

# **The ABC of “Sustainable” Rural Cities in Chiapas<sup>1</sup>**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT A GOVERNMENT  
PROGRAM OF DESTRUCTION AND PLUNDER.

*Translated from the original in Spanish by Fionn O'Sullivan*

# THE ABC OF THE “SUSTAINABLE RURAL CITIES”

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# CONTENTS

1. What are the “Sustainable” Rural Cities (SRCs)?
2. Where does the idea for the SRCs come from?
3. Where does the money come from to build the SRCs?
4. How many SRCs have been built and how many are planned?
5. What is the objective of the SRCs?
6. Are there precedents for the SRCs?
7. How has a SRC become a “Rural Villa”?
8. What’s all this talk of a “dispersion – poverty” relationship?
9. Is the government forcing people to leave their lands?
10. Is there popular opposition to the SRCs?

# CONTENTS

11. Is there enough work in the SRCs?
12. There must be something positive about the SRCs, right?
13. What's this about "sustainability"?  
Are the Rural Cities that, in fact?
14. Why have they located SRCs in the places where they are, or are going to be?
15. What does the United Nations have to do with the Rural Cities?
16. Is there a danger that SRCs might be built elsewhere?
17. Are there alternatives to the SRCs?  
What do those who are against them propose?

*Even though one can talk of economic wars (like the blockade maintained by the United States government on the Republic of Cuba), or of the economic, religious, ideological, racial etc. aspects of a war, the objective remains the same. In the current moment the method of trying to impose capitalism is to destroy/depopulate and to reconstruct/reorder conquered territory.*

*Yes, wars these days are not about conquering territory and receiving tribute from the defeated power. The current stage of capitalism needs to destroy the conquered territory and to depopulate it, that is to say, to destroy its social fabric. I'm talking about the annihilation of all that gives cohesion to a society.*

**Sub-Commander Marcos, to Luis Villoro<sup>2</sup>**



SUSTAINABLE RURAL CITY,  
SANTIAGO EL PINAR  
PHOTO: ELIN SAHLIN

# 1. What are the Sustainable Rural Cities (SRCs)?

**T**

he Rural Cities in Chiapas are new small towns built in rural areas, or “new districts” of small towns that already exist, which offer the campesinos of the state a series of services (electricity, water, sewage, education, health, communications, work) with the objective of concentrating men and women of the countryside, because, according to the government, they live in “dispersed conditions”. The main objective for this concentration is, on the one hand, to despoil the rural population of their lands, that is, their principle resource and asset. In exchange for a home and various services in a Rural City, the government intends that the campesinos should abandon and sell their lands. Or if this cannot be achieved, at least compel them to cease their millennia-old practice of cultivating basic grains, and instead work to produce agricultural products for export or for consumption by the urban population, or to produce biofuels or other products, as will be seen later on.<sup>3</sup>

## **PLUNDER.**

**Plundering the original lands of the campesinos is the Rural Cities’ main objective.**

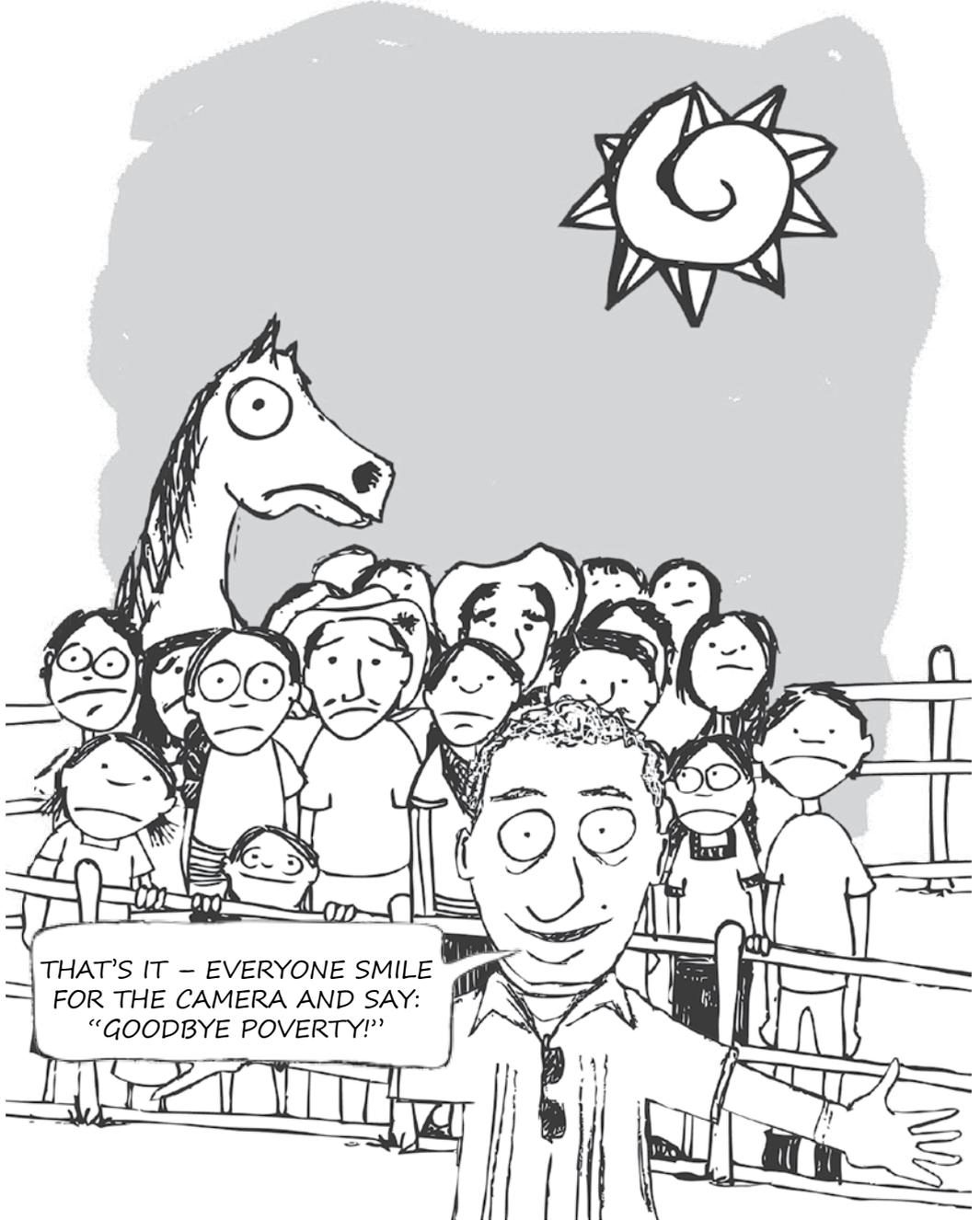
## 2. Where does the idea for the SRCs come from?

In Chiapas it is believed that the SRCs are the idea of the Governor Juan Sabines Guerrero (2006 – 2012), but in reality the government is only implementing the program. The ideas and theories behind the creation of the SRCs in Chiapas come from documents that provide the basis for the Puebla-Panama Plan when the Plan was launched during the term of President Vicente Fox (2000 – 2006). In turn, those "foundational" documents repeat themes from various sources including the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank and Santiago Levy, currently Vice President of the Inter-American Development Bank and previously Sub-Secretary in the Ministry for Finance and Public Credit during the government of President Ernesto Zedillo (1994 – 2000), who at the end of the 1990s co-authored a paper entitled "The South Also Exists".<sup>4</sup> All these documents propose the concentration of the rural population as a means of combating poverty.

The chapter on Mexico<sup>5</sup> in the Puebla-Panama Plan foundation document emphasises that one of its objectives is to support the sustainable management of resources, and from there identifies the need to promote programs of territorial re-ordering, owing to the high level of population dispersion in the south and south eastern regions. In addition, in 2008, the World Bank published its report World Development 2009, called "A new economic geography", claiming that economic integration is the best way of bringing development to all corners of the world. Economic integration, according to the report, means among other things, having better

### ORIGEN.

**The World Bank and the Plan Puebla-Panama are really the ones behind the Rural Cities. Local governments simply push them through.**





1. Juan Sabines Guerrero.

2. Inter-American Development Bank.

3. World Bank.

4. Santiago Levy.

links or proximity between rural and urban areas. As the World Bank points out “the challenge is to get an adequate density, channelling the forces of the market with the aim of encouraging concentration and promoting convergence between living standards between villages and towns and the big cities.”<sup>6</sup>

All of this is distilled by the Chiapas Government into a simple, compelling and disingenuous construction, which declares that there is such a thing as the “dispersion – poverty relationship”, and then says that “population dispersion is the cause of extreme poverty”.<sup>7</sup> With such a simple diagnosis, the solution appears simple and self-evident: concentrating the population “will eradicate poverty in an effective way.”<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Where does the money come from to build the SRCs?



