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MEXICAN REMITTANCE ARCHITECTURE

BUILDING NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE SPACES OF MIGRATION

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On United flight 1066 from Mexico City to Newark, I sat next to a Mexican migrant on his way back to work. Based in Chester, Pennsylvania, Aurelio had been working for one year at Wawa, a chain of convenience store/gas stations, on a work visa. His fellow employees are Mexican nationals—the crew travels from Wawa to Wawa throughout the New England region to tend to the landscaping around the stores and conduct site maintenance. Aurelio had booked a last-minute flight to Mexico City that cost him $800 because his six-month-old baby was gravely ill. In addition to his flight, he needed to pay for three days of hospital care without insurance. Focusing on his return, he explained that Wawa was a good company that "even gave him $300 or $400 for his initial flight out to the Northeast."[1]

This anecdote illustrates transnational subjectivity in a context of economic and state retrenchment from social welfare on both sides of the US-Mexico border. Highlighting the US company's benevolence, Aurelio understood the costs associated with his familial tragedy as his burden to bear; they were costs externalized by his employer, whose employment agreement with him required his prolonged geographic distance from immediate family. His wage labor is of course beneficial to both him and his employer (as has been true for many Mexican migrants since at least the 1920s); as Aurelio explained, "At Wawa, I make in one hour what I would make in one day in Mexico."[2] However, the employee, when faced with unexpected circumstances, is required to collapse

the distance between work and home. This means making hard choices: deplete one's savings and incur debt (and for those who are undocumented migrants, risk incarceration or job loss upon reentry to the United States) or remain far away from those who need you most, denying both familial duties and personal needs. In this way, transnational labor "from below" is defined by great risk.[3]

The inability to support a family on Mexican wages, combined with a great disparity in earning potentials in the United States versus Mexico, contributes to the production of a migratory labor population that funnels remittance dollars south. In 2010, Mexico received an estimated $22 billion in workers' remittances.[4] This financial flow has immediate spatial implications, such as financing a construction boom in rural Mexico that affects daily life for migrants and nonmigrants alike. The remittance landscape, comprising built elements and architecture financed by foreign capital from below, is a volatile unfolding terrain marked by aspiration and risk, vision and disappointment, realization and postponement.[5] The remittance landscape is also an incomplete or unsuccessful bulwark against the myriad uncertainties that drive migrants like Aurelio to take a gardening job twenty-five hundred miles from home. Migrants finance building projects from a distance, envisioning projects as future havens, financial investments, and a means toward familial mobility. While some financially successful migrants are able to enjoy the rewards of years of hard work, in many cases migrant building projects fail to materialize as planned. Decay, abandonment, and construction mistakes mark façades, plans, and infrastructural designs.

This chapter explores the built-environment implications of what Wendy Brown calls "neoliberal rationality" in rural Mexico through the lens of the remittance landscape. While Brown's intent is to explore the political implications of neoliberal rationality for liberal democracy—a rationality based in the extending and disseminating of market values to all institutions and social action, such that decisions once wedded to social, ethical, or democratic values are refracted through a cost-benefit analysis—this chapter explores the spatial and subjective implications of neoliberal rationality in the context of migration. It is this rationality that helps explain the term "economic migrant," used frequently to categorize Mexican nationals who emigrate as persons making fundamental (and often life-threatening) decisions based on strategic economic calculi, as "entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life."[6] This subsumes the causes and consequences of migration into a predetermined and extremely limited view of migration as a decision made by "the poor" to seek higher ground, to move to so-called First World countries in search of a better life. Economic opportunities are sought by migrants, but other historical, social, cultural, and political factors, as well as rising violence in Mexico, complicate the context of emigration.

The question then becomes, To what extent does a neoliberal rationality produce neoliberal subjects, who are not only measured by but also understand themselves in relation to their capacity for "self-care" or "the ability to provide for their own needs and [to] service their own ambitions"?[7] Millions of Mexican nationals view emigration as a strategy to take care of oneself and one's family, to actualize personal ambitions. In doing so, in "choosing" to emigrate, persons bear full responsibility for their actions, "no matter how severe the constraints."[8] Analyzing the production and use of remittance landscapes in rural Mexico as a means to view the costs of emigration exposes the complexities—and in many cases the injustices—of the palette or spectrum of choices migrants have available to them. For those who may attempt to achieve mobility by investing in homeplaces while living at a distance from community and family, they are in part "controlled through their freedom."[9] The freedom to emigrate in a neoliberal context places the burden of culpability on the emigrant (if and when things do not work out as planned) rather than on the government policies and practices that work against their success. The restructuring of the Mexican and US political economies since the 1970s and 1980s has contributed to the rise of remittances, which have surged since the early 2000s.[10] Focusing attention and analysis on what is built with this capital flow is a way to interrogate how a neoliberal rationality has shaped community life as well as individual choices and perceptions.

Indeed, governments around the world—especially those with the highest rates of remittances, such as India, China, the Philippines, and Mexico—laud remitting as evidence of migrants' prowess and commitment to the nation.[11] Some nation-states, such as the Philippines, even have government programs to facilitate both emigration and remitting. Yet, despite state rhetoric that espouses "migrant choice," remittances are symptomatic of governments' various "technologies of subjection," such as the regulation of citizenship to produce a flexible, low-wage labor pool or the reconceiving of citizenship along class lines.[12] As ideas of freedom and liberty are wedded to market potential and economic status, migrants who are excluded from formal citizenship or legal status in the United States, as well as those who may enjoy such status but face limited options for economic viability in their hometown in Mexico, turn to remitting as a potential way out of territorial state-sanctioned restrictions on their life-worlds and human potential.

