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The Remittance House

Architecture of Migration in Rural Mexico

In the rural Mexican town of Vista Hermosa, Jalisco, a four-story colonial style mansion built by locals who emigrated to Napa Valley, California, towers above modest adobe and concrete houses. Since construction began in 2004, the house has been the talk of the town. Local farmers, mothers, shopkeepers, and factory workers gossip about the Italian marble floors, two-story columns, copper antique elevator (to carry its owners to the fourth floor in their old age), private movie theatre, personal gym, oak pool table, and mini-bar, even though few of them have ever been inside.

Nestled in a poor Mexican town reliant on sugar cane and corn farming, this mansion is an exceptional example of what I call the "remittance house." This term refers to a house built with money earned by a Mexican migrant in the U. S. who sends dollars—remits—to Mexico for the construction of his or her dream house. More broadly, I use this term to emphasize remitting and migration as key components of contemporary transnational building practices across the globe.[1] Remittance houses are built in small increments over extended periods of time and represent both local and imported construction techniques and architectural styles. While exhibiting similarities, every remittance house is unique and embodies the specific circumstances of the migrant who finances and builds it. Some migrants and their families build informally, adding rooms as the need arises, while others make use of architectural plans to construct entirely new houses on their land. Understated façades may blend into the existing fabric or highly ornamental designs announce a migrant's success abroad. In Mexico, dating back to at least the middle of the twentieth century, the remittance house has crystallized migrant narratives and desires amid shifting cultural milieux. Artifacts of complex relationships, these houses are also embedded in the macro processes of globalization and transnational migration.

For at least a century, U. S. immigrants' remittances have dramatically affected the vernacular rural landscapes of their hometowns. As early as 1913, the *New York Times* made this observation about Italian immigrant laborers: "They go back when they have accumulated American money, buy property and restore it" with the result that "in squalid villages stand new, clean houses."[2] Today, Turkish migrants in Germany, Portuguese migrants in France, and Chinese migrants in the United States use hard-earned wages to build new houses in their hometowns.[3] However, in contrast to Mexicans, many migrants with homelands far from the United States are not able to return home until retirement.[4]

The current scale of remitting and the continuous movement of migrants between countries are unprecedented. According to the World Bank, in 2007 the developing world received $251 billion in remittances sent by migrants to their home countries.[5] Of that total, migrants living in the United States, the world's top remittance-sending country, sent over $40 billion overseas. Within individual countries the scale of remitting has also increased. Mexico received approximately $9.8 billion in 2002; that amount grew to a record $25.2 billion in 2008.[6]

This fast-growing sector of the economy is spearheading social and cultural changes for

migrants and their families that are manifested in the material world.[7] However, the consequences of imagining, building, and living in these homes on local communities, family life, and local construction practices and markets have received scant attention.[8]

Several migration scholars study the influence of remittances on household economies and family life, but anthropologist Perry Fletcher's work in Michoacán is the main study that focuses on how migration is interwoven with the hopes and dreams of building a house in one's hometown.[9] While recognizing the importance of building, Fletcher stops short of analyzing the spaces and materials of the houses. In addition to the reorganization of domestic life, however, the materials and forms of remittance houses warrant attention. This study explores how the morphologies of buildings and communities embed social meanings and also structure social life and relations between individuals, genders, classes, and groups, thereby establishing social categories and other descriptions fundamental to society.[10]

I use geographically and historically contextualized ethnographies of migrants and their families to study the meanings and implications of remittance houses. An architectural analysis of the spaces of their houses demonstrates remittance houses are a unit of analysis for larger social, political, and architectural discourses about migration and global building practices in rural localities. They are emblems of the rising social status of once impoverished rural farmers. Homes and their interior spaces, however, reveal unintended consequences that many migrants do not anticipate when building them and are subsequently forced to address. Paradoxically, the increased symbolic value of the house is linked to its diminished function or use value. Also, villagers who do not migrate or have remittance houses are affected by the spatial transformation occurring in small towns and villages. The imported architectural styles and spaces suggest lifestyles that are foreign to those they shelter. Houses reflect and reproduce the social condition of migrants (Figure 1). The remittance house, an alluring trap for migrants and their families, can be read architecturally and allegorically: it is both a house form and a crystallization of the inequities that underpin migrants' lives.

Figure 1. This two-story unfinished remittance house remained unaltered between 2007 and 2008. Houses in various stages of construction and habitation mark the landscape of Jalisco. Migrants begin building houses with the intention of completing them but often cannot predict when or how they will. Photograph by the author.

Remittance houses are emblematic of a profound shift in rural Mexican society.[11] Perhaps the single most striking quality of remittance construction is the social distance embedded in its form. Scholars of the built environment can contribute to the study of how migration is transforming rural Mexican society by analyzing changes in spatial form at both migrants' places of origin and points of arrival.[12] Social relations stretched across geographies and exacerbated by distance increasingly define places. Places in Mexico are marked by the absences and familial fragmentation that constitute "migration as a way of life."[13] These absences are a necessary precondition for migrants to realize their dream houses.

The Village in Historical Context

Jalisco, Mexico, is located about 1,500 miles south of the United States–Mexico border along the Pacific Coast. It is one of the four Mexican states with the highest rates of emigration; Zacatecas, Michoacán, and Guanajuato are the other three (Figure 2).[14] Migration to the United States from rural Jalisco dates back to the late nineteenth century. Even before the railroad

Figure 2. This map depicts the four Mexican states with the highest rates of emigration: Zacatecas, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. The village discussed in this article, San Miguel Hidalgo, is shown in the south of Jalisco. Courtesy of Chesney Floyd (delineator).

connected the northern region of Jalisco to California at the turn of the twentieth century, people headed north on foot.

In the early 1900s, large-scale agricultural production based on unequal power relations between *hacendados* (owners of hacienda plantations) and indebted *campesinos* or peasants, established agricultural communities. Campesinos in pueblos or small villages surrounding the hacienda often planted and harvested land that belonged to the hacendados or powerful families known as *caciques*. In remote localities, very small subsistence farming communities, known as *ranchos*, were comprised of one or two extended families.

Farmers mired in poverty and indebted to large-scale landholders struggled to provide shelter for their families. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Mexican revolution abolished the hacienda system, and the caciques began to lose their power. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, Mexico's revolutionary presidents established communal land holdings called *ejidos*. However, the federal government otherwise neglected rural farmers, and most rural inhabitants could build only modest houses with local materials.

To study the remittance house, I focus on San Miguel Hidalgo, a pueblo in the south of Jalisco established before the Spanish conquest. With approximately five hundred inhabitants, San Miguel was (and still partially is) owned by two caciques. Like many pueblos in Jalisco, San Miguel's built environment reflects its migration history. The impact of emigration on the community dates back about fifty years.[15] Various remittance houses—the types range from one-story cement-block houses to monster remittance residences—share party walls with adobe brick houses from the pre-remittance era, some of which are hundreds of years old (Figure 3).

I lived in Jalisco for one year and made frequent visits to several pueblos, including San Miguel Hidalgo. There I surveyed adobe and new remittance houses and conducted interviews with migrants and local non-migrants. I also investigated local businesses and brick-making practices to get a sense of how remittances have affected the building industry. This story is predominately about males remitting and building houses, in part because historically it has been men who have emigrated from rural Mexico. However, today more women are emigrating.[16] While fewer migrant women in the United States hold jobs than men, and those who do earn less, they are increasingly involved in remitting money to their families at home. Nonetheless, mostly men have built remittance houses in San Miguel. Although San Miguel is a unique case, it provides information about the remittance house that can be applied across disparate remittance landscapes.

