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A Nahua Melody: Material Rhythms of houses in Mixtla de Altamirano, Mexico

by

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*With special dedication to grandparents
and the magic world of storytelling.
Jose, Francisca, Leonila e Hilario esta tesis
está dedicada a ustedes. Gracias por
compartirme ese mundo mágico.
¡Mi eterna gratitud y amor!*

A NAHUA MELODY: MATERIAL RHYTHMS OF HOUSES IN MIXTLA DE ALTAMIRANO, MEXICO
By Julieta Flores-Muñoz

This thesis explore the wide and complex definition of the space named as house in an indigenous community, the Nahuas, located in the Zongolica Mountain Range, Mexico. It will draw on ethnographic research to show how Nahuas relate to the corporeal world (objects and environment) and, through processes of struggle and negotiation, use them to produce this physical space, called house. In doing so, it will uncover a different historical narrative. By examining the "house", and the materials used to produce it, as a space that is lived and built (the house) but also perceived, dreamt and remembered (a home), this thesis highlights interconnections between the study of the physical world (materiality) and the study of social processes (social structure and social relations). For, it is through the rhythms of the Nahua's everyday life including material acts of remembrance and spatial practices of memory, that these physical spaces (their houses) can be better understood.

Throughout this thesis I will argue that Nahua delimitation and definition of their houses is continuously changing. This because Nahuas modify their space though their traditions (even those spaces that haven't been explored such as caves and other ones, are modified through their tales and beliefs). These living traditions transfer meaning and orientate both the objects and the environment. Therefore, their objects and the environment (Materiality) is built upon cultural patterns and values that are constantly being modified. Regardless of any processes of subordination, dominance or interrelationship between other groups, Nahuas materiality do not disappear, because it is fluid and dynamic, these becomes modified or reinterpreted. Nahuas Materiality permeates through memory, imagination, traditions, as I will explore through this thesis.

Therefore, rather than beginning with a define idea of what a house is –size, architecture, social structure-, this thesis addresses them as complex physical spaces that encapsulates history, religion folklore and knowledge, both materially, spatially and through the oral traditions and storytelling of the communities that produce them, and in turn produced through them. This continuous movement that builds these space-places allow us to uncover the fluid rhythms that

built these places. Therefore, this thesis will present the houses as complex spaces that are fluid, rather than walls and intimate spaces, houses are presented as built spaces in constant change with a never clear present; rather, there is an experience based on the past and the projection to the future. By presenting the materiality of the houses that connects people with their environment (to which Nahuas had to adapt) an agentic and meaningful space was built, one that includes the memory of adaptation that construct their *Nahua-ness* when producing their home Tocha (as they name it), and the projection of this *Nahua-ness* into the future. Houses then remain in the memory of the Elders and become agents in the construction and consolidation of subjectivities through the knowledge and the rhythms of repetition that constitue their everyday life.

RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

A NAHUA MELODY: MATERIAL RHYTHMS OF HOUSES IN MIXTLA DE ALTAMIRANO, MEXICO
By Julieta Flores-Muñoz

La presente tesis representa una mirada alternativa a la forma en la que una comunidad Nahua, que habita el municipio de Mixtla de Altamirano, enclavado en la Sierra de Zongolica, en el estado de Veracruz, México, construye el espacio conocido como "casa".

Tomando como punto de referencia la materialidad que les rodea y utilizando la investigación etnográfica como herramienta metodológica, esta tesis intenta narrar la compleja e imbricada relación de negociación y conflicto que se establece entre los Nahuas que habitan y el mundo corpóreo que les rodea (sus objetos y su medio ambiente) para producirlo.

Asimismo, al concentrarnos en esa relación de negociación y conflicto, una narrativa histórica diferente se va tejiendo, una que acentúa el ritmo paulatino de cambio que acontece en la vida cotidiana.

De esta forma, 'La casa', a lo largo de esta tesis, será presentada, definida y cuidadosamente entendida, a través de los materiales utilizados para producirla como un espacio que se vive y se construye (la casa); pero también se presenta como un espacio que es percibido, soñado y recordado (el hogar).

Así, enfatizando las interconexiones que se establecen entre el estudio del mundo físico (la materialidad) y el estudio de los procesos sociales (estructura social y relaciones sociales), la presente tesis propone que las casas de los Nahuas pueden ser mejor exploradas y definidas a través de los ritmos de la vida cotidiana, las practicas espaciales y los actos performativos materiales que incluyen la memoria y la tradición oral.

Partiendo de la premisa que todo espacio físico ha sido modificado por la tradición, se sostiene, que toda delimitación y definición del espacio físico – siendo caso específico de la presente tesis, la casa- se encuentran en constante cambio, es decir, se ve modificada a través de los relatos, las creencias y el habitar cotidiano. Esas tradiciones transfieren significado y orientan la materialidad (objetos y el medio ambiente) misma que se basará en los patrones culturales y los valores que están siendo constantemente modificados.

De esta manera, independientemente de los procesos de subordinación, dominación o interrelación entre otros grupos, la materialidad de las subjetividades –en este caso los Nahuas-

no desaparece ya que ésta es fluida y dinámica. La materialidad Nahua sobrevive y se reinterpreta a través de la memoria, la imaginación y la tradición oral.

De esta forma en lugar de definir "casa" como una unidad de análisis, esta tesis se refiere a ellas como espacios físicos complejos que encapsulan la historia, la religión, el folclor y los conocimientos. Esto se manifiesta tanto materialmente como espacialmente a través de la tradición oral de las comunidades que las producen, y que a su vez producen, a través de ellos.

Este movimiento rítmico continuo que construye "la casa" nos permite descubrir la fluidez con la que se producen los espacios 'casas', constituyendo con ello las subjetividades. Es pues, a través de los ritmos que se producen al hilvanar la materialidad con la constitución del ser que se teje una narrativa histórica diferente, fluida que, a su vez, de-construya los conceptos estáticos que premian en la práctica arqueológica.

Esta tesis presentará las casas como esos espacios complejos, fluidos, que, se construyen en un lugar y momento determinado; lejos de presentarla como paredes y habitaciones íntimas, se propone presentarla como un lugar construido en constante cambio. Así, a través del estudio de la materialidad de las casas, incluyendo la memoria de adaptación, se recuperó un espacio significativo, agentico, que permea en la memoria. Esta casa agentica, construye, consolida y modifica la identidad étnica de los Nahuas (*Nahua-ness*).

A lo largo de las entrevistas se presentó: "*Tocha*" Nahuatl para "La casa de todos". Esta descripción material de una casa abierta, conectada y que responde a las necesidades colectivas, permanece ahora solo en la memoria de los ancianos, pero a través de la tradición oral sigue siendo agente en la construcción/consolidación de subjetividades.

Se concluye que, a través del conocimiento y los ritmos de repetición que constituyen la vida cotidiana, los Nahuas en Mixtla de Altamirano, construyen y se construyen al son de los ritmos orquestados en el día a día que cimienta su historia.

Table of Contents

iii

Table of Figures

xi

Academic Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I, Julieta Flores-Muñoz declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

A Nahua Melody: Material Rhythms of houses in Mixtla de Altamirano, Mexico

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signed: ....

Date: October 7, 2018

....

Acknowledgements

Definitions and Abbreviations

INEGI- SIMBAD- National institute of Statistics and Geography-State and Municipal Data Base

CONEVAL-National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy

CONAPO- National Council of Population

UVI-GRANDES MONTANAS- Indigenous University of Veracruz

SEDESOL- Secretary of Social Development

INAH- National Institute of Anthropology and History

INALI- National Institute of Indigenous Languages

Chapter 1   Introduction

This thesis explores the wide and complex definition of the space called house in an indigenous community, the Nahuas, located in the Zongolica Mountain Range, Mexico (see figure 1.1). It draws on ethnographic research to show how Nahuas relate to the corporeal world (objects and environment) and, through repeated social pratices and negotiations, use them to produce this physical space. By examining the house, and the materials used to produce it, as a space that is lived and built (the house) but also perceived, dreamt and remembered (a home), this thesis highlights the interconnections between the study of the physical world and the study of social processes. For, it is in the rhythms of their everyday life including material acts of remembrance and spatial practices of memory, that these physical spaces (their houses) can be better explored and understood. Throughout this thesis I will argue that Nahua delimitation and definition of their houses is continuously changing. Therefore, rather than beginning with a define idea of what a house is -size, architecture, social structure- this thesis addresses them as complex physical spaces that encapsulate history, religion, folklore and knowledge, both materially, spatially, and through the oral traditions and storytelling of the communities that produce them, and are, in turn produced through them.

In order to explore these processes of co-constitution, this research turns to the material world of Mixtla de Altamirano (see figure 1.1 for location). This municipality is one of the sixty-one that integrates a larger region called Big Mountains '*Grandes Montanas*' inside a longer chain of mountains that cross the south Mexican territory called the '*Sierra Madre Oriental'*. This chain of mountains becomes a natural barrier that separates the central plateau from the Golf Coast and crosses three different states: Puebla, Oaxaca and Veracruz. The *'Sierra de Zongolica'* or Zongolica Mountain Range is how authorities name the specific region that Veracruz Nahuas inhabit. With 1000 km^2 (Rodriguez 2013: 25) the Sierra Zongolica is ecologically diverse due to the different altitudes that result in different weather conditions. Despite the natural diversity, according to INALI (National Institute of Indigenous Languages 2008) the region shares the same language: Nahuatl, a subdivision known as Nahuatl of Orizaba and from the twenty-one municipalities where they still use this subdivision to communicate, Mixtla de Altamirano stands out. This is not because 99.74% (INEGI 2010) of the population still uses Nahuatl on a daily base, but because it is

the municipality with the highest human poverty index (HPI) in the entire country of Mexico.

According to INEGI-SIMBAD[1] (2010) 97% of the population that inhabit Mixtla is living in poverty.

Figure 1.1. Location of Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz

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[1] INEGI-SIMBAD stands for the Institute in charge of the statistics and geographical information of Mexico through the municipal data bases. Data bases are provided for free through the web page: www.inegi.org.mx

This is, despite the fact that the highest poverty indexes are mostly related to the financial capacity that families have. To calculate this index, other factors are taken into consideration. For instance, according to economists, the lack of new materials and difficult access to health and education are a reflection of the scarcity (CONEVAL 2017). In other words, social researchers use the lack of new materials in the houses and the low level of investments made in services to calculate this index. Hence, Mixtla de Altamirano's lack of investment in areas such as drainage, electricity, water systems and newer materials to build houses, imply a still traditional and economically limited everyday life.

On the other hand, a strong national narrative, reinforced by traditional archaeology, have linked Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano with a specific ethnic group that is highly implicated in the construction of Mexican national identity. It is a situation that has led to an ethnic discourse grounded on a deep past and an almost unexplored present. Rather than exploring the slow rhythms of co-configuration produced by the intimate tangled connections between materials and humans. Nahuas tend to have disappeared in the archaeological research of a once colonial Mexico. Although Nahuatl speakers are linked together in Colonial narrations as poor peasants living in rural Mexican Barrios (Smith and Novic 2012:15) with a specific organisation that, later on, was defined as 'cargo system' (Nash 1966; Wolf 1967; Korsbaek 1996: 82). Little attention has been paid to the material modifications that can allow researchers to account for the dynamics of the region and the way Nahuas have responded to these material changes, by remembering them, and finally produce a specific space.

In answer to this problem, this thesis offers a closer exploration of the way Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano produce their landscape or 'homeland' today. Focusing, by doing so, on the importance of the re-enactments that oral traditions and storytelling hide. Along this thesis, a different understanding of the material-humans relation is presented in the way Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano account their space through constantly remembering (materials that are absent or those that are still in continuos use). These narrations represent a different way of presenting the fluid essences that materials have when being accounted within the rhythms of the everyday spatial practices. In other words, the relationship that indigenous communities through these accounts established with the concept of past not just built their collective sense of self (in this case their *'nahua-ness'*) through what they called "*el costumbre*" (spatial practices), but put to the forefront the importance of the materials and the fluidity in which people use them. Whether materials help in the process of remembrance or if they are used in a different context, it is this material fluidity that built their history. This thesis uses ethnographic fieldwork to explore the fluid rhythms of change that built the houses in Mixtla de Altamirano.

Chapter 1

1.1   Aims of the thesis

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the materials used to produce the house, a space that is lived and built (the house) but also perceived, dreamed and remembered (a home), in a Nahua municipality located in the Zongolica Mountain Range, Veracruz. Confronting, by doing so, the way archaeology has narrated Nahua ethnicity, and therefore their past, and unveiling the material fluidity that builds their history.

To do so, this thesis stands on the idea that Nahua produce and reproduce certain rhythms of repetition that involve a collective way of understanding the environment, social relations and human subjectivity. Moreover, these rhythms create a particular knowledge that is transmitted via memory and materialises with the act of remembrance –performativity of the self where the characterisation of the home continues being ontologically fundamental. Consequently, this thesis argues that the Nahua use the act of remembrance as a creative way to resist the material impositions coming from outside, but also to project and reinforce the self (being Nahua) and the relationship between self and others (humans and non-humans) as free.

The Nahua, therefore, signify and re-signify traditions (continuities or discontinuities) through time and power in creative ways. However, it is the material expression that the collective self being (*Nahua-ness*) and their bottom-up organisation (cargo system) that is being analysed in this thesis. Accordingly, my main question is:

1. ***Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, lived, perceived and imagined houses: How are they materially realised?***

However, in order to answer this broad question, other sub questions need to be formulated and other issues should be taken into consideration as shown in figure 1.2:

- *How do materials relate and how are they being used in order to produce the Nahua home? When does a simple structure become a house for Nahuas?*

- *How are these materials being narrated and remembered by Nahuas?*

- *How do the materials build and reinforce the sense of self or Nahua-ness in Mixtla de Altamirano?, How do people in Mixtla relate and organise inside the so-called house?*

- *How do materials reflect the collective practices that they have?*

- *How do material changes manifest and affect the rhythms of everyday life?*

- *How are memory and materiality mobilised (socially and politically) to generate ideas of 'self' or cooperation among a given society?*

SYMBOLIC NAMING AND TRADITIONS

REPRODUCE THE SPATIAL PRACTICES

MATERIAL RECORD

? ? ?

SPATIAL PRACTICES = MATERIAL RECORD

STORYTELLING

KNOWLEDGE

CAN THEREFORE SPACE BE CONSIDERED A MATERIAL RECORD AND HOW?

What happen when knowledge comes from other sources that are not familiar with local **EVERYDAY?**
How do you **RE-SIGNIFY SPACE when you** have a clash **OF KNOWLEDGES?**
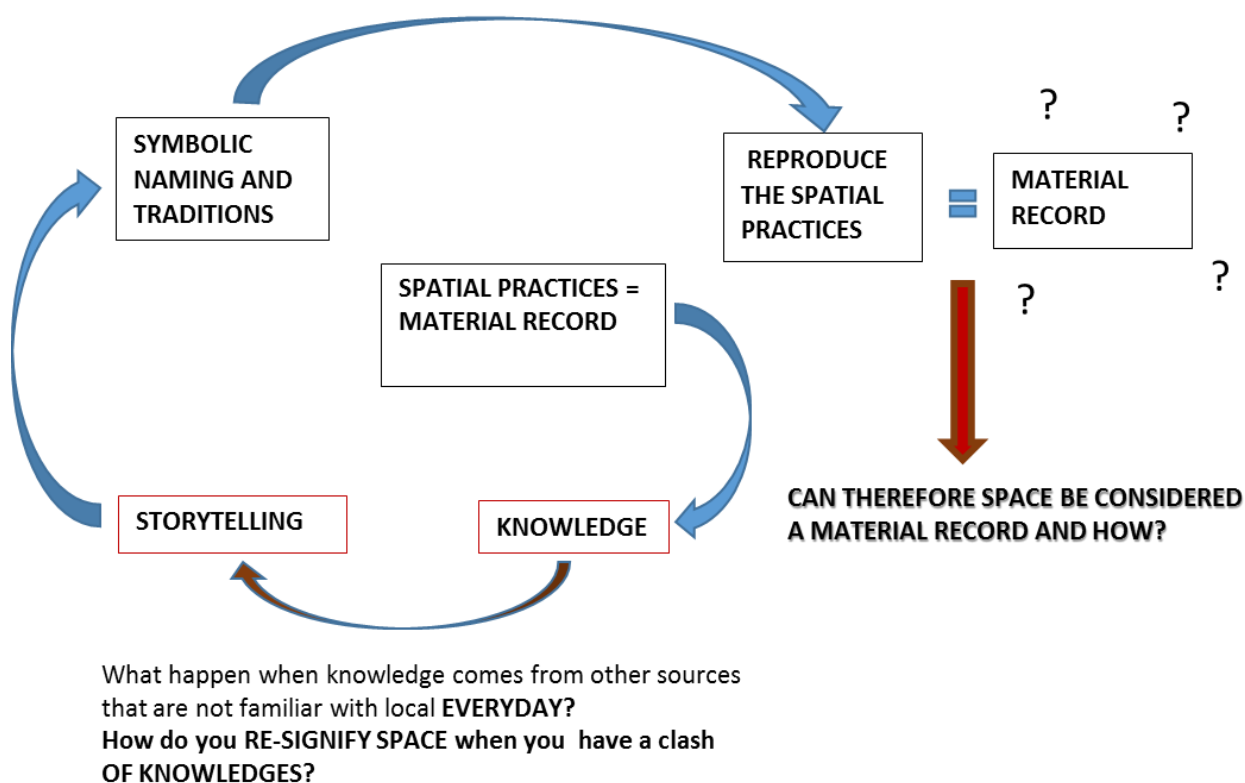
Figure 1.2. Other issues to consider

1.2   Structure of the Thesis

The following thesis uses ethnography as the method and means of analysis to answer a question that foregrounds the relationship established between humans and materials: How do Nahuas use materials to produce their house? Within this general question, other issues were uncovered, such as, the way archaeologists, Elders and others, narrate materials to produce a Nahua 'history' and the implications of those differing narratives. This thesis's main aim is to highlight the fluidity in which people use materials and the changes that are hidden in the way people narrate them. Accordingly, Chapter 2, provides a wide overview of the background of the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano. A national traditional archaeological narrative that dismisses continuity and that challenges anthropological discourses in its attempt to bridge identity and history. In the national account, reinforced by traditional archaeology, Nahuas are linked to Toltecs and possibly Aztecs (Limón Olvera 2008; Stark & Chance 2008; Smith 2012), groups that are not just highly implicated in the construction of Mexican national identity, but also, of whom mythological narratives evoke movement (migration as a rite of passage). That is to say, that in their accounts, these two groups walked and occupied different types of environments (Taggart 1983; Fowler 1989; Beekman et.al.

2003; Van't Hooft 2006). However, if Aztecs and Toltecs are important in the national account, in the state of Veracruz a different historical narrative recognises other ethnic groups: Totonacas, Huastecos and a deep past of Olmecs (Medellin-Zenil 1989; Melgarejo-Vivanco 1960). This leaves the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano with an unexplored and, therefore, unclear deep narrative of their past. With a total surface of 66.3 km^2 and 43 different localities their history becomes a set of disconnected pieces in a puzzle that will be explored in this thesis. Nonetheless, this disconnection sheds light on the lack of interest given to the materiality and the fluid rhythms that built the sense of self of the Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano. This next chapter ends with a set of definitions and theories that will lay the foundations of the entire thesis. The main aim of the chapter is to present the Nahuas that live in Mixtla de Altamirano.

Subsequently, chapter 3 provides a closer insight into the ethnographic methodologies that have been used to answer an archaeological question. First, it sets out the ways that archaeologists have used ethnography to create models that help them in understanding past societies, and the important debates that arise from this specific perspective and the newer ideas that recognise the colonial frameworks behind this use of ethnography. These newer ideas return the politics into the ethics in the praxis of archaeology, a perspective that I assume in this thesis. Next, the chapter relates a personal experience of working with the Elders: memory, and the Elders' idea of past-ness that are still transmitted orally from time to time. Within this scheme, memory became knowledge and was central in their act of performativity. However, due to the new ways of conceiving the Elders inside the communities as a non-wanted minority, the transmission is almost lost, as Doña Dolores expresses to me "*before we used to listen to our grandparents, we treat them with respect, now they treated us like garbage*" (Ayahualulco, March 19, 2015). Memory then is reinforced in other ways. In addition to the ethnography, other resources were used in order to have a better understanding of the Nahua home/house. This chapter then will be an insight into the work undertaken in the municipality located in the Zongolica Mountain Range that helps in defining archaeological narratives (the material culture studies) as a living matter.

Chapter 4 provides a catalogue of forms: the materiality of the houses that I was able to document during my stay in the mountain range. Presenting the materials in disconnection will allow the reader to detach from the meaning and the understandings that people gave them. Nonetheless, in presenting them in a certain order a particular account is being captured, one that foregrounds the techniques used to document the houses. It could be said that in presenting the materials I am presenting my own account, one that distinguishes the chaotic material dissonance that is produced in the everyday life of Mixtla de Altamirano and that differs greatly from their own understanding of the materiality of 'the house'.

Consequently, chapter 5 takes a closer look into the dialectic relationship between people and materials through the space called 'house' in Mixtla de Altamirano. It is, therefore, a closer exploration of the interrelationships between spatial practices, materials and collective self that Nahuas have, and that produces their landscape. It brings together past and present in an attempt to understand the continued rhythms that build the fluid essence of materials in the everyday life: from the shared kitchen to the individual working land.

Chapter 6 examines the social interactions that are built in and throughout the houses. In this chapter a hierarchical invisible structure that operates for each household is revealed. This structure is furthermore, endorsed by the different symbolic alliances that go unquestioned. *"el Costumbre"* (Spanish for tradition or everyday activities), even though it could be said that the preservation of Nahuas cohesion depends greatly on this hierarchical structure, it is the mouldable quality of this hierarchy that allows traditions and previous understandings to survive in Mixtla de Altamirano. This means, that even though each member of the community knows the different tasks to be done, these can and are modified according to the particularities of everyday life.

Chapter 7 brings together the key elements that have been analysed in the preceeding chapters: the materials and the way people relate, use, and remember them to produce the home. This discussion chapter highlights the way transformations are being materially realised. These transformations furthermore redefine peoples understanding, but more importantly, define the fluidity of the materials that produce the house. As a brief conclusion, this discussion chapter will include a suggestion into the way archaeologists could narrate this fluidity and the importance of the living memory and history. Materials are fluid and so are people, in narrating them in different and creative ways, archaeological research overcomes static discourses.

Finally, chapter 8, provides a short conclusion that summarises the main points argued in each one of the chapters, to lastly, suggest future work.

Chapter 2   Nahuas and their houses: Pieces in a puzzle that build a background

"This is the land of the Nonohualcas, they came and inhabited here, well, not really here, the first Zongolica was on top of a mountain nearby [...] Nonohualcas did come before to try this land, but they died and the ones that survived move to the top of the mountain, that is where old Zongolica is […] they moved from this part of the mountain, because we are living on top of water like as if we were on top of a petate[2], and on the bottom we find dead rivers where once water was alive[…] however later on the Franciscans arrived, they were the ones to bring evangelization in this region, and near here we still have the Calvary that they established, but we all come from the Nonohualcas" (Maria Cira, communitarian radio, 12 May 2015)

The above quote is part of a conversation established with Maria Cira, a strong vibrant radio presenter; her insights, apart from shedding light upon being a Nahua, a woman and a broadcaster, also allowed me to understand the way in which history has been accounted. With a silvery voice, she explained to me the origins of the communities that finally established in the Mountain Range. Despite the fact that she recognised the penetration of the Catholic Church during colonial times, and even though, later on, she spoke about the families with a different background that made of the mountain range a home, in her account, Nahuas were and still are part of the noble people of the Nonohualcas. Establishing, by doing so, a deep history of occupation and a direct link to just one specific group: the Nonohualcas (an ethnic group that, furthermore, was linked to the Toltecs). In her account, the noble people of the Nonohualcas walk through different landscapes all the way to the Promised Land that happened to be located on top of a river that they needed to cover with several *petates* (grass mats). As I will explore later on in this chapter, a similar account surrounds the Mexicas –an ethnic group that is highly implicated in the construction of the Mexican national identity and with whom the Nonohualcas share the language Nahuatl -.

Maria Cira's specific historical account, creates the illusion of an unbroken society and reinforces, by doing so, the idea of 'us' against 'others' with a steady and static past and a prosperous and emancipated future. Such ways of telling historical facts have been encouraged by different institutions (including the Catholic Church and the nationalist narratives). Therefore, it did not come as a surprise when she told me such an elaborated narrative. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that these kinds of accounts, were used to divide and segregate the Mexican population. For instance, throughout colonial times using the cast system (based on a steady ancestry) the Mexican population was once divided and discriminated. Although with

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[2] Grass mat made from palm leaves used as a sleeping mat.

Independence (1810) and later revolution (1910) the cast system was abolished, this physical segregation of population resulted in an uneven society that reinforced the classist idea that due to the traditions they have (ethnicity), indigenous groups will be destined to be poor peasants. Therefore, the first piece in their puzzle called ethnicity, is that official historical narrative, explored thoroughly in section 2.1. Following this narrative, a second piece is presented, when exploring their language: Nahuatl, in section 2.2. Within these two pieces of the puzzle, the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano who become direct decendants of the Nonohualcas and are organised in a different way through what anthropologists have defined as the '*cargo*' system[3] still inhabit that deep-past and therefore are not considered to be modern or likely to become wealthy.

Then follows the presentation of a different part of the puzzle, by connecting the *cargo* system with the set of definitions archaeologists have built around the concept of a large house '*Calpulli/Tlaxicalli/Tecalli*'. This is because, although the *cargo* system has been defined as a hierarchical civil-religious organisation that is based on the family stewardship of an event, and has been extensively described by an important number of anthropologists (Wolf 1967: 195; Aguirre Beltran 1981; Chance and Taylor 1985; Medina 1996: 7; Olivares and Rosales 2014: 55), it has been, in less extension, associated with the material expression Nahuas built for their houses. Even though the *cargo* system has been explained as a communal defence mechanism that allows communities to have a certain degree of economic self-determination (Wolf 1959: 217; Nash 1958:69) and can be associated with the organisation found in the *Calpulli*, it has also been seen as an imposition brought by the Catholic Church that rather than help enhancing self-determination, becomes an abusive mechanism to maintain wealth outside the community (Harris 1964 in Chance and Taylor 1985: 2). Regardless, the *cargo* system provides a sense of uniqueness and continuity that should be explored as an important component of the constitution of the Nahua production of their house; as I will explore in section 2.3. However, a closer look should be given to the way archaeologists have defined the concept of large houses; as territorial units, which limits, and boundaries are not precise. This is mainly because the proper definitions and understandings of them varied from place to place in which the translations and descriptions of the Spaniards become our only source. While in some places, the Calpullis are translated as houses (Smith 1993), on other sources they are translated as barrios and understood as neighbourhoods (Colin 2014; Perkins 2005).

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[3] The cargo system is a civil-religious hierarchical structure that operates in almost all the indigenous communities in Central and South America. It consists in a number of specific well-defined works that rotate among the members of the community.

Moving the discussion further, a fourth piece of the puzzle is presented and refers to the unique ways in which the same ethnic group (the Nahuas) inhabits different altitudes and produces material differences without losing the sense of belonging and being connected with each other (section 2.4). Alongside the unique and strong sense of belonging they have, the way in which recent history is used as a reminder of who they are and where they are heading, I use a historical building (a Hacienda) that helps bridge that deep-past with a cruel colonisation that reinforces the unity among them (section 2.5, final piece of their puzzle).

Within this chapter, a closer look into the historical background of the Nahuas will help to connect the pieces of their puzzle. Although little research has been done in the Nahua municipality I am presenting, the following discussion will shed light upon the way Nahuas conceived their mythological arrival, a connection between the research done using the language Nahuatl and the ethno- historical sources. In addition to these, is the archaeological understanding of the calpullis/tlaxicalli/tecalli as 'house/community' units associated to the Nahuatl speakers. Finally, in presenting a puzzle as a metaphor of historical narratives, I am also presenting the diverse and complex ways in which narrators, storyteller, and historians can account and/or confect history. This specific one, follows a particular theoretical structure that is discussed in section 2.6.

2.1   First piece of the puzzle: Mixtla's official historical background

When historical data such as, ethno-historical sources (codexes, letters, among others), archaeological research (digging reports, interpretations and models) and mythology (people's beliefs and local narratives), are turned into one account that is promoted by an institution as a unique truthful chronicle, history becomes officialised. That is to say, that the resulting narrative goes unquestioned. Such is the case of the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano's history reinforced by traditional archaeology. Even though their ethnicity has been narrated in a way that helps in confecting them with the archaeological past (the pre- conquest period), they have been generally dismissed from the archaeological research. What is more, this narrative left them somehow timeless and ahistorical, as if they were frozen in this deep past.

The official historical account establishes a direct link between Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano and the Nonohualcas (Gomezjara, Mijares-Malagon 1998: 44). This has had severe consequences among researchers and even the Nahuas inhabiting the municipality today. In the first place, establishing one unique group that occupied the mountain range, obscures the ethnic complexity that is well documented by some researchers that have explored Nahua's territory (Garcia Marquez 2005: 123; Lira Lopez 2009: 109). Nonohualcas are not the only group that arrived to the mountain range, therefore a multiethnic background has, as a result, a diversity of groups

among which the Nahuas arise. Secondly, the Nonohualcas, in the account, are not a local group but a migrant one. Consequently, claims for historical land can be obscured due to the fact that the mountain range belongs to no one. Thirdly, there is a lack of interest and support to continue research in the area, creating the illusion that history is one and unique, and is already explored.

This official historical account is further reinforced through some of the linguistic research of the Nahuatl language, and one important ethnohistorical document: the *Cuauhtinchan Codex 'Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (see figure 2.1 and 2.2). This has resulted in a lack of archaeological research in the mountain range. Nonetheless it is important to point out that archaeology has not been able to characterise the Nonohualcas journey established in the *Cuauhtinchan* Codex. Hence, the use of this codex that was written in 1547 painted on European paper in an indigenous tradition by an anonymous author (Yoneda 2005; De la Paz 2007) becomes the only source of information. This document connects several groups in the central and south plateau with Toltec (Tollan inhabitants) migration (Carrasco and Sessions 2007: xix; Ramirez Sorensen 2008: 183). However, it is important to point out that during the Aztec domination, having connections with the Toltecs, was considered as being part of the nobility (Caso 1963; Evans 1990, 1993; Umberger 1996; Smith 2012). Therefore, it is rather unclear, whether the codex or history of Cuauhtinchan was written to claim the legacy of the land before Aztecs or was made only to claim nobility in front of the Spaniards (Kirchhoff, Guemes Herrera and Reyes Garcia 1976). In spite of that, without a doubt, it is one of the most important documents that has helped study the re-composition of the landscape after Tollan (Tula) collapsed in the region. In addition to that it is the only written source that provides evidence of the -mythical- journey of several pueblos (communities) all the way to the Zongolica Mountain Range.

The *Cuauhtinchan* Codex is a pictorial document where time and space are represented in a unique way, that has not just allowed researchers to recreate the mythical journey (Hill Boone 2007: 27), but more importantly, is a lens through which researchers can see the creative ways in which people, not just describe a process of belonging (inhabitation of Cuauhtinchan), but also a way to 'account their own history' as Coatsword (2007: xx) describes it. As a result, the painted story starts all the way back when the *Toltecs-Chichimecas* found *Tollan*. However, in the story, *Toltecs* were just one of seven towns that travelled from a cave named *Chicomoztoc* (seven caves of *Chicomoztoc*) and arrived at a small Otomi village near a river. According to the codex, several groups or pueblos existed in *Tollan* but two of them were recognised as particularly important: the *Toltec-Chichimecas* and the *Nonohualca,* which were composed of four ethnic units: *Cozcateca, Tzoncoliuhque, Chilchiucalca* and *Tcovaque* (Reyes Garcia 1961; Altamirano Hernandez and Tello Ladron de Guevara 2012). In terms of politics, the *Toltec-Chichimeca* dominated the *Nonohualcas*. However, the *Tcovaque* were recognised as being on top of the hierarchy. This

important group (Tcovaque) seems to be the one that migrated to Zongolica later on (Garcia 1961; Reyes Garcia 1977:24).

As stated in the codex, during the journey to the south part of Mexico (Kirchhoff et al. 1976; Garcia 1961) *Couenan* and four other leaders were at the head of the expedition of the Nonohualcas (Sahagun 1981: p.123-229; Garcia 1961). They walked through Tlaxcala, Hidalgo and Puebla in a migration that took 36 years until they found a place to stay. This was an Olmeca-Xicalanca manor, a place called *Calchiutepec* or *Cerro de Jade* (today it is known as Cholula in the state of Puebla). Once there, *Nonohualcas* asked *Olmeca-Xicalanca* for land and even though it was denied at the beginning, after five years, they managed to take control of the manor. Nonetheless, the towns that were neighbouring *Olmecas-Xicalanca* allied with them and started a war against *Nonohualcas* to recover the land. *Nonohualcas*, as a consequence, decided to seek advice from their god *Tezcatlipoca* who suggested to go back to *Chicomoztoc* (the original place) and seek help from the *Chichimecas*[4]. However, according to the story, *Chichimecas* could not have a nobility title without learning *Nahuatl*. Therefore, C*hichimecas* ate *maize* and wore *narigueras*[5] (Rossell and Rodriguez Cano 1999) in order to learn the language. Finally, once *Nonohualcas* and *Chichimecas* recovered the land, they spread inside the region. The account then continues when the *Nonohualca-Chichimeca* group divided into two subgroups: The ones that migrated to the south-east - the *Tcovaque* and *Costcateca-,* and the ones that went to the northeast – the *Chachihuacalca* and *Tzoncolohque-* . *Chalchiuacalcas* stayed in *Chlatiutepec Omeyocan* and *Cuahuyahualulce* and *Tzoncoliuhque* stayed in *Tzoncoliuhcan* (what seems to be Zongolica) (Yoneda 2005).

In short, the Toltecs dominated the territory that was called *Coatlalli*. However, little is known of the previous groups that inhabited the region even though they are mentioned in the account, like *Olmecas-Xicalancas*, *Chochos*, *Popolucas* and *Mixtecos,* little research has been made to identify their occupation. Nonetheless, 224 years of the *Toltec-Chichimeca*'s manor is documented, until hunger and war gave place to a new series of movements, tensions and enmities (Rossell and Rodriguez Cano 1999). The rapid spread of the population into the territory supports the hypothesis of the importance of migration as a rite of passage to legitimise greatness

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[4] Chichimecas are specifically important because they are the nomadic group (hunter gathers) of the north part of Mexico that are believed to be ancestor to all the Nahua groups today via the same account that include Tula and Tenochtitlan. However, Chichimecas did not speak nahuatl. In fact, the tribes that inhabited the northern territory were not absorbed by Aztec empire or later on Spaniards. They were known as 'the uncivilized ones'.

[5] this part of the history is particularly important due to the symbolic representation that the Nahuatl had as a sign of being noble and the consumption of maize that represents the fact that they go from nomadic to settled societies

and to find the Promised Land (Beekman and Christensen 2003; Healan and Cobean 2012; León-Portilla 2005a). Although movement did exist, different types of *Nahuatl* seems to have emerged from the fusion with other languages (Chance 1996; Stark and Chance 2008) in different time periods (as I will explore in the next subsection). By the time of the third expansion occurred – with *Aztec* empire- many groups in different parts of the territory already spoke *Nahuatl*.

Figure 2.1. The complete Cuauhtinchan Map No. 2 A polychrome painting on Amatl (a kind of bark paper) (http://mapadecuauhtinchantwo.wiki-site.com, 29 September 2017)

Figure 2.2. The representation of Cholula in the Cuauhtinchan Map No. 2

(http://mapadecuauhtinchantwo.wiki-site.com, 29 September 2017)

Finally, even though this ethnohistorical document establishes a relationship between different groups that speak Nahuatl and the Toltecs in Tollan, there are two points that should be taken into consideration when using them as the only evidence. On the one side, during the postclassic period, some groups –especially the ones inhabiting the central plateau- had the need to establish a direct link with *Toltecs* nobility as a way to rise in the hierarchical society of the time[6] (Escalante 2008: 88). Therefore, deep ties were reinforced with historical accounts. On the other side, during the postclassical period, migration was a mythical way of reinforcing ownership of the land. In fact, migration is strengthened as a way of conquering a specific territory, in almost all ethno-historical sources.

Nonetheless, the *Cuauhtinchan Codex 'Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca'* reinforces the nomadic essence of the Nahuas in the Zongolica Mountain Range and the complex relationships they established with other groups. Not to mention, that during the conquest and later colonial times the Nahuas that inhabited the Zongolica Mountain Range moved deeper into the mountains to stay away from the Spanish domination. However, a key issue is presented today when exploring the mountain range as a whole region. This is because the same mountain environment is

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[6] As I stated previously, this was the case of the Mexica to legitimate their nobility title.

separated by an invisible border between the states of Veracruz and Puebla in which Nahuas with the same historical background are treated in a different way. In the official history (narrative) of each state Nahuas follow a different path. In the state of Puebla Nahuas are a dominant ethnic group, therefore the recognition of their deep ties has important implications in the Nahuaness promoted by the state of Puebla. Unfortunately, that is not the case in the state of Veracruz where three other groups are promoted by the official narrative: Totonacos, Huastecos and Olmecas; Nahuas in Veracruz tend to have disappeared (as shown in figure 2.3, indicating the traditional borders of the three ethnic groups that dominate in the official narrative).

During the past decade, archaeologists working in the state of Veracruz, have insisted on the elimination of the ethnic borders promoted by the official narrative (see for example Daneels and Miranda 1998; Berdan et al. 2008; Lira Lopez 2010). However, ethnic borders and pristine cultures have been the foundation for strong identity discourses. It seems even dangerous to question those strongly rooted narratives that evoke belonging and ownership of the land. Those official narratives, once promoted by national institutions, are now being used by local entrepreneurs that found a way to turn ethnicity into a commodity (Flores 2010). Therefore, rural Mexico, and with it, indigenous communities, become part of the ecotourism experience and are presented like pieces to be exhibited in a museum. However, the outcome of producing that static identity as Bonfil Batalla (1988:64) pointed out, contributed to building a stronger sense of uniqueness in a stereotypical and selective version; prioritizing the folklore and the crafts (Navarrete 2009: 70), rather than the creative ways in which people preserve and explain certain traditions. As a result, a certain kind of '*Nahua-ness'* today can be materialised and sold as a commodity and although it is being sold in the state of Puebla, in Veracruz other ethnic identities are being used with the same purposes. This has created severe consequences in the performative process of remembrance and the rhythms of everyday life in the community (as I will explore through this thesis).

Within this simplified view of traditions, Nahuas seem to somehow loose continuity in their own everyday life. Traditions are seen as fossilised acts (Alvarez 1991: 128; Oland et. al. 2012: 1).Therefore, Nahuas traditions keep them locked in a perpetual past (Navarrete 2009: 67; Wallerstein 1987; Trigger 1984: 356). One important tradition that define their Nahua ethnicity is their language and will be explored in the next section.

Figure 2.3. State of Veracruz's official narrative divides the state with imaginary border lines in three. Each part reinforces a particular ethnic group

2.2   Second piece of the puzzle: Nahuatl

An important reason for choosing Mixlta de Altamirano was the high proportion of the population that still today consider Nahuatl as their first language. In fact, to put it in the words of Dona Reina "w*e are Nahuas because we speak Nahuatl. That is what makes us Nahuas*". As stated above, one of the most important traditions that define the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano is their continuous use of the language which some of them called Mexicano. From a total of 10, 387 inhabitants, 10, 360 still use it to communicate in their daily activities. In other words, 99.74% used Nahuatl and 42.38% are monolingual, which means that 4,403 inhabitants do not know any other language than Nahuatl (INEGI 2010).

However, when it comes to explore the history of the language Nahuatl, the decision of working with Nahuas resulted even more thought-provoking. This is because, according to the statistic the language Nahuatl is the most spoken one inside the Mexican territory. A total of 1, 725,620 Mexicans use this language to communicate in their daily activities. However, among Nahuas living in different regions and even in different communities nearby, language has transformed to the point where it is impossible to considered Nahuatl as one homogeneous group.

Nahuatl is part of a broad family of languages called *Uto-Azteca*. Although there is still debate regarding the origins of *Uto-Azteca*, many theories have been proposed. For instance, while some researchers think that it is native to central Mexico (Hill 2001, 2012; Bellwood 1997), others think that it was brought through human migrations (Kaufman 2001; Boone 2000; Fowler 1983; Miller 1983; Dakin1982; Hale and Harris 1979). As an example, Beekman and Christensen (2003) state that the introduction of Nahuatl was a product of a migration process from sedentary refugees coming from the north-central areas of Mexico into the Central Highlands long before what historical records indicate. However, some others have suggested its origin in the Gulf Coast (Delhalle and Luykx 1986). The one thing that almost all researchers agree, is that at some point Nahuatl expanded from the centre high plateau of Mexico into the whole territory of Mesoamerica and even further (Lockhart 1992; Escalante 2008: 87).

According to the official historical account, the expansion from the central plateau to different parts of Mexico took place in three different waves that represent different moments of history: Collapse of Teotihuacan; Collapse of Tollan, and finally with the expansion of Mexicas (Aztec) Empire (Escalante 2008) (see figure 2.2). The first movement is from the city of Teotihuacan to Tollan, even though it remains unclear whether Nahuatl was spoken as a first language or if the city was ethnically diverse as has been suggested (Headrick 2007; Manzanilla 2006; Lujan et.al. 2006; Braswell 2004). This possible human movement has been supported by archaeologists through a characteristic ceramic (the *coyotlatelco* ceramic complex) that has been documented

both in the Teotihuacan last period of occupation (AD 150-700) (Dumond and Muller 1972; Rattray 1965; Rattray 1972) and in a very early stage of the construction of Toltec city (Tollan) (Mastache et. Al. 2002; Mastache and Cobean 1989; Rattray 1965). It is thus with the *Coyotlatleco ceramic complex* that researchers establish the movement of people between AD 900-1150 when Teotihuacan stopped being a centralised city to consolidate the city of Tollan around 650 AD (Villalpando 2007:36). Regardless of the suggestions made by Ashwell that Tollan received people from other parts of the central plateau like Cholula (Ashwell 2003:40), or of other researchers that suggested people moved from different parts of the territory like Jalisco, Veracruz or Michoacan (Willeremet and Edgar 2013; Evans 2012; Evans 2014); the plain account established the link between Teotihuacan and Tollan (as shown in figure 2.4).
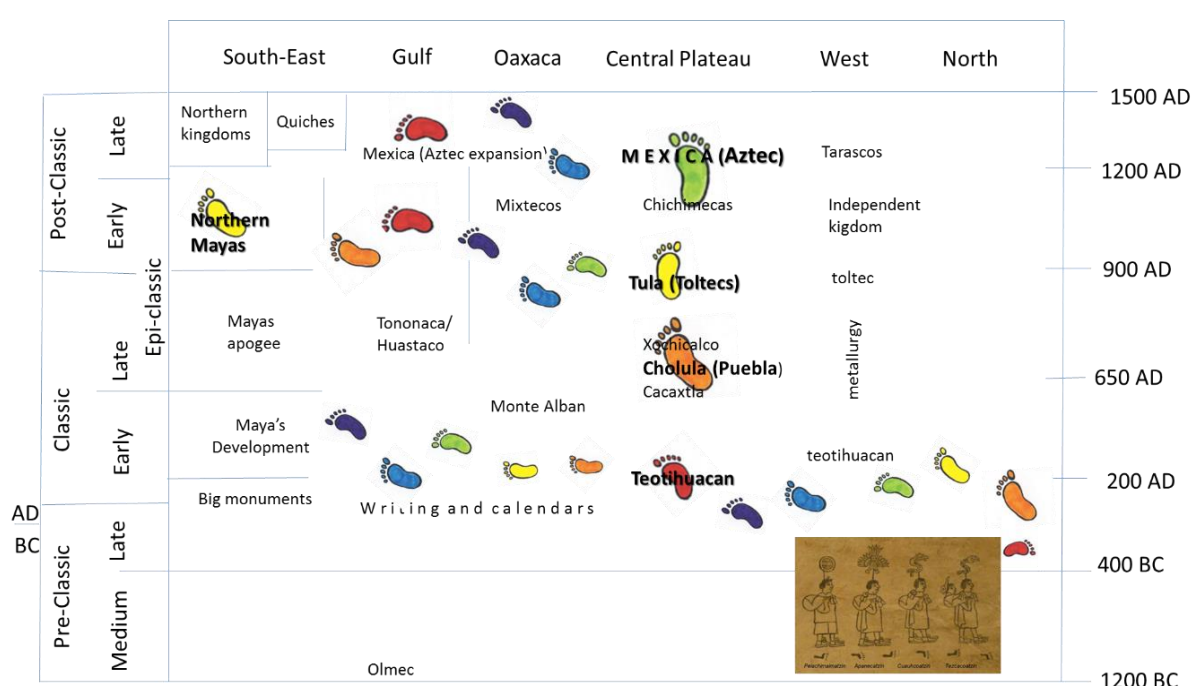
Figure 2.4. Three Nahuatl expansions according to different researchers: feet represent Nahuatl speakers that come from the north and settled at Teotihuacan, Cholula, Tula and finally Mexicas

Notwithstanding the veracity of the movement of people and the ethnical origins that researchers want to attribute them, the city of Tollan became important not just for its size (Kirchhoff 1985; Smith 2012: 39), but because later on the Mexicas (the main group of the triple alliance of the Aztec empire) acknowledged the importance of Tollan. For instance, prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in 1428 AD, *Tlacalel* and *Itzacoatl* (chiefs of the Mexicas) ordered the burning of antique books and paintings in order to rewrite their own history as the great Mexicas (Leon-Portilla 2005a: 107). In the new accounts they proclaimed the same historical background of the city of Tollan (Lopez Austin 1960). Furthermore, according to the account written by Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, the Mexicas not just shared a historical background, but Quetzalcoatl -the main god of

Tollan- directed the migration of the Mexicas all the way to find Tenochtitlan –the promised land- (Lopez-Lujan and Lopez-Austin 2007).

The second dispersion that is associated with the collapse of Tollan (Ad 1116) appears to have as a consequence the foundation of Tenochtitlan (city of the Mexicas, today Mexico City). However, the dispersion of people during the collapse of Tollan is much more complex than that. For instance, there is a relationship between Tollan and the Postclassic site of Chichen- Itza in the Mayan area (Kubler 1961; Cobos 1998), which suggests that Toltecs moved from the northern central plateau to the south of Mexico to the modern Yucatan state and beyond. It is within the dispersion produced by the collapse of Tollan that the Zongolica Mountain Range was populated by the branch of Toltecs known as Nonohualca*s*.

Despite the fact that Nonohualcas have been considered by some researchers as part of the Nahuatl-speaking diaspora across Mesoamerica that appeared after the collapse of Teotihuacan, and that later on returned to the north to help found Tollan (Anawalt 1985; Jimenez 1966 in: Beekman and Christensen 2003), and even if, archaeological research in Tula (Tollan city) has revealed settlements with ceramic that relates to Teotihuacan phases *Tlamimilolpa* (250-450 AD), *Xolalpan* (450-650 AD) and *Metepec* (650- 850 AD), such an assumption cannot be made (Healan and Cobean 2012; Portilla 1983). Therefore, the second diaspora of Nahuatl in the 12th century AD (collapse of Tollan) cannot be directly related nor reduced to only Nonohualcas. Nonetheless, the tradition of relying on ethnohistorical sources in addition to the lack of archaeological research for the postclassic period in Veracruz have reinforced the account that stresses the Nonohualca*s* as one of the main groups that migrated and established in different parts of Mexico, one of them being the Zongolica Mountain Range.

2.3   Third piece of the puzzle: The study of the house in Mesoamerican Archaeology- The Calpulli/Tlaxicalli/Tecalli and Altepetl-

Despite the fact that the translation of Calpulli from Classical Nahuatl is "large house", Mesoamerican archaeologists have struggled to define the physical limits and composition of these space-places (Boornazian-Diel 2008:2; Charlton, Charlton and Nichols 1993: 147; Santley and Hirth 1993; Smith 1993: 192). One of the main reasons for this lack of clarity is that descriptions of the pre-conquest calpullis mainly come from Spanish documents, and varied from document to document. On top of that, when the Spanish settled (the Franciscan friars at the beginning), Nahuatl names were changed and in some cases the Calpulli became either Barrios, Parcialidades or Estancias, which implies all kinds of sizes and social structures of inhabitation, from a small locality with even one house, to a community, a neighbourhood, or even a district

(Smith and Novic 2012: 10; Redfield 1928; Hicks 1982; Nutini 1961; Mulhare 1996). These diverse ways of naming/referring to the big house of the Nahuatl speakers, has derived in a continuous conversation regarding the possible organisation inside these units. According to Smith and Novic (2012: 7-14) *Barrio* 'is not an appropriate analytical term to apply to ancient Mesoamerican units', the concept of *Barrio* has been reinforced by the unique organisation of contemporary indigenous communities through the definition of the 'cargo system'. In other words, the cargo system is the organisation that delimit a *Barrio* and is used mainly in anthropological literature (Olivares and Rosales 2014).

Although the 'cargo system' has been widely explored and defined by ethnographers due to a sense of uniqueness and continuity it gives to indigenous Mesoamerican communities (Wolf 1967: 195; Aguirre Beltran 1981; Medina 1996: 7; Olivares and Rosales 2014: 55). It has also been described as an original way of organising themselves that creates equality among the community members that re-distributes resources through the celebrations –food and festivity (Wolf 1967). However, it is within this organisational system that *barrios* are defined in urban contemporary scenarios (Tax 1937: 110). Nonetheless, for the archaeologist, the concept of *calpulli* is much more complex than a *barrio* and includes a number of shared activities that can better relate to two different levels of analysis: an urban neighbourhood or even a complete District (Smith and Novic 2012: 7). It could be said then, that the definition of barrios is given by the social structure rather than the physical space in itself. However, when it comes to define the physical space, the terminology is still problematic. For instance, for Chance (1996: 109) in some regions the main institution is the Tecalli (noble house) rather than the Calpulli (large house), which suggests a more stratified society. Although according to Olivera (1978: 105) the settlement pattern of a Tecalli varied from a calpulli due to the ceremonial centre in which nobles and few commoners lived, the land that was possessed by the main landlord was not contiguous. Henceforth, the identification between Calpulli and Tecalli becomes problematic. Boornazian-Diel (2008:2) introduces *Altepetl* 'as an organisation of people associated with a given territory' composed by a number of Calpullis and Tlaxicalis, without making any difference between them. In some cases, Spaniards used 'barrios' to define what Nahuatl speakers called tlaxicalli, which 'referred to any place of residence' (Chance 1996:110). It is within Reyes Gracia (1977:122) that a connection is made between the organisation of Calpullis and the group that migrated to Cholula, the Tolteca-Chichimecas (Nonohualcas). Although for Flannery (1976:16), "*the one-room thatch-roofed, wattle-and-daub house became the most common residential structure in Mesoamerica's early villages*", the fact that settlements were not nucleated suggested that the physical limits of one house might have contained a complex organised hierarchy with a large number of family members inhabiting it.

Until today a problem arises when analysing houses, although we agreed that the household is "*the locus of everyday life and the producer of most activities and things archaeologist recover*" (Earle and Kristiansen 2010:3). Limits of these units are necessary but still rather unclear (Beaudry 2015:2). Regardless, the discussion between Calpullis, Tecalli, Tlaxicalli and Altepetl and the Spanish translations that varied according to the ethno historical source, one thing is clear, for better understanding the house there is a need to explore the way humans relate to their material world and use it to build their houses. In this case, Calpullis have been defined as 'a territorially distinct landholding unit or urban ward' (Change 1996:109) or as Santley and Hirth (1993:3) explained them, as units in which society reflects economic, reproductive and organisation values. In both cases, Calpullis are seen as units. Although the term *Barrio* was in fact re-introduced by ethnographers that seek for historical continuities between pre-hispanic and modern indigenous communities, within these discourses both terms: *Calpolli* and *Barrios* are syncretised in a unique way (Redfield 1928; Carrasco 1976). In the words of Olivares and Rosales (2014: 53) 'the prehispanic calpullis and the Spanish institution 'barrios' have syncretised and there is no possible way of distinguishing one from the other. Yet, by focusing on the rhythms of change that materials have, and the way people reproduce these space-places a better understanding can be achieved.