In 2009 it was reported that for the construction of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, 60% of the budget was from federal resources (Section 23 funds), 25% from state-level resources and 15% from private sector contributions.<sup>9</sup> Tracing the sources of finance for the Rural Cities is difficult if not impossible, as neither the federal nor state governments has provided transparent information about them. Does the money come from taxes raised from the population? Or from bank loans? It's not possible to know with any certainty.

One possible source of finance for the construction of the Rural Cities is multi-lateral funders, bodies like the World Bank or the Inter American Development Bank, which have given billions of dollars to the Mexican government for "housing" projects. It hasn't been possible to establish if the money from multi-lateral funders has been channelled into the Rural Cities, but this probably is the case.

Private sector finance has been provided in the form of donations from foundations set up by large corporations. These donations have been used for the construction of certain projects within the SRCs, in particular for Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, but there is no public information available on the size of these contributions (see Appendix 1 for the list of participating foundations).

#### **MULTILATERAL FUNDERS?**

Where the money comes from to build the SRCs remains a mystery. The government has kept this information in the dark.



**BASKETBALL COURTS AT THE NUEVO  
JUAN DE GRIJALVA RURAL CITY.**

PHOTO: CIEPAC ARCHIVE.

### **FAILED PROJECT**

**The foundations quickly lost interest in the SRCs. In turn, the government scaled down the publicity efforts it had made at the start.**

Large corporations are donating money for the Rural Cities, but their motives are not pure altruism. Firstly, they receive in exchange an exemption from taxes that they would otherwise have to pay to the Treasury; secondly, their donations allow them to exercise a monopoly of the sale of their products and services within the Rural Cities. Farmacias del Ahorro gave money to build basketball courts in Nuevo Juan de Grijalva. In exchange, their logo is plastered all over the courts, and they have a monopoly over the medicines that are sold there.

The Azteca Foundation (from TV Azteca, Electra [a consumer goods chain] and other companies owned by the industrialist and millionaire Roberto Salinas Pliego) donated money to promote small and medium size companies, and in return UNEFON (also owned by Salinas Pliego) has a monopoly on mobile phone coverage in Nuevo Juan de Grijalva.<sup>10</sup>

It has not been possible to establish why these foundations lost interest in the Rural Cities project after the inauguration of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva on 17 September 2010. The majority of the foundations that took part in the construction of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva have abandoned the project and the Chiapas Government has not launched big publicity campaigns celebrating their presence, as was the case when the first Rural City was established.

## 4. How many Rural Cities have been built and how many are due to be built?

**T**

he number of Rural Cities planned has varied with time. In 2008 the Sabines government announced there would be 25 Rural Cities in Chiapas, eight of which would be built in that year. The reality has been very different. At the end of 2011, two Rural Cities have been built – Nuevo Juan de Grijalva in the municipality of Ostuacan (northern region), and Santiago El Pinar in the municipality of the same name (highlands region). Two more are in construction – Jaltenango in the municipality of Angel Albino Corzo (Frailesca region) and Ixhuatan in the municipality of the same name (northern region). In the last two, progress has been slow. A visit to Ixhuatan at the end of November 2011 revealed that although the large part of the “social infrastructure” (civic square, public market, health centre) had been built, house building had been held up while waiting for finance to be approved. It is not very likely that this Rural City will be populated in time for the next federal and state elections in July 2012. Jaltenango is even further behind.

### OUTLANDISH ESTIMATES

**In 2008 the Sabines Government announced that there would be 25 Rural Cities in Chiapas. At the end of 2011, two Rural Cities have been built – New Juan de Grijalva in Ostuacan municipality (northern region), and Santiago El Pinar (highlands region), with two more in the process of being built.**

According to Chiapas Government documents available on the internet at the end of 2011, a fifth Rural City is “being studied” at Copainlá, in the municipality of the same name (central region), which will be the largest of all, with nearly 900 houses.<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely that work will begin on this Rural City before the end of Juan Sabines’



**THE FIRST RURAL CITY, NEW JUAN DE  
GRIJALVA (2009).**

PHOTO: ELIN SAHLIN

“In 2008 the Sabines Government announced that there would be 25 Rural Cities in Chiapas. At the end of 2011, two Rural Cities have been built – New Juan de Grijalva in Ostuacan municipality (northern region), and Santiago El Pinar (highlands region), with two more in the process of being built”.

six year term in December 2012.

Government accounts of the Rural Cities have varied along the way. In 2008 President Calderon (2006 – 2012) announced an extensive house-building program including mortgage finance for 50,000 homes, with which it was sought to extend the Mexican model of housing construction throughout Central America. The president of the Rural Cities Consultative Council, Esteban Moctezuma Barragan, who is also the president of the Azteca Foundation, declared that “there will be Rural Cities not just in Mexico, they will spread across Latin America and the globe, and will be the legacy of President Calderon and Governor Sabines, because they solve many problems at the same time because they address the issue at the root.”<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, by the end of 2011 the Chiapas Government was hardly mentioning the Rural Cities in its press statements or in publicity in the mass media. Throughout 2011, the Chiapas Government’s Public Relations Department maintained a low profile in its statements on the issue.

AND ABOUT THE FACT THAT NOT MANY OF THE PLANNED RURAL CITIES HAVE BEEN BUILT, WHAT CAN YOU TELL US?

HMM... WELL... YOU KNOW, THE RURAL CITIES IS A REALLY IMPORTANT PROJECT, AND ER... HMM... ER... IT'S REALLY MOVED ALONG A LOT... AND... ER... WELL... THIS GOVERNMENT KEEPS ITS PROMISES, NOT LIKE OTHER ONES! YOU KNOW: DEEDS, NOT WORDS... RIGHT? AND ERM... CAN YOU REPEAT THE QUESTION?





AGRO-INDUSTRY, NUEVO JUAN DE GRIJALVA.

PHOTO: ELIN SAHLIN

## 5. What is the objective of the SRCs?

T

he Rural Cities are part of a long-term government plan of enormous proportions that intends to reconfigure, remake and reorder Chiapas' rural areas so that they serve and generate greater profit for the lords of capital. The plan is not exclusive to Chiapas, nor even to Mexico. It is a movement taking place across the world, which has different versions in different countries. Nonetheless, the medicine is the same everywhere: governments provide the battering rams, the advance battalions that build infrastructure, change laws, displace populations and privatize natural resources, train people to work for the private sector and then receive with honours private companies so that the latter can invest capital, ending up by pillaging, exploiting and wiping out.

The Rural Cities runs along another program of the Sabines Government, named Productive Reconversion, which aims to incentivise the production of agricultural products and goods for export, at the same time restricting the sowing of basic grains and other subsistence produce. What is being sought with these programs is nothing less than "social engineering" to transform the countryside, destroying ways of life and millennia-old traditional practices, all in order to promote private investment.