Traditional House Forms in Rural Mexico

Until recently, as I learned from fieldwork and oral interviews, the principal building material in rural Jalisco was adobe brick—a mixture of earth, *zacate* (grass), and horse manure. To make adobe brick, laborers worked in complementary ways: one worker's knowledge of where the good earth was located was complemented by another worker's knowledge of brick drying techniques. Also, the vulnerability of adobe construction to the elements, notably water, wind, and pests, required homeowners to continuously tend to houses and to rely on neighbors to keep homes in good condition. These processes reinforced ties between individuals and the immediate environment and created an interdependent community.

Historically, building an adobe house has been a communal, distributed, and reciprocal process handled by men. While most men in the village were known as *albañiles* or vernacular builders, some held special craft skills, one able to build roofs and another able to craft wooden doors. These specialized skills allowed neighbors to strengthen their standing in the community by extending their help to other families. Similarly, neighbors traded critical items—one farmer's honey would be traded for another's time. This pattern of exchange allowed a seemingly homogenous community to articulate important social distinctions.

Vernacular dwellings in San Miguel also exhibit a close fit between an agrarian way of life and domestic space. Typical houses consist of a courtyard or partial courtyard surrounded by inward facing living quarters and an interior porch connecting private rooms, with the communal space of the courtyard. The courtyard, a multi-functional space, is by far the most frequently used area in the house. In the courtyard, a large outdoor *comal* (a wood-burning oven, for stewing meat and making bread), a well, and a tub for washing clothes are situated among fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and corrals and stables for livestock. The courtyard also contains sheds for tools to make honey or adobe bricks.

Figure 3. This modestly scaled but elegant remittance house remains attached to the crumbling adobe walls of much older houses on either side. Photograph by author.

The continuous exterior wall, which defines the courtyard house, acts to enclose the home and define the edge of the street. This wall is attached to a roof known as *dos aguas* (two waters) whose pitch parallels the street and whose edges extend seamlessly over individual houses. The wall and roof create a continuous built fabric that separates public from private space (Figure 4).

Traditionally, adobe homes were built and expanded in an incremental fashion. The Rodríguez house, built around 1930, exemplifies this informal approach to the construction of domestic space (Figure 5). Originally a one-room dwelling, the enclosed space consisted of a communal sleeping area attached to a large unfenced yard. Adults slept on the dirt floor while wooden boards that rested on the wooden roof beams created a tiny (and dangerous) attic-like space for their seven children to sleep next to piles of corn. During the dry months their five boys slept outside. About twenty years later, the family added two additional rooms to provide separate sleeping quarters for boys and girls. Shortly thereafter they extended and enclosed the patio, which allowed them to put interior furniture outside, where they spent most of their time. The patio faced an enclosed yard, where the corral and stables for pigs and goats, the well, an outdoor kitchen and oven, and fruit trees orchestrated daily life (Figure 6).[17] The construction of the Rodríguez house parallels the life cycle of the family.

The Rodríguezes did not (and could not) build for an imagined future. When many children were born, they added rooms to house them. When the livestock overtook the yard, they added spaces to contain them. After a particularly profitable summer harvest, they enclosed the patio to shelter the family from the rain. Farmers did not have the luxury of building houses that fit all of their needs, in part because being able to build was contingent on external factors: rainfall, seed quality, prices for farm products, the farmer's health, disposable cash, the caciques, demands, and limited time to make bricks and build. These logistical constraints dovetailed with religious beliefs. The saying, "If you plan for tomorrow, God will damn you," was (and is) professed by devout Catholics who left "planning" in God's hands. The lack of architectural plans, the continuous and open-ended approach to the building process, and the contingent nature of

Figure 4. Until the 1980s, remittance house remodels tended to conform to local vernacular forms. The continuous exterior wall and roofline of the adobe house is unbroken by newer concrete construction. Photograph by the author.

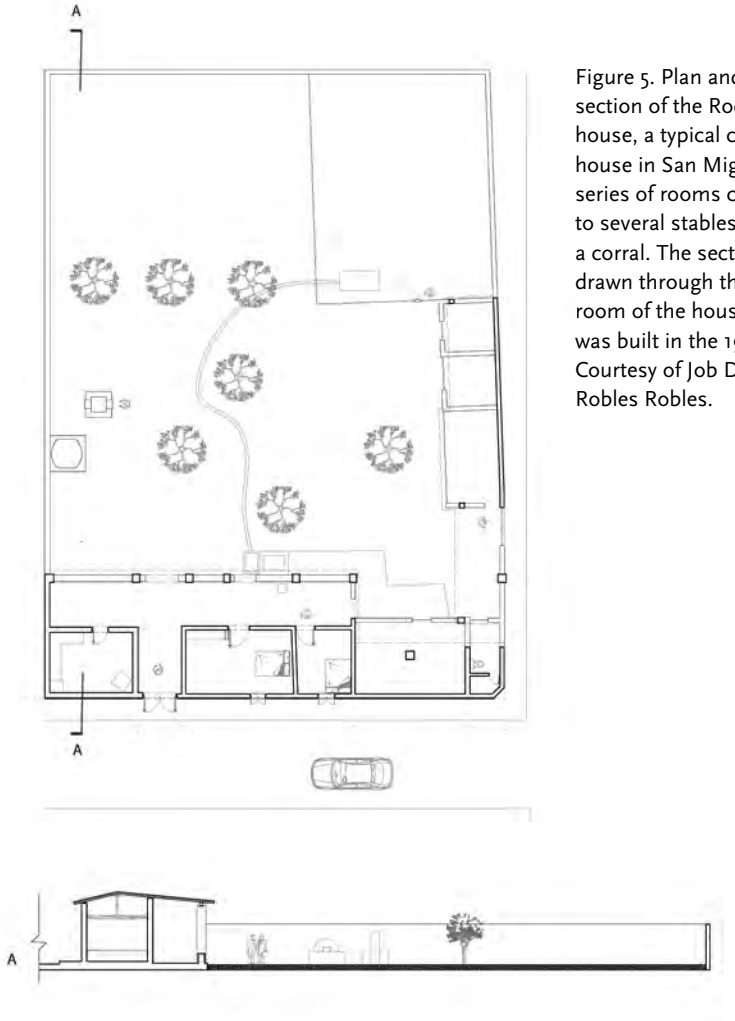

Figure 5. Plan and cross-section of the Rodríquez house, a typical courtyard house in San Miguel. A series of rooms connect to several stables and a corral. The section is drawn through the initial room of the house, which was built in the 1930s. Courtesy of Job Daniel Robles Robles.

Figure 6. The yard of the Rodríguez house is filled with fruit trees, a comal for baking, laundry lines, a well, and corrals. Photograph by the author.

opportunities contributed to an environment in which buildings, or in this case "the home," were viewed through a temporal lens, not as completed products.

Available materials, shared façade elements, and a desire for uniformity have lent traditional Mexican pueblos a marked continuity and homogeneity of appearance. Locals wanted adobe brick made from the same earth; the exterior wall and the roof made of a fired adobe tile known as *teja* connected the disparate homes visually and materially, creating a uniform aesthetic. The goal was for the house to look like the neighbor's house.

Since the 1930s, village life has been increasingly disrupted by a series of factors affecting Jalisco's countryside. Critical droughts in the 1930s and the violence of the Cristero War (1926–1929), which pitted the federal government against the Catholic Church, ravaged small towns. The bracero program (1942–1964), which contracted locals to work in American fields, and the geographic isolation of pueblos from the new highways built in the 1940s and 1950s propelled hungry and desperate men north.[18] These environmental, political, and social upheavals impacted building practices.

Waves of successive migration during the twentieth century meant that fewer men and women were available to erect buildings and till the land. As soon as they were able, men who migrated north sent dollars as a substitute for their presence. The flow of men shuttling back and forth between Jalisco and the United States was shadowed by the flow of their dollars sent home to support families.