The internalization of notions of self-responsibility are manifest in the "remittance house," which yields both great possibilities and great burdens for individuals and their families who view new homes as evidence of self-discipline and a strong work ethic. Architectural analysis of these homes and ethnographic research into their use and influence over individual and collective "spatial imaginations" reveal the importance of the home as a space of representation.

For an individual who is excluded from formal forms of citizenship and/or economic mobility in one or both countries, building a remittance house is a critical act of self-realization, not necessarily just a setting for domestic life.

Alongside the private realm of the remittance house, migrants also finance public or communal remittance architectures. Collective social organizations in the United States called hometown associations (HTAs) pool resources that are intended to build everything from public roads and infrastructure to retirement homes, libraries, cemeteries, and rodeo arenas. In 2001, the Mexican government began a formal program called Tres por Uno, or 3x1, which matches migrant contributions with municipal, state, and federal funds.[13] Combined remittance and state-funded public projects in Mexico help articulate the hinge between what Aihwa Ong calls "neoliberalism as exception and exception to neoliberalism," as they are spaces that open new forms of migrant solidarity and inclusion, and even possibilities of altering and reorganizing political structures, while also being paradigmatic sites of neoliberal rationality that extend the logic of a nation of atomized individuals responsible for their well-being into the public realm.[14] In this context, both migrants and Mexican government leaders view spending migrants' own dollars on Mexican infrastructure as normal and justified.

Focusing on a series of residential projects and one collectively (remittance) financed rodeo arena, this chapter identifies the architecture of remittance as a primary source of evidence that contributes to ethnographic research on transnational migration and diasporas. While anthropologists and sociologists research the social and cultural implications of remittances on family and community life, arguing that there is a "culture of remittance" and tracking the rise of "transnational civil societies," or migrant groups that implement social change in the public spheres of their hometowns via activism in host locations, this chapter connects social transformation to the building projects *through which* these cultural implications are often enacted.[15] It also engages architectural and urban histories on the relationship between migration, cities, and buildings by foregrounding the role and meaning of remittances and by turning attention to emigrant homelands as measures of transnational migration rather than spatial changes in migrants' places of arrival in the United States.[16] The production of remittance architecture in Mexico, or of an entire remittance landscape, is just one way ordinary architecture is changing due to globalization, pervasive "mediascapes," and related processes traversing distant locations.[17] However, it is important to identify remitting as a strategy through which built-environment change occurs; remitting, by definition, links two particular places through the action of a single individual, providing evidence of how geographically dispersed places are mutually constituted.

Examining the remittance landscape as a specific set of material projects

and processes reveals the extent to which building is a product of migration itself, one that in turn produces more migration. Individual residential projects are crystallizations of migrants' life stories and the macro political, social, economic, and historical forces that shape migration. Both informal (as seen through the remittance house) and formal (arising from migrant engagement with the Mexican state) remittance architectures contribute to the production of new landscapes in Mexico that further entrench a specifically neoliberal rationality. This entrenchment occurs through the *accretion* of remittance building projects over time, which uniquely shapes the social spaces of migration here (one point on the migration trajectory) and there (the second point on such a trajectory). This produces social worlds increasingly structured by the logic of remittance, a logic in which distance is normalized and incorporated into a way of life—*remitting as a way of life*—that manages separation, dispersion, fragmentation, and ambivalence on a daily basis.

Research in Jalisco, one of four Mexican states—alongside Michoacán, Guanajuato, and México—with the highest rates of remittances, illustrates the material and social consequences of remittance construction as a strategy.[18] The remittance projects examined here have largely been built in Jalisco since the 1980s, when political and economic change ignited a northward exodus of able-bodied men and women, especially men and women from Mexico's embattled agrarian sector. In the 1980s, fewer than 250,000 Mexicans settled in the United States each year, but by 2000 that number had increased to almost 500,000 a year; the size of the Mexican migrant population rose from 2.2 million to 9.4 million.[19]

The Remittance House as an *Auto-Retrato*

The remittance house, a product of personal and familial discipline, is fundamentally aspirational. Rather than rushing toward completion, migrants remit over a period of years, even decades, incrementally building a new house. Ongoing construction becomes a vehicle for constituting and reconstituting oneself amid an ever-changing milieu. Building is an enactment of future promise. Depending on one's circumstances—and if the project is ultimately never completed—the process of building itself may be the closest one can get to actually transforming the structural conditions of one's life in their hometown (plate 28).

For these reasons, the home's specific formal and aesthetic details assume great importance. The new house will nearly always have an articulated façade painted in bright colors, taking on unusual geometries, either literally or decoratively, and intensified with an eclectic mix of ornamental column capitals, trims, and embedded patterns. Contemporary elements combine with traditional Mexican construction techniques, craftsmanship, and colors to

FIGURE 13.1. One-of-a-kind, street-facing façade adjacent to an unadorned fired-brick side elevation in Jalisco, Mexico.

produce highly varied results. Purple, yellow, or fuchsia houses are complemented by turrets, water fountains, or decorative wooden crossbeams made out of concrete; a single façade may employ details that reference American, Greek, Gothic, Tudor, or neoclassical architectural styles. In this way, a stylistic postmodern pastiche has come to represent the spaces of migration. Often the house design can be traced to the specific job one performs in the United States.[20] Whether envisioned by a migrant-client, inspired by a home seen in the United States, or found in any one of a variety of trade magazines, the façade of a remittance home is, as noted by the artist Walterio Iraheta, an *auto-retrato* (self-portrait) of its maker.[21]

