From: Black, Richard and Khaled Koser (eds) 1999. *The End of the Refugee Circle? Repatriation and Reconstruction,* pp.211-25. Oxford: Berghahn Books

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Repatriation and Everyday Forms of State Formation in Guatemala

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Introduction

The return of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico after more than ten years in exile is one of the cases that contributed to the designation of the 1990s as the 'decade of voluntary repatriation'. This repatriation exercise is an example of the contemporary concerns to promote the process of repatriation and to 'push' refugee assistance back across the border in order to prevent the further formation of refugees. The lasting aim was to contribute to the formation of a modern, democratic state.

The process of how repatriation links up with the (re-) formation of states has rarely been examined. The present chapter focuses on this process by drawing upon a more general debate on state formation. The process of repatriation in Guatemala is demonstrated to have increased the presence of the 'state' in the former areas of conflict, but at the same time to have enhanced the possibility of new conflicts. After presenting an analytical framework for the study of state formation, the chapter articulates the relationship between repatriation and state formation by focusing on three issues, namely: the arrival and forms of intervention of 'waves' of relief and development agencies; the conflicts over access to land and other resources which are related to the recategorisation of the social landscape, and finally the arrival, capacities and strategies of repatriates and returnees who regard themselves as a social force of modernisation.

The chapter draws upon one year of fieldwork that was undertaken between 1994 and 1996 in Nentón, a rural township in Huehuetenango in northwestern Guatemala. During 1994-5, the incidence of armed encounters had reduced to one per month, and by late 1996, the 'Voluntary Committees for Civil Self Defence' - the backbone of the army control of areas of conflict - had been disbanded[1]. Returned refugees and other displaced persons make up more than 40 percent of the 20,000 inhabitants in Nentón. The fieldwork applied an inclusive, regional approach which did not focus exclusively on the returning refugees. Rather I sought to follow the conflicts and changes in a cluster of villages and settlements on both sides of the border between Guatemala and Mexico.

Background

The Guatemalan refugees became recognised as such by UNHCR in 1982, when they had fled

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[1] The final peace accord was signed in December 1996.

the armed conflict between the military government and a front of left-wing guerrilla groups, known as the La Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala (URNG). As many as 150,000 people fled Guatemala, but only 46,000 were recognised and assisted as refugees in the settlements controlled by the Mexican government. Ninety percent of the refugees spoke Mayan languages while 10 percent were *ladinos*, non-Indians. The government conditioned the presence of the refugees in terms of 'temporary asylum' and restricted their mobility and integration (Aguayo et al 1987; Stepputat 1992; Hernandez et al.1993).

While many Guatemalans have filtered unnoticed back across the border over the years, a formal agreement on assisted repatriation was signed by UNHCR and the governments of Mexico and Guatemala in 1986, when a civilian government was elected in Guatemala. The scheme provided repatriating households with transport, some food, seeds, tools and cash for building materials. However, by 1992 only a small proportion of the refugees had repatriated under this scheme. Continued human rights violations, compulsory participation in the armed patrols for civil defence, and problems of recouping prior land titles kept most refugees from repatriating and prompted the formation in 1987 of a refugee organisation, the Permanent Commissions (CCPP). Refugees in more than a hundred settlements elected the members of the CCPP, which was commissioned to negotiate the conditions of an 'organised, collective return' of the Guatemalan refugees. Among the demands were access to land, freedom to choose where and how to settle, and non-presence of the army in the return settlements. 'Repatriation' vs. 'return' became a politically loaded distinction, the former being organised for the refugees; the latter being a sign of resistance against the Guatemalan government in general and the army in particular.

Repatriation came to constitute an important element of the peace negotiations and a central element in international involvement in the peace process in Guatemala, as it did in Central America in general. [2] In the face of this pressure, the Guatemalan government negotiated directly with the CCPP and eventually on 8 October 1992 the parties signed an agreement. This agreement gave the refugees access to land and to the establishment of segregated return settlements, most of them in the areas of former conflict. As of mid-1997, 18,800 refugees had returned 'collectively' while 17,400 had repatriated 'individually'. Many inter- and nongovernmental agencies have been keen to support the process of resettlement and reconciliation in Guatemala. The ferocity of the army's counter-insurgency campaign, the general interest in the upsurge of Mayan identity, and the preparedness of the returnees to modernise and organise for the reception of assistance are among the factors that have drawn attention to the aftermath of the violent conflict in Guatemala.