By the 1970s and 1980s a noticeable trend in new home construction, linked to remittances, emerged in southern Jalisco. By 2006, Jalisco received $2 billion from men and women who are now identified proudly in Mexico as *paisanos* (countrymen) or *norteños* (northerners). They are no longer called migrants—a term historically used to signify people who are willing to abandon their land, traitors to their home country.[19] Although it is unknown exactly how much of this money is used on home building, the influx of dollars has resulted in a building boom across rural Jalisco.[20]

Over the last thirty years, local infusions of capital have changed the way that campesinos conceive of the building process. Rather than

Figure 7. While most remittance houses in this region are viewed as social and cultural investments, as opposed to economic ones, some norteños have managed to make money off of new houses. Don Miguel built and then sold remittance houses in the 1980s and 1990s. His house, on the right, was built with the money he earned. His house is dwarfed by a monster remittance house built by the owner of a gardening business in California. The house remains empty for most of the year. Photograph by author.

providing much-needed shelter at a minimum cost, now families are able to imagine and implement changes that make them more comfortable or beautify their houses. Migrants also build for retirement, to define themselves as successful to their family and community, or as a means of self-expression. In this region, very seldom do migrants view new homes as economic investments. Lack of potential buyers, and the possible damages to property and goods that result from renting, keep owners from selling and renting remittance houses (Figure 7).

Disposable income—the capital available to a migrant family—limits the extent and quality of construction in a project. Small capital flows may result in the decision to undertake small-scale remodels that replace old windows with new ones. More income may result in more substantial building projects whereby migrant families completely knock down an old adobe house to build from scratch, or build on newly purchased land. In either case, migrants want to build rather than buy a house. In the process, old materials—adobe, zacate, and wood—are updated to fired-brick, steel, aluminum, cement, and glass. Design motifs and lifestyles are pulled from a wide spectrum of personal experiences to create unique homes.

Motifs in Remittance Construction in Rural Mexico

The architectural decisions of migrants—to detach or semi-detach remittance houses from continuous exterior walls and rooflines—produce the most critical spatial changes in the village. To build modern houses, which might have second stories, double garages, tall ceiling heights, and modern floor plans, migrants must tear down old adobe houses, break from the continuous fabric of the traditional dwelling, and start anew. These choices distinguish migrant houses from their surroundings. It also shows migrants as people who have withdrawn from the pueblo and at the same time are still heavily invested in its well-being and vitality, and one day might return (Figure 8).

Detached from neighboring houses, the new house will have an articulated façade that is distinct from the continuous adobe wall. Traditional Mexican colors and modern house ornamentation are mixed to create individualized façades. Purple, usually yellow, or fuchsia houses are complemented by columns, turrets, water fountains, or fake wooden cross beams made out of concrete that refer to Greek, Gothic, Tudor, or Neoclassical architectural styles. However, the four-sided freestanding house is not a part of local conceptions of space. Owners tend to either reattach new houses to the neighbors' wall (but not the roof line) or leave its sides unpainted, windowless, and unadorned (Figure 9).

The second major change caused by remittance construction is the abandonment of the courtyard plan. The focus of the house shifts from the communal spaces of the all-purpose yard to the individual spaces in the interior of the house. It is possible to abandon the courtyard, where family members previously spent all their time, in favor of the individual rooms of the modern home because many intergenerational migrant families no longer live together. Instead, grandparents often still remain in their adobe house close to remittance houses built by absent sons and daughters.

Figure 8. This remittance house interrupts the continuous façade of the vernacular fabric with a fence, carport, patio, and second story. This house also demonstrates inequalities between emigrants and those who stay in the south of Jalisco. Photograph by author.

Figure 9. The façade of this house, built in Jalisco by a family living in Texas, mimics wooden siding using stucco and concrete. Note the side of this house is unadorned even though there are no plans to build an adjacent house. Photograph by author.

Figure 10. Note the representation of pitched-roof dormers in the ornate window frames and the innovative, cantilevered shed-roof features above the windows. Photograph by author.

Amenities and new facilities often update the vernacular dwelling or equip the modern home. Modern kitchens known as the *cocina integral*, garage doors, washers and dryers, televisions, and bathroom sinks are meant to ease daily chores. A gas stove and laundry machine replaces extended periods of washing by hand in the yard, or cooking on the comal. New kitchens move inside and have open floor plans as opposed to being outside or a separate room. The space for casual encounters between women in the yard or the privacy of enclosed kitchens is eliminated in modern kitchens that are connected to the TV room where husbands or children might be lounging.[21] Other amenities, such as sprinklers and reliable running hot or cold water, are lacking. Some houses have bathrooms that look modern but have no running water; in other cases, families tend a front lawn with buckets of water.

Lastly, select trappings associated with suburban domesticity in the United States are exported to Mexico. According to Hugo Galindo, an engineer who works in San Miguel, "those who can afford a California-style house get one."[22] Many migrants (and even locals who have never left home) want a front lawn, pitched roof, two-car garage, doorbell, and mailbox. However, home building and designing in the United States are specific to the history of U.S. building materials, technologies, construction processes, and the American way of life—all embedded in architectural elements. In Mexico, these architectural elements have a symbolic value that overrides the difficulties of building, living in, and maintaining the houses.

In suburban homes in the United States, front lawns are a display piece for pedestrian and car traffic and can be used recreationally.[23] In rural Jalisco, remote roads have little to no traffic, and grass is proudly maintained for few to see. Furthermore, the lawn ends up replacing the all-purpose back yard, not being an addition to it, as the house is moved to the back of the lot where vegetables and animals previously thrived.

The mailbox, which in the United States is functional, becomes symbolic in Mexico. Villages do not receive mail from the *cabecera*, or head municipality, do not have postmen, and are not equipped with post office boxes. Norteños, who add mailboxes to their homes, are either poised for a postal future or imitating a system that exists in the United States.

Pitched roofs, perpendicular to the street, often replicate the image of a suburban home in the United States without actually replicating the form of a pitched roof. Flat roofs are fronted with an ornamental pitched façade, or pitched roof window frames are used (imitating dormer windows) to refer to the freestanding house form (Figure 10).

The doorbell, a trapping of a modern way of life, may seem like a minor addition to the rural home. However, it changes the spaces of the home as well as the house's relationship to the social fabric of the neighborhood. In San Miguel and several other pueblos around Jalisco, one enters an adobe house through a heavy wooden front door or through the courtyard. The front door is built with a small half window. Neighbors go up to the window, often left open, and call out for the owner of the house. The courtyard and traditional door allow for casual interactions; they create thresholds between domestic interiors and exteriors that allow conversations with-

out requiring homeowners to invite passersby inside the house.

The doorbell formalizes relationships between neighbors. Houses with doorbells often have one-piece wooden doors that must be opened all the way to see who is calling. This design and grassy lawns create two spatial barriers for passersby: first a visitor must enter into the front yard through a wrought iron or wooden fence and then push the buzzer. Some neighbors are so put off by the doorbell that they refuse to ring it, and some homeowners refrain from answering a ring when they do not know who is calling. When the doorbell is used, it creates a remittance space that impedes the informal *grito,* or street call.

Migrants take pride in their homes, employing the highest quality building methods and materials available to them. Similarly, the incorporation of typical North American housing design, such as detached residences, garage doors, lawns, and other amenities, reflect migrants' desires to build modern homes consistent with their changing status and lifestyle. As of this writing, new homes built in this idiom are not necessarily built by migrants. Some locals who have never left Mexico—the lucky few who can afford it—are building in either an American style, the *estilo del norteño* (style of the one who goes north), or a kind of rural modern. They are influenced by remittance houses going up around them; by the modern housing stock they might know from visits to Guadalajara, Jalisco's major city; and by images they see on television and in magazines. The ubiquity of the remittance house has at least contributed to and perhaps also created a stylistic feedback loop between norteños and their rural counterparts. Dwellers in the remittance landscape (in select high-migration communities in the countryside) are increasingly influenced by other distant places, even if they have not traveled to them. Even for rural inhabitants who have never left Mexico, migration and remitting shape daily life.

