohesion, solidarity, reciprocity, and community belonging.

Figure 6.



Thick high walls characterize the façade of a historical home, one of the oldest in town. The home is made from caliche, adobe, and other local materials. The deterioration of the home is also indicative of the minimal remittances the owner receives.

[5] In the past, population pressures caused a severe housing shortage as more and more people migrated from the countryside to the city and the lack of adequate planning caused many to build their own homes. But also many of these internal migrants built houses very similar to the ones they had built in their rural homeland (Williams, 1972).

Figure 7.

A new home in Santa Lucia, built by several migrants who each pitched in to build a section of the house. Notice the separate entrances, use of different materials, and various changes in design, including the multiple stories, windows, balconies and set-back placement of the house.

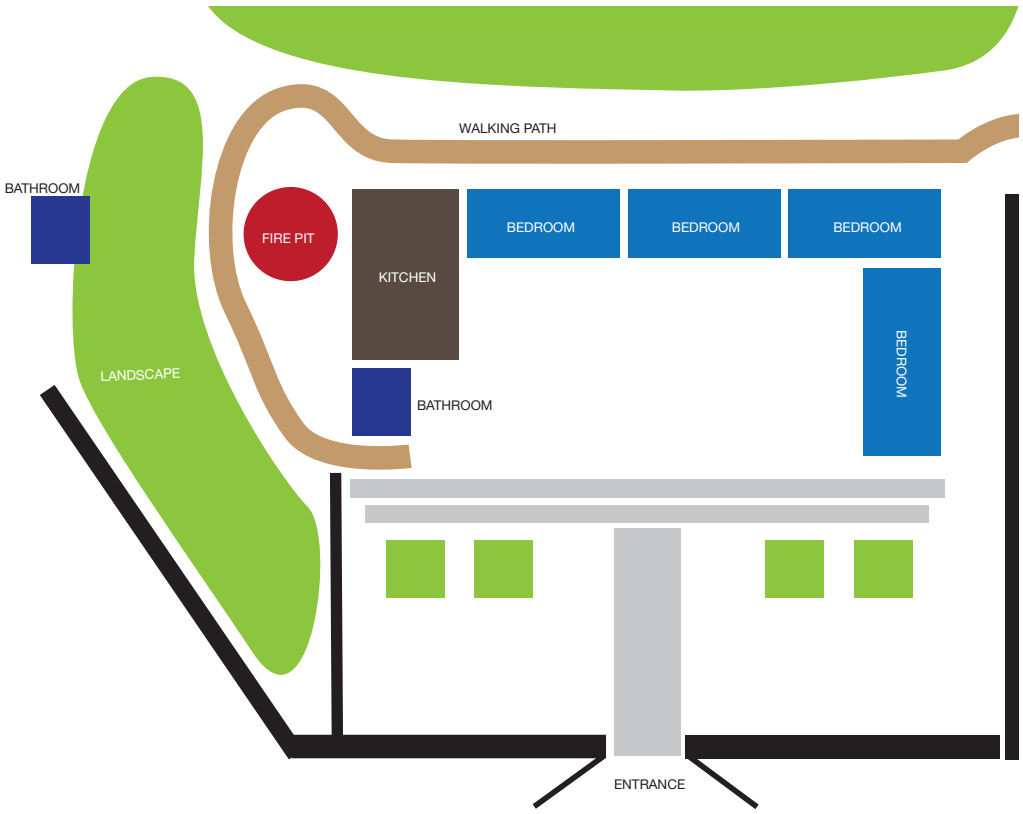
Gradually locals, instead of manually producing building blocks using local materials, started to use brick and concrete more generally as materials shifted to being purchased at building material shops, especially with aide of remittances. As one travels from the historic center of the town to its outskirts, the historical use of building material in Santa Lucia' dwellings begins to shift with recent additions to houses made of differing materials, like brick or rose quarry stone. At the expansive and expanding outer area of the town (figure 8) are new constructions made of concrete, brick and other materials. The homes located here are exclusively made by migrants. Contrary to the traditional autoconstrucción approach, migrants usually contract either an architect or an *albañil* (stone or concrete mason) to draft a blueprint of their 'dream house' or follow the guidelines of an already existing blueprint, usually purchased in the U.S. These newer dwellings are situated not around the historic center (the Church), but rather are oriented towards a view, either facing the watering hole or overlooking the town.

Figure 8.

Ariel view of the town with yellow demarcated roads. The southeast section of the town, where the watering hole is located, is where migrants are building their houses, away from the town's center.

Due to the availability of land, the perceived need or desire for more space, these houses have differed from the common form of other houses in Santa Lucia. The newest homes are built on an open plan, with rooms, including the kitchen, situated off a central living room. Figures 9 and 10, below, demonstrate the difference in floor layouts between a historical and a newly built house.