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[2] Displacement was an issue in the Esquipulas II peace agreements between the five Central American presidents in 1987. The UN Special Programme for Economic Assistance to Central America (PEC) gave top priority to displacement and return, a priority that was formalised through the International Conference on Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA).

Everyday forms of state formation

How do we analyse the relationship between repatriation and state formation in the current global context of humanitarian interventionism? The three conventional levels of analysis - global, national and local - interact and need to be combined in considering how everyday forms of state formation are articulated through repatriation and resettlement.

In a highly polemical article David Slater refers to the current politics of humanitarian interventionism as the 'Occidental will and capacity to intervene . . . and subvert other sovereignties' (Slater 1995: 371). This subversion, however, is somewhat paradoxical since the stated purpose of the interventions is to restore or create modern and coherent (nation-) states and reinforce the governments' ability to exercise 'good governance'. The Guatemalan return movement is a good case in point of the paradoxical nature of intervention. In a recent paper Thayer Scudder suggests that resettlement schemes always entail the possibility of reinforced state control over the groups resettled (Scudder forthcoming). In contrast, return and resettlement as directed by the CCPP and supported by the international community, was explicitly anti-governmental. Governmental agencies have deliberately been kept at a distance, and the returnees have only accepted support from intergovernmental agencies, NGOs and popular movements. Thus, the segregated return settlements may be interpreted as representing a kind of trans- or postnational space where state control is challenged or subverted (Appadurai 1993; Stepputat 1994).

Such an interpretation, however, depends on a conventional, dualistic understanding of the 'State' vs. (civil) 'society' in which the state is seen as a more or less coherent, autonomous and calculating political subject, centred in the government and state institutions. But the 'state' can also be conceived of as an idea - a claim to unity, coherence, structure and intentionality - with material effects. In this sense, the 'state' lives in and through its subjects (Abrams 1988; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Sayer 1994). The effectiveness and projection of this idea of the state is contingent upon the development of a grid of modern rationalities, techniques and practices which render the regulation and administration of everyday life desirable, feasible and even (possibly) legitimate. This is what the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality' deals with: the modern governmentality is the particular way of thinking about the kinds of problems that should be addressed by social authorities, which emerged together with an ensemble of means to manage 'populations' during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe (Miller and Rose 1990; Foucault 1991). These means included the conception and exploration of new objects of knowledge and intervention - such as economy, society, poverty and population - as well as modern techniques of administration, calculation and surveillance.

These everyday forms of state formation, that is, the embedding of ideas and practices of 'state' in the everyday life of the state's subjects, takes us into the 'local' level of analysis. As Henrietta Moore argues, the rationalities which sustain discourses and practices of government are global in scope, but they are always developed in specific contexts by politicians, academics, media and ordinary people (Moore 1996: 12). As I understand Moore, she argues against the idea

that there is one (European) centre for the production of these rationalities. The will to modernise works in many different localities, and among many different actors. Following Wagner (1994), we may for example distinguish between 'modernisation offensives from above' - carried out by an élite, a bureaucracy or an army - and 'modernisation offensives from below' that are promoted by, for example, groups who have been disadvantaged or excluded by 'modernisation offensives from above'.

Thus, when we are talking about everyday forms of state formation, it is important to note that the modern rationalities, techniques and practices that underpin state formation are not necessarily imposed. Modernisation offensives from above and from below entail an element of disciplinisation as well as of liberation from previous hegemonic limitations. Discipline works in schools, clinics, workshops and other bounded spaces, but discipline can also be, for example, 'a countermove against external impositions by means of establishing capable collective agency' (Wagner 1994: 26).