### **PRODUCTIVE RECONVERSION**

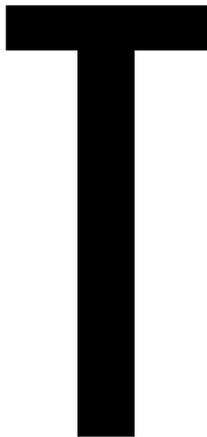
**The aim of the SRCs is to suppress subsistence cultivation and promote production for export, thereby encouraging private investment.**

In this context, the English researcher Japhy Wilson has written:<sup>13</sup>

“The launch of the Rural Cities Project in Chiapas in 2007 thus appears in a very different light when viewed in historical context than when framed by the narrow state discourse of ‘poverty’ and ‘dispersion’. Located within a broader process of neoliberalization, and confronted by an armed insurgency developing its own urban project of social transformation, the Rural Cities may indeed reduce poverty and dispersion, but will also fulfil the political-economic function of clearing the peasantry from the land, implementing capitalist relations of production, and replacing the semi-autonomous space of the ejido with a space in which all dimensions of everyday life can be monitored and administered by the state. As the government of Chiapas has itself made clear, the Rural Cities “should in no way be considered as a single act of relocation in a housing estate. On the contrary, it is a project that implies a change of life in its inhabitants”.<sup>14</sup>



## 6. Are there precedents for the SRCs?



he Rural Cities program is similar in its objectives to displacement of people brought about in other contexts, in particular "hot" wars. In war, sometimes an army aims to "clear" an area of its civilian population and concentrate it in another location for various reasons. For example, as a counter-insurgency measure in an area, to separate the enemy from its civilian support base. In addition, to control the civilian population with the aim of indoctrinating them, or to prevent their opponent doing so.

In the case of Chiapas, some of these objectives are found in the context of a "low intensity war" against, in general, traditional campesino movements, and in particular against the Zapatista and other movements and independent organizations. Apart from creating a dependence on the government among families that live in the rural cities, the long term objective is to cut at the root the bind that campesinos have with the valuable natural resource that is the land, as well as what is above and below it.

The sites in which the civilian population is forced to relocate to and concentrate in are known by various names: concentration camps, relocation camps, internment camps, native reserves, model villages, new villages, strategic villages, development poles, agro-villas, and now, the self contradictory description Rural Cities.



NO, THE BEANS HAVEN'T ARRIVED, NOR THE MAIZE, BUT SOME REALLY TASTY ANIMAL BISCUITS HAVE JUST COME IN!

IN OTHER WORDS, WE WERE BETTER OFF WHEN WE WERE WORSE OFF.

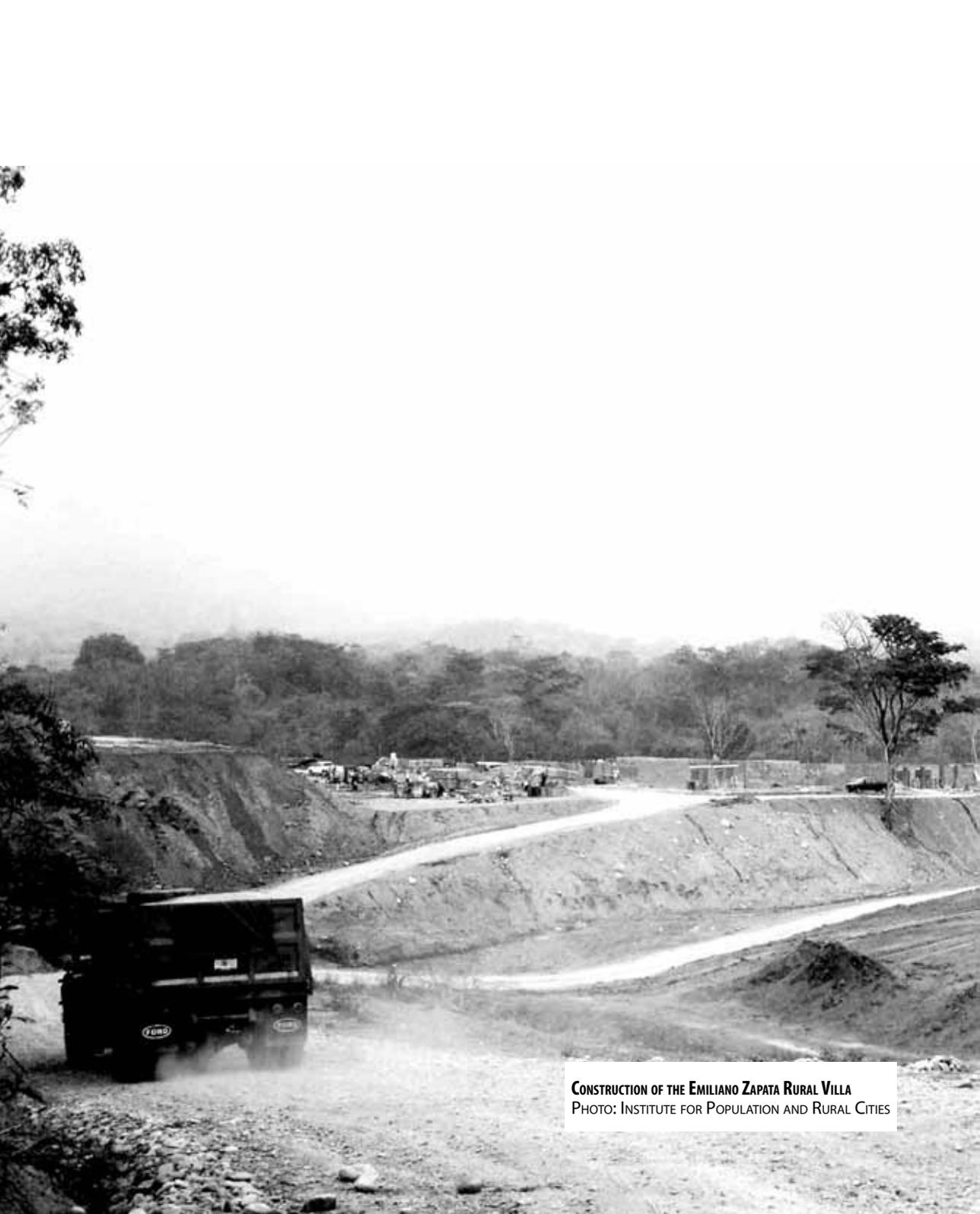
**A BREAK**

**The names of this kind of project have changed through history: from native reserves and concentration camps to the current and contradictory title Rural Cities. What has not changed much is one of the underlying aims: to cut at the root the bind between people and the valuable resource that is the land (what lies in it and underneath it).**

While it is incorrect to think that campesino families in the 21st century live in communities isolated and far from the capitalist market, it's undoubtable that living in Rural Cities constitutes a break with their previous way of life and an insertion into a world whose poles and values are different. In interviews, various inhabitants of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva stated that in the countryside "we used to have everything". Foodstuffs in particular could be got relatively easily and at low or no cost, while "here in the Rural City we have to buy everything" (listen to the [Spanish] Radio Zapatista report on the Rural Cities at <http://radiozapatista.org/?p=1159>). Life in the Rural Cities radically changes factors and concepts such as space, time, work, the reproduction of culture, relations with nature, ways of production, and without doubt, identity. Another objective that cannot be left out is the "showcasing" of the Governor. When Juan Sabines leaves the governorship at the end of 2012 he will be just 44 years old. It's logical to think that he will want to continue his political career in the next six year period. For this he has to demonstrate initiative and "enterprise" in his current management of the governorship, which in Mexico is not achieved by heading a sober, honest or efficient administration. On the contrary, it is achieved through mega projects through which large amounts of cash flow. In turn, these open a path for big companies at the same time as displacing, impoverishing and destroying the life of campesinos and the poor, leaving a trail of banknotes for cronies and friendly companies. The corrupt media transform these plunder plans into almost messianic visions of a governor and his noble campaign to save the people from their poverty. Further on we will see to what extent it has been possible to achieve these goals in the three years that the "Sustainable" Rural Cities project has been operating.