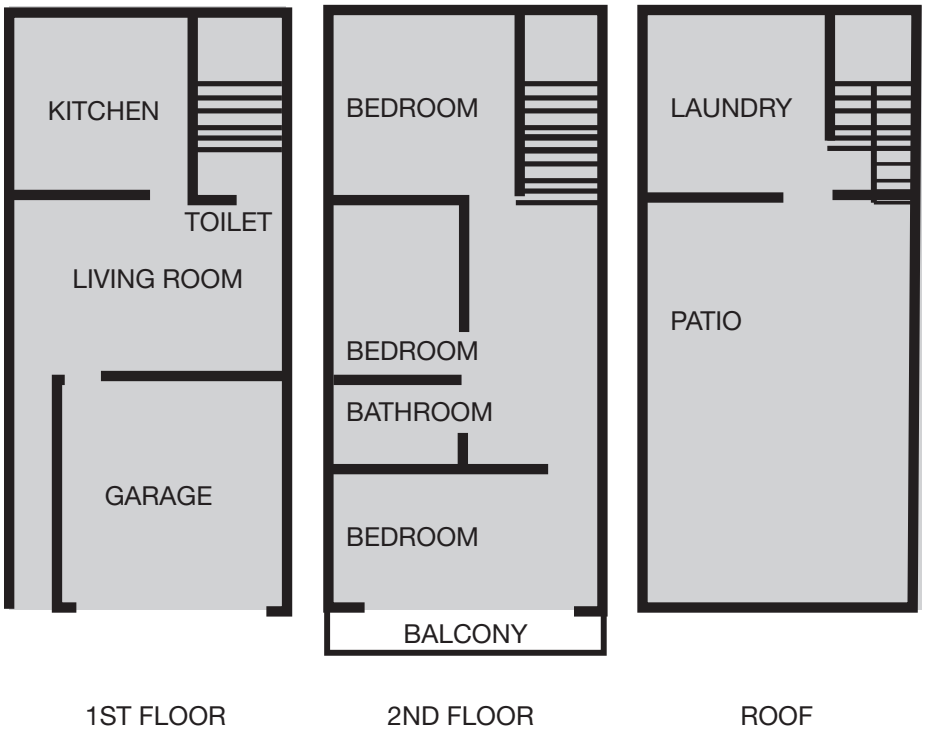
Figure 9. Layout of historical home.



The layout of one of the oldest homes in Santa Lucia (about 110 years old) is above. It has had renovations like, new paint, addition of a flush bathroom inside, instead of an outhouse, but overall they preserved the essence of the original design. The core element of the homes (and all historical homes) is the patio. Older homes do not have a 'living room'. The centrality of the patio is further accentuated by the entrance door leading to the patio directly. During the day these doors generally remain open, connecting those inside with the people outside. The patio is where games are played, chitchatting takes place, rituals such as praying the rosary are done and countless other social activities, big or small. In essence the patio is a concentrating pole where events and experiences take place and memories are formed. Figure 10 shows the changes in the layout of a newer home. This home belongs to migrants living in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Notice that the space for the garage dominates the first floor. The living room and the kitchen are on an open layout, while the bedrooms are on the second floor. A room on the roof is used as a laundry area and the patio is used as a place to hang clothes. Although the patio in older homes was also used to air-dry laundry, in this layout it is the only function for the patio. Also, because the garage connects to the street more

directly, it tends to be used more for socializing than the formal living room itself. When there is activity in the town, the doors to the garage are often open to the street and with people sitting in chairs socializing.

Figure 10. Layout of new house.



Amos Rapoport (1969) writes, "man has built in ways so diverse that they can be attributed to *choice*, which involves cultural values". The differences in form between past and new houses illustrate changing social relations. Before the materials chosen to build houses were primarily shaped by climatic conditions. Today house form continues to be shaped by the environment, but also by U.S influences, mainly, concerning design and mainstream ideas about the organization of domestic space. The spatiality of historical homes places a premium on maintaining physical proximity among household members and their surrounding community, whereas in the United States privacy is valued. In this day and age of global transnationalism, the coming together of different influences, some based in rural Mexican culture and others stemming from migrants settling into various U.S. locales, has resulted in architectural hybridity. In the townscape of Santa Lucia, these are the "misfits" –the places that do not quite fit with the commonplace Santa Lucian architecture. Let me demonstrate this type of disjuncture with two examples.

Instead of high walls with little or few small windows facing the outside, new houses have large porch areas, big windows, multiple levels, and accommodate the use of a car very well. These housing designs completely break from typical designs of the region. For example, a new house built at the edge of the town is constructed with a thatched roof, which is unusual for this region (figure 11). When inquiring about the logic behind this choice the female household head stated, "*pues así se ve más como casa de campo, como si fuera una hacienda de esos tiempos*" *(well in this way it looks more like a country house, like if it were an hacienda from those time periods)*. Her response elicits a romanticized vision of what Santa Lucia is to her –a return to the past; when agriculture was a way of life. Her statement also personifies how she positions her family to be in a place of power, like the *patrons* (bosses) of the past. Although haciendas are very typical in the history of the region[6], thatched roofs are not.

Figure 11.

Notice the hybrid mix of materials including concrete columns and metal windows, which contrast with the thatched roof and wood, the material identified with hacienda-like architecture. Atypical for this region, the house is built with a thatched roof.

A Chicago-based migrant explains his choice of house (figure 12) by simply stating, "it is the house I would have liked to build in Chicago if there was room" (personal interview, May 2009). His family lives in the densely populated south side of Chicago

[6] In examining census books from the 1960s detailing the occupations of the municipality's residents; it was not uncommon to find a singular *patron* or employer for large amounts of an area's population and land, denoting an existence of an hacienda.

and in a city that is known for its popular use of bricks. Although he chose not to have peaked roofs like the houses in that part of the city, but rather he continued with the flat style roof common in Santa Lucia. He also chose to build 3 fireplaces in the house. The desert climate of the region means it gets very cold at night, but fireplaces in the house are atypical. Houses made of adobe insulate heat very well, whereas one made of brick would require a heating system. His house has seven bedrooms, two garages, four bathrooms, a wrap around porch and needless to say is very extravagant for the context of the town.