The Remittance Construction Industry

Remittance architecture transforms local economies in rural areas not only through an infusion of capital but also by fundamentally changing the way they operate. The expansion of certain sectors of the construction market, coupled with new demands from norteños, brings foreign goods into local businesses. Global companies become part of rural localities, and government activity in the construction sector increases. New actors in rural construction markets are formalizing informal industries that are now larger in scale and more vulnerable to external market forces.

The remittance economy directly affects the local construction economy through the rapidly increasing demand for fired brick, the main building material used in new construction. The cabeceras used fired brick in the early twentieth century for houses and public buildings. Villages of campesinos did not use this material until the 1950s and 1960s, and then only a select few residents did. In the 1950s, Tonio Ortiz, one of the first braceros to return to San Miguel, built the town's first remittance house of fired brick (Figure 11).[24] Ortiz did not alter the basic spaces of the adobe house. In the 1950s, he built a two-room house about five yards in front of his adobe house. When more money became available, he knocked down his adobe house and built an exact replica of it in fired brick on the same lot. Fired brick is preferred to adobe because it requires less maintenance and care and lasts longer.

Figure 11. Don Tonio Ortiz, San Miguel's first bracero to return and build a house with dollars. Don Tonio stands in his entryway next to the moto (also bought with dollars) that replaced his horse. He drives his moto to and from his agricultural fields every day. Photograph by author.

Figure 12. This is one of Autlán's largest brickyards. All the bricks are made by hand without shelter from the sun. Photograph by author.

The early fired brick mimicked adobe bricks in size. Adobe brick typically measured up to 100 by 70 by 10 centimeters and had to be large to bear the weight of the wall. By the 1950s, fired bricks, known as *listones,* were 40 by 20 by 6 centimeters. According to Gustavo Chávez, a local albañil in his eighties, *listón* brick lasts longer than the fired brick made today. "In the past they made brick like you make good bread. They beat it and beat it until it was soft powder. Now they make the brick to break."[25] The listón, substantial brick, could bear the weight of a wall.

The most popular brick used in contemporary modern rural houses is much smaller than listón because steel columns and concrete have been introduced to bear wall loads. For the same amount of earth and clay used to make one listón brick, manufacturers now produce three *tabique* bricks, which measure 14 by 28 by 6 centimeters and cost about ten cents apiece. According to Rodulfo Sahagún Morales, the largest brick manufacturer in Autlán, a town that supplies San Miguel, "The smaller brick economizes the land. For the same amount of good land you get more brick and with less brick you can build because of steel reinforcement."[26] Thinner, narrower bricks and slimmer walls appear to benefit everybody: locals who buy cheap bricks and manufacturers who produce more of them. However, locals need to buy more of them, and the value of brick has declined. Furthermore, a new dependency is created on the external markets that supply steel beams.

Despite an increase in brick production, old technologies used to make them endure. Rodulfo Sahagún Morales estimates that there has been a 60–70 percent increase in *ladrilleros,* or brick makers, in the last twenty years. The brick businesses in the town of Autlán now support six hundred families. However, laborers sometimes work thirty-hour shifts, watching big earthen ovens heat hand-made brick using old rubber tires for gas. The ladrilleros—both men and young boys—work in the full sun, hunch over as they mix earth and clay and pour them into molds, and breathe noxious fumes emitted by the burning tires (Figure 12). Thus, remittance construction supports local people through brick manufacturing, albeit under perilous conditions.

Remittance building has also contributed to the expansion of local craft trades for the production of goods that complement the lavish aesthetic of the norteños. Locally made custom doors and windows and wrought-iron ornamentation are still preferred to prefabricated windows and doors. However, local craftsmen are professionalized and increasingly expensive. It takes an ironworker one day to make one window that he can sell for five thousand pesos or roughly five hundred dollars. Ironically, local craftsmen advertise their ability to custom make doors and windows that appear to be standardized or modern yet are unique pieces that fit unusual openings or meet other requests. In this way, the remittance construction industry supports local craftsmanship and regionally specific designs.[27]

Lastly, the number and importance of professional albañiles has increased. Before the rise of the remittance economy at the turn of the last century, most men in the village were albañiles and participated in construction. Now, albañiles are professionalized and organized hierarchically from a peon to a *maestro de obra* with four positions in-between. The albañiles are paid not in informal exchanges with their neighbors but with pesos. While wages have increased in this transition, so has the cost of the materi-

als they must buy to build. Thirty years ago an albañil would make thirty pesos a day, which was enough to buy eight sacks of cement. Today, one worker makes two hundred pesos, but it will only buy one and one-half sacks of cement. Albañiles, employed by norteños to build extravagant remittance houses, are pushed to the edge of their knowledge. As a result, houses are built with major errors. Accidentally, bedrooms open onto the street, second stories are built with doors that open to the sky, rooms are trapezoidal, or kitchen sinks are sunk deep into a wide countertop, forcing women to bend at the waist and reach for their dirty dishes.

Due to the prevalence of mistakes in the designs of remittance houses, norteños are starting to hire architects and engineers and introduce them into the building process, which produces tension and competition with the albañiles who traditionally played the professional's role. Hugo Galindo, a professional engineer with training from the University of Guadalajara, uses computer programs to design norteños' houses.[28] The software contains thousands of suburban house plans produced in the United States. However, albañiles, who cannot read architectural plans and want to retain their place in the construction process, argue that architects are at a disadvantage. They probably have not migrated to the United States to work and thus do not know the U.S. construction industry first hand. An albañil or carpenter who has migrated to the United States and has worked in the construction industry is well positioned to know what norteños want.

However, both architects and albañiles—even if they have worked in construction in the United States—are faced with the same major challenge. Masonry construction almost always mimics designs that are intended to be built with lightweight wood frame construction used in suburban homes in the United States. In the words of José López, owner of a business in El Grullo that supplies construction materials to San Miguel, "The houses in the U.S. fall apart, they are flimsy, built for thirty years. This house," he said, while knocking on its brick and concrete wall, "is forever."[29] López has attempted to bring sheet rock and plywood to rural constituents, but locals do not want wooden houses and criticize the way that buildings are made in the United States. Using photographs of U.S. houses, taken personally or from magazines, or pointing toward other examples in nearby pueblos, norteños want to replicate the image of the American home without importing its construction materials or methods.

Aside from needing more bricks and specialized builders, norteños desire items that they have seen or lived among in the United States. These items are not manufactured locally and have to be brought to rural Mexico in the back of a truck or imported from foreign manufacturers. This demand has created a niche market for foreign goods. For example, the automatic garage door, imported from the United States and paid for in dollars, was introduced to El Grullo in 1995. Similarly, some local nonmigrants also desire foreign goods. A girl from a small town north of San Miguel wanted hardwood flooring, which she had seen on television and in photographs of her cousins' homes in the United States. Relatives in Los Angeles purchased hardwood flooring at Home Depot and drove it 1,500 miles in the back of a truck to her house in Jalisco. The symbolic value of the hardwood floor exceeds the time, money, and energy spent getting it to her. It essentially allows a youth "stuck" in a pueblo to join remittance space and remain connected to her migrating family members.[30] Local businesses are now importing Italian floor tiles and modern bathroom fixtures for both migrants and non migrant families.

