Short Abstract:

This paper aims to contribute to the longitudinal studies of DFDR by presenting ethnographic material from the Zimapán resettlement project in Mexico. The data is analyzed through a lens of anthropological and heritage theories. The role of anthropology in contested projects is also discussed.

Long Abstract:

The Reestablishment of Routine Cultures in Displaced Societies

By

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One of the most contested and ethically questionable topic in the development industry is development-induced forced displacement and resettlement (DFDR) caused by large infrastructural projects. The fact is that DFDR projects are still not handled well and the consequences for the displaced people are difficult to mitigate.

We have nevertheless made advances and come a long way from the 1980s “at gunpoint option” to an informed local participation in key issues. Anthropologists have been leading in this work pushing for compensation for the resettled people. Particular progress has been made to mitigate the economic impoverishment risks; fewer advances have been made on the risk of social disarticulation and the rebuilding and resilience of a community. Longitudinal studies with ethnographic data covering the whole process are needed.

This paper aims to contribute to the much needed longitudinal studies of DFDR by presenting ethnographic material from the resettlement project Zimapán in central Mexico. I returned in 2013 for a first follow up after more than 10 years. Longitudinal studies demand good baseline data. I have that (Aronsson 2002). The research questions are straightforward: How do people get by? What is the role of heritage as memories and environment? These questions will be discussed through the lens of social disarticulation, routine and dissonance culture and heritage theory. The return also triggered the question on the role of anthropologists in contested projects.

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