

SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN PARTICIPATORY RECONSTRUCTION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS FROM EL SALVADOR

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Participatory methodologies are regularly used by NGO's in post-disaster housing reconstruction projects addressed to poor victims of rural origin, especially in the developing world. One rationale behind the choice of such methodologies is that they are supposed to encourage people's appropriation of project objectives. A corollary aspect refers to the communitarian ideal. In other words, the active participation of beneficiaries – often as manual labour – is believed to enhance a shared sense of community. This presentation addresses these issues as they revealed themselves in a reconstruction project taking place in a Salvadorian municipality after the 2001 earthquakes. The objective is to explain how the success - or failure - of participatory methodologies depends on their appropriateness to the local context, including cultural values and the economical well-being of beneficiaries. This paper will discuss how models that inform the day-to-day practices of a reconstruction project clashed with the local values and social structure of the people involved. Research suggests that a lack of consideration for socio-cultural factors, expressed in terms kinship support networks, economical needs and political organisation delayed the construction process. Participation became quasi-forced labour and the communitarian ideal remained precisely that, an ideal that did not adequately reflect beneficiaries' motivations.

Reconstruction; participation; community; culture; INGO

INTRODUCTION

Participatory methodologies are often used in post-disaster housing reconstruction projects (Arnstein, 1969; Choguill, 1996). They refer to the implication of beneficiaries in project implementation, however the nature of their involvement can vary depending on what is meant by participation from one project to the next. For many international NGOs that undertake such programmes, participation is viewed as a positive and cost-effective methodology that can yield a variety of outputs, not only from a building perspective but also from a social point of view. Here, beneficiaries' active participation is hoped to enhance people's level of appropriation of project objectives and to foster a shared sense of belonging or of community. Indeed, what is often termed community participation has become a cornerstone in the debates regarding post-disaster reconstruction. According to many expert opinions, a project may greatly suffer in terms

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of its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability if community groups and networks are not included as active participants or players during the project cycle. However, the notion of community has become a highly polysemic one (Davidson *et al*, 2005). And when it is applied to reconstruction projects, it is important that the concept refer to an objective and historically constituted social group whose members share, for example, cultural values, kinship ties and participate in a variety of social, political and economical arenas. In this sense it is important to understand that a community is much more than a group of chosen beneficiaries who participate in a given project. In other words, what is at stake in the discussion of this paper is the difference between the application of communitarian ideals in reconstruction methodologies and their appropriateness to adequately define a given local context.

Hence this paper concerns the politics of participation and community building in a post-disaster reconstruction project that took place in El Salvador following the 2001 earthquakes. The perspective adopted here stems from social anthropology and focuses on the social dynamics between a group of selected beneficiaries and project supervisors. The discussion aims to illustrate how the project logic, i.e.: the application of participatory methodologies and a communitarian ideal, ran counter to the social structure and cultural values of the people involved. Through this case study, the objective of the research is to caution reconstruction practitioners to the risks there are in applying conceptual models when they do not adequately correspond to the social reality and lived experience of the people they most want to help.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this research followed traditional anthropological guidelines, namely the practice of daily participant-observation on the construction site over a period of eight months. During this time, and aside from daily conversations, formal and semi-structured interviews were done with all the beneficiaries and project supervisors. The same were undertaken with representatives of other local institutions involved in the humanitarian response and reconstruction initiatives, such as the mayor's office, the local Red Cross and Health Unit, Church representatives, etc. Further interviews were done with NGO representatives also working in reconstruction in the area and with UN agencies such as the World Food Program who played an important role in these projects. It is important to stress that many issues that are presented in this paper could not have been clearly identified without communicating over an extended period of time with all the different stakeholders involved.

A DISASTER IN CONTEXT

Over the centuries the small Central American country of El Salvador has known many disasters, especially earthquakes, as two tectonic plates, the Coco and Caribe plates, regularly collide into one another thereby creating intense seismic activity. Salvadorians even call their land the "valley of the hammocks" due to the cyclical nature of these happenings. Hence, the 13th of January 2001, an earthquake of magnitude 7,6 on the Richter scale shook El Salvador. A month later, to the date, a second quake further

impacted the nation. The town of Lamaria¹, located in the western department of Sonsonate, was one of the municipalities affected by the first disaster. With a population of a little under 24 000, 13 440 people became either homeless or saw their houses damaged to various degrees. Although this part of the country is not considered among the poorest, the majority of disaster-victims in Lamaria can be said to belong to the more marginal segments of the population: households located in rural zones, built in traditional adobe and whose monthly income fall below the poverty line.