Regardless, little attention is put to the materiality that builds the space-place called home. On the one hand, archaeological research uses ethnography to create models for a better understanding of pre-modern societies and on the other hand, ethnographers focus on the organisation that encapsulates the materiality of the house. In the words of Ransley (2009: 1) drawing on other scholars, both discourses are part of a 'historically-situated and culturally-specific understanding of human-object-environment relations, rooted in the separation of the social and material world (of mind and matter)'. Dismissing, by doing so, the fluid rhythms that materials have. Contrary to that, this thesis moves beyond a simple ethno-archaeological research, which will only help as an analogy between past and present. Rather, it problematizes the way archaeologists narrated the Nahua ethnicity through the relationship established with the materials. Narrations that by doing that, have helped in confecting them with the archaeological remains, leaving them timeless and ahistorical and within this scenario somehow apolitical, as I will explore more thoroughly in chapter 3 (section 3.1.2.1).

2.4   Fourth piece of the puzzle: the uniqueness of Mixtla de Altamirano

When focusing on the way the modern Mixtla de Altamirano is produced, two elements stand out from the rest: The settlement pattern and the morphology. The first one refers to the way people have decided to inhabit the piece of land that constitutes the entire municipality of Mixtla de

Altamirano. With a total surface of 60.87 km^2 the entire municipality is divided in 43 different localities with a total population of 11,646 inhabitants (INEGI 2015) expanded throughout all 43 localities. Although the local centre is the place where people still converge, the settlement pattern is dispersed. However, the majority of localities or small communities that surround the centre are constituted by members of one specific family.

This way of settling resembles the descriptions made of pre-conquest communities. According to the archaeological research elaborated mainly during the seventies that focus on the settlement patterns in the Basins or central plateau of Mexico (Sanders, Parson, and Santley 1979), prior to the Spanish invasion, a preponderance for disperse settlement patterns was observed (Smith and Novic 2012; Parsons et. al 2012; Cowgill 2007; Carrasco 1961; Evans 1989; Parson and Santley 1979; Sanders et. al. 1979; Blanton 1972). In Veracruz Santley and Arnold III (1996: 225-249) found a similar pattern for communities that established in the southern part of the state. Although it does not imply a direct connection between pre-conquest communities and Nahuas today, it does suggest continuity in the traditional way of inhabitation. Otherwise speaking, it sheds light on the preferences when it comes to producing a place and the creative ways of re-producing these preferences.

According to CONAPO (National Board of Population), the population density in Mixtla de Altamirano is of 156.7 inhabitants per km^2 (INEGI 2010). This dispersed settlement pattern was then confirmed by exploring the municipality through satellite image. With this information, a first hypothesis of a traditional material inhabitation inside the mountain range, was put forward. However, one of the consequences of this kind of settlement pattern was of special interest when exploring the material world of the Nahuas. I am referring to the diverse way in which one same ethnic group settles in different environments. A situation that happens due to the morphology of the mountain (see figure 2.5). Among the same group: the Nahuas, important differences are given by the different elevations in which they inhabit. These elevation differences, give as a result different weather conditions, living species –vegetation and animals- and natural resources, and even though the process of inhabitation results in different ways of using materials, Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano still are one same ethnic group that acknowledges these regional differences.

Accordingly, these three areas (see figure 2.6 the topography of Mixtla de Altamirano) are named in the following way:

1) 'Warm land' or 'lowland' up to 800 meters above sea level. Due to the physical characteristics of this area, among the elders in Mixtla de Altamirano it is also called 'the ranch'. This because, the soil is the richest to grow grains and other plants. Therefore, it

could be said that the main activity in this surrounding area has always been agriculture. Although the products obtained have varied over time, the rich soils have allowed continuous exploitation of this area. For instance, it is well documented that the production of Tobacco in the last stage of the colony and early independent Mexico (around 1720) was one of the reasons to welcome private owners, causing people to move further up in the mountain range (Reyes Garcia 1961; Rodriguez 2003a, 2003b). One of the materials remains of this private invasion still stands in Xochilta (one of the communities in Mixtla de Altamirano) where the remains of an 'hacienda' have been re-used and transformed into a little restaurant –explored in the next section 2.5-. Although little information was found regarding the exact date and the main activity of this 'hacienda', local historian Don Francisco suggested that a possible date for the construction goes all the way back to 1726 and assures that the main activity was the production of tobacco that later on transformed into sugar cane. This information was reinforced through the elders' conversations that still remember the production of tobacco and the change to sugar cane. Today the production of sugar cane remains important but has been accompanied by other production such as banana, maize, orange, beans, chilli, and coffee.

2) The second area is 'temperate land' or 'middle land' up to 1,700 meters above sea level. - This area is where the head of the municipality is located. Although, the soil is not as rich as the lower lands, the elevation benefits the production of coffee beans. However, the main activity in this area has to do with the administration. Even today, the highway connects this part of the municipality to the bigger town named Zongolica. For this reason, the centre continues being used by all the Nahuas as a place to buy/ sell products.

3) The third area is called 'cold land' or 'highland' over 1,800 meters above sea level. The area is covered with forest and rocks that not just creates an abrupt scenery but makes cultivation almost impossible. Although people still live from the exploitation of wood and other resources obtained from this abrupt landscape, such as the rocks (transformed in lime) and certain sand to produce pottery; another important activity in the highlands was the goat stock. Within this area, an important production of textiles was once elaborated using wool from these animals.
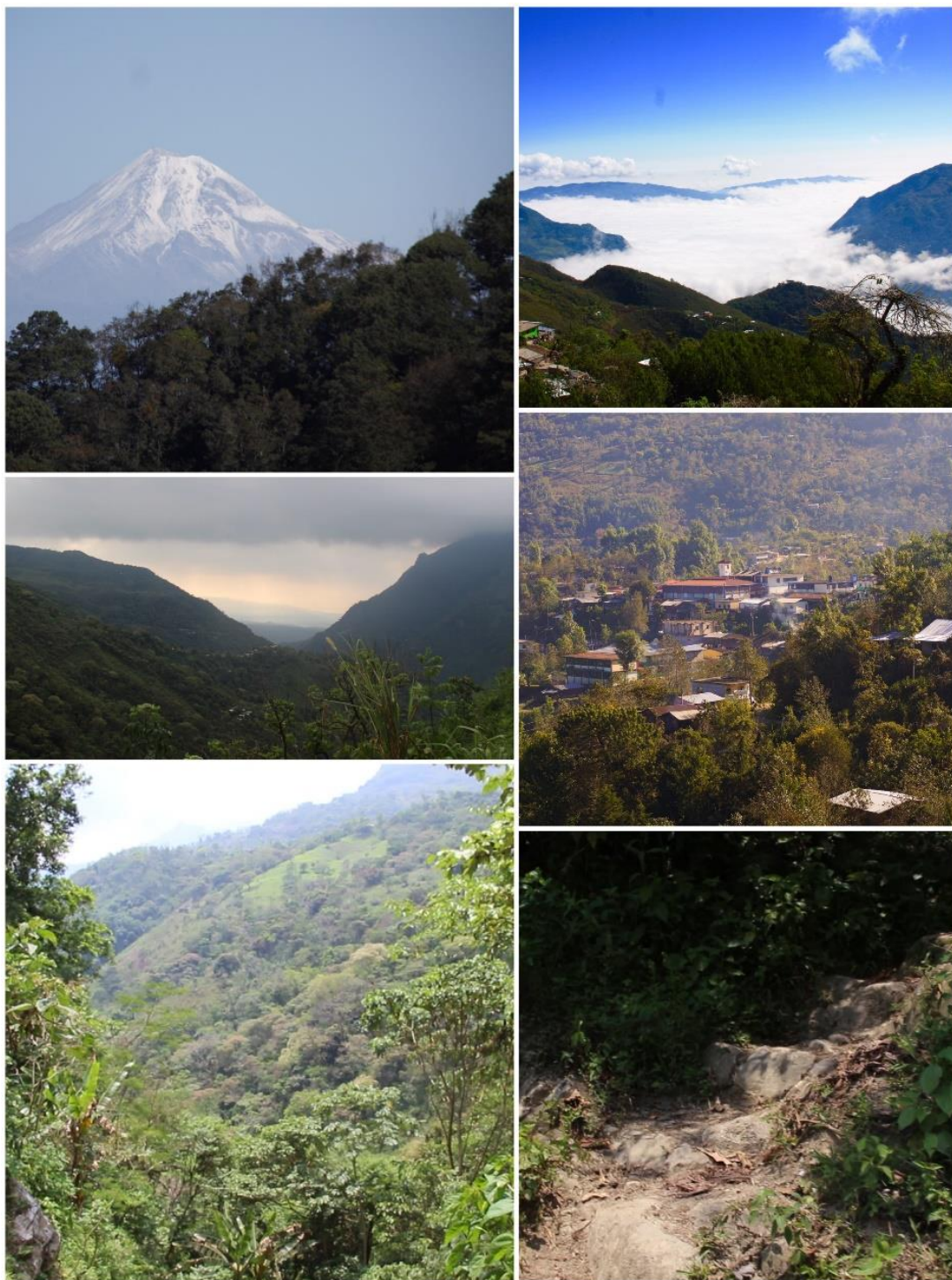
Figure 2.5. Mixtla de Altamirano's Landscape. Due to the abrupt morphology, differences in altitude and climate create differences in vegetation and animals.

Despite these differences, the mobility within regions creates a unique pattern and cosmology that includes a wider relationship with things in different environments. Even though this three areas division seems to be documented in other parts of the mountain range (Martinez Canales 2013: 75). In the specific case of Mixtla de Altamirano, it is thought that these regional differences define people's personality (Lic. Gerardo, 6 March 2015: Interview). However, Mixtla de

Altamirano, have very specific rhythms that demonstrate that the people not just have a great understanding of different landscapes, but that this mobility became part of the daily activities. It could be said that it is in that itinerant inhabitation of the municipality that Nahuas in Mixtla have transformed the landscape into 'Tocha' or in English: 'the house of all of us' (as I will explore more fully in chapter 4 and 5)
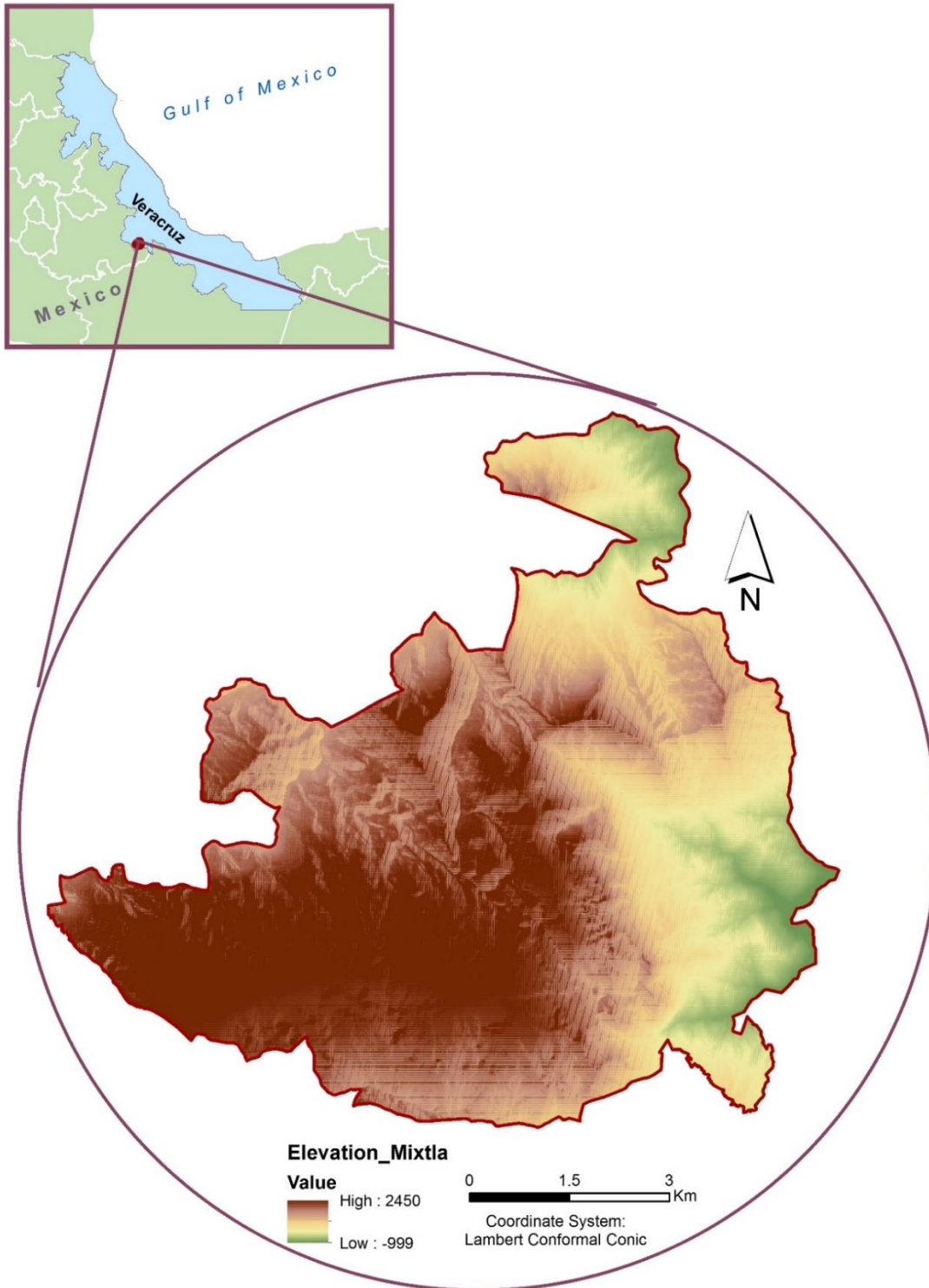
Figure 2.6. Mixtla de Altamirano Topography

2.5 Fifth piece of the puzzle: Living historical remains. Connecting past with present through photographs, documents and storytelling

Until this point, I have presented the pre-conquest history that builds the Nahua's ethnic identity. According to the official narrative, it seems that Mixtla's inhabitants remained frozen in time even after Spaniards arrived. Despite the fact that through oral tradition and memory the Nahuas past became richer, it also suggests that colonial intrusion just helped to build a stronger sense of what Nahuas were. Regardless of the conflicted accounts, a harsh colonial intrusion is well documented in the mountain range. The land in the Zongolica Mountain Range was very much appreciated throughout colonisation, independence and revolution periods (1690- 1920) tobacco investors corrupted the land early through colonisation and independence. This production followed sugar cane, and more recently it was changed to coffee. Although this last one works more as smaller cooperatives, there are still big landowners that use the workforce of the Nahuas, as I was told during my fieldwork.

Equally important to memory are the materials that still stand as a reminder of the past living conditions. Such is the case of the almost forgotten *Hacienda* that is located in one of the communities in Mixtla de Altamirano. Despite the lack of information found in libraries, Nahuas still recount the history of the almost destroyed monument by saying "my grandparents used to tell me…" The Hacienda is located in Xochitla, a community located in the lowlands of the municipality (see figure 2.7). Although, the lowlands were already presented to me in many stories as "*rancho*" (explored more deeply in section 4.3), it was not until I visited this part of the municipality that the name became coherent with the stories. This is because, the term *rancho* (ranch) is mainly used to define extensive portions of private land with one particular owner. Consequently, when they continued to refer to rancho, I thought that they all have extensive portions of land in the lowlands, or else, they work for someone that owns this land. Even if some were referring to their specific piece of land, the individual portions of land that they possess are not large enough to call them rancho. It turns out that "rancho" is the traditional way that they referred to the lowlands because this part of the municipality was once private land with one owner (a real *Hacienda* that later on become a *Rancho*), and although it has known various overlords and just recently was divided into smaller fragments of land, the name has not changed because it still provides food for the entire municipality.

According to the interviews, this Hacienda used to produce sugar, liquor, tobacco and coffee (in different times). The main hull of the once *Hacienda* stands as the only remains in the community of Xochitla and is dated as far back as 1726 (see figure 2.8 to see the remains of the ex-Hacienda). Even though I tried to locate more information regarding this ancient building (inside and outside

the municipality of Mixtla), it was only through a local historian (Don Francisco Garcia) I found a work of an unknown author that contains some data regarding the building in itself. However, due to the fact that this work was presented to me in photocopies without date and author, I had to rely on the story that surrounds the building that is common knowledge among the people. Therefore, after the interview with the elders where questions regarding this Hacienda drove the discussion to the older practices, Don Francisco decided to show me his "*proper scientific documents*" and continued the conversation in his household.
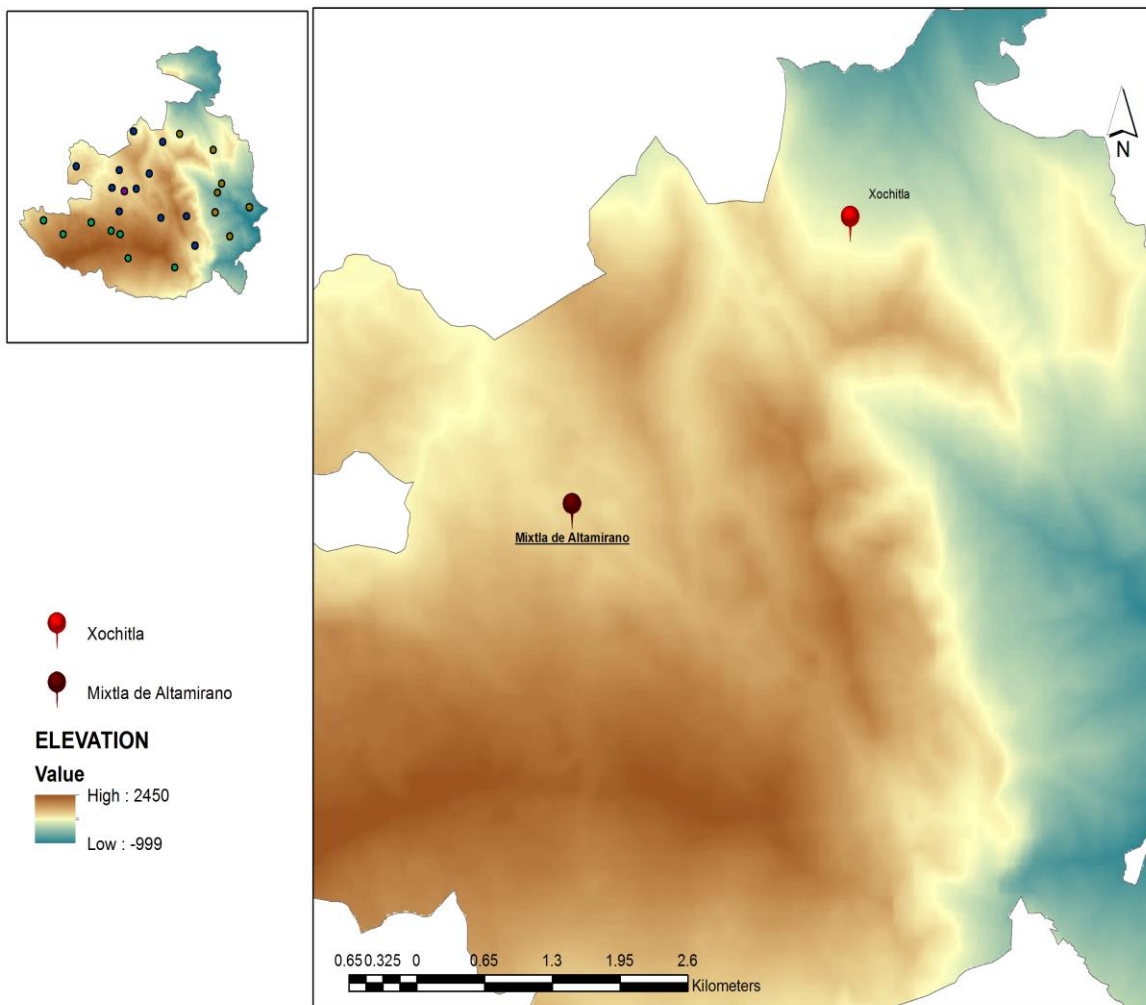
Figure 2.7. Location of the *'Hacienda'* in Xochitla

Figure 2.8. The remains of the ex-hacienda in the community of Xochitla. Some people inside the community had built their houses using these materials that once were private and belong to a rich Spaniard.

According to the work of the unknown author found in Don Francisco's house, after the consolidation of the Hacienda in 1726 built by a rich Spaniard "*that has as a last named Corro*", around the year 1850 or 1860 "*approximately 130 years ago*", the building was refurbished by Don Primitivo Rodriguez Mendez. During the interview with Don Francisco, a question regarding the exact building's measurements gave us an interesting conversation that led to the presentation of his book. "*In this book that a scientist gave me, said that as part of the refurbishment, people measure the entire building including the gardens and the total area of the building was 50x 100 mts². However, I believe that it was bigger, just imagine, all the production of tobacco, sugar cane and liquor was made here at some point*" (see figure 2.8).

Figure 2.9. Walls that once stood mesh with present ones. People find creative ways to reuse materials from the past. Pictures taken by A. Mayahua

The materials used for the construction of this once enormous Hacienda (that today lies just as remains), are stones, sand and lime (see figure 2.9). According to the interview with Don Francisco, all the materials were brought to the community from different parts of the mountain inside the municipality. However, today the building is in poor condition and belongs to one specific family in the community. Although some parts are being reused, the family that owns the remains uses the big stones mainly to build other parts of their own household "*we used them to build the green house or whatever we need them for*".

Figure 2.10. The kitchen. Although this is a kitchen that works as a restaurant, it is also used by the members of the family as their own. However, the family ignores what this space was used for prior to their occupation, one of their theories is that it might be the entrance porch, however the whole building is in bad conditions and only some of the walls still stand. Pictures taken by A. Mayahua

A short conversation was established in the kitchen of the once hacienda with some members of the family (see figure 2.10). Apart from some images that were taken, no further information regarding the number of family members that were still using this space was gathered. It is also important to point out, that according to the women that was preparing food, the place where the kitchen is located today, could be the main entrance or porch of the antique Hacienda. However, the building is in poor condition, therefore a furthermore detail analysis of the remains might be needed to explore the complete context of this building (see figure 2.11).

After acknowledging the history of the lowlands (once exploited by rich merchandisers to produce different goods), an interview with another local historian (Don Heledio Segis Lara) in Zongolica helped illuminate more deeply the important post-colonial period with several other photographs that show the different ways of living in the mountain range. According to Don Heledio, his

grandfather was a rich Spaniard who arrived in the community of Zongolica when there were hardly any roads. He recalls an infancy of sobriety.

Figure 2.11. Remains of this ex-hacienda are in process of being preserved by the family that had received some visits from the national heritage institution. However, as they told me, "*there are just recommendations because this is our home now and we need the space to live*". Pictures taken by A. Mayahua

In Figure 2.12 an old photograph taken in a household, shows people in front of what it seems to be a smoky kitchen. Although Don Heledio denied knowing the story or any relationship to the family in the picture. In his own words "*is with this kind of photograph that one can better understand the history of the people that have lived here in this mountain range".* In the image a group of people appears to be in front of an old building. However, as he pointed out, it looks as if these people were working for someone, or at least have some money. In his words "it *was not easy to have horses and some of them are better dress than others, I think they were the workers of the hacienda but who knows*".

Later on, he referred to his own personal memories in an almost uncommunicated Zongolica and his own passion of collecting old maps and photographs that better illuminate what he

remembers as the descriptions that his grandparents and parents used to account. Figure 2.13 is Zongolica around the 1950. In the images we can see mainly what is called a Spanish layout. Most of the buildings are made with the same materials used in the construction of the Hacienda (stone, lime and sand). Don Heledio told us that the lamps in the street were placed when he was a child and they were gas lamps that people had to turn on and off every day. He also told us that the market has been part of the place since he remembered "*all the communities come to Zongolica to sell whatever they find in the mountain and exchange products. That is why also Zongolica is so big, it is here where the people that had their Haciendas used to come and buy things*"

Figure 2.12. Picture recovered from local historian. The story is unknown but in the words of the historian it could be people in front of what it seems like the smoky kitchen (the way they still call the kitchens that used woods and fire to cook) but a big one that maybe belonged to a rich family.

Figure 2.13. Streets of Zongolica during the 1950's with haciendas and ranchos, a semi-urban Spanish layout was already being imposed in the town of Zongolica.

As seen in figure 2.14 new materials were introduced at a very early stage. Buildings resemble the ones seen in the nearest cities. Red clay tiles that, according to Don Heledio were fabricated near Orizaba and brought to Zongolica just for rich merchandisers. Therefore, according to him, the clay used for the roof of the buildings was not originally produced in the highlands of the mountain range. However, other types of clay products that were fabricated in the highlands were used to cook and, in his words "*indigenous came down to exchange them for food and other goods in the local market, so we did used to have local clay for other activities but not for the buildings*"

Regarding the shape of the houses in the lowlands, don Heledio said to us that the houses used to have high roofs because some of them were used as storage for the piles of tobacco that was collected from the surrounding lands where they cultivated it. Then, these piles were taken into Orizaba. "My *grandparents started as merchandisers, they had a grocery store, I don't remember that there were Haciendas as such. As you know Hacienda is an extensive piece of lands, in the mountain range people have smaller ranches, they used to produce a specific product that later on they bring to Zongolica to sell, for instance the tobacco, once dried then it was taken to Orizaba*"

Figure 2.14. According to Don Heledio, these houses were occupied by Spaniards or people that were merchandisers. Houses used to have tall roofs because they were used as storage for the collected production. This stock was later on taken into Orizaba

Despite the fact that both historians told us the story of a past based on their own remembered oral tradition, they both relied on their own sources to illuminate their accounts. The ex-hacienda represents the monument that stands firm as a reminder that once the land was private and that people used to serve a specific family. Complementing this information, the photographs collected, help them into showing the way the introduction of new materials modified their rhythms. For both of them, the new materials represented an improvement into indigenous community's everyday life.

2.6 Putting together the pieces of the puzzle: a theoretical path to explore Mixtla de Altamirano's everyday life

Because the theoretical framework used in this research revolves around the concept of household/house as the space-place that produces and materialises the Nahua collective organisation, a closer look is given to the way people built a relationship with their materials/objects. This means that the problematic definitions both from the Classic Nahuatl (Calpulli, Altepetl, Tlaxicalli, Tecalli) and the Spanish translations (House, locality, Neighbourhood,

Districts) should be equally explored. That is to say, the way time, space and materiality are interwoven in the production of the house in Mixtla de Altamirano. To do so, three spatial levels were analysed as one same thing. This is because while for the Elders the definition of house involves the whole concept of the modern municipality (the communal ties and exchanges along what they defined as their territory). For younger generations the house is a smaller space (compact area that includes kitchen and rooms), as I will explore deeply through this thesis. Therefore, the material expression that builds 'home' in Mixtla de Altamirano today, includes three different levels of exploration according to time: 1) The whole municipality; 2) The urban centre; 3) The household (which is composed by several rooms as explored in chapter 4). Consequently, although the material expression of the Nahua has not yet been substantially changed, the definitions and ideas that build the houses have changed. In other words, Nahuas are producing their space within the rhythms of the everyday life. It has just been recently, when the materiality of the household started changing, mainly influenced by the conceived ideas of new house structures, that reached Mixtla, and that prioritizes the nucleated family rather than extensive families (a westernised idea of household as I will explore in section 2.6.2).

To fully comprehend this complex dialectical relationship between people and materials, fieldwork proved essential and is the basis of this thesis. Therefore, four months fieldwork in

Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz was undertaken, in collaboration with the Indigenous University of

Figure 2.15. Working with Elders and their traditions (2015) along different communities in the municipality. A methodological approach that combines interviews, participant observation and the record of the material expression known as 'home'

Veracruz –office '*Grandes Montanas*'. In which I gathered information via interviews and narratives by working with elders in 25 different communities inside the municipality (see Chapter 3 for insights in the methods used to collect the Data).

In other words, practising archaeology in a creative way has led me to re-establish a broken link between archaeologists and Nahuas through their understanding of space and the material consequences, to write a history that is alive. Along the interviews undertaken, the particular

interest in materials moves the conversations and makes people remember stories of everyday life in the past. Moreover, it was an insightful experience that also helped me rethink the archaeologist's approach to knowledge and the political and social implications of defining people and writing historical narratives for them (Ranciere 2016: 101).

2.6.1 Building home: the trialectics of the Space and the relationship between people and things in the everyday life

As discussed above, a first look into the definition of household/home allowed to put in the forefront, an important opposition. While the first one is related to the physical space, the second one is associated with feelings of relatedness (Cook, Davison and Crabtree 2016:2). Central to this discussion, is that within that dichotomy between household and home lies a western ontological domination that separates and tends to classify our understanding of the object/human need/commodity (I mean the complex word 'house') into an encounter between the private – intimate- space, against a public –social- space (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 2; Cieraad 1999:8; Gillespie 2000: 36; Crabtree 2013: 99; Bowlby et al 1997: 344; Giddens 1984) or the study of a micro- against macro-level of analysis. Furthermore, by doing that, a set of oppositions arise –e.g. nature against culture; space against place; material against emotion; everyday against history; self against society and agency against structure- (Whitridge 2004; Carsten and Hugh-Jones: 1995:2; Lane and Rodman-Murray 2011: 10; Sekimoto 2011:48).

All of the above, however, differ from the way Nahua perceived and built their houses. The Nahua traditional household emerges as a combination of natural and cultural, space-place with no clear divisionary boundaries between the 'intimate' private and the 'collective' public (as I will explore through the next chapters); rather than a dualistic understanding, a complex set of relationships are intertwined and forged collectively that unify the home/house understanding. Whether researchers focus on the connections between house and identity (Duncan 1981; Altman and Gauvin 1981; Sadalla et. Al 1987; Cooper 1995; Giglia 2012), or house and social class, ethnicity and status (Halle 1993; Saunders 1990) or the material culture, daily life and consumption patterns of home (Bourdieu 1984; Pellegrino 1994; Warnier 1994; Miller 2001), or space and domestic architecture (Kent 1990), the home/house - definitions and ideas- rooted in western society, prioritise the binomial 'inside-private/outside-public' spaces, and therefore, have as a consequence, the reinforcement of private –individual spaces against collective ones. It is arguable that the self-construction process within western societies seems to be consolidated in this private space and reinforced or augmented through daily life within the act of performativity in the public spaces (Cooper 1995). In opposition to that, the Nahua self-construction reinforces the collective and through the common knowledge, hidden in the oral tradition they overcome

the inside/outside dichotomies. On the whole, the Nahua houses/household/home becomes a narrative that later on is transformed into knowledge. A knowledge that, furthermore, is, in essence fluid, as I will explore along this thesis. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that in order to understand the rhythms that build the Nahua material definition of houses, a specific theoretical path was used as I will briefly present in the next sections.

2.6.2   The westernised house as Unit

As stated previously, there is no such thing as a clear definition of the word 'house'. Even when looking in a dictionary a house is described as a building for human habitation that consists of '*a ground floor and one or more upper storeys*. It has also been defined as: t*he people that live in a house or a noble, royal or wealthy family or lineage*; [or else] *A building in which people meet for a particular activity*' (Oxford Dictionaries 2016). The only thing that all of the above shares, is that they establish a connection between intimate space (in that they refer to an indoor place). Ever since then, the house has been associated with the intimate space where society reproduces.

Nevertheless, what does intimate space mean and why does society create this intimate space? In 1844 Karl Marx said that 'labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself'. Using his own dialectic method – "*material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought*" (Afterword to the second German Edition 1873, Transcription Kuhls: ii) - he explains that this non-equal relationship between humans, based on their materials, needs certain mechanisms to reproduce; one of these is the spaces that people inhabit. The analysis made by Marx puts the materiality of society at its forefront, and has as a consequence, the development of a series of new methodologies that focus on the reproduction of the uneven society and therefore the study of private, intimate spaces. For instance, 'structuralism', focusing on the dialectic relationships established between system or structure and the elements produced by it, (including the self), concluded that it was in the process of naming things –meaning-making and sign-sign processes- therefore in the mind, that power hides and within power the reproduction of this uneven society. This idea was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure during the early 1900's and it created an important school of thought that focused on language and the discourses as a way to understand the reproduction of power through the dissemination of ideas (Chomsky 1956). Within these ideas, houses became metaphors of the society. By this, I mean places where an uneven society reproduces itself.

In addition to that dualistic understanding of intimate spaces as places where society reproduces, after the post-war period, a renewed interest in the construction of a society based on the explorations of the `self` as central and in control, emerged (Heidegger 1953 ed. 2010; Sartre

1943 ed. 2003). Within this renewed interest, binary, plain oppositions were strongly criticised. For instance, as a response to Lukacs (1971) that stated that consciousness was a passive reflection of the world and the materiality, alongside Engels (1875-76) (e.g. Engels 1955) that stated that the dialectics of nature determined the dialectics of history, Sartre (1943) not just criticised, but he explained that the dialectic process (self and society) can be transcended by putting ourselves in 'situation' and acknowledging that there is more than our 'situation'. Therefore, people are by nature condemned to be free (Sartre 1943: 474). With this, Sartre broke the dualistic Cartesian concept of a human being –a product of nature- and returns the responsibility to people for their actions "it is men that made the history". It is, therefore, within existentialism that humans as part of a particular time in the world are recognised to have consciousness and will to produce and reproduce in material ways.

Alongside this developed understanding of the 'self' in a continuous active performance or agency. A set of approaches that focus on the way that these selves built a relationship with others –the self-construction process against other selves. For instance, the being woman, explored by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), as a social construct. Within this analysis, the active performance is determined by these intimate spaces, and therefore the social consumption patterns. In any case, the reconfiguration of the way that we built ourselves as a mirror of the outside physical world is an ongoing task undertaken by the poststructuralist, and for many researchers, it all starts in the home or the house where we inhabited: 'the intimate space'.

2.6.3   The self-construction process: house as a reflection of the self

Among different researchers, the word 'house' acquires a wide variation of meanings. Although, each definition puts to the forefront it is particular focus: e.g. scale, identity, social contracts and power (Blunt and Dowling 2006), the strong relationship between society and the materiality of the house has never been questioned. Until today, a westernised dominant idea is that the household (as the intimate space where family reproduces) is in essence a female space (Cieraad 1999: 10: Hayden 2002: 85; Young 1997: 133). Although this idea was built and keeps on being encouraged by diverse institutions along different periods of time (State, Church among others). It has certainly modified the way that households have been defined and are still being conceived. For instance, Hayden (2002), correlates the domination of women in the household with the way women are treated in the nation state. Therefore, for Hayden (as for many other feminist scholars) houses embodied a set of characteristics that are reinforced by the masculine nation.

Standing on another ground, but with the same insight, (household as a space of domination) geographers, sociologists, economists, among others, focus on the house as a built physical space

that links the inside with the outside. Within this view, houses stop just having a use value, but also acquire a commercial value. For instance, Mostaedi (2006: 3) describes modern society as a nomadic, individual and self-employed one. He, therefore, combines new materials to create houses that allowed a more individualistic and portable kind of housing. However, in this understanding, the relationship between society and housing will have as intermedium the owner of the means of production (power). It is the owner then that will control time and money of people and regulate the type of housing through what is best for society in general. As a consequence, the relationship between architecture (household and the city layout) and the structure of society is determined by the way the market works and whoever owns the land.

This dialectical relationship between structure of society and architecture has been an arena for radical thinkers to unveil the way conceived spaces are not just produced by the capitalist system but also owned (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 1973, 1989, 2005, 2007) such is the case of the new layout for workers that even extend to the farmers in rural areas and in this case Mixtla inhabitants. Following this analysis, people will not behave in the same way when they are owners of a particular space, as if they are just tenants. Accordingly, radical thinkers invite us to act and defend the cities as our own home (Harvey 2012). It is within that analysis that home (embedded in this definition of feelings of relatedness, memory and symbolism) becomes essential to create the sense of ownership and belonging necessary to defend and act upon them. Houses arise, then, as more than physical structures that determine a given society, they need to become symbolic places more than just the stage of the performance; active spaces where the feelings of relatedness, the memory and the symbolic essences should matter in order to be able to own them and defend them. Within that context, historical accounts, oral traditions and other strategies, to build those feelings of relatedness, become essential.

Naturally, each society has a unique way to build the feelings of relatedness. Therefore, creativity and uniqueness accompanied this process. From the above mentioned, an important lesson is learned: the houses should be defined, understood and read (in a semiotic sense). This is because, the unique ways in which people create those feelings of relatedness and the slow movement of reconfiguration that spaces create in society are a necessary relationship to understand. This relationship should not be understood as a plain movement, but more as a dialectic movement, with specific rhythms that will vary from case to case. In other words, the house becomes in itself a narrative on how people slowly become modified by materials and how materials help in representing the different ways people find to organise (the fluid rhythms of change that are being explored in this thesis). However, when referring to the house, there are two ways of exploring this dialectical rhythm of continuous change. On the one hand, house can be explored as a unit, focusing on the performativity of the people that inhabit this particular space, a very

common way to understand the household inside Mesoamerican research, and on the other hand exploring it as a 'space-place'. Both analyses, share an important characteristic, they grant agency to the space (Nelson 2014, 1999; Murphy 2007; Elden 2004b; Barad 2003), therefore they should be complementary.

Some key strengths of taking as a starting point the space-place analysis are that, borders become somehow blurred (Johnson et. al. 2011). With this I mean that the house is not defined beforehand, it is after the analysis that borders become evident. In addition to that, some researchers believe that it is with this type of analysis that a greater insight is allowed into the way people establish a relationship with nature (Crouch 2010). In this thesis I will approach 'space' using the Lefebvre production of the space (1974) and definitions of the 'spatial illusions' (1991): transparency and opaqueness, with which, he insists that space is both material and social. Accordingly, the house will be both presented in a physical way and demarcated only after analysing the everyday rhythms that will be defined by Mixtla de Altamirano's inhabitants. This will be done by unveiling the two illusions that operate when defining the concept of space (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989): 1) illusion of transparency, which involves studying space as transparent to human comprehension and 2) illusion of opaqueness, where space will be defined entirely by the material characteristics, evoking that what you see is the reality (Ranade 2007: 1519). This, however, suggests including the time-depth that also characterises the 'place' analysis (Tuan 2001:179). With this analysis, a broader definition of 'house' will include understanding the symbolic essence and the feelings of relatedness that are produced and re-produce within the house. Therefore, the attention is centred on the everyday life movement of people, and the fluidity of materials that act upon people all the way to produce and be produced through the act of remembrance.

Therefore, the study of space transcends other disciplines, when space stops being understood only as a scenario materialised in the dominant cartography. Rather, it becomes an agent that is produced and produces. Furthermore, because space is human, feelings of relatedness, emotions and a symbolic understanding of it will connect more deeply with the relationship humans have with their environment through the everyday life rhythms (Tally 2013; Elden 2004; Lefebvre 1991)

2.6.4   The trialectics of the space: the daily life of the house studied in Mixtla de Altamirano

As stated above, to overcome the mechanical opposition of infrastructure –relations of production- and superstructure –culture, institutions and political power- that was historically situated, Lefebvre (1991) introduces the study of the space as well as time -both abstract

concepts- in a material way. Accordingly, domestic space will not be defined as just the place where people sleep or eat. It is, therefore, a unique place where humans inhabit, and it is, furthermore, in continuous transformation through the movement of three different notions of space (Lefebvre 1991; Elden 2004)

1) Spatial practices - the objective space where life occurs. The scenario of a particular everyday life. Therefore, it is thought to be the space that we perceive. It is, furthermore the space that allows us to define the domestic in a broader sense. This because perception varies according to the spatial practices located in a spatiotemporal dimension.

2) The representational space – defined also as the conceived space, the space of power and the imagination. This is the space imagined by cartographers, architects and designed by the power discourses: for example, the imposition of the private intimate space as conceived by those who plan the cities and the houses. This representational space, most of the time, ignores the spatial practices or the perceived daily life of the people.

3) The lived space or space of representations- The experience or perceived space. The space of imagination and feelings. This space is not just where humans live in their constructed, spatial world (Rogers 2002:29-35) but also, is the space that has the power to shape the balance between popular 'perceived space' and official 'conceived space'". Therefore, is where cartography and spatial practices mesh and reconfigure both perception and conception (see figure 2.16)

The PERCEIVED: Spatial Practices The people's construction of space

The LIVED: Space that is experienced.

The CONCEIVED: The space of Power, cartographies, architects and impositions
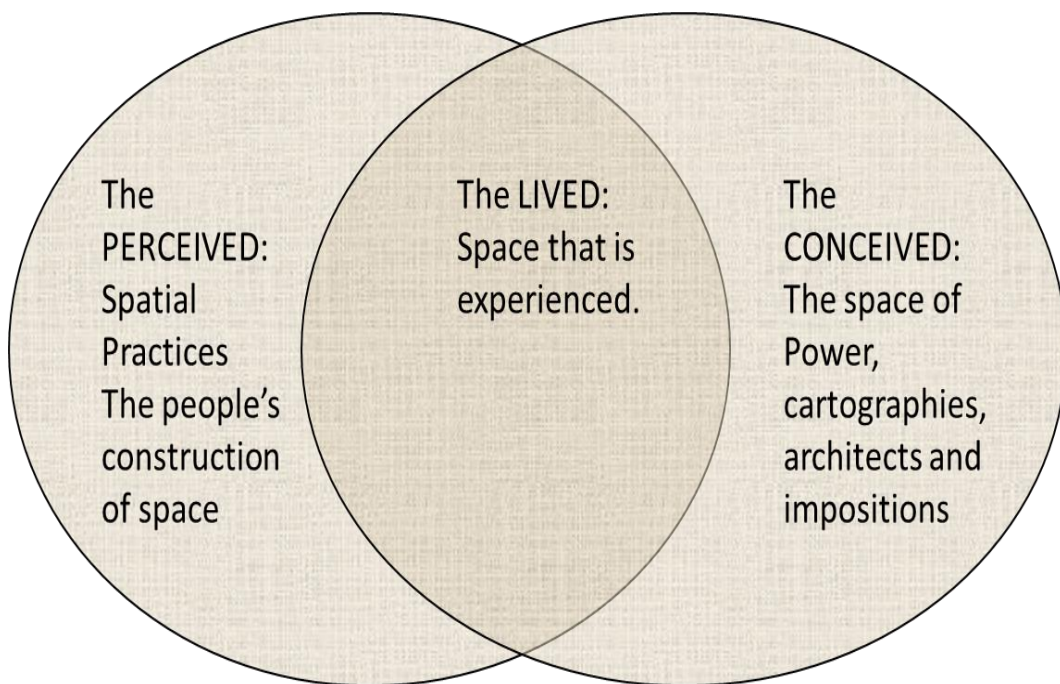
Figure 2.16. The trialectics of Space according to Lefebvre (1991)

With the introduction of three dimensions of analysis -rather than just two as Hegel and Marx have done- Lefebvre introduces the 'spatiotemporal' rhythm that everyday life gives and that is necessary to define a 'place' (Tuan 1997:179) and that is used in this thesis to define the space called 'house'. This not just gives a quantitative understanding of the household but puts in the forefront the qualitative properties that humans grant them, determining that spaces (houses) should be studied in everyday life and the praxis of culture (Lefebvre 1991 (1974): 404-405). This suggests then that space (in this case the houses) has mouldable and flexible characteristics that will vary according to people's understanding (time and culture) and not just mathematical and cartographic as they have been studied so far.

Trialectics was reintroduced to the theoretical literature by the postmodern philosophy and geography through Soja (1996). According to which the lived space cannot be separated from the conceived and the perceived space. Therefore, following Foucault (1972) space becomes a fundamental variable for the survival of capitalist structure and therefore, should not be 'subordinated to time or the social' (Warf and Arias 2009: 3-4). In addition to postmodern philosophy, this kind of analysis has been very influential in contemporary archaeological research and 'social scientific conceptualizations towards a more culture -and difference-attuned understanding of spatiality' (Vuolteenaho, Ameel, Newby and Scott 2012: 3) For instance, Sturt (2006: 119-139) uses the trialectic of space to overcome approaches that focus only on the human actions. He does that by introducing the rhythm of the coast and 'how people might engage with depth terrestrially' in specific times (2006: 129). His approach focuses on how space in late Mesolithic and early Neolithic times of the East Anglian fenlands might also bring specific rhythms of lived space. Kent (1990: 2) recognising that while architecture creates boundaries – household as units-, exploring the space creates the possibility of unbounded spaces. Within his analysis, it is through the use of the space that it is possible to understand the broad sense of domesticity. This means, that new ways of exploring the space should include people's experiences that can and should be included in the analysis of a specific space (e.g. cartograms, spatial warping, among other analysis).

If the debate is to move forward, the definition of the house, has to be expanded, more as a complete lived space (Bergmann 2008). Home, then, is more than the structure of the house and household. It becomes a set of feelings associated with relatedness and an everyday exploration of spaces. Mallet agrees with other researchers that home can be defined as '*structured functionally, economically, aesthetically and morally*' and where domestic 'communitarian practices' are realised (Mallet 2004:66; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Douglas 1991). One of the ways to improve our knowledge of the space is by distorting them according to the everyday life rhythms, as I will explore in the next subsection.

2.6.4.1 Everyday life a theory of semantic field, moments and rhythms: The fluid rhythms of material changes

When Lefebvre explored the three spaces (1974) he not just connected history-time- with society-social relations- in a given space, but this also helped him argue that structural simplicities ignore other things such as: "*praxis, the dialectic, tragedy, emotions and passions, the individual, and much of society, and of course history*" (Elden 2004: 24). In order, to include these dismissed categories, that can and should be mapped, he introduces the theory of rhythms and with this, a stronger sense of 'one-selves' in connection with the space that we inhabit. Hence, for Lefebvre, rhythms are determined by the act of repetition over certain time and space in the everyday life. Nonetheless, this repetition does not mean the same thing identical and indefinitely. Moreover, '*there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive*' (Lefebvre 2004: 6). Accordingly, rhythms then, are the ones that shape the human experience (Edensor 2010: 1), but they do it, within the everyday life realm. In the case of the Nahuas in Mixtla, rhythms are foregrounded in the daily activities that resulted from the inclusion of two moments: their oral tradition and the praxis, as I will expand through the thesis.

Therefore, inside the realm of everyday life 'selves' can create the rhythms that outline the lived space in Lefebvre theoretical thinking. However, Lefebvre is not the first one to point out the importance of this realm as a significant place to explore dichotomies between 'self' and society (Reguillo 2000: 77). This realm was first introduced by Freud in 1901 who, through memory, past and unconscious in the everyday life, defended the idea that human beings were not the masters of their own will or even destiny (Levy 2011: 67). To the present day, the concept continues being key inside cultural studies and sociology. For instance, it is within everyday life studies that Bourdieu (1989) explained and used *habitus*, as both structure and agency within the construction of the self. Another example is Habermas (1981) use of *Lifeworld* to define the environment of practices and attitudes that are grounded socially and culturally in the everyday life. Maffesoli (1989), on the other hand, uses everyday life to expose the importance of *imaginaries* in the contemporary society. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explored the knowledge built through language and signs in the everyday reality and found that people created *mental representations of their actions*. De Certau (1996) uses the everyday life to explore the creativity process through the action people have taken in opposing powerful structures, among others.

Even if in Lefebvre's (1947) analysis of everyday life, he establishes strong connections with the theories mentioned above, it adds up to the important ingredient of space. Therefore, it is not just the performativity or action against the powerful structure, but the way the physical space helps in reproducing these actions. It is, therefore, within Lefebvre theory that spatiality is

introduced. That is to say that, most of the theoretical approaches of everyday life focusing on the modern capitalist society, take the space for granted and even further, it is inside the realm of every day that 'self' is built. As a consequence, a minimal creative margin is left to study other space-temporal societies (Leon Vega 2000: 52). Furthermore, the 'self' theorised inside the everyday life of this specific society –the modern capitalist one- is immersed in a strong dominant structure where 'selves' are subsumed and unable to break domination (Goonewardena 2008: 120). Therefore, the responsible 'self' conceptualised by Sartre or Heidegger loses the capacity to produce their space and consequently time becomes for granted and dominant in the analysis. Nonetheless, with Lefebvre's introduction of spatiality as an everyday critique, fluid rhythmic 'self' is theorised; one that is capable of creating their space through the lived experience and therefore have their own perception of time-history. In other words, a self that can (through the perception of himself and the space that surround him) create rhythms that contraposed the dominant ones.

But how does Lefebvre manage to add spatiality? First, he stands on the idea that everyday life is not a space in itself. The everyday life is just part of the fabric that is made with the multiple networks and channels of social space (Lefebvre 2008: 231). He thereby, defines every day as *'a level within praxis and society as a whole'* (op cit: 119). The first thing to clarify is that he does not define 'level' as hierarchical or structured. Rather, he understands level as closer to a continuous field. A second clarification comes with the classical way to read space and time within the everyday life. He argues that instead of three dimensions, everyday life will be determined by the dialectic movement of four dimensions in space and four dimensions for time as shown in figure 2.17

EVERYDAY LIFE

Everyday space	**Everyday time**
Geographic	Short-term future
Geometric → Biological	Past → Present
Economic	Long-term future
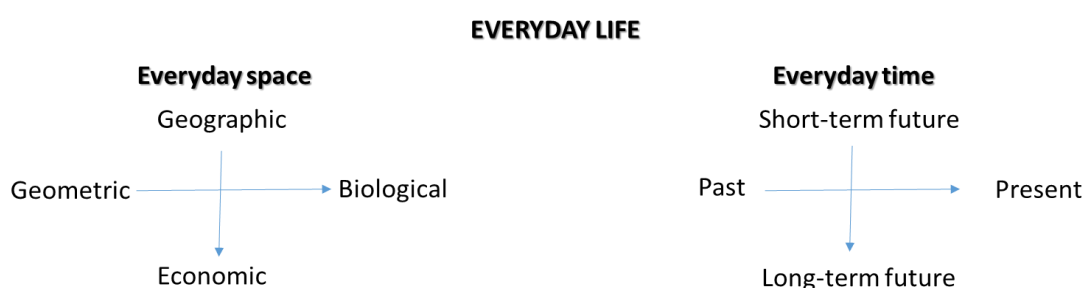
Figure 2.17. The dimensions of everyday life according to Lefebvre (2008)

Therefore, as expressed in figure 2.17, there is always a space and a time of everyday life; this space, as well as the temporality, can be explored via the senses. For instance, for time 'the long-term [the] accumulation in the cycles of finance and in the shorter term the memory and meaning at the level of individuals and communities' (Nicholson-Smith 1991: iv). This can be further understood in the analysis he makes of the rhythms of capital (Lefebvre 2004; Edensor 2010;

Gough 2013; Harvey 2001). Lefebvre, as a Marxist, agreed that the rhythms of capital penetrated the everyday life through the labour uniform conditions and the commodification of things that had as a consequence a very classist society (as I try to capture in figure 2.18). This classist society is the one that produces the social space. However, he explains that social space is composed of both subjective aspects and objective aspects.

Content in the subjective aspects there is the freedom of 'selves' through the way they perceive the environment; there is the idea that people are free. This perception transforms their consciousness and can (or should) transgress the objective environment in creative ways (art is used as a way in which people in creative and innovative ways transgress the objective space). However, when thinking of creativity in the everyday life, narrations and oral traditions become an important tool to reinforce the subjective aspects of the production of the social space.