Beyond façades, the materiality of the building envelope is sometimes an indicator of where individuals lived while working in the United States. In Tepatitlán, a family who had lived for many years in Texas built a two-story, fired-brick remittance house that is clad in what appears to be wood siding but is actually ribbed and painted stucco on cement.[22] Their gable roofline conceals

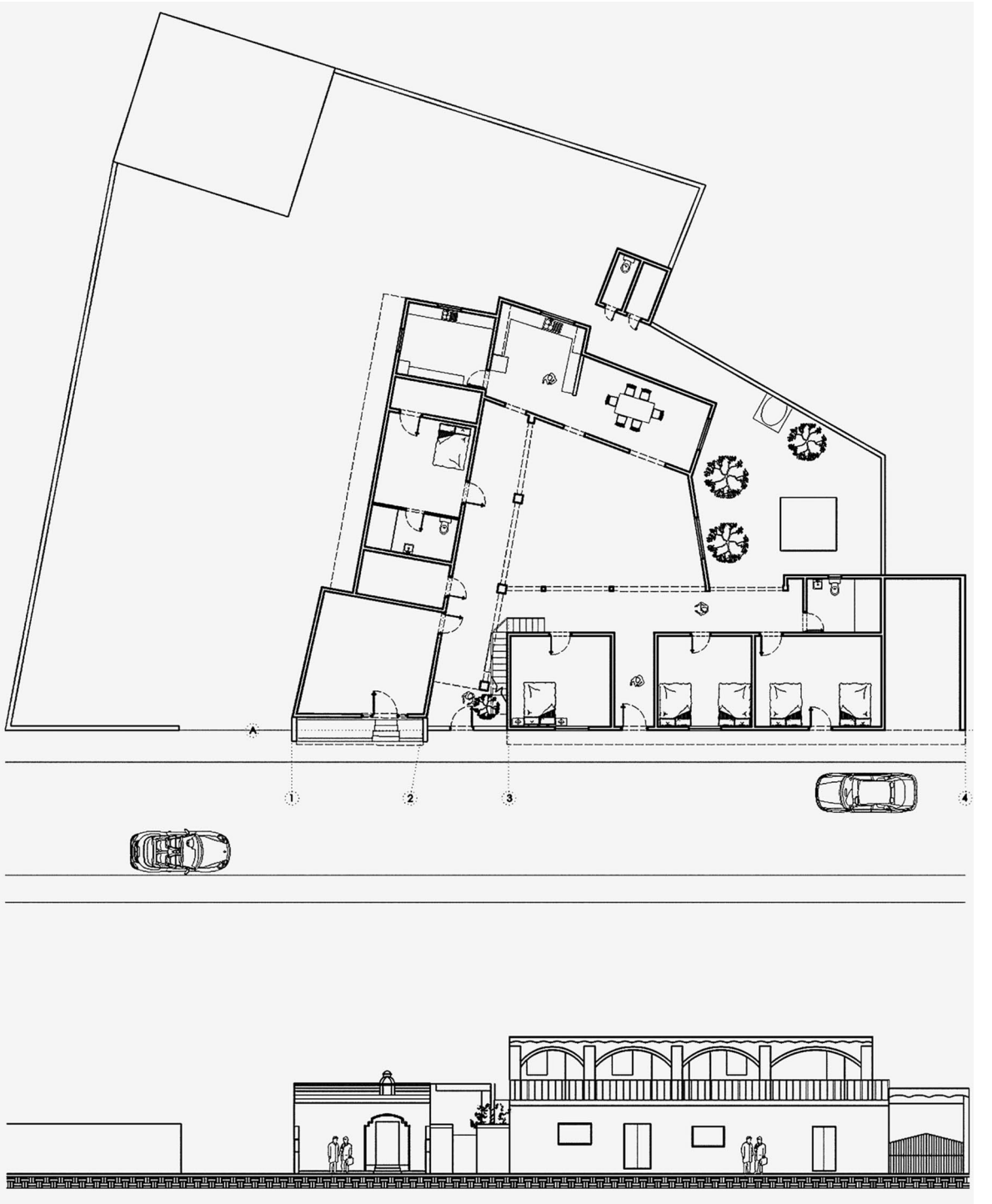

FIGURE 13.2. Ballooning floor plan of a remittance house in Jalisco, Mexico.

a flat roof but completes the image of a wood-framed house of the type commonly seen in the United States. The faux-wood cladding abruptly stops on the side of the house that faces the neighbors; unadorned brick anticipates a future when the neighbors will build an adjoining structure, as is customary in small-town residential architecture. In Jalostotitlán, a man who worked in Chicago for more than thirty years purposefully left his brick home unpainted, but it is varnished, connoting nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Chicago walk-ups.[23] In this way, a US regional specificity is mapped onto Jalisco's domestic architecture.

Spatially, migrants typically tear down old adobe houses, break from the continuous fabric of the traditional dwelling, reconfigure the courtyard plan, and start anew to distinguish migrant houses from their surroundings while remaining on their ancestral plot of land. In the central western states of Mexico, migrant pueblos are peppered with modern houses, which may have multiple stories, two-car garages, high ceilings, and floor plans straight out of US suburbia. These choices are linked to the complex temporality of the remittance house: building in Mexico is about the idea and possibility of returning to the familiar, but both the pueblos left behind and the migrants themselves are transformed by the spaces of migration.