'Institutions' and modernisation from above

Institutions (*instituciones*) abound in Nentón. *Instituciones* is the common indigenous term to designate governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies of relief and development which have positioned themselves in the township during the 1980s and 1990s. The distinctive trait of 'institutions' is that they are external agents in control of resources to which persons, groups and in particular communities may negotiate access, if they fit the categories managed by the institutions, and if they master the language and codified practices of the institutions.

'Institutions' are explicitly distinguished from 'organisations' (*organizaciones*). The latter are seen as something 'amongst ourselves'. Even though they have been introduced by people from other places, 'organisations' are seen to involve serious commitments on behalf of people in the villages. While they regard 'institutions' as legal and apolitical entities, the status of 'organisations' is less clear. People relate 'organisations' to the movements which preceded or directed the popular insurrection from the late 1970s onwards, and '*the* organisation' used to be synonymous with the guerrilla movement. The army apparently warned people in a village neighbouring the return settlement in Nentón not to mix with the returnees because 'they bring back their organisation that started the problem'.

The armed conflict has brought several new elements into the everyday life in the Nentón area. Apart from new social actors - the institutions, the organisations and the army - and the visible resources they have distributed, such as tin roofs and roads, the armed conflict has also engendered a new set of categories that have structured the work of the institutions and increased the complexity of the social landscape. The categories of 'displaced',' repatriates', 'returnees' and 'locals' complement and cut across other sets of categories that used to circumscribe entitlements, belonging and social relations, such as 'tenants', 'individual

landowners', 'holders of communal land', 'holders of national land', Indians and *ladinos*, and the names of the townships and villages of origin, all of which define important identities. This reconfiguration of the social landscape can be illustrated by focusing on two different sets of institutions which arrived in Nentón in the 1980s and the 1990s respectively.

In January 1982, the army evacuated the population of the township capital of Nentón. Return movements later that year occasioned intensified state presence. As a former teacher explained:

> Before 1982, only the Ministry of Education was present here in Nentón. But when we returned with the army to repopulate the town in 1982, all the institutions of the government arrived. Before, they didn't even know that Nentón existed. We, the teachers, were sent out to clear the bush and construct rustic schools.

Across the whole of Guatemala a first 'wave' of mainly governmental agencies accompanied the army's counter-insurgency campaign in 1982-84. The campaign was launched under the new doctrine of 'security and development' which was supposed to win 'the hearts and minds of the population. This doctrine urged the army to become aware of, and respond to, the sufferings of the civil population, in particular to the 'displaced', 'a new actor in the Guatemalan scenario' and 'a new expression of the social costs of the armed challenge to the government' (Gramajo 1995: 192 and 198).

However, sensitivity to the sufferings of the civil population was clearly subsumed by security imperatives. During the campaign more than four hundred villages were massacred and destroyed, and the army reorganised and relabelled the population according to spatial criteria. While many fled into 'the wilderness' (*el monte*), those who stayed were considered subjects of the state and concentrated in villages where armed civil defence patrols could be organised and sustained. Those who had fled and were living either in Mexico or in *el monte* were excluded from the authorised national space, that is, the network of armed villages. They were deemed 'subversives', '*guerilleros*', 'non-Guatemalans' or '*canches*'.[3] The civil patrols and the network of villages constituted a near perfect system of social surveillance and information on movement for the army and other state agencies. The excluded non-subjects of the state - the refugees and displaced persons - could only be 'helped' if they submitted themselves to the army's rituals of reinclusion by applying for amnesty and passing through re-education camps before resettling in armed villages or in one of the new 'development poles' which were designated for displaced people and refugees (AVANCSO 1990; Wilson 1991; Stepputat 1997). In some cases they received some relief items before resettling, but before the repatriation scheme of 1986 this seldom occurred in any systematic way.

[3] *Canche* is an old Quiché word for 'yellow skinned' Spaniards (Zur 1993) and has been a popular nickname for blue-eyed foreigners and guerillas alike. It has been used consistently by the army to delegitimise the guerillas as foreigners and foreigners as guerilla supporters.