If emergency assistance and temporary shelters were delivered in a timely manner, reconstruction projects for permanent housing started only in May 2001. There were various kinds of reconstruction initiatives depending on the socio-economic status of the victims. Indeed, some local and foreign initiatives targeted homeowners or landowners whose houses were partially damaged, others targeted landless and homeless families who had lost most of their belongings and who found themselves without a place to live. These families were the principle target group for foreign NGOs who implemented reconstruction projects in the municipality. At the time of study, there were four such initiatives, three of which took place side by side on newly acquired and adjacent land plots located a few kilometres away from the town centre. Their overall objective was to create a “model neighbourhood”, serviced with water and electricity, for 200 families who were categorized as the most vulnerable people - meaning the group of disaster-victims who were both landless and homeless and who were living in the temporary shelters erected by humanitarian NGOs such as *Doctors without Borders* and the *International Federation of the Red Cross* shortly after the disaster.

The idea of creating a model neighbourhood is not uncommon in post-disaster settings. In the case of Lamaria, it entailed that the foreign NGOs work in coordination with the mayor’s office that designated the area it thought most proper for such housing projects addressed to the poorer segment of the population. So the area selected was precisely one which the local authorities envisioned as an important potential development zone for a number of characteristics: it has fertile soils, an elementary school, a newly built hospice for the elderly run by nuns, and is close to the Pan-American highway and therefore transport is easily accessible. Indeed the entire initiative, the first of its kind in the municipality, was termed a “pilot project”, implying that its long-term objective was to enhance the socio-economic living conditions of this vulnerable group.

Two plots of land that previously served as sugarcane fields were therefore acquired, a larger one where the three NGOs started their respective projects for some 150 families and a smaller one located 500 meters away where one of the NGOs erected 50 houses for the remaining beneficiaries. This site, named La Hermandad, is where most of the research was undertaken. It was headed by a European Red Cross agency that also financed various other reconstruction initiatives in the area, such as repairing the elementary school, funding the construction of a cafeteria at the nuns’ elderly hospice, while also putting money for the renovation of the local Red Cross office and the Health

¹ Names are fictitious in order to respect confidentiality and anonymity of informants.

Unit. Clearly, this foreign NGO became highly visible in Lamaria and played a major role in reconstruction.

It is worthwhile stressing that, although these three NGOs worked in a designated area, they worked independently of each other and did not use the same construction methodologies: while two hired contractors with heavy equipment to accelerate the building process, the European Red Cross relied entirely on manual labour from the beneficiaries and masons hired in Lamaria. The rationale behind this decision was to enhance beneficiaries' sense of appropriation of the project and to boost the local economy by providing salaried work for professional masons who had also suffered from the earthquake but who, for the majority, were homeowners and thus did not meet the NGO's selection criteria.

The project logic

As previously mentioned, selection criteria for this project targeted the "most vulnerable" population and were the following: potential beneficiaries must be 1) disaster-victims, 2) who never owned a house nor a plot of land (they were thus either renting or living with family members at the time of disaster) and 3) whose income did not exceed the minimum monthly salary which amounted to US\$ 97.00 per person in 2001 (PNUD, 2001). Although young families were preferred, the project also considered the elderly and single mothers. In fact, in La Hermandad, around 15 family groups consisted of singles mothers and their children. The majority of beneficiaries had been living in the temporary shelters but it must be emphasised that they did not previously live in the same *canton* prior to the quake. Indeed, Lamaria's administrative district is divided into 10 *cantones* (referring to the more remote rural zones) and 28 *colonias* (meaning an urban zone) and the homeless gathered in the shelters came from all over. This means that the beneficiaries did not form a homogeneous group, albeit the fact they all responded to the selection criteria: some families were of rural origin, others from the town itself, some were used to hard labour as daily workers in the nearby plantations, others were out of a job for a long periods of time. Moreover, not all families originated from Lamaria. A third came from the Eastern provinces of the country and had fled these intense conflict zones during the civil war, which ended in 1992. These emigrant families were living along the railway line at the time of disaster in shanty dwellings which all collapsed during the earthquake. Among the beneficiaries, this group was considered as the hardest working, especially in comparison to the city tenants who, for the most part, did not occupy a steady job.