It is, therefore, within everyday life through praxis that people should enact the ideas that were built inside the perceived space (the way they perceived themselves and the others). Lefebvre, hence, stands on the idea that everyday life should become like a work of art that reconstructs the 'self' (referring to the innovation and creativity that takes place in reinforcing the subjectivity and that is used in the production of their social space) and act upon the space with the unique rhythm. As previously stated, oral tradition and the narratives to re-enact the 'self' in Mixtla de Altamirano are a unique example of the way they created their own rhythms that is opposed to the rhythms of the capital, as I will explore with the houses. This therefore connects the theory of spatiality with the performativity one.
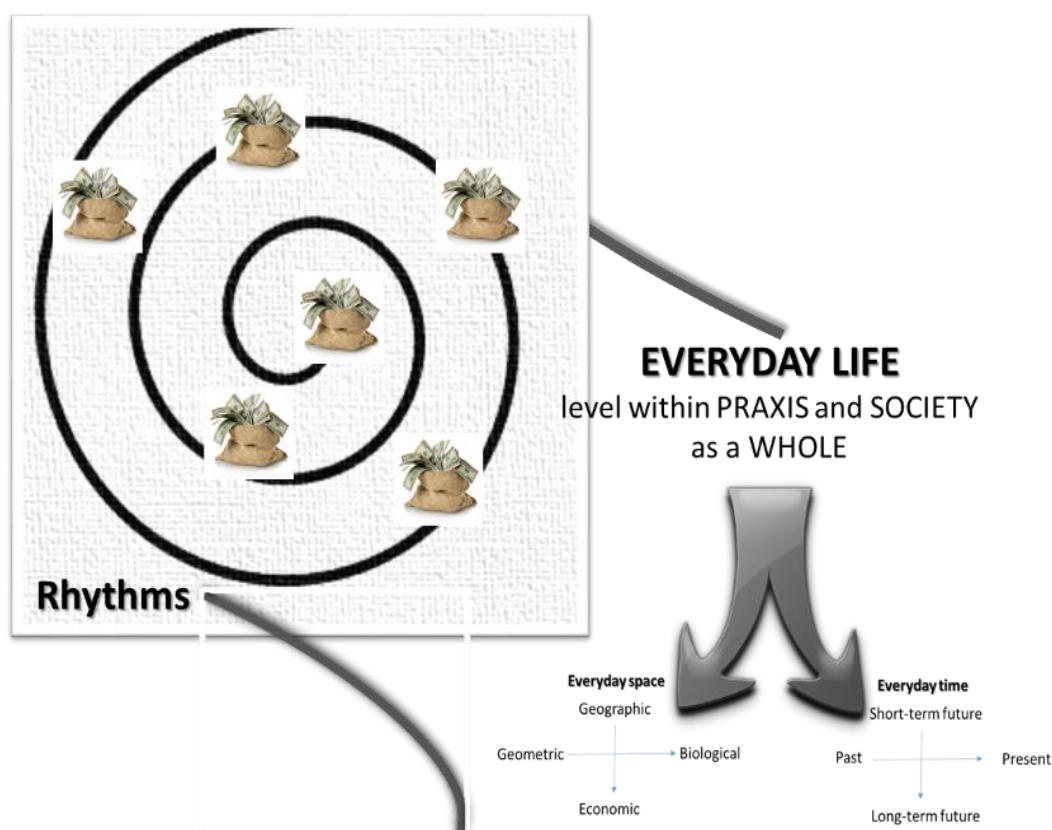
Figure 2.18. Rhythms of Capital (power) that penetrate the space and time of the everyday life that produces the social space (objective aspects and subjective aspects)

In summary, in 'The critique of everyday life' (1930), Lefebvre gives a better understanding of the way social space is produced. Accordingly, as stated above, the social space will be composed of both: 1) subjective aspects -that are related to the environment of the group and the individual within the group (the communities perception); and, 2) objective aspects -which are defined as a dense fabric of networks and channels in which hierarchies and structures are located, and as part of it all the everyday life (See Figure 2.19). In addition to the social space, understood within this dialectic movement from 'self' to 'society', the social time has also a dialectic movement that opposed cyclical time scales (the natural, cosmological rhythms) and the linear time scales (knowledge, reasoning and techniques). Hence, everyday life will, therefore, not be as deterministic of human independent thinking and acting in the world. Everyday life will then have its own specific rhythms according to spatial impositions, environment, self-construction, art, traditions and knowledge among other characteristics, as I will explore in the specific case of the Nahua.

Having discussed how Lefebvre builds an understanding of social space, let us turn to the exploration of the rhythms of everyday life. Accordingly, the way to achieve it is through the study of the local and particular '*moments*'. That is to say that, moments are those disruptions in everyday life (Edensor 2010) that provide the critique and later action. As a conclusion,

Rythmanalysis will become the sociological tool to explore 'the everyday temporal structures and processes that (re) produce the contacts between individuals and the social' (Edensor 2010: 2). For instance, in the case of the Nahua, a moment will be a tradition that is explained in a different way and that from that point forward become re-enacted and explained in the same way.
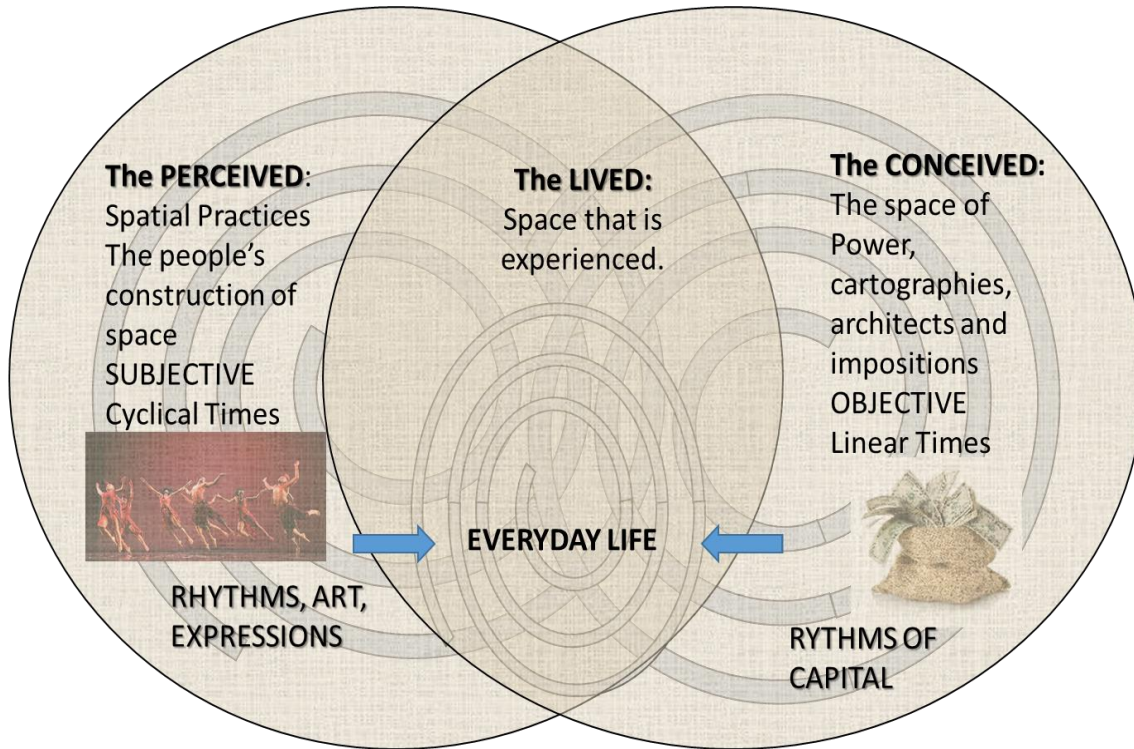
Figure 2.19. Trialectics of Space, Everyday Life and rhythms and the production of the social space.

Even if archaeology has provided numerous examples of the use of Lefebvre to interpret the archaeological data (Delle 1998; Boivin 2000; Robin 2002; Sturt 2006; Mlekuž 2010; Aldred 2014; Boer 2013; Johnson 2012), the use of Rhythmanalysis within archaeology grants archaeologists with the responsibility of understanding today's complex world and participating in it (McGuire 2005: 8). This because it is through the analysis of both rhythms –biological and social- that space and time can be better understood as a product of the everyday life. This means that it is through the combination of these dissimilar rhythms, that both materiality and personhood become entangled through the meanings that people grant objects and environment (Materiality) that surrounds them. Materiality, then becomes the agent in the construction of personhood in a specific time and space. Creating, by doing so, a wide range of possible historical narratives that allow us to overcome that linear imposed conception of both time and history.

Therefore, by presenting several pieces in a complex puzzle, a statement is reinforced: There is not a single space that has not been modified by people's traditions (this includes even the places that have not been explored. People modify them through tales and superstitions). These living

traditions transfer meaning and orientate both objects and environment. However, because these objects and the environment are built upon cultural patterns and values, these are constantly being modified. Regardless of any processes of subordination, dominance or interrelationship between people, their materiality (objects and environment) do not disappear, this because Materiality is fluid and dynamic. Therefore, that materiality will permeate through memory, imagination and traditions. This, however, suggests that 'materiality of space' should not be reduced to an objective analysis, through the study of the physical space but should be explored in a variety of ways, as I will present in the following chapters of this thesis.

2.7   Brief Conclusions

This chapter sets the different pieces of a complex puzzle that represents the understanding of the Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano. With the exposition of the construction of their pastness versus the little research literature that helps in recreating that deep-past using both their language Nahuatl and the ethno-historical resources, one result, a narrative that connects them with the Nonohualcas. This narrative, however, disconnects them from the present, leaving them timeless and therefore, somehow a-political. It could be said then, that their '*nahua-ness*' in some way is strongly connected to that ancestry in that deep-past. Although, additional to these materials, their memory is enhanced through the '*hacienda*' that stands still, as a reminder of a cruel colonial, independence and revolutionary process. Their ethnic identity keeps them connected with that deep-past that defines them, it seems that later periods of time help in reinforcing the united group that Nahuas are.

 Despite this interesting connection with the deep-past, the explorations of the unique ways in which Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano have occupied the landscape, reinforced my interest in the creative ways in which they still define their home. The Nahua home becomes a narrative that later on is transformed in knowledge using their oral tradition. A knowledge that, furthermore, is, in essence, fluid as I will explore along this thesis. Using Lefebvre's exploration and understanding of their space, which in fact is produced by them (the Nahuas) in their everyday life, a new definition of home appears. One that does not counter the 'inside' (private) with the 'outside' (social) as the westernised definition of house does. Through this thesis a close exploration of the way in which the self-performativity of the Nahua (in this case a collective self) creates borders only after their enactment on the everyday life.

In the next chapter, the step by step of the methodology is presented. Although many archaeologists have used ethnography to answer archaeological questions, this personal experience provided with a singular path that allowed me to both discuss ethically the use of

peoples stories to build a better understanding of the relationship established between humans and their materials/objects, and the way archaeologists can participate in moving beyond a simple understanding to a more active participation that changes the already established narratives that justify differences among humans.

Chapter 3 Drawing boundaries: steps followed to define the material expression that builds the houses

"I started trying to be a little more optimistic, so I woke up with a whole new attitude and because I had spent one week going through the cartography I decided to visit another community that my beautiful and plain map showed me. At first, I thought that buses travelled all the way over there. But unfortunately, they told me that there were no buses, just walking. So, being very brave (naïve) I decided to start walking what my map marked as just 6 km distance. How hard can it be to walk 6 km through the mountain anyway?! ..." (Fieldwork diary, 4th March 2015)

As I explored in the previous chapter, in the case of the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, a definition of home/household/house should avoid having specific boundaries or borders. Rather, if a proper understanding of the house is to be achieved, borders or boundaries should be slowly defined through the exploration of the Nahuas conceived, lived and experienced space throughout the rhythms of their everyday life. This suggests, however, including in the analysis, the dissimilar rhythms produced by the different generations of Nahuas that inhabit Mixtla de Altamirano. In order to fully comprehend the way Nahuas produce the space named house, ethnography is not just suggested but necessary. It is then within the everyday life of the Nahuas that the rhythms are orchestrated, and within it, the narrative of the fluid essence of the relationship between people and materials.

Having, then included in the previous chapter an exposition of the way in which this research approached the analysis of the house in Mixtla de Altamirano, the discussion should move into the path I follow to write this specific narrative. Thus, as stated in Chapter 1 section 1.1, the research questions to be answered along the entire document is as follows: Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, lived, perceived and imagined houses: how are they materially realised? This question however, implies a set of other questions: When does a simple structure become a house?; How do people in Mixtla relate and organise inside the so-called house?; What things need to be there in order to called it house?; What happens when households suddenly change?; What happens when the conceived dominates the lived space?; How do people experience these changes?; How do rhythms modify? Or how much do the rhythms help people resist the conceived space?; How do materials changes modify the landscape and the relationship that people established with it?; How does knowledge resist and how is it transmitted?

In this chapter, the methodology is presented. First, a description of the methods that were thought to be the most accurate for answering the research questions. This includes the paths that other archaeologists have walked when using ethnography as a primary method and a closer insight into the reasons behind using this methodological tool in Mixtla de Altamirano, an

indigenous municipality, located deep in the Zongolica Mountain Range (section 3.1). Additionally, a discussion that foregrounds the use of cartography and drone versus the reality of walking and living on the mountain. Likewise, the need for establishing connections with the Indigenous University and the project that was originally presented to them.

Section 3.2, presents a brief analysis of the participants in the municipality, in which Elders become the key informers. It was through their stories that the participant-observation of everyday life in Mixtla, acquires depth in time. When documenting the diversity of the region through the Elders accounts, a fresher understanding of the material expression of their houses and the fluid properties that this one has, presented itself. Through these interviews, Elders explained their own way of living and experiencing this space. However, besides documenting the way everyday life produced their concept of home, these interviews help as a proof of the rapid reconfiguration of the region and the way people experience it. More than interviews, however, the conversations with the elders help them re-connect with their everyday life. Therefore, discussing the home (space-place) assists in the act of remembrance. Consequently, an interesting view on the differences within the region emerges. Moreover, an important connected, open space was described and re-discovered during these interviews. Mixtla de Altamirano stands as a home for the elders, regardless of whether the actual community is distant from the municipality centre. As an example, the name of the head of the municipality is *Tocha*, which means "the house of all of us or our home" in Nahuatl. This was already forgotten by the younger generations, yet this research has revived it.

Following on, Section 3.3 presents the collection of the data, an account of the four months spent on fieldwork. The data collection also includes summaries of the visits to the parochial church to locate ethnohistorical documents and of several libraries to recover material, as well as work carried out in the Indigenous University and the communitarian radio. It is important to point out that both institutions have received copies of all the interviews and videos produced during the fieldwork for future works or other uses that they might find beneficial. Additionally, photos, videos and audios were distributed within each interviewed community.

Finally, the chapter ends, elucidating and discussing the ethics on the basis of this research as a brief conclusion that will point out the pros and cons of the chosen methodology along with a brief explanation of how the explorations and analysis will develop in the following chapters.

3.1   Approaching Mixtla de Altamirano

The investigatory method of this research correlates both historical and contemporary data. The first part of the study was the selection of the most suitable place to undertake the research. One of the primary aspects that proved essential along the entire research, was to have previous experiences working in communities within rural Mexico. Based on those experiences and since the research questions have as a central issue, the exploration of the materiality of the houses, I had to include the best way to compile and understand the rapid reconfigurations (imposed or not) of previous material expressions, I decided then to work with the movement in the everyday life, as discussed previously. The case of the Nahuatl speakers became my first option, due to these constant movements and reconfigurations, as explored in chapter 2 (section 2.1.1). Besides Nahuatl speakers are, not just central to the national discourse, but have moved spatially several times (movement has not only been essential in their mythology but also, they have been displaced numerous times through different periods). Therefore, while Mexican National discourse has reinforced the linear historical account of the Nahuatl speaker's communities' dispersion, each sub-group that settled in different landscapes acquired specific and different characteristics. Whether they re-adapt to each specific region, modify or revive some practices, or even completely claim different origins from those imposed by the Mexican National account, one thing remains certain, Nahuatl speakers' communities have found different ways to survive or resist until today.

Having then decided to work with Nahuatl speakers' communities, a cartographic and demographic exploration was undertaken. Consequently, an examination of the vast archaeological work carried out in the central plateau and adjacent Nahuatl communities to define the settlement patterns prior to the Spaniards invasion, reveals a preponderance for dispersed settlements (Smith and Novic 2012; Parsons et. al 2012; Cowgill 2007; Carrasco 1961; Evans 1989; Parson and Santley 1979; Sanders et. al. 1979; Blanton 1972). Therefore, using QGIS, and satellite images, I aimed to locate a Nahua region, densely occupied, yet portraying a dispersed pattern of settlements within it. In that respect, the Zongolica region proved particularly attractive, not just because of the highly dispersed pattern found on the mountain, but because the region is part of the natural corridor that connects the coastal port with the central plateau. Therefore, it benefits from a continuous deep human inhabitation that has been unceasingly modifying through the people's constant movement from the coast to the central plateau.

After recognising Zongolica's Mountain Range as a region infused by deep and diverse ways of inhabitation, a more refined historical, demographic and cartographic analysis was carried out.

This analysis resulted in further refining the study area and distinguishing one specific location among the entire region: the municipality of Mixtla de Altamirano. In doing so, two demographic variables were taken into account. On the one hand, the high percentage of Nahuatl speakers (99.6% of the total population speak Nahuatl and 42.4% do not speak Spanish, according to the national census of 2010) and on the other hand, the high poverty index that the inhabitants present (80.3% of the total population are in extreme poverty conditions). This last one, because the index in itself is based on the absence of services and facilities such as education, health, food and basic services like drainage, piped water or houses with concrete and 'modern' materials, suggested a traditional inhabitation, rather than newer patterns. Therefore, the municipality conditions put forward the isolation hypothesis, reinforcing, by doing so, the preservation and continuity of certain practices.

 With this first hypothesis and ideas, a more specific analysis showed other interesting facts. For instance, the differences between Nahuas inhabitating Veracruz and those in Puebla. The Zongolica Mountain is part of the *Sierra Madre del Sur Mountain Range*. Although the *Sierra Madre del Sur*, has a characteristic landscape, and people share some traditions, language and stories, contemporary political boundaries have divided the mountain into different states, reinforcing by doing so differences among neighbouring municipalities. For instance, the divisions between the state of Veracruz and Puebla, create differences in resources, and differences in investments and projects, though these municipalities share boundaries. Additionally, differences are further reinforced by non-governmental organisations that participate in selective indigenous communities with better access or easier governmental policies. That is to say, that contemporary political boundaries today reinforce the division among Nahuas living in the same region. Regardless of whether they all share mythology and language, they see themselves as different. That is because one state recognises Nahuas as an important group (Puebla) while as for Veracruz other groups are central in the account where somehow, they disappeared from the archaeological record (as explored in Chapter 2 section 2.1.2)

Mixtla de Altamirano belongs to the state of Veracruz. Accordingly, the main services provided by the state, e.g. health care and education, are part of the political domain of the main state government located in Xalapa (the capital city of Veracruz). However, since Mixtla, is far-flung, from the capital city Xalapa, Orizaba (given its proximity to Mixtla de Altamirano) became the main city that connected the mountain range affairs with the main government in Xalapa (see figure 3.1). A closer historical analysis of this connection with the city of Orizaba, helps this research understand the dynamics and the flow of people. In addition to being close to the mountain range, the city of Orizaba has been an important commercial city that joined Mexico City (historically Tenochtitlan) with the port of Veracruz (an important cotton producer in the past

and the main connection with the southern part of Mexico inhabited by the Mayan communities). Therefore, the lowlands parts of the Zongolica Mountain Range were very much valued in historical time, especially during the tobacco empire (around the 1920's).
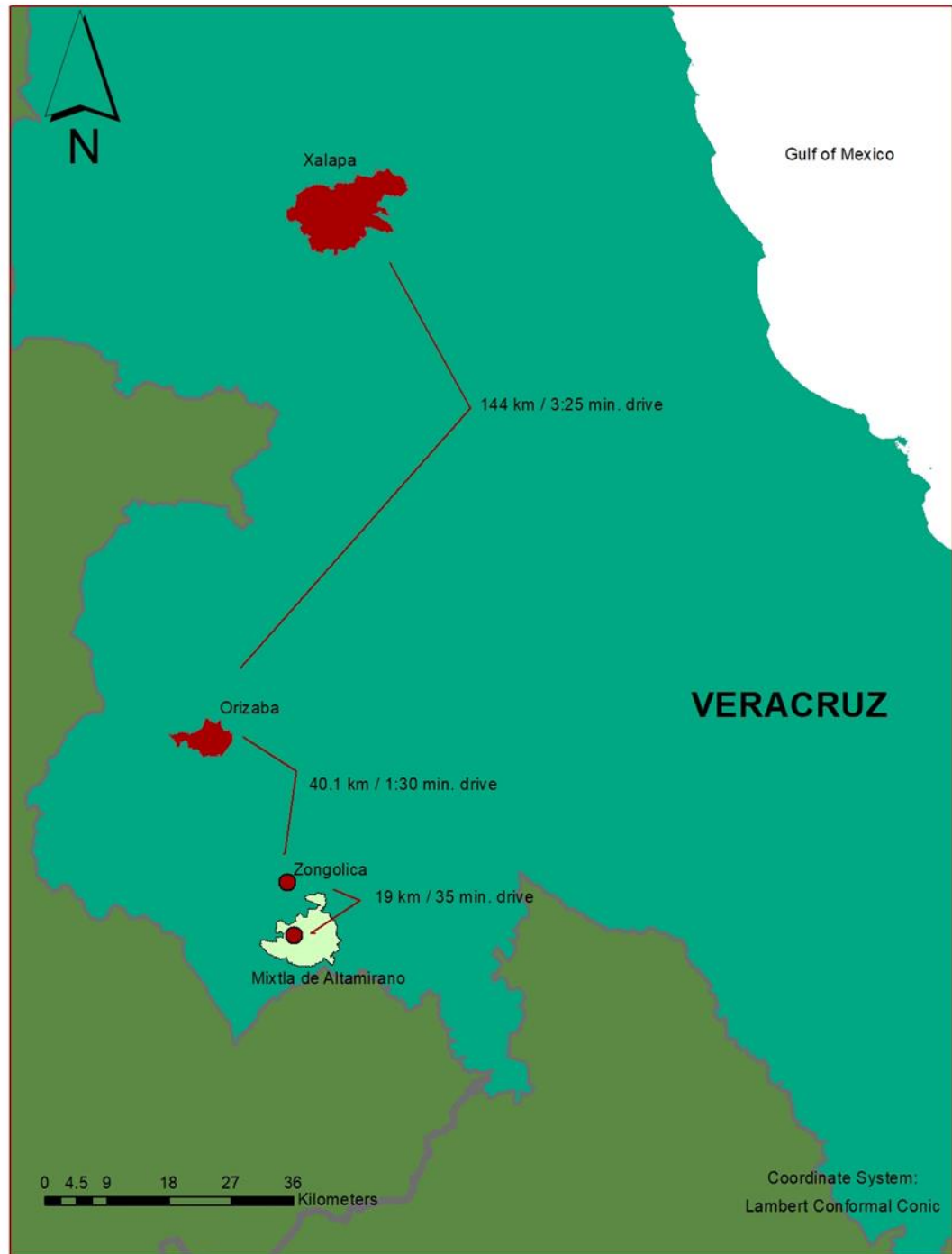
Figure 3.1. Mixtla de Altamirano, Zongolica, Orizaba and Xalapa distances in kilometres and hours driving.

These dynamics resulted in a continuous displacement of Nahuas communities following colonial times, moving further into the highlands of the mountain, where the land is not as productive. Taking into account that the motorway that connected Orizaba with the highlands (in which Mixtla is located) did not exist until recent years (1972) we can pretty much conclude that Nahuas somehow were not just displaced but disconnected.

This continuous displacement, in congruence with the intensive exploitation of the lowlands part of all the mountain range, led to the development of the town that today is knowns as the heart of the mountain, the town of Zongolica. It is important to stress here that the growth of this town had to do with the introduction of the *Haciendas* (owners of sugar and tobacco farms) who established themselves in the mountain. Therefore, the town of Zongolica grew in importance based on the displacement of Nahua communities during colonial times. Nonetheless, today, it is not only the gateway that connects many isolated municipalities in the mountain range (including Mixtla de Altamirano), but it also is where commercial transactions were and are still made.

3.1.1 Ethnography: a method, a way of analysis and a form of writing

It is a widely held view among researchers that ethnoarchaeology is the research technique that uses ethnographic data to answer archaeological questions (David 1992; London 2000; Gould and Watson 1982). This however, suggests that ethnographic data can help in understanding past societies through direct analogies. In other words, to use people's behaviours and artefacts in specific conditions and then correlate them with what we see in the past. Hence, creating the idea that people's culture can be somehow static or non-modern. A similar discussion amongst archaeologists has led to different ways of naming the use of archaeology in contemporary societies (Atalya et.al 2014; Harrison and Schofield 2010; Holtorf 2007; Lucas 2004; Rathje 1978). In the next subsection is a brief explanation of the history of the relationship established between ethnography and archaeology and the way it is being conceptualised in this research. However, initial observation suggests that although Mesoamerican archaeology needs to create a connection between present and past, it cannot do it through the 'sometimes' linear understanding of the way people view, define and use the word 'ethnicity' and their correspondent materiality. However, using Lefebvre's category of everyday life, the production of space, and his rhythmanalisis, a different way of viewing materiality can connect past and present as an active constructor of Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano. Using memory and absences, materials are being used, defined and signified differently. Therefore, following Funari, Zarankin and Stovel (2005:2) view in which they explain that the way we interpret materials "*will construct a past (Jenkins 1995) or a specific narrative of it (Funari 1995)*" rather than uncovering the past,

this thesis does not suggest establishing a direct link with a particular ethnic group, but focuses on the evolving and constant movement of ideas that have built but also have erased borders.

3.1.2 When archaeologists use ethnography: a brief history of a methodological flirtation

The use of ethnography to answer archaeological questions has been a thorny issue among several social scientists that discuss the nature of archaeology and anthropology (Garcia-Piquer et.al 2017; Hodder 2012; Wallace 2012; Vila-Mitja 2011; Garrow and Yarrow 2010; Harrison and Schofield 2010; Gnecco and Ayala 2010; Aguirre-Rojas 2007; Navarrete-Sanchez 2007; Ingold 2007; Edgeworth 2006; Gnecco and Hernandez 2005; Funari, Sarankin and Stovel 2005; Meskell and Preucel 2004; Lucas 2004; Thomas 2004; Gosden 1999; Tuhiwai 1999; Gould 1980). Despite the fact that both disciplines shared the focus on humans, temporality creates a big gap between methodological approaches that end up in disconnecting the common objective they shared; I mean the better understanding of humans and the environment (things).

While anthropologists tend to be very critical toward the archaeological emphasis on 'things' and rather focus on the relationship established between humans, archaeologists lose track of the varied ways in which things are described, narrated or signified in one same context. Although, for many years, this disconnection created more refined methods in each discipline (Hodder 2012: 1-3), in recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature that focus on the connections between these two disciplines through the interest of the human-nature relationship (Hicks and Beaudry 2010: 3-7). Ethnographies have been considered a middle ground of encounter between these two disciplines that, furthermore, helps towards the exploration and better understanding of the way things modified and are modified by humans. Along this thesis, a rather broad understanding of ethnography is accentuated. That is, that ethnographies present a singular portrait of the human-nature relationship.

Within this definition of ethnographies, a different discussion foregrounds the use of these portraits to understand past societies among archaeologists. A discussion in which historians have participated, for instance, Aguirre-Rojas (2014:118) a well-known Hispanic historian, believes that by incorporating ethnographies and recovering oral traditions, historical narratives are enhanced. He then suggests that by recuperating lost memories, groups that were once not included in the official narratives, are voiced. This has been an idea used by archaeologists that highlights the womens' contribution in prehistoric societies using examples of the contemporary communities (Vila-Mitja 2011: 17-32; Cruz-Berrocal 2009: 26; Owen 2005: 235; Allen1996: 137-140). Other uses of ethnographies have been applied specifically in the use of memory and oral tradition to understand the historical landscape that surrounds or builds a specific place (Mendez-Blanco and

Gonzalez-Alvarez 2015: 471). Or simply to complement historical narratives through the collective process of remembrance (Williams 2003:2)

Although through ethnographies, archaeologists have become aware of the importance of the invisible identities that converge in one same context and the way people signify spaces through things, the variable of time (deep-past) is still a big debate. This because according to some researchers the correlation of these portraits between different temporalities can lead to flat analogies and misinterpretations, separating materials from the fluid characteristics that they achieve when relating to humans. In other words, the way people print their intentionality and proximity by choosing things and shaping certain spaces, and how these things modified people. It is, therefore, by dismissing these fluid characteristics of materials that archaeological narrations have been examined and criticised. More so, when these narrations involve living communities or the contemporary past (Harrison and Schofield 2010: 4) or, are used within nationalistic purposes (Hamilakis 2007; Fernandez 2006; Thomas 2004; Diaz-Andreau 1998; Rodriguez 1995; Navarrete 1993; Fowler 1987). In such scenarios archaeological narrations have been described as static accounts, or as some researchers called them 'death accounts' that are displayed in museums and that perpetuate the progressive idea of history (Gnecco and Ayala 2010:25; Echenique 2009:4; Litvak 1978: 669).

Regardless, the use of ethnographies has allowed a better understanding of the relationship established between people and things. From, a processual archaeology where things acquired new meanings, through seeking for general rules that apply to all societies and materials (things) representing an adaptation to the natural environment and a passive product of social activity (Funari, Zarankin and Stovel 2005:2); to a 'post-processual turn', that helped move research questions from a predictive science into a more contextual one, putting to the forefront place and time as key elements to unveil the social sciences subjectivity.

Despite the fact that both ways of dealing with the archaeological record have strengthened the understanding of the relationship between humans and their things, there is still a sense of asymmetry between disciplines (archaeology and anthropology), as expressed by Garrow and Yarrow (2010:3) "*there is a widespread belief that archaeology has less to offer in the way of theoretical and substantive interest*". This common misconception accompanied the work of those archaeologists who have used ethnography, or that engage with living communities.

Regardless of the misconceptions, archaeologists have a long history of using ethnographies to understand their archaeological context (Peregrine 1996b; Gould 1980; Kosso 1993; Binford 1962; Ascher 1961; Blanton 1993). However, main trends have mimicked both processualist and post-procesualist's underlying philosophy. In the first case, archaeologists tend to use people's daily

accounts as an analogy to study people's past (Parker 2011: 603). Although this kind of approach stands on the idea that knowledge and truth are achievable by organising and controlling the archaeological record in a better way (Schiffer 1976). It has also been criticised for assuming that people from different times and places can become informants of what we see within our archaeological context (Peregrine 1996a: 486). Nonetheless through what they called the Middle Range Theories (MTR) archaeologists are able to predict or correlate behaviours and tendencies (Sullivan III 2008: 121) that societies have to produce or choose certain materials (Clark 2015: 40; Tschauner 1996: 2; Kosso 1993: 163). On the other side of the coin, ethnographies have helped reinforce the subjective nature of the archaeological science. By this I mean, that by bringing to the forefront particularities of contexts and uses of materials (Hodder 1992), the science of Archaeology is obliged to recognise that history is mouldable and is an unfinished matter.

Underneath the discussion between achieving a more objective science against understanding and presenting the subjectivity part of it, a common appellation appears. An ongoing claim for a more ethical praxis (Gonzales-Ruibal 2012; Edgeworth 2006: vi; Thomas 2004: 223; Gassiot and Palomar 2000; McGuire 1992). This not just because, as Haber and Burke (2006: ii) state "*world archaeology is really a remapping of colonial ties, interpreting material through the lens of British or American academic eyes, rather than through the eyes of the archaeologists from the countries being studied, who live directly with the social consequences of their work*". But also, because archaeologists have sometimes dismissed the possible outcomes that the produced narratives will have within society (Rodriguez 2010:5). Whether, because some people's past tends to be magnified or in opposition, dismissed, but people's past is and will always be a political matter (Arendt 2006; Bennett 2009; Hall 2005; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). More so, when their group ties are strengthened by their shared history (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1975). Society that historically has been dismissed from the official national accounts and claim to be part of it, can and should be helped by archaeologists to recover the memory of their past (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 16). For instance, referring to the past Lucas (2004) claims that archaeology should engage with the unconstituted present and by doing so, he positions the archaeologist as an active participant of the complex everyday life within their society. Therefore, as stated by Harrison and Schofield (2010: 7-8) "*Archaeology has a role in both challenging these official histories and bringing to light the aspects of recent history that they seek to overwrite".*

A good example of this is the relationship between archaeologists and indigenous communities where broken links should be fixed (Endere and Curtoni 2006: 73; Benavides 2005; Gnecco and Hernandez 2008; Gosden 2001; Ucko 2001; Bender 1998; Leone et.al 1995). This because, it is thought that the praxis of archaeology should recognise different voices (Preucel and Hodder 1996). Although, there is still an ongoing debate in whether the indigenous communities should

take over the management of archaeological sites and the research that is undertaken (Byrne 1991; Dongoske et al. 2000; Watkins 2005). There is no question that archaeology should encourage the different ways of viewing, understanding and even narrating the past. Whether if it is from a postcolonial perspective (Gosden 2004; van Dommelen 2006), or from those who stand on the idea that colonialism has never been overcome (De Sousa 2007; Rivera-Cusicanqui with De Sousa Santos 2014; Gonzalez-Casanova 2004), there is still the need to decolonise, deconstruct or problematize narratives and overcome the ongoing internal colonialisms that froze indigenous people in a perpetual past. The one thing that is clear is that indigenous communities and archaeologists should find innovative ways of building knowledge together and underline the political incidence that archaeological narratives have had (Lumbreras 1981a; Lumbreras 1981b; Lorenzo et. al. 1979) and still have. It is along this new way of building a more communitarian archaeology that the aim is no longer to have results or find general laws to explain the material behaviour of humans but focus more on their praxis as a continuous and mouldable process (Hodder 1999).

Consequently, taking as a starting point the traditional conception of ethnography as 'concerned with how social structures, relationships, and processes that produce cultural forms that in turn shape individual consciousness and practices' (Cerwonka 2007:14), the use of ethnography within this thesis in a Nahua community, represents an expedition from the dialectical interpretation of humans and materials to a more phenomenological understanding that involves the praxis that the everyday life brings into shaping and re-shaping personhood, their *Nahua-ness*. Therefore, I decided to approach the everyday life of a specific community by using interpretative ethnography. Interpretative ethnography as defined by Smart (1998: 111) is a 'methodology for studying the ways in which a social group constructs and lives its particular, indigenous version of reality'. I will then, not just focus on the particularities of the Nahuas in the Zongolica Mountain Range, but their entire everyday life, including the local history, and the knowledge of their historical landscape using oral tradition. That is why central to this thesis, are the elders in the different communities that built the entire municipality of Mixtla de Altamirano in the mountain range. This entails undertaking participant observations, complemented with interviews and the use of geographical information to survey a contemporary municipality in a holistic perspective (Fetterman 1998: 20). Within the entire thesis, ethnography is understood as more than a method it is also a way of analysing the material presented and a way of writing. This portrait of the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, is not an image that should be extrapolated to a different time, rather it expects to show the movement (different rhythms) through time of the space-place that they define as their home.

3.1.3 Cartography: maps, drones and other equipment

This ethnography was planned after a thorough cartographic analysis was undertaken. In which money and time calculations were done using the following variables: distances, transportation, type of roads or possible walking paths and the population inside each community inside Mixtla de Altamirano. This information was gathered in Xalapa through the University's observatory (CUO) and the server of the Institute of Geography and Statistics of Mexico (INEGI). After different grids were created, a specific agenda was proposed that would initially cover the entire municipality which was divided in three different areas according to the different altitudes. These differences were, later on, corroborated, refined and named during fieldwork: Lowlands (between 500m and 1,200m above the sea level); Middle Land (between 1,200m and 1,700m above the sea level), and finally, Highlands (l,700 m all the way to 2,500m above the sea level).

Accordingly, it was these different altitudes that were the main reason to divide the 43 localities or small communities inside the municipality that were to be visited and interviewed. Therefore, using QGIS, I identified the best possible routes, highways, paths, total costs, as well as the distance in kilometres between sites (see figure 3.2). Taking into consideration time and money, five different routes were identified and presented to the authorities of the municipality, once in Mixtla de Altamirano.
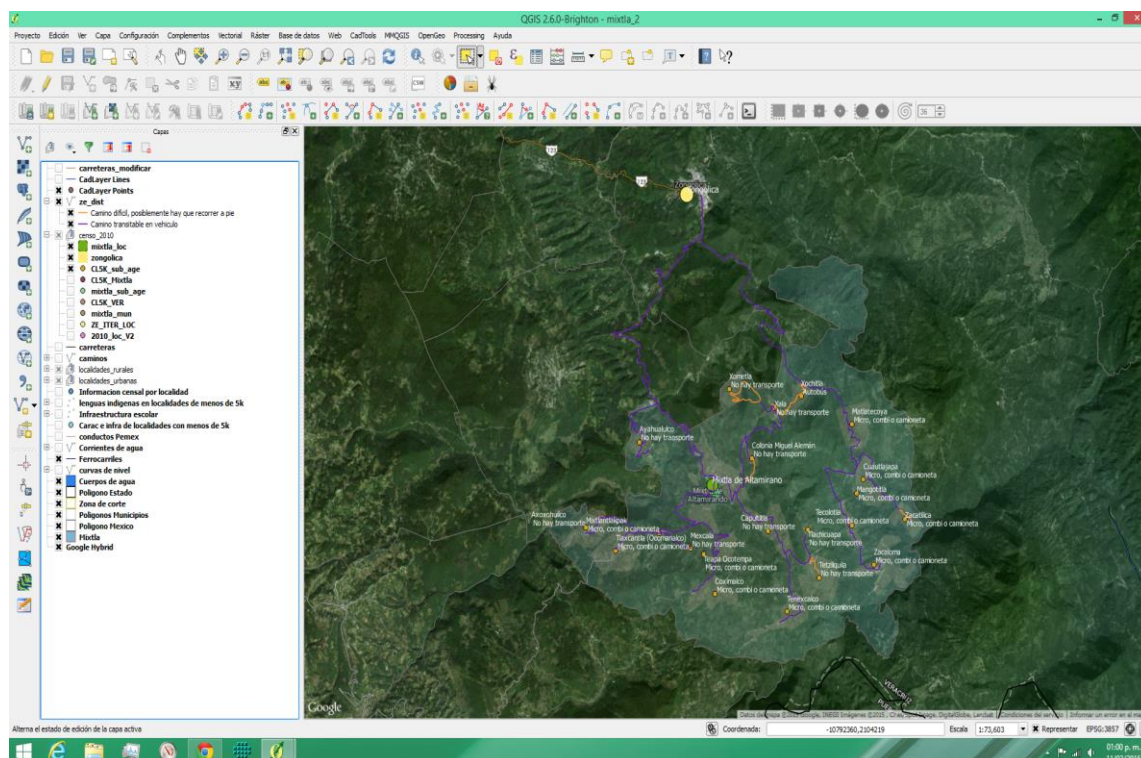
Figure 3.2. Mixtla de Altamirano municipality: routes to be used on fieldwork

Besides the use of a GPS to locate important places during fieldwork, and a measuring tape to corroborate some sizes, images were taken using a drone to explore the settlement pattern in more depth. Therefore, a homemade quadcopter (drone of four rotors) with a fixed camera was employed to undertake the research. The footage that was collected from the drone's camera was processed and used as aerial photographs to analyse the space.

In addition to the technologies used to explore the space, a Cannon camera model E05 Rebel T5i digital with an 18-200 mm lens, and a tripod to hold the camera, proved as essential equipment for the ethnography. Complementing the video, a Sony Mp3 IC recorder was used to ensure the audio collection. Although the camera had a good microphone with an average volume, the use of the voice recorder was indispensable.

3.2 From an etic to an emic approach: On fieldwork with the Nahuas of Mixtla de Altamirano

Once on fieldwork, the research was presented with an etic perspective, both with students in the Indigenous University and with local authorities in the head of the municipality. These two presentations foregrounded the emphasis on the observations rather than participating within the everyday life of the people that inhabit Mixtla de Altamirano. Premating, by doing so, the etic approach, what some scholars defined as being in control of the data; in other words a quantitative, 'scientific' approach (Niblo and Jackson 2004; Fetterman 1998: 22). A letter signed by the University's principal was used to identify myself as a researcher and enabled me to walk freely through the municipality and allowed me also, to use their facilities (e.g. the radio transmitter to communicate with each community, light to charge my equipment and internet connection). The good relations established with the workers inside the municipal government facilitated the flow of this work. However, no further connections were established with the local government or the political party that sponsored the government. Despite the fact that the focus on this research wanted to highlight the outsider perspective, changes during fieldwork resulted in an ethnography that involves participation and embraces both emic and etic perspective. Rather than a participant process, the fieldwork in contrast to the original intention, reflected an almost entirely Emic approach (How Nahuas perceived and categorise the world) as I will briefly account ahead.

As previously stated, the external assistance both from the university and the local government proved to be valuable. However, once alone for the application of the strategy to collect the data, several setbacks helped into reformulating the perspective used for the ethnography. Although interviews kept on being the main source of information, after spending one week in the

municipality and having completed just a couple of interviews, I become fully aware that in order to cover the objectives of fieldwork on time, the strategy to collect the data would have to change. This because, when you live in the community, time does not entirely belong to you, and even with fixed schedules, prepared interviews and a complete organised agenda of the objectives to cover per week, you always depend on other people's rhythms. It is ironic, that the one thing that I was interested in documenting became also the matter of my personal agony during fieldwork (the daily life and the rhythms). As established before, my original idea was to cover the entire municipality focusing on a physical analysis of the space. However, the drone was used fewer times than expected, due to problems with the electric batteries that were used. Not to mention that though it was a popular device to attract kids from the community, it was not a much-loved device for the police officers and militaries that work in the area. Later on, I learned that Zongolica Mountain Range is not entirely a peaceful place. This because, drug dealers and human traffickers use the disconnection of the mountain range to transport merchandise (human or non-human). This had as a consequence a reconceptualization of the data collection strategy. The first thing that was modified was the fact that I could not walk-work unaccompanied to explore the physical space.

Having to adapt to other people's times and agendas in order to complete the survey was challenging. Not to mention the fact that transportation was almost inexistent within the municipality. Consequently, the maps prepared that calculated distances and times varied greatly from the reality of having to walk the municipality. On top of that, people do not work on Sundays, by reason of religious practices and family commitments. Therefore, creating an agenda that allowed me to move between communities proved almost impossible. Consequently, I required a different approach to the data. Along with a more active participation inside the everyday life of the community, working collectively with elders prove to be very useful. However, these interviews were not on the original plan of this research, rather a causality consequence of a favour and a bad weather day.

As previously stated, a stormy day in Sacaloma (a community located 45.7 kilometres away from the head of the municipality) helped in consolidating the methodology used to gather information. This is because, although the trip to this community was to produce a short footage to promote tourism outside the municipality of the waterfalls, using the drone, a heavy storm stopped us from being able to return to the centre of the municipality. Because I was accompanied by the Minister of Tourism, he decided that rather than just waiting for the storm to calm down, Elders should gather in the meetinghouse to reaccount their stories. It turned out that they did so gladly, and that in the words of Don Gerardo (the Minister of Tourism) "*that way you won't have to walk around visiting each household*". It not just saved time, but it allowed me to

participate in their stories as well as avoid silences, and my own perspective. This because elders encourage each other to talk and tell their stories as well as describe the municipality through time. In their account they included what they remembered people (their grandparents) used to tell them, the different materials they used and the way they were raised. In this particular interview, they talk about the differences between their grandparents' life, their own and the newer generation. Suddenly, after this interview, a world of possibilities opened before me (see figure 3.3).

Although this first interview had several technical difficulties due to the storm and the sound of the voices. It helped to prepare a newer methodology that focused on the accounts produced by the Elders, rather than my own perspective as an outsider. I therefore, decided to prepare the interview in a way that it allows documenting the flow and the particular rhythms that Elders wanted to account. After all, the detailed reconstruction of the community of what the community of Sacaloma located in the lowland part of the municipality, used to be and the differences between then and now, was exactly the kind of information I was seeking. The landscape of the mountain, following from this first interview, transformed into a map of meaning, or a symbolic field that was not just 'pinch out emancipatory impulses' (Thrift 1989: 151), but united the verbal memory of the elders with the visual and the built environment through time (Watts 1992:122). Therefore, the thrialectics of the space became a reality and consequently the idea of gathering this collective voice became the methodological approach of this thesis.

The second factor that changed this ethnography from an etic perspective to a more emic approach (by this I mean the recovery of the wisdom, movements and rhythms of everyday life) was the relationship established with the collective of women that weave. The meeting took place on March the 8th of 2015. In itself, the meeting provided a rich insight into the art of weaving and the complete process of valuing and exploiting the natural resources that the mountain provided to create a piece of clothing (eg. the different plants that they use to colour the wool, or the best time of the year to remove the wool from the animals and the materials used to weave) as well as the way that this art has changed (eg. artificial colouring, lack of ships in the mountain, plastics). What followed from the meeting, however, became a crucial element.

After the meeting was over, Eliazar Mazahua invited me to see her personal collection in her house (see figure 3.4). We connected so well that she invited me to stay and eat in her house and even further, she told me that if I did not have any place to eat I would be welcomed into her house every day. A connection was born that day. Later on, this simple connection developed into

a professional and friendly relationship as she was to become the translator I relied on and the companion to walk me through the mountain visiting each community patiently.

Figure 3.3. Waterfalls and First interview with Elders in the community of Sacaloma

I never thought that Eliazar would appropriate the project as she did. Sometimes I was completely dismissed from the interviews while she led the discussion based on her own personal ideas and questions regarding the remembrance process. Overall, it became a project to which she committed. In one way, speaking on behalf of my name was an easier way to dig into her own past and ideas regarding the town she was living in. Not to mention that walking alongside each other, I learned details of her life and the way she saw her community. Additionally, she agreed to help me with the interviews as long as I assisted her with her daily routine. As she expressed several times, 'two sets of hands work better than one'. Therefore, I was engaged in a daily life routine within the household in order to use the rest of the day off to 'walk and talk to the elders' -as she said. The time spent within the household with Eliazar was priceless because of the level of insight in the daily life that I connected with, through her rhythms. Not to mention the important implications when writing the ethics of this research, as explored in section 3.5 of this chapter.

Figure 3.4. Eliazar Mayahua's household

3.2.1   Interviewing Elders

As stated above, pivotal to the research, are the interviews undertaken in collaboration with Eliazar Mayahua –informer and translator. Due to Eliazar's social status as woman, mother and wife within the community, she became key, not just as an informer herself, but because she is an 'honourable' woman, respected and trusted by people in the surrounding communities. Additionally, the language barrier I struggled with was no longer an issue. Consequently, having sorted some practicalities, I had just to create a schedule that fitted Eliazar's personal responsibilities in her household. As stated previously, Elders interviews were rich and insightful, due to the way they perceived their past and remembered it. Along with the detailed descriptions that elders made, a reconstruction of the way their materiality has changed, comparing both older generation (their grandparents) and the newer generation patterns that resulted unconventional according to them. Elders along with Eliazar appropriated the project and helped into reconstructing their own landscape, using memory, and through their oral tradition.

In order to achieve a better understanding of their perceived landscape, different communities had to be visited along the municipality. Although, the maps I had a hold of, were the product of the physical exploration of the region using QGIS and were not entirely accurate; I used them to generate routes for a potential agenda of research. Nonetheless, even if the language barrier was sorted along with the methodology, and even though the unavailability of transportation meant that walking was the main means to go through the entire mountain, carrying my equipment, it was still important to organise the meetings with the elders beforehand. Therefore, I decided to visit the communities on two different occasions, although that entailed walking the same distance twice (once to inform the people about the project and the other one to actually carry out the interview). However, when experimenting with this method of approaching the elders, I realised (while walking on the mountain for days) that firstly, my agenda was very ambitious and secondly, that even if people had expressed interest in participating in the interviews, when returning with my camera, they were never present.

Taking, thus, the experiences that resulted from visiting the communities twice, it became apparent that I would need to approach the elders in a different way. It occurred to me, that maybe for instance If I used the local radio transmitter that connects the central municipality with other smaller communities, I could maybe announce my arrival. Even if the Elders, were not interested in participating, they would be informed of my presence. Therefore, I asked for permission to use the authority's communication technology. It should be clear, however, that when announcing my visit on the radio, the speaker referred to me as a Doctor. Consequently, the Elders arrived at the meeting believing I was going to physically examine their health. It was an

unfortunate communication issue/mistake, yet it resolved the problem of having no participants in the interviews undertaken. Due to the positive response from the Elders following the interview, I allowed the radio operators to keep announcing me as 'a Doctor'.

As a result, twenty-six collective interviews were gathered (see figure 3.5). Seven of them belonging to the communities in the Highlands (Mixtlantlakpak, Axoxohuilco, Mexcala, Tlaxcantla, Teapa-Ocotempa, Tenexcalco and Coximalco), Twelve of them to the communities in the middle lands (Ayahualulco, Xometla, Xala, Tlachicuapa, Barrio Tercero, Barrio Primero, Colonia Miguel Aleman, Capultitla, Tetzilquila, Barrio Cuarto, Barrio Segundo and San Andres Mixtla) and seven to the Lowlands (Zacaloma, Xochitla, Zacatilica, Tecolotla, Mangotitla, Matlatecoya and Cuautlajapa). Although the interviews were supposed to be planned and structured, they developed and flowed in their own rhythms, each one of them dribbled in different directions. Therefore, the group interviews with elders were not controlled. In fact, ideas, stories and facts were encouraged by the elders themselves (see figure 3.6). Even more, some of the interviews derived into drawings that represent the house (see section 4.2). This because in their words "*you will understand better if I draw it*". Therefore, they found a way to exemplify themselves without using language. A good way of also appropriating the project and underlining the importance of transmitting their knowledge in a better way.
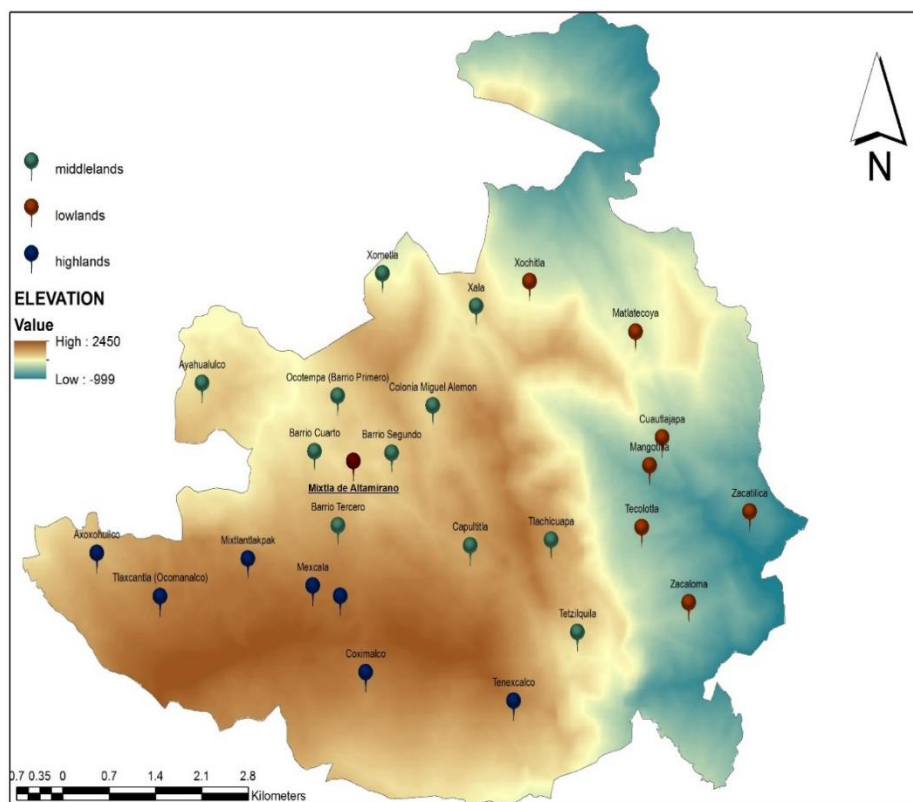
Figure 3.5. GPS points of the communities visited. Elevation data: INEGI 2010

Figure 3.6. Some images of the interviews made in the three regions of the municipality

Not controlling the interviews, however, did not imply a lack of preparation. Rather, that aspect was vital since these interviews with the Elders were my main source of information. However, in order to work with this data, I had to acknowledge that, as stated by Rapley (2001: 304) following

Chapter 3

Seale (1998), there are two major traditions for working with interview data: 1) to use it as a resource, or 2) use it as a topic. While the first one does not pay attention to the interviewer the second one recognises that 'the interview reflects a reality jointly constructed by the interviewee and interviewer'. In the specific case of the interviews that I undertook in Mixtla de Altamirano, the topic had to be as clear as possible due to the process of translation. Therefore, rather than asking plain questions, I decided to create a dialogue following a specific set of bullet points that could resemble a Semi-structured interview (Russell 2011 158):

1) Introduction: Present myself and Eliazar, explain where I come from, talk about how much I like history. Introduce my personal belief about the importance of collecting the histories that are not taught in the classroom because they do not appear in the books. For instance, the ones that our grandparents used to tell us. As a result of this disconnection between generations, I seek stories of how the mountain was populated or anything that they can remember that their grandparents told them. Perhaps talk about the first men and women who arrived at the mountain.
After this first short introduction, a curious thing happened in almost all the interviews undertaken; they stated that they have no stories, because in the past they did not have education and they suffered hunger, so they did not know such a thing as stories.