In some cases the rapid improvement of houses or entirely different house constructions such as the urban chicago-style (figure 12), have been accompanied with criticism from the community.*"¿Ya vistes el palacio?"* (Have you seen the palace?), one of my Great Aunts asked me as she gestured to the top of the hill. A couple of elders mentioned something about *el palacio*, but I did not know what they were referring to or the nuanced way they were using the term, until my Great Aunt pointed it out. They refer to his house as "the palace" to compliment his ability to afford such a construction, but also to poke fun at the excessiveness characterizing the house.

Figure 12.

House referred to as *el palacio* or the palace to compliment a migrant's ability to afford such a construction, but also to poke fun at the excessiveness characterizing the house.

Some criticisms stem from lamenting the declining rural way of life and feeling threatened by the changing social relations houses embody. For example, when asked what she thought about the increase in houses being built, the elder replied,

> *Yes. They're building their houses here but they are not here, they won't come back here (to live) –when?! Only God knows…Only because today is Sunday and there is a lot of people –young women and men, but during the week? There is no noise at all, there are no children… There use to be, but now there are no more children. It will end like the other village, it has been forgotten, only the walls remain there.*" (personal interview, December 2008).

The elder's fear that Santa Lucia will be forgotten is based in tangible evidence; the town's depopulation trends, the tragic fates of other towns, and the recognition that people cannot live and thrive in the town. Santa Lucia's agricultural existence is rapidly being outpaced by the migrant's (in Mexico and in the U.S.) use of the town –as a place of leisure.

Public Space: Continuities and Departures

Depopulation coupled with frequent remittances is drastically changing the townscape of Santa Lucia. In particular, infrastructure, beautification and community-oriented projects financed in part by collective remittances have greatly contributed to morphing the village from a place of residence and work into a *lugar de descanso* or place of rest. Arriving to the town use to be a trek. Before, a faded sign on the right side of the highway would abruptly announce the exit for Santa Lucia. The shaky exit off the highway would send cars over patches of uneven gravel, creating dust clouds for the duration of the twenty-minute drive into town. Today, visitors traveling from the nearby cities or from the U.S., take a smooth exit of the highway and onto a freshly black paved road that quickly leads them to the town's entrance, now formally marked by an overhead arch made of rose quarry (figure 13). Where a creek used to exist and quench the thirst of cattle and other animals, it now has been converted to a recreational area complete with grilling areas, basketball courts, and pedestrian pathways (figure 14). All roads, except where new construction of homes is taking place, have been paved making it easier for automobiles to travel through the narrow streets (figure 15). Before dirt roads and the livelihood associated with cattle prevailed. Now all main roads are paved facilitating the movement of cars and people. Additionally, a

Figure 13. Entrance

Rose quarry, considered to be a high-quality material, makes the arch entrance a symbol of pride for the town's people.

Figure 14. Recreational Area

During the weekends, the recreational area, which used to be a creek, is filled with children or families grilling food. During the week it is empty and bare of any activity.

bridge, financed thorough collective remittances in 1992, was built over the creek, connecting the two parts of town (figure 16). It now serves as a public space to congregate and host special events. Furthermore, a kiosk, prevalent in the plazas of major cities, was built in the center of the bridge, and it has been consistently pointed to as a source of pride in the town (Mapping, 2008).

As more and more of the town's residents migrated North and settled into their new communities, they have organized themselves to form grassroots organizations committed to financing community betterment projects in Santa Lucia. As mentioned earlier, ACOPIL's subsidiary, Club Social Potosino has heavily financed projects in the village. The vice president of ACOPIL, who is connected to Santa Lucia, explains their mission is to "*ayudar nuestra gente*" or help our people (personal interview, 2008). The organizing abilities of the migrants prior to the *3x1 Program for Migrants* and their current participation in it today has leveraged important projects, like the bringing of electricity (figure 16). "If it weren't for us the rancho wouldn't be making progress," commented an active member of the Club (personal interview, 2009). Javier Cerda Ramos, the Director of Regional and Community Development, overseeing the 3 x 1 program in the state, explains:

Figure 15. Comparison of Roads

Before dirt roads and the livelihood associated with cattle prevailed. Now all main roads are paved facilitating the movement of cars and people.

> *One has also to understand that this kind of programs stem from migrants' initiatives or from the initiative of the beneficiaries of these communities, so generally the first thing the migrants seek to do is to have and bring services to their home –water, light, roads –but what is very interesting is that many of them are invoked to provide a space of development, community however it may be –a Church, a space for multiple uses –where the people can congregate to bring about community-oriented things…(Interview, December 15th 2008).*

Figure 16. Bridge

One of the first projects to be completed by ACOPIL, a bridge connecting the town was built in 1992. Today, the bridge is used as a plaza, a place to engage in social activity.

Figure 17. Electricity

An infrastructure project fully completed in 2006, electricity poles distribute electricity throughout the town and nearby villages.