The selection process did not last very long because the needs were so great. The project started in May with the arrival of the first beneficiaries who had to weed out the sugar cane field. The others followed in June and July. For those who had been living in the temporary camps, the shelters themselves were transported to the construction site. These consisted of aluminium sheeting and of heavy plastic cubicles, which had been given to the families by the humanitarian NGOs. All in all, over 300 people including children lived permanently on the site.

The most important aspect of the project logic was the following: in exchange for their manual labour, beneficiaries would become the private owners a new anti-seismic brick house. The process was described to them as a non-monetary exchange. This type of project is called a “food for work” project, meaning that beneficiaries work full-time in construction, abandoning their regular remunerated activities and, to compensate the lack of income, food rations are provided by the World Food Program on a monthly basis. There were dozens of such initiatives in El Salvador at the time of study.

Furthermore, there were a series of rules and regulations that had to be observed. Nuclear family groups had to live on the building site with no other kin members allowed; men had to work 164 hours/month, single mothers 120 hours/month and married or accompanied women 64 hours/month. A chart was kept to assess the man days worked by each family group. Most had to abandon their regular remunerated activities in order to comply with these regulations. However, in the case of seven families, the men kept their outside job while their spouses worked full-time in construction. It is important to stress that the women who were active in the building process were participating in a typically male occupation. Indeed, in this society, masonry is not a traditional activity for women. Hence many were proud of this fact, especially the group of single mothers.

In terms of organisational structure, and aside from the European representatives who only came twice to the field site, the project was headed by a civil engineer who was present on a daily basis. There was also a supervisor who hired seventeen masons, all from Lamaria, who trained the beneficiaries in construction and provided technical supervision. A social worker was also hired whose mandate was to create various social committees such as one concerning the cleaning of the communal latrines, another on food distribution, a third on the environment. In short, the purpose of these committees was to enhance participatory activities on the site. The social worker, who would regularly speak of herself as a feminist, targeted mainly women. With respect to the project logic, this aspect was supposed to balance the more “physicalist” side of the reconstruction process².

Indeed, in conceptual terms, the way the project was structured aimed to create various participatory activities, which covered both the physical side of construction, meaning the construction work itself, and what was termed the social side of reconstruction. Here, complementary activities were hoped to encourage people's sense of belonging, of working towards a common objective, namely the creation of a new model neighbourhood. Something akin to a communitarian ideology did indeed frame the entire initiative and this was discussed with the beneficiaries themselves during monthly general assemblies where the social worker and the engineer would reiterate this overarching objective.

The project started in May-June 2001 and was supposed to end in February 2002. In fact, construction terminated at the end of June 2002, meaning that many families did

² See Lavell, 1999 for a discussion on the physicalist versus social aspects of reconstruction.

not reintegrate their economic activities before one year. There were various reasons for this delay, which will be explained further, but the most important one was the overall fatigue and lack of motivation of workers. In comparison, the other two projects of this initiative were completed in March 2002 principally because project officials had opted for a different construction methodology, that is the use of heavy machinery and the hiring of contractors. As mentioned, in La Hermandad there were none as construction relied on manual labour.

There were fifty houses to be constructed and everyone worked on all of them so that no one knew before hand which house would become their own. Each family would receive an 80 m² house on a 200 m² plot of land. All houses followed an identical model that had been approved by the beneficiaries at the beginning of the project. Each house was composed of three rooms, two smaller ones of 20 m² each and a living room of 40 m². The roof was made of aluminium sheeting. Washrooms were not incorporated inside the house because the ground water was too elevated. Instead, dry latrines were built outside at the very end of the project. Everyone thought them quite un-aesthetic. Each lot was bordered by a little brick wall that delineated the limits of one's personal property. Procurement of all materials came from Lamaria: tools and cement were bought in local shops, black earth was collected from nearby riverbeds and the NGO received free access to gather white earth from one of Lamaria's various quarries. All agreed that the houses were of good quality, especially considering their solid metal frame. Indeed, market value for one house amounted to US\$ 4500, a rather high price for a reconstruction initiative. In fact, for the same amount, two houses could be constructed, albeit using other materials and construction methodologies. This reflects a choice from the NGO: Project leaders opted for this design not only because it was the families' preferred one, but also for development reasons. Indeed, it was argued that families' standard of living would improve once they became the owners of such an economical asset. And to ensure that this medium-term developmental goal could be reached, a special clause was included in the project forbidding the selling or leasing of the house to any third party for a period of ten years. The extent to which this clause was respected after project completion was not verified in this research. However it is worth mentioning that this clause goes against usual property rights as they are encoded in the law.