2) Talk about how daily life patterned changed: what things you do in your daily life and what the youth does things today. How houses were built, the materials that they use, the ones that remain and the ones that have dissapeared.
It was when I started this dialogue that I realised that there is no such thing as a deep past, for Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano; we are all connected and we are all past. With this I mean, that they referred to the first men and women that populated the mountain as their grandparents, and all the people after that are also grandparents. Moreover, when it comes to exploring the past and the storytelling, there is no better way than to talk about the quotidian in the community. It was within this context that all kinds of stories emerged, with a mix between a really deep past and the story of how they grew up (their lived experiences). The stories of the daily life that I gathered made me excited, however, and more importantly, made Eliazar happy to walk with me and contribute ideas and join them in that collective remembrance process.

3) A special attention was granted to the material culture. Thus, conversation was directed into the house and the transformations; the way the kitchens were made, the rooms for

the people to sleep, the place to pray, the access to the land, water, the food that they produced and what kind of artefacts they used to work, store and use in a daily life. Here, regional differences emerged, the production of ceramics and lime in the highlands, food in the lowlands and wool in the central parts. Also, the way that these goods were distributed in the municipality, was something they enjoyed talking about. Not to mention the artefacts that became key in the food elaboration process (for instance the *Metlaxontil;* the older version of the *metate*[7] stone –see figure 3.7 and 3.8)

4) The plants and methods they use to heal and cure themselves. This was especially important in a community from the highlands that preserves the tradition of midwives until today. However, in other communities they talk about specific traditions or what they called "*el costumbre*": which are things that they take for granted or the normal way of doing things.

5) Traditional music: the instruments they used when doing the *faena (*the collective work), and the way Nahuas used them to select their government. Festivities and other stories that relate to the everyday spatial practices.

In conclusion, in order to set an open interview and somehow control the information allowing it to flow, I had to formulate a structure, so that then elders share with me all kind of different stories, and even encouraged each other in the process of remembrance. The interviews, subsequently, lasted around one hour and a half, to two hours. Finally, I concur with Maria Cira's statement (the communitarian radio speaker): "*knowledge is not completely lost, the elders have the information. Elders carry on their shoulders the knowledge of this mountain*" (interview fieldwork 2015). The Elders opened the possibility of appreciating the changes in the daily life rhythms (from a cyclical view of the time to a linear one) through their very own act of remembrance.

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[7] Flat stone for grinding mainly corn

Figure 3.7. Artefacts of the daily life: A and B) Metlaxontil; C) pumpkin bowl; D) old pottery

Figure 3.8. Materials shown along different interviews: A and B) prehispanic ceramic offers-according to interviewee they were found in the garden as part of a Xochitlali (feeding the land); C) old wool blanket, in ther account it belonged to the grandmother of one of the interviewees; D) spindle, it is still used when weaving wool; E) turtle shell used as drum; F) Metlaxontil

3.3   Other sources

Apart from the elders' interviews, other resources were used to understand the 'past-present-future relationship' that as Robertson (1991:72) postulated 'must be the object of history'. For instance, documenting the ritual of feeding the land or as they called it *Xochitlalli*. Besides having been invited to attend the ritual, a conversation with the people in charge of preparing the food and the festivity led me to realise that underlying this act lies a clear conviction of the earth or the land as our mother (a goddess that provides food and shelter) was assumed. However, in contrast to the idea of an ethereal god, for Nahuas, gods, as well as dead souls, like to dance, feast and eat. They are, in other words, sharing the same space as us, and therefore, share our needs. Another example of this religious understanding was collected when I had the opportunity to attend a *cross compadrazgo* (see sections 6.3.1 in chapter 6) that is a clear example of the strong sense of family ties that continues even after death. The deceased return to share the same

physical space each year. Furthermore, they take care of family businesses by negotiating a good future with the terrestrial gods.

Additional interviews were conducted with key people who in their own understanding, promote and defend the Nahua 'ethnic' identity; the secretary of the government, archbishop of the church, the local manager of the church, two previous municipal presidents, an announcer on the communitarian radio, the head of World vision non-governmental organisation and the local historian. I followed the same principle of interviewing by preparing a structure for the ideas and allowing the conversation to flow (semi-structured interviews). Even though, some of those interviewed reduced Nahuas to a specific set of characteristics "*poor, short, darker skin, uneducated, dress up differently and with different ideas*", their insight enriched my personal understanding of the way that society displaced Nahuas with an almost racist discourse that defines them. Unfortunately, this puts to the forefront the internal colonialism (Gonzalez-Casanova 2009, 1963) that not just Nahuas, but many indigenous communities have to withstand (Stavenhagen 2013). In contrast to that, other interviewees not just opposed that reductive vision but proudly claimed to be Nahuas themselves or having a Nahua background. In any case, these interviews enriched my understanding of what it is to be Nahua from the Zongolica Mountain Range.

Other resources were explored during fieldwork. For instance, several church books that provide information regarding the use of land on Zongolica were located in the centre of the town. Furthermore, main libraries in Mexico City were visited in order to follow the trace of the Nonohualcas. I complemented this archaeological revision with two unofficial conversations with archaeologists specialised in the area (Dr Annick Daneels and Dr Yamile Lira). Another important source of information for this research are the maps, pictures and interviews documented from the visit to what it was pointed out to be the oldest house in the municipality (kitchens, altars and material culture, in general, were documented on these visits). This was complemented by a comparison with newer houses, the product of governmental projects to change the housing (this also involved the collection of photographs and interviews), regardless of the newer materials from which these houses are built and that attract families.

Finally, the intervention of the Indigenous University was vital in appreciating the newer ways of living, experiencing and acknowledging being indigenous Nahuas, shaping also the ethics along this research. The close relationship that was established with students permitted this research to compare and contrast three different generations. The first one being the elder generation that has created narratives of the past through the everyday life remembrance exercise, reinforcing, by doing so, the collective self through traditional ways of building houses and using the space.

The second one, the younger generation that is constantly bombarded with ideas emerging from a different social and natural environment. The third one, middle-age women and men –present in between two streams of knowledge-. Hence, these represent three different performative acts that have as a result, different relations with the same space. Each generation provided this thesis with examples of how modifications in the space, transform but do not entirely change the inhabitation of the mountain. People find interesting ways of resisting, and slowly modify their daily life rhythms.

Researching houses (the materiality) allowed me to move from one generation to another (time) and from lowlands to highlands (space), connecting the entire municipality with a certain way of understanding and defining the home as a place lived, conceived, and experienced, where knowledge proves to be fluid, evolving and resisting in harmony.

3.4   Analysing the interviews: database to explore the house

Before analysing the interviews, they were transcripted from the original audio to a word document in the language in which they were produced. The ones in Nahuatl were, then, translated to Spanish by two students from the Indigenous University: Alicia Mayahua and Victor Quiahua. Once all the interviews were transcribed and translated, several databases were made in order to better understand and represent the Elders' verbal images of the past I collected during fieldwork. Accordingly, from the twenty-five accounts collected over the lapse of four months (as exposed in section 3.2.1) four data bases were created. A first database helped organise the information according to the topics that were explored in each interview. Although I have used a specific script for the interviews, as stated previously, each one took their own course with a different direction. Therefore, this first database helped not just help in organising the information, but also into foregrounding the unique definition that Nahuas grant to the space-place called home. Once the topic of the house was strengthened a different set of databases were created. These new databases are the foundations of the material expression of their household. Within them, the materiality of the household in Mixtla de Altamirano is better pictured.

3.4.1   The materials of the Nahua house: objectivising a remembered space

In order to create a database that highlighted the physicality of the space, a closer analysis of each interview was undertaken. In each community a detailed description of the houses allowed some words to be repeated more than others and therefore a list of materials presented themselves through the words of the Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano. The materials that were

mentioned represent the past and although some of these materials continue to be used, they are part of their pastness. A past, that according to them is full of poverty and lack of progress. Within this view, the future awaits as a promise of better times to come. Therefore, their accounts are full of complaints and anger because in their words: "*we are forgotten, nobody cared if our kids died or if we had food or health, we had to survive alone, we did it as our grandparents taught us, everything we know is because our grandparents show us, they show us how to work hard*" (Axoxohuilco, 27 March 2015). Following this line of thought, some elders even dismissed the use of these past materials just because according to them '*they are old and do not work*'. Though, some of the materials are shown in figure 3.8, in the first database (Appendix A: A.1), the material presented focuses on the houses. Therefore, the information was divided in between the description of the roofs, the walls and the shapes and other spaces that were mentioned as part of the house in each community.

Following the same methodology of word repetition, a second database focuses on the materials that were used in the everyday life (Appendix A: A.2). A great deal of the materials mentioned were used along the entire municipality. However, differences appeared when it came to describe the production of each specific community. It was within that everyday life rhythms that materials proved to be more useful in some parts of the municipality. Nevertheless, a continuous use of materials appeared until today. A good example of this continuous used of materials is the grinding stone. Although named in different ways and with slight changes, this material keeps on being used in a daily basis, as I will explore in the next chapters. This data base helped configure the image of the everyday life of the people inside the municipality. Although they worked together using similar materials that were produced locally, some of them were mentioned less frequently. These differences were attributed to the specific activities that each individual had. For instance, in the community of Mixtlantlalpan, located in the highland part of the municipality, participants were mainly midwife women. Therefore, conversation centred on traditional medicine and specific material spaces used to take care of the pregnancies, for instance the *temazcalli*[8].

A third database (Appendix A: A.3) was elaborated and later used to define the borders of the physical houses that were remembered in the municipality. This database portrays the different dynamics and the local productions that varied within the three different ecosystems that converge in one municipality. Although, the municipalities everyday life changed from lowlands to

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[8] Temazcalli means in Nahuatl: house of heat, and is used mainly for curations. It is a sweat lodge where people have vapour baths. The vapour is produced with heated water and special herbs according to the illness.

highlands, the exchange and connections between smoky kitchens creates a wider definition of house, as explored in the next chapters (chapter 4 section 4.3), that varied from the westernised idea of home that separates inside with the outside. For the elders, smoky kitchens remained open and the house is composed by other spaces also open inside the municipality. These open spaces were exploited for the benefits of all the group. Hence, *Tocha* 'the house of all of us' consolidates as a unique material expression of being at home. Along the interviews in the three regions, a clear idea of brotherhood and cooperation that allow them to transit, exploit and use things that were found in the house that belongs to the collective that they were.

This third database includes what arbitrarily I catalogue as the ritual world of the Nahua. With ritual I mean the collective performances that have a mystical, spiritual side. Consequently, I divide the database in three: *mayordomias, xochitlalis and faenas*. Although the first two have to do with religious purposes and the third one is a collective work, the importance of rituality is that it organises people together into a specific task. Even more, in their accounts, Elders explained that *faena*, is a kind of celebration, where work was accompanied by music and everyone shared a meal. Hence, for the purposes of this work, *faenas* are a special celebration that are part of the rituality of the Nahuas. Within this context, the materials named through the interviews gave an interesting chart with a prioritization of traditional music candles, incense burners, and flowers that involves a specific performance (as I will explore in chapter 6 section 6.4)

However, by presenting the interviews in a database, an erroneous assumption regarding the nature of the information can be made. Interviews are full of life and provide a very detailed and complex understanding of the word 'house'.

3.4.2   Considerations

A considerable amount of literature was taken into account in order to undertake the ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1968 edition 2010; Aull 1999; Fetteman 1998; Emerson et. al 1995; Hannerz 2003; Cerwonka and Malkki 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Narayan 2012; Smartt 2016). While these sources emphasised the fact that doing an ethnography means living in the chosen place for a while, creating a personal connection with people through in-depth interviewing and prolonged observing, other elements are not so straightforward. For instance, the fact that budget and time are limited. Therefore, while undertaking an ethnography as an approach for research, it is vital to primarily live and let others live in their own rhythms. This, unfortunately in academic timelines, does not come so easily.

Once on fieldwork, although I had prepared ahead of the work that I was going to accomplish on a daily basis, and though I planned each step in the municipality, the most fruitful moments that

were significant in terms of content for this thesis, occurred when unprepared and least expected. It was either when the camera ran out of battery, or that I was just going to have a quick chat with the lady that was in charge of the store, or someone invited me for coffee. Whatever was the scenario, the outcome was similar in that most powerful insight of the community came always in an informal way. Therefore, one important consideration when working in a community, is that extensive fieldworks are needed.

A second consideration to be made is that the information gathered was in a different language. In spite of many people in the municipality capable of communicating in Spanish, there is no better way to completely understand a 'collective being' than knowing their language and the way they name their surroundings. This situation was greatly overcome by the fact that people engaged with this project making it their own and followed their own rhythms in defining their houses. Furthermore, elders created a great way of communicating their ideas through the use of drawings, hand expressions and repetition. This ever-interesting example of working with Nahuas in Mixtla de altamirano connects with the ethics of this work in that this is their own understanding of house. Their stories (oral tradition) and act of remembrance made possible the understanding of the material expression they called home.

3.5   Ethics, Politics and a brief conclusion

"Our ethics rest on not thinking in an unworthy manner in order to avoid dishonest action. Learn always, prepare ourselves always, and acknowledge all the possible paths, steps, speeds and rhythms. Not to walk over these different paths, but to learn from everyone, walk with everyone and with everyone arrive. It is not to the immediate, ephemeral, to the today, that we look. Our sight goes further. Far away where we can see any man and woman, waking up with a new and tender anguish of knowing that they should decide on their destination, that they are walking through the path with the uncertainty that produces having to give content to the word freedom" (SCI Marcos 2007)

So far, this chapter has helped illustrate in detail the procedure employed for answering to the best of abilities the research questions. As stated above, the fulfilment of the University of Southampton's ethical code was achieved thanks to the intervention of the Indigenous University that granted me a written consent to work with Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz. This important document was attached to the ethics forms that every researcher has to complete when working with living human participants. The University of Southampton's ethical code, based on ERGOS standards, include five points:

1. Studies and research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.

2. Participants must be fully informed about the research or study they are invited to participate in and their consent to take part must be made voluntarily, freely and without any coercion. Consents should be recorded, ideally in writing.

3. Risks should be managed so that harm and/or damage arising from the research is avoided or minimised wherever possible and measures should be taken to ensure that the benefits of research/study should outweigh any potential harm or damage caused.

4. The independence of the research/study must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

5. The same high ethical standards shall apply wherever in the world the study/research is undertaken. (Principles of Ethical Research 2017)

However, beyond these five points suggested by the university, this thesis subscribes to a much wider understanding of ethics, that has to do more with the praxis of archaeology: Archaeology for whom? (Panameno and Nalda 1979). Within this context, this thesis stands upon the idea that archaeology should return to the service of the people, or as Fernandez (2006: 86) states, archaeology should be more inclusive. With this I mean, a focus on the history that is built within a daily life, the so-called collective memory. This research will not be, therefore, the account of heroes, leaders, governors, or nations. Rather, it is one of the many accounts of how people organised themselves in a daily life and erased or created differences amongst themselves. It is not about creating one exclusive narrative but acknowledging that there are many narratives that are still untold. In this specific case, the narrative of the Nahua that inhabitat Mixtla de Altamirano, their own personal way of remembering and living in the mountain range. This was enhanced by the way in which people appropriated the project as if it was their own (as explained in section 3.2). Consequently, it is my personal understanding that in our praxis as archaeologists we should refuse to see history as one that is static and linear, but rather to open up the possibility of utopia within our research.

Henceforth, it must be stated that the interviews, videos, and collective memory of the people in Mixtla de Altamirano that were gathered during the fieldwork, were returned to each community, showed and left in schools (including the Indigenous University) for future works, and presented on the communitarian radio. Still, there is a promise of returning to present the final thesis, a way of producing history using archaeology, one that moves and rather than being static, it is produced in the intimacy of our collective daily lives. This methodology, therefore, tries to connect the already disconnected work of the archaeologists with the communities that have been dismissed from the official account and detached from their deep history. It is within further chapters, that an in-depth analysis of the home/household of the Nahua is undertaken. The aim of these chapters is to return the rhythms of daily life that are expressed materially and

hidden in their oral traditions. Despite the fact that human habitation has been continuous in the mountain range, the slow material modifications, alongside the noisy modernity has not changed the fact that the people still perceive themselves as Nahuas, and that they do want their story to be accounted.

In conclusion, this chapter provides a wide view of the methodology chosen to better explore the material expression of the houses of the Nahua. Even though, a rigorous agenda with different activities was planned, the methodology here exposed was the result of the praxis and varied greatly from the original plans.

Chapter 4   Nahua household: The mishmash of shapes and sizes

"Back in my days we didn't have anything, today everything looks nice, we have corrugated metal sheet. Before houses were made of grass that had to be cleaned from garbage and spines, once the grass was clean, we tied it up making them rolls, if we start in the morning we might finish late at night, we use around 50 tied rolls of grass, it's a lot of grass and a lot of work. After we did the house we sleep and eat there because we need to have smoke, at the beginning the smoke comes out white and that means that the house is not ready but when the house have more than three years the smoke stays in the roof and makes it stronger, like a kind of glue. Then it is when the smoke come out black and the roof becomes black too, that a house is ready and will last. Before the houses were made of a wild straw from the upper mountain, but we also used the cane grass that we find in Zacaloma o Zacatilica [lowlands]*, then, we go to rancho to pick the cane grass and bring the other kind from the highlands. I grew up like that in a house made of grass and wood, but our grandparents told us that the house need also thin sticks one against the other, to build the walls, some other people use maguey, but the roof is always made of grass. Now the grass house is lost, because we don't have that grass anymore."*) (Capultitla 24, March 2015)

In the last twenty years, Mixtla de Altamirano's population has seen radical transformations within different aspects of daily life. This –according to several interviewees- was the result of the road's construction that connected the centre of the municipality with the bigger town of Zongolica -finished in 1972- (Fieldwork 2015). Once communications were improved, governmental and non-governmental organisations', as well as entrepreneurs, penetrated the region intensively. The first two with projects that focuses on 'improving the Nahua quality of life' and the third ones to create new consumption patterns. As a result, a slow material reconfiguration of their space affected traditions, previous knowledge's, understandings, and more importantly the bottom-up organisation that constructs the collective being of the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano.

Consequently, during the four months I spent in fieldwork, a wide range of definitions and understandings of the home, were exhibited among the various communities visited and the different generations of people inhabiting the municipality of Mixtla. This mishmash of shapes explains the way Nahuas in this region understand equilibrium (between traditional ways and new materials). As explained by Maria Cira the newscaster of the local radio "*Having equilibrium does not mean static practices, it referes to movement*" (Maria Cira Quechulpa, 12 May 2015). In this chapter, I will offer the catalogue of shapes and sizes of the home along different periods of time. This catalogue will help as a visual guide of the home, as a way to account this particular movement, but also the visual dissonance I experienced when first arriving to Mixtla de Altamirano. Each documented household presented a different space as pivotal for the reproduction of life. While some consider their household to be the space devoted to cooking,

others presented the newer rooms used mainly for sleeping. As stated above, when adding the variable of time, the household becomes even more complex. This because, each generation of Nahuas live the same space in different ways and therefore, grant a different meaning to the material expression of household. Along three generations of Nahuas: a slow reconfiguration. From a wider regional view, where many people can share one kitchen and therefore everyone was called brother and sister (following the communitarian every-day life rhythms), to an individual closed room that produced nucleated family ties and, consequently, a slow reconfiguration of rhythms and physical forms that resulted in a different material expressions and understandings of the same space.

Within that regard, three different sections are going to be presented that will illustrate not just the dissimilar understandings, but also, the different tools used to record the complexity of shapes that were described as the materiality of the house. I present it like this as a demonstration of the different ways in which one material expression can be documented, read and approached. In the first section (4.1), I will present the household recorded using photographs. Each household is accompanied by a short description as well as informal interviews that accounts the way these physical spaces are lived. In addition to that, some of the interviewees presented associated material culture that gives meaning to these physical spaces. Mainly, the recordings were accompanied by intimate conversations with the people that inhabit the house. These 'inside' conversations prove to be a closer way to approach the material. In the second section (4.2), I will present the drawings and maps that were provided by people in different communities visited. These illustrations were given as part of some of the interviews to clarify the way the space used to be, or just as a way to illustrate what they were describing. These materials reconnected people with a particular way of viewing the object of analysis and produced a clearer understanding of the environment. I will finish the chapter, with the outcome of the conversations established with the elders referring to the physicality of the home (section 4.3). Finally, a small conclusion, will bring together the different ways that documenting the materiality helps blur the fine lines that divide humans and things, but put to the forefront the importance of materiality in the self-construction of the Nahua.

4.1   The household in photographs: using the camera to document an "intimate space"?

Social sciences in general (sociologists, economists among others) takes materiality as an important component to study poverty. Through elaborated calculations based on the presence or absence of materials, researchers are able to create models that explain, predict and compare the living condition among different sets of populations (Alkire and Foster 2011: 476-470; Meghnad, Sen and Boltvinik 1998: 18-19). To collect this data, in Mexico, every five years individuals from the National Statistics and Geography Institute (INEGI) visit each household and through a survey gather specific information. It is because of this way of gathering information, that people in Mixtla de Altamirano were not, in general, uncomfortable or surprised when I visited their houses to collect data. Although, in this specific case, no questionnaire was undertaken, I did request permission to shoot pictures inside their houses. It could be said that in general people were proud of showing their houses. There was always a story behind each of the objects asked about.

Within this section, a closer exploration of the houses was recorded using photography. Although photography in archaeology has been seen as a useful tool (Bohrer 2011; Fisher 2009; Shanks and Svabo 2013; Dorrell 1994), relying entirely on the camera to record the house presented certain limitations. The most important one, is the lack of understanding that one might get by an isolated image. However, the insight I obtained by visiting houses and hearing personal accounts allowed me to understand the complex world of meaning that spaces like the house provided for a family. This data was collected with the help of Eleazar Tehuintle, Victor Quiahua and Alicia Mayahua. Their own insights helped not just in the understanding of the house but in capturing what they thought that it was an important part of the house. Overall, rather than conceiving an intimate space where nucleated families reproduce, as the national surveys do, it was through the conversations and the daily life that the concept of houses in Mixtla de Altamirano appeared as an open space that still defines their bottom up organisation and collective-self.

4.1.1   The house of Eliazar

The house described below is without any doubt where I spent most of my time. Even so, little of the conversations were recorded. By this I mean, that more than formal interviews regarding the house in itself, our conversations were part of our quotidian. Consequently, it was when we walked, make the tortillas, picked up wood (among other activities that we did together) that the level of insight became profound. However, these informal conversations, although they were

not recorded, made the ethnography richer. But also helped in understanding the materiality of the household.

Eliazar's household is located inside the property of her in-laws. As it is the tradition, she arrived there within the first years of being together with her husband (25 years ago) but she did not have her kitchen right away. When a women arrives in the husband's household, they should prove to their mother in law (and other women in the main kitchen) that they are capable of doing the chores and provide for her own family (as explored in more depth in Chapter 6 section 6.1). Although, tradition varies according to the families and new regulations with land ownership (see chapter 6 section 6.2), in the case of Eliazar, she had to wait until her first born was around two years old to receive a place in the family property (see figure 4.1 to see the composition of the father in-law's land).

Figure 4.1. The complete compound of smoky kitchens that belong to the family of Eliazar, taken from one of the drone's flights. The main house is marked with the star and belongs to the mother and father of Eliazar's husband (her in-laws). Seven other nucleated families inhabit the same property. Even if the tradition is to pass the land to the male members of the family, in this specific household, land was granted also to the female members.

Although one same piece of land is divided in between several nucleated families, each one of the nucleated families have specific spaces that are not shared with the rest of the members of the entire household. Nonetheless, not sharing does not refer to being private. It means that the use is restricted to some activities that do not necessarily implicate the socialisation of other members of the complete household. Despite this, all the spaces inside the complete household are open spaces that can be transited with certain freedom. Such is the case of the rooms that are meant to be for sleeping. Although each nucleated family has a minimum of one extra room apart from their smoky kitchen, they hardly use them for other activities. This in other words, means that the space where the complete family spends almost the entire time is near the fire inside the smoky kitchens.

As shown in figure 4.2 the main household (the first smoky kitchen built in the entire compound) is marked with a star. This is the place where Eliazar spent her first years as a married women and learned the women's chores. Because this is the oldest part of the household it preserves the traditional hip roof on a rectangular plan shape. Moreover, the materials used to build the main kitchen are more solid than the rest of the houses. Just this kitchen measures 6 by 4 metres covered by a red clay tiles roof. Inside the main kitchen a strong lifted stove and a cemented floor. The bigger room that is located aside this kitchen is the praying room whose roof is made with new corrugated metal sheets that gave this space a Gable shape.

Figure 4.2. Eliazar's kitchen and room inside the squared area. The main kitchen and household is built with red clay tiles as are the colonial households. The roof still has the Hip-roof, therefore I start to wonder whether the hip-roof shape was introduced during colonial times.

Even though, the main kitchen was used at some point by all the women living in the compound, today each one of them has their own smoky kitchen and just visit each other from time to time. Nonetheless, the main kitchen (with the star in fig. 4.1 and 4.2) is still the one in best condition with the stronger materials and consequently, it is still considered the centre of the household. Eliazar's house is shown in 4.20 inside the red squared area. It is composed by a 2 by 4 metres room divided into two different spaces. One where the *brasero* is located (see figure 4.6) and the other one where her aunt -figure 4.4 - (that Eliazar considered as her mom) sleeps. Her roof is made with corrugated metal sheets with a mono-pitched roof, and the floor is still the soil without additional materials. Eliazar had another room 4 by 3 meters with three beds where Eliazar, her husband, the two daughters and three sons sleep all together. In this room they also have a small altar. As well as the kitchen, the floor is just the soil and the roof is made with corrugated metal sheets too, nonetheless, this one has a gable shape (see figure 4.15).

In the whole property inhabited by 7 different nucleated families, there is just one latrine. Even if, it appears to be in good condition, they change the latrine due to the many people that use it. Apart from sharing the latrine, each family has a specific place to shower. This, however, is not very common in the households in other communities. Women are used to taking showers while they wash the clothes in the river or where they supply themselves with water. Men do the same after working in the field. Therefore, the introduction of a space to shower is reserved for those that have water supply in their houses or near them. In the case of Eliazar, she has a water tank nearby that allows her to bring water at any time.

Figure 4.3. Eliazar and her daughter in this set of pictures the 3 females (Eliazar, Veronica –her daughter- and her aunt) were explaining to me the meaning of being a woman in the community according to their age (see chapter 5 section 5.3).

Figure 4.4. Eliazar's aunt telling her story, although she did not speak Spanish she made herself clear in many ways

Eliazar lives in Barrio Segundo (see fig. 4.5), one of the communities near to the centre of the municipality. This community has 758 residents among which 390 are men and 368 are women. According to official statistics, the number of households in the community is 164 houses. However, there is no clarity whether the national statistics are considering one house as a complete compound or counting them as one nucleated family house. When I asked Eliazar if they recognised her household as one she said that they informed authorities according to their convenience:

> *"for example when the people from the light company come and*
> *ask us, because they divide the entire electricity among the*
> *number of houses, then we count all of the ones inside the*
> *compound as one and in that way we divide the total in between*

> *all of us, after all we don't really use that much amount of light*
>
> *and it's a lot of money […] but sometimes it is better to say that*
>
> *there are many smoky kitchens inside one compound"*

Whether one household has more than one room or they share one kitchen with other nucleated families is not defined and depends on the way each family decides to divide their own land that it is thought to belong to all the family members.
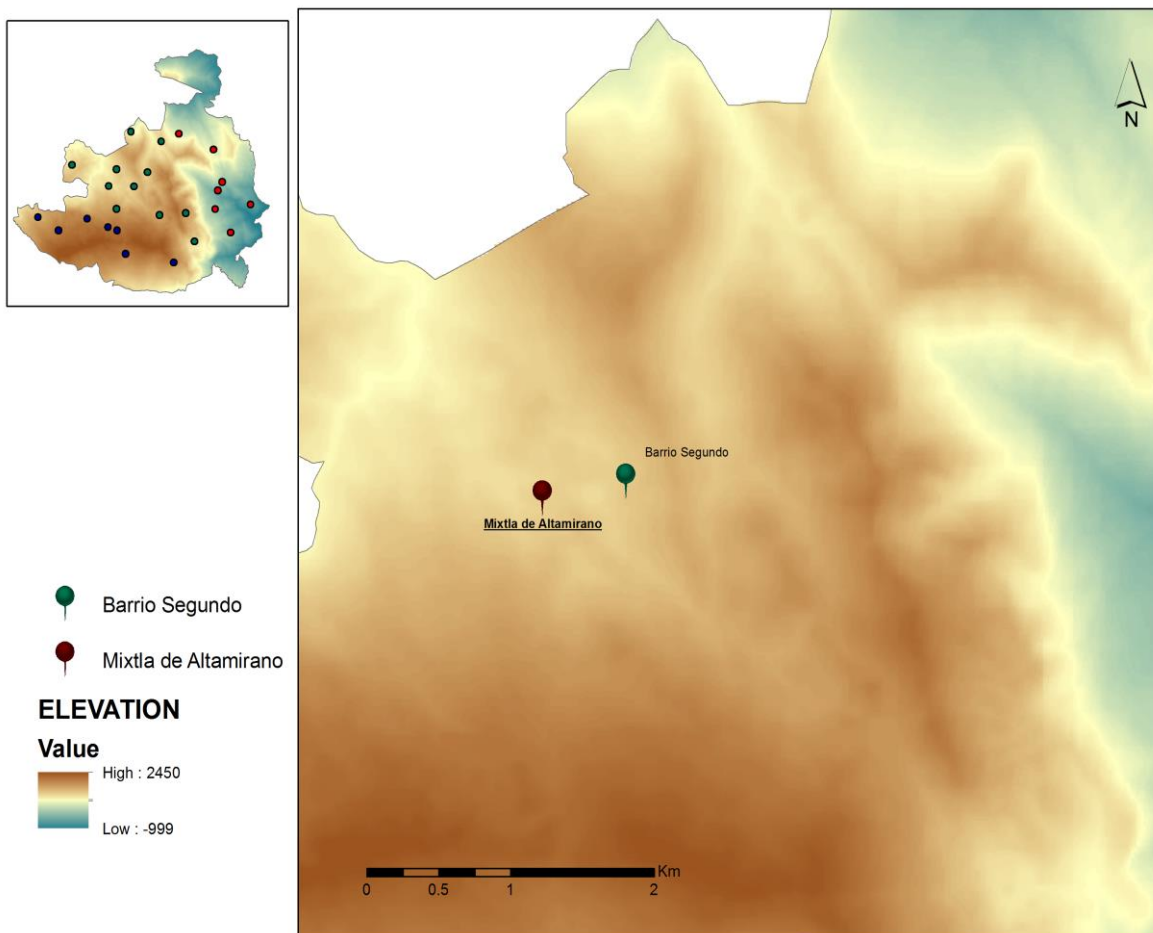
Figure 4.5. Map of location of the house of Eliazar

For instance, despite the fact that several other houses share some spaces, the family that she has to take care of is composed of her husband, two teenage girls (13 years old and 15 years old), one teenage boy (17 years old), two smaller boys (9 years old and 7 years old) and her aunt (see figure 4.7). According to Eliazar, the kitchen was not being renewed because a different household was going to be built with newer materials. These new houses are being granted by a CDI (National Commission for the development of the Indigenous Population) housing program that as they say *"help us regulate the problems with our land…now we own it"* (as I will explain in the next sub-section).

Figure 4.6. Eliazar kitchen is made with wooden cladding, nails, plastic bags and two pieces of corrugated metal sheets. The shape that the roof has is mono-pitched and the floor is the soil without materials. In the picture Eliazar is cooking and her aunt is warming herself near the fire

Figure 4.7. Four of the six children shown in the picture are Eliazar's children. The two teenage girls on the sides and the two boys in the middle. The two little girls in the middle live in the same household. Although they are the cousins, Veronica (the oldest of the picture) take care of them all and they are allowed to eat in any of the smoky kitchens that belong to the entire compound or household.

4.1.2   The house of Matlatecoya

Matlatecoya is located in the lowlands of Mixtla de Altamirano (1227 metres above sea level) (see figure 4.8). With 130 residents among which 62 are men and 68 are women, the community was and still is producer of bananas, coffee and other goods that are associated with agriculture. The household I visited is one of the 30 that composed the small community and according to local authorities is the oldest house in the region. The smoky kitchen (presented as the house), still conserves the open spaces documented in other old houses along Mixtla de Altamirano. This house is composed of a big room (6 by 4 square metres) with a gable roof on a rectangular plan. The space was constructed with a wooden frame and cladding fixed with nails. The floor had cement and the roof was made of corrugated tin sheets. The room itself was divided by two different spaces. The first one slightly smaller (2 by 4 m^2) than the second one (4 by 4 m^2). It was within the second one that a *brasero* (a traditional stove) was located. The first room did not have

any specific purpose other than having materials like wood, nails and sacks of sand that I assume were the remains of the construction materials used to improve this house. Even during the interview, they refer just to the smoky kitchen (the second room) as the house. The conversation about the smoky kitchen lasted 30 minutes in which they referred to the materials and the changes.

The head of the family, Don Melecio, was not there to receive me. Instead, I was welcome by his son, Don Antonio and wife, Dona Concepcion. Along the entire visit, different children and adults entered the house making themselves noticeable but did not interrupt the conversation already established with Don Antonio. It was later on when Don Melecio arrived with Don Juan, two of the oldest inhabitants of the household that Don Antonio and his wife Dona Concepcion ceased to speak and allow them to present the house and shared their experience of living in the past. Don Melecio explained to me that four of his sons with their families shared the house. Both, Don Antonio and Don Melecio presented the smoky kitchen as the house. It was evident that, the history that surrounds this family starts with the composition of their smoky kitchen. According to the participants, the smoky kitchen has been renewed because they received a cement floor that "*make the space look cleaner and wider*" (Doña Concepcion during interview). They want to make more changes in the house that will include changing the roof. The roof was composed of several sheets of semi destroyed corrugated tin and they wanted to seek government support to provide new polycarbonate panels, that according to them are stronger and do not make noise when the rain comes.

Don Antonio's wife (Doña Concepcion) proudly showed me the house *brasero* and told me that now they live better than their grandmothers due to the fact that they used to work mainly in their knees "*as if they were always praying to god for food*" –added Doña Concepcion, almost laughing. The many activities that the women did on their knees included grinding the maize, preparing the fire and elaborating tortillas, activities that today are all done standing up and that according to her are much easier.
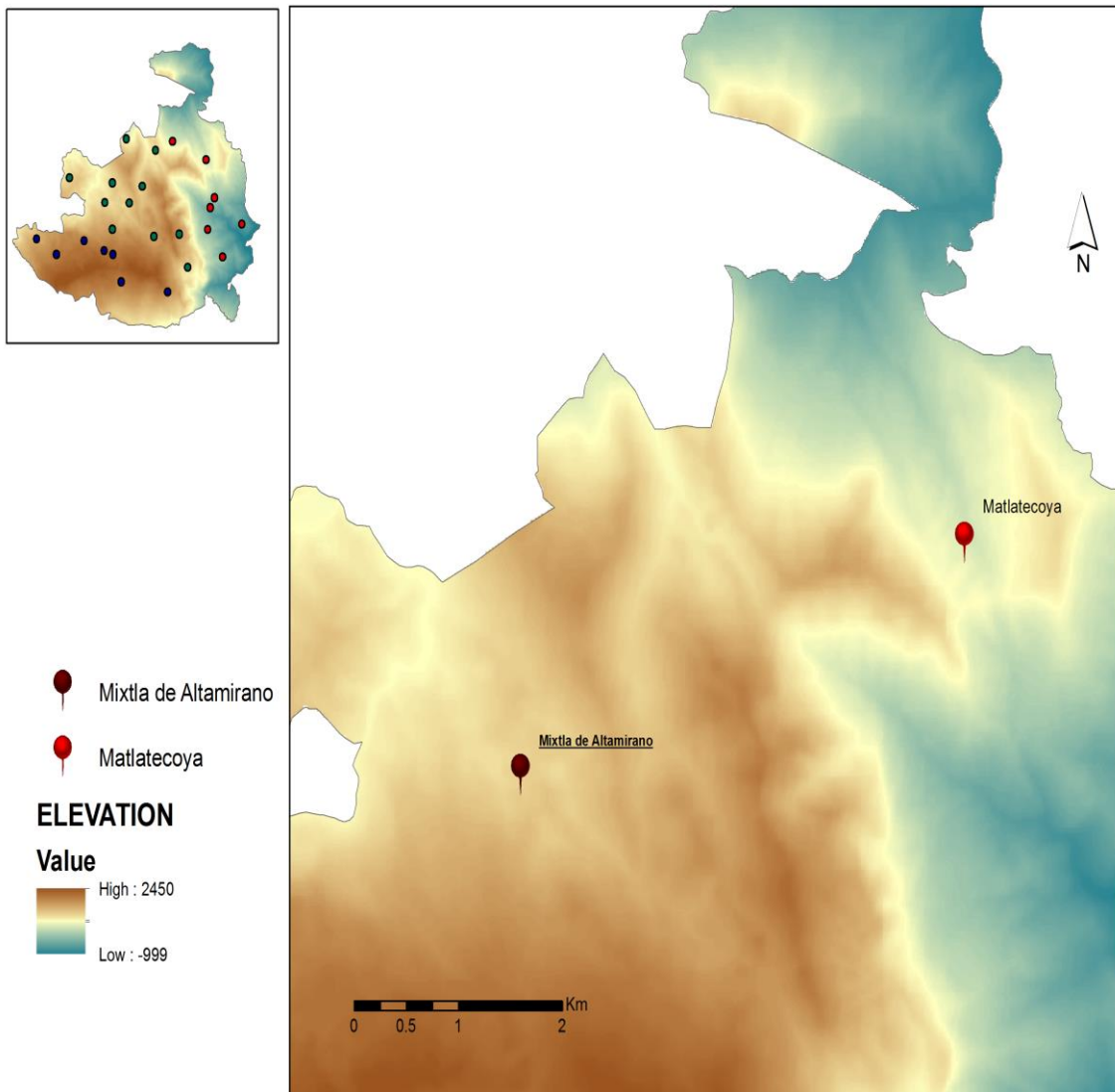
Figure 4.8. Map of location of the house visited in Matlatecoya

Figure 4.9. The smoky kitchen of the Family living in Matlatecoya (Lowlands). In the upper picture the cradle of the babies made of sack. Hanging out, dry corn used to produce the flour for tortillas (the main meal). In the bottom side the *metate* (grinding stone) and the cooking artefacts that according to Dona Conepcion "*haven't changed that much…we still use the metate*".

Figure 4.10. The *brasero (*lifted stove) is made with wood, big rocks in the bottom then sand all the way to the top. However, the fire place is made in the same way that they produced it in the past, with three stones to support the pots and pans "*the only difference is that now we cook standing up, it is easier than our grandmothers used to work*".

Continuing the conversation, Doña Concepcion told me that the pots and pans (that are shown in the figure 4.3) were bought in the market located in the town of Zongolica, some of them have been even brought from Orizaba "*before, our grandmothers used to buy them at their doors, because women that come from the highlands made them and come to sell them or they sell them in the local market in Mixtla, they also exchange them for maize, beans, bananas or whatever they produce here in the lowlands*". However, when I ask about the Metate (stone for grinding the maize) and the tecomates (pumpkin bowl), Doña Concepcion told me "*this one I don't know where they buy it, it was there when I arrived to the house*".

Figure 4.11. The kitchen has two entrances, one is facing the road and crossing a smaller room (where we enter) and the second one is facing the rooms where they sleep. This was mainly the entrance used by the family members that entered and leave along the interview (in the picture in the right). In the left, the *metate*

Figure 4.12. Don Antonio and Doña Concepcion at the beginning of the interview presenting their home.

Figure 4.13. Don Antonio and Doña Concepcion above. Don Melecio lower right and Don Juan lower left

Figure 4.14. In the right, Don Antonio and Don Juan by the door that connects the smoky kitchen with the rooms they use to sleep. In the left, one of the occupants of the house with baby

When Don Melecio and Don Juan arrived, rather than focusing on the house, they told me about the voids that they had. For instance, they did not have school and depended greatly on the sugar cane hacienda. They complain that in the past, they did not have any support from the government "*we did not have anything, not even food*". They even complain about the shortage of water "*we needed to bring water from the river, we carried them and stored them inside the house*". They were especially content with the new tank that provided water for all the community, that was recently built in the year 2014.

4.1.3   The house of Barrio Cuarto

When enquiring about the earliest preserved houses, many people along the municipality agreed that these could be located in the centre of the municipality, in *Tocha.* This is because according to storytelling and oral tradition, the very first place to be occupied was the centre of the municipality, later on, in their words *"people spread from San Andres Mixtla to other places inside the municipality looking for house and food"* (Teapa-Ocotempa 25 March 2015). Accordingly, with the help of Victor Quiahua and Alicia Mayahua, two houses were located that preserved the 'traditional' ceiling using grass and palms and that have a specific shape (the hip-roof on a rectangular plan) known as lima houses (see figure 4.15).

Both houses were located in Barrio Cuarto, although it is considered as the centre of the municipality. Because of its growth of population, authorities have decided to divide the centre of the municipality into five different communities: four barrios and the centre, called San Andres Mixtla. The houses visited are located in Barrio Cuarto and with an altitude of 1650 metres above sea level it belongs to the middle lands (see figure 4.9). Official statistics provided by INEGI

established a total of 618 residents from which 316 are men and 302 are women. The total number of households is 123.

Hip roof on a rectangular plan
LIMA

A-Frame house or Gable roof
DOS AGUAS
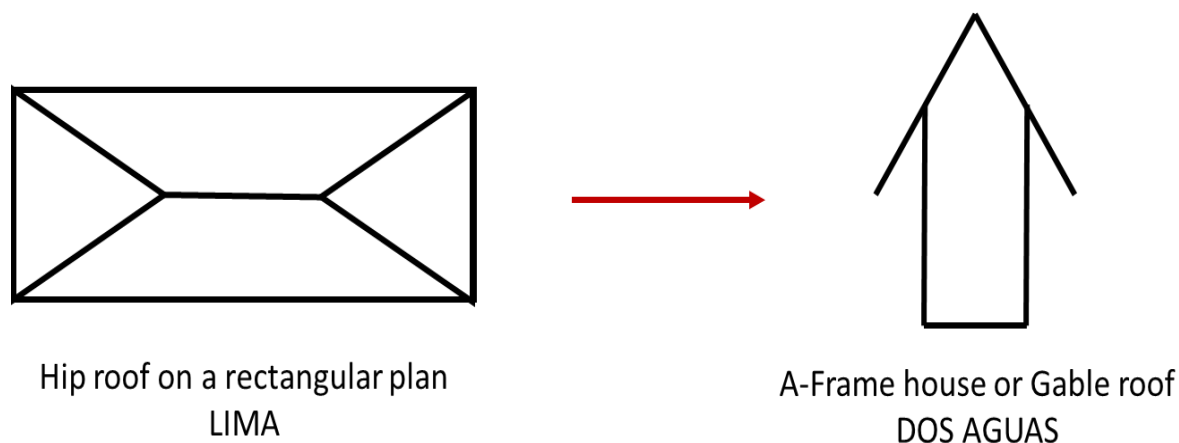
Figure 4.15. The two main roofs seen in Mixtla de Altamirano
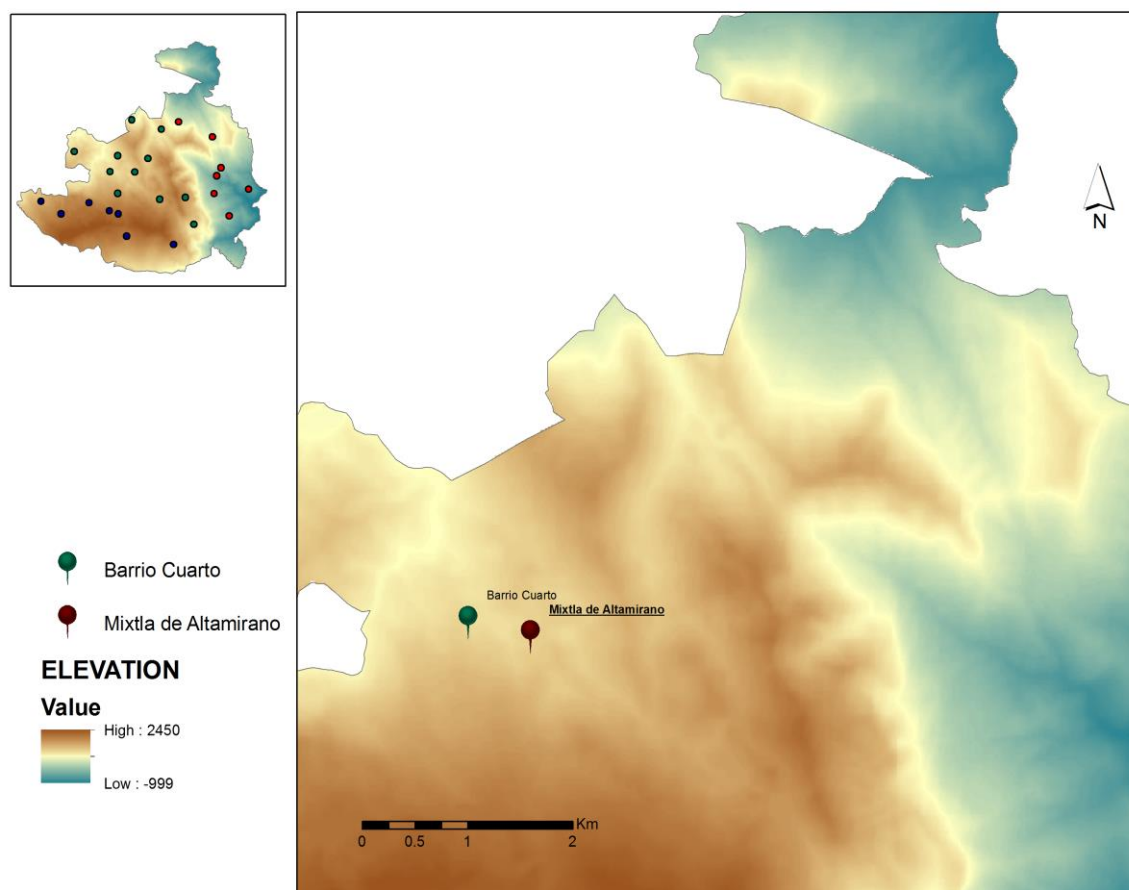
Figure 4.16. Location of the houses visited in Barrio Cuarto

Laura Quiahua was the person who informed us about one of the oldest households. Although she doesn't live there anymore, she spent a long time inhabiting the house that today belongs entirely to her in-laws. In fact, given the conservation of some materials, she thought that this

household could be the one with less changes in all the municipality. She went even further in mentioning that for the last 27 years or even more, the household has been untouched. However, the one thing that was certain was that even if the household has been modified inside and some of the materials have been improved, the shape of the household has been preserved for at least 50 years (according to our informer) (figure 4.17).

Consequently, we went to visit Laura's in-laws in their household. Welcoming us, was Doña Luisa, aged 65. Right now, she is in charge of the elder couple, after all she is their daughter. The owners of the house: were Doña Maria Antonia, aged 80, and her husband Don Jose aged 95 (see figure 4.18). Once in the house, Luisa told us that the household belonged to the family of her dad, Don Jose, and that originally was made with the grass on the roof, a typical *lima* house with a hip-roof on a rectangular plan. In the past, the walls were made with thin sticks one aside the other.

Figure 4.17. Don Jose and Dona Maria household. This is composed of two rectangular rooms. Image on the left is the kitchen with the original roof built with grass (known as Lima houses with a hip-roof on a rectangular plan). On the right is the room where they sleep and pray, with corrugated tin panel roofing with a Gable shape but also in a rectangular plan. Pictures taken by V. Quiahua

Doña Luisa explained to us that although the household in itself has preserved the original shape, there have been some modifications due to the perishable nature of the materials. Consequently, the grass in the roof has been fixed a couple of times, and the thin sticks have been replaced with wooden cladding, and more importantly, some parts of the floor have been covered with cement. She also told us that the newest room was built with corrugated tin roofing and with a Gable type shape. I proceed, asking if the reasons for replacing the roof were due to the better quality of the newer introduced materials, Don Jose nodded to ratify, and added that it was also due to the fact

that the grass to build the roof has slowly disappeared from the region, as well as the wood and some traditional materials to build the house.

Figure 4.18. On the right, Luisa aged 65 (daughter of the couple). On the left Don Jose Morales 95 years old: father and owner of the property. Picture on the right taken by V. Quiahua

Additionally, according to the accounts of Don Jose, the house started with the one big room, where cooking, sleeping and all the activities used to happen, they used to have more space outside he told us, however problems with the materials made them have to continuously change them; roof first he said, to the cardboard or corrugated tin sheets that the government brought, but they unceasingly had to be changed due to the strong rainstorms that they have during the rainy season (rain comes in vigorous quantities any time from May all the way to November. However the rainy season is identified to be June, July and August). He told us, that with the panels the roof did change its shape because it was easier to fit the corrugated metal sheets into a Gable shape, in Spanish known as '*dos aguas*' (figure 4.15).

Figure 4.19. Different angles of both rooms: On the right, the room to sleep and the grass roof with a Hip-roof; the chicken farmyard aside the room for sleeping with a Gable shape roof. In the left: the rear of the room, used to sleep. Pictures taken by V. Quiahua

 "*Even if the household materials have been changed, the main structure remains*" Don Jose told us. Six people inhabited the household, one of them died in an early stage of his life, therefore just five enjoy the material essence of this household. In his words "*all the members count and still occupied the house in some ways*". Today, the household is inhabited by three people but during holidays is still a full house when the rest of the sons and daughters come to visit them. Even though, later on, they built an extra room, and transfered the altar from the smoky kitchen to this new room, they don't like to spend that much time on this one; they used it strictly for sleeping and praying.

Figure 4.20. Dona Maria Antonia, showing us how to tie the thin sticks as they used to build the walls of the house. Now they use it sometimes to build fences, however in the past they used to do this for the walls, and instead of plastic bags they used the maguey fibres.

In the same community, really near the house of Doña Maria, another old household was located. Doña Rosa's house. She kindly received us and allowed us to take pictures and converse with her. According to her, the structure is 32 years old and it is about to fall down "*nobody helps me with the chores*". Doña Rosa told us that she raised many children in this house, she never specified the exact number, however she did complain that she did not receive visitors very often and that the conditions of the house were not good enough. The house was just the kitchen with a grass hip-roof (a *lima* shape) without an additional room and measured 4 metres by 3 metres. The walls are wooden board, put together with nails for the most part, nonetheless there are parts that are still covered with thin sticks.

Figure 4.21. The kitchen from the above and the roof inside. The shape of the hip-roof is well represented in the photograph. Even if along the interviews people agreed that the grass was resistant enough, the perishable nature of the materials is evident. In Doña Rosa's house we could really see the weather damage and the lack of maintenance. Pictures taken by V. Quiahua

Although Doña Rosa did not have another room attached to the kitchen, she did have a big vegetable garden beside the house with all kinds of vegetables and medicinal plants which she uses for self-supply. Among native species that I recognised (*quelites*, tomatoes, and lime trees) others were unknown and caught my attention. When I asked about them, she told me that some of them were used to colour the sheep's wool and some others were brought by some governmental programs that aimed to rescue the traditional medicine. This because as she told: "*I have always known how to cure the body with plants, especially when babies are coming*".

Inside the household the pots and pans hanging in the walls of the kitchen near to the *brasero* [lifted stove] (as shown in figure 4.22), resembled the ones seen in the house visited in Matlatecoya. It could be said that the interior of the smoky kitchen kept the same shape and materials inside. Equally, in the central part above the raised stove, the three big stones allowed ventilation between the fire and the place where the pots are put when they are being used to cook the food.