**THE MEDIA AND ITS LIES**

**Corrupt as they are, in return for official contracts the media transforms plans for shady business deals and plunder into almost messianic visions of the governor.**



**CONSTRUCTION OF THE EMILIANO ZAPATA RURAL VILLA**  
PHOTO: INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION AND RURAL CITIES

## 7. How has a Rural City become a “Rural Villa”?

# A

part from the Rural Cities, Government of Chiapas documents talk of the creation of various Rural Villas. At the current moment only one Rural Villa is in (slow) construction, the Emiliano Zapata estate in Tecpatán municipality, in the northern zone of Chiapas. Its history is intertwined with the organizational processes of the OPEZ (Emiliano Zapata Proletarian Organization). The future inhabitants of this Rural Villa are the victims of the same torrential rains at the end of 2007 which produced significant loss of life and property damage for the current residents of the Nuevo Juan de Grijalva Rural City. The militancy of the OPEZ, expressed through years of proceedings, sit-ins, demonstrations and public denunciations brought the state government to negotiate the terms of its incorporation in a Rural City. The OPEZ leaders managed to extract certain concessions, in terms of the type of housing that would be constructed, the location of the new settlement, the right to maintain their original lands and a certain amount of autonomy in the management of financial resources. These achievements by the militant residents of the OPEZ disturbed the government authorities to such an extent that they downgraded the status of the future settlement to that of a Rural Villa. Academic Dolores Camacho affirms that “no-one [of the future residents] understood the distinction

between a city and a villa, but it seems that the objective is to avoid the original official project being distorted, with the experience of the OPEZ's struggle leading to other areas demanding the same treatment".<sup>15</sup>

In 2010 the leader and founder of the OPEZ, Caralampio Gómez Hernández, was accused of embezzlement and jailed, freezing construction of the villa for months. At the end of 2011, Caralampio Gómez was freed and construction began again, but four years after having lost their homes and lands, 243 families and future residents continue waiting, in an overcrowded, unhealthy and foul-smelling "temporary" camp, with no mid-term estimated of when they might move into their new homes. Desperate to get away from the overcrowding and resume their lives, some families have returned to their previous homes, in spite of government warnings of the dangers of possible future floods.



**DISPLACED PERSONS CAMP.**  
PHOTO: CARLOS HERRERA

## 8. What’s all this talk of a “dispersion – poverty” relationship?

**T**

he government of Juan Sabines says it has discovered the principal reason behind poverty, that is, the dispersion of the population. According to this view, one is poor because one does not live in a centre of population of a certain size and therefore lacks access to government services that one would have in a larger settlement. The government publishes data on dispersion in Chiapas (of 19,386 settlements in Chiapas, 14,436 have less than a hundred inhabitants), but does not justify its assertion that dispersion is a cause of poverty, let alone the principal cause. It simply asserts that: “the high level of dispersion makes impossible the provision of services and the economic and social development of communities”.<sup>16</sup>

Under this vision, to reach “development”, the provision of resources by the government is indispensable. It completely ignores the issues of power relations and the appalling distribution of wealth as causal factors of poverty. Neither does it mention urban poverty, which in some cases is worse than that found in the countryside. How to explain then the scandalous urban poverty that exists in many cities, in spite of not having the dispersion of population that supposedly exists in Chiapas and causes its poverty? On the contrary, urban poverty reflects not dispersion but over-crowding.

### **DISPERSION?**

**If the cause of poverty is population dispersion, why then are there so many poor people in cities?**

## 9. Is the government forcing people to leave their lands?

**T**

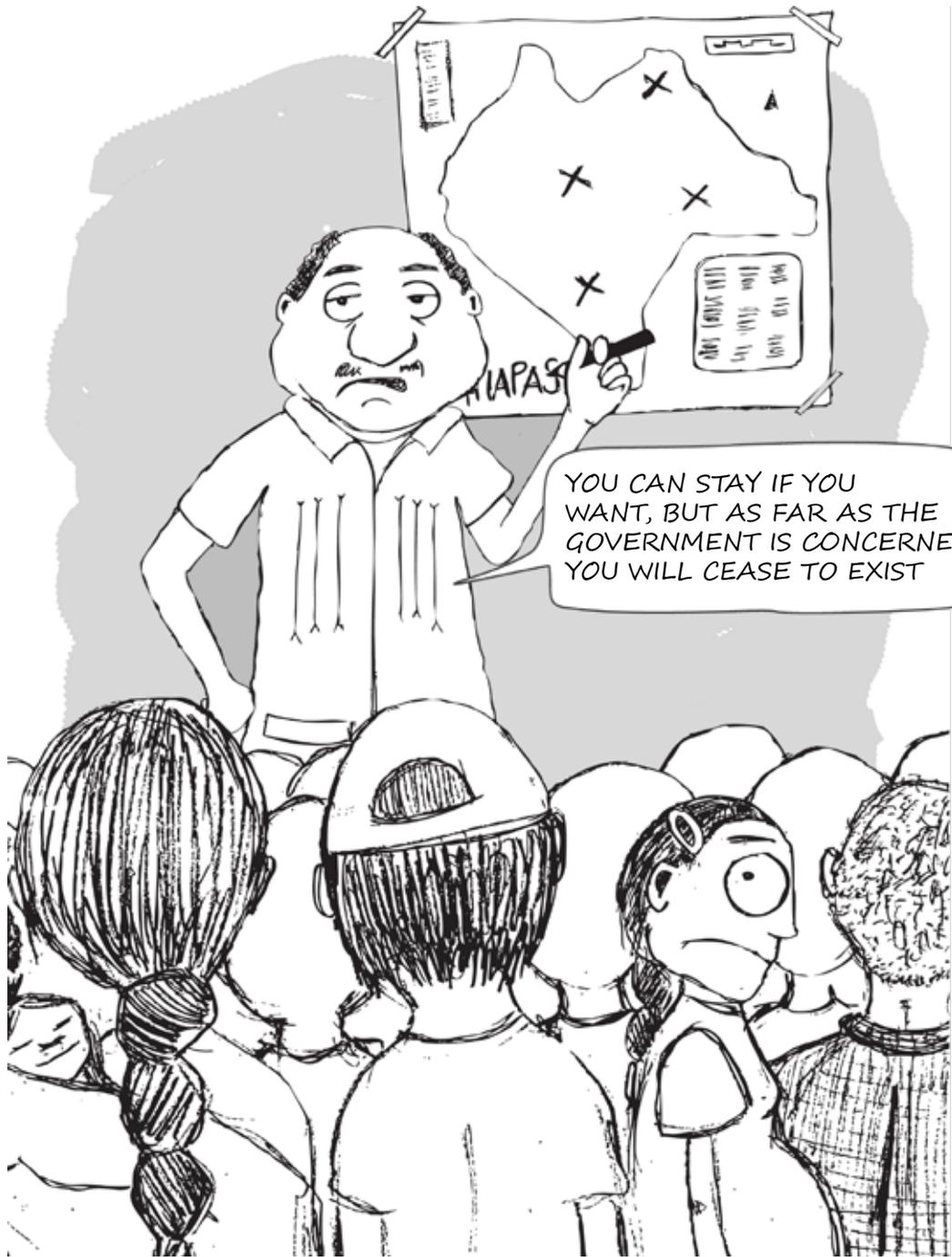
his is one of the most important aspects of the Sustainable Rural Cities project. Since being announced in 2008, various analysts have indicated<sup>17</sup> that one of the objectives of the project is to dispossess the campesinos of their lands, with the aim of making them more "profitable" in the hands of large companies. This objective has been denounced on several occasions by social and civic organizations and human rights organizations such as the Fray Bartolome Center and the LIMEDDH (Liga Mexicana de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos – Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights).

On one hand, it is certain that there is pressure from government authorities for people to abandon their lands if they live in a community selected by the state government for transfer to a Rural City. In the areas affected by floods and by the blocking of the River Grijalva in November 2007,<sup>18</sup> the government moved those affected to temporary camps and pressured residents in areas close to the river banks (technically, close to the 100 mark, that is within an altitude of 100 metres above sea level) to cede their property to the government, in exchange for a house that would later be built in New San Juan de Grijalva. When the residents had signed the agreement, the government proceeded to destroy their houses so they could not return.

In other cases, in communities where the residents have been reluctant to abandon their homes and lands, the government has taken coercive measures, removing the few government services that were previously provided: school teachers, medical and dental attention, vaccinations for children and electricity, among others. The government also appears to have removed the names of villages

### **COERCIVE MEASURES**

**The government has taken measures so that after ceding their properties people cannot return to their own homes: destruction of the original dwellings, and suspension of the few government services that were previously provided (school, medical attention, electricity etc.)**



YOU CAN STAY IF YOU WANT, BUT AS FAR AS THE GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED YOU WILL CEASE TO EXIST

### OFFICIAL MAPS

**The names of communities that continue to fight against the loss of their lands have officially disappeared from maps.**



**FLOODING IN COMMUNITIES IN CHIAPAS AND TABASCO, PROVOKED BY INTENSE RAINS IN NOVEMBER 2007.**

PHOTO: INTERNET

from official maps, making official the “disappearance” of communities that resist and fight against the loss of their lands.<sup>19</sup>

Families from New Colombia near to the Rural City at Jaltenango, displaced by the torrential storms and landslides in September 2010 have not been able to return to live in their community. Only men have been allowed to return to their lands to work them or to harvest coffee. Women and children have been prohibited from being in their original homes, even those that suffered no damage.<sup>20</sup> While the Jaltenango SRC is being built, families have to live in sports facilities, facing various health and overcrowding problems, or to live with other families elsewhere.