Figure 18. Comparison of the Church

The photo to the left, taken in the mid-1980s, displays a simple Church. To the right, notice the gold ornamentation on the altar, new chandelier, and new paint job. The Church's roof and

Santa Lucia is a place of rest for both those living abroad and those living in Mexico – many living in urban areas drive out on the weekends to "rest, play and relax." Local residents often spend their weekends in the town and migrants frequently travel here for the Christmas holidays, summer months, and a particular weekend in the month of May for the local festival. Throughout my fieldwork, prior to the December holiday season, Monday through Thursday of the week, the town was empty and bare of any activity. On Friday evenings it would begin to stir with some life emerging as people arrived to relax for the weekend. The trickling in of people on the weekends offered a glimpse of what would happen if all its community members, both far and near, were to have an opportunity to come to Santa Lucia.

Throughout the years the village's main existence has come to be a place of leisure, rather than a place people could live in. Those who stayed in Mexico eventually moved into urbanized areas, in search of employment and better schools for their children. Due to extremely low enrollment, municipal authorities have decided to close the primary school at the end of the 2009 academic year. Some elders and very few families actually live in the town year round. Yet, migrants and local residents are dedicating resources to improve their town and also preserve its essence. The community development projects financed by migrants, the state, and the municipality are physical markers of modernity. But also accompanying 'progress' are strong efforts to maintain community-oriented practices and traditions.

Figure 19. The Retreat House

A member of *El Comité* stands at the rear of the *casa de retiro*. It has a full kitchen, dormitories, multi-use room, and bathrooms. Youth-oriented and religious conferences are hosted here.

Two examples that strongly illustrate the work of local residents are the *casa de retiro* (figure 19) and the *Fiesta del Señor de la Misericordia* or Lord of Mercy Festival. The

retreat house was a project initiated by El Comité, a Mexican-based organization primarily steered by elders. An active member explains that a main goal of El Comité is "to unite our people" (personal interview, 2008). He explains that as people have moved to the U.S. and various urbanized areas in Mexico, it is important for them to strengthen their *raíces* or roots. The elders saw the need for San Elian youth who were living in nearby cities to spend time in the village and encourage them to attend retreats, which focused on religious education and developing leadership skills. Additionally, El Comité has been instrumental in carrying out the behind the scenes work to host the annual festival, which involves oral stories, dances, prayers, songs and other rituals. Santa Lucia's public space has been transformed to be a *lugar de descanso*, as well as continue to be a locus for strengthening a community identity. The next chapter explores the findings associated with individual and collective remittances in detail.

Chapter 5 Built Form and Social Relations

Why do migrants expend economic resources on a place they generally visit three times a year? Why do they build an entire house in a place in which they can never fully live in? "So we have a place to stay," answers one migrant when asked why he constructed a house in town. Other interviews echoed a similar sentiment –"so my children can return and visit when they like", "because I know we'll use it", "it is pretty here" –there is a sentiment of returning, perhaps not permanently, but regularly to a place they hold in positive regard. With the use of the plural subject, inherent in these statements is an expectation for the migrants themselves to come back, but also for their children to also be connected to the village. ACOPIL's broad mission is "for all potosinos to unite in the cause to maintain our Mexican traditions and fight for better opportunities and conditions for our communities of origin". Not only migrants from the U.S. feel this way, but also internal migrants who moved to nearby cities. "To unite our people," is the mission of *El Comité*. At the foundation of these pursuits is their overall aim to preserve culture, in which the idea of home is embodied. Also bound in the materiality of building infrastructure projects and houses, are changing social relations that involve seeking status and result in social stratification. In contrast to the elders' fear that Santa Lucia will be forgotten, U.S. migrants express a different reality, as encapsulated by one migrant, "It's progressing. Because a lot of people are returning, because the children who left to study in San Luis, they are returning, along with people from the U.S. Before there were less houses now there are more. A lot of people are constructing houses, even people who live in Mexico. The very fact that there's movement, people coming and going, -it is a source of work for people in the nearby ranchos, they contract people." The building of houses represents life, a different life, returning to the village and symbolizes the importance of continuing with the legacy of Santa Lucia. Yet the pursuits of financing community betterment projects and housing are based on transnational mobility, which results in social stratification and marginalization of the town's residents.

Cultural Preservation

The concept of culture, the shared beliefs and values of a group is essentially a semiotic one. Culture is shared, learned and adaptive. Santa Lucia provides a means to

store, process, and communicate symbols of culture. The Santa Lucia community is producing a public space that is used as a means to facilitate and organize themselves toward common understandings and collective action.

Wrapped in Santa Lucia's transformation to a place of rest is not only an indicator of its integration into the global economy, but also the desire of community members to remained connected in some way to this place. For many migrants, building a house or investing in an existing house is proof of a commitment to the community. Whether lived in only a few months out of the year, the houses tie many to Santa Lucia and provide a means for migrants to maintain a connection between their lives in the United States and their identity that is inextricably tied with Mexico. Exemplifying this are the transnationalized activities aimed to preserve the local culture and its traditions. The pinnacle of transformation for Santa Lucia was observed in a specific point in time, the annual *Fiesta del Señor de la Misericordia* (Festival Lord of Mercy). While traveling to the fiesta by airplane I had to make a flight connection in Dallas, Texas (the only direct outbound flight to San Luis Potosi) and to the surprise of my father and I, the small plane was filled with familiar faces. I asked a fellow passenger and relative why he was coming and he emphatically pointed to his teenage daughter sitting next to him and said "para que sepa" (so she knows), meaning so she can know what the Fiesta is about and what it means. We had expected a low turnout at the fiesta due to the global economic crisis that began in 2008. However, about 1300 people arrived.

Figure 20.

Icon of *Señor de la Misericordia* being carried to the highest point of the hill where *ofrendas* are offered by dancers and musicians.