Figure 4.22. Dona Rosa's brasero (raised stove) and her fireplace also built in the same ways as the house of Matlatecoya with three big stones to hold the pots. Pictures taken by V. Quiahua

Although the physical space varied in measurement and the amount of rooms in between these two houses visited in Barrio Cuarto, one place stayed at the centre, I am referring to the smoky kitchen. Even though the measurements of the smoky kitchens varied, as well as the materials that built this space, both of them preserved the raised stove and the three stones that create a natural separation between the fire and the pots. Furthermore, some elements even resembled the smoky kitchen visited in Matlatecoya, like the pots and pans hung on the walls of the kitchen and a place to collect the wood used for cooking outside the smoky kitchen. As shown in Figure 4.23, among the meaningful materials that were shown to me as old and traditional were chairs made of one piece of wood, the *metlatxontil* (both of these artefacts have already disappeared), The pumpkin plates, the *braseros* (raised stoves) and the dry corn. Even if the *braseros* are a newer acquisition, it is my belief that what they considered as being very traditional is the fireplace with the three stones.

Figure 4.23. Different materials located in both houses that according to the interviews built their sense of being at home. Starting from top right an antique chair made by one big piece of wood. Upper left the *metlaxontil* (an antique grinder used for chocolate and other species). Lower left the pumpkin plates. At the bottom, the *brasero* (lifted stove). Lower right the maize used for corn tortillas.

4.1.4   The houses that float: a non-planned visit

The house that floats was visited on March the 9th of 2015. What is interesting about this form of house is they are next to the road that connects different communities, presenting specific characteristics. Due to the location of the communities within a steep terrain morphology, a very unique shape is needed to allow these houses to almost float next to the road. With two big cement beams, they hold the house up in the air and use the lower part as a storage. The roofs, although they are made with similar materials, varied in that they are mono-pitched type (almost flat roof). Even if this type of roof is found in other households that are not aside of the road, the ones aside of the road had wooden floors, instead of the sand. Some of the newer structures, instead of wood use cement floor too. According to several interviews, these kinds of houses are newer, and they are the result of the overpopulation in the mountain range. However, I was unable to verify this fact. One thing is certain, these houses are the result of living in a specific kind of habitat that require certain architectural skills to use all the possible space and modify the landscape.

Figure 4.24. Living next to the road is living with a permanent view to the emptiness. Even if the household in the road has a flat roof, the smoky kitchen (where i was invited) have the characteristically Gable shape roof

I was invited in this household as a guest to drink coffee and eat beans. It was an informal event as part of Eliazar's family commitments (she visits her godmother regularly and takes her goods from the market in the centre of the municipality). Due to the informal nature of the event, I did not tape the conversation and pictures were limited. The household belongs to Eliazar's uncle. While we walked to the highlands where the household was located, she told me that she was originally born in that community (Tlachicuapa). However, she left this community once she got married (aged 20), as the tradition indicates, and never thought of coming back.

Figure 4.25. The view from the house. In the distance other (or maybe just one) households that share the same floating characteristics using the landscape to build home.

Eliazar's godmother, who offered us the coffee and food, spoke little Spanish. Therefore, the conversation was mostly in Nahuatl with Eliazar who asked her about the house and the story behind her space. She explained to Eliazar that the smoky kitchen (place where we were located) was the oldest part of the construction. This was evident because of the materials used. The floor was sand, and the roof was made with grass and had a hip shape. However, she told us that the household included several other rooms one of them being where they sleep and pray and another one was used as storage. She continued talking about her husband and his work, whom in Eliazar's words: *"has been the same since they got married, they have land therefore he goes and work the land, she has chickens and grow some vegetables in her greenhouse"*. The household overall seemed to be big. During the conversation she did not mention the number of inhabitants in the household, however, later on Eliazar told me that she had five sons and daughters and three of them were living in the household with their wives but the kitchen that we visited was used only by her.

4.1.5 The pink rooms and the CDI houses

In 1999 a landslide destroyed houses and farms of the people in Atzala (a community situated in the lowland part of the municipality at 1,100 meters above the sea level). As a result of this environmental disaster, the government granted a piece of land situated 2,300 metres above the

sea level (in the middle-lands of the municipality) which the small community was allocated.

Local authorities as well as inhabitants decided to name this new place Colony Miguel Aleman

(see figure 4.26). With a total of 108 residents from which 59 are men and 49 are women, it is one

of the two communities that have been moved due to environmental issues. Even if the

inhabitant's main concerns regarding this allocation had to do with lack of land tenancy, in 2006

after several negotiations, the municipal government decided to grant a specific budget to build

30 households/rooms.
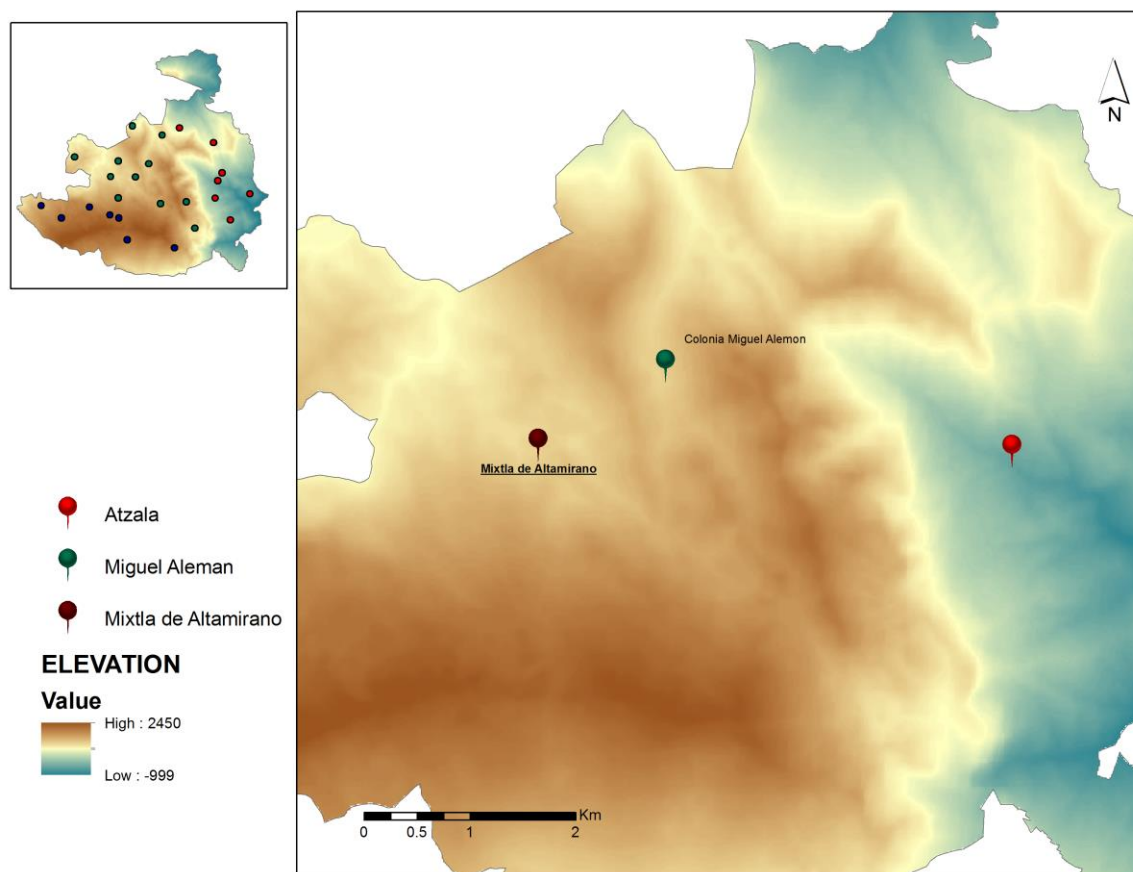
Figure 4.26. Map of location of Miguel Aleman and previous location of Atzala

Figure 4.27. Don Eusebio Temoxtle is the local authority of Colony Miguel Aleman. As such he presented his house proud of it wearing a t-shirt with the name of the political party that pay for the housing. It is important to point out that all the rooms are painted in the same colours.

Initially, this household/rooms resolved the problems regarding the climate conditions to which the new inhabitants were not used. However, the room presented new glitches. For instance, one of the main issues resulted in the reduced dimensions of the room in itself that measured 3.60 metres by 4 metres. Built with cement, dipstick, bricks and a roof with a mono- pitched shape made of plastic panels that resembled the red clay tiles, it became almost impossible to cook inside this small and closed room (as the people expressed during the interview). Nonetheless, even if, during the interview with the elders many complaints were made regarding the size of the room, according to Don Eusebio (who kindly showed me the room) "*people feel happy with this rooms, because now at least we are not cold at night, and besides having new materials make people always feel safer, this are materials that last longer*".

Figure 4.28. Don Eusebio's property painted in the colours of the political party that gives them the support to build the house. Pictures taken by V. Quiahua

It is undeniable that such a reduced space represents a big issue when it comes to preserving the rural lifestyle of having animals and cooking with fire, not to mention the modifications in the family structure that these rooms represent. While some people inside the community are able to build an attached smoky kitchen and preserve the essence of collective lifestyle, some others

are condemned to a minimal space where cooking can even be an unhealthy matter (see figure 4.29 for the settlement pattern of the new colony).

Figure 4.29. The small new Colony Miguel Aleman, in which almost all the households are the new rooms. Even if some people can add an extra room to the ones that the government gave, most people rely entirely on the small room. As a result, the nucleated family structure is put to the forefront and cooking with fire can become an unhealthy matter

According to the secretary in charge of the municipality's constructions (*Secretario de Obras Publicas*) Lic. Gerardo, the resource to build these specific rooms comes from a project that involves two federal institutions: National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous Communities (CDI) and Social Development Secretary (SEDESOL) that according to the high poverty index and other specific concerns creates a budget that benefits some people in the community. For instance, this same resource was also implemented due to the extreme violence presented in some parts of the region that were dealing with child molesters. That is why, these rooms are called pink rooms. In interview Lic. Gerardo said:

> "*This municipality also has high indexes of violence […] just recently they*
> *captured a guy that was raping young girls, and that is why in the proposal*

> *sent to the two federal institutions, we claimed that with these rooms girls*
>
> *can be locked in safe at night in these pink rooms that can provide a safer*
>
> *childhood*" (Fieldwork, 6th March 2015).

Whatever the case it is, these small rooms represent one of the many ways of building smaller spaces for families that are in need.

In a different program but with the same institution the CDI offers some families the opportunity to build their households through the: '*Indigenous Infrastructure Programme'*. However, one of the most important requirements that the families must have to become a beneficiary, is the legal ownership of the piece of land, where they want to build their home. This means, therefore, that people that were living in communitarian spaces or shared land (like the case of Eliazar's household section 4.1.4) will have to claim ownership and legalize the individual use of land. This in other words, means splitting the land that once was for all of them.

Figure 4.30. The new model of housing that CDI is implementing. It is composed by two rooms, one space for the dining room a small kitchen, and a bathroom.

Several problems come with this new model, one of them being the lack of services like water and gas. Pictures taken by A. Mayahua.

The final outcome of this programme is shown in figure 4.30, a new little household constituting of two bedrooms, a space for a dining room, a close kitchen and a bathroom. These households were almost new and not yet granted to most of the families that obtain the benefits of this programme. However, several problems were foreseen with these kind of houses, as explained to me by Eliazar itself: "*the kitchen is closed but I am not going to use it as kitchen I will use the room that I am using for sleeping now as my new open kitchen and in that way my house is going to have more rooms […] toilet is going to be for taking showers until drainage is done*" (21 April, 2015). It becomes important to point out that services such as water and gas are still not available in the community, so the problem of the toilet will be the lack of drainage and having a close kitchen will become an important health issue if women cook with fire inside these specific households.

4.1.6   The house of Alicia (a story of migration)

Alicia is a former student in the Indigenous University. Even though, this university is located in the municipality of Tequila (36.1 km apart from Mixtla), Alicia has her family living in Mixtla de Altamirano and therefore, she became my first contact in the municipality. Apart from the fact that she helped in sorting practicalities, she also provided me with her own personal account and allowed me to document her story as well as her own description of her household.

The location of her household is in the community of Barrio Tercero (in the centre of the municipality) (see figure 4.31) and her story is like many other stories in the mountains, she used to have a small household, as she recalled, made with wooden cladding walls, corrugated metal sheets in the roof in a A-frame shape (gable roof) and a small chicken farmyard "*we always had chickens*". According to her account this household was divided in two rooms one where the smoky kitchen was located (3 by 3 metres long and wide, and 2 meters high) and the other room was the place that the family use for sleeping. In this last room

> "*We had two beds, one where my parents sleep with the youngest of*
> *my sisters and the second one where I sleep with my other sister and*
> *my brother, our toilet was made with wooden cladding walls and*
> *corrugated cardboard sheets and it was located seven metres apart*
> *from this two rooms*".

Even if they always had chickens, she remembers that there was no garden. This because, although, it was a piece of land that the parents of her dad gave them, it was occupied by big stones everywhere and the land was not even.

> "*Little by little my dad removed trees and stones from the property all the*
> *way until the land was level and that is where he built the house for the*
> *chickens with a corrugated metal sheet and thin sticks as walls, he also built*
> *the pen for the pigs with the same materials as the ones used for the*
> *chickens… although we were poor my dad used to work really hard to make*
> *the space of our house a much better place to live*".
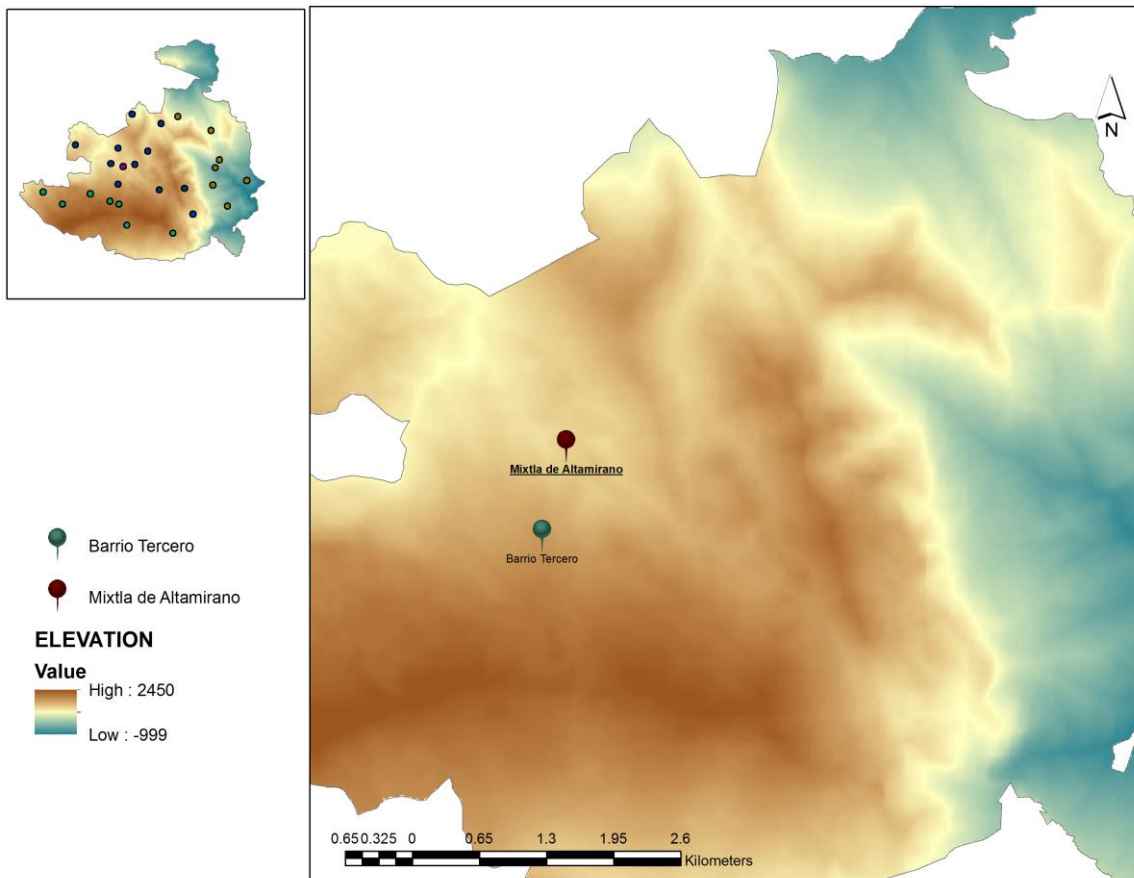
Figure 4.31. The location of the family house of Alicia

However, necessity struck, and her dad decided to move to the United States of America in order to forge a better future for his family. Her dad spent six years in the States sending punctually each month a regular amount of money to build a new household in the same piece of land.

> "*In each visit to the community, my dad dedicated a certain amount of time*
> *to build a different part of our new household, he used to tell us that this*
> *house was for us to have a better future… he started with the basics,*
> *fortunately he was a good builder*".

The new household materials are concrete, blocks, cements and the roofs have some red clay tiles with a mono-pitched shape. There is a total of three rooms that are used for sleeping and a space used as a living room. In this new household they have a space specifically used for taking showers "*we just use it in the winter because we prefer to take showers outside when is summer, I guess is just because we are used to do it so*". Even if they referred to this as the bathroom, the family still uses the latrine due to the lack of water and drainage in the community:

> "*My mom wanted a toilet in the bathroom, so she asked the authorities for drainage, I told her that drainages just damage our river and will be bad for our health, I believe that a good latrine is better for us, in that way we can also take care of our land*".

Figure 4.32. Alicia's household blends past and present. While she sleeps in a concrete and cement new household (the two bottom pictures), she still uses the old

smoky kitchen made with wooden cladding walls and corrugated metal sheets as a roof (two upper pictures). Pictures taken by A. Mayahua

Her dad finished building the new house in 2005, according to Alicia's account, she thinks that his dad sorted problems of water shortage in a very clever way. This is because attached to the house is a big water tank that they fill with water from the rain. In addition to that, another important part of the house is the vegetable garden for which she cares.

"*I have learned from the University many ways of taking care of the garden, for instance I am using thin sticks as walls to avoid animals eating the seeds and I also make my organic insecticide*".

Figure 4.33. The family have found very convinient ways of sorting problems such as the shortage of water, food and medicine supplies. They not only take care of their vegetable garden that is also full of medicinal plants, but they have built a water tank. Picture taken by A. Mayahua

Figure 4.34. Upper right and Left Alicia's smoky kitchen. Lower right the green garden. Lower left the toilet/latrine.

Even if Alicia's house might seem different from any other household in the municipality, once going inside the smoky kitchen a sense of relatedness was experienced. This is because as seen in figure 4.34 the smoky kitchen appeared untouched by time, with the same details and decorations that characterised other smoky kitchens visited. In other words, her kitchen does not stands out from the normal kitchens in the municipality. With a three stone fireplace on top of the traditional *brasero* (lifted stove) Alicia's kitchen is warm an inviting. What is more, even if the kitchen has shelves to keep the pots and spoons, Alicia's mother likes to hang them on the wall, as she told us: "*because is la costumbre (the tradition)*".

Figure 4.35. Inside the newer household the living room space is used for praying, and the rooms attached are just used for sleeping. One of the rooms is attached to the living room while in the upper floor are two rooms. Pictures taken by A. Mayahua

Even though in the interview Alicia told us that the new household is very comfortable, they spend little amount of time in this house

> "*it is nice because we are not cold at nights and it represents the effort of my dad who is not with us anymore, but we don't spend a lot of time inside this house, it is in the kitchen were we spend a considerable amount of time, for me, my mom and my siblings the kitchen is the place where we chat and make the most of our family time*".

Currently, Alicia lives with two sisters named Eleuteria and Aracely and a brother named Javier, her mom Luciana and a new-born (son of Alicia). Although her dad is no longer part of this family, in her words: "*this house is important for us because it is the result of my dad's dream and hard work and therefore it will always have some part of his spirit*".

4.2   Representing the house through drawings

The drawings that illuminate this section were the consequence of the prolonged interviews, as expressed to me during the visits in Barrio Cuarto, instead of trying to explain "*let me just draw it better*" (May 12 2015). Although, photographs allow recording of a meticulous level of detail, the limitations of the camera lie in the fact that they produced a homogenous and plain image where no apparent detail stands out (Shanks 1997:73). Each viewer, therefore, will interpret the plain image in different ways. Not to mention that the scene will be limited to the photographer's own eye and perspectives (Debussche, Lepart and Dervieux 1999: 4). Despite the fact that drawings are also produced by one person, this personal understanding and unique attention in specific details is captured and, more importantly, can be analysed by those who see the drawing (Wickstead 2008: 5). Among archaeological research, drawings were a valuable way to register the information before photography appeared (James 1997:24). Nonetheless, today, the use of drawings is almost exclusive to specific analysis (mainly ceramic, lithic among others). Still, the importance of drawings cannot be denied to document findings and describe scenes, even if they are only reduced to personal field notes.

In other words, the descriptive properties of imaging our own understanding of reality are still very well valued among different researchers, across disciplines (Kose 2008: 290; McGrath and Brown 2005: 56; Anning 1999: 168; Purcell and Gero 1998: 402). In this section, apart from the specific attention that the drawer paid to certain details, the true value of them rely on the collectivised view that they generate and the additional details they provide of the space that they called home. This is because even if one person was in charge of the drawing, others were observing and commenting on the drawing that represented one same unified space. As a result, with these drawings people were able to express what for them constituted the main aspects of their house. In a certain way, they became directors of their own artistic masterpiece that better described their collective understanding of household. Finally, but not of less importance, it was with the drawings that the language barrier was better overcome.

4.2.1   Mixtla's oldest household: The interviews in Barrio Cuarto

The following drawings were part of one of the two interviews made in Barrio Cuarto. In this specific interview, the number of participants went beyond 13 individuals (among them two students that helped me recover this material). With a clear aim surrounding this visit, mainly to recover the elements of the oldest household, I decided to use the camera and focus on the interviews. Apart from the interview, Victor (student) decided to help out with the description by drawing the household. Although he started drawing, he suddenly attracted the attention of those interviewed who were persistent on drawing something themselves. Even if Victor's interests were on the measurements and the shapes of the household as seen in figure 4.36, the participants started paying attention to what he was doing and gave him facts regarding the organisation of the structure in itself. He managed to get consensus and finalised his sketch. Even though Victor spoke fluent Nahuatl, drawing the household brought together the people that did not understand Spanish and the ones that do not understand Nahuatl (me). In other words, the drawing found the way in our conversation to facilitate the interviews.

Accordingly, Victor started drawing what people were describing, giving, therefore, central attention to the smoky kitchen. Because, for Victor and myself, the measurements and the shapes were significant. He included the measurements even if participants were more interested in positioning actions rather than the structure in itself. As a result, Victor's half drawing (figure 4.36) that focuses on the shape and measurements end up emphasising the type of household that we were visiting. Not being the case with figure 4.37 and figure 4.38 were attention is put to the characters that inhabit the household along with their main activities. Likewise, the use of colours better illustrates what I interpreted as a feeling of relatedness. To be more precise, people engaged with figure 4.37 and figure 4.38 more than they did with 4.36. Both drawings, were made while they accounted how changes in the structure have affected their daily life.

For instance, while drawing the Figure 4.37, women talk about how their grandmothers used to suffer. They referred specifically to the second floor that was built near the roof of the kitchen where they use to keep their grains. To access this second floor, they have a wooden stair that makes this area almost inaccessible, as explained to me by one participant:

> "*The poor woman, on top of all the activities she struggles to reach the maize, many accidents make us think that probably we needed to change this*". Therefore, nowadays in their words: "*we do not build the second floor anymore, we store seeds in a different room [...] The second floor is not used or not even built anymore, because it was very dangerous. In our house, we use to have a little stair to go up, but my mum fell down every*

> *time that she went to pick the seeds, that is why my dad built a little store*
>
> *room aside where he kept the seeds and that is the tradition now, to keep*
>
> *it in another room"(April 25 2015).*
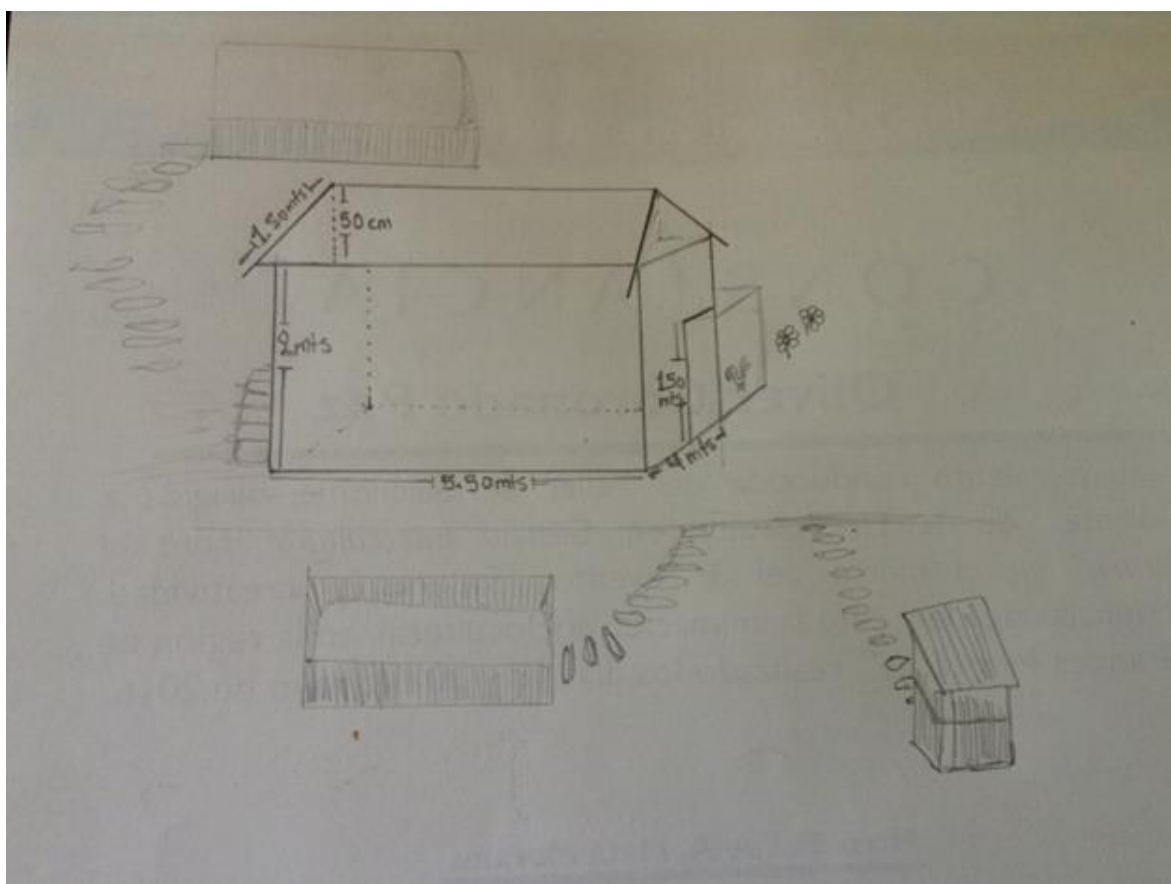
Figure 4.36. Sorting the problems of language, a drawing showing the structure and the measurements. Positioning each room as people told us and as we were able to appreciate was a fundamental task, however, for the rest of the people was not as important as documenting the actions. Drawn by V. Quiahua and Elders

Similarly, when elaborating the drawing with the parts of the smoky kitchen (figure 4.37), getting a consensus regarding the place where the actions were taken, entailed an interesting dialogue, that again put to the forefront the centrality in the activities and the daily life rather than the shape of the kitchen in itself. Nonetheless, a clear connection between activities and material culture is shown in the figure 4.38. In other words, certain material elements help to describe the actions. For instance, the activity of cooking is represented with the *Metate* (grinder stone). Meanwhile the activity of sleeping and relaxing that sometimes takes place inside the smoky kitchen is represented by a man with his hat on (a sign that he is relaxing).

 In this specific drawing, the activities inside the smoky kitchen are also gender represented. While the women are responsible for the food preparations and the kitchen overall, the man uses

the household as a place to relax after working hard in the field. Accordingly, an image that will hardly be captured by a photograph is captured by a drawing that flows with their rhythms and daily life.
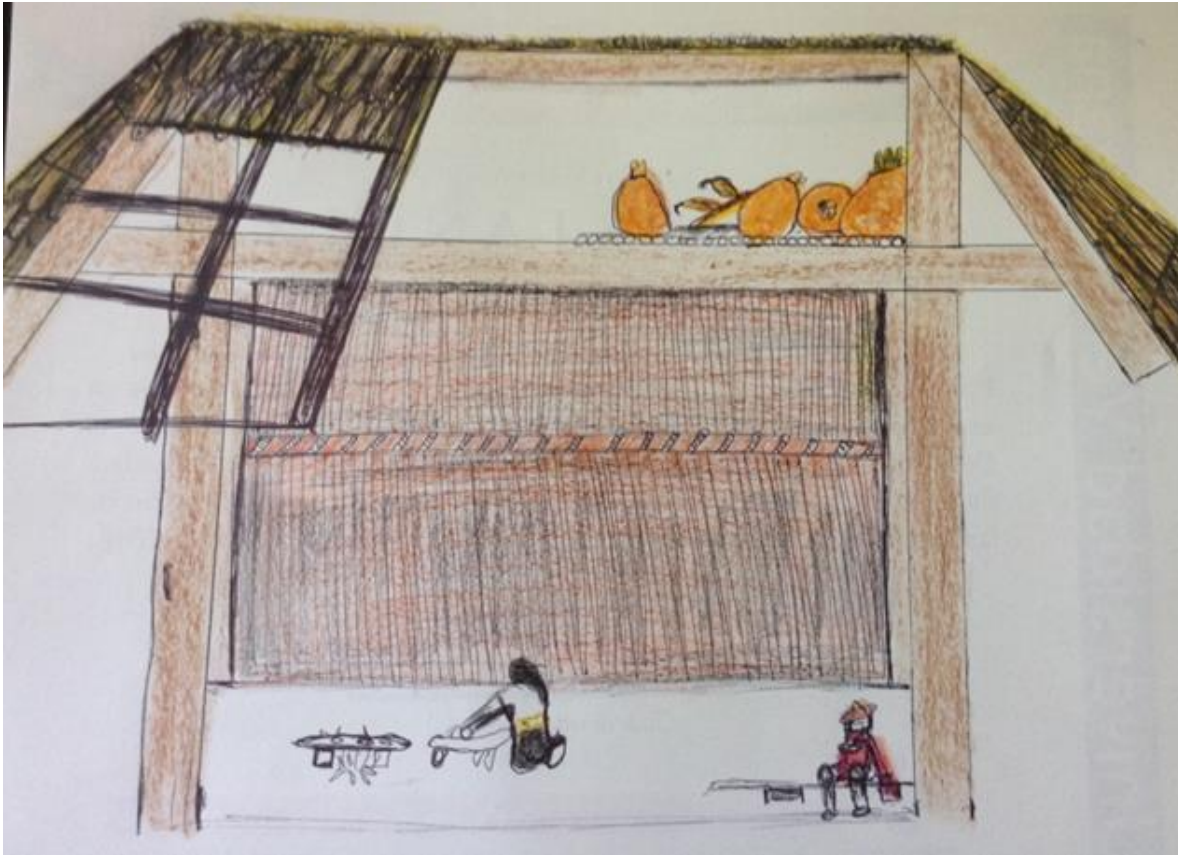
Figure 4.37. Although the kitchen is a central component of the household people were more interested in documenting activities that take place inside it. In this a representation of it from the side, to explain to us that before a second floor was used for storage —mainly seeds to eat-, to access the second floor they used to have a stair. Nowadays in their words: "*this is very dangerous, so we don't build the second floor anymore, we store seeds in a different room*". Drawn by Elders in Barrio Cuarto

As stated above, to reinforce these important connections between people, actions and materiality, in figure 4.38, people are set aside to provide the specificities of the household. In figure 4.37 humans are put into action combining styles, between the shapes and materials, the activities and the representation of being Nahua. Much can be said regarding both drawings. However, it is important to point out that this was an interview specifically to understand the characteristics of an old house. With that regard, these images put to the forefront the open space and lack of individual areas that Nahua houses still preserve. Nonetheless it also helped in

signalling the important relation that Nahuas have with their materials as providers of action and direction.
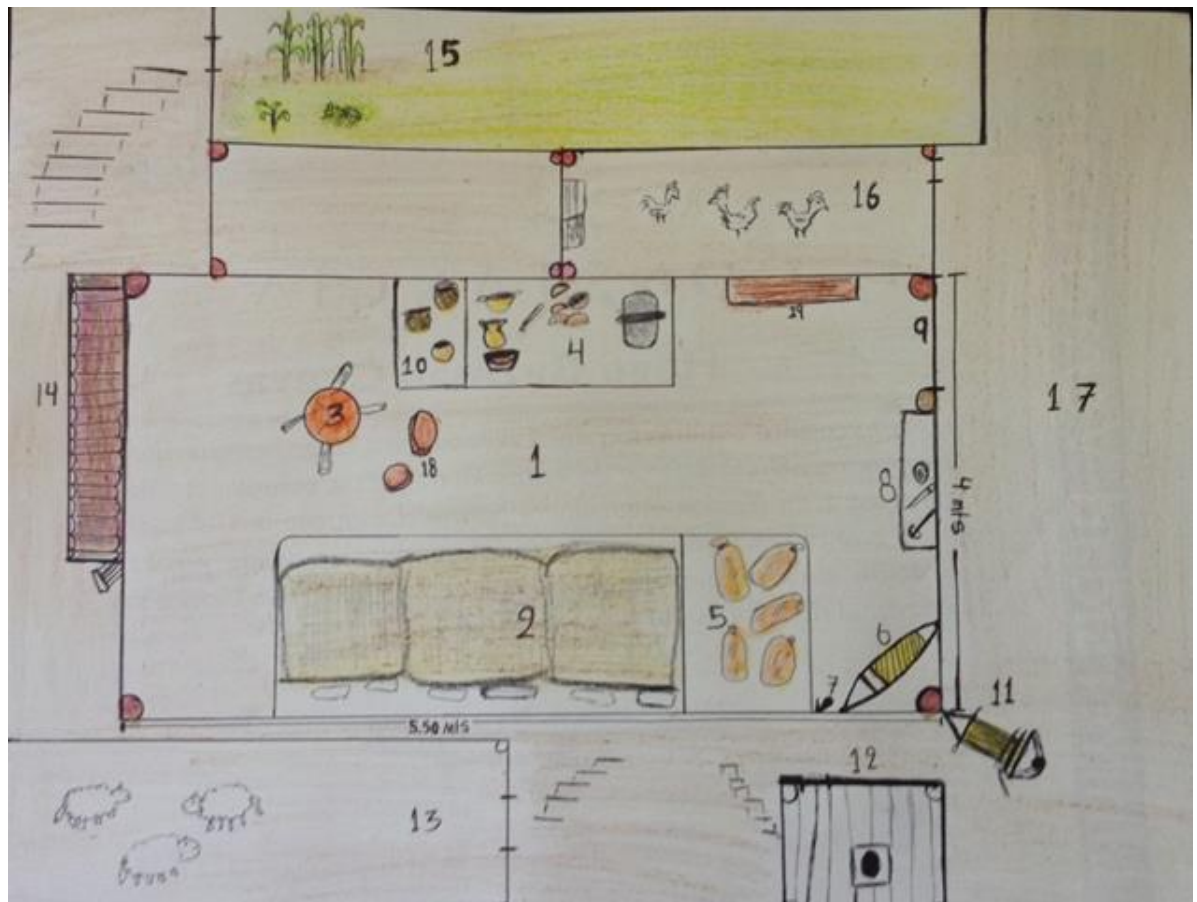
Figure 4.38. And so, they draw the household in what seems to be a consensus. They name each part. However, more than naming, the main attention is given to the activities rather than focusing on shape and size: (1) centre of the house, the heart (this is the place where they used to put the fire when it was in the ground); (2) place to sleep (varies in each household); (3) floor fire; (4) dishes; (5) clothes in sacks; (6) baby hammock; (7) rack; (8) storage for tools; (9) door; (10) straw baskets; (11) the wool hand loom; (12) latrine; (13) sheep yard; (14) Woodstock; (15) vegetable garden; (16) chicken yard; (17) patio; (18) benches; (19) altar. Drawing started by Victor but with the intervention of people that inhabit the house.

4.2.2 Drawing the government rooms

In contrast to the interview carried out in Barrio Cuarto, in Colony Miguel Aleman (where the survey and documentation of the newer rooms took place), people were less interested in sharing details of their new households. In other words, levels of engagement with our questions regarding the materiality of the room were low, compared to the ones shown in Barrio Cuarto.

Even though, according to the interviewees, the new material houses are thought to be better than those with more traditional materials, the drawing of these rooms did not seem to draw any attention (as seen in figure 4.39), no colours were used, and no further interest was taken. As a result, the drawings presented, although again started by Victor (student) did not attract the people's attention as it did in the previous ones presented.
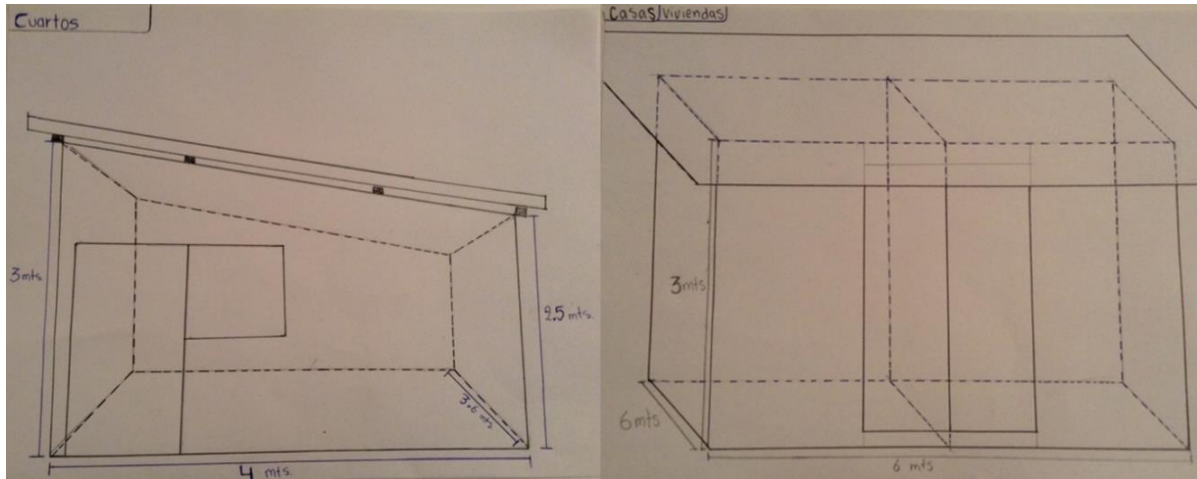
Figure 4.39. The two strutures that are part of the governmental aids to promote a better way of inhabiting the mountain range. This specific drawing was made mainly by V. Quiahua. On the right side the so-called pink rooms and on the left side the CNI household. However, the minimal spaces create a different set of problematics. Although the approach was the interview and the approach was the same as the one used to document the oldests household, the lack of colours and the almost plain image reflects the level of interests regarding the material spaces known as home. In contrast, even if they did keep on pointing out the beneficial parts of having a household with materials, many problematics were pointed out that resulted from this new reconfiguration. Drawing by Victor with the help of people in the community.

Measurements were taken, in order to draw a more accurate representation of the physical space. This activity was accompanied by an interesting interview concerning the formation of the Colony Miguel Aleman. However, respondents centred, during the survey, on the history of displacement and the worries of not having spaces that they used to have, for instance, barnyards, or even enough agricultural land and other problematics that the displacement brought (as seen above in section 4.1.5). They also shared their worries about changing their community and the different type of soil and weather conditions that they had to overcome when they arrived to the new community. Overall, a sense of detachment of their original community

was still affecting their thoughts regarding the new rooms. Though they found positives in particular they kept the idea that in the past they had suffered more, out of the 15 people that attended the interview, around 8 showed their discontentment towards the small rooms that do not allow the preservation of many traditions "*we can do anything inside the room, when we cook it fills with smoke*". It could be said then, that the different materials that surround them create an unstable everyday life to which they are still getting used to.

4.2.3   The map of Tlachicuapa

Tlachicuapa is a community located in the highlands part of the municipality (seen in figure 4.40). Despite the fact that, a couple of visits were made before the elders presented the map in figure 4.41, it was during this visit and because of the map that a rich conversation took place. According to the interviewee this map was the result of an agreement made by the entire people of the community to provide for the number of households and to locate the nearest water supplies installed on 2013. In their map, a number of 49 households can be counted (see figure 4.41) However, according to the national statistics, Tlachicuapa with a total of 148 residents (73 of them are men and 75 women) have just a total of 34 houses which were counted (INEGI 2010). There are therefore a total of 15 houses that do not appear in the national statistics.
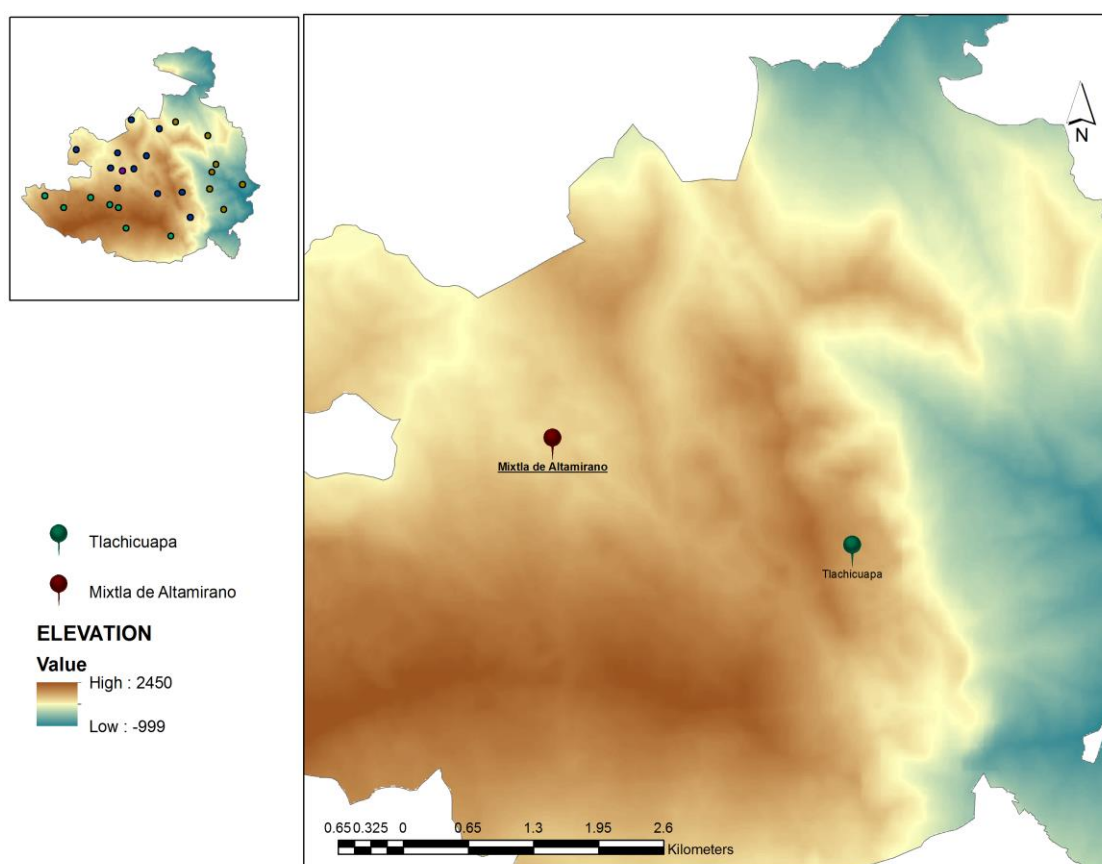
Figure 4.40. Tlachicuapa in the map

Figure 4.41. Map found in the community of Tlachicuapa. A few things in this image become interesting. For instance, there is a different way of representing household according to their materials. Another important detail is the size of the school and the flag compared to the church.

Even more, in the Figure 4.41 each household is presented with a different set of shapes and colours to sign differences. When asked questions about these differences, informants responded that this is the way to sign differences in materials. While the newer houses or the people that have received improved households are represented with a flat roof. The older houses are bigger and are represented with the trapezoid shape. There are few households that have the trapezoid shape and are also smaller, to this they just said, "*size is not really important what it is important is if they received money from the government to fix the houses or not*". To the question regarding the number of households, the elders in the interview told me that when the map was done, people took into consideration just the kitchen to count as a specific household. However, this was not entirely accurate because many families still shared one kitchen and have many rooms "*maybe that is why they are big or small, who knows, it just helps us locate the water supplies and the roads*". The one thing that is certain is that this map is a free interpretation of their own land. Although it is not an accurate representation of the physical land, it does help them acknowledge

the different houses that constitute their community as well as enabling them to locate their water supplies.

4.2.4 The house of Alicia in a drawing

The interview with Alicia has been explored in previous section 4.1.6. Even if this interview was somehow more personal than formal, a relatively equal format was used, not to mention that the material side of the household was put to the forefront. Therefore, a drawing was also suggested as part of the exposition (that resulted in figure 4.42). It is important, however, to point out, that the number of participants in Alicia's household interview were reduced to just some of the inhabitants. Yet, when drawing the household, the mother and sister sat aside and ask her to draw specific details that she had forgotten to place. Therefore, a process of engagement with the drawing happened that resembled the old household interview in Barrio Cuarto. While Alicia was drawing the shapes in the most accurate way possible, the mother insisted on the plants, the windows and the roads. She even took the pencil at some point to draw the plants in front of the house and said, "*these are my medicinal plants, sometimes I have more, but not right now*".

After the intervention of Alicia's mother, Alicia decided to pay special attention to the outside and started including more trees and shapes aside that according to her, represented the corn that they use to plant sometimes near the house. In her own words she explained: "*we just have a few corn plants and it's not really for eating, we used it to preserve the seed*". To finalise the drawing, Alicia's mother asks to inlude the vegetable garden and while being drawn, she added "*it is not green and you cannot see it right now as we just started growing it again after the winter, but we try to keep it growing the whole year aroung*". Finally, the illustration rather than focusing on the inside of the building, seemed to pay extra attention to the openness of the household and the importance of the food production rather than the praying altar that is located in the inside.

Figure 4.42. Household according to Alicia's understanding. Although this interview was more personal, important insights into the household was made. Even more, the drawing was supervised by her mother who insisted on drawing the plants that are outside the house (medicinal ones) and the green garden aside. Drawing by Alicia and her mother

4.3   Houses that are remembered: the materiality of a conversation

Within the last two sections, the materiality of the house was presented in different ways. Moving from the accuracy in which photographs represent reality, all the way into presenting it in a more creative way (mapping it and drawing it). Along this road, an important observation was made, the level of accuracy in presenting materials worked in an inverse way to the level of understanding that I had about the object. The same things happened with the level of engagement that Nahuas showed with their materials. For instance, when drawings were presented, people blurred the soft lines that separate them with their materials. Reinforcing by doing so the action that humans have in building their material world, but also bringing to the forefront the importance that this material world has for human action. While in the first section, the materiality of the household is presented almost entirely as reflecting the physical characteristics that this contains (through photographs), in the second section, with the drawings, the representations help explore their own interpretation of the material world that surrounds

them. Now, in this section, the object of analysis (or materiality) will be entirely presented through ideas and the act of remembrance that creates a closer relationship with materials and a strong sense of home-iness. Through the presentation of remembered description and images from the past, elders blurred completely the lines that divide them from things, as they all part of the past. Putting to the forefront the importance of absences and memory as a way to forge subjects and subjectivities. In other words, the way materials help reinforce personhood through the act of remembrance.

4.3.1 Structure, Shape, Materials and outside components of the households

When describing their household, Elders referred always to their smoky kitchen as the centre. What is more, when recounting the materials that they use to build their houses, they did not considered other spaces that are normally considered as part of the house, such as the toilet (latrine), the place to cure (temazcalli), the place to pray (santocalli) or the vegetable garden, they refer immediately to the materials they used to build their smoky kitchens. This is still not surprising, in Mexican society today, kitchens are the spaces where family gathers and continues being the heart of the house (Collado 2007; Gomez 2005; Fagetti 2002). Therefore, for Nahuas if the smoky kitchen is thought to be the centre and the fire the heart, the soul of the house will then be the smoke they produce when cooking with wood. In the words of Eliazar:

> "*The place of the fire is where the heart of the house is located… look!*
> *It even has a shape of the heart. Besides they say that if your kitchen*
> *doesn't have fire then it means that you don't want to invite people,*
> *or even that you have family problems, there is always the need for*
> *smoke and fire in the kitchen*" (March 2015)

It is within the smoky kitchen that Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, reunite after working outside to eat, pray and rest and they considered them the heart of the complete material expression of the household. According to conversations, the main material used on the roof of the smoky kitchen was grass (see appendix A.1). However, the variety of grass depended greatly on which part of the region the community was located. While in the highlands, Nahuas's communities used to cover the kitchen with local grass that grew naturally, in the lowlands they used the sugar cane grass to build the roofs of their smoky kitchens. 26% of the interviewers recalled using the pre-Hispanic woodcutting technique known as Tejamanil (see figure 4.43). However, this 26% is highly concentrated in the highlands and the middle lands. 30% also remember the use of maguey to cover the kitchen, or the use of the maguey fibre to tie the grass. Again, the vast majority of interviewers that remember the maguey are concentrated in the high and middle lands.

Figure 4.43. A classic example of the pre-Hispanic wood cutting technique called Tejamanil
(https://www.haikudeck.com/vernacular-architecture-art-and-design-presentation-
kXq2yYOekp)

Various materials were registered for the assembly of the walls. While 46% of the interviewees recall the use of wood, 54% refer to the use of thin sticks one against the other and just an 11.5% remember using stones. A general tendency (table Appendix A section A.1.1) reflects the use of wood cladding in the colder areas and thin sticks in the warmer places. Again, people use maguey fibre instead of nails or other materials to put together the pieces of wood or stick. However, it was just in two interviews: Coximalco and Barrio Cuarto where people explained how to obtain and use of the maguey fibre (as see in figure 4.20 as Dona Maria explained how they use the fibre to join the thin sticks together).

Accordingly, conversations regarding the shape of the smoky kitchen were registered in just in 5 communities. In four of which a reference to the Lima house (of which the main characteristic is the roof of grass) as being in a circular/oval shape and with the introduction of other materials a squared shape became prominent. According to interviewees, the gable roof (dos aguas) was introduced when the government brought in the corrugated metal sheet. This because, "*it is easier to fit two corrugated metal sheets in a squared rectangular place*" (interview 2015). This created a slight changed in the shape of the roofs. According to interviews from a hip roof on a rectangular plan, roofs changed to an A-frame house or a gable roof (see figure 4.15.) *"The first houses were built using zacate (grass) and carrizo (different types of canes) that we collected from the higher parts of the mountain, we could also found this zacate near the middle land, but today there is nothing like that, we finished it all, that is when we started using the metal sheets, they are easier to put"*(Axoxohuilco, March 26, 2015).

In some communities, they mention the use of maguey and maguey fibres to build the houses. Although this material was instantly mentioned, it appeared that the uses varied from community to community. For instance, while in Tlaxcantla (a community in the highlands) they used it as a

roof "*to make the roof we use whatever material we have, like for instance the maguey, we just cut the plant and throw it in the roof for protection* (Tlaxcantla April 17, 2015). In Barrio Cuarto they mentioned that they used the material to produce ropes: "*the most of the cases the maguey we use it to produce rope that help us build the walls of the houses […] we scrap the maguey all the way until obtaining the precious rope that we use to build the house*" (Barrio Cuarto, April 25 2015).

Additionally, when referring to other spaces that were important for the Nahua composition of the house, it is apparent that having land to cultivate was as important as the smoky kitchens. However, when looking at a correlation between place (the house) and space inside the municipality (lowlands, middlelands and highlands), a rather interesting distribution was found. That is to say that while in the highlands houses were composed with greenhouses for medicinal plants, ovens to make lime and places to treat people for illness (*temazcallis*), in the lowlands they have storage for seeds, animals and other activities. This will be presented in greater detail in the section ahead (Section 4.3.3).