Hence daily life on the site was punctuated by work activities. Men were assigned to the more heavy chores and the majority of working women were assigned to two workstations: the assembling of metal structures and the compacting of foundations. Children were encouraged to attend the nearby school, however many did not and so working women would ask a neighbour or someone they trusted to keep an eye on their children.

A river bordered the southern side of the site in which families bathed and washed their clothing or cooking utensils but potable water was delivered on a daily basis for consumption. There was no electricity so at nightfall all activities stopped and families retired in their respective cubicles. As time progressed and construction advanced, families had to dismantle their living quarters and reassemble them elsewhere, some as

much as three times, in order to allow for the erection of the new houses. This moving around could create some tension among the beneficiaries who did not always appreciate their new location, or more specifically, their new neighbours. Indeed, social relations between beneficiaries, which were hoped to evolve along a communitarian ideal, deteriorated as time passed causing an important delay in construction.

Community building and its impasses

Although in conceptual terms the project seemed to be well organized and designed, it followed a very top down approach for its entire duration. Because many aspects of social life were dependent and structured by the NGO, daily life became problematic for various reasons. Furthermore, subtle processes of social differentiation between beneficiaries consolidated themselves over time, which are better analysed when research is undertaken over an extended period. The analysis of social dynamics between the beneficiaries and their superiors and between the beneficiaries themselves reveal the extent to which participation became an obligation and the communitarian ideal remained precisely that, an ideal which cannot adequately describe reality as it unfolded in the very special time and space of this reconstruction project.

Gender relations a work

A first area where problems arose concerns the working relationships between men and women. If at the early stages of the building process things appeared to proceed smoothly, the situation changed radically. The fact that many single women participated in construction meant that they mixed more than what is customarily appropriate with married or accompanied men. Proud of doing a typically male activity, they would often joke and talk to their fellow workers. However, friendship between the sexes is not common in Salvadorian society hence, for the women who did not work, this situation became a source of tension. Their reaction followed traditional ways, namely the production of gossip. This is not to be taken lightly, indeed, gossip has a definite social function in maintaining boundaries between what is culturally accepted and what is not. Gender roles in rural Salvadorian society are still very traditional, and in the enclosed space of the reconstruction site, where everything is known, jealousy and gossip became a permanent source of dissension between beneficiaries. The outcome of this situation was the polarization of the group of single mothers from the other women living in La Hermandad.

Relationship with superiors

The most important aspect of the social dynamics between beneficiaries and project superiors concerned working relationships. But first, it is important to understand that it is customary for Salvadorians to describe themselves as hard workers. They often say this with a sense of pride. It is a positive cultural marker, which one can often hear when speaking of working conditions in the country. This entails that appreciation and positive evaluation at work are not taken lightly.

Beneficiaries were thus trained by the masons and complied with working hours. However, not all were considered good workers. Some men were much more assiduous in their tasks than others and therefore were more positively valued by superiors. Those who complained about the working conditions, about the fact that they were not receiving any salary, that they were treated as cheap labour, even though they would receive a house at the end, were considered lazy. What happened as months went by is that some people had built a reputation as either hard working or not, and this line of differentiation also followed another cultural marker, that of being of rural or urban origin: people from the *campo*, from the rural areas, were generally considered better workers while the city dwellers, somewhat unaccustomed to this kind of intensive work, were not as positively valued.

Furthermore, if relationships to figures of authority are generally ones of deference, there were a few individuals who were not shy to express their views in public, openly criticizing the organization and the project leaders. This was particularly the case during the last three months, when people felt a general fatigue and were anxious to earn a salary again. When this occurred, the engineer and the supervisor would quickly call for a general assembly where they would exhort beneficiaries to understand that this was a humanitarian project where everyone had to give their fair share of labour. They would invoke the fact that all the families should try to get along because they would form a new community.