Figure 21. Streets during the Fiesta

Procession returning to a tightly packed town. Notice the unfinished 2nd floor construction of the house they are passing.

The annual festival, also commonly dubbed *Fiesta de Mayo* (May Festival), has existed for many generations. Through oral stories it is known that since the early 1900s this tradition has been ongoing. The festival communicates the importance of family, religion and other values such as working together. My great grandmother, who would have been about 106 years old, at one time and at others, participated in this annual celebration. Every third Thursday of May, the Fiesta is celebrated and lasts until Saturday evening. Although the origins of the festival in Santa Lucia are not clear, it shares much of the characteristics of other rural festivals documented throughout the country. These celebrations stem from the Catholic faith tradition but also from the local Mexican culture derived from ages of *mestizaje*[7].

The transformation of Santa Lucia's space, emerging from the weeks and months of advance preparation, is at its pinnacle during the Fiesta de Mayo. A bustling vibrant village, in contrast to the quietness that characterizes this place the majority of the year, occurs almost overnight. In the days leading to the fiesta and its close, the town's population swelled from its reported census population of 50 to an estimated 1300 people! The fiesta begins with a series of masses and processions originating from the town's church to atop of a *cerro* (hill) where a *capilla* (shrine) is located. The processions carry the image of Jesus Christ to the hilltop and various songs, prayers, dances, and other *ofrendas*, such as candles and flowers are given to the divinity, Lord of Mercy, who has a reputation of healing and granting mercy upon its believers. When the processions return to town, they enter to narrow streets now filled with food, trinkets, and artisan vendors. Additionally, where space

Figure 22. Aztec Dancers

Aztec Dancers commissioned for the *Fiesta de Mayo*.

[7] mestizaje is a concept that has historically revolved around the process of racial and cultural mixing among native inhabitants of Mexico and others but the concept also refers to a cultural movement supported by the national government through the development of the arts.

allows carnival rides are also set up for the children. American pick up trucks with license plates from Illinois, Texas and other Mexican states parade throughout the small town, while women stroll around in their best clothes.

The fluidity of the grand spectacle, can lead one to believe that this is a spontaneous event. However, there is an intricate web of organization behind the fiesta. The *mayordomos* are the stewards of the fiesta, which includes raising funds; contracting musical groups, firework artisans, and Aztec dancers; management of various committees like those in charge of decorations and distributing religious paraphernalia throughout the processions; and hosting rehearsals for the ever-important and key component of the celebration, *pastorelas*[8], works of folk theater that their origins in the Catholic Church's teachings. Being selected or volunteering to be a mayordomo has always been an honor due to the degree of responsibility associated with the title, but also because of its historical continuities. The elders, including my grandparents, remember themselves as children participating in its traditions and growing up to be a steward of the celebration.

Today, the responsibility associated with the celebration is transnationalized as many mayordomos are no longer exclusively residents of Santa Lucia, but residents of diverse American places. As a result, many of the associated responsibilities have become cross-border activities and inevitably changed. For example, the *pastorelas* used to be a laborious process with various scenes, rehearsals and detailed costumes; but since many live in different areas it has become a condensed version of the tradition. My grandmother commented to me, "it's not the same, you should have seen it before". She recalls the intricate designs the actors had to make for their costumes, the all night rehearsals hosted in the *patio* of someone's house, and the ardent devotion to the catholic faith. Although religion continues to play a central role in the fiesta, a shift is happening in that a lot of the U.S. born youth only knew the fiesta as the Fiesta of Mayo and not as the Festival of Lord Mercy. Returning migrants want the fiesta to be more elaborate; instead of the simple *ofrendas* they now contract multiple bands, sophisticated flower arrangements, which result in high expenses. Another change are the roles in the fiesta that were exclusively reserved for men are now overwhelmingly female. One community

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[8] Pastorelas, the dramatic reenactments of key Biblical passages, were especially useful in the process of Catholic indoctrination for the native inhabitants of America, as many were completely staged in native languages, such as Nahuatl, and today, they are omnipresent throughout Mexico as a central component to religious celebrations. (Garcia & Ortiz, 2004).

member explains, "times change, women go to work. Before there were more restrictions and the women now participate" (personal interview, 2009)."

Gender and Space

Times do change, through a variety of influences, one being exposure to U.S. cultural norms. A most strikingly example embodying changing gender relations is the makeup of the mayordomos. Again, they are increasingly female. Additionally, participation in public roles throughout the fiesta is increasingly female; especially the very public act of being a *torero*, now more so a *torera*. The literal translation of torero/torera means bullfighter, but in this context it means to dance with a bull figure above one's head as part of the fiesta's evening firework show. As a participant observer in the research site, one of the few male mayordomos asks if I want to be a torera for that night's celebration. Holding the bull figure in one hand, and gesturing with the other, he explains that he needed volunteers. But as I scrutinized the structure of the head of the toro or bull, a sort-of metal paper mache with wire outlines from which fireworks are propelled, I hesitated as I remembered my cousin's story of getting burned at last year's *Fiesta de Mayo*. I declined. However, that evening six dancers, almost all twenty–something women, danced. In my interviews with elders they recount, that the mayordomo position and the toreros began to shift from largely being occupied by men to one occupied by women in the early 2000s.