These strategies were based on the concept of a growth- or development-pole, whereby the idea of development could be radiated from one point of intervention or investment. In Nentón, the 'development pole' of Chacaj was established on a plot of land which had been abandoned by refugees, and during the 1980s development efforts in the township were concentrated here. The institutions there included the army's civil affairs office, several ministries, a Taiwanese mission for agricultural development and a few North American NGOs. Most of these worked in a paternalistic fashion. Meanwhile army-employed teachers taught the population how to become 'good patriots' and officers trained them for the civil defence patrols. 'Growth' or 'development' did not radiate from the efforts concentrated in Chacaj; in fact all that radiated was the rumour that people in Chacaj were spoiled by all the assistance they had.

The first wave of institutions was part and parcel of the attempt to secure direct state control of the population and its movement, but an attempt that was inscribed in the development discourse. The ritualised labelling of returning refugees as subversives was abandoned in 1986 when they were no longer required to sign a petition for amnesty when entering the country. But at village level repatriates would have to 'follow the custom', including taking orders from the army-authorised leadership, joining the civil defence patrols and often being refused the return of their land rights. It was in the context of this hegemonically controlled form of repatriation that refugees in Mexico formed the CCPP. Their return became a lever for the introduction of a different type of relief and development agency which, in some respects, challenged the sovereignty of the Guatemalan state.

The second wave of institutions that reached Nentón from the late 1980s onwards was mainly internationally induced. Expectations of a massive repatriation to the border region attracted the attention of international donors and organisations, in particular after the much publicised 1992 accords on the 'organised return'. International funding was channelled through the President's office, through the new Ministry of Development or through transnational NGOs. Many foreign donors also sought to channel their support for reconstruction and return through national NGOs in order to strengthen NGO-capacity and the 'civil society'. UNHCR and the donors paved the way for major participation by NGOs in a context where the latter from the outset were not welcomed at all by the government. In the field, UNHCR effectively became an 'umbrella' for NGOs.

The modes of intervention of the second wave of institutions changed, *grosso modo,* from paternalistic, army-centred interventions that viewed civil patrols as extensions or representatives of the army's authority, to a mode of intervention that sought to induce nonmilitarised forms of organisation, such as 'development committees' or regional 'associations', serving as entities for negotiation with governmental and other agencies. Even though many programmes and projects did not focus specifically on repatriates, settlements and villages with returned refugees were usually given priority. While this was also true of the first wave of institutions, the discourse of intervention of the second wave of institutions changed from the security-centred discourse - depicting refugees and displaced people as subversive non-Guatemalans - to a postconflict

discourse that depicted the same people as disadvantaged Guatemalans in need of assistance.

For the national NGOs in particular, the return movement represented an opportunity to enter the former zones of conflict which had been 'no-go' areas for more than a decade. They saw return settlements as 'bridgeheads' for further activities in areas that hitherto had been dominated by the army and evangelical churches. From these bridgeheads would be dispersed self-centred development; awareness of human rights, environment and gender issues, and non-governmental forms of organisation. 'Organisation and popular power' would spread at the 'local level' resulting in 'the opening of a field of pressure and demands towards the state' (CCPP 1993: 3).

Although these two waves of institutions differ in many aspects, they have several common features, particularly when viewed from the perspective of everyday life in Nentón. Even among village leaders in Nentón, the difference between governmental and nongovernmental may pass unperceived. They are all 'institutions' and the persons embodying them are all 'employees' or *licenciados*; the local employees of several consecutive institutions may well be the same non-Indians from the township capital, and they all try to teach the villagers new ways of doing things.

Another continuity between the two waves are labelling practices arising from the provision of resources, the elicitation of information on the categories defined for and by the intervention ('displaced', 'repatriates' etc.) and the tendency to focus interventions spatially in points from where 'development' or alternative ideas will radiate. These practices of intervention have the possibility of creating tensions as labels and strategies interfere with existing social identities and trajectories. Thus, for example, 'refugees' who returned from Mexico in 1984, 1990 and 1994 have received very different attention: while the 'subversives' of 1984 received a bag of beans, the 'repatriates' of 1990 received maize and beans for six months, as well as corrugated tin sheets for their roofs, and the 'returnee' of 1994 additionally received very soft credits for land, house and income-generation.