4.3.2   Everyday life Materials

When exploring the artefacts, materials or things that surround the everyday life of the Nahuas, absences proved to be essential in the construction of the nahua household in the present. Even more than that, some people during interview told me that the materials that are already extinct passed from generation to generation and were buried in the smoky kitchen to remember their ancestors. Such is the case of the *metlantxontil*. Even if this specific material does not exist in the physical way, or even if elders ignore the exact use of this artefact, they still remember it and make stories that surround it, granting it, by doing so, with a sense of mystery and nostalgia. Furthermore, among the elders, the flavour of the food or the feeling of being at home changed with the introduction of new materials. Whether a real change is produced or not, this process of remembrance still coexists and is reasserted among the newer generations.

Such is the case of the *metate* (grinder stone), an artefact that overcomes time and space among the Nahuas of Mixtla de Altamirano. In 65% of the interviews, people mentioned the importance of this artefact. Moreover, no apparent differences were found among inhabitants in the lowlands or the highlands. More importantly, up to today, people still use it and grant a special flavour to the maize that is ground in this stone "*You can tell when people have grind the maize in the Metate, the tortilla definitely have a different flavour and burns evenly in the fire*" (Barrio Primero 2015) (see figure 4.23 some of the objects shown through interviews).

Another important reference for the Nahuas are the three stones fireplaces. 57% of the interviewers talk about the location of this fireplace in the smoky kitchen. Although the majority recognised the benefits of the *Braseros* (lifted stove) compared to cooking in the floor. The three stones pass from the floor to the lifted stoves and the stories that surround the three stones involve the resemblance with the shape of a human heart. Accordingly, the position of these stones should be in the centre of the kitchen because as explained in interview: "*the fire is located in the centre of the kitchen… This because before our grandmothers used to work on their knees, and the best place to put the fire was in the centre*" (Axoxohuilco, 27 March 2015).

Pots, Jars and other ceramic artefacts for cooking, were also broadly mentioned during interviews. Even if griddles are fundamental for the preparation of the food and they are also ceramic, Jars were mentioned more frequently. This, due to the fact that with these artefacts people transported water to the households "*we used to bring water using a kind of jars that were made by the grandmothers in the highlands mainly… we used to have more than one, so we can store the water*" (Zacatilica, 20 April 2015). But also, because these big jars no longer exist. Lime and pumpkin plates were also mentioned significantly. This is because, lime is essential in the nixtamalization process (cooking the corn with an alkaline solution to remove toxins but also to make the grinding easier). In addition, pumpkin plates, were and still are, where people store their recently baked tortillas "*if you store them in the pumpking plate they preserve for many days and do not get hard… Now a days, few people have them because they are expensive*" (Matlatecoya, 11 March 2015).

Today, although Nahuas still use some of these artefacts, the materials in which they were made are no longer the same. In some cases, the production is no longer local (ceramic mainly) and in some others a different material is introduced (such is the case of plastics, metals and glass). However, during one of the conversations in the highlands a woman told me: "My *mother left me her cazuela (cooking pot), I still used it sometimes, I think that the taste of the food I prepare with it is different, it tastes way better*" (Coximalco, 26 April 2015). Therefore, these materials still coexist and have a special meaning among the people inside some communities.

According to the Elders, the food that they consumed on a daily basis was maize, chili and beans. However, not all the regions were able to produce them. As a result, a one to one material trade shaped the brotherhood that they had. This one to one trade was called '*trueque*' barter in Spanish. It is within this relationship that a broader conception of household started to unfold. This because, according to the elder's accounts, even if they complained of not having anything, they did not reject the idea of having materials that were produced locally. In other words, all the things that were produced in the region (lowlands and highlands) were part of the things that

they have and possessed "*we can walk freely with our cattle and collect wood for our fire anywhere*" (Barrio Segundo April 12, 2015). Accordingly, apart from maize, bean and chilies, people shared, coffee, banana, *quelites* (several kinds of pigweed) wild mushrooms, potatoes, green beans, tomatoes, oranges, mangos, pumpkin, sugar cane products, wild animals that they hunt, domestic animals, eggs, and lard, among other products:

> "*Whatever you collected, or you have, you can change or try to sell it…when someone goes to Orizaba you can also ask if they can bring some extra thing for you… I think we use to have a little bit more solidarity in between us, we helped each other, now a day's young people don't have any respect*" (March-April 2015)

A similar thing happened with the manufacture of clothing and use of medicinal plants. People from different regions exchange their products to complete the cycle of inhabitation in the mountain range. Therefore, they all dress with the same clothes and had the same medicine, but more importantly, even if some of them were not direct manufacturers, the sense of possessing it and recognising that it was there for them, illustrates the equal exchange and free movement among *Tocha* (Mixtla de Altamirano). Whether plants are used for medicinal purposes or decoration, there is no doubt that the collection, cultivation and use of plants is an important part of the Nahua tradition. Flowers are still being cultivated in the highlands of Mixtla and later taken into Zongolica market to be sold. When asking about the uses of flowers, elders refer more to decorative plants than to medicinal plants. However, according to the interviews the collection of plants was mostly coming from the highlands and later expanded to the lowlands.

Subsequently, a closer look into the artefacts that were mentioned during interviews regarding labour outside the household, reinforced the accounts of their specific activities. As expected the headband used to carry things on people's backs (*mekapal or mecapal*) was mentioned the most times. This is not surprising due to the fact that even kids have their own *mekapal*. Therefore, this artefact is not gender or age specific. Accordingly, the Machete was mentioned in 27% of the communities visited. This tool, furthermore, helps illustrate today's idea of rural Mexico. In 19% of the interviews, Nahuas mentioned the hoe, another important artefact to plough the fields. However, the sickle was just mentioned in the highlands when they referred to the way they cut the grass to build the households. And, the same thing happened when referring to the saw to cut trees, that due to weather conditions and tree species, just occurs in the highlands. In contrast, in the lowlands people mentioned a press or mill, when referring to the sugar cane exploitation

4.3.3   The production of Tocha (the use of the landscape)

As stated previously, after processing the accounts of the elders in Mixtla de Altamirano through the databases, a clear open and complex concept of household materialised. In previous times, Elders used to share an almost open space full of smoky kitchens. These smoky kitchens did not represent one house. This because there were other spaces as important as the one used for cooking like the place to harvest or sleep. Even more, one smoky kitchen could belong to more than one family, normally shared with two or three generations of the same family. Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, had equal transit, exploitation of resources and exchange. Although smoky kitchens belong to specific families, they were never closed, and people had free access to them and inside the smoky kitchens all kinds of activities happen, (in their words) "*Itla tzapotzintle sekipatla ke ika tenextli" (translation: "we changed bananas for a small amount of lime")* (Mangotitla 21, April 2015). Through the interviews an interesting way of naming the municipality appeared: *Tocha*. This specific word caught Eliazar's and later my own attention because *Tocha* is the Nahuatl for 'the house of all of us' and it describes the material expression of the idea of home among the Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano (see figure 4.44).

Along the interviews with the elders the material absences (materials that exist in the memory or are no longer used in the same way) proved essential to keep influencing people's experiences and understandings of the everyday life. Therefore, absences become an important source of information that constitute an idealised past and that creates a strong connection between the ideological world and the physical world. In order to understand this transition, in this section I will present the materiality of the household according to the Elders memory, proving that materials transcend through the several accounts that reinforce their collective self. Throughout the conversations, Elders remembered the house as an open space that prioritizes the outside rather than just the smoky kitchen. This specific understanding connects the materiality of the smoky kitchen to the material expression of the whole region they named *Tocha* a Nahuatl word that translates as 'the house of all of us'. Elders don't refer to their particular smoky kitchen, rather they refer to the materials used to build the kitchens -in a plural way-. This imply that the modifications among the traditional kitchens were done almost in a homogenous way within the region.

In short, for the elders in Mixtla the feeling of being at home was not reduced to a specific space inside the municipality. What is more, in their own words "*we were able to use any space in the mountain range to give food to our animals or to pick up wood […] now days that is impossible to do*" (Barrio Primero, 2015). That is to say, they were all owners of the space. Ironically, even if

they express that before they felt content because people respected each other and the traditions (communal parties).
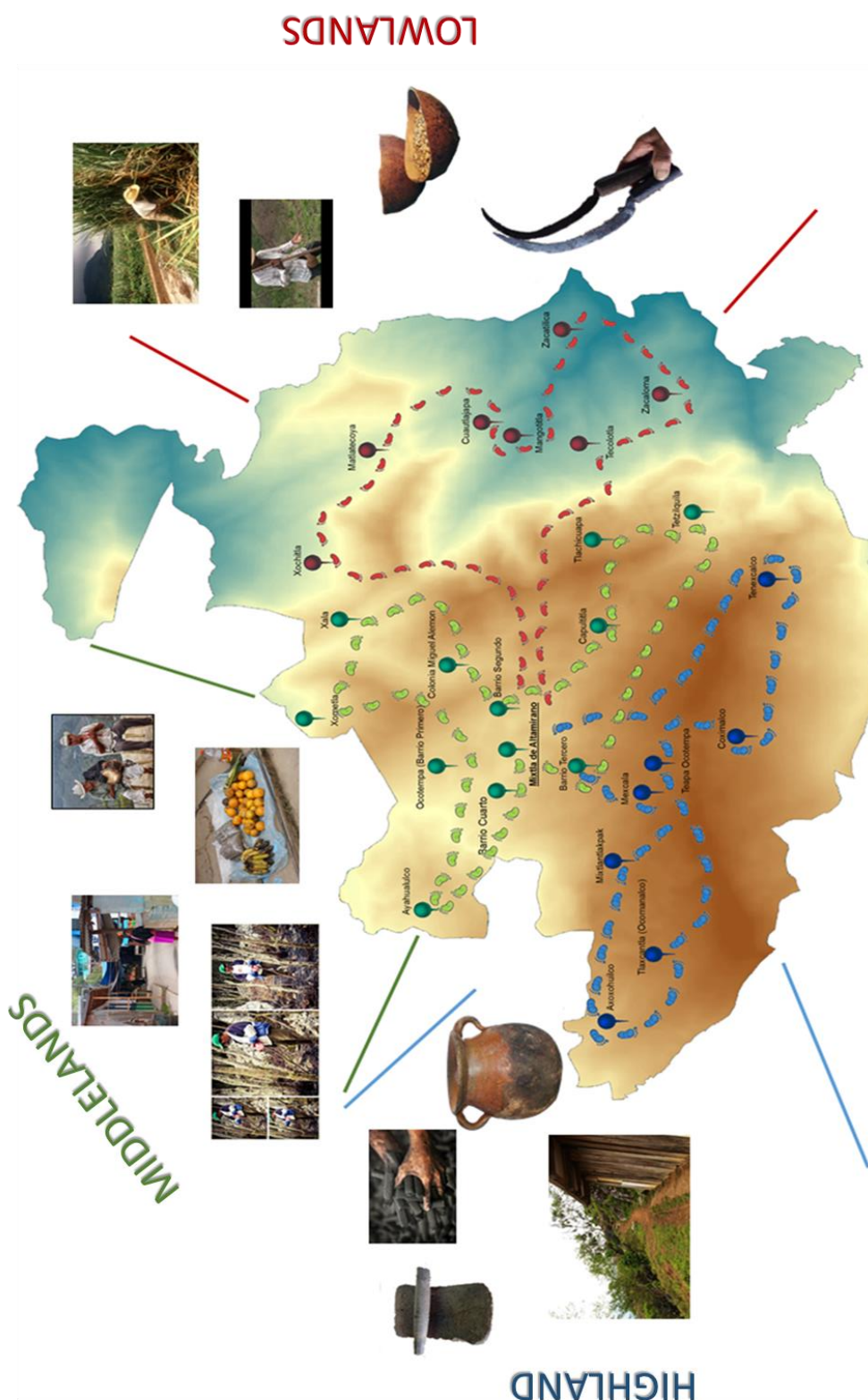
Figure 4.44. Walking through the municipality within the three different natural sub-regions. Through the exchange that they called '*trueque*' materials become active in the construction of their *Nahua-ness* and the production of their home *Tocha*

4.4 Brief Conclusions

All of the materials presented in this chapter, represent in some ways the expressions of a Nahua house. Although, the nature of the data collection varied and can be questioned, the plurality of ways to capture the essence of the houses allowed us to flow in between time and space connecting lowlands with highlands through mainly three generations in Mixtla de Altamirano. It was through this survey that houses although defined as smoky kitchens (that are also used for sleeping and doing other activities) change in composition and also the uses of the rest of the space. While elders used to flow between smoky kitchens and inhabit the complete municipality as if it was the house of all of them, newer generations create closed spaces prioritising the intimate space and the nucleated families.

It could be said that up until today, the material expression of the Nahua households could reflect the collective open understanding which puts to the forefront the outside elements like water, land, animals, and resources in general. The new materials and independent houses shift the movement into closer individual spaces. By doing that, a new competition among Nahuas, that once were materially an equalitarian society, modifies the rhythms of their everyday life.

This chapter therefore, focused in presenting the materiality of the houses that connects people with their environment to which Nahuas had to adapt, but it is through the exchange and cooperation in between regions that materials become active in the construction of their *Nahua-ness* and the production of their home *Tocha*. Furthermore, this materiality can also be transmitted through oral tradition, where the material absences prove to be an important part of their process of remembrance that still influence the way they build their houses today. This chapter then, serves as a catalogue of shapes and materials that, as documented so far, are constantly changing, resulting in diverse ways of defining one same space: the house for the Nahua. Within the next chapters, a more detailed account will shed light on the way that the materialization of the house changed the performativity of the self. In other words, the strong connections between people, landscape, and materials and how they all produce each other along these three observable generations in Mixtla de Altamirano.

Chapter 5   From Smoky Kitchens to Houses: Living in Mixtla de Altamirano

"As time goes by, I grow up and realise that unfortunately as indigenous communities we have lost or forget many things. Many things of our indigenous cosmovision have become obsolete during this new stage, this because, for instance, my grandparents never knew any computers, never knew any technological matter such as the radio produced here in the mountains of Zongolica […] But also, one thing is for sure, people don't lose their culture just because they want to lose it […] I like for instance, speaking in my own language, it is through the language that I feel my ancestors are alive, my traditional clothes captures the wisdom of my grandparents and then I believe that they are not dead, they are still with us sharing their wisdom. Somehow if we forget is like as if we are rejecting our traditions and betraying our ancestors." (Maria Cira, communitarian radio Zongolica, 12 May 2015)

One of the aims of the previous chapter, was to characterise the diverse material expressions of houses that converge in a Nahua municipality today. This diversity helps, on the one hand, to elucidate that current definitions used to explore the house are, in many ways, embedded in a westernised understanding of family structures, well-being, and composition of space (Hurdley 2013; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Cieraad 1999; Joyce and Gillespie 2000). On the other hand, by exploring this diversity, this study will seek to illustrate previous findings that suggest that archaeological research should move beyond the simple Cartesian exploration and understandings of space (where space subordinates to time, as if this was a simple product of it), to a more complex understanding of space that cannot be separated from the action of humans (Kam-Ng et al 2010: 413; Low 2008:25; Watkins 2005; Elden 2004; Lefebvre 1991).

In this chapter, I will explore, therefore, the dialectic relationship between people and materials through the space of a Nahua house. This relationship will be framed in the way spatial practices and materials are continuously modifying each other. Therefore, the house becomes the centre of a series of ongoing interactions and social relations, the product of their own daily process of production (Zhang 2006: 219; Lefebvre 1991: 11). It is, therefore, through the closer exploration of the interrelationships between spatial practices, materials and 'Nahua-ness'[9] that the Nahua landscape will be produced and continually reinvented.

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[9] I mean the construction of the personhood that in the case of the Nahua is collective.

5.1   Houses that reconcile time

When I first arrived in Mixtla de Altamirano to explore ethnic singularities I had a vague understanding of what spatial practices and the production of space meant. Although, I had read Lefebvre's idea that grants centrality to spatial practices, in his own words "[spatial practices allow] *some degree of cohesion [that] guaranteed a level of competence and a specific level of performance." (Lefebvre 1991: 33),* once there, my main focus was the materials that according to the Nahua helped preserve their ethnic identity. In other words, I was looking for historical continuities in their material record. However, my first experiences, led me far from these initial ideas. Rather than encountering patterns and continuities, I felt I was standing in a place full of ambiguities and discontinuities.

In terms of material culture, there was little that connected one generation with the other. A first glimpse of Nahua material culture could not help me account for the traditional historical narrative of the Nahua living in that region of the mountain range. After the first couple of days, I was invited to attend a festivity that the local government promoted as being very traditional. However, not only was this festival in commemoration of a Catholic Saint, but when I interviewed the religious administrator[10] in charge, I found that the main parts of the celebration resembled others I had attended in different parts of Mexico (e.g. the flower arch, the food served, among others, as I will further explore in Chapter 6 section 6.2). Therefore, on the surface this festival had more to do with the Catholic Church practices than divulging a singular event to celebrate 'Nahua-ness' (as my official contacts had suggested to me).

Consequently, during the first couple of weeks I encountered a tangle between traditions (performances transmitted orally from one generation to the other) and new, uncommon practices (happening among younger generations) converging in Mixtla de Altamirano's daily life. For the most part, after several weeks of living in Mixtla, my preliminary ideas were that a generational gap separated Nahuas in Mixtla. My first hypothesis was that, more than ethnic differences inside the region of the mountain range, the diversification of spatial practices among different generations of Nahua have produced a dissonance among people in Mixtla de Altamirano. This erratic situation has been a challenge for ethnographers that have worked previously inside indigenous communities and seek for continuities (Sandstrom 2005: 21).

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[10] Religious administrator (Mayordomo) is part of the religious stewardship (Mayordomia) that characterises the organisation of many communities (mainly indigenous) in Mexico.

Figure 5.1. Woman during catholic festivity remembering her childhood. In the background the flowers used to decorate the local church during the festivity a tradition that is shared by many churches in the State of Veracruz (Ayahualulco 2015)

Moreover, disconnections intensify when new materials are used to reinforce the false narrative that present means better. Such was the case in the first interviews that I had with the local authorities that applauded the rapid changes in the region, after the introduction of the highway. This created a situation that in the words of Lic. Gerardo (in charge of public infrastructure):

> "*clearly changed people's standardized living […] before people behaved somehow apathetic, the only thing that they have in mind was to wake up really early, make tortillas, give food to their husband, arrange the practicalities inside the house and the day was gone, next day the same things and every day the same, a very unimaginative routine life*" (Lic. Gerardo, March 6, 2015 San Andres Mixtla).

An 'unimaginative' life that, nonetheless, makes him also feel appreciative of being Nahua "*we have a lot of traditions that make me feel proud of being Nahua like the carnival Patocotonas we organised, we do it like our ancestors used to do it […] it's a shame that you did not arrive to see this unique festival!*"

Each one of the interviews undertaken in the centre of the municipality pointed out different reasons that make them appreciate being Nahua. Things ranging from specific traditions "*Xochitlalis is a very local tradition that was taught to us by our grandparents*" (Maria Cira, 12

139

May 2015, Zongolica) to the language Nahuatl *"I think that the one thing that make us nahuas is that we speak Nahuatl"* (World Vision representative 4 March 2015). These answers invariably came from an idea of a shared past rather than the present. For instance, even though, for Lic. Gerardo, the Nahua past is 'unimaginative', it is in the legacy of this past that he found the things that make him feel specifically Nahua.

Figure 5.2. Young man standing along the new paths that connect communities. He was accompanied by two other young men and they were listening to modern music (Miguel Aleman 2015)

Figure 5.3. Tricycle on a laminated roof (San Andres, Centro Mixtla 2015)

Moreover, this mesh between past and present was reflected in the way people perceived spaces inside the municipality. While some places recalled past quotidian practices, new materials somehow disconnected one generation from the other. For example, for the elders, the centre of the municipality was referred as the oldest place inhabited: "*the entire municipality was first built there, the very first people came to that part to live in the mountain range and from there people started moving to other communities*"(Collective interview in Barrio Cuarto, April 25 2015). For younger generations, this same space – the centre of the municipality, represents the newest place inside the region, where they hang around with friends, used the computers that have internet access, and play football, as explained to me by some of the football members team while we accompanied them to a tournament in the big city of Orizaba (March 23 2015). For young people with access to a wider world or 'connectivity' the city centre is the modern part of the municipality.

Figure 5.4. In the centre of Mixtla a local market, even though there is a building specifically for the market, it is not big enough. Therefore, women arrive with their merchandise and sell it in the street near the market building (San Andres, 2015)

Overall, these material dissonances reconcile or clash in one specific space: the houses of the Nahua. Therefore, rather than focusing on the materials –things- that reinforce 'Nahua-ness', I decided to focus on the spatial practices that built their own sense of being at home. This was because, even though the rhythms among different generations of Nahua vary profoundly, they all converge in one materially built space called 'house'. Furthermore, these different rhythms both inhabited and imagined these houses, and within these clashes of imagined and lived, is where the material expression of the houses in Mixtla de Altamirano consolidates. In other words, different knowledges and rhythms are condensed in the houses of the Nahua that are built in the abrupt landscape of the Mountain Range.

5.2 Underlining the importance of houses: The conversation with Elders

In the conversations undertaken with Elders throughout the municipality of Mixtla de Altamirano, the word 'house' was not just repeatedly used but proved to be a useful tool to create an instant connection between past and present. Whether I was in the highlands or lowlands, Elders reinforced the centrality of the house within their accounts. The materiality of the houses instantly helped recreate the daily activities surrounding this space and by metaphorically walking through the materiality of it, they reconnected with their past, beliefs and feelings of relatedness. In other words, it was easy to talk through the house. For instance, after the collective conversation in Capultitla, a community located in the middle lands, a woman approached me

and with a soft faltering voice recalled important details of her daily activities taking as a starting point the house '*when I remember my first little house that I had with my Mister I feel nostalgic […] it was very poorly made, but we eat good food not like today'*. She followed this description of her feeling of relatedness, with intimate details of her daily life in the past, that she connected, later on, to her present, and by doing so she explained her own beliefs. She continued the conversation in Spanish, even though it seemed to be hard for her, she wanted me to understand

> *"tortillas are not the same if you don't ground the maize with the Metate, now*
> *girls don't want to do it but the flavour is not the same [..] The fire should*
> *always be alight in your kitchen, people say that when there is smoke coming*
> *out from the kitchen you are welcome to visit"* (Capultitla, March 24 2015).

Figure 5.5. Women after collective interview, both participated actively in the accounts (Capultitla 2015)

Somehow, framing the conversation with the Elders about their daily life activities around their houses, not only eased communication, but also brought to the forefront the important imbrications between material absences and the process of remembrance. In other words, Elders conversations proved essential in demonstrating the way people use materials (whether absent or not) to remember practices and past quotidian. In the highlands of the mountain range, a community called Mexcala, for instance, women were very keen to talk about a material that was already forgotten, the Metlatxontil (a grinder stone that according to the interviewees was smaller than the Metate). Despite the fact that mainly women attended this interview, the conversation between them referred to this object. Moreover, because they were speaking Nahuatl and although I understood some words, it was Eliazar (my interpreter) that later on translated and pointed out the importance of this material for their act of remembrance "*I remember the Metlatxontil grandmothers used, I don't really know what they grind in this stone, but I don't think they use it for Maize, I tried it once and it is very small, maybe they grind coffee or spices* (Mexcala, 25 March 2015).

After this interview, I raised this same material in conversations in the different communities I visited. It was when I referred to the "Metlatxontil" that people quickly connected with their past and the conversation then led to behaviours or beliefs. Furthermore, because of the nature of the interviews (open and collective), Elders were able to chat and satirise their daily life, like they did in Barrio Primero, when conversing about the Metlatxontil. One of the women commented that she was grateful about the changes from Metate to electric grinder '*this makes our work easier*' she said and continued explaining about the way her grandmother had buried the *metlatxontil* in her kitchen. Unexpectedly, other women laughed and with certain scepticism asked her *"so maybe you should do the same with your metate, after all younger people don't want to use it anymore!"* The first lady agreed and said, *"well it makes sense if we think that the metate is the soul of the house, maybe the Metlatxontil was the soul of the house before!"* (Barrio Primero, 26 April 2015).

Figure 5.6. Women remebering the Metlatxontil (Mexcala 2015)

Figure 5.7. Women waiting for authorities to open the door of the communitarian centre where we were going to chat (Cuatlajapa 2015)

Even more, this remembered object was used in the rest of the conversations as the starting point to discussions of other spaces and materials that have also disappeared. For instance, when I interviewed the communitarian radio host, a strong vibrant woman who is a solid believer in the promotion of a united ethnic identity, it was when I mentioned the lost objects, that she instantly transported me with her conversation from a very deep past of migration and settlement in the mountain range, to her grandmother house. Moreover, she remembered the objects that were absent in her own house, but that she felt that were the foundations of the daily activities of Nahuas:

> "I remember how important it was for my grandmother to have the temazcalli
> or this big ceramic pitchers that were in my grandmother kitchen, that was the
> place where she stored the water, she use it to go collect water […]there are
> many things we have just forgotten that make us native people, for instance I
> like to speak my language because I believe that it is through my language that
> the knowledge of my ancestors is transmitted and therefore I can feel that
> somehow they are alive […] people don't lose their culture just because they

want to lose it". (Communitarian Radio Zongolica, Maria Cira Quechulpa, 12
May 2015)

She provided a detailed description of her grandmother's house, the open spaces, and the
importance of the altars or as they name this special space the *Santocalli*. She even recalled
personal details like the way her grandmother dressed and combed her hair. Within such a rich
detailed conversation, she could not help making comparisons with her own ways of living as a
proud Nahua today, using some of the materials she remembered that her grandmother used,
and that she still has in her kitchen

> *"in my kitchen I still have the metate, metlalpile and tecajete because there*
> *are things that are very traditional and even though I have my blender, people*
> *still need them to prepare mole and other typical dishes".*

Rather than focusing on asking about traditions, fictional stories, beliefs and superstitions,
approaching these topics through the materiality of the house and therefore their daily life, seemed
to be a more comfortable arena that led to other stories. For instance, when I visited the community
of Ayahualulco, the conversation had led us to talk about the materials that were used to build a
house. One of the interviewees, interrupted the conversation and told the audience that they were
forgetting the most important materials. He was talking about the offerings to mother earth as a
symbol of permission and respect. People, nodded assent, and another woman added with a wince
"*he is right. If you don't give something you can suffer illness or members of the family could get sick,
like my uncle that died just because he was enchanted*" (Ayahualulco 19 March 2015).

Together these conversations helped me picture their history based on the importance of
material absences that still modified and constructed the collective self that Nahuas in Mixtla de
Altamirano form. They do so, through the act of remembrance that helped move the information
from one generation to the other. This practice, known as oral tradition is, unfortunately, almost
lost. Even so, it is a well-known fact that oral tradition helps strengthen the Nahua identity. It is
through these acts of remembrance that the details of an already gone everyday life move from
one generation to the next. A good example of the above comes from the conversations with the
Elders, in which an interconnected Mixtla de Altamirano emerged. Although, this
interconnectivity just survives in the imagination of the younger generations, the very act of
remembering it, somehow reinforced the collective soul that Nahuas have. Although spatial
practices and the everyday life have changed, the oral tradition of one big household for all the
people in Mixtla still influences the new spatial practices and the everyday life of Mixtla de
Altamirano.

An epitome of the above was given by the daily practices in Eliazar's house, in which three generations converge. Each generation is living and imagining this interconnectivity between Mixtla de Altamirano's inhabitants in different ways. Although the idea of one big house for all the people in Mixtla has long disappeared, the way they remember it connects them with the neighbouring communities. However, the understanding of it varied from one generation to the other. As a result, Veronica (Eliazar's daughter) cannot really picture an everyday life that involves a free movement inside the municipality creating a slow disconnection between communities, families and people. As I will explore in the next section.

Figure 5.8. Girls going to collect water. Today they use plastic buckets rather than ceramic pitchers that they used in the past according to the Elders accounts (Walking from Zacatilica to Tecolotla in the Lowlands 2015)

Figure 5.9. Woman in Xometla a community in the middle lands, *"we collect the water from a spring that is located up in the mountain […] we planted and collected tobacco and then coffee […] for the houses we used the pieces of the sugar cane that we have to collect in the lowlands"* (Xometla 2015)

5.3 Living, cooking, and walking with Eliazar

Eliazar's personal knowledge and everyday life, offered depth and further texture to the Elder's accounts. She not only provided me with the security of having food, company and translation, but we also established a friendship through the conversations that we had while walking, washing dishes, going for water, preparing coffee and all the other minutiae of everyday life that we did together. We touched on broad topics such as the practices that we both have, traditions here and there, but more importantly we talked about changes inside her community. Encouraged by the conversations with the Elders, she not only expanded their stories with her own thoughts and experiences, but also introduced me to her own understanding of family and collective work. That is to say, she shared the rhythms of her entire household with me.

Even though her inputs during the interviews was crucial, making me another member of her house (smoky kitchen) was fundamental to understanding the composition of her Nahua household (material exploration in Chapter 4 section 4.1.1). For instance, it was with her, that I understood the way land was and still is inherited, the different social roles inside the household, the compromises you establish with your blood family, especially with the vulnerable groups

(Children and Elders). But more importantly, she taught me how the sense of community is preserved in the way ritual kinship works, as a way to create ties that go beyond the blood relations but are as important as having the same blood (Marriages, Godfatherhood and Stewardship). All the above mentions are key to understanding the houses more like a compound of them that resulted in one big household. To put it in other words, these big households work through the cooperation of the connected houses inside. It was then, through Eliazar's every day that I strengthened my ethnographic enquiry to more fully understand the material expression of the houses inside Mixtla de Altamirano landscape. Therefore, exploring the human composition of Eliazar's household helped in connecting the past (The elders' accounts) with the newer generations I observed.

Alongside this connection, by defining the household as a compound of interconnected houses, a resemblance can be made to explore house as an institution (Levi-Strauss 1983: 184; Gillespie 2000: 1-3). Although traditionally, the house institution was described as being held by kinship, within Mesoamerican indigenous communities this kinship goes beyond blood relations (Robichaux 2005: 32). Therefore, in Mixtla de Altamirano, the house as an institution is built upon ritual and political relations as it has been described for other indigenous communities (Peter and Coy 1974; Ravicz 1967; Thompson 1971; Gudeman 1975; Nutini and Bell 1989) This is because, it is through those alliances that families became bigger, united and connected as I will explore in the next sections.

5.3.1   The first meeting with Eliazar

When I first met Eliazar, she gave me the impression of being a bashful, reserved kind of women. I met her because I found out that weavers (all women) had a collective inside the community and I became interested in learning the way they organised. Local authorities helped me locate these women and called them for an interview. Eliazar was the only one that arrived that day and although I learned little about the collective organisation, I got to meet Eliazar. During the interview in front of the authorities she hardly spoke and did not look at me. Nonetheless, at the end of the interview she approached me and asked if I wanted to see her work in her house. Even though the invitation seemed unexpected, this was the kind of relationship that I wanted to establish, something close and intimate apart from the local authorities, therefore, I accepted the invitation. The minute that Eliazar arrived at her house, she changed, as if being in her own space produced a sense of security. Eliazar came to life and from that moment on, she had an opinion for every single thing we encountered together.

The first time that I went to her house, my main focus was the spatial dimensions and the materials used to build it. This was the very first house I had been invited into. Once there, I had to close my eyes until they were accustomed to the smoke that filled the inside of the building. Even though the building had ventilation, it was hard to get used to the smoke especially when she started the fire. Once acclimatised, the first things that caught my attention were the materials that built the walls, the dimensions of the room, the door, the floor, the lifted stove, the pots and pans materials and the way they were hanging from the walls. It could be said then, that my attention was driven to the physical world that built the place in general. I got distracted by her quick moves inside her house. After the stove was lighted, she suddenly disappeared for some minutes and returned with a big plastic bag full of her weaving materials, but before presenting them to me, she grabbed one of her ceramic pots, filled it up with water and put it on the fire.

Figure 5.10. Some materials inside Eliazar's kitchen. The fire was in the lifted stove but preserves the three stones that according to Eliazar resembles the shape of a heart. These three stones were used also when people did not have the lifted stoves. The 'metate' (lower right) that according to the interviews could be derived from the extinct 'Metlatxontil'. The 'metate', is one of the most important materials inside the house, Eliazar still uses her 'metate' to grind the maize and prepare the dough to make the 'tortillas' (upper left) in the 'comal' (lower left). Previous 'comales' were made with clay.

Chapter 5

Once the water was in the fire, she started telling me all about the weaving materials:

"Look at this one, I made it long ago, I don't have any money to buy wool anymore, besides I take a lot of time and it doesn't produce money so easily [...] the weaver collective is very effective and I like the fact that we are all women, but is hard because I don't have a store or anything else to get money from and invest in the wool [...] I can't have sheep's because my house is really small and we don't have space so I need to buy the wool [...] I am good at collecting the plants that we use for dying the clothes though, the yellow colour is the easiest to make, red, pink and grey we use plants, we can even have some purple too, but now they use other colours that are not natural [...] you collect the plants in specific months and then you can dry it so you can use it later on [...] we know that in some places they also use some animals that produce colours but here in Mixtla we mainly use plants... I have to wait, until I have money from selling my materials to weave some more, not like the other women that have extra money and then they can invest in the materials" (March 2015).

That day I not just learned about weaving but while listening, I helped Eliazar clean the maize, wash it and later put it in the fire with lime -a process called *'nixtamalization'-* (see figure 5.11). After the tasks were finished, she awarded my knowledge with a warm coffee. It was also during that conversation that we decided to help each other, me with her daily activities and she by becoming my translator in the interviews with the Elders. It was in doing the everyday tasks in Eliazar's house that materials became meaningful.

Another, useful way of illustrating the above, happened the first time we all sat in the table, hungry and waiting to receive food. Eliazar, was obviously in charge of the food distribution, and so I saw her dividing the food among the people at the table. Even though, the kitchen was full of children, it was as if they knew exactly when they were going to receive their share. In a very organised way, she started serving all of us. The first one to be served was my partner and secondly me. This was because we were guests. Nevertheless, I saw her saving the best piece of meat for the youngest of her children. After she saw us eating, she asked her aunt if she wanted to eat and gave her a good plate of food especially made for her needs. Yet, the aunt (Dona Elo) never sat at the table, she ate close to the fire, a spot that she used almost all the time due to her bone problems. When it was time to serve the children, the first ones to eat were the smaller ones that happened to be male, and then the older ones that were two females. At the end, she divided the food and made sure she served all the children, including the children that were not part of her house but lived in the same household. Children that did not belong to her house, did

not ask for food, they waited until they were served (in this case by Eliazar). That very first time, we did not share the table with her husband nor the oldest of her children, a sixteen year old young adult.

Figure 5.11. Cleaning the maize to wash it and put it in the fire with lime a process called '*nixtamalizacion*'

Figure 5.12. One of the many children that inhabit the household. Although, her mother lives in the same household, I met her twice. However, she was always playing and eating with Eliazar's children.

This first portrait of food distribution would have failed in explaining anything if I hadn't returned to eat with the family every day for the rest of my stay. Even though, within this repartition of goods, more complicated things may be evident, such as, prestige, equality, rituality, among other observations. I did not fully understand this first event. But more importantly, I was curious about the reasons why the husband and the sixteen-year-old young adult did not share the table with us. I had to wait until this act became part of my quotidian to understand that each person inside the community has a specific role that they respect in order for the household to work, and that every enactment is repeated in a ceremonial way over and over until it became a normalised activity. Having specific roles, were in this case, the reasons why the husband and the sixteen year old son did not share the table with us. This is because, traditionally, men worked in the field. Therefore the hours of food varied from the rest of the family. Even though field work is no longer something they do, the mature men in the house still eat at different times, and are not used to sharing the table with other members of the family. They both (Eliazar's husband and son) shared the table with just the invites, under specific circumstances, such as parties or special events.

Figure 5.13. The house of Eliazar was always full of smoke. She kept on saying that this is the way a house should always be: "*a house without smoke is not a house is a room […] my mother told me that the heart of the household is the three stones of the fire, look at it! The three stones look like a real heart, can you see it?*" (March 2015)

In addition, once I became entirely part of this portrait, Eliazar stopped serving me first. What is more, we waited until everyone had eaten, and only then, ate and later on had coffee and a chat, while preparing for something else. And just like that I realised I had stopped paying attention to the materials to engage with the symbolic and ceremonial aspects that humans give them

> "*the first ones to be served are the men that have to go worked in the field, that was the tradition [la costumbre] even though my husband do not go to the field anymore, he is used to eat in a different time to the rest of the family […] besides men need to be strong because they spend a lot of time doing hard work […] my girls when they are on their period receive also a special treatment and need an extra food, but I do take care of my children, I want them healthy and strong, even the children of my sister in-law, we all help each other around here, so I prefer to give food to the children than to eat myself. Fortunately there is food for everyone*" (Eliazar, March 2015).

5.3.2 Three knowledges, three generations: Grandmother, mother and daughter

Another invaluable contribution of living with Eliazar was given by the generational skirmish that cohabiting the house brought. As such, I got the opportunity, not just to be surrounded by three dissimilar spatial practices, but to listen to their particular accounts that produced one household. Between Eliazar's older daughter aged fourteen (Veronica), Eliazar aged thirty-seven, and her aunt aged unknown (Dona Elo), was a different way of using, imagining and understanding one same physical space called house. This had as a consequence dissimilar way of relating to the materiality that makes such a space. But more importantly, within these different generational rhythms a gradual change that ended up redefining the materiality of the house. Each one of the three women that lived in the house produced their own specific sense of 'hominess' based on previous experiences, but also the physical world that surrounded them. It is specifically in the 'meaning-making' practices (the process of how people make sense of daily life events) that past experiences helped shape the present and the future (Bourdieu 1977; Douglas 1993: 268). In this specific case, even though, this was without a doubt the house that Eliazar had produced for her and her children, she built it using previous experiences of building houses (by watching her mother and listening to her grandmother), but also she let the newer generation produce her space (the house) introducing new rhythms such as her girls new schedules like attending school.

It could be said then, that each generation's way of imagining the house slashes transversely the everyday life that produced the space to finally re-produce it in different ways. That is to say, to change them, as I could appreciate in the very understanding of the house that was presented by Veronica (the daughter): "*I like my house, just to smell the fire burning make me feel protected".* Despite the fact that she mentioned the burning fire as a way to feel at home, the one thing that she was attracted to, when talking about the new house, was the intimacy that she will gain by having her own space. Both intimacy and owning a space does not really make any sense for Dona Elo. Nevertheless, in the words of Veronica: "*I am so happy that with the new house I will have my own room, in the new house I will have a room that I will share just with my sister, but it will be our room, we want to paint it with a pink colour".* This new everyday life in which Veronica gains ownership and intimacy, somehow resulted in a different way to appreciate the house and therefore a different future in which collective practices are long gone: *"I don't want to get married but if I do I want to have a house with rooms just like the new one we will get, but I want to keep on studying and I want to go out from Mixtla to study"* (Veronica, March 2015).

Figure 5.14. The daughter of Eliazar named Veronica: "*Different to my mom I have a place to take a shower for example, I wash my clothes in the public tank I don't have to go to the river, and more importantly I go to school I wish one day I could become a nurse, mom wakes up at 3 am. I wake up at 7 am. I still have to take care of my brothers and sisters when mom is not here, but I have other responsibilities such as school*" (March 2015)

When discussing about the peculiarities of the house, Veronica (Eliazar daughter) explained to me that new objects gave her the impression that her chores became easier. Somehow, these new objects that still coexist with the older ones make her feel that she had more time in her hands *"I saw how my mom had to do more manual work. We have less responsibilities, for once I don't*

have to grind the maize with the 'metate', I use the electric grinder, and that is a relief!" (Veronica, 8 March 2015). Every time she referred to new ways (changes), in the conversation I had with her, she mentional technological improvements "*for instance, now I don't have to pick up wood, we just have to buy it, or we don't have to collect plants from the mountain, we go to the store and buy things, water is closer so when I go wash clothes I don't need to walk […] life is easier*" (Veronica, 8 March 2015). However, when I ask her about her preferences in food, she answered me: "*the best way of doing the tortilla, is as my mom make them, she still uses the 'metate' and I like the flavour […] I know how to do them like that, but it takes a lot of time*" (Veronica, 8 March 2015). It could be said then that older objects although important and meaningful, are no longer being used in her everyday life. However, these older objects grant their daily life with a special sense of being home.

The three women that cohabitate the house agreed that one of the major changes that have definitely modified their life is the closer access to water "*before we use to walk two hours carrying clothes to wash them once a week and the problem was not reaching the river, it was coming up to the house with wet clothes for two hours […] we carried the clothes with the 'mekapalli'* (headband used to transport heavy objects)" (Dona Elo, 8 March 2015). For Veronica, having access to water closer to her house means that: "*I can take a shower in my house*" (Veronica, 8 March 2015). It could be said then, that the material changes end up modifying the patterns that produce the space of the house in Mixtla de Altamirano. Now people in Mixtla de Altamirano have time to work outside the community and produce money rather than focusing in the inside relationships. Moreover, according to Eliazar lifestyle changes are not just limited to a gender or an age:

> "*Children now can play more. Before they have to take care of their little
> brothers and sisters, they have to help more on the house activities, now they
> have other responsibilities that we did not have, like studying […] I remember
> when I was a child I got married and came to my mother-in-law my husband
> went to Mexico City to work and so I had to help her, we wake up at three in
> the morning, pick up wood while I take the animals to eat in the mountain,
> wash the clothes in the river […] Grind the maize in the metate, fortunately in
> the house I shared the work with my sisters-in-law, so work was less […] Now
> all my children go to school […]I follow what my mother- in–law did in her
> household. She didn't make any distinction between boys and girls, in my house
> all my children have to help me in the house responsibilities, this because we
> don't have land to produce so they all have to work inside the house. My big*

boy uses to take care of their sisters and go with me to wash clothes, but I think their life has changed a lot from mine" (Eliazar, 8 March 2015).

Figure 5.15. Eliazar's account was full of details: *"my dad never let me go to school, he used to said that it was not going to be useful […] with my kids I had never make a difference between female or male, my oldest boy used to take*

care of their brothers and sisters when I needed to go do other activities,
he has always been very good with me, he helps me to prepare tortillas
and to carry wood, he always protects his sisters too, he knows how to do
house work" (Eliazar March 2015)

The way information was presented shifted when conversing with Eliazar's aunt (Dona Elo). Even though this dialogue took place before the rest of the talks with Elders in other communities, talking to Dona Elo was a noteworthy practice to comprehend the almost magical way in which Elders represent their past within their conversations. Dona Elo did not speak Spanish but understood what I was asking and used her hands and body to make sure that I followed her conversation. She started the conversation using the same pattern that later on I would recognise along the other dialogues established. I mean, she referred to the scarcity, the lack of things and the magical events "*Before we did not have anything, with some plants we used to make our skirts or we used the skin of some wild animals to cover ourselves [...] we have to be careful with the animals, because it can be somebody's nahual[11], so it is important to ask permission*". Through her accounts and her facial expressions, you could tell that she had a tough life "*my man used to hit me, but just when he was drunk [...] we were never married, he just stole me and then treated me badly*" (Dona Elo, 8 of March 2015). Nonetheless, when I ask about her owned space she described the spatial practices more than the physical space per se. She started by telling me that the location of her house resulted in extra work: "*my house was upper in the mountain, we had to walk down like two hours all the way to the river to get water and wash our clothes, we carried wood every time that we went out of the house*"

When later on I asked about the house composition Dona Elo again referred to the everyday life that involves movement inside the whole municipality to look for provisions and although she did not refer to the relationship established with people, whenever she refered to someone she called them brother or sister:

> "*the stove was in the floor and we used to grind maize with 'metate', we did*
> *not have enough maize so we had to be creative, we use maize, beans or*
> *banana to complete the dough to make the tortillas, we bring the bananas*
> *from 'rancho' (lowlands), we also grind chilli, and look for wild herbs*
> *'quelites', mushrooms upper in the mountain [...] sometimes I needed money*
> *so I used to walk all the way to 'rancho' (lowlands) to cut some coffee and*
> *then they pay for each kilo you cut*"

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[11] Among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano a Nahual referred to the animal that takes care or associates to the human anima. Each people in the community has a Nahual and has to take care of it through prayers or using traditional medicine (with plants).

Although Dona Elo focused on the spatial practices, the mysticism in which Elders built their space accompanied her conversation when referring to her everyday life. This mysticism, results from combining oral traditions and the unknown, as I understood it from the account Dona Elo gave me:

> *"The most important thing to remember is that you have to ask permission*
> *to the land to build a house […] we feed the land with what we have, we*
> *put some 'mole' (special food), coffee, alcoholic drink, if you have chicken*
> *you will give chicken […] if you don't do it, then you will not have good luck*
> *and your little chickens and turkeys could die"* (Dona Elo, 8 March 2015)

With the several intimate conversations that I had with the members that inhabited Eliazar's house, the Nahua definition of house and domestic space that Elders describe me flawlessly, became alive. This was because, even though, the Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano, were describing the concept of the house in two different ways. One, as the space where they cooked and slept, and the second definition refered to the openness that include several spaces like the centre of the municipality or the land where they cultivate and the altar's where they pray to god and the multiple saints. It was just after living the daily life with Eliazar and listening carefully to her own points of view that I realised that houses are conceived and lived as these open spaces that are shared by members of a family that, furthermore are not neceseraly blood related.

For instance, in Eliazar's case, the family that she shares all the space with, are not blood related. This is because she lives sharing the big kitchen with her mother-in-law that according to her own account is like a mother to her. Therefore, her house (or smoky kitchen) is just part of the entire household that is integrated by several smoky kitchens and rooms associated to one main big smoky kitchen:

> *"I don't know where I would be, if it wasn't for my father and mother in-law,*
> *they gave us this piece of land where I can finally have my own kitchen, it*
> *hasn't been easy, at the beginning I have to show them that I was a hard*
> *worker woman, I have had lots of problems with my husband, but at the end*
> *my mother in-law have always defended me and even told me once that if my*
> *husband wanted to leave me for another women I will stay in this household,*
> *because I have earned my place and my own house"*

Figure 5.16. The aunt of Eliazar (Dona Elo) explained to me that se was left alone. Her husband abused her and left her after all her kids died. "*Fortunately I have Eliazar in my life, she took care of me when I was left alone […] I see how young adults now treat us with disrespect, as if they don't understand that we were the ones that build this place and that we still know how to survive in the mountains*" (March 2015)

Even when she referred to new materials to build the house, Eliazar kept referring to the important connections with the complete household and more importantly the physical openness that she knows from a continuous practice:

> "*new houses are very nice I will use it to sleep imagine we are not going to be cold in the winter and then I can make my kitchen bigger I will use the room where we are sleeping at the moment to build my new smoky kitchen, I have seen the new houses and supposedly they come with kitchen, but tell me, do you really think I could cook with fire in that close room?*" (Eliazar, March 2015)

The result of this participant-observation conducted as a member of Eliazar's house, was mainly in the way I fully understood the Elders descriptions. I could finally colour in the spotless accounts of an open house and the interconnectivity established among them in the whole municipality. Although this openness is being slowly modified, it is still there. That is to say, there is a slow

movement of reconfiguration from an open understanding of the space full of connected smoky kitchens to one that had not yet become a place with disconnected households. More importantly, it is because of the survival of this spatial connectivity and the collective practices (*tequio* or *faena* and the reciprocity) that houses in Mixtla de Altamirano can be explored as an institution (Good 2005: 276).

Eleder's accounts use the physical characteristics of the house to focus on the deeper social relationships that these houses had. In other words, the houses became a symbol. Understood as such, houses have received a fair amount of attention (see Arnauld et.al 2012; Manzanilla 2012; Robichaux 1997; Monaghan 1996; Mulhare 1996; Chase and Chase 1996; Riviere 1995; McKinnon 1991, 1995; Errington 1987; Waterson 1988). Despite the fact that the focus was in the house as a social institution and that little attention has been given to understanding the spatial dimension of such an institution and the changes in materials over time. The study of houses as an institution has put to the forefront the importance of the physicality of the house, disregarding by doing so, the traditional lineage theory (Chance 2000:485). Houses are then more complex than just a space that is produced by family members. Houses are built by all the people that cohabit a certain space.

5.4 *Tocha* 'the house of all of us': one big interconnected household

> *"We used to call it Tocha it means the house of all of us, we don't call it like that anymore, that was just our grandparents, I believe they name it like that because the cemetery, and you know, at the end we all are going to live there" (Tlachicuapa 15, April 2015)*

> *"I remember my grandmother referred to Mixtla as Tocha and I think is because we all have a house there…we used to be able to go down and pick wood and fruit from Rancho and pick up quelites" (Mixtlantlakpak 28, April 2015)*

> *"We call it like that because it is the centre, our Altepetl the first community we all live in and then we spread through the whole municipality but this is our first home so it is our house, it could be said that we were born there and we will all go die there, we will be all together there" (Axoxohuilco 24, March 2014)*

Among Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano, the entire municipality was imagined as one big household. From their accounts, I could picture the interconnections between three different

natural regions. Even though, in the first couple of interviews people referred to these regions as radically dissimilar especially when referring to people's behaviour, like the Secretary of communication described to me with a youthful voice "*The municipality is divided in three different parts […] the low part and the middle part speak some spanish but upper in the mountain no one speaks spanish and they don't really work as a team, they don't cooperate a lot with the politics of the municipality, let's say that they are kind of more difficult*" (March 2015). I decided to explore in depth these three different natural regions. After all, these different natural regions could create different landscapes. Therefore, it was a perfect opportunity to observe one same ethnic group (the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano) inhabiting totally different natural environments (see figure 4.17).

Despite the fact that my starting point was the obvious separation between the natural regions. During the conversations with the Elders, I heard quite the opposite. Based on the accounts collected from the seven communities in the Highlands (Mixtlantlakpak, Axoxohuilco, Mexcala, Tlaxcantla, Teapa-Ocotempa, Tenexcalco and Coximalco), twelve in the middle lands (Ayahualulco, Xometla, Xala, Tlachicuapa, Barrio Tercero, Barrio Primero, Colonia Miguel Aleman, Capultitla, Tetzilquila, Barrio Cuarto, Barrio Segundo and San Andres Mixtla) and seven in the Lowlands (Sacaloma, Xochitla, Zacatilica, Tecolotla, Mangotitla, Matlatecoya and Cuautlajapa) connections and movement along the entire region were described. In other words, somehow the *Tocha* 'the house of all of us' as they remembered they called the centre of Mixtla, started to be revealed.