Beyond formal characteristics, how these houses are used reveals a disjuncture between migrants' aspirational fantasies of a hometown domesticity and the experiences associated with the geographic fragmentation of one's extended family. In a small town in Jalisco, San Miguel de Hidalgo, the Robles brothers, who live in California, spent nineteen years renovating their mother's house. They transformed an old two-room adobe house, built in the 1900s, and a separate two-room addition, built by their father (with pesos) over the course of twenty years, into an eight-bedroom, two-story house with not one but two kitchens: the original kitchen was rebuilt with modern materials and separated by a party wall from the new kitchen, equipped with modern appliances.[24] Much to their dismay, their mother continues to use her old kitchen, as well as her old bedroom and bathroom, despite their lack of modern amenities. How the house is used reveals two overlapping homes. A home of long-standing rituals and habits is embedded within a newer home of experimentation and change; the brothers' imagined world is made concrete yet still unrealized.[25]

These homes, materially distinct from their surroundings, shape what Dell Upton calls the "spatial imagination" of those who live among them—imaginations shaped by representations of success achieved abroad.[26] In the small town of Vista Hermosa, a very successful migrant couple—once poor farmers in Jalisco and now rich farm managers in Napa Valley's vineyards—employed more than eighty people over a three-year period to build a mansion in their absence.[27] The electrician responsible for wiring this remittance house, a man

FIGURE 13.3. A husband and his son (*left*) work in a corner store in Oakland, California, while the wife and daughters (*right*) live in the family remittance house in Guanajuato, Mexico.

who struggled to fulfill his clients' desires to use modern appliances like those of the United States and to install circuit breakers modeled after US electrical standards (otherwise absent from houses in Vista), told me a story about bringing his son with him to work on the unoccupied house. The father and son sat at a plastic-covered dining room table. The dining room was part of an open floor plan with a three-story, high-domed ceiling overhead. European-style columns supporting the roof ringed the central space. Interior second- and third-floor balconies circled the central atrium, creating multiple vantage points. Imported Italian marble flooring, a plasma-screen TV, a statue of Venus, and an Austrian chandelier were defining interior finishes. In this setting, the electrician's son asked, "Papi, why can't we have a house like this?"[28] Telling me this, the electrician shook his head and his eyes lost focus. How could he explain? While the son, at age six, was old enough to recognize the radical differences between their one-story, concrete-block house, with its few amenities, and the migrants' mansion, he was not old enough to understand that his father would have to abandon him, his siblings, and his mother—and risk his life crossing the border—to have even a small chance at attaining a similar lifestyle for their family. In addition to symbols of success, remittance houses are symbols of rising inequality; they are part of the normalizing of economic distance among community members as they create new aspirations and perceived needs.

The remittance house embodies the potential for change in the lived world of migrants working in the shadow of the US economy. They are evidence of migrants' attempts to resolve a fundamental contradiction inherent to trans-

FIGURE 13.4. Free-standing house in Jalisco, Mexico. Varnished brick and serial columns suggest Chicago's industrial architecture.

national economies infused with a neoliberal rationality: that migrants are achieving economic mobility and viable livelihoods by living and working thousands of miles away from family and community. Migrants take great risks to realize this promise, building new homes in places they have called home, houses that stand in stark contrast to their overtly marginalized position in the United States. But for families that are fragmented across geographies, where one parent remits from the United States while the other raises children in Mexico, the house is a habitus that teaches youth how to become neoliberal subjects. The built environment of remittances is the material world where children learn about the sacrifices of everyday life associated with economic viability; sustained from afar, they prepare themselves for emigration and/or future familial fragmentation. For families that live together in the United States, the remittance house may stand abandoned for years, if not decades.

The social and psychological costs associated with the remittance home are offset by the extent to which the home is a space of representation where migrants can demonstrate success to neighbors and where they can articulate

specific stories about themselves. Antonio Rodríguez commissioned for the courtyard of his house a replica of the Statue of Liberty, with the face of his mother, to announce to a private audience in Mexico his identification with the United States; in contradistinction to others determining the boundaries of his belonging, Rodríguez makes his own claims.[29] Sergio Suarez built a hacienda-style estate on his ancestral land in Jalisco; it not only broadcasts his success in the United States but also shares it (he employees more than a dozen people to manage the property, all paid with dollars). According to Suarez, the "hacienda" is also intended to promote the value of Mexican traditions, including its Spanish-colonial past (plate 29).[30]

Formal Remittance Construction for Public Projects

Remittances have influenced so many aspects of social and political life that the Mexican state has aggressively engaged the spaces of migration. So-called remittance development, articulated in part as a strategy to alleviate poverty, has captured the attention of Mexican corporations like Cemex and government departments such as SEDESOL. Formed in 1996 as an outgrowth of similar efforts that coalesced in the late 1980s, SEDESOL was intended to create a sense of support and inclusion for civil society amid state retrenchment. Since the 1970s, with the end of Mexico's import substitution industrialization (ISI) policy and the destabilization of the social base related to the tight hold on the government maintained by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Mexico was primed for great economic and social change. Adam Morton illustrates how neoliberal policies in Mexico, which increasingly took hold in the decades after the 1970s, were rooted in restructuring state-civil relations and renegotiating state-business-labor relations such that specific projects were designed to harness social mobilization. SEDESOL, aimed at providing social services and alleviating poverty, is "successful in sustaining the passive revolution of neoliberalism."[31] This passivity, Morton argues, is linked to the ways that capitalism survives and state power is further entrenched through periods of crisis; as the Mexican state realigned its goals and strategies, social and political change was funneled through existing social and institutional forms. Newly formed bureaucracies were able to incorporate new social groups without "the expansion of mass control over politics."[32]