National and global companies also see opportunities in this emerging remittance construction market. Construrama, a branch of Cemex, Mexico's largest cement company, franchises local construction businesses. Cemex thus controls prices and competes with local vendors. Home Depot recently opened branches in Guadalajara, and Famsa, a Mexican furniture company, opened branches in the United States in 2000. Migrants may buy a refrigerator in Texas for pick up in Guadalajara. Although residents of San Miguel would have to drive four hours to get to Guadalajara, it may become worthwhile

if the prices are much lower there than in local businesses.

Remitting is a complex system, and global companies are strategizing about how to formalize the remitting process. Rather than bring uninsured money home in the back pockets of blue jeans (where it is easily and often stolen in airports or bus stations), Cemex allows migrants to open a "materials as capital" bank account. Migrants may deposit money in Cemex branches in the United States, and family members may withdraw construction supplies from Cemex franchises in Mexico. This transaction mimics remittance wire transaction services spearheaded by Western Union; it allows migrants to control how their money is spent and to avoid wire-transaction fees; and it makes it possible for companies to control where a family spends its money in Mexico. Famsa offers a similar service for furniture.

In turn, the Mexican government has become involved in the remittance house and the construction industry. *Vivienda* is the most recent in a series of programs that President Vicente Fox initiated during his presidency. The programs are geared toward assisting paisanos in the United States who want to build homes in Mexico. The federal and local government will subsidize either acquiring a house or remodeling one that is deteriorating.[31] This program is vast and involves many strategies. Mainly, it allows the government to create alliances with manufacturers (part of the government's portion of the cost is paid in materials and labor) and gives them some control over how remittances are spent. The program helps "populations with the scarcest resources" that are forced to "informal squatting" in "substandard housing." In Mexico, where almost half the country lives in poverty and almost 15 percent in extreme poverty, the government is very interested in having the poor pay for what would otherwise be the government's responsibility.[32]

Local municipal governments are also changing their land policies. Land in San Miguel is starting to appreciate in response to the quality of houses being built there. This once sleepy subsistence farming community is becoming a *pueblo de descansa*, or retirement community, for returning migrants and their parents. To collect taxes, the municipal government recently pressured locals to register their houses; 65 percent of the houses are currently registered in the *municipio*.[33]

The expansion of the local construction industry and the increasing competition between global companies and local markets is not unique to rural Jalisco—it is one of the defining factors of globalization. However, the region's dependence on remittances renders it particularly vulnerable not only to global market shifts but also to migration trends and individual remitters' whims. Ignacio Robles Pelayo, owner of a local business franchised by Cemex, admits, "Without migration I don't know how we would survive. We sell the most cement and bricks and windows in December when [the norteños] all come home for Christmas and make improvements to their houses."[34]

Figure 13. These two kitchens are adjacent in the Robles mother's house. The "old" kitchen, on the left, was rebuilt with modern materials. The new kitchen, on the right, remains unused, leaving the cabinets, microwave and oven in impeccable condition. Photograph by author.

The Remittance House Experienced

The spaces of the remittance house and the structural changes in local construction industries and building traditions influence daily life of migrant families. Some families, for whom migration has been a way of life for several decades, have houses that demonstrate a wide spectrum of construction techniques and reflect local experimentation and innovation. In these families individuals learn over time to better control the construction process. This learning curve can be explored through the building history of the Robles family of San Miguel.[35]

The migration history of the Robles family echoes the experience of many of the family's neighbors. Twelve Robles children grew up in a two-room adobe house with no running water or

electricity; their house was located in a remote rancho connected to San Miguel by eighteen kilometers of unpaved road. Even after the eventual move to San Miguel, the family could not escape severe poverty. In 1970, Raúl and Sergio (the two eldest sons, eighteen and seventeen years old respectively) illegally migrated to the United States to pick peaches, wash dishes, and muck out stables. Ultimately, all but one of the family's twelve children left for the north. After eighteen years of repeated migration between California and Jalisco, the children had saved enough money to build new houses in San Miguel. They lived through deportations, illegal border crossings, and humiliating work experiences.

Today, the Robles family boasts six remittance houses built during the last twenty years; the houses line the main entrance of San Miguel. Since 1988, the Robles brothers (principally Sergio and Raúl) have spent nineteen years renovating their mother's house. When the brothers started this project, the house consisted of two old adobe rooms, built at the turn of the last century, and a separate two-room addition built by their father with pesos over the course of twenty years. The brothers tore down the old adobe kitchen and rebuilt it in fired brick. Next, they added a second story to the father's addition. Then they added a new kitchen adjacent to the old kitchen, equipped it with modern appliances, demolished the corrals, stables, and trees in the yard in between the two units, and connected them with a large living room and new roof (Figure 13). By 2007, they preserved the form of the rest of the old adobe house, but rebuilt it using fired brick, added a modern bathroom, and built a two-car garage (Figure 14). The Robles brothers learned about remittance building through this long, extended process. By the fourth bathroom they knew who to contract, what systems were needed to get running water, and how much the bathroom would cost.

However, the spaces are not used as intended. The mother, for whom this eight-bedroom house was built, uses her old kitchen and sleeps in her old bedroom. Sergio remarked, "We just finished her new bedroom and bathroom which was really expensive. We brought state of the art equipment, safety rails, for the bathroom wall so she doesn't fall when showering, but she won't use it."[36] Indeed, most spaces in the house are fully furnished but not used except for the living room, where Ms. Robles prominently displays photographs of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, most of whom live in the United States. During Christmas, her children and their growing families reunite in San Miguel; even then, there is little use for the mother's house because several have built their own remittance houses.

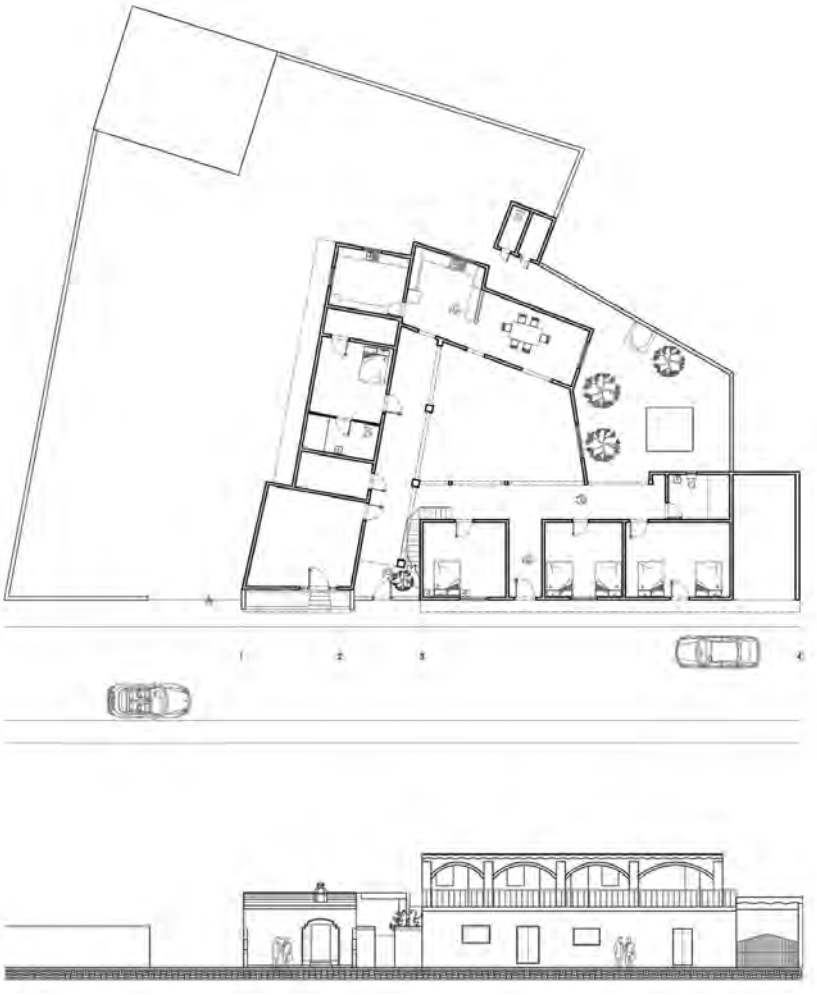

Figure 14. Plan and elevation of the Robles mother's remittance house. Note the awkwardly shaped living room just off the street, the two adjacent kitchens in the rear left corner, multiple bedrooms, two indoor bathrooms, and two outdoor bathrooms. Courtesy of Job Daniel Robles Robles.