For instance, when visiting Zacatilica, a community located in the lowlands, one of the elders explained that they use the upper parts of the mountain to search for wooden sticks to make their house "*we used to wander up in the mountain in search for Zacate to build our houses, then we search for sticks and like that […] sometimes people use the garbage of the sugar cane to build the roofs and so they come to here*" (Zacatilica, April 20 2015). Contrary to what elders accounted in Xala a community located in the middle lands, where they explained that they used to walk to "rancho" word used to referred to the lowlands to find food *"we take four to five days to build the houses, and then it is a matter of surviving, we bring food from rancho and maybe if we are lucky we have some animals to take care of* (Xala, March 21 2015). On the other hand, the stories of the communities in the highlands denoted more than in other places a critique regarding the disconnection with other communities in the present. When I visited Tlaxcantla they converse about the smoky kitchen and the way these have changed "*we don't use zacate anymore because there is none, I like better the zacate because if it is built properly it last a lot of time and then you don't hear the rain so strong*" (Tlaxcantla, 17 April) . Eventually, in Matlatecoya, one of the elders told me that *"houses before were made with hard work, it's not like today that you ask for money*

and they give you, before you need to work hard to build the house, somehow you feel proud of your work" (Matlatecoya, March 11 2015).
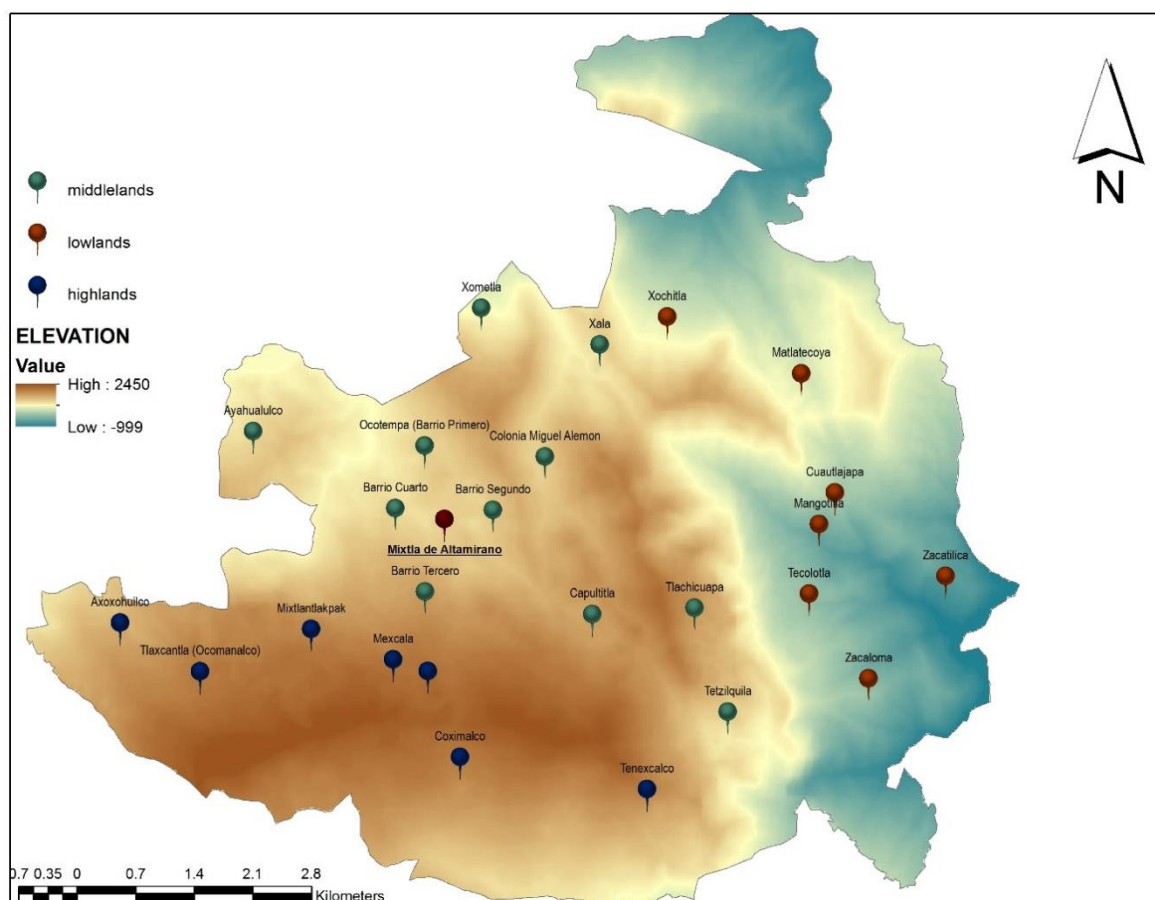
Figure 5.17. Map with the communities visited in the three natural regions: In general, the lowlands were a good place to produce fruit and some vegetables. It was also the place used to build *Haciendas* since the colonial times. The Highlands had the worst land, but pines and rocks have created a perfect place to produce the lime necessary for the nixtamalization process and materials in general to build houses. The Middle lands were considered the house of all of us, a place where they exchange goods. Women in this area know how to weave and in some places near the highlands they find good clay to work ceramics.

Despite the different materials used to build the smoky kitchen, when asking questions regarding the house composition, they all referred to a similar open connected space. As explored In terms of shape and size, the smoky kitchen represents the centre of their house. However, the definition of house it is not reduced to the smoky kitchen. In their accounts, elders from the different regions mention different materials like grass or pine waste from the upper mountains and sugar cane waste on the lowlands. However, the space they conceived as the 'house of all of us' implied a relationship between the three geographical areas and the interconnectivity between smoky

kitchens. As described by a man in the community located in the highlands in Mixtlakpak "*Houses were made of tejamanil (wooden plank) of one meter long […] to produce the tejamanil they use ococote pine and then people cut it in small planks, but today ocote is almost disappearing […] the floor was soil, well… some of them are still soil, but tejamanil is gone they have replace it with other materials such as laminated roofs, as you can see now and if you go to the lowlands is the same materials*" (Mixtlantlalpan, April 28, 2015). Compared to what they account in a community in the lowlands named Tecolotla, where a man said: "*I believe that the houses are different from the ones in the highlands, for instance they have to cover more from the cold, here we just have to make sure the water do not wipe our houses away […] the zacate need to be very well knitted to cover us from the heavy rains and we use a lot the sugar cane waste that is near us*" (Tecolotla, April 20, 2015).

In general, elders described their houses as being very equal between them, the different materials used to build the houses did not represent dissimilarities among them. Even more, in general, when it comes to describe the house, elders mainly women, direct their descriptions towards the activities and the artefacts needed to do the activities; the lack of food and the amount of work they used to have. On the other hand, Elder men, focus on the materials to build the house and the shape that this one had. However, I needed to ask specifically about the shape and the materials used to build the houses to know about them. For example, when I was in Axoxohuilco a community located in the highlands, it was in the collective interview that specific detail about the process of building the house was listed. Most of the people that participated in this interview spoke Nahuatl, therefore the interview started in this language. Then several voices in Nahuatl explained that the local production which is lime, and women talked about the houses and the metlatxontils "*when we grow up everything was made on our knees, even we ate in our knees, women used to make three buckets of maize per day […] yes I remember here the metlatxontil and that my grandmother also buried it in the kitchen*". A man in perfect Spanish and with a strong voice explained the process of building a house to me (see figure 5.18) "*All the houses are the same, before they were made of wood and grass, we look for ocote pine and we cut it with machete into very thin slices, the houses were squared and the differences are in the roof, the ones known as 'lima' and the one called 'dos aguas'*". He continued his descriptive account giving specific details of how they used to produce charcoal and lime "*Young people are not interested in doing any field job, they just want to go far away from the community*" (Axoxohuilco, March 26, 2015).

Figure 5.18. Men in the highlands community named Axoxohuilco, explaining the production of charcoal and lime

After the material databases were made, and even though in some communities materials that build the house varied (as explored in chapter 4 section 4.3.1), one same understanding of the concept of house puts to the forefront the smoky kitchen as the centre. However, smoky kitchens do not represent the entire physical space that the word house encapsulates. It seems to be that for Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano a house involves a broader space in which complex relationships shape people and objects at the same time.

5.5   The centrality of space in oral tradition: does the past become flat in the Elders accounts?

Up to this point, I have argued that along the elder's accounts the house and the objects inside them became central not just to start the conversation and make it flow in a more natural way, but also the materiality of the house, helped Elders recreate their past events and traditions all the way into transporting them to their mythical spaces. This, however, brings to the forefront another remarkable detail that I came across through these conversations. I am referring to the way past is conceived among the Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano. For the elders, the past seemed to be a deep meaningful concept where time is relative. To put it in other words, it gives the impression that their deep past (the one referring to Nonohualcas) and their own past happen all in the same time frame: in their concept of past. Although the accuracy of the space is accomplished by accounts that are rich in details that describe perfectly the scenarios and the actions. When talking about time, the Elders just referred to their grandparents' time. As such, past as a concept although it can become flexible in peoples imagination, it is modelled with the same limitations of everyday life.

I noticed this phenomenon happened repeatedly in different communities along the municipality, when I arrived to Tlachicuapa, and as conversation was moving forward regarding the in-depth stories. I noticed an old man dressed in traditional white trousers and sandals and asked about the clothes. His answer, in Nahuatl translates in the following way: "*when our first grandparents arrived to this mountain, they use to dress with the same clothes that I am using; now younger generations feel embarrassed to dress like this* (Tlachicuapa, April 15 2015). At first, I thought that he was talking about his actual grandparents arriving to the mountain. However, I had previously listened to Eliazar referring to historical accounts as 'the stories of our first grandparents that inhabit this mountain range'. I was therefore, inquisitive about the real meaning of their 'grandparents' and asked Eliazar. She looked at me with absolute astonishment and answered "*our very first grandparents used to live in this mountain and learned many things, about how to work, how to think. Their knowledge became stories that elders know, that's why we always have to listen to these stories of the people that know better, those are our grandparents, all the people that have lived here and that with their example teach us how to live here*" (Eliazar on our way back from Tlachicuapa to San Andres Mixtla, April 15 2015). Therefore, for Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, grandparents are all of those who previously lived, experienced, tailed their everyday life and left memory to be accounted from one generation to the next, nurturing by doing so, the traditions, folklore and the knowledge of living in the mountain range.

Another example of the above, was produced in the highlands in the community of Teapa Ocotempa, when Elders were talking about the free movement along the municipality "*before we were free to move from one place to another, we can built our house wherever we want, like our grandparents taught us, but now we have to stay in one same place and even ask authorities to name the land after ourselves*" (Teapa Ocotempa, March 25, 2015). According to local authorities, land in the municipality of Mixtla de Altamirano had always been private. Therefore, this free movement probably had to come from an in-depth story. In order to understand, the depth of this statement, I had to look into historical resources for information regarding land repartition in the Zongolica Mountain Range. According to the historical sources, land was proclaimed 'Indian land' right after the conquest. Accordingly, Tzoncoliuhcan (in the prehispanic data) became Zongolica and was recognized like one of the two 'Indian lands', the other one was Tequila (Aguirre 1986). It could be said then, that indigenous people could be free to walk inside this Indian land. Nonetheless, while Tequila continued to be part of the Spanish Crown, Zongolica was given to Pedro de Sepulveda in the early colonial times (Rodriguez 2003: 29). This was the starting point of a series of particular landowners (1586-1592) that according to Reyes Garcia (1961) obliged indigenous communities to move deeper into the mountain range due to the harsh labour conditions that they were forced into. Moreover, with the introduction of tobacco in the region, rich landowners purchased bigger amounts of land, pushing communities further up into the mountain.

Although little is known regarding the land situation inside Mixtla de Altamirano in the early colonial times, in the year of 1831 the municipality is formally established with 1,454 inhabitants, 696 men and 758 women. It had a parish church and a 'primary' school (INEGI 2010). Before 1831, the remains of one building helped as a reminder of the continuous exploitation of the tobacco plant in the region. I mean, the hacienda that was built around 1726 remains located in Xochitla (lowlands) that was built around 1726. According to the authorities' accounts, and reinforced by some Elders' stories in Xochitla, it was after the hacienda but before the establishment of the municipality that land was divided and each one of the inhabitants received a share of land to cultivate and on which to live. Indeed, land has almost always been private, therefore walking freely around the municipality has not been a reality in the past hundred years. However, another possibility could be that 'walking freely' meant the strong inner relations that people in Mixtla used to have that reflected in that openness that the households used to have. Whatever the scenario, I agree with Florescano's (1990: 612) statement regarding the resistance and survival of indigenous communities in Mexico. He states that indigenous communities did not disappear through conquest and colonial times mainly for two reasons: 1) The strong coercion of their

groups, and 2) The 'protection'/separation policy that the Crown established to protect pure casts.

In any case, Indigenous people kept the tradition and history alive by transmitting the knowledge orally. It could be said then, that hidden in these stories is the resistance and survival of certain practices. For instance, from cultivating cacao, cotton, and corn, in the lowlands, people seemed to move to the highlands and survive by exchanging materials but preserving the practices. An example of this, is given by the introduction of the goats around 1655, approximately (Reyes Garcia 1977:26). This gave the people in the past a possibility of exchanging the cultivation of cotton to goat skin. And by doing so, they were able to change the materials to produce their clothing but preserve the tradition of weaving with looms until today. Even more, when Dona Elo (Eliazar aunt) (March 8, 2015) said that before they used to dress using plants, she might be referring to the cotton they used to cultivate.

Figure 5.19. Traditional footwear for men (Tlachicuapa 2015): "*my paternal grandfather used sandals made from garbancillo, on top they were made with correa cruzada and underneath they were made of garbancillo. They always used their authentic outfit*" (Interview 2015)

Furthermore, this way of referring to the past as flat, in addition to the centrality of space and practices, has been previously documented by several researchers working with orality (Pagliali

2009; Montemayor 1998; Leon Portilla 2004; Poveda 2004). Meanwhile, some consider that oral tradition is by definition an art of duelling with words as established by Pagliali (2009: 61). Others just focus on the objectives that they pursue, which is the transmission of knowledge. Within this objective, it proves nonessential to establish a correct time frame. However, space and practices are essential to building a good narration that will be transmitted. After all, as Hurley (2013: 8) puts it 'memory, as biographic narrative, is as contingent and multi-dimensional as any other form of telling'. Furthermore, the way that Nahuas referred to the people in the past in a generic way as 'grandparents', is according to some interviewees, a way to pay respect to all the ancestors and acknowledge that they are family members "*one and only Nahua group*" as the radio commentator said in interview (Maria Cira, Zongolica, May 12, 2015). A statement that again, reinforces the importance of the house and the family relations established inside them.

However, when it comes to listening to the stories and making notes, it becomes a puzzle to understand what generation or how deep these grandparents they referred to, really inhabit the mountain range. For instance, when I visited Xometla, in the middle lands, one of the elders started talking about the first settlers "*the first men that inhabited this community were our grandparents, at least that is what the story tell us, they used to live even worse than us, they have to build the pathways that cross the mountain range, we have to keep them clean and it is really hard to walk through them especially when it's raining […] there was nothing to survive in the mountain, at least that's what our grandparents told us, fortunately now we have somethings and now at least with the roads we can go everywhere we want, we just need to have money*" (Xometla, March 22, 2015). Although this statement sounded like a deep history, it turns out that the community of Xometla is of fairly recent formation. Therefore, in this specific case, she was referring to the generation of her actual grandparents.

Additionally, their stories could have been part of their daily events or just anecdotes that happened to others and that became certainties through this oral tradition. Then people account those anecdotes as if they have happened to someone close and very recently, like Elders expressed in the community of Tenexcalco, located in the highlands "*I remember one day of the deaths that I did not put food to my death in the altar and then I was scared because my compadre (ritual kindship relation) told me that one of his close relatives that was drunk was scared by his father that die one year before because he did not put food in his altar for him […]Our grandparents scared us telling us that foreigners were going to come an eat us, that is why we were fearful of people that come from outside*" (Tenexcalco, March 24, 2015).

Again, a good example of the way they describe the past reflects on the material descriptions of their houses. This is because, through their accounts houses can be seen to have been modified in

a drastic way and are perceived to have become better. However, even though certain materials have changed, the smoky kitchen continues to be central in the idea of a house. It could be said, then, that apart from the fact that there was a kind of compressed temporality in their accounts, the one thing that is certain is that this past is somehow connected with ignorance, poverty and suffering. Most of the conversations started by mentioning the scarcity that they used to face in the past. For instance, in the community of Mangotitla in the lowlands and Colonia Miguel Aleman in the middlelands; two communities that were moved from one place to another due to natural disasters, talk about the way their houses have changed for the better. While in Mangotitla talk about the materials in the past and how they thought they were worse "*The houses have changed a lot, first they were made from woods and zacate, other people started using the tejamanil, they use ocote pine and they do very fine little pieces to put them on the roof […] we use to do everything on the floor, even cooking in the floor now we use the lifted stoves but my grandmother use to do everything on the floor* (Mangotitla, April 21, 2015). In Colonia Miguel Aleman, referred to the new materials and the difficulties they face within the new houses "*now houses are good materials, although I still use my kitchen because in the new houses is difficult to cook with wood*" (Colonia Miguel Aleman, March 21, 2015). Therefore, the material changes in the houses connected them to a better present that will take them to an even better future.

However, after mentioning the scarcities, when they recall their past activities, and traditions and even when they started remembering the material absences, then the past started to be less pessimistic and fuller of fraternity and respect among all of them. For example in Tlaxcantla a community in the highlands, one of the ladies talked specifically about the free movement but in other words, she mainly stated that it was because of the familiarity among people that they can walk through the mountain "*we used to be very poor and suffer a lot […] I remember that I was able to have animals that wander everywhere and no one was mad with me if I pick up wood from the mountain* (Tlaxcantla, April 17, 2015). Or in Ayahualulco a community in the middlelands, where another woman talked about respect *"today young people do not respect their elders, they see me and they just push me and say get out of the way old lady, I remember that my grandparents were respected, you always have to respect your grandparents because they take care of the children while mothers and fathers are away working* (Ayahualulco, March 19, 2015). Or in Zacatilica, in the lowlands where they mention the food *"we have hardly food to eat but what we have was good food, chickens that taste different, eggs, wild plants (quelites), bananas, coffee and of course the maize and beans, sometimes some women come from the highlands and give us mushrooms and like that we ate poorly*" (Zacatilica, April 20, 2015).

 As a result, from an instantly remembered sad past, elders recognised the essence of their collective practices and acknowledge the importance of their traditions to survive the difficult

natural conditions of the mountain range. This was corroborated in a community in the highlands called Mixtlantlakpak where one of the elders blamed the individualism and the lack of money in the community, as a factor that triggers the lack of interest in keeping traditions alive "*Before we used to have so many parties and shared everything, now no one wants to do a party because it is a lot of money and people don't have animals to kill anymore […] you required a lot of money to be the godfather of the party*" (Mixtlantlakpak, April 28, 2015). Or for instance, in Tepa Ocotempa a community in the highlands, a lady with a sweet voice proudly recalled the way her grandmother took care of the marriage of all the sons and daughters "*I remember when I was growing up, woman as I am –now is not the same- the sons had to take care of the mothers and the fathers, they had to protect them. When my grandmother was alive she had 12 kids, and she manage to pay for the marriage of all of them […] if the daughters in law accept the marriage she brought music to the house in order to wait for the daughter in law to arrive and then serve her food, the party lasted for at least two days*" (Teapa Ocotempa, March 25, 2015).

Nonetheless, in real terms, for me, these conversations (that were a product of their own act of remembrance) were full of idyllic details in all their time frames: past, present and future. Again, another lady in Tenexcalco, a community in the highlands, speaking only Nahuatl, exemplified the above, with her own pleasant memories "*we went everywhere selling totopos and other merchandises as my grandmother taught me to do, not like today the young girls don't want to work because they just want to go to school, they are just given by paper, they are badly advised, we were not like that, for example me, my men went to my house to ask for me, you don't speak with a man until grandparents, mother and father allow you to see him, not even a little bit, now all the young people are badly advised, they don't want to follow the traditions, make a party and share with the community, the men just stole[12] the women […] before traditions were prettier, I think before you have the respect, no one is going to harm you, you feel safe to walk through the mountain* " (Tenexcalco, March 24, 2015). Jumping from present to past, this woman presented a static past based on a continuous traditional movement that broke in the present. Within her statement we cannot really be informed of how deep this tradition has been there, it is just the way it is and has to go unquestioned.

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[12] It is said that a man steals a woman when they decide to spend one night together. As a consequence, they have to live together as a couple, but it will depend of each family whether to punish the couple by not giving them a different space to live. Although this practice of stealing women has become popular within newer generations, for Elders this was a very unusual practice and they even have the belief that it will carry bad luck for the couple.

5.6   Brief Conclusions

Overall, in this chapter, I presented the dialectic relationship established between people and materials-objects through the space called house in Mixtla de Altamirano Veracruz. Although Elders accounts were invaluable, living the daily activities with Eliazar's and the fact that she even considered me as part of her household, allowed me to finally give extra texture to the Eleders' accounts. Being part of her family, allowed me to experience the family structures that were and still are part of the performance that strengthen the Nahua-ness (collective self of the Nahuas) in Mixtla de Altamirano.

The Nahua traditional household emerges as a combination of nature and culture with no clear divisionary boundaries between the 'intimate' private and the 'collective' public –rather than a dualistic understanding, a complex set of interconnections are intertwined and are constantly forged in a collective way. Each one of the interviewees, represented the complex and unique understanding of house as a space, where animals, gods –anthropomorphized or not – things and humans interact with each other and help in the act of remembrance. As such, this definition of house can help us understand their bottom-up organisations and the ways this material institution might have helped them resist as a collective-self through time.

It could be said then that the Nahua house is a narrative (Bachelard 1958) that uses both memory and materials to be remembered (Megill 2007: 54; Connerton 2009; Agius et al 2016: 128). These narratives, in the words of Fontefrancesco (2010: 144) 'help domesticate the surrounding world' in different ways. Within this process of domestication, houses become agents, hybrid objects (Cook 2016) as a '*physical and institutional manifestation, and the cultural and physiological possibilities of feelings at home'*. On the whole, houses as narratives become knowledge. A knowledge that, furthermore, is, in essence, still moving.

In the next chapter, a closer look at the social relationships that are built in and throughout the houses will allow us to explore in depth the materiality of these houses that strengthen who the Nahuas are.

Chapter 6   'El costumbre' summing up lessons Eliazar and the Elders: post-marital residence, inheritance and the fight for the smoky kitchen

"Although I grew up helping my mother, I truly learn how to work once I was here with my mother in law. I was lucky to have such a patient mother-in-law and sisters-in-law they always treated me with respect and help me work properly […] Now I have my own kitchen and I teach all my children to work, I don't make a difference between boys and girls, they all know how to work because I don't want to have lazy children" (Eliazar, March 8, 2015)

Throughout the conversations with Elders and the everyday life in Eliazar's household presented in the previous chapter, an idea is put to the forefront, among the Nahuas of Mixtla de Altamirano houses are the main spaces where socialisation takes place. They do so through the oral tradition that was a strong source of knowledge. However, contrary to the westernised concept of a house, these spaces are far from intimate. Not just because they are physically open (as shown in previous chapters), but because the socialisation process involved, and still involves, the entire community, as I will explore in the following chapter. Each member of the family (and the community) has a specific task in the house. Although the tasks vary according to age and gender, all the members of the family participate in the house's wellbeing in general. More importantly, the specific tasks undertaken by each member of the houses will, later on, have an effect on the entire household and therefore will benefit the entire community. Moreover, the house in Mixtla de Altamirano functions as a mirror of the way in which the collective that Nahuas in Mixtla represent configures using symbolic features that consolidate their cohesion.

In the chapter ahead, a closer look at the social interactions that are built in and throughout the houses will reveal a hierarchical structure that operates in each household. A hierarchical structure that is, furthermore, endorsed by the different symbolic alliances that go unquestioned. Even though it could be said that the preservation of the Nahuas cohesion depends greatly on this hierarchical structure, it is the mouldable quality of this hierarchy that allows traditions and previous understandings to survive in Mixtla de Altamirano. This means, that even though each member of the community knows the different tasks to be done, these can and will be modified according to the particularities of everyday life. For instance, even though it has been argued that 'men have a stronger position in the social structure' (Taggart 1983:20), inside the households in Mixtla de Altamirano, women are the ones that take the final decision when it comes to solving problems, such as money or health issues of any members of the family. Even more, if the men are missing, women are able to take the same respected position of the men within a household

and attend the meetings or take decisions regarding the community, as well as participating in faenas (collective works) among other things.

Subsequently, it is this ability to reshape the Nahua hierarchical structure that allows traditions and previous knowledges in Mixtla de Altamirano to survive, flowing in a continuous way. For instance, although the high percentage of Nahuas migrating, has distorted the established hierarchical structures of each household, celebrations and communitarian commitments are still accomplished in different ways. One of the many conversations established with Eliazar gave a good illustration of this. This specific chat took place on a typical coffee break late in the afternoon when we came back from visiting a community with high indexes of migration where women are left alone: "*But we manage it, when my husband was absent, my father in law took good care of us. Even so, I had the duty to attend some meetings instead of my husband. Sometimes I even send my youngest son to do the faenas* [collective job]" (April 28, 2015). It is, because of this openness and ability to adapt that traditions have survived, and the essence of the communitarian practices are still alive. One thing is certain, the tasks that each member of the family has to do, whether they are more recent or traditional, go unquestioned, because in their words '*O Yi wehka mochihtiwitz*'. Translation: "That is how we have been doing it" (meaning that is the traditional way we do it '*el costumbre*' in Spanish).

6.1   Post-marital residence

> "*when you get married 'la costumbre' is that you go live with your in-
> laws [...] whether they treat you good or bad you have to tolerate it,
> because you become a new member of their family [...] they
> acknowledge that you are an important member of the house when you
> show them that you know how to work and that is why families have to
> do an agreement between them [...] in my times, you did not go out with
> a boy unless your parents give you permission, so the boy had to come
> with his Tlayecanque[13]* [godfather] *or the parents and ask my parents if I
> can go out with their boy, conversation was never established just
> between the couple, not like today!*" (April 27, 2015).

The above description of '*el costumbre*' (the traditional way) of post-marital residence was given by one of the elder women participating in the conversation in the community of Coximalco,

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[13] Tlayecanque has been defined as a ritual specialist that speaks in the name of someone else and that guide the ceremony in all the phases (Rodriguez 2008:87). However, in this specific context it refers more to the godfather that accompanied the whole ceremony

located in the Higlands. Although, this description confirmed what Rodriguez (2008: 85) had previously documented for other Nahuas communities (the patrilocal nature of inheritance and post-marital residence), it also puts attention on the personal story of this particular women and her view regarding the lifetime commitment of having a marital contract.

Along the different conversations established in different communities, marriage appeared as a contract that people were obliged to fulfil even if they became unhappy and no longer wished to be married. It was just after spending time in Mixtla listening to different stories that marriage was demarcated in a different way, as important alliances based on reciprocity. In other words, all family members from both the women and the men are equally respected and involved. These specific contracts worked as acts of reciprocity between families. When married, the family of the men receive a new member (worker), while the women's family receive in exchange a specific dowry: food, liquor, animals among other things that the men's family prepared before asking for her hand in matrimony "*when my husband asks for me he took a big box full of bread, coffee, sugar, eggs, liquor, candles and flowers*" (April 2015). After marrying both families will be united and help each other.

Figure 6.1. Preparing for a party. In the bag some coffee, sugar and bread. (Tlachicuapa 2015)

Chapter 6

Even though it could be said that reciprocity is established between families, the decision of the marriage contract rests on the couple. In other words, the marriage is not a pre-arranged contract between families, it becomes a contract after the couple decide to commit. In conversations Elders did not speak directly about love, but they did refer to it as necessary to establish the marriage contract. For instance, in Barrio Primero (middle lands) one of the women with a strong voice described her understanding of love and commitment:

> "*I remember when I saw him, and he saw me, we knew that we have to ask permission […] first our parents have to feel in their hearts what we were feeling […] he found a proper godfather to help him convince my parents that he was going to take good care of me*" (April 26, 2015).

In summary, although marriage can be conceived as a contract between families, most of the times, the couple chooses to establish it. Nonetheless, according to *'el costumbre'* they need help to officialise the contract. Therefore, either the man asks his father to intercede in his name with the parents of the woman or he would find a godfather to help him with the negotiations. Usually, the godfather would be an influential member of the community: "*when I ask my bride I took Mr X, who is the owner of the small ranch in the lowlands and we took bananas and coffee […] Mr X spoke on my behalf and referred to me as a hard worker man*" (26 April 2015). The fact the figure of the father can be easily replaced by the godfather reflects the importance of ritual kinship relationships inside the different communities in Mixtla de Altamirano.

In addition, to the several members of the community that are implicated in the wedding negotiations, the family of the groom will have to visit the family of the bride-to-be, usually more than once. Although some people talked about four days, it might take longer or less time depending on the family and the couple's particular situation. For instance, in the following examples, each old lady recounted their particular experience. The first one is part of the conversation established in Barrio Segundo, and the second one belonged to a lady in the lowlands in the community of Zacatilica. Both of them complained later that these days' young people do not respect *'el costumbre'*.

> "*I remember that when they ask my hand in marriage, my now husband and his godfather had to visit my house several days, I don't remember if three or four, but each time they visited my house they have to take a basket full of bread, coffee and other things, until one day that finally, they accept, we all celebrate with liquor (April 26, 2015)*

"My proposal lasted a week and the family of my husband even gave

my family a donkey" (April 20, 2015).

Figure 6.2. "*Candles, flowers and incense accompanied our celebrations*" (Barrio Cuarto, 2015)

Once the contract is established and both families are satisfied, the wedding celebration will take place in the man's household, meaning that they will celebrate the wedding in the entire compound of houses that belong to the father of the groom. In this household, the wife-to-be and her family will be greeted with music, food and dances. As described, the two families will eat and fast for few days until the marriage is consummated. Just as the proposal, the time varies between families. However, the longer the celebrations the better the status acquired by the families within the community. For example, when I visited Teapa Ocotempa, in the highlands one woman very proudly referred to her grandmother as an important woman because she was able to pay for the traditional wedding: "*When my grandmother was alive she had 12 kids, and she manages to pay for the marriage of all of them […] if the daughters in law accept the marriage she brought music to the house in order to wait for the daughter in law to arrive and then serve her food, the party lasted for at least two days*" (March 25, 2015).

A list of objects emerged during discussions with elders of these practices. A proper celebration must always include incense, flowers and candles. For example, in the case of a marriage celebration, Eliazar explained that the use of incense is vital to clean the air that surrounds the couple. As they kneel down in a *petate*[14] that normally will be located in front of the household's

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[14] Bedroll made of woven strips of palm leaves.

main altar, the couple is doused with incense. Apart from the use of incense, other materials were
mentioned as important to other celebrations, such as the case of the crown of flowers and
flowers in general, as explained to me by Eliazar (see figure 6.2 and 6.3)

> "*flowers are always a sign of festivity […] almost all the celebrations*
> *included the crown of flowers, whether it is to receive the godfather or the*
> *people in charge, it means that we pay respect and celebrate with the*
> *organisers […] it also means fortune and celebration […] of course we use*
> *them on weddings, we put flower crowns on the women and the men*
> *getting married*" (May 2015).

Once the wedding celebration is over, the woman stays in the house of the man. From that
moment on, she (the new wife) will be expected to help her new mother-in-law and her sisters-in-
law in the main smoky kitchen. To refer to the mother-in-law, some brides use just mother, as she
will now be in charge of her. It becomes the mother-in-law's responsibility to help them learn the
duties of the kitchen and the work inside a house. Until one day when this wife will receive from
her father-in-law a piece of land (inside the compound) to build their own kitchen. When she has
her own smoky kitchen, then she receives different presents such as a grinder stone (metate) and
other kitchen utensils.

Figure 6.3. "*Flowers are always a sign of festivity [...] almost all the celebrations that we have we*
use the crown of flowers [...] it could mean respect but also it means fortune and

celebration [...] of course we use them on weddings, we put crowns on the couple" (Eliazar, May 2015)

Even though, after a certain amount of time the couple receive a space to build their own kitchen (most of the time when they have children), they still share certain things with the main kitchen, such as main access, greenhouses, farmyard, and sometimes they even shared the *santocalli*[15]. In any case, even after receiving their piece of land to build their kitchen, wives will always feel an obligation towards their mother and father-in-law, who will permanently have the main kitchen and will be, therefore, the centre of the extended household. Being the centre of an extended household means that you are knowledgeable women. According to this tradition, each woman in the community will at some point have their own kitchen with their own rules, and finally become the head of an extended household: a much-respected title in the community that also derives from other contracts such as being godfather (*compadrazgo*) as we will explore later in section 6.3 of this chapter. However, these marriage arrangements can better explain the material expression of the Houses in Mixtla de Altamirano. Although each couple is allowed to a certain degree of freedom in their own smoky kitchen, they share activities with the bigger household and therefore will have to adapt to the rhythms established by all the people that inhabit the household. In other words, marriage relationships are also produced through and in turn they produce houses (and materials within them).

6.2   Inheriting and building the house

According to '*el costumbre*', it should be the last born men who will inherit the main smoky kitchen. This, however, will only happen once the parents are no longer there. In other words, the youngest of the couple's sons will own the smoky kitchen once the couple have died. Before that, he will commit to provide and take care of them. This specific '*costumbre*' is the result of the post-marital patrilocal structure (Rodriguez 2010:72), in which female members of the family join other households and therefore 'abandoned' the family land. As for the rest of the male members of a family, they will be granted specific spaces inside the household compound or, as they called it the family *solar*, where the main kitchen is built.

The Elders I spoke with, and Eliazar, highlighted important changes within this specific '*costumbre*'. While, some kept this tradition alive, others preferred to pass the kitchen to their youngest women. One of the reasons to change (Eliazar and I hypothesise) is that men are migrating to other places while women stay in the communities. Therefore, a way to preserve the

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[15] The room dedicated to pray.

land among the family is to inherit it to the women members of the family. Despite these variations, inheritance practices still surround individuals with family and provide care to the ageing. Fortunately for elders in Mixtla de Altamirano, this tradition is still alive. This invisible layout is reflected in the location of smoky kitchens inside the household. The others smoky kitchens surround the main kitchen and have to follow a similar construction pattern. Whether or not the newer smoky kitchens are bigger in size, the maintenance of the main kitchen is always something that all the family participate in.

Among national government, it has commonly been assumed that one smoky kitchen equals one household. However, the amount of smoky kitchens that surround the owners of one same piece of land varied according to the size and history of the family. This very unique settlement pattern allows Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, to have certain amount of control in their domains. With families growing the pathways are reduced to thin alleys between smoky kitchens. On top of that, because the traditional kitchens are normally open, people can see through the wood walls and know who passes through the alleys. This situation has been documented in other parts of the mountain range where according to Rodriguez (2010:75), Nahuas use it to their own benefit. Despite the fact that the settlement pattern has varied drastically due to the reduction of space, the building that makes the smoky kitchen remains almost in the same shape and size, as explored in previous chapters. But also, it follows the same traditional way of building them, the first things to do, after having the specific space is to locate the position of the stove that according to Eliazar will determine the position of the walls:

> "*My husband asked me where I want to put the stove and then in one of the corners we do a small offering of a little Xochitlalis[16][…] the offering will depend on what you have, it can be big or small, it depends! But you need to do it to have a good fortune […] here in the community there are some people that know how to do a Xochitlalis so you can call one of them, but if you don't have money you do it yourself […] as our grandparents taught us*"
> (Eliazar, March 10, 2015).

The *Xochitlalis* requires the intervention of a specialist inside the community with a certain amount of prestige. Therefore, again, it implies that even building a house required certain social interactions between people inside the community. Building smoky kitchens is something that

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[16] Ritual that involves burying things in the ground, among the things that are buried the most important ones are food, alcohol and flowers. The performance involves opening the earth through a hole as if it was the mouth and giving it food. The earth or land in the nahua cosmology is a female goddess (*Nana Tonantzin*) that later on taken by the catholic church using the same word Tonantzin to refer to the virgin Mary (see Leon-Portilla 2000)

you share with the entire family: "*it was not just us, we help each other and take around five days to build a house*" (Tlaxcantla, April 17, 2015). This collective way of building the house includes the new material houses. For instance, during my time in Mixtla, Eliazar received materials to build herself and her family a new house. Despite the fact that the space given modifies the concept of house, her family still used the help from members of the household to finish her construction on time. Nonetheless, when I asked her, what would happen with the *Xochitlalis* in her new house, she told me:

> "*the new material house has a kitchen but I am not going to use it because*
> *it's closed and we don't have another kind of stove […] maybe later on,*
> *when they show us a new kind of stove, but right now we still need to have*
> *ventilation in the kitchen, that is why I will move my smoky kitchen […]*
> *besides, the new house has cement floors so it is hard to open a hole […] We*
> *will build the new smoky kitchen where we are sleeping at the moment, it's*
> *a bigger space and it is nicer, the floor is even and it is cleaner, I will*
> *obviously have a Xochitlalis in there […] I will bury whatever I had at the*
> *moment, because we have no money to make a big offer […] there is a*
> *woman living in Barrio Cuarto that makes Xochitlalis* " (May 1, 2015).

Figure 6.4. According to tradition the last-born male will inherit the main smoky kitchen that, as shown above, tend to be big open spaces (Lowlands 2015)

Following the statement above, Eliazar proved that although her house reflected the social relationships that built the sense of *Nahua-ness*, it was through the materials/objects that those relationships were produced. The slow modifications of '*el costumbre*' have somehow helped

preserve the symbolic essence of the space they called house. Therefore, until today building and inheriting the smoky kitchen still moves towards forging that collective self-defined '*nahua-ness'*. Nonetheless, these slow modifications in the rhythms of '*el costumbre'* have also resulted in some issues that will be explored in the next subsection.

6.2.1   The lack of space and the equal rights between men and women

One of the main restrictions for preserving this traditional way of inheriting the household, is the lack of space inside the domestic land (*solar*) for all the members of the family. Even though, tradition dictates that it would be the last born male who receives the main smoky kitchen, other males should have received a piece of land too. Nonetheless, the shortage of land has created tension among newer generations that also want to continue with this tradition and therefore reclaim their piece inside the family *solar*. In the past, even third generations cohabited in the same solar. Today this is practically impossible. This is because, back when the land was first privatised (a date that, furthermore, varied according to informants: *"I don't remember when they gave each of us our piece of land… it was long ago*" (March 2015)), each head of the family received a solar[17], which according to the interviews: *"It was a big piece of land".* Nonetheless, it was finite and with the continuous growth of the family members is running out. As Eliazar suggested: "*Now we don't have enough space to give to our kids*" (April 23, 2015).

Although '*el costumbre'* regarding the inheritance of the land had created a sense of equality and 'brotherhood' among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, with the introduction of new practices reinforced by privatisation, this sense of brotherhood has also been modified. The fact that some people inside the community have accumulated bigger pieces of land, has not just stressesed the shortage of land but also has contributed to the feeling of inequality that evokes a smaller Mixtla de Altamirano. In several conversations with the elders, this brotherhood was expressed through the comfortable use they have of their space, that allows them to experience a somehow bigger Mixtla.

> *"Our grandparents were able to have all kinds of animals, if they needed*
> *wood they can cut it and there was no problem, people trusted each other*
> *and can even make deals, our grandparents organised in a better way […]*
> *in that piece of land all the children could have space to have their own*
> *family […] families tend to be big then […] if you wanted a separate space,*

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[17] Unfortunately, Solar is a measurement that was determine by the local chiefs and it changes according to the historical moment; therefore the exact information regarding the measurement varies between interviewers but goes from 1000m2 to 10000m2.

> *people have meetings and agreed in giving the newlyweds a space, but*
>
> *today there is no land anymore and the people that have land wants money*
>
> *instead*" (March-April 2015).

It could be said that although frontiers that delimitate Mixtla de Altamirano remain the same, the experience of the space varied from a wider and more extended idea of it, to a reduced and limited piece of land. Adding to these changes, gender equality among the children have contributed to the tautness inside the household. Many families have insisted that it is important to give a piece of land to both women and men equally. For instance, Eliazar following her mother-in-law's ideas, wishes to give each one of her children a piece of land:

> *"it is unfair for my girls, I considered myself lucky of having a good mother-*
>
> *in-law but I have seen the other way around and I don't want my daughters*
>
> *to suffer any kind of abuse […] they should also have a piece of land, like my*
>
> *mother in law gave to their daughters, besides who better than my*
>
> *daughters to take care of me when I grow older"* (March 2015).

Indeed, inside the household where Eliazar has her kitchen, several other smoky kitchens belong to the daughters of her mother-in-law. This does not represent a common practice in the community, when I asked the mother in law about it, she answered "*it's just fair. I wanted my daughters to have the security of their household, so I told my husband that each child that we have will get a piece of our land, so he should be careful with the amount of children he wanted to have*" (March 2015). In between jokes, she continued explaining that today women are left alone due to the migration of the men and she prefers to take care of her daughters rather than their being left alone in a different household and having to take care of their mothers-in-law. Eliazar wishes to mimic the decision making of her mother-in-law "*But who knows what happen, besides right now I don't have space in the household nor money to buy land for all of them, right now there is a problem with the land, because there is no space*" (April 2015).

Certainly, this idea of shortage of land has helped in the promotion of the new state-sponsored houses that shrink the several open spaces that used to compose one house. In this way, several little houses can fit into the family solar. In the same way, these new houses have promoted the nucleated idea of family, dismissing, by doing so, the extended families composition. However, building a small residence apart from the main family kitchen presents other kinds of problems, including the lack of protection that the most vulnerable population (children and elders) receive within this new model of housing as explored in chapter 3:

> "*we use to take care of our mothers and fathers, respect our grandparents,*
> *now I see the younger people that don't respect us, they even mistreat us*
> *[…] I hear them saying look at the old lady and then laughing, or punching*
> *me in the way […] I think that respect is one of the many things that have*
> *been lost, I remember when I was young my grandmother take care of me*
> *and have authority to educate me*" (conversation with Elders March, April
> 2015).

For example, in the specific case of Eliazar, the commitments she establishes with her aunt and with the other children inside the household provide a clear example of collectivising the responsibilities of the most vulnerable ones. In other words, the importance of family relations in between the houses in a household compound. Although these new houses encouraged the disconnection of families and reinforce the nucleated families, Nahuas still have an important ingredient that keeps families together. I am referring to the '*compadrazgo*' which means becoming godfather or godfatherhood which I will explore in the next section. It is through this social contracting that the households become a place where cooperation and reciprocity is expected. Materially, this translates into blurring the lines that divide each big household.

6.3   Becoming Godfather

Eliazar's father-in-law (Don Manuel) explained godfatherhood while we were walking to attend a celebration where he was going to become a Godfather of the Cross, a title that he received when he was asked by a member of a different household to buy the holy cross that goes on top of the grave of the deceases members of the different house:

> "*If I become Godfather of someone, I acquired a life time responsibility that*
> *obligates me not just to give things to your godson, it is a tie between*
> *families, that is why you can't choose any godfather for your kids, you*
> *choose people that can provide for your family too, more importantly, you*
> *choose someone that can fulfil the commitments. Besides when you become*
> *a godfather the new family treats you differently, you are not a stranger*
> *anymore, there is a sense of prestige […] it's a commitment you establish for*
> *life*" (19 April 2015).

The ritual kinship or godfatherhood (*compadrazgo)* has been described as one of the main aspects of social and religious life among indigenous communities in the whole Mexican territory (Rodriguez 2012:97). Good (2005: 276) argues that underneath this social contract lies a strong

sense of reciprocity and caring for each other. It is within this relationship that sets of obligations are established that tie people through the different stages of their life, from the moment that the ritual contract is entrenched till death. As defined by Rodriguez (2012: 98) the *compadrazgo* is the institution that relates people with others despite consanguinity. The godfather, in most cases, seals this social contract through the gift of certain objects. In other words, the *compadrazgo,* ties people using symbolic objects that entails somehow certain commitment. Although, there are different descriptions and types of *compadrazgo* according to each specific case (Nutini and Bell 1989:62), overall, this institution's main aim is to collectivise personal responsibilities (eg. Godfather acquires specific responsibilities towards the godson but also towards the entire family of the godson). However, above collectivising responsibilities, establishing these relationships materialised the symbolic union of different households that later on can work as one complete household. Blurring, therefore, the boundaries between different households.

The specific celebration that I was invited to attend (the cross celebration) is in itself a unique *compadrazgo* relationship (I will explore it fully in section 6.3.2). This because, it shed light on the fact that these contracts can be established throughout an entire lifetime. Don Manuel, for instance, was asked to be godfather of the cross '*padrino de la cruz'* a commitment acquired post-mortem, in which the godfather is required to buy the cross and the gravestone of the deceased. The cross, however, has to be bought in advance and delivered after nine days have passed after the funeral. The commitment, however lasts until the cross is delivered in the cemetery and the gravestone is chosen. Nonetheless, in order to understand this terrenal contract, one must first scrutinise the unique beliefs that surround death that involves an active participation of the living and connects families -explored by many ethnographers (e.g. Lhuiller 1963; Lopez-Austin 1999; Broda and Good 2004; Johansson 2012; Rodriguez 2012; Alegre-Gonzalez 2004; Velasco-Toro 2011) but reshaped by my personal experience in the Mountain Range (explored in the next section).

6.3.1   The Tonal among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano

Among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, there is the belief that all living people have a *tonal* – which can be related to the Christian soul. According to Lopez-Austin's study of pre-hispanic Nahuas (1980:230) the name to call it is *tonalli* and it was not exclusive to humans. All the animals and plants were connected through their specific *tonalli*. The human *tonalli* was then the connection with the cosmos and their surroundings. In exploring the pre-hispanic and colonial Nahuas, Lopez-Austin (1980:231) establishes that it was this *tonalli* that you were born with, the one that determines your actions. For instance, if you were born with a bad t*onalli* you will be a

bad human and if you were born with a good *tonalli*, your actions will be surrounded by goodness. Although this might be simplified, it differs from ideas introduced later of achieving goodness by different mechanisms, imposed by the Catholic Church.

Even though, the *tonal* was mentioned in several occasions during my fieldwork, it differs from the one described by Lopez- Austin. During the interviews the *tonal* was mentioned when referring to the river and the land "*the tonal of this river is sick, mother earth is getting sick of the people that inhabit this mountain range*" (Xometla, March 22, 2015) and was not exclusive to living entities. Additionally, although people did not mention that being bad was having a bad *tonal*, being sick or dying could be described as having a bad/weak *tonal*. Despite these differences, in both cases, the *tonal* and *tonalli* need the living people to finally achieve their final goal. The *tonal* as described in Mixtla de Altamirano is the warm part hidden inside the body. According to Rodriguez (2012:99) this *tonal* will later on transform into the *anima*.

> "*Before curing the body one have to look into the tonal, illness is caused because you have a weak tonal, people have to take care of their warm tonal, there are many causes for a weak tonal, it could also be that you are behaving in a bad way or someone curse you, the important thing is that if you become ill the tonal have lost energy, that is why in order to cure you, we have to shout to the tonal*" (Traditional Doctor April 2015).

As stated by the traditional Doctor, later on in the conversation, it is only when the *tonal* becomes cold that it transforms into an *anima*. However, the faith of this *anima* will depend greatly on the way family acts to help this anima leave the house. This because once the *anima* is out of the body it will start a journey towards a specific place. Just as in the catholic religion, the place hinges on the cause of death and the behaviour in life. For instance, if the person was good, the anima will go to *Ilwikatl* –heaven, where he will meet with god and saints- this place is associated with births but also water. Yet, if the person was bad in life he will go to the *Miktlan* –this place is associated with the Christian hell and it is linked to caves and dark spaces (Fieldwork 2015; Rodriguez 2012: 98). Notwithstanding, this *anima* does not disappear, it stays among the living for a long time until the journey begins. Therefore, it is the family that have to help this *anima* start the journey after the nine days that the celebration of mourning last. If in those nine days the deceased is not properly prayed for feasted or celebrated, then, the anima could stay among them and become a bad spirit that can cause sickness to their own family or fear among the living in general. If, on the contrary the anima rests in peace it will be allowed to visit their dear ones during the death festivities celebrated once a year without being feared.

However, in terms of material practices and space (central topics to this thesis) this belief establishes a connection between the symbolic and non-material (the *anima, Tonal*) and the way the everyday life of the Nahua is shaped. That is to say, the way the material/objective world is produced by the Nahuas system of beliefs. This is because, once the *tonal* abandons the body and becomes an *anima*, the deceased needs to be prayed for, feasted, lamented and properly celebrated and remembered. To put it in the words of Don Manuel: "*if we don't celebrate it this way, our 'comadre' (godmother)* [in this case he referred to the wife of the deceased] *can suffer, because our 'compadre' (godfather)* [referring to the deceased] *will stay here in this world without being part of the world, just suffering and making others suffer too*" (19 April 2015).

The ceremonial celebration to guide the *anima* into the other world includes the 'cross godfatherhood' that I attended during my fieldwork. In which I was invited and considered as part of Eliazar's household, and even though I was a foreigner, they received me as an equal member of the godfather and the godmother's family. Although the attention was fully for the godfather and the godmother, the guests of the godfathers are celebrated in the same respectful way, as I will explore in more detail in the next section.

6.3.2   The compadrazgo during the death ritual: fieldwork notes

Becoming a cross godfather is, as any other contract of that nature, a very serious responsibility that in the case of Don Manuel, lasted the complete nine days. This contract is not just important because of the duties towards the family of the deceased, but because it is believed among people in Mixtla that if the anima stays in this world and creates problems the one to blame will be the godfather. Therefore, again the belief that there is an anima that needs to be taken into another non-visible world derived in the importance of certain practices as the cross godfatherhood is. In words of Dona Esperanza (Eliazar mother-in-law):

> "*They said that if you don't fulfil your responsibility then the deceased will hunt you and your family. It will bring misfortune, but I do it, because I feel good to know that the deceased will finally rest in peace when he have finally the cross and the family is grateful and will happily receive us in their house, after all, being asked to be godfather is a great honour […] one should always think that you will want to have a good 'compadre' for yourself, just imagine if they don't give you the cross when you are dead!*"
> (April 2015).

She also makes clear that this task has an important moral responsibility of reciprocity. The celebration that I attended was just one part of a larger commitment. Although, they explain to

me that the responsibility goes beyond that simple delivery of the cross (that I attended), it was along this particular celebration that I came across with the rituality and ceremonious ways in which they practice the everyday activities in Mixtla.

The whole ceremony lasted around eight hours, at this point the deceased was already buried but the tables and the clothes that hold the body while the family had a wake was still there, as a way of symbolising that the *anima* was still there among us. Along those eight hours we were obligated to eat and drink everything that the host family serves you. I was invited as part of the family of the *compadre* (godfather) and for that reason, I was very well treated. However, the protagonists of the night are the godmother and the godfather. Consequently, the first ones to sit down and eat meat, *mole* (a traditional food served during celebrations that consist in meat mainly chicken covered with a brown sauce made out of different kinds of chilies with chocolate among other spices) and drink, are the godfather and the godmother. Later on, the rest of the family may eat and drink. However, because it was a death celebration a specific protocol was followed. This includes that in essence the first one to drink the alcohol poured in a special glass, and be served food will be the deceased (as I will account in detail). I did not leave the hosts household until five in the morning of the next day. Although, previous to the event, but after accepting the invitation, Eliazar asked me with her satirical voice "*are you going to be able to last through the whole event?*" I never thought that she really meant that we were going to be there until the sunrise of the next day.

Thus, we (the entire family of the godfather and me) started a procession from their own household towards the household of the deceased, carrying with us the cross among other presents like images of saints*,* candles and flowers. The walk lasted around fifteen minutes all the way to the hostess household's entrance where we stopped. It was just then, after spending one hour on greetings in front of the door that I thought to myself that maybe Eliazar was right, this was going to take longer than I thought. In the entrance, another detail enlightened the whole night. Although we were all greeted with respect, both the Godfather and the Godmother were celebrated and as a sign of their importance they were given crowns and necklaces of flowers to wear through the whole event. After crowning them, they were kissed on both checks, misted with burned copal incense, sprayed with holy water that they brought from the local church, and sprinkled with flower petals. This dynamic, was repeated with each guest member of Don Manuel and Dona Esperanza's household. Therefore, apart from the coronation, we all had a very formal greeting outside the household. Finally, after one hour of salutations, we were all welcomed inside the household, where we were conducted through thin paths to the *santocalli* were the altar of the household was located, but also where the deceased received his last goodbyes. Still

in the floor in front of the altar, the space of the coffin was replaced with sand from the graveyard on top of the planks and the white sheet they used to cover the body.

The room of the *santocalli* was heavily decorated with candles, saints and flowers, all elements that produced a mystical atmosphere. The smoke of the burning copal combined with the one produced in the smoky kitchen, located next to the *santocalli* room, which helped in accentuating this feeling. Even though the room had a lightbulb, it was the intensity of the candles burning through the smoke as if they were cutting their way through the thick air that created a strong sense of spirituality. It felt as if the candles were after all the ones that will light the path for the deceased. Once inside, but before getting a good look of the entire room, I observed the Godfather and the Godmother approaching close to the altar and crossing themselves, staying there a couple of minutes in a very serene way as if they were praying. Finally, each one of them grabbed the burning copal and accentuated the thick air by spreading the mystical smoke along the entire altar. At last the cross, was placed in the altar in the same place where the body was guarded during the veiling ceremony. In fact, it is thought to be in this precise moment, when the anima is thought to abandon this specific *santocalli* and start the journey to *Ilwikatl*. This journey will last one month, in which the family has to offer food on the altar so the *anim*a has the strength and energy to continue the difficult journey.