The remittance development discourse (maturing with the blossoming of the remittance landscape itself) is part of a larger ideological shift occurring in NGOs, government agencies, and the financial sector, all of which have come to view the poor as an asset.[33] From Washington, DC, to Mexico City, social workers, policy makers, bankers, and politicians are strategizing new ways to capture their "surplus" capital and "bank the unbanked"; their financial inclusion in global institutions is espoused as the democratization of development

itself. Sensitive to critiques of so-called development as a technology of the hegemonic West, the Mexican government and Mexican corporations frame their engagement as facilitators of visions driven by migrants who are the supposed beneficiaries of their proposed development projects. By supporting a "migrant-initiated" development policy, the government positions itself as merely amplifying what migrants are already doing.[34]

State discourse about 3x1's "best practices" reveals the government's vision for remittance-financed development. An estimated 95 percent of Mexico's remittances are spent on individual households, and government officials go to great lengths to drive home the importance of social contributions, with the hope that individual remitters will become town benefactors.[35] At a federation meeting in California, a migrant who wanted to learn about 3x1 asked, "I want to put a truck farm in Mexico, like there are here. It is what I have worked on for over twenty years. Will you help me with that? I have the experience but not the land. Will the government help me buy the land?" A representative of the government who works with migrants responded, "We are interested in social projects. If the project will help ten families, we are interested, but if it will only help yours then we are not. The idea is to spread the resources we have to as many people as possible."[36] The government is investing in as opposed to divesting itself of small rural localities, and by doing so they encourage *norteños* (the colloquial term used in central northwestern Mexico to describe migrants who go north), to assume new political and civic responsibilities and continue a legacy of visible engagement with the poor and rural sector without the government making any comprehensive economic or political commitments.

The government is also constructing the idea of a social good while at the same time stressing independence from the government. Official 3x1 guidelines announce that the program permits migrant civil society to change the conditions of their communities "without depending completely on the government. . . . Mexico has big business partners in the exterior: its migrants, who allow collective remittances to better the country."[37] It is migrants' sacrifice—"It is their personal money, we are aware that they don't have to do this and that their lives are hard in the United States"—that allows them to partner with the state.[38] As the state recasts migrants' roles, it also essentially institutionalizes emigration itself.

In the past, remittances have affected the development of Mexico's rural sector in positive ways. In the 1960s and 1970s, after the *bracero* program had ended, foreign capital allowed Mexican migrant farmers to save and buy seed, invest in cattle, or hire farmhands to work and till their land in their absence.[39] Remittances have also been invested in tractors and other modern farming equipment.[40] The anthropologist Peri Fletcher notes that in Pátzcuaro, a vil-

lage in the state of Michoacán, early investment in cattle with hard-earned dollars from migration to the United States created a more stable and successful class of farmers.[41]

Arguments are still made that remittances are stabilizing, and amid the confluence of emigration and national governmental policy that has further destabilized rural communities, migrants envision remittance-financed public projects as a way out of financial distress and a means toward revitalizing the communities they had left behind. However, the economic promise and the social, cultural, and political costs of building public projects are often little understood.

Analysis of the envisioning, construction, and use of a 3x1 remittance-financed rodeo arena in Lagunillas, an *ejido* (state-sanctioned agricultural collective) community of approximately nine hundred people, begins to illustrate these costs. Intended as an economic engine for development and as a site of norteño investment, migrant hometown associations in Los Angeles and Nevada funded through the 3x1 program a rodeo that repositions the town vis-à-vis the other rodeo arenas. Lagunillas is one of several villages in the region that are competing to attract large audiences who will turn a profit through ticket sales. More than profits, however, the remittance rodeo is producing a spectacle of remittance based on the commercialization of the *jaripeo* (bull-riding) tradition that is completely dependent on norteño dollars for survival. In part, state encroachment in rural localities has triggered a jump in the scale of rodeo production. Large formal rodeo arenas have resulted in disruption and discontent in hometowns through rivalry between and within hometowns, calling attention to regional struggles over community, identity, and economic vitality.

In Lagunillas, it was *ejidatarios* (members of ejidos) who had originally wanted to build a new rodeo facility.[42] Historically, after the Mexican Revolution of 1911, *campesinos* and *peones* took full ownership of corrals (pens for livestock) as newly formed ejidos were constructed out of abandoned hacienda grounds. Ejidos, envisioned by the state as the bedrock of a new family-farming sector in Mexico, were both revolutionary, in that they granted new social status to once-indebted servants, and strategic, in that they allowed the state to secure political allegiance from its rural constituents.[43] The teamwork required by ejidatarios to hold a jaripeo event reinforced the Mexican state's interest in the rise of the ejido as an autonomous and self-reliant agricultural unit. It also provided a venue for a critical cultural practice, contributing to constructions of "ranchero masculinity," a hegemonic configuration of gender practices that legitimize men's dominant and women's subordinate positions.[44] This is one of the paradigmatic readings of rural Mexico's patriarchal social order, and bull riding has assumed its symbolic weight.[45]

FIGURE 13.5. Young *jinete* (rider) risking life in seasonal performance in Jalisco, Mexico.