Problems with food distribution

Another source of problems pertains to the irregularity in food distribution. Most families were not receiving any income during the construction process and relied on the monthly food rations distributed by the World Food Program (World Food Program, 2001). Aside from this, there was another food distribution headed by the Office of the Archdiocese and distributed by the nuns who lived nearby. This second food distribution targeted families with children under the age of seven who were considered underweight for their age, which was the case for almost all the children. While this distribution never failed, there were problems with the WFP one, namely important delays in delivery sometimes lasting over a month. This happened once the social worker, who was in charge of this aspect of the project, left in January 2002.

The delays in distribution did not affect all families equally. Indeed, if selection criteria had targeted poor disaster-victims sharing a same socio-economic status, some were much poorer than others. This was particularly the case for seven families who relied entirely on the outside food distributions. Health problems related to malnutrition and lack of essential vitamins became more apparent, thereby causing fatigue and slowing the work activities. As of March 2002, many asked for day permits to leave the site in order to go to the local clinic in Lamaria. Some men who had been working full-time developed health problems that required them to stop working, and their wives had to take over. At the same time, project leaders were under pressure to terminate construction. The combination of these factors created tension on the site and work relationships became uneasy. At the end of the project, almost a third of the

beneficiaries would not show up for work and some men had even reintegrated the outside workforce.

Political initiatives thwarted

A revealing event illustrates the extent to which community building was not only arduous but how it could also be seen as a potential risk from the supervisors' perspective. After the earthquake, many *colonias* and *cantones* had to organize themselves in order to facilitate the humanitarian aid distribution. People were called to form small representative bodies named ADESCO (community development association). Some did exist before the events in other parts of the municipality, but for many people the earthquake gave them the impetus to elect representatives who would interact with the mayor's office and NGO representatives in order to explain and defend their needs. Thus an ADESCO has a recognised legal status.

When the other two projects part of the model neighbourhood initiative were terminated, the new owners decided to form an ADESCO. When the beneficiaries of La Hermandad heard of this, they wanted to do the same, even though in their case the project was far from completed. We were in February 2002. However, when project leaders realized that this was the intention of "their" beneficiaries, they strongly recommended waiting before undertaking this project. The reasoning behind this interdiction was simple: NGO representatives did not wish to see their authority undermined by a newly elected ADESCO, which could voice its concerns to other institutions. In terms of community building, this decision ran counter to the development of a communitarian feeling among the families. Arguing that there were already too many social problems on the site, projects leaders were fearful that more dissension would arise with an ADESCO.

Factors of social differentiation

When speaking of the process of social differentiation amongst the beneficiaries themselves, and aside from those directly related to the work activities, there were two important vectors: economical factors and cultural markers.

First, although all families' income did not exceed the minimum wage, once on the building site, certain individuals showed a clear sense of entrepreneurship. This was particularly the case with two women, one belonging to the group of single mothers whose eldest son complied with the working hours, and the other one married. Both had decided early on in the project to cook hot lunches for the masons and anyone else who could afford it. They baked *tortillas* on a daily basis and also sold various food and household items from their respective cubicles. Quickly their businesses thrived and a sense of competition developed between them. Each had her clientele of beneficiaries (those who could afford it) and of professional workers. However, with the problems in food distribution which clearly affected many members of La Hermandad, the fact that these families seemed to get by much easier and even making a profit engendered jealousy and envy from those struggling harder to put food on the table. Extended

families with six to eight children were not uncommon and with the lack income their situation became more difficult.

Envy is a traditional mechanism of social regulation in Central American societies that is more apparent in small peasant communities than in our larger industrialised societies (Foster, 1967). It manifests itself when an individual acquires a good in socio-economical contexts where the acquisition of goods is limited. Many things can become the object of envy: a newborn child, a husband, food, an unsuspected source of revenue, the acquisition of furniture, etc. Hence the fact that two families seemed to be economically thriving compared to the others created much envy in La Hermandad, an envy that could only be attenuated through the use of ties of reciprocity between people. And here again, there were none available because the project guidelines forbade the presence of kin on the site thereby isolating beneficiaries from their mutual aid networks.