Although women are generally relegated to the private domain of the house and associated with its internal functions, women in Santa Lucia are increasingly actively present in the public arena. However, this is not to say that women were absolutely powerless and marginalized before. In fact, they were the ones often making key household decisions like the balancing of a budget. But in recent years, increasingly numbers of women are participating more in public positions. And this is not a phenomenon exclusive of this village. Robert Smith (2006) has shown how fluid gender relations affect settlement, return, and transnational life among men and women of a specific migrant community. He speaks to the complicated renegotiations of gender relations derived from social norms stemming from women living and working in the U.S. and the local context of relations between men and women. Although more research is needed to adequately define changing gender relations in the community of Santa Lucia, another notable example that breaks from current literature written about the structure of

hometown associations is the makeup of ACOPIL. The executive board, which includes the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary are overwhelmingly female. It has a female president, vice president, and secretary. Additionally, the presidency, which is occupied for a term of two years with no term limits, has elected two female presidents each serving multiple terms. This has led to increased female visibility in the politics and public presentation of the hometown association both in the U.S. and Mexico. Additionally, regular women not holding an official position, American or Mexican born, increasingly participate in public life in Mexico. As a younger female visiting Mexico, I remember that my brothers or male relatives had to accompany me when going out to the street either be it a short trip to the store or to play outside. Currently, young women, especially American-born females, are not strictly held to that convention anymore when wanting to travel outside of the home, if they are paired with other women.

Symbols of Status

For some migrants and their families, houses reflect aspirations, for others they are real markers of achievement, namely how successful they have been in working in the U.S. The new house styles reflect the fading away if not loss of an agricultural lifestyle. In the older homes where remodeling is taking place, small stables have been tightly converted into garages for trucks or cars. New constructions have amply designed space for their vehicles, with one of the more extravagant houses having two large garages. Furthermore, some who in the past were content with the condition of their house are now feeling somewhat pressured to 'improve' the appearance of their house. To illustrate, let me draw on an example intimate to me.

My grandmother, who has always lived in Mexico, has a home in the village and her main house is in a nearby city. She receives regular remittances from several of her sons that live in the U.S. For a long time, great portions of remittances were being used to invest in an agricultural way of life –buy animals, their feed, seed, and equipment. Some minor work or repair was done to the house in Santa Lucia, but it was never a main expense paid for by remittances. However, in recent years my

Figure 23.

Materials, paid for by remittances, to improve the appearance of an older home by adding a second level.

grandmother has vocally expressed the need to improve the house, especially to her eldest son, my father. Materials have been bought to add on a second level to the house as requested by my grandmother. In a quiet discreet but obvious way, my grandmother has expressed that the houses around her are improving in a more rapid pace. The house has now become a source of worry and stress, questions about ownership have arisen among her sons and especially among the siblings still living in Mexico. Additionally, my grandmother, a woman who has fiercely maintained her agricultural lifestyle, even as a widow, is now partially consumed with improving the house. As a respected elder in the community with successful sons, who were some of the first of their generation to go live and work in the U.S., she feels their collective social standing must be also demonstrated physically, as other households connected to recent migrants are doing in rapidly remodeling and constructing housing in Santa Lucia. In short, there is an incessant pressure to showcase one's commitment to the village by investing in your house. And the house is intimately bound with displaying one's social achievements, standing, and aspirations. The aesthetics, design, and materials of the house are the open text telling neighbors about who you are, what you have, where you stand in the local social structure.

Appliances and services that were atypical 5 or 10 years ago are now commonplace, such as televisions, satellite dishes, washing machines, and gas stoves to name a few. They are new symbols of status and achievement and most importantly of modernity. It should be acknowledged that not all these changes are due exclusively to migration; they are also a result of the Mexican state's push for 'modernization' across the country. A combination of surveys and census data accomplished by the Mexican government reflect the town's transition to a locus of modernity and consumption. In the table below, selected statistics highlight the changing characteristics of houses in Santa Lucia. They mostly highlight how these houses have become equipped with resources not before seen in the village.

Table 2. Change in Services and Appliances,1970 -2005

	Total# of Houses	% Floors Not made of dirt	With drainage	Piped water inside the house	With Electricity	With Television	With Refrigerator
1970	34	91%	0%	0%	0%	29%	n/a
1980	39	97%	0%	0%	79%	33%	10%
1990	28	96 %	0%	0%	93%	87%	20%
2000	32	100%	63%	100%	100%	91%	72%
2005	47	100%	87%	93%	100%	87%	87%

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Censo general de población y vivienda 1970, 1980,2000, II Conteo de Población y Vivienda: Viviendas habitadas y deshabitadas por localidad, 2005.

In 1970 twenty-nine percent of houses had a television and in 2005 that percentage grew to include 87 percent of the homes in Santa Lucia. Notice that the big jump in access to basic utilities occurred in 1990 – the presidential administrations of Miguel De la Madrid (1982-88) and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) implemented structural adjustment policies, which centered on a discourse of modernization and incorporation of the country into the first world (Middlebrook & Zepeda, 2003).

Also the house building/renovation activity overwhelming the town symbolizes consumption patterns, which in Santa Lucia used to mean a life rooted in agriculture. Purchasing a house to enjoy and fill things with is one activity that has replaced agriculture activity. Being incorporated into the global economy, has meant a dependence on wages, which residents have gone on to pursue in nearby cities and in different states throughout the United States. Migrants near or far have been able to afford a place of rest and leisure. Similar to how beach towns become saturated with tourists who consume the town, Santa Lucia, in a sense, is also infiltrated by 'outsiders' with money. To illustrate, a trend recognized in my fieldwork is that migrants are building their houses around the watering hole that once used to quench the thirst of cattle and horses. A few, like the owner or *el palacio* have started to build high in the small hills of the town, gazing down on the village. Some explain that there is more room on the southern edge of town and it's "*mas bonito*" (more pleasant). Migrants are consuming the picturesque landscape.