In the early 1990s, while the mother's house was being remodeled, two other sons—Julián and Abel—built their two-bedroom houses. With limited resources and little knowledge of construction, they imported to San Miguel the trappings of U.S. suburbia, bringing drive-in

Figure 15. Julian Robles' house is one of the first remittance houses built by the Robles brothers. Notice the two-car garage, thin strip of grass, ornamental pitched roof, and fence. The yard and fence create distance; peso-houses tend to meet the sidewalk or street directly. Photograph by author.

garages, narrow front lawns, and pitched roofs. As a result of improper construction, Abel's half-pitched roof is waterlogged, and his family fears it may collapse. Meanwhile, they battle allergies caused by mold growing on saturated building materials. For both brothers, the houses are not as they imagined they would be when they were saving money in California to build in Mexico. Julián built a home with a big living room, a dining room, two bedrooms, and a double garage for his imagined family (Figure 15). But unwed and childless, he does not spend much time at his new home. He sleeps in the bedroom and eats elsewhere—in the field or at his mother's house.

Both houses need major repairs that the brothers cannot afford because they no longer migrate between Mexico and California. Abel and Julián earn pesos from farming; the average is about eight dollars a day, not enough to buy one bag of cement. However, without the papers to return to the United States legally, going back would involve hardships including risking their lives in the Sonoran and Chihuahuan desert. Rather than living apart from their families and working for a boss, they elect to till their own fields.

Sergio and Raúl benefited from their involvement in the construction of remittance houses for their mother, Abel, and Julián. In the mid 1990s, Sergio and Raúl began construction using architectural plans and architects. Sergio's extravagant home, the only freestanding house in town, is one of the most admired *casa de norteños* in the region. The drive-through garage, entry drive lined with palm trees, and symmetrical doric columns almost exactly replicate a house design from the mail-order catalogue known as Home Design Services Inc., a company located in Miami, Florida (Figure 16). Sergio was taken by a photograph with a caption that read, "Alluring Arches Attract Attention" (Figure 17). However, the plan of his house departs from the model house type and thus reveals critical distinctions between lifestyles in suburbs in the United States and rural Mexico. Sergio omitted the attic floor. "What would I use an attic for?" he asked.[37] He also commissioned a room-size safe in the master bathroom. The thick walls keep all his valuables protected; he lives in the United States eleven months a year.

Raúl Robles also used an architect-designed plan for his remittance house. His plot, sandwiched between two other courtyard wall houses, was not wide enough to allow the house to directly face the street. To maintain the original design of the façade, he rotated the house 45 degrees, creating a triangular front yard and a few oddly shaped rooms (Figure 18).

Both brothers use ornamentation and detail to bring the experience of an American suburban home to rural Mexico. Cheery "Welcome Home" doormats dress up their front stairs, and wood furniture, which they carried across the border, create a country aesthetic. Sergio planted his

front yard to mimic the illustration in the Home Design Services catalogue, and *Homelife* magazines are on display in his house. Both brothers equipped their remittance houses with modern light switches, stereo systems, and large televisions. These objects create material connections to U.S. prosperity and provide fodder for local discourse about the details of modern house design as well as the luxuries of migration.

Although Sergio only paid $600 for his plan, his rough estimate for building the house was $250,000: "I am not sure how much I spent, I sent all the money to my brother and he bought everything."[38] His house cost more money than any other building in town, including the church, and is more than four times the cost of his two other brothers' more modest remittance houses.

Both Sergio and Raúl were able to build such extravagant houses because they are no longer menial laborers. They now own two successful carpentry businesses in the United States. Furthermore, because both brothers were granted citizenship in the 1986 amnesty program, they may travel safely from California to Jalisco to tend to their houses.

Despite the convincing appearance of the Robles brothers' houses, their success is ambivalent. The brothers, who maintain houses in California and Jalisco, are confronted with the expectations of their children. Born in the United States, they expect an American standard of living and world of opportunity in both places. The brothers work for eleven months out of the year to meet these demands while their beautiful homes in Jalisco stand empty. The choice is clear: to live in a remittance house year-round means to lose the ability to maintain it.

Before winning citizenship in the amnesty program, Raúl had been deported multiple times, losing all his money and belongings each time. He almost lost the finger he used to hold open the trunk of a car when he illegally crossed the border. He washed plates in restaurants and conducted hard labor before he landed a job in the same carpentry factory as his brother Sergio. All those trials and more happened before he could become the owner of a small carpentry business like his brother Sergio. His life, full of humiliating and dangerous circumstances, has been systematically invested in creating a remittance house. The rewarding walls of this Mexican home might remind him of his struggles, yet the young and eager men and women of San Miguel see the house and imagine success in America rather than hardship. Beautiful and harmonious representations often hide the physical sweat involved in the production of space.[39] For many youth in

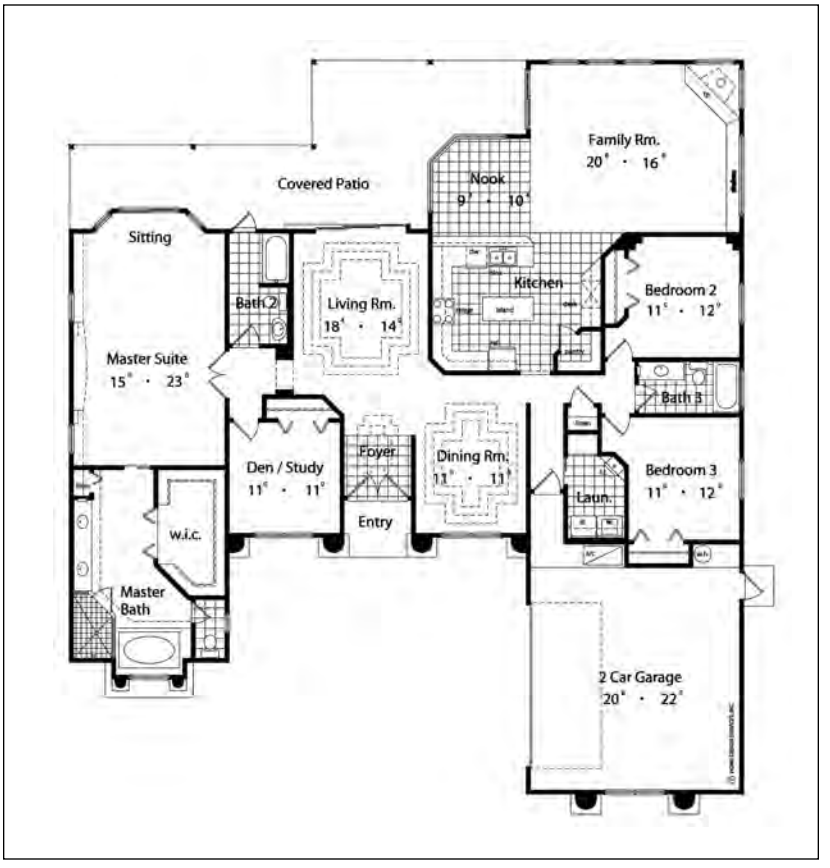

Figure 16. Sergio Robles purchased this plan from Home Design Services Inc. in Florida for construction in San Miguel, Jalisco. Copyright Home Design Services, Inc.