Nonetheless, the displacement has not been as fast or as easy as the authorities might have wanted. In fact, the underlying, if hidden aim of seizing land has come up against enormous resistance from indigenous campesinos. The next answer deals with this issue.

## 10. Is there popular opposition to the SRCs?



PILGRIMAGE BY THE PUEBLO CREYENTE.  
PHOTO: SIPAZ

# W

ithout doubt. There are different types of opposition to the Rural Cities, among campesinos and indigenous people who live in them as well as from organised communities that do not live in them but are aware of their implications.

One of the groups that has mobilised most to denounce the cultural destruction and looting of resources implied by the Rural Cities is the Pueblo Creyente [People of Faith].<sup>21</sup> During a pilgrimage in November 2010 against "projects of death", this indigenous grouping declared:

"We denounce... the rural cities project, because it is not a

**WHAT DOES PUEBLO CREYENTE SAY?**

The Rural Cities in Chiapas are part of the system of neoliberal plans, projects and businesses for transnational companies that step by step are taking over our mother earth and removing its natural resources.

**WHAT DO LAS ABEJAS SAY?**

If in truth they want to benefit us, the first thing they should do is respect us... Does anyone believe [Juan Sabines] consulted us to see if we agreed? He hasn't even officially informed us. He hasn't asked if we want to leave our homes and lands, to give us other ones that they have decided on".

sign of life for indigenous people, but of death. It is a plan imposed by the government to control the population and to destroy their culture. With reason the bishops of Latin America have stated: the indigenous peoples are threatened in their physical, cultural and spiritual existence, they suffer grave attacks on their identity and very survival, as economic and cultural globalization puts in danger their existence as separate peoples. It is not true that this is a project to reduce poverty. It is grounded in the lie that dispersion causes poverty. This is not true. We hold that the cause is that the riches of this nation are in the hands of a few and do not reach those who in truth need them. These projects are there to make the rich even richer and to impoverish the poor even more, that is to say, the economic system is at the service of the rich and is not there to end poverty. All that is given to the indigenous are the left-overs, to calm the consciences [of the rich] and to hold back the struggle for truth and justice. As such, the Rural Cities in Chiapas are part of the system of neoliberal plans, projects and businesses for transnational companies that step by step are taking over our mother earth and removing its natural resources."

(See the CIEPAC video on Youtube, "Pilgrimage against death projects: mines, dams, rural cities". Search for it by its name in Spanish: "Peregrinación contra proyectos de muerte: minas, represas, ciudades rurales")

Las Abejas [The Bees], a well-known social organization in Chiapas, has also denounced the project. In 2010 it declared:

"If in truth they want to benefit us, the first they should do is RESPECT US. But no, they barge in and do what they want with our lands and our resources. This is what is happening in the Rural Cities of Juan Sabines; after spending many millions announcing them to the whole world he has started to build them, one in the neighbouring municipality of Santiago El Pinar, another right here in the municipality of San Juan Chenalhó. Does anyone believe he consulted us to see if we agreed? He hasn't even officially informed us. He hasn't asked if we want to leave our homes and lands, to give us other ones that they have decided on. They haven't engaged in dialogue to see what is needed

in this municipality... we understand the government's plan very clearly. They want to control our organizations, to take over our lands and do business with transnational companies. This is the reason for the counter-insurgency campaign against independent organizations. For this reason [ex-President] Zedillo and the federal Congress didn't want to pass the San Andres Accords, because these would have obliged the government to respect us. That which is laid down in Article 169 of the International Labour Organization would have been enshrined in the Constitution: governments cannot implement projects nor exploit the resources in indigenous territories without first CONSULTING THE COMMUNITIES." [capitals in the original]<sup>22</sup>



### RESISTANCE

People have resisted in many ways: from refusing to accept edicts on "risk zones" and continuing to live in their homes, to transforming their homes within the Rural Cities.

These important declarations constitute examples of support and solidarity towards people who have been displaced through the force of nature or the designs of government and now live in the Rural Cities. There is however something even more important, which constitutes the resistance of the campesinos, communal land holders and communities against the loss of their land.

This might be that, from the start, the residents said "no" to the government attempts to despoil them via "risk zone" edicts (as in the case of the Emiliano Zapata Rural Villa), or because they boycott the houses built for them and instead go on living in their original communities (the case in Santiago El Pinar), or because even when living in the Rural City, they simply continue working their lands in the face of the make-work jobs created by the government in the new settlements (as at Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva), finding ways to hold onto their lands.

People resist in many ways: the people of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva have remodeled their homes, reorienting them or changing them to be more livable, even more sociable, more open to contact with neighbours.<sup>23</sup>

The boycott of the indigenous communities in the Santiago El Pinar area of the houses built in what has come to be, rather than a Rural City, an extension of the municipal centre, is of

**OVER-CROWDING**

A house measuring 4.74x5.72 metres means overcrowded conditions for a typical campesino family.

undeniable importance. In an interview carried out in a visit to Santiago El Pinar by academics from the United States, the workers in the assembly plant were asked why they did not live in the newly built houses. One answer was: "For what? You can't even cook in them". The walls, ceiling and floors of the houses in the Santiago El Pinar SRC are built of plywood, an inflammable compressed wood, inappropriate for traditional methods of cooking on an open fire.

The floor space in the houses at Santiago El Pinar (internal dimensions of 4.74 by 5.72 metres)<sup>24</sup> are the smallest in all of the SRCs: their use by a typical campesino family would result in over-crowding. Built onto steep slopes and supported by thin concrete pillars, located in a zone which experiences heavy rain for seven months of the year, and with construction faults visible to the eye, the diminutive houses of Santiago El Pinar offer no guarantees of any type, let alone of sustainability.

Houses at Nuevo San Grijalva also have construction defects and, as documented by the LIMEDDH,<sup>25</sup> they make use of materials which are of inferior quality to those detailed in the official accounts. Even as such, they are better than those at Santiago El Pinar in terms of internal and external spaces and construction materials. They are also nothing like the houses being built at Ixhuatan, which are more spacious, with a better design and of a higher quality. Of the Rural Cities already built or in construction, the houses at Santiago El Pinar, the only Rural City in the indigenous zone, are the most precarious. To add insult to injury, the director of the Institute of Population and Rural Cities, Romeo Moscoso Loranca, had the almost racist nerve to declare that Santiago El Pinar has "indigenous characteristics".<sup>26</sup> We could ask the official: where does he observe this: in the over-crowding, in the precariousness, in the smallness, in the shacks that the few resident families have had to build next to their houses to be able to cook?



**HOUSES AT SANTIAGO EL PINAR: THE SMALLEST LIVING SPACES BUILT WITH THE WORST CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS.**

PHOTO: ZZ-COLETIVO

## 11. Is there enough work in the SRCs?

**T**

his, without doubt, is the Achilles Heel of the Rural Cities. Neither economic theory nor common sense backs up the idea that "concentrating" 400, 500 or 600 families will in itself create a supply of jobs. Furthermore, on principle, bringing together people from the countryside in a Rural City implies the creation of unemployment when they are separated from the land, the principal means of sustenance. The state government knows this and for this reason has tried to provide demand for labour through various productive projects that can be found in the Rural Cities. However, nothing will be that certain for campesino families, in particular during times of crisis, than having access to their own means of production which at least would support them on a daily basis.