Visible difference: 'sadly remembering the conquest'

The resettlement of repatriates and displaced persons engenders a reorganisation of the social landscape and existing entitlements. As the following examples show, the new categories and entitlements nurture conflicts in which different identities and social memories are brought into play. Just as the visible individual assistance to repatriates before 1992 created resentment between them and their neighbours, the even more conspicuous assistance to the return settlements has created resentment and conflicts. The basic issue of most of these conflicts is the access to land that the 1992 accords provided, including the possibility of escaping existing communal hegemonies by establishing autonomous settlements.

Nentón provides two examples. One is the case of Pocobastik, where a group of repatriates bought a piece of land, which was also claimed by their former neighbours in Trinidad, the private estate that they all came from. Before the armed conflict they were all classified as

tenants (*mozos colonos*); when the war started they all supported the guerrillas and they all fled to Mexico. But they went back at different times, under different conditions, and since the most recent group of repatriates had access to credits, they had won the land. Upon the return of these repatriates, earlier returnees to Trinidad - among them cousins and uncles of the repatriates - visited them and 'displayed threatening attitudes', according to observers from the Guatemalan refugee commission.

In the negotiations that followed, the people from Trinidad presented themselves as tenants. Long before the war they had the permission of the *patrón* to work the land 'as if it is your own', in exchange for defending the land against 'unknown' intruders. Their subsequent defence of the land during the war, and the lives of those who died in combat on this land, now entered the argument. They also resented the fact that the repatriates would not 'recognise the place where they were born' and come and live together with them in Trinidad. The repatriates, on the other hand, invoked ownership, laws of private property, and their right to settle wherever they wanted. Their claim to the land, based on the new category and the governmental accords, was modern and historically 'thin'.

The other example involves returnees in *Nueva Esperanza*, an autonomous settlement for returnees, where a land conflict with the neighbouring village Aguacate was inherited. Interestingly, a previous division in Aguacate between earlier 'repatriates' and people labelled as 'displaced' was healed and a united front presented to the 'returnees' in *Nueva Esperanza*. Adding to the complexity was the fact that several families from Aguacate had returned from exile to *Nueva Esperanza*, rather than back to Aguacate.

Having a communal land title, Aguacate claimed part of the land registered as the property of the returnees. In 1996, having obstructed the authorised remeasurement of the returnees' land, a large group of people from Aguacate, some of them armed, invaded the land, cleared some forest and planted their corn. Later the group started constructing houses on the land. The well-connected returnees in *Nueva Esperanza* attracted the support of the UN Human Rights mission (MINUGUA), the governmental Human Rights attorney and a number of NGOs. The army and the Governor also intervened, unsuccessfully, to resolve the discord.

In presenting their case, Aguacate representatives established their entitlement through the story of one of their grandfathers who had managed to obtain a title for the land from the government and had Aguacate declared a village (*aldea*). Struggle for the land and recognition by authorities, even in the distant past, are customary means of 'place-making' which legitimised the claims of Aguacate. At a meeting with foreign NGOs, representatives of the Aguacate land committee ended their presentation as follows:

> Sadly it is as if the external assistance is putting a little pressure on us, it makes us remember the Conquest which the Spaniard carried out, because at that time they came and put the yoke on our Mayan ancestors, invading and removing their belongings, just as the situation we are experiencing now. Thus, this makes us

> remember the violations that the *conquistadores* committed in the year 1492. Hopefully this violation will cease since we now have these human rights . . . we want that our rights be respected. We have already suffered a lot because of the violence. Here in this village the *guerilleros* have bothered us quite a lot, they have murdered several people. We have endured (*soportado)* this . . . Why? Because here we were born, here we live, and here we will stay. We don't want to inflict damage on the people who travel (*caminan*), we don't want to be assailants. What we want is to show our children how to make a living with sweat on the brow, so they become honest people.'