Figure 17. The "alluring arches" of the house in this photograph captured the attention of Sergio Robles, who built an exact replica of the house, including the plantings illustrated in the front yard. Photograph by author.

Figure 18. Raul Robles's house is not perpendicular to the street because his chosen model house plan was too wide for his lot. Photograph by author.

San Miguel, the remittance house reinforces the desire to cross the United States–Mexico border, overriding the difficult conditions of crossing the border and the insecurity they will inevitably have to contend with when they get there.

The Remittance Development Model: Distance Built in to Emigrant Communities

The ubiquitous brightly colored façades of remittance houses contrasted against the backdrop of Jalisco's farming communities provide evidence of the increasing dominance of migrants' remittances as drivers of change in rural Mexico. The state's reliance on entrepreneurial individuals as economic engines in rural Mexico constitutes the basis for what could be called a "remittance development model." In this model, the state plays an increasingly marginal role in rural development, while migrants claim the mantle of civic benefactor with its attendant rewards, risks, and responsibilities. This relationship is formalized by federal programs like "3x1," which matches migrants' funding with municipal, state, and federal dollars for public and infrastructure projects.[40] While remittance houses are generally built informally with private funding, they are emblematic of the shifting realities underpinning rural Mexican society.

Remittance houses do more than signify a transition to a fundamentally different process of development; they also provide insight to the nature of the remittance development model. Where state-financed development is strategic and normative in its orientation, development driven by rural migrants is often tactical and based on personal aspirations. Migrants are reacting to local conditions, driven by necessity or ambition, or motivated by familial and civic pride. This orientation to the personal and local is evident in the morphology and appearance of remittance houses, which migrants distinguish by using the best available materials and by emulating the latest styles of U.S. residences.

More important than the distinct types of development associated with remittances is the evident distance between the aspirations and realities of migration and remitting. Migrants, who set out on their journeys to the North, are filled with hopes for better lives and self-sufficiency; they quickly learn the risks and uncertainties associated with the dangerous crossing and the lack of legal status in the United States. They cannot depend on state services such as police protection or health care. The condition of remittance building projects reveals the uncertain logic of migration. Many dream houses are never realized—some are left unfinished, while others appear complete but lack adequate electricity, ventilation, or plumbing. Others are finished but are abandoned and left to fall into disrepair. There are a variety of reasons for this situation. Families in Jalisco who manage emigrants' remittance investments might squander the money or use it for an emergency. Remittance flows stop when a migrant dies, becomes ill, loses his or her job, assumes more responsibility toward those near to him or her in the United States, or acquires an addiction. Remittance flows also stop when a migrant moves back to Mexico. Scores of houses strewn across the landscape in rural Jalisco expose the discontinuity between the remittance house as imagined and the remittance house as built. Distance is literally built in to the remittance house through its production (Figure 19).

Just as the distance between a migrant and his or her home town is implicit in the remitting process, the state's reliance on migrants is corre-

lated with a general lack of support for migrants and their families. Successful migration and remitting does not guarantee a happy or peaceful retirement for those who return. The Mexican state sporadically and unreliably provides meager assistance to the elderly through DIF, a social program run by the federal government. However, it does not provide retirement benefits or guarantee social security. As a result, some or all of the family members must stay in the United States to continue remitting—fundamentally redefining the nature of "home" by embedding persistent geographic distance into daily life even after the initial goals of remitting have been achieved. Señor Cura, a priest in a small rural town undergoing dramatic change due to emigration, observes, "People feel the *frontera*, the distance between their families. Some return from the north and cry to me in private because they now have better resources, they finally have cars, but they miss their family, their father, and mother."[41]

The current economic crisis has exposed the dangers of this model. Since 2006 remittances have declined. According to data from the National Survey of Household Income and Spending in Mexico, between 2006 and 2008 over 250,000 families that previously received remittances from family members abroad now do without. The Inter-American Development Bank reports that in 2007 a reduction in remittances left at least two million people without the financial help they once received. Many families still receive remittances, but the amount is less than before and not enough for even minor construction. *La Jornada*, a Mexican newspaper reports, "Less money from migrants equals a fall in consumption in many regions of the country and affects the albañiles that build houses for the migrants." The reporter also asks, "What happens when an albañil loses his work in the U.S.? Well, it is probable that four or five albañiles lose their work in Mexico. The fall in remittances, according to the experts, has affected overall the Mexicans who work in construction, a branch seriously affected by the economic crisis of our northern neighbors."[42]

Figure 19. These haunting columns await further investment. According to local knowledge, they have remained unaltered for several years. Photograph by author.

Risks are not borne by migrants alone. Geographic distance and fragmentation also affect families and communities. Decaying vacant houses, which disrupt the lived fabric of the street, are a liability for locals because thieves have learned that the houses are often full of new and expensive goods. Houses are also a burden for families who have sacrificed everything to achieve them, cannot afford to live in or maintain them, but do not want to abandon them completely. The spaces of these houses also change social norms and customs: the new settings tend to isolate migrant families behind yards and fences and create animosity among a community of people by disrupting their common bond. Furthermore, the remittance house creates inequalities between those who emigrate and those who never leave Mexico.

Despite these issues, remittances have created beneficial opportunities for individuals in small towns. In some migrant families, daughters and sons from rural villages are attending professional schools in Mexico, funded by a parent's wages in the United States. Remittances result in a changing social status, reflect self-determination, and allow some families to enjoy meat and buy medicine. New amenities, such as the washer and dryer, ease chores for women. The new houses also instill hope in emigrant families

that one day the whole family will live in them together.

Migration and remitting have now transcended economic necessity to become self-sustaining cultural norms. For many eighteen-year-old boys, migration to the United States is an initiation into manhood, a rite of passage, the next logical step due to the remittance spaces they have known intimately throughout their youth. According to Señor Cura, "Now [migration] is more of a question of ideology than work and money. The United States is superman. The clothes are better, the houses are better, the money is better. The people around me, when I was growing up all had those things. I watched Walt Disney, Superman, and it wasn't the reality that I lived."[43] Even those Mexicans who have never left their home towns grow up in remittance spaces where they are influenced by popular culture and migration.

For all these reasons, emigrants from rural Mexico struggle with ambivalence in their journeys to support their families and improve their communities. On the one hand, migration and remitting provides a newfound capacity for self-determination—an example of globalization "from below" that empowers a rising class. On the other, the building of a remittance house implicates the migrant in a new status quo that exacts a heavy toll. This ambiguity and ambivalence is evident in the very houses migrants build. Crystallizing their contradictions, the remittance house demonstrates both migrants' successes and their uncertain future.

NOTES

1. Transnational building practices refer not only to migrants' private homes but also public migrant-sponsored projects. Here, I refer to transnational building practices initiated "from below" as opposed to the actions and practices of corporate builders or international architects who build across borders. See Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1998), for a discussion of migration from below.

2. "Immigrants Rehabilitate Europe with Our Money," *New York Times,* September 21, 1913, magazine section, SM7.

3. Although the remittance house has received scant attention in scholarship, newspapers and popular magazines have published many stories about these trends. As early as 1984 the *New York Times* was publishing reports on Turkish migrants in Germany remitting to Turkey. See "Germany's Guest Workers," *New York Times,* August 19, 1984, adapted from *The Crowded Earth* by Pranay Gupte (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984). For information about remittance flows in several countries, see Jason DeParle, "A Good Provider is One Who Leaves," *New York Times,* April 22, 2007. For scholarly work that addresses migrant housing in Portugal, see Roselyne de Villanova, Carolina Leite, and Isabel Raposo, *Casas de Sonhos: Emigrantes Construtores no Norte de Portugal* [Houses of Dreams: Emigrants Building in Northern Portugal] (Lisboa: Edições Salamandra, 1994); this book is published in Portuguese and French.