Ejidatarios in Lagunillas had talked about building a rodeo arena to replace their modest corral (an enclosed dirt lot) for fifteen years. Due to lack of funds and political consensus, their efforts to initiate the project repeatedly failed. Until 2003, Lagunillas was one of only four pueblos, out of a total of twenty-one in the municipality, too poor to build their own rodeo arena.[46]

Migrant investment supported by state funds triggered the realization of this aspiration. A new facility, built between 2003 and 2007, cost an estimated $500,000 (about sixteen times the amount it would cost to build an ordinary home in Lagunillas) and officially seats twenty-five hundred people. The concrete bleachers, supported by massive load-bearing walls and enclosed by ornamental metal and chain-link fences, tower over the surrounding landscape. This monumental and modern structure sharply contrasts with the cluster of dilapidated one-room public buildings, one-story adobe and concrete houses, and largely cobblestone and dirt streets that make up the town. Locals repeatedly referred to the rodeo as the most modern and accommodating in

the region, if not entire state of Jalisco (plate 30).[47] Jaripeo events are tightly scripted cultural performances that inscribe hierarchies through what Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman call "embodied place-making."[48] A procession leads attendees from the heart of the town to the arena. Once everyone is inside the stadium, elders from the village parade horses around the ring to the sound of brass trumpets played by the evening's first band. Announcers enter the arena to introduce the names and pedigrees of the *jinetes* (bull riders) and band. Professional bull riders sport full regalia—sombreros, fringed leather jackets and pants, spurs, vaquero shirts—presenting an image of impeccable ethics when kneeling before cheering crowds in the name of the Blessed Virgin. Pop-up microeconomies include the selling of food, as well as tequila, hats, and cotton candy, often locally produced. Hours later, young men jump onto a bull as it is released into the arena, hooking their spurs into the bull's ribs as they are violently flung from side to side. The evening ends with a twenty-person all-male musical band playing late into the night.

Whereas in the past the economic and cultural capital of small towns supported local events, contemporary jaripeos are transnational and commercialized affairs. One elder, Don Ignacio, remembers, "The old jaripeo was free, not about making money. Now it is *all business* [*puro negocio*]."[49] The "puro negocio" aspect of the event hinges on the new professionalization of the jinete, the bulls, the *banda*, and the beauty queens. Schools throughout Jalisco have been established to train jinetes. The jaripeo does not use villagers' livestock; special bulls are raised specifically for jaripeo events. Beauty queens crowned during the event are involved in a binational fundraiser that reaches from Lagunillas to Las Vegas. Popular bands advertise themselves to pueblos throughout Jalisco and beyond, traveling in large buses from event to event. The ejido is not an isolated place but part of a regional and binational network of villages and cities undergoing transformations visible in the jaripeo. In this networked remittance space, rodeo promoters and pueblos compete with one another for audiences and pesos in a region defined by scarce resources. The spectacle of remittance is also a moment when everybody is united in one place. The agricultural field surrounding the arena turns into a parking lot filled with people and cars from the "North." In this way, the jaripeo is a vehicle for a migration-based society to reorient itself to a market-oriented, entrepreneurial society dependent on emigration. Here, tradition is performed and consumed as identities, unmoored from the "village," manifested in multiple and distant localities.[50]

In Lagunillas, the jaripeo events have failed to generate capital for the town and have even indebted key migrants who are most invested in its success and continued use. In addition to economic challenges, migrants in Los Angeles and Las Vegas—each representing two different US hometown associations—

FIGURE 13.6. License plates of vehicles parked outside an arena in Jalisco, Mexico, document linked geographies as people return from several US states for the *jaripeo* (bull-riding event).

have endured bitter feuds over who has invested more money into the arena and whose queens should be crowned at the annual events. Meanwhile, the ejidatarios who manage the arena on a daily basis express a sense of disregard when it comes to critical decision-making processes about the design and future of the arena itself, since their contribution is not financial. And, finally, the people of Lagunillas (ejidatarios and migrants as well) are engaged in an ongoing fight with their municipality regarding who owns the rodeo project. 3x1 projects are technically owned by the state, but the arena was built on ejido land, which is communally owned by the townspeople of Lagunillas.[51]

This story about a migrant-driven development project in one small town is emblematic of remittance space generally—an aspirational world in which individual migrants risk their hard-earned money to transform the fortunes of their hometowns. Remittance-financed communal projects are evidence of

how the state channels migrant resources to "marginalized" communities to serve state goals (both material and political) with limited investment. In the case of the rodeo, the state did offer architectural expertise but no assistance with planning and economic development, which resulted in undue challenges for migrants and townspeople to solve on their own.

But the jaripeo also tells more nuanced stories about change in so-called rural communities. The jaripeo event, recalibrated toward local and distant market-driven competition, remaps the boundaries between social reproduction and production. What Nancy Fraser describes as "the solitary relations, affective dispositions and value horizons that underpin social cooperation" are learned in these communal settings, now visible to and at the service of global markets.[52] The rodeo arena is both a space for the construction of personal subjectivities and a performative space of representation where entire communities act out social roles called into question by these new relationships. Rather than riding bulls, manhood (and womanhood) is increasingly defined by one's capacity to produce and fund rodeo events. The quality and characteristics of relationships produced by hierarchical, intrafamilial, and neighborly forms of solidarity, and even paternalism, are replaced by another set of relationships based on social and economic status vis-à-vis the spaces of migration. Emergent rituals crystallize the loss of past relationships through the acting out of its forms.

The Built Environment of Neoliberal Subjectivities

The ubiquitous brightly colored façades of remittance houses set 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 a model of so-called development whereby the state supports and encourages migrants to assume the mantle of civic benefactor, with its attendant rewards, risks, and responsibilities.

Remittance construction does more than signify a transition to a fundamentally different process of so-called development; it also provides insight into how construction projects engender neoliberal rationality and what Fraser, in her treatise on the status of finance capitalism in the present age, calls an "institutionalized social order."[53] Whereas 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 and driven by necessity or ambition, or motivated by familial and civic pride. This orientation to the personal and local is most evident in the form and appearance of remittance houses, as idiosyncratic *auto-retratos*; however, it also drives the kinds of public projects in which migrants collectively invest.