The statement has a modern orientation, for example through references to 'rights' and the 'Mayan' ancestors. [4] But the way in which the new categories are made intelligible and negotiable is by applying the binary, colonial opposition between *indios* and *ladinos* with the returnees in the position of the *ladinos,* and Aguacate in the position of the *indios.* The latter are represented as the legitimate heirs to the 'Mayan ancestors', the victims of the conquest who had their land taken away. The inhabitants of Aguacate are the ones who have endured the suffering, who have worked long hours on the land, and who have a continuous presence from the past and into the future. Among the elements which position the returnees as *ladinos* are their 'conquest' of land; their abilities to communicate with 'institutions', *licenciados* (educated urban people) and *canches* (blue-eyed strangers); their access to urban style dwellings; their absence and failure to contribute to the defence of the land during the conflict, and their lack of local knowledge.

In both the above cases of conflict the less privileged party - the locals already in Guatemala when the newcomers arrived - represented the returnees in terms of spatial, social and cultural differences. Continuity, belonging, roots and their historical relations to the authority of the government constituted the locals' principal claims to the land. The newcomers, in contrast, represented the locals in terms of a difference in development, in modernisation and in time, thus constituting their claims on the basis of a break with tradition - an awakening.

'Formal people' and modernisation from below

While their claims to the disputed land are based on the memory of (recent) violence and exile, the accords of 1992, and the formal acquisition of a deed, the returnees' representations of themselves *vis-à-vis* the local people are structured by a developed/underdeveloped, or modern/traditional dichotomy. These distinctions revolve around the issues of livelihood, violence, language, education, as well 'reason', as illustrated in the following excerpt from a

[4] A few years ago nobody in the area identified themselves as 'Mayan'. The Mayan movement is a new, postconflict phenomenon.

representative’s speech to a foreign ambassador who visited *Nueva Esperanza*:

> Those from Aguacate destroy the forest, they only leave fallow bush. If this land had not been *finca* (private estate), they would have destroyed the forest here as well. Their destruction is a problem because our estate depends on forestry. There will be undernourishment amongst our children, maybe the youngsters will become delinquents. It is a pity because we came here to make development. Here, in *Nueva Esperanza*, the families are thinking about how to develop every day. In Agaucate they only want to spill the blood . . . They haven’t got any education; 90% of them speak in dialect, and only the leaders speak Spanish. You cannot reason with them (*a ellos no llegan razón*). They do not want to accept the authorities, neither the Human Rights attorney, nor the INTA, [5] nor the Governor . . . They have a problem with us, they threaten us. This situation reminds us of 1982, when we had to leave the country. (Transcript, November 1996)

The young representative, who was himself born in Aguacate, reasons within discourses of modern knowledge (environment, undernourishment, delinquency, percentages of monolinguism) and emphasises the distinctiveness of the returnees’ will to develop, to become modern. This is their common project and an important collective identity which is based on the incorporation of a new set of ethics. Vehicles for these ethics are ‘ideas’, ‘examples’ and ‘advice’ which have ‘woken us up’, ‘opened our eyes’ and ‘made us aware’. They are products of specific techniques for the making of subjectivities, self-perceptions and meaning - in Foucault's terminology ‘pastoral techniques’. Throughout their trajectory returnees to Guatemala, and particularly their leaders, have received ‘ideas’ from Catholic and Protestant missionaries, in cooperative settlements in the lowlands, from peasant unions, from the guerrillas, and from relief agencies and solidarity workers in the refugee settlements in Mexico. These ‘ideas’ have worked as blueprints for new modes of living.

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[5] The Institute for Agrarian Transformation, responsible for registration, redistribution and surveys of land.