4. Remittance houses need not be associated only with migration across international boundaries. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, African Americans sent money from large U.S. cities to families in the Deep South to build their dream houses. My thanks to the anonymous peer reviewer who offered this comparison.

5. Remittances are distinct from other capital flows between countries, such as direct foreign investment or international aid, insofar as they consist of what sociologist Alejandro Portes calls sending "from below" by immigrant workers. See Alejandro Portes, "Conclusion: Towards a New World—The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (March 1999): 463–77.

6. According to the Bank of Mexico, remittances grew yearly until 2007, when they declined by approximately 3.6 percent in response to the global economic crisis that began in that year. For more information about how the recession is affecting remittances, visit the Bank of Mexico at http://www.banxico.org.mx/sitioingles/index.html (accessed July 2008).

7. I confirmed the existence of remittance houses in twenty-three towns I visited in Jalisco. I saw what appeared to be remittance houses in the states of Guanajuato, Estado de Mexico, Oaxaca, Michoacán, and Zacatecas. Dr. Catherine Rose Ettinger and Dr. Salvador García Espinos at La Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo are studying the impact of remittances on housing in Michoacán. See also Álavaro Sán-

chez Crispin and Salvador García Espinosa, "Impacto de las remesas sobre el recurso turistico de la imagen urbana en localidades de la Sierra Purhépecha y ribera del lago de Pátzcuaro, México," *Boletín del Insituto de Geografía*, no. 65 (2008): 102–17, available from www.igeograf.unam.mx/instituto/publicaciones/boletin/bol65_08.html (accessed December 2009).

8. Research institutes such as the Pew Hispanic Center, as well as multinational banks such as the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, aggressively investigate how migrant remittances influence the U.S. and Mexican economies and local development in Mexico. The Inter-American Development Bank published the first state-by-state analysis of U.S. remittances to Latin American in 2004. The report links remittances from a specific state in the United States to a specific state in Mexico. Redro De Vasconcelos, "Sending Money Home: Remittances from Latin America to the U.S.," *Inter-American Development Bank* [cited November 17, 2004], available from www.iadb.org. Economists Ed Taylor and Douglas Massey use quantitative methods to accrue information about remittances as a potential tool for development in impoverished rural areas. See Ed Taylor, "The New Economics of Labour Migration and the Role of Remittances in the Migration Process," *International Migration* 37, no. 1 (March 1999): 63–88; Douglas Massey and Emilio Parrado, "Migradollars: The Remittances and Savings of Mexican Migrants to the USA," *Population Research and Policy Review* 13, no. 1 (March 1994): 3–30. For migrants as agents of cultural change in rural Mexico in an age of globalization, see Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration to the U.S.: Family Relations in a Transnational Migrant Circuit" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1989). For the social and political consequences of migration for both sending and receiving communities as citizenship is extended across borders, see Robert Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Michael Peter Smith, *Citizenship Across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2008).

9. Her in-depth study discusses the effect of migration on an indigenous community in the state of Michoacán, and the meaning that building homes holds for individuals, families, and the community as a whole. See Peri Fletcher, *La Casa de Mis Suenos* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999).

10. Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially chapters one and five.

11. Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*.

12. The material implications of migrant disinvestment in American immigrant neighborhoods linked to the remittance house is yet to be studied. See Anthony King, *The Bungalow: the Production of Global Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), for a discussion of British migration to India and the impact on the vernacular Indian house.

13. Jeffery Cohen argues that remittances contribute to the replacement of agriculture as a way of life by "migration as a way of life." Jeffery Cohen, *The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), especially chapters one and three.

14. For discussion of early migration to the western states of Mexico, see Douglas Massey, et al., *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

15. See INEGI, Mexico's national geographic institute, for more information about rural demographics and migration trends, at http://www.inegi.org.mx. Also note that some migrant remitting communities in Jalisco, especially in the region of Los Altos, date back further than San Miguel, while others are more recent.

16. Whereas in 1990 80 percent of Mexican emigrants were male, by 2006 over 40 percent of Mexican migrants in the United States were female. See Jeanne Batalova, "Mexican-Born Persons in the U.S. Civilian Labor Force," *Migration Policy Institute* no. 14 (November 2006), available from www.migrationinformation.org.

17. Jorge Martinez, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, July 2007. Also see Mariana Yampolsky, *The Traditional Architecture of Mexico* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

18. For a basic history of Mexico, see Enrique Krauze, *The Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810–1996* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

19. The term "norteño" is used in this region to connote a migrant, someone from the pueblo that goes north. It is not used to refer to an American from the north.

20. A national study estimates that 80 percent of remittances are used as general family income and that 16 percent are used to remodel homes. See M. Gamboa, *Informe bimestral septiembre-octubre de Nacional Financiera* (Mexico City: Nacional Financiera, 2001). However, these figures dramatically contradict the findings of Álavaro Sánchez Crispin and Salvador García Espinosa in Michoacán, where a higher percentage of remittances are used for home construction. In my case studies, more than 16 percent of family remittances were spent on the construction industry. Too little regional research has been conducted to understand the distribution of these percentages throughout Mexico.

21. See Fletcher, *La Casa de Mis Suenos*, for a discussion of women's use of the interior of new houses.

22. Hugo Galindo, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, March 2008.

23. See Paul Groth, "Lot, Yard, and Garden: American Distinctions," *Landscape* 30, no. 3 (1990): 29–35, for a historical genealogy of the terms lot, yard, and garden.

24. Don Ortíz, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, October 2007.

25. Gustavo Chávez, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, January 2008.

26. Rodulfo Sahagún Morales, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, January 2008.

27. José López, interview with author, Jalisco, March 2008.

28. Hugo Galindo, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, April 2008.

29. José López, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, December 2007.

30. Barba family, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, February 2009.

31. For information on this program, see the SEDESOL (Secretary for Social Development) Web site at http://sedesol2006.sedesol.gob.mx/programas/vivah.htm.

32. Poverty rates are hard to identify and are defined differently by institutions and government agencies. The American Central Intelligence Agency's statistics of extreme poverty rely on food-based definitions of poverty; more general poverty statistics rely on assets. Information available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html.

33. San Miguel's records are kept in the Public Works department of El Limon's City Hall. El Limon is the cabecera, or county seat for the municipality. This figure is based on available records.

34. Ignacio Robles Pelayo, interview with author, Jalisco, December 2008.

35. Several interviews with the Robles family occurred between the months October 2007 and August 2008.

36. Sergio Robles, interview with author, Jalisco, Mexico, February 2008.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. See Don Mitchell, *Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), for a discussion of harmonious representations of workers' landscapes.

40. For information on "3x1," visit Secrataría de Desarrollo Social, available at http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/index/index.php?sec=801866&pag=1. For a discussion of the "remittance development model" see Sarah Lynn Lopez, "Migrant Remittances and the Mexican State: An Emergent Transnational Development Model?" (University of California, Berkeley: Institute for the Study of Social Change, July 2009), available at http://escholarship.org/uc/item/58k8g8zm.

41. Padre Manuel Vazquez Rubio, interview with author, Michoacán, Jalisco, August 2008.

42. Author unknown, "Caen las remesas, por culpa de la recession en EU, dice el gobierno mexicano," *La Jornada*, available at http://migracion.jornada.com.mx. Translation by author.

43. Padre Manuel Vazquez Rubio, interview with author, Michoacán, Jalisco, August 2008.