

Landscapes of Belonging.

Building and Dwelling in a transnational Mexican community

Julia Pauli (Hamburg University, Germany)

Abstract

Allover Mexico, landscapes have been transformed through migration-related house construction. When I started my fieldwork in the village of Pueblo Nuevo, Estado de México, in 1995, international labor migration from the area and to the USA had just commenced. *Casas de sueños* (Fletcher 1999), dream houses, built with remittances were still rare. Gossip and envy surrounded these houses. By the beginning of the new millennium, migration to the U.S. had tremendously increased. Throughout the first decade of the 2000s the village experienced a boom in migration-financed house construction. During these years, building belonging and keeping attachment through houses turned into a vital social practice to muster the challenges of long-term absenteeism of migrants. The village's borders were extended by new houses and the rural landscape became dotted with colorful and creative dwelling projects in all states of completion. Yet when I returned to Pueblo Nuevo in 2010 and 2013, more and more unfinished *casas de sueños* were in gradual decay or were being used for something else, e.g. goats' stable. In my presentation I want to unpack these stages of migratory experiences and affective production of belonging inscribed into landscape through housing. I will especially focus on the social dynamics and tensions underlying and being expressed through these transformations of landscape.