The refugee 'camp' was thus one of several spaces in which new sets of ethics were developed. The 'camp' was a 'disciplinary space' (Foucault 1977), embodying a detailed structuring of time, space and social relations; which permitting observation and regulation. When incorporated in a relief regime, the refugees became subjected to headcounts, registers, measurements, classifications, listings, queuing and other procedures of logistical management. These procedures are techniques developed for the government of populations. But to a large degree in the case of the Guatemalan refugees, they themselves took charge of these tasks. In the words of the Mexican coordinator of a large settlement in Mexico, 'this is seen by the government as a major experiment in self-government'. [6]

An equally important experience from the refugee camps included the incorporation of formal procedures, for example, for democratic elections, the development of cooperatives, project management and workshops. A common denominator of most of these practices is that they are based on formalised operations, formalisation being 'a way of re-interpreting the world and re-classifying its elements with a view to increasing manageability' (Wagner 1994: 26). As Wagner points out this formalisation does not necessarily increase the general knowledge of the conditions under which we live, but it does entail a 'belief in the *knowability* and, following from it, in the *mastery* of the world by means of *calculation*' (Wagner 1994: 26).

Formalisation has become incorporated in the returning refugees' understanding of themselves and their encounters with their environment. As a leader from Pocobastik said to a government official while they were waiting for the civil patrollers to arrive for a meeting: 'Ahh, don't believe they're formal people like us (*gente formales*); they're like animals'. To become 'formal' is certainly a pervasive ambition for returning refugees in Pocobastik. They want to have 'formal houses', to have an officially sanctioned and technically impeccable 'urban layout' (*trazo urbano*), to follow prescriptions for meetings, to elect 'administrators' for the settlement and to have written regulations.

Even more pervasive is the formalisation of the return settlement *Nueva Esperanza* and its one thousand inhabitants. First it is criss-crossed by systems of representation based on diverse criteria such as neighbourhood, religion, age and gender. Secondly it is organised as a cooperative 'peasant enterprise' where the management of different sectors of the economy is

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[6] It is important to note that there were major differences between the experiences of refugees in the larger camps in the interior of Mexico and those in the smaller and less established border camps.

separated from the management of 'communal services' - the social sectors. The wall charts and filing systems in the cooperative's office are a far cry from the small desk drawer in the deputy mayor's desk in Aguacate and Trinidad. Obviously NGOs have been involved in the establishment of these organisational structures, but the ambition of the returnees to become formalised permeates the whole enterprise.

Seen in this perspective, the return settlements are dense packages of modern rationalities and techniques of government, or rather self-government. Although modern techniques of government are mastered in other places as well, the perception of return settlements as new beginnings invites the wholesale introduction of modern rationality (Riesco 1995). Within an encompassing project of modernisation and guided by a fairly rigid ideological blueprint, the CCPP and their national and international supporters have deployed the techniques which were experienced in exile. However, while procedures and formalised modes of operation *in abstracto* are transportable assets, they do not automatically lead to the practical knowledge which is necessary in order to survive on marginal lands in a poor region with a very limited market. After two years, *Nueva Esperanza* had not become self-sufficient in subsistence crops, and 20 percent of the returned households had left the settlement. Others relied on food donations or salaries from construction projects, while some continued to engage in migrant labour in Mexico.

In addition to the enormous task of re-establishing their own livelihoods - a process which often entails impoverishment (Cernea 1997) - the returnees and their supporters have set themselves the task of improving conditions in the whole return area and of achieving self-government. 'What we want for us we want for everybody' is one of the slogans of the CCPP. They see the return settlements as bridgeheads and themselves as promoters of human rights, gender and environmental issues, as well as of new practices of organisation and political action. In the sense that the politics of the return movement are directed against the state and the élite, the returnees indeed engage in a 'modernisation offensive from below' (Wagner 1994).

Settling people, settling conflict? Dimensions of postconflict state formation

The main argument of this chapter is that repatriation can have a potentially stabilising effect in terms of state formation. Repatriation in Guatemala has been demonstrated to have contributed to the social construction of peace and to the development of a 'common discursive framework' which includes the extension of a network of modern rationalities through which techniques of government work, as well as to the diffusion of specific ideas and languages of 'state' and 'civil society'. At the same time the Guatemala case study illustrates ways that repatriation may have destabilising effects (Sepulveda 1995).