Remitting's enormous power comes from its capacity to support new strategies, alter existing hierarchies, articulate the visions of migrants (who are often excluded from formal avenues of home ownership and development), and entrench ideologies of self-reliance and self-government amid existing inequitable political and economic systems. Migrants may realize the image of their dream, but its social dimensions are deferred. Meanwhile, the state formally incorporates migrants into development projects as they continue to neglect the economic and political viability of so-called rural localities. Participation in remitting as a strategy is predicated upon one's capacity to work; the able-bodied individuals who migrate are afforded little to no protection (in the form of a "social safety net") by the state when they return home encumbered by age and/or infirmities.[54] 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.

Remitting becomes a way of life, institutionalizing migration as the solution to rural (and often urban) poverty. Moving between places and sending money as a strategy for familial maintenance reconfigures what family and community life means. Individuals' roles in families—and presence in households—are replaced by dollars. Through this practice, physical and psychological distance from one's hometown is normalized, as are its attendant risks.

Ethnographies of remittance construction provide evidence of the discontinuities between what is envisioned and what is built, as well as the role that construction projects play in migrants' personal ambivalence about where they want to live, and when. Migrants build for a future. But the building itself cannot answer the question of when and if a migrant should return, and, as discussed above, its future maintenance may force a migrant to stay away longer than initially planned.

The new homes, the rodeo arena, and many other remittance projects are migrants' articulations of their own future and demonstrate ingenuity and creativity, but they do so through migrants' adherence to practices of self-discipline, competition, and great sacrifice; in communal projects, new forms of solidarity and collectives with political potential are created, but that creation occurs within a governmental framework that promotes self-governance without state protections or even (in some cases) rights. The remittance landscape is evidence of how neoliberal subjectivity, in addition to practices taking place in capital cities around the world, is perversely built in rural hinterlands as the very solution to and way out of migrant subjugation. Current governmental attitudes and policies toward migrants strip these landscapes of their potential to provide emigrant communities with much-needed, viable homes, as well as community services.

Notes

All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms unless an interviewee has specifically requested otherwise.

1. Aurelio, informal conversation with author, June 2017.

2. Aurelio, informal conversation with author, June 2017.

3. The term "transnational actors from below" identifies migrants who are working low-wage jobs and who send home part of their pay, which often sustains extended family in their home country. See Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998).

4. Remittances are defined by the World Bank as the portion of international migrant workers' earnings sent back to family members in their countries of origin. For extensive research and graphics on current remittance flows, see the "Global Remittances Guide," Migration Policy Institute, accessed June 23, 2019, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/global-remittances-guide.

5. What I call the "remittance landscape" in Mexico exists across emigrant nations. See Sarah Lopez, *The Remittance Landscape: Spaces of Migration in Rural Mexico and Urban USA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). For research on migrant homebuilding, see Peri Fletcher, *La Casa de Mis Sueños: Dreams of Home in a Transnational Migrant Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Catherine R. Ettinger, *La transformación de la vivienda vernácula en Michoacán: Materialidad, espacio y representación* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2010); Sarah Lopez, "The Remittance House: Architecture of Migration," *Buildings and Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 17, no. 2 (2010): 33–52; Carolina Leite and Isabel Raposo, *Casas de sonhos: Emigrantes construtores no Norte de Portugal* [Dream houses: Emigrants building in northern Portugal] (Lisbon: Edições Salamandra, 1994); Ruth Piedrasanta et al., *Arquitectura de remesas* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2012), accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/arquitectura-de-remesas-2/; Christien Klaufus, "Globalization in Residential Architecture in Cuenca, Ecuador: Social and Cultural Diversification of Architects and Their Clients," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, no. 1 (2006): 69–89; Mirjana Lozanovska, "Performative Subjects: Migrants and Their House-Building Practices," in *The Politics of Recognition and Social Justice: Transforming Subjectivities and New Forms of Resistance*, ed. Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli and Bob Pease (New York: Routledge, 2019): 126–43. For research on Chinese remittance landscapes, see Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Denis Byrne, "The Need for a Transnational Approach to the Material Heritage of Migration: The China-Australia Corridor," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 16, no. 3 (2016): 1–25; and Cangdong Heritage Education Center, accessed May 5, 2017, www.cangdonproject.org.

6. Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 42.

7. Brown, *Edgework*, 42.

8. Brown, *Edgework*, 42.

9. Brown, *Edgework*, 44.

10. In the 2000s, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) ceded power after seventy years, a transition that can be linked to economic and political shifts dating to the 1970s. In the 1970s Mexico turned away from import substitution industrialization toward global

markets. By the 1980s, Mexico's economy was dependent on oil revenues. The collapse of oil prices globally in 1981 led to the peso devaluation of 1982. The International Monetary Fund gave loans to Mexico for development and practiced austerity measures. Mexico emerged from this financial crisis with new institutional relationships in which banking and finance played a greater role in governance. See Adam Morton, "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive Revolution' in the Global Political Economy," *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2010): 631–53.

11. While this is true, remittances are only 3 percent of Mexico's GDP, compared to 10 percent for the Philippines. See Dilip Ratha, "Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance," in World Bank, *Global Development Finance 2003: Striving for Stability in Development Finance* (Washington, DC: World Bank, April 2003): 157–59.

12. Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 6.

13. In 2001, Pres. Vicente Fox publicly recognized migrants as the country's heroes. Shortly thereafter, the government formalized the 3x1 program. From 2002 to 2009, the federal government increased its spending on the program, from approximately $15 million to $50 million. For archival information on government spending related to the 3x1 program, see SEDESOL, http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/en/SEDESOL/Informes_Trimestrales_del_Presupuesto_Ejercido. For information on the 3x1 program, see Secretaría de Bienestar, "Programa 3x1 para Migrantes," https://www.gob.mx/bienestar/acciones-y-programas/programa-3x1-para-migrantes.

14. Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 5.

15. For ethnographic accounts of migration between home and host places, see Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Robert Courtney Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Migrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Jeffery Cohen, *The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004). Michael Peter Smith and Matt Bakker, *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), addresses larger structural transformations.

16. An important theoretical contribution is Stephen Cairns, ed., *Drifting: Architecture and Migrancy* (London: Routledge, 2004); as well as Mirjana Lozanovska, ed., *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration* (New York: Routledge, 2016). For work on migration and cities, primarily in the United States, see Jeffery Hou, *Transcultural Cities: Border Crossing and Place Making* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman, eds., *Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); and A. K. Sandoval-Strausz and Nancy H. Kwak, eds., *Making Cities Global: The Transnational Turn in Urban History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

17. See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), for a discussion of five "scapes" related to globalization that trigger social and political change.

18. I have studied this architecture in Michoacán, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, the Yucatán, and Puebla. Remittances are received by all thirty-one Mexican states and the Federal District.

19. Francisco Alba, "Mexico: The New Migration Narrative," Migration Policy Institute, April 24, 2013, 2–3, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/print/4209.

20. For example, the Robles brothers discussed later are carpenters in the United States; their work exposed them to styles and techniques that they incorporated into their Mexican homes.

21. Walterio Iraheta, notes from public talk at the University of Texas at Austin, February 2014. Photographer Iraheta has documented remittance architecture in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. See "Faraway Brother Style," accessed June 23, 2019, http://farawaybrotherstylewalterioiraheta.blogspot.com/.

22. Álvarez, informal conversations with author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2008, 2012.

23. Claudio Suarez, interview by author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2012.

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

25. Robles brothers, interviews and observations by author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2007–2008, 2012.

26. Dell Upton defines this as a sense of the relationships among people and their environments. See Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Space in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); and Upton, "Persuasion and Coercion: Therapeutic Landscapes of the Early National Period," *International Journal of Conservation and the Built Environment* 6, no. 2 (2016): 116–137, esp. 117.

27. Javier and Ruby Villaseñor, interviews by author, Jalisco, Mexico, and California, United States, 2007.

28. Electrician, informal conversation with author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2008.

29. Antonio Rodríguez, interview by author, California, United States, 2008.

30. Sergio Suarez, interview by author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2012, and Illinois, United States, 2012.

31. Morton, "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico," 644.

32. Morton, "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico," 634.

33. Ananya Roy theorizes the incorporation of the poor into development discourses as "millennial development." See Ananya Roy, *Poverty Capital: The Making of Development* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

34. For a comprehensive analysis of the politics of HTAs, see Xóchitl Bada, *Mexican Hometown Associations in Chicagoacán: From Local to Transnational Civic Engagement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

35. For information about remittance spending, see "Encuesta Nacional de Inclusión Financiera (ENIF), 2012" (INEGI's National household surveys), INEGI, accessed June 23, 2019, https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/enif/2012.

36. Observed by the author at a federation meeting, Dublin, California, February 2009.

37. SEDESOL, 3x1 Programa para Migrantes, "Cuarto Informe Trimestral 2008."

38. Carlos Leal, secretary of COPLADE, interview by author, Jalisco, Mexico, August 2008.

39. The bracero program was a bilateral guest-worker program that resulted in the migration of hundreds of thousands of seasonal agricultural workers from Mexico to US fields.

40. Still, despite these changes and individuals' desire to bring tractors to farms in Mexico, the 1988 national census found that fewer than half of the country's *ejidos* (communal farms) had any kind of modern technology available, whether improved seed, fertilizer, or tractors. Only 17 percent of arable ejido land was irrigated in 1988. In 1988, more than half of Mexico's farms were ejidos. See Wayne Cornelius and David Myhre, *The Transformation*

of Rural Mexico: Reforming the Ejido Sector (San Diego: Center for US-Mexican Studies, 1998), 8.

41. See Fletcher, *La Casa de Mis Sueños*, chap. 2.

42. For general information on ejidos, see Cornelius and Myhre, *Transformation of Rural Mexico*.

43. Cornelius and Myhre, *Transformation of Rural Mexico*.

44. For further discussion, see Smith, *Mexican New York*, chap. 4.

45. In his discussion of eighteenth-century rural Mexico, William Taylor notes that patriarchal forms date from Hispanic times. Many patriarchal characteristics in the eighteenth century—men occupying positions of social status, men having greater freedom of movement, agriculture being the primary economic activity largely in the hands of men—informed similar social relations in the first half of the twentieth century. For a discussion, see William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 108.

46. Although there are twenty-eight localities, only twenty-one have approximately one hundred persons or more.

47. Additionally, the church and the elementary school signify two small investments, in the 1950s and 1970s, respectively, but these projects are modest.

48. Sen and Silverman, *Making Place*, 5.

49. Don Ignacio, interview by author, Jalisco, Mexico, 2007.

50. For discussions about tradition and space, see Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *The End of Tradition?* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Ananya Roy, "Nostalgias of the Modern," in AlSayyad, *End of Tradition?*, 63–86.

51. See Lopez, *Remittance Landscape*, chap. 3, for further details on these disputes.

52. Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," *New Left Review* 86 (April 2014): 71.

53. Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode," 57.

54. The Mexican federal government sporadically and unreliably provides meager assistance to the elderly through Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF, the National Agency for Family Development). It does not provide retirement benefits or guarantee social security.