The town's depopulation and increase in homes also highlights the dialectics of 'modernization'. Modernization is not only associated with technological change, as in the introduction of modern appliances and services, but also with urbanization and the pastoral construction of the countryside as a place of rest and leisure and the city as a place of work. With the introduction of electricity in the village, many have opted to construct kitchens differing from the traditional kitchens that are separated from the house and equipped with wood-fired ovens. Now the older houses often have two kitchens –one with traditional stoves and the other with gas or electric stoves, exhibiting the tense transition from the old that resists to move away, and the new struggling to get in. For example, some houses have washing and drying machines, but hardly use them because of the cost of electricity and the fear of blowing a fuse. So laundry machines remain unused while clothes are washed by hand and hung to air dry. Also, in contrast to locally

gathered firewood, gas must be purchased from vendors outside of the town, thus also highlighting a greater dependence on a cash economy and thus on the steady influx of remittances to sustain it.

The town serves as a mirror reflecting status and when migrants see the town they want to see success because they view it as inextricably tied to their own success. The constant improving of the village shows the other (whoever that may be) that they have made it. The other has multiple identities. At times, it is those in their immediate community, other times it includes rural towns with similar transnational ties, as well as, the big city, San Luis Potosi, the state's capital. Migrants are proud to show the city that they too can have modern services and most importantly, afford a place of rest, *lugar de descanso*. Moreover, the migrant's ability to succeed in accomplishing community betterment projects has led them to engage in the politics of the big city. As there are no more projects to accomplish in Santa Lucia, migrants connected to the hometown association have begun to get involved in initiatives concerning the city, such as the training of San Luis firefighters by Chicago firefighters, the donation of ambulances to the general hospital, and more recently, raising funds to rehabilitate the mental institution located in the city of San Luis Potosi.

Social Stratification and Marginalization

The townscape is a text of the social stratification of the village, a stratification based, or shaped by people's transnational mobility. The houses in the new and expanding area are settling around the watering hole or in the nearby hills. Most of the homes at the edge of town are fully completed or close to being done. The closer the house is to being completed is also indicative of migrants tenure living in the U.S. These houses, which remain empty because migrants do not have the means to support themselves in the village, are poignant reminders that to remain in the village is to remain poor.

Moreover, the use of specific building material and paths to building coincide with a migrant's length of time living *en el otro lado*. But also common throughout Santa Lucia' landscape are partially built homes of migrant laborers and their families. Some houses are built in stages because of low income, irregular employment, and infrequent land tenure. Specifically, higher income migrants who had been living in the States more than

ten years tend to contract architects and use more expensive and prestigious materials, whereas those that are living abroad less than 10 years and with moderate means prefer brick or can afford to cover the underlying blocks with plaster and paint. Recent migrants, who also tend to be of lesser means, either pay an *albañil* (stone or concrete mason) or construct their own houses with materials readily available in the region.

As a local community leader explained to me, "*puro burgués viven aquí*" (only the bourgeoisie live here), as we looked out to the town from atop of the sierra, where construction of *el palacio* was taking place. The construction of this house embodied the marginalization taking place within Santa Lucia. First, the owner, a migrant living in Illinois, had purchased the land, typically used for grazing, from an elderly woman who was in need of additional income. Secondly, the home is being built away from the town and overlooking it. Lastly, materials and labor for the construction of the home are being imported from the nearby state of Queretaro due to its "good material" and "the labor is cheap". The stones and materials, creating this home, are metaphors revealing demographic changes. They exhibit depopulation and the existence of a ghost economy. There is a shortage of labor in the region, knowledgeable in masonry, and several have contracted labor from outside for weeks at a time and provide room and board for the duration of the project. Few are the ones living a subsistence agricultural life style and selling tunas (cactus fruit) and other types of produce or diary products, such as cheeses and milk, as resources for income. In fact, Santa Lucia' economy and existence is increasingly based on migrant initiatives.

Contrary to certain idealized visions transnationalism is not a socially liberating and equalizing force, but rather extends inequality across borders (Guarnizo, 1997). Social relations have become more and more differentiated and perceptible through visual markers. As you walk through the town, one gets a sense of which households receive individual remittances more frequently or live in the U.S. The homes with fresh paint jobs and ongoing renovations, those with cable satellite dishes looming atop the roof, and with two or more stories, are easy identifiers of households with incoming remittances or are themselves migrant-owned homes. By being absent, migrants gain a stronger presence, in their home communities via their ability to send remittances, contribute to local projects, and advocate for local causes.

By 2002, when the *3x1 Program for Migrants* was officially installed in the state, U.S. migrants, especially those in Chicago, were already well organized and were

receiving frequent visits from public officials even from the state's governor. Simultaneously, as the courting of migrant causes was ongoing, a well-established group of concerned citizens, *El Comité*, living in Santa Lucia, also were advocating for services by politicians. However, this specific constituency was often ignored and they orchestrated fundraisers, toy, food and clothing drives on their own. El Comité's organizing and advocacy efforts have fallen on deaf political ears, as their attention is elsewhere securing the migrant allegiance by courting hometown associations. To circumvent this challenge, El Comité, changed strategies and would then ask ACOPIL directly for help on projects they were seeking to get accomplished. For example, *La casa de retiro* or retreat house, mentioned earlier, moved from the theoretical planning stages to its construction after heavy campaigning by El Comité to ACOPIL. In securing a significant investment from ACOPIL, the group's vision of having a center of development for both the youth that remained in the village and those that had relocated to nearby cities with their families was realized.