The few projects financed by the government have never been enough to address the demand for jobs that exists in the Rural Cities. Furthermore, several have closed as a result of being loss-making. Testimonies collected from residents of Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva show this clearly: "there's no work here". One official from the (state-level) Department for Social Development commented to some researchers that –being generous in her estimates– in Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva 40% of families are unemployed and that they "are looking for any work opportunities that might be created".<sup>27</sup>

The problem is that the Rural Cities do not generate work on their own, because they are relatively isolated, without sufficient transport connections, and because they are located away from major commercial traffic routes. The few sources of work that do exist depend almost without exception on government support, that is to say, subsidies that allow productive projects to function.

### SUBSIDISED EMPLOYMENT

The few sources of employment in the SRCs are almost completely dependent on state subsidy. Without this subsidy, they would be simply unworkable.

What is produced in the Rural Cities (roses, gladioli, eggs, bread, tomatoes, chilli etc.) will be consumed within the settlement, or requires guaranteed “market demand”.

Some projects, like the rose greenhouses at Santiago El Pinar, have failed because marketing issues were not thought through properly. Other projects, such as poultry farming in the same Rural City generate produce which is required in the same area, but are managed by just three or four families.

In Santiago El Pinar, what appears to be the exception to the rule is the assembly plant (maquiladora) which provides work for 150 people. Benotto-branded bicycles, three-wheeled cycle carts for the street sale of corn-on-the-cob, tamales, hot-dogs etc., and desks for primary schools are assembled in the factory. The people employed there earn 3,000 pesos a month (US\$221), plus a bonus of 1,000 pesos if they turn up to work punctually and “washed”, a shamelessly racist requirement imposed by mestizo managers on indigenous employees.

While the assembly plant operates as a cooperative, it depends entirely on the government to work. Without the subsidies to pay for salaries and supplies (which in the large part come from Mexico City, a thousand kilometres away), and without the guaranteed sales of desks from the Department of Education, the assembly plant would not be sustainable. It is not idle to speculate that the bicycles and carts for street sales will not be sold but instead will end up being used in other projects, or to “thank” citizens for supporting particular political candidates. The assembly plant is an “economic fiction”, at least in terms of today’s neoliberal capitalism. No private company would be able to overcome the considerable challenges represented by the distances over which supplies have to be brought, selling the completed products or generating profits that are worth the effort.

### ECONOMIC FICTION

The assembly plant is an “economic fiction”. The assembled products are paid for almost exclusively by the state, not the market.





IN SANTIAGO EL PINAR, THE ASSEMBLY PLANT FOR BENOTTO BICYCLES AND TRICYCLE CARTS FOR THE SALE OF CORN-ON-THE-COB, TAMALES, HOT DOGS ETC. IS THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE: IT PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT FOR 150 PEOPLE. HOWEVER, IT CANNOT SUSTAIN ITSELF WITHOUT SUBSIDIES. THE CARTS WILL PROBABLY NOT BE SOLD, BUT INSTEAD USED FOR OTHER PROJECTS OR TO "THANK" CITIZENS FOR SUPPORTING PARTICULAR POLITICAL CANDIDATES.

PHOTO: MARIFLOR AGUILAR



OTHER PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE POULTRY FARMS IN THE SAME RURAL CITY, GENERATE PRODUCE FOR WHICH THERE IS DEMAND IN THE LOCAL AREAS, BUT ARE MANAGED BY JUST THREE OR FOUR FAMILIES.

PHOTO: MARIFLOR AGUILAR

The new furniture factory that is soon to be opened in Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva<sup>28</sup> will predictably face the same challenges.

One resident interviewed in Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva aptly summed up the principal weakness of the Rural Cities. In response to the question "What would make a Rural City "sustainable", he answered: "well, there would need to be enough work".<sup>29</sup>

The two Rural Cities established so far are not self-supporting in terms of work. In reality, the Rural Cities depend on resident campesinos who, far from finding work in them, continue working their previous land-holdings. In other words, the families that continue in the possession of their lands take from them what is required to live in the Rural Cities, despite the sacrifice (in cost and time) required to work them.

An irony: the supposed sustainable Rural Cities would better be called "Rural Cities sustained by the campesinos".

All of the aforesaid raises disconcerting questions: will the next governor of Chiapas, who will take office in December 2012, have the same priorities as Juan Sabines, and will he (since all the candidates are males) continue subsidising the (few) sources of employment in the Rural Cities? Or will he pursue his own mega-projects for personal prestige, scattering the Chiapas countryside with white elephants like the "sustainable" Rural Cities?

## 12. There must be something positive about the SRCs, right?



# A

According to some residents who were interviewed, the main reason for staying in Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva is the school for their children. A resident also mentioned the presence of the clinic, even if it has defects such as lacking the full range of medicines, or its prescription of the same medicine for a wide range of illnesses.<sup>30</sup>

One researcher with a good knowledge of Santiago El Pinar – who prefers to remain anonymous – confirmed that the residents do appreciate certain aspects of the Rural City. For example, the drains, paved roads, support for coffee producers (there is a warehouse that buys the coffee from the region’s producers). But even so, people are refusing to live in the Santiago El Pinar Rural City, leading to one newspaper to label it a “ghost city”.<sup>31</sup> The researcher estimates that only 5% of the houses built are inhabited by people from the area, with the other 10% being occupied by officials and doctors and nurses from the clinic. In other words, 85% of the houses are not lived in, as the area’s inhabitants prefer their previous houses and plots.

## 13. What’s this about “sustainability”? Are the Rural Cities that, in fact?

THEY’RE CALLED SUSTAINABLE BECAUSE WE’RE TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY. THEY’RE STILL NOT THAT SUSTAINABLE, BUT THE IDEA IS THAT THEY’RE GOING TO BE, BECAUSE SUSTAINABILITY IS A PRIORITY FOR THIS GOVERNMENT. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING HERE IS THAT THE CONCEPT IS WELL UNDERSTOOD. IT IS UNDERSTOOD, RIGHT?



# T

he “sustainability” of the Rural Cities is a mystery. No government document defines the concept. We can infer that what is meant to be understood is that the Rural Cities will sustain themselves once official subsidies are withdrawn, and that they will go on functioning as autonomous entities (an aspect that was called into question in answer 9). More likely, we can speculate that the issue is one of fashion, and the name “sustainable” was used as it sounds more attractive.

As with so many aspects of the Rural Cities, the term sustainable is another deception. In the context of the already existing Rural Cities in Chiapas it doesn’t mean anything, let alone that these new settlements have their own life. One of the key tests of any settlement that is sustainable in reality would be that it creates employment of its own accord. However, as we have already seen, without ongoing financial support from the government, the Rural Cities wouldn’t have the few projects and sources of work that actually exist. And even with these, as the inhabitants point out, “there’s no work here”. In terms of the definition of “sustainability” from an environmental point of view, there is no data or information that back up the suggestion that the Rural Cities have any characteristics that protect or defend the environment.

### SUSTAINABLE?

Sources of employment are not self-supporting without subsidies from the public purse. Even with those that exist, there is little work in the SRCs. Neither is there any data on whether the Rural Cities protect or defend the environment.

## 14. Why have they located SRCs in the places where they are, or are going to be?

**E**

ach Rural City has its own history. However, the Chiapas Government, and within it, the Institute for Population and Rural Cities, has never clarified the reason for the exact location of the new settlements. The first Rural City, Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva, provided for 410 families displaced by the torrential rains of October and November 2007; the Emiliano Zapata Rural Villa has a similar purpose. The location of the former was decided by the government on its own, while the latter resulted from the decision of leaders of the OPEZ, who negotiated the purchase of 111 hectares for the Rural Villa with the government.

However, no government document explains why, for instance, it was decided to locate a Rural City at Santiago El Pinar (it is one of the poorest municipalities in the country, although in 2000 Chiapas had 44 municipalities with a very high level of poverty),<sup>32</sup> nor in Jaltenango or Ixhuatan. Nonetheless, various social organizations, journalists and researchers have put forward the idea that the precise location of the Rural Cities serves other goals, apart from “concentrating” the dispersed population. Various observers hold that the location of Santiago El Pinar is for reasons of counter-insurgency, for its location in one of the main zones of Zapatista influence at Oventic, one of the five Zapatista Caracoles [autonomous municipal centers], and for its panoramic view over various communities and access roads, including the autonomous municipalities of San Andres and San Juan del Bosque.<sup>33</sup>

In turn, the Ixhuatan Rural City is close to important

**COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

The location of some Rural Cities may be due to their closeness to areas of Zapatista support and to access roads.