Before the repatriation and resettlement in Guatemala, the state apparatus had little presence outside the cities in highland Guatemala. Systems of indirect rule through private estate owners were predominant, and the majority of the population, in particular the 'Indians', were excluded from citizenship and from the political sphere. In the countryside the state was generally

perceived of as a distant source of authority and occasionally a source of violence. One way that the politics of repatriation might be described as affecting state formation in Guatemala was the closing of this gap between the state and the people through mobilising intervention.

In the wake of the counter-insurgency campaign, the army and the agencies which accompanied the process of resettlement gave the state apparatus a more continuous presence in the area of conflict where they offered, if not citizenship, then at least 'patriotship' to the male members of the civil patrols. The case of Nentón illustrates how displacement and resettlement became associated with waves of interventions, first for 'security and development' and then for 'peace and development'. Development interventions in turn necessitated the settlement of people in legally and physically defined places. A fixed and formalised spatial organisation seems to be essential for the construction of the state as a vehicle for human progress.

A second interaction between repatriation and state formation might be described as the 'modernisation' effect. Once settled, the repatriates and returnees involved themselves ('modernisation from below') and become involved ('modernisation from above') in the production of networks of rationalities, which are prerequisites for the extension of modern forms of power. Techniques of physical control were gradually substituted with techniques of containment operating through processes such as credit-schemes, licences, regulations and democratic systems of representation.

Even though the politics of the return movement was directed against the government and the élite, they contribute to the production of specific ideas of the state, the public sphere and the content of citizenship. This is a third aspect of the interaction between repatriation and state formation. Before the conflict, the image was of a predatory state. Particularly in association with the second wave of institutions, however, the state has come to be perceived as a more benign actor. Through their constant evocation of the 'state' and 'public' responsibilities, and through their ability to engage in a dialogue with representatives of the state, returnees in particular have contributed to the production of an image of the state as a body with powers and rights to intervene in society. Perceptions of the state have at the same time become more 'layered' and sophisticated. The distinction between governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies was not very meaningful to most people in the villages. They were all seen as providers of resources, representatives of urban lifestyle and power, and promoters of formalised procedures. In contrast the returnees have become acutely aware of different types of agencies, and particularly the distinction between 'governmental' and 'nongovernmental'.

Overall, the return movement can be considered to have contributed to the formation of a 'common discursive framework' in contemporary Guatemala, defined as a 'material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterised by domination' (Roseberry 1994: 361). The framework provides practices and discourses of (legitimate) intervention by governmental and other agencies, as well as a 'language of contention' through which subjects of the state can criticise and engage in negotiations with these agencies. According to Carol Smith, such a hegemonic construction has

not existed in Guatemala since the days of the colonial regime (Smith 1990). It might be a conclusion that the political effects of the numerous assistance projects for returnees in the former areas of conflict in Guatemala have been more significant than their economic effects (cf. McDonald and Gatehouse 1995).

The increased local presence of civil authorities and the ‘rule of law’ has, however, gone hand in hand with the perpetuation of previous conflicts, or the creation of new conflicts over resources and identities. The interventions described involved the introduction of new categories and boundaries which redefined the social landscape. They have been targeted mainly on the displaced, repatriates and returnees and have thus created new differences and provoked or magnified conflicts over resources and entitlements. The people who were present before the repatriates and returnees arrived have reacted to the visible or perceived privileges of the returnees by delegitimising the newcomers as intruding foreigners, guerrilla-supporters and/or representatives of the non-Indian national society - as the heirs of the *conquistadores*. In the context of the local conflicts over resources, they legitimise their actions with reference to their roots and their defence of the land during the conflict. The recently returned, on the other hand, have constructed themselves as developers - as modern ‘formal’ people, and have privileged access to development agencies.

The local conflicts that have emerged in the process of repatriation to Guatemala are not the same as national-level conflicts. They are best understood as conflicts over access to resources, communal leaderships, ethnic identities, and the exclusions and inclusions which accompany repatriation schemes and modernisation offensives. The Nentón case provides several reasons to believe that these local conflicts do not persist over time, and shows how the different parties can enter new tactical alliances. There is a persistent danger, however, that the kinds of conflict which have accompanied local return can be exploited by actors in the national conflict.