The flow of remittances has become a source of power for migrants, at the cost of others not being heard. Power, as Michael Foucault (1983) has shown, is all pervasive. Although nuances of the meaning of power may differ among scholars interested in defining power, almost all authors would agree that powerholders by definition exert control. Through the manipulation of resources and ideas, powerholders can pursue specific agendas. This is not to say that migrants are at fault for the marginalization taking place in their community, but rather it reflects the macro and micro dynamics generating social stratification. Specifically, the consolidation of Mexican state policies largely designed to co-opt migrants into supporting the states neoliberal policy priorities is reflected in the promotion and actualization of The 3x1 Program for Migrants, administered by the Mexican Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL). Under this program a Committee of Validation and Attention to Migrants (COVAM), which includes representatives of four parties (migrants, municipal, state, and federal government via SEDESOL), they prioritize and decide on the technical viability of proposed projects. Each of these parties contributes 25% of the total cost of the approved project.

Scrutinizing the makeup of COVAM one can see that there is no representation of local lay people from wherever the project is being proposed. The municipal president of the location of the proposed project is said to represent the 'local' people in COVAM. But many describe municipal presidents as hungry for resources and ready to jump on projects

migrants initiate. Is this true public participation? A genuine public participation process would also involve groups like, El Comité. All citizens should be able to participate in the development and design of their town.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The Santa Lucia migration process shares many features with other contemporary migration flows. Like other places in Mexico and Latin American countries, Santa Lucia had an established tradition of regional labor migration. It is embedded in the historic heartland of migration from the north and western states of Mexico to the United States. Motivated by a deep sense of obligation, migrants from Santa Lucia have engaged in sending individual and collective remittances from abroad. Yet, the particular combination of factors that have molded Santa Lucia' transnationalism is unique with its own history and local culture and practices.

The case of Santa Lucia' transnational migration confirms the association between structural changes at the global level and the proliferation of migrant transnationalism. Beyond this broad statement, this research demonstrates how the circulation of goods, people and information across the sending and receiving locations leads to the emergence of a transnational social space that straddles international borders. This thesis set out to test the impact of migration through the prism of the built environment. Specifically, this thesis focuses on a particular element of the migration process, remittances, to showcase the physical impact of such transnational relations. The material expression of policies such as the *3x1 Program for Migrants*, which is bound with intimate notions of home, has resulted in transforming a town from a place of residence and work into a place of rest.

Elites have always imported designs and culture, but rather what is new and unique are the types of people, specifically migrants, who are appropriating architecture and creating hybridity in the townscape by mixing historical with new forms of design. This has reordered some social relations, like the centrality of the *patio*, but has also reinforced communal socializing through the creation of a kiosk and plaza. Additionally, the built environment is a medium for people to engage in culture preservation activities, but also the visibility of the material is stratifying the local society. The ability to advance and afford things involved with the place of rest is based on transnational mobility.

Despite the fact that Santa Lucia is actually a quasi-empty, unproductive place, becoming what some Mexicans now call 'ghost towns.' it has been construed as an idyllic place cultivated through the intimate emotions connected to this place, which has resulted in ubiquitous social change displayed and reinforced in the built environment. Migrants' search for recognition and respect has engendered the town into a jewel that is sustained

with a steady inflow of resources from abroad. The village map is changing with new houses, older houses with new designs, new recreational areas, a newly remodeled church, and other visible markers, all financed by remittances, be it collective or individual. Large houses, some finished some still in the process of building, are scattered around the town. The physical changes of Santa Lucia illustrate the way an agricultural life has been preempted by the experience of migration. The house, a repository for consumer goods, is one focal point in which the transformation of a subsistence village into a source of labor for interconnected global labor markets is showcased. Projects, financed by migrants, are testimony to their sense of commitment and their reluctance to abandon a part of who they are. This is showcased in the prolonged engagement required in building a house or raising collective funds for a specific project. The village, in certain ways, is a measure of migrants' success en *el otro lado*.

However, taking greater stock of the entire remittance-development program, as exemplified with the case-study of Santa Lucia, it is unfortunate that nation-states are intent on riding the costs of basic necessities, such as, potable water and electricity, on the backs of some of the world's most exploited workers. The global reorganization of production has produced local economic and social disruptions. The transformation of Santa Lucia to a place of leisure does have economic repercussions that stimulate activity and spending in the local economy, such as, the contracting of labor, purchase of materials, appliances, and other things. However, I believe pursuing a remittance-development does not create wealth for the local communities, but rather creates conditions that breed more urbanization and migration.

Mobility of people is one defining characteristic of the major transformations currently affecting all regions of the world (Castles & Miller, 2009). The depopulation and exacerbation of inequalities within Santa Lucia, exemplifies a particular set of outcomes stemming from the migration experience. This research can serve to guide future inquires investigating remittance-development projects and their implications. In particular, future research can work to expand on the sustainability of such practices, contribute to comprehensive development strategies, and advance advocacy for fairer forms of migration.

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