**DISPLACING FAMILIES.**

The Ixhuatan Rural City lies next to important mining concessions held by the Canadian mining company Cangold, Grupo Frisco and Grupo Carso. The government of Chiapas could facilitate the forced transfer of the population, offering affected families “a new house”.

**GOVERNMENT PRETEXT.**

The Jaltenango Rural City lies close to the El Triunfo nature reserve, which may be used to displace an undetermined number of families. Official discourse criminalizes the campesino and indigenous population, blaming it for damaging the environment.

mining concessions. Just six kilometres away lies the Santa Fe mine, operated by Grupo Frisco and Grupo Carso, whose owner is Carlos Slim. In addition, the Santa Fe mine borders an enormous holding of 4,761 hectares which belongs to the Canadian mining company Cangold Limited based in Vancouver. This territory encompasses parts of the municipalities of Ixhuatan, Chapeltenango and Ixtacomitan. Predictably, Cangold will use its concession to extract 1.7 million ounces of gold and 6.6 million ounces of silver<sup>34</sup> through open cast mining. Apart from the ecological disaster that this implies for the surrounding and distant areas, because of the cyanide that will filter into important rivers that cross this attractive landscape, it will displace hundreds and possibly thousands of families in the area. The Chiapas government will facilitate this enforced migration, offering affected families “a new house” in the Ixhuatan Rural City.

The Jaltenango Rural City lies close to the El Triunfo nature reserve, On the pretext of protecting the environment of this ecological reserve, an undefined number of families that live and work there<sup>35</sup> will be displaced from the heart of the zone and from bordering areas. An official from the Jaltenango municipal presidency stated in an interview how convenient it will be to relocate these communities from the reserve, as in this way “we will protect the flora and fauna and avoid the massive destruction caused by deforestation. The language used illustrates a tendency often found in official discourse: the criminalization of the campesino and indigenous population. Millennia-old practices such as the cultivation of maize which are part of the cultural heritage of the whole Meso-America region are now deemed responsible not only for causing “natural” disasters but also for environmental deterioration and global warming.<sup>36</sup>

In Copainlá Municipality there are plans to build the



NUEVO SAN JUAN DE GRIJALVA RURAL CITY.  
PHOTO: INTERNET

### HYDROELECTRICITY.

The largest Rural City yet planned will be built in the municipality of Copainlá, where there is interest in building a new hydroelectric dam, a project that is currently un-viable due to the level of community resistance that it would encounter.

largest rural city yet, with nearly 500 dwellings for 4,500 inhabitants from 24 localities in the region, in an area measuring 116 hectares. In July of 2010 spokespersons from the Federal Commission for Electricity announced plans to build two new hydroelectric dams in Chiapas, one in the municipality of Acala and the other in Copainlá. On this occasion, the coordinator of hydroelectric projects from the company declared that, as these dams will generate resistance from those affected, the best strategy would be to compensate the population by installing clinics and schools in adjacent areas. What better than building a Rural City to dampen resistance to the project?<sup>37</sup>

# 15. What does the United Nations have to do with the Rural Cities?

It is important to remember that the UN is not an independent organization. On the contrary, the member states of the UN direct it, and in each country the UN works in accordance with plans, objectives and projects of the government. Although there are occasional exceptions, the UN's agencies rarely question government plans in each country.

The UN has had a larger presence in Chiapas since the start of Governor Juan Sabines' six year term. The government signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2008, on the basis of which various projects have been financed, it is said, to reduce poverty. The Sabines government has used the presence of this and other UN agencies in order to have it understood that they back or approve of certain government projects such as the Rural Cities.

The state government's publicity campaign includes repeated reminders that Chiapas has incorporated the UN's Millennium Development Goals into the state's constitution, being the first government in the world to have taken this step.

Nonetheless, the presence of the UN does not imply direct backing or approval for the Rural Cities. In fact, the opinion on the Rural Cities of Oliver de Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, has been quite critical since his visit to Nuevo San Juan de Grijalva and Santiago El Pinar in June 2011. In the always discrete

## PROPAGANDA VS. REALITY

**In spite of what has been widely publicised in official propaganda, the presence of the UN does not imply direct backing for the Rural Cities. In fact, one of its suggestions has been to encourage an "independent" investigation before any further Rural Cities based on the same model are established.**



United Nations



and diplomatic language used by the UN, he distanced himself from the Rural Cities after pointing out the failings of the productive projects the state government has established, and more tellingly still, “encouraged” an “independent and comprehensive, and participatory” study of the Rural Cities in order to assess the “disruptions to the means of subsistence created by the relocation of families”, before “new settlements of the same type are established.”<sup>38</sup>

## 16. Is there a danger that SRCs might be built elsewhere?

**W**

hile some echoes have been heard in other states in Mexico about the usefulness of building rural cities, for example in Durango, Morelos, Hidalgo, and Puebla, it is only in the last of these that a “replica” of Chiapas’ rural cities has been set in motion.<sup>39</sup> Construction has started on the San Miguel Tenextatiloyan Rural City (Zuatla Municipality), though with a different approach to the Chiapas Rural Cities, owing to the unwillingness of people to relocate there.<sup>40</sup>

## 17. Are there alternatives to the SRCs? What do those who are against them propose?



In conclusion, the project of combating poverty, in the guise of the Rural Cities, represents the putting into practice of a model which goes against the right to autonomy of indigenous peoples. This project is also in opposition to that of Zapatista autonomy, manifest in concrete terms in the Zapatista Caracoles, and in the more than thirty autonomous Zapatista municipalities. In the autonomous project, political representation is based in control by the people of their authorities, that is, the Councils of Good Government and municipal committees, and also in the development of communities which avoid the clientelism, corruption, authoritarianism, racism and violence to which they were previously subjected. In contrast, in the government's Rural Cities project, social organization and representation are subsumed in the state and the companies that participate. The program as a whole follows the government's own logic: excluding, corporate and clientelist.

In the autonomous areas, decisions on the health or education system and in general on the path of development are taken by the community and for the community. In the Rural Cities, the population has been converted into simple recipients of services, over which they have no control or influence, and which have not been designed on the basis of their needs or interests.



PRIMARY SCHOOL, OVENTIC CARACOL, AN AUTONOMOUS ZAPATISTA MUNICIPALITY.

PHOTO: INTERNET

### LIFE CHANGE.

The re-ordering of life and traditions in the Rural Cities implies the imposition of a way of life based on consumption and dependence on the state apparatus. Food, in particular, could previously be obtained relatively easily and at low or no cost. In contrast “here in the Rural City, we have to buy everything”

From the perspective of the indigenous peoples, territory represents a collective good, a source of well-being, knowledge, culture, identity, traditions and rights. In this sense, the project of Zapatista autonomy is based in a symbolic-expressive appropriation of territory which supports collective identities. In contrast, for the Rural Cities program the appropriation of territory is functional-instrumental, mediated by a relation of utility towards physical space which justifies the eviction of people from their land, which in turn implies the re-ordering of a way of life based on autonomy into a way of life based on consumption and dependence.<sup>41</sup>

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 6 January 2012



NUEVO JUAN DE GRIJALVA

PHOTO: ZZ-COLECTIVO

## APPENDIX I

### **Private foundations that participated in the construction of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva**

- Fundación Telmex: installation of Community Learning Centres, as well as phone and internet connections and other “support for education”.
- Fundación Azteca: installation of branches of Banco Azteca, support for small and medium size enterprises, among other support
- Fundación Banamex: dwellings and technology platform
- Clinton Global Initiative, a division of the William Clinton Foundation: unspecified support, but possibly related to the production of renewable energy through cultivation of jatropha and other biofuels
- Fundación Unidos por Ellos: 100 dwellings
- Fundación BBVA Bancomer: three schools in Nuevo Juan de Grijalva
- Fundación Teleton: construction of a medical clinic
- Farmacias del Ahorro: construction of sports pitches
- Fundación Michou y Mau: installation of water treatment plants
- Fundación Rio Arronte: equipment for a clinic
- Fundación Kaluz: cash donation, provided by workers from Mexalit, one of its companies.
- Instituto Carso de la Salud, a division of the Fundación Carlos Slim: equipment for clinics
- Autonomous University of Chiapas: preparation of the Masterplan for the Rural Cities
- National Polytechnic Institute: training in the use of infrastructure and “new technology” in the Rural Cities
- Mexican Academy of Architecture: urban development consultancy
- Fundación Adobe: design of the construction system for dwellings.