A process of differentiation between the haves and the have-nots therefore appeared and consolidated itself through gossip and envy. And this situation did not facilitate the emergence of a sense of community nor of social cohesion amongst participants, quite to the contrary. As economical differentiation between the beneficiaries became very apparent towards the end of the project, people would disengage themselves from work and group activities. A sense of divisionism reigned and families would keep to themselves.

The second vector of differentiation refers to cultural markers. Here, issues on cleanliness versus dirtiness or on religious affiliation became factors of dissension between them. Certain women would regard with disdain other families and hoped they would not have them as future neighbours because they kept their cubicles untidy or because they were of a different religious denomination. Since it was only at the end of the project that each family group would know which house would become their own - after a secret ballot where only the project supervisors attended - much speculation circulated on this topic. Again, such talk did not reflect a growing sense of cooperation and community between the families.

During the last two months of the project, more and more beneficiaries would disengage themselves from work activities. This became problematic because the latrines and the walls still remained to be built. The engineer and his superiors convinced the beneficiaries to erect the walls using the participatory construction methodology but for the latrines, they decided to pay the more experienced workers who would accept to do this specific job. In effect, at this time, the masons contract had been terminated. The predominant discourse from the beneficiaries at this time did in no way reflect the formation of a sense of social cohesion. Recorded conversations and interviews reveal that many were untrusting of others, "there is no community here, people are all hypocrites" – would mention various women.

Problems with design

Once the houses were completed and allotted to each family, women realized that something was lacking in terms of design: there was no adequate roofing to cover them while they would cook. In rural Salvadorian society, it is usual for women to prepare meals outside. But when the sun is hot or when it rains, obviously one needs some form of roofing for protection. The design of the house did not take into account this customary practice and therefore many women wanted to extend an aluminium sheet from the roof for shade. The material was even at their disposition as they had been living for the past months in the cubicles, that is the temporary shelters that had been given to them by the humanitarian NGOs that first arrived in Lamaria. But the project leaders refused, arguing that it would hinder the overall design of the houses. Their decision was to oblige each family to redistribute without fee the materials to some kin member of their choice. Although most were reluctant, project leaders were adamant about this. But many people confided that they disagreed with this decision, believing the NGO was using too much authority because the temporary shelters had been *given* to them. Nonetheless they complied.

CONCLUSION

In mid-June 2002, La Hermandad was inaugurated in front of journalists, Red Cross officials, the mayor and other representatives of local institutions. Beneficiaries had mixed feelings. On the one side they were relieved the construction work was over because many were anxious to find or reintegrate their jobs but, on the other side, they were a little worried at the thought of the European Red Cross leaving them. Indeed, for this population who is usually ignored or forgotten by government institutions, this whole experience put them at the forefront of NGO considerations. They had been beneficiaries, and in a way proudly so, albeit all the problems that emerged. This said, they remained also rather critical of the overall process, thinking of it as too long and costly for them.

From an analytical point of view this research reveals various issues. First, participation does not guarantee the emergence of a sense of social cohesion and belonging between participants. As a construction methodology, it can become a rather costly decision, in both financial and social terms alike. As the preferred means to foster a communitarian feeling between members of a project, there is again no guarantee. When experts talk of community participation in reconstruction projects, this does not necessarily reflect an objective reality where all members share a sense of belonging or thriving towards sustainable common objectives. In this case, there was somewhat of a misconception regarding beneficiaries' motivations. They did not partake in this adventure to form a new community, but to have access to an important economical asset, a new house they could claim their own. Motivations are better understood in utilitarian and individualistic terms rather than corresponding to a communitarian ethos. When this is accepted, it becomes easier to understand why this group of beneficiaries developed tensions and divisions among them. In various aspects, the project challenged cultural values by mixing women in the work force, by showing favouritism

towards some individuals, by forbidding the presence of other kin members on the site that could have led a helping hand, by letting some beneficiaries develop micro-enterprises that exacerbated the underlying social stratification that already existed among the selected families. Peoples' reaction followed customary ways, namely the incessant production of gossip and avoidance of disdained individuals or families.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that community participation in itself has to be rejected. Nor does this research suggest that reconstruction projects should strictly follow a customary division of labour along gender lines, in this case the exclusion of women from construction. What this case study does recommend, however, is that reconstruction initiatives can benefit from more in depth understandings of local custom and ways and must beware of certain ideals that still permeate humanitarian action worldwide.

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