# NOTES

1. I thank my colleagues from CIEPAC, whose collective work I have cited here in various places. I also thank my colleagues from Radio Zapatista for their inspiration and support.
2. First Letter from Sub Commander Marcos to Don Luis Villoro, 9 March 2011, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2011/03/09/apuntes-sobre-las-guerras-carta-primera-completa-del-sci-marcos-a-don-luis-villoro-inicio-del-intercambio-epistolar-sobre-etica-y-politica-enero-febrero-de-2011/>
3. Taken from Contreras et al. "Las Ciudades Rurales en Chiapas: Nueva estrategia contrainsurgente", published in Planes geoestratégicos, desplazamientos y migraciones forzadas en el área del Proyecto de Desarrollo e Integración de Mesoamérica, (J.M. Sandoval, et.al., coordinators), INAH-SEP, printed in Bogotá, Colombia, 2011.
4. This essay was published in 2002 in the journal *Economía Mexicana*, but circulated in draft form years earlier. [http://www.economiamexicana.cide.edu/num\\_antiores/XI-2/01\\_ENRIQUE\\_DAVILA.pdf](http://www.economiamexicana.cide.edu/num_antiores/XI-2/01_ENRIQUE_DAVILA.pdf)
5. "Plan Puebla-Panamá Documento Base, Capítulo México Informe Ejecutivo", Francisco Abarca Escamilla.
6. World Bank magazine *Intercambios* Year 8, no. 92 November 2008
7. Available at [http://www.ciudadesrurales.chiapas.gob.mx/videos\\_crs](http://www.ciudadesrurales.chiapas.gob.mx/videos_crs)
8. Available at <http://www.ciudadesrurales.chiapas.gob.mx/diagnostico>
9. "Desarrollo, el objetivo de Ciudades Rurales: gobierno de Chiapas", *La Jornada*, 1 September 2009, p. 29.
10. Caracoles anegados: Informe sobre la situación de los damnificados del Tapón del Río Grijalva 4 November 2007, Chiapas, LIMEDDH, Mexico, 2011, p. 6, <http://www.espora.org/limeddh/spip.php?article509>.
11. Available at [http://www.ciudadesrurales.chiapas.gob.mx/crs\\_copainala](http://www.ciudadesrurales.chiapas.gob.mx/crs_copainala).
12. "Ciudades Rurales para vivir mejor: Felipe Calderón", *El Heraldo de Chiapas*, 8 April 2008.
13. "Notes on the Rural City: Henri Lefebvre and the transformation of everyday life in Chiapas, Mexico", Japhy Wilson, University of Manchester, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2011, vol. 29, pp. 993-1009.
14. Carlos Jiménez Cacho, Treasury Secretary, Chiapas, Government of Chiapas press release 27 de June 2008, <http://www.cocoso.chiapas.gob.mx/documento.php?id=20080616072551>.
15. "Las ciudades rurales chiapanecas: ¿el fin de la dispersión y la pobreza o formas novedosas de control social?", Dolores Camacho Velázquez, (unpublished), p. 11.
16. "Ciudades y villas rurales sustentables", Government of the State of Chiapas, undated.
17. See, for example, *Ciudades Rurales en Chiapas: Despojo gubernamental contra el campesinado*, by M. Zunino y M. Pickard, *Boletines "Chiapas al Día"*, CIEPAC, 2008, <http://www.ciepac.org/boletines/chiapasaldia.php?id=571>.
18. See: Caracoles anegados: Informe sobre la situación de los damnificados del Tapón del Río Grijalva el 4 de noviembre de 2007 en Chiapas, LIMEDDH, Mexico, 2011, <http://www.espora.org/limeddh/spip.php?article509>.
19. Caracoles anegados, p. 30.
20. Interview with Canadian journalist Dawn Paley by Radio Zapatista: <http://radiozapatista.org/?p=3485>. See also the article Paley wrote during her visit to Chiapas: <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/en-espatopmenu-81/3304-mexico-cafe-sin-carbono->.
21. Servicio Internacional por la Paz (SIPAZ) says that Pueblo Creyente emerged in the following way. In 1991, the person responsible for the organization of diocesan assemblies consulted the delegates from the rural pastoral teams about the best way forward. It was proposed that the grassroots members should be asked this, and with this aim in mind representatives from the pastoral zones

were invited. 36 people took part as delegates in this meeting which later became a semi-permanent assembly. "From this nucleus was born that which would become the Pueblo Creyente". Taken from SIPAZ Informe, Vol. XIV, No. 2, August 2009 [in Spanish].

**22.** Available at [http://chiapasdenuncia.blogspot.com/2010/05/comunicado-de-las-abejas-de-actea\\_22.html](http://chiapasdenuncia.blogspot.com/2010/05/comunicado-de-las-abejas-de-actea_22.html).

**23.** "Notes on the Rural City": Henri Lefebvre and the transformation of everyday life in Chiapas, Mexico", Japhy Wilson, Environment and Planning Development: Society and Space, 2011, volum 29, p. 1004.

**24.** Measurements taken by a researcher who prefers to remain anonymous.

**25.** Caracoles anegados, p. 5.

**26.** Bulletin of the Instituto de Comunicación Social No. 5924, <http://www.comunicacion.chiapas.gob.mx/documento.php?id=20110807123944>.

**27.** See the video, Ciudades Brutales Asustables-Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, parte 1, CIEPAC, 2010, <http://www.ciepac.org/documento.php?id=307>, minute 4:00.

**28.** Available at [http://www.perfilfronterizo.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=5118:planta-ensambladora-de-muebles-en-crs-nuevo-juan-del-grijalva&catid=5:estatales&Itemid=4](http://www.perfilfronterizo.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5118:planta-ensambladora-de-muebles-en-crs-nuevo-juan-del-grijalva&catid=5:estatales&Itemid=4)

**29.** Interview carried out by various independent media groups in Chiapas at Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, 27 June 2011. For reasons of personal safety our interviewees in the Rural City prefer to remain anonymous.

**30.** See the video Ciudades Brutales Asustables-Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, parte 1, CIEPAC, 2010, <http://www.ciepac.org/documento.php?id=307>, minutes 0:35 and 2:20.

**31.** Available at <http://www.miradasur.com/index.php/noticias/1-latest-news/919-santiago-el-pinar-una-ciudad-rural-fantasma-casas-con-defectos>

**32.** Available at <http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/chiapas/municipios/07062a.htm>

**33.** As suggested for example, by Dr. Japhy Wilson of Manchester University, cited in La Jornada 15 March 2010, "Se busca desactivar caracoles al impulsar ciudades rurales sustentables", by H. Bellinghausen.

**34.** "Cangold termina adquisición por opción del proyecto Ixhuatán Gold", 3 November 2011, available at <http://www.marketwatch.com>

**35.** Interview carried out with the private secretary of the municipal president of Jaltenango during a visit by CIEPAC.

**36.** Paragraph taken from "Las Ciudades Rurales en Chiapas: Nueva estrategia contrainsurgente", Contreras et.al., op. cit., p. 161.

**37.** Ibid., p. 157.

**38.** Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Mexico Visit, from 13 to 20 June 2011, United Nations, Mexico City, 20 June 2011, pp. 6-7.

**39.** A critical review of the Rural City in Puebla puede can be found at "¿Una Ciudad Rural en San Miguel Tenextatiloyan? La mirada distorsionada del progreso que se mueve entre el 'ninguneo' y el olvido de los campesinos y las campesinas", Benjamín Berlanga Gallardo, CESDER, unpublished, May 2011.

**40.** See the note by La Jornada de Oriente about the plans for the new Rural City in Puebla: <http://www.lajornadadeoriente.com.mx/2011/09/02/puebla/opi13.php>

**41.** Paragraphs taken from "Las Ciudades Rurales en Chiapas: Nueva estrategia contrainsurgente", Contreras et.al., op. cit., p. 165.