After the cross is placed on the altar, it becomes part of the tradition that each one of the members of the invited household stands in front of it, prays, crosses themself and spread copal incense over it. People waiting for their turn to spread copal must be quiet and respectful of other people's prayers. I was astonished by the behaviour of the youngest members, kids of around six and seven years old stayed all the ceremony without being misbehaved and respecting the ceremonious event. After they had all prayed, all the women related to the deceased knelt down on top of a *petate* (bedroll made of cane leaves) to receive special care and treats from the women living in the godmother's household. These treats included: combing and getting their hair done with colourful ribbons, and dressing them with earrings and necklaces until they looked 'honourable'. The first one to receive this special care is the widow and the sisters of the deceased, but they include the daughters and even the cousins (see figure 6.5).

Once the women looked well groomed, they grabbed the copal incense and burnt it, crossing the altar as if they were saying thank you by cleaning the air and encouraging, by doing so, the anima to initiate the voyage. Once all the women were honoured, it would be the turn to honour the men. They did so, by sitting them on a chair while the godfather crossed them with a handkerchief that later on he put around their neck. Resembling, by doing so, the traditional way of wearing the handkerchief (see figure 6.6 and 6.7). The godfather, later on also placed a

necklace with a cross symbolising good fortune and protection. After the male members of the deceased family had been honoured, they had to do the same act done by the women, I mean, crossing the altar with copal incense to thank the guests for the care and the special treatments. Finally, all groomed they prayed the rosary and accompanied the praying with violin music after the melody, the young son gave a long speech that included the importance of traditions and family ties.

Figure 6.5. The grieving moment where symbolically one family -the godfather family- takes care of the grieving family. They do so, by combing, affixing earings and necklaces a way of "*taking care of them in this hard times*".

Figure 6.6. Honouring the men in the family, using a handkerchief and a necklace with a cross. An important moment where the godfather dresses them in a traditional way

Up to this point, although certain gifts have been given, food has still not been served. As part of the gifts, in the ceremony that I attended the godfather brought two big baskets full of pig's meat. Before giving it formally, the godfather remembers the deceased through a speech that also enhances the family relations. The food that they presented, overall, is to accompany the mourning process of the family and allow them to take their time in healing. Each member of the household welcomes the food received by crossing it with copal incense and symbolically kissing it (see figure 6.9). The meat brought by the godfather is just served to them, the rest of it is stored and used in a different occasion, when they are alone. For all those guests, the host family serve a magnificent feast of *mole* (the traditional brown sauce for celebrations). However, before food is served, and as a way of thanking the godfathers for their caring, the host family give them bottles of liquor, that once opened they shared firstly with the deceased and later on each one of us sitting at the table will have to drink the poured beverage (see figure 6.8).

Figure 6.7. When finishing with the gifts that honour the whole family, men rise from the chair and use the copal incenses as a way of sanctifying the moment.

The way of symbolically sharing the alcohol with the deceased is through pouring the beverage served into the specific space were the body had been bid farewell (See figure 6.8). Before eating and during the toast with the alcoholic beverages, the guests as well as the hosts give some words to thank the godfather and the family. After toasting, food is served, and we all feast in silence. Due to the nature of the celebration, people feast in a quiet and ceremonious way. As established before, the entire event lasted around eight to nine hours and no one is allowed to go until everything is done. This became then, a good example of family cooperation and the symbolic way of showing support through not just the exchange of food but also through the special caring and treatments that the mourning family received from the new godfathers of the cross. Moreover, it was by participating in this event that the material housing made sense as a place where cooperation and reciprocity is expected. This cooperation, furthermore, appeared in every single aspect of their daily life, as shown in the next section with another social relationship called the *Faena* or collective work.

Figure 6.8. The exchange of liquor with the deceased, they use the sand and the planks with the white sheet where the deceased was positioned through the whole veiling ceremony, this is thought to help him during his journey to the *Ilwikatl*

Figure 6.9. The copal incense is a very important part of the whole ritual, almost as important as the food. Inside the basket are the pieces of meat that the godfather brought in honour of the deceased. Each member of the family have to receive it by kissing the basket and use the copal incense to make the sign of the cross.

6.4   The *Tequitl/Faenas*: "the work that we do that benefits all of us"

Even though both consanguine kinship (blood family) and ritual kinship (marriages and 'godfatherhood') create important ties between smoky kitchens, there is a different kind of contracting that helps construct and consolidate what they know as "*the house of all of us*" that Mixtla de Altamirano represents: the collective tasks or *Tequitl* in Nahuatl and *Faenas* in Spanish (both ways of referring to it today). As explained to me during the conversation in Zacatilica, a community located in the lowlands:

> *"Faenas had to be done every Monday, they use to call it with the flute and*
> *the drum but it was mandatory to assist because when you live in the*
> *mountain and there is rain the paths and roads that connected the houses*
> *get destroyed easily, that is why we needed to participate and go every*
> *Monday to clean the road, or do any other task, after all we need to do*
> *something for the place that we live in" (April 20, 2015)*

This same anecdote was repeated in almost all the conversations across the entire municipality. From Lowlands to Highlands, this collective work not just helped preserve their roads and paths, but also sorted problems such as waste, building smoky kitchens, community centre, churches, and schools, among other important tasks that concerned the complete collective that they formed. It could be said that these tasks helped create a much stronger sense of self through their daily praxis.

In general, this work that benefices all the people in Mixtla, enhances their group performativity by committing people to specific tasks that also go unquestioned. It almost seems like the way that people organise collectively to perform the tasks, worked as a metaphor of the way the smoky kitchens organises in itself. With this I mean that in addition to the fact that the tasks go unquestioned as part of their duties, this collective work is composed with an equal mouldable hierarchy that I explained happens inside the smoky kitchens. Although this hierarchical organisation was composed mainly of men in the community, women participate in the present, every day having more responsibilities. This not just happens due to the fact that men are the ones leaving the community in search for other opportunities. But also, because the tasks are less physical than before.

Today, although *Faenas* are still undertaken, the majority of the works that used to be important are now sorted out by the authorities in the municipality who either prefer to hire workforce outside of the municipality or pay for the jobs that were previously supposed to be an obligation, as they explained to me through different conversations:

> *"We still have to do Tequitl, but it is different, it is still our duty to clean*
> *the church or the hospital, even the streets, but the municipal government*
> *helps us with some money depending on the task, they give us 5 or 10*
> *pesos, and I believe that this is wrong because now people don't want to*
> *commit if they don't receive payment" (Barrio Segundo March 10, 2015)*

> *"Before they used to call people with the drum and the flute but today that*
> *is not the way that we organise the work, they call us through the radio if*
> *we can help in fixing a road or something specific" (Xometla March 22,*
> *2015)*

> *"I remember my grandparent telling me that before the one that was in*
> *charge of the communitarian works went house to house and then they*
> *kept on playing the drum and the flute until the work was done, today*
> *even if they call you people don't want to participate (Ayahualulco March*
> *19, 2015)"*

Indeed, *Faenas* have radically changed and with these changes, according to the Elders, the feeling that the group cohesion is somehow being detached. The above mentioned was expressed in many of the conversations along the municipality (see figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10. Women in the community doing Faena or Tequitl- communitarian work that in the past was unquestioned but today it is mostly paid. In this specific case, women are paid to brush the street every week.

Another good example of this was given by a man in Axoxohuilco, a community located in the highlands. He pointed out in a very clear way "*before it was easy to organise ourselves and do the job, but today nobody wants to participate if they don't get paid, that is not how we used to do it*" (March 26, 2015). Broadening this statement with the many times that they talked about the loss of respect and traditions among the younger generations "*they don't have any respect, before we use to call us brothers and sisters now they don't even look at each other eyes and say hello, the young people don't care about each other*" (Ayahualulco March 19, 2015), gave a glimpse of this feeling of disconnection between generations and also pointed out the way the collective self that they are is being continuously transformed.

The drum, the flute and the turtle shell can represent these transformations and sense of disconnection. This, because these materials were used to call and accompany the complete *Faena* and were essential in the organisation process in itself, today they are used only in festivities and special occasions to somehow demonstrate who they are:

> "*the drum and the flute make really nice music* […] *it remind us who we are, we use them still for the festivities and when we want to celebrate someone, today there are only two people in Mixtla that know how to play these instruments they live in the community of Xala, we call them every time there is a special occasion*" (Lic. Gerardo, March 6, 2015).

Although traditions, for newer generations, are no longer something that they have to do, the collective self is reinforced by the fact that they still remember them and preserve them. Such is the case of the language Nahuatl and the *Faenas* or tasks that they remember were done in the past. Therefore, the remembrance process was and still is essential to reinforce the transformed self-constructed identity. The drum, the flute and the turtle shell are, in this specific case, essential elements that came from the past.

When I visited the community of Xala to interview two traditional musicians (Figure 6.10) they confirmed the use of these instruments in a different way:

> "*now we use it when there is a party or someone important comes along, we use it when there is a meeting or we are going to inaugurate some place and someone important comes along* […] *sometimes when we do Faena but mainly concerning parties, for instance when we have to go collect the 'cucharilla' plant (a specific plant that is used to do the arcs that they put in front of the*

> *churches when there is a celebration) or during Mayordomia*
> *(Stewardship) […] Before lots of people knew how to use the*
> *instruments, now nobody is interested in learning how to play it, the*
> *young people prefer to use newer instruments, they have the cell*
> *phones and with that they play the music […] The turtle shell was*
> *also common but this one is lost in Mixtla de Altamirano […] now*
> *faneas are not called through the music, today they use the*
> *speakers and the radios to call for the people*" (Xala March 21,
> 2015).

In addition to the newer ways of using these instruments they told me that the tradition of playing the music was never done by women, this is because according to them women were in charge of preparing the food 'and that activity takes a lot of work'. Although they also participate in the *Faenas*, there are no women that they know of that play the drum, the flute or the turtle shell. This is a tradition for men, in their words: "*women participate in the Faneas, they collect plastic bottles, garbage, but before it was harder and then each authority decided if they need women or not*". However, what I did came across was the fact that in the various rhythms that they played, I could notice that the music did not have a specific beginning or an ending. Although there is always one instrument that starts first (in the first melody they play it was the drum but in the second one it was the flute) the whole construction did not have a specific end. When I asked them about this they told me that it has to do with the fact that this music is supposed to accompany the work: "*we needed to accompany the work and sometimes is more time than other*" (see figure 6.11)

Summing up, '*el costumbre*' among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano reinforces, on the one hand the importance of the houses as the space where the main socialisation takes place; on the other hand, it points out the ways in which this same socialisation may also help blur the divisions between different households. As a result, it is through the different social contracts that the material expression of the house transformed from a smoky kitchen to a complex open interconnected big household that changes through time, place, specific scenario and even people interviewed. Nahuas description and presentation of their material houses becomes as complex as it is, to present their ethnic identity. Each smoky kitchen connects with others in particular ways that although they are defined with their particular everyday life rhythms, they respond to a wider and homogenous knowledge that passes from generation to generation through their own ways of narrating their past and living their present.

Figure 6.11. The conversation with Don Laurencio (in the right) and Don Juan (in the left) that includes them playing several rhythms and the explanation of how they made each instrument and how they learn how to play. One important detail is that the flute is made with the same materials that they used to elaborate the smoky kitchens.

6.5   Brief Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored the social relations that produce the Nahua of Mixtla de Altamirano's space. The cohesion of the Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano was built through the sense of siblinghood that open up the smoky kitchens into a complex set of relations between different households. This openness brings together components such as a clear sense of cooperation and reciprocity among the people living in the Mountain Range. Therefore, along the chapter a clear idea that the houses in Mixtla de Altamirano are far from being intimate spaces,

and that the mouldable hierarchy that built the "inside" is clearly overcoming that "inside" to define a broader space that furthermore is produced and is in continuous transformation.

Moreover, because the community is, in essence, still the prime socialisation space, it could be said, that the adaptability of the hierarchical structure has allowed the daily practices to stay alive creating a living memory that is reinforced through oral tradition. The invisible hierarchical structure will find a way to adapt to the new circumstances and re-signify tradition but becomes essential in order to perpetuate the collective practices. '*La costumbre*' is then that unquestioned organic invisible hierarchical structure that allows Nahua-ness to flow with a certain amount of repetition. It is thus, in the everyday life that the people in Mixtla de Altamirano can find their living memory and history.

Despite the malleable essence of the Nahua hierarchy, there is still a head of each household who is responsible for the entire wellbeing of the family and most of the times acquired important commitments towards the community too (e.g. *Mayordomias* and *compadrazgos* -ritual kinships-, and *tequio* o *faena* –collective chore inside the community-). It is within these commitments that alliances are strengthened but perhaps more importantly that they trigger the reciprocity that is fundamental among the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano. It could be said then, that the community works on the basis of kinship. However, the nature of this kinship system in Mixtla is open and adjustable. It has been argued that this openness is the result of the many contingencies that indigenous communities had to face in the past (Sandstrom 1991: 157-158). However, there is no doubt that it is because the hierarchy is open and adjustable that self-organised people navigate the different currents that time brings.

In the specific case of the Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano, one of the results of the open kinship system, could be the establishment of the ritual kinship (Rodriguez 2012:97). Nowadays throughout the entire municipality and even further, people established symbolic ties through almost every event of an individual's entire life. It is through the ritual kinship that imbrications between households reinforce this group camaraderie and kept the material spaces called houses open in different ways.

The way that these transformations are being materially realised represents an opportunity to observe the generational clashes that resulted in the production of a well-defined self-collective space, it is not just by exploring a particular experienced space, but also the way in which one space might be interpreted and produced in several ways. The next chapter brings together and expand upon key elements that have been analysed so far: the houses and the particular definitions, conceptualisation and realisation among the people in Mixtla de Altamirano and the way that the materiality can be narrated.

Chapter 7 Mapping to understand the experience of space: The everyday life activities and the narrations that modify materiality.

"Every morning it was the same thing, waking up at 3 am to wash the maize, grind it three times and prepare the tortillas, put the coffee on the stove and heat the left-over beans from a previous day, if we have oil or a little animal fat, we fried them, they are nicer like that! Then the husband is ready to have breakfast. We always had to prepare some lunch for them, like tacos to take away or something for the long work on the field; once he is gone you have to again cook the maize with lime and take the clothes to the river and wash them. On your way to the river pick up some wood and if you find some quelites [pigweed] *then you pick them up and have your food sorted […] Being indigenous meant you were born poor and had to work hard" (Dona Elo, 8 March 2015)*

Throughout this thesis, a map was created; a map of the journey that represents building a certain understanding of 'house' in a Nahua municipality in the Zongolica Mountain Range. Within that experienced map or journey, three topics stand out from the many interesting details and stories that arose that throughout the fieldwork. One refers to the material world that is constantly being defined, understood and signified in different ways. The second one refers to the way these materials survived and help in the performativity of the constructed body. Finally, the third topic refers to the ways in which social scientists (archaeologists, in this case) have been reading this slow movement of modification between humans and their things. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss these three topics, that describe the precise way different material narrations produce dissonant rhythms that intermingle and help consolidate the expression of the houses in Mixtla de Altamirano. Section 7.1, will bring to the forefront the materials that according to Nahuas produce the sense of *home-iness* today. These are fire and smoke, both evoking the importance of warmth, cosiness and comfort but also a past of food, reunion and unity.

Section 7.2 will discuss the connections between the spatial practices in everyday life and the materiality hidden within the oral tradition that has built the space Nahuas called Tocha, where people inhabiting Mixtla de Altamirano became siblings, all members of the same family. It is within this internalised knowledge that they have and the sequence of repetition in the everyday life that things become significant or dismissed. Behind memories and material absences is a particular construction of knowledge and the essence of transformation that encourages materials to transcend time. Therefore, storytelling defines the rhythms of the place and redefines people's understandings, but more importantly helps in building the definition they have of a house. This will later be framed with the example of the drum and the flute in Section 7.3, where the changes in Nahua collective practices and their daily performativity help newer generations to enhance past activities but also present them essentialised as their material uniqueness.

Chapter 7

This discussion chapter will finish (section 7.4) with a brief overview of the way in which archaeologists have narrated materials but more importantly, how these narrations have helped in constructing that *Nahua-ness*. Rather than presenting the fluid essence of their space-places defined by the intermingled relationship produced by people and their things, historical discourses have helped in keeping Nahuas locked in the deep past, dismissing local narratives and leaving them somehow apolitical. It argues then, that archaeologists like other social scientists, should be cautious of knowledge that is produced by this kind of archaeological narrative constitution of an indigenous people and the implications of this version of a specific community for contemporary society. This is not to suggest that archaeologists should divorce from society. On the contrary, research activity should reinforce the creative praxis that will return archaeology into a political matter, not as a dirty word as McGuire (2007: 10) explained, but as the possibility to act upon the world through the production of knowledge. I suggest that it is therefore in the deciphering of this metaphorical map that the experienced space represents, that new narratives can be written. The aformentioned because it is within this space that new materials converge with older ones, and where memory becomes fundamental to building the future, and as a result a slow rhythm of reconfiguration is orchestrated. It is by exploring these rhythms that transformations can be better understood.

This chapter therefore will bring together the key elements that have been analysed through this entire thesis: the materials and the way people relate, use, and remember them to produce an expression of their house. For the Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano, houses are produced in the rhythms of the everyday life. From a region full of smoky kitchens that coexist with each other as one big house to intimate spaces where nucleated families start to be disconnected from the strong collective that they used to be and still remember.

7.1   Materials that speak to us: the heart of the household and the importance of saints, fire and smoke

Despite the fact that Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano have seen a rapid change both in the materials that built the house and in their family compositions, the material structure of the house remains open. One house can be constituted by several rooms in which different nucleated families inhabit. Although the number of rooms that one house compound (household) includes depends greatly on the physical space of the land, it also depends on the family members, the extension of the family *solar* (piece of land) and the history of the family itself. Yet, as expressed by Nahuas themselves throughout this fieldwork, it all starts with a smoky kitchen and a *santocalli* (the name of the place where the Nahuas set the altar to pray). These two spaces, according to

Nahuas, provide the sufficient elements to recreate a sense of '*homi-ness',* within which, driven by the feeling of relatedness and comfort, Nahuas are able to enact the collective practices that they have (as I will discuss in later sections). In reviewing the several interviews undertaken in Mixtla de Altamirano, Nahuas agreed that eating and sleeping are two of the main activities that happen in their houses (Sandstrome: 2000, 59). However, in the words of Dona Elo "*preparing the altar with flowers and cross oneself every morning is as important as having breakfast*" (Dona Elo 8 March 2015). Moreover, one of the ways in which Nahuas sanctify spaces and things in general is through smoke. Therefore, both spaces (kitchens and *santocalli*) share a common denominator: the smoke.

Previous studies that have defined the home as a multi-layered and complex object, propose the assertion that objects have their own biography (Morton 2011; Ermarth 2010; Bennett 2010). For instance, when talking with Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano, the one thing that triggers a sense of feeling at home was the smoke, that in a different context it is also used to sanctify objects. However, can we really assert that smoke was always used for the same purposes or that it created the same feeling of relatedness and therefore meanings? Nevertheless, today smoke is an agent of remembrance that, when captured by the entire understanding of house, produces a sense of place that reminds them of who they are, as Nahuas: '*smelling the smoke I start being hungry (…) my house help me remember my ancestors, therefore remind me who am I and where I am going' (March- May 2015).*

According several of the Elders' accounts, the smoky kitchens and the *santocallis* used to be located in the same room, where other activities used to occur such as sleeping, and resting, among others:

> "*Before we did not have any other rooms other than this one* [men referring to the smoky kitchen], *in here we used to sleep on the floor, all the house activities we used to have, were made on the floor, sometimes the woman weave outside of the kitchens when the day was warm, but they needed to be paying attention to the fire so it was better to do it inside, we normally have a small greenhouse and a space for the chickens inside the household*"(Tetzilquila 15 April 2015)

Consequently, it is not clear when *santocallis* were taken out of the smoky kitchens. Yet, health institutions that arrived during the mid- 1970's, were insistent about moving activities out of the kitchens due to the smoke that, according to them, was unhealthy. Little by little, Nahuas built extra spaces to realise other activities (mainly sleeping). Today in the majority of the houses to

which I was invited, the *santocallis* tend to be separated from the kitchen in a different room. However, Elders pointed out that praying and thanking the mother earth was also done near rivers, caves and in the words of Eliazar: "*any space that needed to be cured. Mainly, in the santocallis we just venerate our deaths, the saints and the virgin*" (Eliazar 12 March 2015). Despite the physical position of the *santocalli*, one thing remains the same, the altar is always lit with candles and incenses as a way to create a sense of being holy. Therefore, smoke is still an important part of the rituality as if it was through it that they were getting blessed. Dona Elo referred to the cosiness of the smoke and the way they bless food through the smoke:

> "*There is nothing like a good fire inside a house, women know that*
> *fire is important to be welcome or not in a house […] women duty is*
> *to provide a good fire for the house, it's as if women were in charge*
> *of the warmth and the holy food people eat*" (Dona Elo) *(March-April*
> *2015)*

One might think that the smoke produced while cooking follows a different path, metaphorically speaking, from the one created by the incense. However, through the several conversations established during fieldwork, I found similarities in the way people conceived smoke. Although several organisations (governmental and non-governmental) have insisted on the elimination of smoke in the kitchens, the isolation and lack of services have kept alive the use of wood for cooking. Regardless of the efforts in trying to eliminate smoke through improvements in the stoves, having a smoked kitchen creates a bucolic atmosphere where people feel welcome and warm. As stated by Eliazar on several occasions:

> "*it is when you have smoke in the house that people understand that*
> *they are welcome in the house […] to have your stove fired means*
> *that you are fine with your family and you have food to prepare so it*
> *is a good sign […] the three stones have been there forever, that is*
> *how our grandparents cook on the floor and they have the shape of a*
> *heart, look!*" (Eliazar 15 March 2015)

Therefore, wood, fire and smoke enter into a symbolic field of action as established by DeMarris, Castillo and Earl (1996), a relationship that they called materialisation, in which myths and other stories bond people with their material culture, creating symbolic meanings that can be used by institutional power (Bourdieu 1977). It becomes then rather unclear whether the importance of smoke started with the relations that they established through the cooking and processing of food or if it has to do with the arrival of Catholicism in the mountain range and the use of incenses for the sanctification of the sacraments, or both in the syncrenicity of cooking with the new catholic

practices. Despite this ambiguity, smoke is still a fundamental element in the mountain range an, as seen in chapter 6 section 6.3, it is still the way Nahuas bless their food, the guests, the gifts, and a place in itself.

> *"We use the incense to sanctify our presents, I personally like the*
> *smell of it, but I don't know when we first start using it, our*
> *grandparents use it when they arrive for the first time to the*
> *mountains… burning incenses accompanied our celebrations"*

Therefore, as Earle and Kristiansen (2010: 11) stated 'Materiality cannot be understood or explained as an isolated theoretical concept'. This is because as they explained, the dialectical relationship that materials have with humans adds social meaning to them, political power (materialisation) and economic direction (materialism). None of the above come in a separate strand and all of them becomes a key concept in the study of archaeology. Within the Nahua context, although stoves have slowly become modified adding components that prevent smoke, which some people consider a technological improvement, smoke still evokes the spiritual world of the Nahua. Whether this spirituality comes from the very first uses of the fire to cook, or from other institutional practices, such as the Catholic Church, smoke becomes a key component in the everyday life of the Nahua.

Hence, it could be said that a strong connection is established with Nahua history and past-ness through the continuity of the smoky kitchens. Additionally, smoke can be understood beyond the production of their material conditions of life. For although smoke represents part of that necessary material condition of life, the use of it does not quite explain the complex relationship that Nahuas established with it. It does illustrate, however, the way materials survive (resist) or adapt to new circumstances.

> *"This is how we used to do it and we will continue doing it, although*
> *now it is easier though, because we don't have to collect the wood,*
> *we have to buy it, but I am happy I don't have to see the new stoves*
> *that I believe are very dangerous and besides they don't allow the*
> *free cooking (Eliazar 10 March 2015)*

> *"this is how my mother and before her my grandmother used to cook,*
> *I don't know how to cook in a different way, i am already happy that*
> *we don't have to do everything on the floor, stoves have changed and*
> *improve already"* (Tetzilquila 15 April, 2015)

Chapter 7

Despite the fact that materials were used in similar contexts throughout the entire mountain range, each one of the interviews undertaken reinforced the idea that a well-founded understanding of context and variation proves necessary when exploring the social meaning of things, as is demonstrate by the example of smoke. For, even though materials can be used in a similar way in a Nahua smoky kitchen, each one of the stories re-directs this use into a different arena (symbolic, economic, or political). This even more evident when absences were remembered and accounted. When materials are no longer part of everyday life they acquired a different meaning that transcended their use:

> *"I remember, when I was young we used to have the fire and the smoke even if it was night, specially over winter time, we did not have any covers, and the fire of the stove was the only thing that kept us alive, now even if I have covers I like eating near the stove and during winter I like to stay near the stove, just to remember those days" (Dona Elo, 15 March, 2015)*

Therefore, materiality has different ways of transcending and becoming fluid "*Now girls don't want to use the metate [grinding stone] so much but tortillas don't taste the same*" (Capultitla March 24, 2015). However, in the case of the Nahua in Mixtla, both context and the variations were transmitted from one generation to the other through oral tradition so that although it is still considered an account of cumulative knowledge, it is slowly being lost: "*now young people don't care about us, they don't listen to us*" (Ayahualulco March 19, 2015). Nonetheless, it was through the Elders' accounts that a new understanding of the home allows me to blur the borders that delimited their houses, as I will discuss in the next section.

7.2 Spaces that tell stories: rhythms of everyday life, oral tradition and living memory

> *"We were Nahuas because we speak Nahuatl, we understand each other and we share the same obligations, besides if you see a brother or a sister that do not have any food, you will share your food, sometimes you won't have any food yourself and it will be nice if someone will give you some food… kids were the important ones and you don't deny food to the kids or the elders that already had worked a lot for the community"*
> (Elders in Matlatecoya, 2015)

When I first arrived in Mixtla de Altamirano, my idea of exploring the 'house' framed it as a unit of analysis, a delineated and bounded space. Nonetheless, through everyday life, these units present themselves as wider, without a clear division or boundary between them. However, it was only, when exploring the houses through the Elders' accounts, that I better understood these (previously conceptualised) 'units'. Although the house was capable of telling a story, it one that can only be accounted through the spatial practices that include the way in which people move through it, produce it, and slowly modify it. By way of explanation, the history hides in the way Nahuas re-signify their space through their daily spatial practices and the different narrations that these spatial practices produce. As the above quote from the Elders in Matlatecoya described, a sense of siblinghood, allows the use of the entire municipality indiscriminately or at least permit a greater sense of freedom among the Nahuas that inhabited Mixtla de Altamirano. Whether a real sense of siblinghood was experienced, the account force newer generations to understand the value of working as a collective self.

Despite the fact that this interconnectivity or sense of freedom is rather difficult to comprehend by just looking into the physical characteristics of the house and the settlement pattern of the communities in Mixtla, it is later when understanding this interconnectivity and the way in which Nahuas organise, that a different map allow to account the rhythmic essence that spatial practices have, its within this rhythmic essence that changes hide, both in materiality and in their sense of being Nahua.

> *"we used to feast with the rivers, we were the guardians of the land*
> *and the mountain, my grandparents use to take me near the river to*
> *feed it, as if it is one of us, and when you live in the mountain you*
> *understand that in order to survive you need the help all, that is why*
> *also we give food to the river and the land, at least that is what my*
> *grandparents used to tell me"* (Xochitla, 16 April, 2015)

Elders told me that the knowledge they possess comes from their parents that taught them how to work and what to do. Consequently, because knowledge and with it meaning, travelled from one generation to the other through the stories and tales, I felt an instant interest in the way Nahuas understand and constitute their materials through their stories. Despite the fact that each narration contains the ways in which Nahuas relate with the materiality that surround them, the transmitted knowledge hides a slow reconfiguration. Since, when accounting events, Elders added or dismissed bits and pieces of narrations that they considered more or less important. Lefebvre (2004:6) introduces this idea when referring to new rhythms, suggesting that 'there was always something unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive'. For instance, when Elders refer to

the new materials a substantial change in their narrations is required. Although there is always a small comparison made with the past, Elders bridge temporalities to make their story believable and adaptable for newer generations:

> *"My mother used to cook on their knees and all the works were harder,*
> *we took a longer time to process the food and go for the water and*
> *all the things we are commited. However, even with all the hard*
> *work, we used to be more involved in the communitarian activities*
> *and festivities [...] now people don't want to commit or participate in*
> *their chores, is as if they believe that they are alone living in here [...]*
> *we can see that also when celebrating the river or the caves, people*
> *don't want to do Xochitlallis because they don't believe they are*
> *necessary, we are disconnected from people and from nature"*
> *(Axoxohuilco 27 March, 2015)*

Certainly, in preserving their oral tradition the prestige of the Elder is also boosted. This is because, Elders acquire the position of the more wise, high in the hierarchy, as the ones that have survived in the mountain range and that know how to work; the knowledgeable ones. This allows them also to be the ones in charge of the compound of houses and normally to be the ones taking (or at least guiding) the decisions regarding the community's organisation. However, today, the social structure that held each member of the group together is being lost.

> *"Is as if the land is claiming us that we don't feast it enough, for*
> *instance, even now with all the fertilizers that we use, our plants*
> *still get sick, before we did not have any chemicals and although it*
> *was harder to work the land we had lots of plants around us that*
> *we can use to eat, and also other animals that we can hunt, but*
> *we were always very careful to ask permission to hunt or work the*
> *land, we were in general more respectful" (Ayahualulco 19 March,*
> *2015)*

For Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano, space recounted through the everyday practices proves to be fundamental. Stories that are narrated within everyday practices, although accompanied by fantastical accounts, become believable. Notably, even though, time is uncertain, the detailed description of the spatial practices allow Elders to make inferences. Contrary to the way external narratives are written when referring to the Nahuas, where the space-place is a given, delimited locale, in Nahuas accounts space-place is presented as flexible and dynamic (as set out in the chapter 4 along section 4.3). Within Mixtla de Altamirano, spatial activities are the ones that

weave tradition from past into future and it is through these constructed meaningful spaces that their collective practices emerge, strengthen and, also transform.

> *"once I remember coming back from the fieldwork after a really hard*
> *day of work when an old lady came by and told me that one member*
> *of my family was going to get sick, in order to make her better I will*
> *need to put an offer in the santocalli that included tamales*
> *(traditional dish) and aguardiente (cane liquor) […] I did and no one*
> *got sick, later on my grandmother told me that the old lady was just a*
> *saint that was reminding me to pray and care about my santocalli"*
> *(Barrio Primero 26 April, 2015)*

Therefore, it is through the spatial practices that houses, and their materiality become meaningful. A good example of the way these narrations built the space and justify the changes was presented in chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.) through the drawing of the smoky kitchen. Elders recall a specific place of storage (on top of the smoky kitchen). A place that according to them disappeared due to the danger that was created having the maize on top of the building (Barrio Cuarto interview). However, as the dynamics of the community were being explored through out this fieldwork, something additional emerged. Due to the lack of land, the majority of people living in Mixtla de Altamirano, changed their activity, from a subsistence agriculture to the construction business. Therefore, Nahuas today tend to leave the community to earn their wages. As a result, the majority of times, food has to be brought from outside. Although the food had not changed, and the maize is sold in large quantities, they do not have to store the corncob anymore. Whether this change had consequently caused the modification of the space that builds the smoky kitchen, it is unclear and was not mentioned within their narrations. Despite this, it is within this internalised knowledge produced by their narrations and the sequence of repetition in the everyday life that both people and place modify each other and that transformations occur.

Additionally, through memory, Elders encourage materials to transcend time. However, in order to survive oblivion, materiality will need to be accounted within the realm of the everyday spatial practices. An example of this is presented through Nahuas narratives, where objects that are remembered trigger past practices that always take them to the way things were, a specific produced space. Therefore, spatial practices become the key ingredient for built space (materiality) to acquire agency. For instance, in building a certain narration of the past, houses were described in a romantic way; as Bachelard (1958) suggested, this way of narrating the space creates connections between memories and the perception of space that help them survive time. However, although romanticised, as Auster (1997: 298) explained, oral traditions and storytelling

tend to cut back narrative by dismissing detailing, this is to create enough space for the reader to appropriate it and continue being remembered. In the case of the narrations in Mixtla de Altamirano, among the interviews with Elders, although the narrations started simple, Elders themselves encouraged and engaged with them and became fuller with details as everybody's particular space was trying to be accounted and accepted by the rest of the members in the meeting. As a result, these 'collective' acts of remembrance provided a detailed reconstruction of their daily practices that were lost. It was when accounting these practices that objects that were long absent reappeared and with them a particular understanding of the communitarian activities that created a unique rhythm on their built space.

Although Elders' narratives help in recreating their built space, in representing it, westernised cartography proves insufficient. In order to map the built space and tell the story an interdisciplinary process needs to involve voicing the many creative ways in which humans have represented their spatial practices: Literature studies, arts, critical theory, anthropology, among other sciences. This is the case of Nahuas oral traditions, where materials were never plainly described, yet they encounter the symbolic essences that Nahuas grant them. This creative way of transmitting the experience of building the environment to newer generations has been a fundamental part of societies. In recreating these narratives, the pictorical codexes combined space, time and anecdotal accounts of a journey in one represented image, as presented in chapter 2 (section 2.1 figure 2.1). Although, westernised cartography is not presented, the use of symbolism and vegetation allows the readers of this map to understand the place and the year in which this historical narrative took place. It could be said that this specific historical narration resembled the creative way in which Nahuas today transmit traditions. That is, the codex's aim was to represent a 'cartographic space' with the history of people as a living matter. While codexes distort the space to create narratives that connect, time, people and environment, today's oral tradition fulfils the same purpose. It is through this detailed way of accounting their own spatial practices that oral traditions connect space, time and the relationship Nahuas have with things.

In the specific case of the Elders in Mixtla de Altamirano, the storytelling helps reinforce everyday life (the spatial action). In other words, storytelling is used in the transmission of knowledge. As for me, this oral tradition helped in dismantling the closed definition of house I brought with me into the field. That is to say, it helped into foreground the opposition between inside/outside. When I referred to the tales and stories of the house, Elders answered back accounting places such as lowland, highlands or middle land. On fewer occasions Nahuas referred to inside activities such as cooking. My framing of 'house' as a contained space (inside) did not fit their narratives. Their framing included the 'outside' in different scales. *Tocha* was described as a region that was

lived and experienced in a different way "*it is not like today, that people don't share anything, before we used to take care of each other, respect our grandparents because they were the ones that know how to work the land in a better way, or to cure themselves, we used to respect them*". Thus, the definition of the house as a unit could remain only if borders disappeared. This is because according to the Elders the whole region and the specific production in each of the sub-regions is experienced as one house "*the house of all of us*", a unit after all.

It is through the oral tradition that materiality survives and moves from one generation to the other with a different meaning in each generation but anchored to the everyday life practices that make a specific space. The way each generation names -and understands- materiality takes us to another very important discussion, one that grants us the possibility to see the way in which materiality helps in reinforcing who we are and allows us to perform our everyday spatial practices. This process will be discussed further in the next section.

7.3   Materials that build the self, collective practices and the objects that transcend time and space: flute and drum that made the house

> "*we used to be respectful with one and another, if a brother or a sister was having problems with health we all gather up and help them carrying the person all the way to a hospital, sometimes it takes us 7 hours to get to a hospital because we have to walk with the ill person, but we manage, we always have ways of sorting problems*"
> *(Xometla 22 March, 2015)*

As discussed in the previous section, oral tradition helps certain objects survive beyond their material absence through the constant act of remembrance. However, more than just being remembered, objects that were used in the past and have disappeared or are not used in the same contexts, help in enhancing the collective self. Although, the relationship between the materiality of the house and society was intimately tied to women and nucleated families, for the Nahuas the materiality of the house ties together the dynamic interconnectivity between several open spaces that built one big home. However, within this particular understanding of the house, is a society that privileges the collective practices that they used to have and the slow reconfigurations that are dismantling their traditional ways of living the house.

Throughout this thesis I have laid out the traditions and changes that are modifying the rhythms of the everyday practices in Mixtla de Altamirano. In doing this, the conceptual delimitation and even definition of the house appeared as central for change. For, the house and the collective-self

or their "*Nahua-ness*" (as a constructed body) are tied together. However, this socially-constructed collective body that they have is in contraposition to new ideas of housing and family that are being imposed within modernity. Despite this, their daily practices, reinforced by the oral traditions that built their ethnic identity, are thought to be non-modern and therefore a product of a past. Although these collective practices are slowly being modified, the objects that once reinforced them are still part of their ethnicity and therefore used to remember 'who they are'

Such is the case of two objects that are also an excellent example of the way materiality can interveave oral traditions and the narrations around certain produced space. I am referring to the flute and the drum presented by Don Laurencio and Don Juan (chapter 6 section 6.4; figure 6.10) and that I will discuss in this section. A first look into the physical components of the drum and the flute allow the researcher to comprehend that neither of them are currently being produced locally. The flute is made out of a kind of plant that no longer exists in the surrounding area:

> "*is made out of the same materials that we used to build the house,*
> *the Carrizo (*spanish for common reed grass*) … before we had this*
> *plant all over the place, it used to grow near the water and also in*
> *some places in the mountain, but now there is no plants like this*"
> (March 21, 2015).

As for the drums, one is made out of a turtle shell, which is no longer part of Nahua's ecosystem, and the other one is made out of an animal skin, as Don Laurencio explained to me referring to the drum of Don Juan:

> "*he made this one with a skin of an animal that he bought, he has*
> *had it for 30 years, but before this one he had one that he made*
> *himself with the skin of animals he hunted and the fibres of the*
> *maguey that we used… he said that grandparents taught him to do*
> *them and play it*".

Despite the fact that both objects have physically changed, people still enjoy playing the flute and the drum. However, again, the purpose of these specific objects varied. As explained to me by Don Juan and Don Laurencio, playing the drum and the flute was something that you needed to do, not so much as an activity that was recreational. These two instruments were once used to announce that a certain chore needed to be done. Due to the big, open spaces that Nahuas inhabit, a one-to-one verbal communication was problematic. Therefore, the drum and the flute were used to advise people that something was going on and they needed to gather in a specific place. Food processing, building smoky kitchens, schools or other spaces, carrying a sick person,

and festivities, were all practices that involved all the community and needed people to gather beforehand in order to find the best solution to a problem.

Consequently, it could be said that these two instruments always accompanied the collective practices of Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano. However, according to Don Laurencio and Don Luis, other instruments were also used that had not survived like the turtle shell and even sea shells:

> *"and pretty soon, these two instruments will disappear too, now*
> *young people prefer to listen to their phones that keep music inside,*
> *or they want to play other instruments like accordion or trumpets, we*
> *are the only two survivors of this tradition, but also, authorities don't*
> *care that much for the collective work, nobody wants to do anything*
> *for the other people, specially if it is for free" (Don Juan 21 March*
> *2015)*

Despite the fact that these objects are not used for the collective tasks that they have, they are an important part of what they presented to me as their *Nahua-ness*. According to Lic. Gerardo, these two objects are fundamental for parties, and big events where Nahuas need to represent themselves:

> *"We used the flute and the drum to present ourselves and as a*
> *sign of festivity and respect, for instance when an authority*
> *comes to Mixtla we receive them with the drum and the flute…*
> *its our tradition and it makes us proud" (Don Laurencio 21 March*
> *2015)*

For that reason, these two objects work as agents that help move the social body that Nahuas represent. Furthermore, with this illustration, an idea is put to the forefront, society needs to narrativise their things to make them agents of change and continuity. Within this idea, a turtle shell might not be used or mean the same thing for one society as for the other. However, if this object is to have social resonance, the turtle shell would have to have shared meaning within the Nahua community and be narrativised. Once narrativised and as agents, these objects (and materiality in general) acquire political consequences. In the case of the instruments used by the Nahuas today, they portray the essence of what the collective work used to be. Although, now this work is no longer there or has changed, these objects remain and have moved from being used for a sometimes trivial, daily life activity, into a symbolic arena. These instruments, then, have become part of Nahuas' (as a social body) memory, that furthermore, sets them apart from other social bodies. Therefore, these materials become ritualised and now are only used during

festivities where there is the need to enhance or stand out from other groups. In other words, they become objects of their *Nahua-ness.*

This example reinforces the idea that objects and, in that regard, materiality in general, has to move from a simple descriptive focus on technological improvements to a much wider understanding of human-nature relationships. Although this idea has helped reshape material culture studies, it has also produced different propositions. For instance, Schiffer and Miller (1999) have suggested that by differentiating artefacts and external living organisms, the human-nature relationship can be better illustrated and therefore understood. However, this division is not always so clear, as seen with the example of the musical instruments. With objects that are re-used from nature such as the sea shells or the turtle shell, this division is further blurred. Furthermore, during the months spent living in Mixtla de Altamirano, many objects that were used in Nahua daily life present themselves in a natural way. For instance, the corn cob used to clean the table, the rocks that are used in the stove, are both nature and culture objects. In that regard, Ingold (2012: 431) suggests that even living organisms should be understood in the scope of the human living communities and therefore accounted for in our understanding of them. Thus, materiality should be understood as a human construction that is immersed in a specific narrative, then as established by Rolston (2010:304) "*the way to future is through remembering rather than enforced forgetting [...] through mature contestation rather than bland reconciliation*". A suggestion that furthermore, recognises the importance of ethnographies as a way of voicing and illustrating the different ways in which the relationship human-nature is narrated and move the given social body (Alberti and Marshall 2009:346). Or, as Viveros de Castro (2012) suggests that in order to understand or explore other people's materiality we will need to engage in their complete understanding of their world.

In this formulation, the flute and the drum should be explored as the objects used for communication inside the house of all of us (Tocha); they both evoke the collective work by accompanying it. New ways of organising themselves have resulted in differences both in the meaning and in the structure of the objects. Despite the changes, these objects have survived, not as pieces in a museum but as active agents in the remembrance process of who they were and how they used to work. Therefore, according to Nahuas they still define them, they both still evoke the collective practices that they used to have that united them in one specific material expression of house.

Moving on, from any material to specifically the houses and their material expression, specifically, it is important to understand houses as more than an organisational unit. In this process, home and self, and material and emotional connections become co-constitutive. However, as Gosden

and Marshall (1999:172) state, at the heart of any analysis has to be the link between people and things, rather than the object in itself or society in itself, we should focus on the different meanings and values that people grant to objects. These different rhythms are given by the practices in the everyday life and the way we use materials (as discussed with the example of the drum and the flute). In addition to this, in order to bound personhood and self-realisation, Earle and Kristiansen (2010:11) refer to the necessary analysis of materiality, materialisation and materialism, or the way materiality slowly becomes objects with meanings for a specific society. In other words, the fluid essence of history will be given by the different narrations that materials have for each society.

7.4 Narrating materials: archaeologists as storytellers reinforcing oral tradition

In the sections above several points were made regarding the entangled relationship established between people and things. A relationship that is interwoven by the way people narrate and give meaning to their things. Focusing on the materiality of the houses that the Nahuas have, one can argue that materiality should be read in that context. Although Nahua materiality does have physical characteristics that cannot and should not be denied, it is through the Nahuas everyday spatial practices that this materiality becomes meaningful and therefore agents to move the self constructed body that Nahuas are. It is then, through these meanings that are constantly changing, that both uses and practices, modified the everyday rhythms of people. In Mixtla de Altamirano, one can explore these continuous changes of meanings through their oral tradition:

> *"To do this shawl [rebozo] we used the backstrap loom as our grandmothers*
> *taught us, however now we buy the wool and use different colours that we*
> *buy in Zongolica, this save us a lot of time because before we needed to*
> *have the goats then take out the wool, wash it, collect the plants to dye the*
> *wool, dye it, use the spindle, look at my spindle, it was given by my*
> *grandmother, although I don't use it, it is very special and when I have the*
> *chance I use it to teach women to weave with it" (Barrio Segundo, 26 April*
> *2015)*

Although storytelling and oral folklore in Mexican culture has had a long tradition (Mariscal 1990; Briggs 1988), according to some researchers this tradition is the result of the colonisation process (Florescano 1997; Lopez-Austin 1985). They base this hypothesis on the fact that it has been well documented that the Catholic Church used orality through the acculturalisation process to overcome language differences. Whether this practice is introduced or if it was presented prior to

Spanish colonisation, two points should be taken into account when exploring and comparing narrations. One is that indigenous communities, in this case the Nahuas, have been using oral tradition for a long period of time, making it their own (Kuss 2010; Damm 2005; MacCarty 2003; Whiteley 2002; Cruikshank 1992; Robe 1970). This is well illustrated by the conversation established in Barrio Segundo, where women explained to me the weaving process that involves new materials. Second, that the narrations that are produced by Nahuas are mainly judged as being superstitions, rather than stories that contain a particular way of understanding their surroundings:

> *"Our first grandparents told us the story that in the mountain called*
> *Tlacuiloltecatl big snakes live and have their nests in caves; some of them*
> *are even bigger than the size of the men. It is also said, that some of them*
> *are so old that they have feathers. The snakes are always sleeping but when*
> *they are hungry, they produce a kind of fog that is very well spread. This to*
> *attract birds and other kinds of animals and eat […] that is why our home-*
> *the mountain- is foggy mainly in the mornings" (Capultitla 24 March 2015)*

Although, some researchers have insisted on the fact that dismissing this cumulative knowledge reinforces the existing social inequalities and transcends into the performativity of indigenous groups (and any minority groups) (Gonzalez-Casanova 1965). In this specific case, Nahua oral traditions, as any other narrative produced in a non-academic space, are dismissed. However, as explored in the previous section, a closer look into these narratives allows researchers to understand the specific ways in which people understand their surroundings and help objects trascend time as explored in the previous section. More importantly, in addition to being a good source of information, oral tradition provides a good example of the ways in which people engage with the act of remembrance and build a story that connects time, space, human and nature, one that can help archaeological research not just in understanding this intermingled relationship, but in prompting a different way to account history.

However, oral traditions have been severely dismissed by Mesoamerican archaeologists, a situation that has driven archaeologial research in Mexico far away from the contemporary past (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2010) by disconnecting people from their things. In the eagerness to conceptualise the biological and social evolution of the 'modern' human, a single linear narrative has been produced (Preucel and Meskell 2004:3). This one narration has, furthermore, prioritised the *progression* of history. Despite the breadth of work that has attempted to frame archaeology as the exploration of the material life and the constitution of the object world (Hodder 2004; Patterson 2004; Godsen 2004, 1994; Buchli 2004; Ashmore 2004;

White 1973) in which new narratives provide insights into the way humans give meaning to objects and use them according to a specific time and place (Sorensen 2010; Yarrow 2006; Lucas 2001; Bender, Hamilton and Tilley 1997;Hodder 1997), by dismissing differing, non-academic ways of accumulating knowledge in specific contexts, we close the posibility of better conceptualising and understanding temporality, spatiality and materiality.

In the oral tradition of the Nahuas, materiality imbricates with each other and with humans and despite the argument that materials can be atemporal or have a different temporality, when materiality is narrated it shares a specific time in the everyday practices of people. It is then through these meaningful narrations (that do not necessarily have to be written) that materiality is capable of producing change inside a specific social body (Meskell and Joyce 2003; Hodder 1987; Meskell 2001: 203; Bradley 2000). It is by voicing these multiple narrations that monolithic and hegemonic historical narratives can be dismantled, as stated by the elders in Mixtla de Altamirano:

> *"new generations don't care about our knowledge anymore, they think that they don't need it because with our knowledge they don't get money, but our knowledge is far more important, we know how to take care of the land and ourselves" (Axoxohuilco 2015)*

> *" I remember that before we used to respect our elders, everyday we hear their advices, now nobody respect us, they treat us as dogs, sometimes they don't even give us food" (Ayahualulco 2015)*

> *"I remember before our grandmothers know how to take care of the mothers and their babies when they were coming, we didn't use any doctors, now young people don't want to learn"(Mixtlanktlakpan 2015)*

> *"My grandparent tought me how to play the flute, it is made from carrizo… now the new generation use even their phone to produce music, they don't like this one anymore"(Xochitla 2015)*

> *"We did not have any school so we have to learn through our granparents, now kids don't trust us, they think they know more because they go to school, they are not interested in our tales and stories, some of them don't even want to speak in Nahuatl anymore" (*Barrio Primero, 2015*)*

Chapter 7

Although the above quote was produced in different communities, they share one important point, Elders and their narratives are no longer being treated in the same way. Even though, their narrations provide an insight into the construction of the space and exposed Tocha '*the house of all of us'*, these accounts have been dismissed by the hegemonic discourse. Rather than this narrative, the new generation of Nahuas remembered the greatness of the Nonohualcas who were warriors and descendents of the great Toltecs as explored in Chapter 2. Their deep past, somehow becomes more important to Nahuas than the rhythms that provided continuity and discontinuities in the everyday practices.

For instance, when exploring these changes produced by the narratives inside the social body, Hodgkin and Radstone (2006: 1-5) state that these narratives even determine the way people remember. We can agree with this statement when we focus on the younger generation of Nahuas in Mixtla that feel proud of a deep past but dismiss their oral traditions. Despite this, generational disjuncture my fieldwork highlighted the way in which collective memory, has also the potential to create a sense of place and belonging, even in contested landscapes (Bender 2001: 3). In this particular context, however, we must also bear Gregory's point (2004: 11) "*Colonialism was always as much about making other people's geographies as it was about making other people's histories*" in mind. The narratives of the Nahuas resisted and through the constant enactments produced in the everyday life a certain collective identity survives. Despite the fact that social sciences are increasingly open and engaged with different ways of thinking, imagining, and representing the world, there is still a long way to go in grasping different understandings. Localisms, indigenous stories and many other narratives are slowly being heard, celebrated and accounted (Comaroff 1993; Olupona and Rey 2008). Nonetheless as Edgeworth (2006:8) states:

> *"Any attempt to write something so radically different from the norm*
> *runs the risk that it will be dismissed out of hand because it is so*
> *unconventional. Yet at the same time it challenges us to break out of*
> *the conventions of traditional ethnographic reporting and its*
> *constructions of objective reality".*

Engaging with these different and/ or new narrations of past, present and identity provide the reasercher with tools to interrogate and critique the established ones.

In Mixtla de Altamirano, connections established between memory and the reconstruction of the past consolidate the communitarian practices that Nahuas still have. They keep a traditional understanding in the narrations that expresses themselves in their everyday life enactments. Among archaeologists, the use of social

memory has slowly become recognised as a way to understand different customs of building relationships with and through things and the meanings that are granted within everyday practices. Within this context, social memory has helped archaeologists explore the socially-constructed space, locate archaeological sites (Borgstede 2010: 385-392) understand cosmogony in the past (Lopez-Austin 2015; Zunino 2013) and explore everyday life (Arnold and Graesch 2002; Arnold et. al 2012). Nonetheless, this knowledge provides a wider view into other relationships still unexplored. Overall, social memory, literature narratives, photography, codexes, decolonial narratives, all represent a different way of objectivising one flexible and mouldable past, in which the home/the house, becomes through memories, stories, photographs, maps, and even modifications, that thing devoted to reminding us who we are, where we came from, and where we are heading. An object produced from our experience and once narrated as an agent in the self-construction process.

7.5   Brief Conclusions

The discussion within this chapter brings together different aspects of the production of a particular space called 'house' in Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz. A broader and important idea is highlighted in the way Nahuas construct these spaces, a relevant idea is foregrounded; the importance of promoting interdisciplinary research in order to understand the relationship established between people and their things. Throughout this thesis, the materiality through which Nahua houses are produced is presented in diverse ways (official history, photographs, drawings, and storytelling). However, despite the diversity in which materiality is presented, meanings and understandings of it, comes from the way in which Nahuas use them in the everyday practices. Additionally, these everyday spatial practices help bridge two different moments, a remembered space that is full of anecdotic accounts of previous practices, beliefs and knowledges, and an idea of a future in where Nahuas project themselves as a constitute body. With not a clear present, it could be said that it is within these daily rhythms that these spaces are constantly being named, understood and narrativised. Hence, past and the idea of future are slowly modifying the everyday practices that construct the self (in this case the collective practices that the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano have).

Consequently, by presenting the way in which Nahuas built the concept of house, this thesis illustrates two important points: first, that materials should speak to us in a fluid way; and, second, how Nahuas create their own fluid history by understanding, naming and passing to newer generations a strong set of ideas that built their space. However, more important and significant for archaeological research is the way in which materiality is being narrated.

Chapter 7

Throughout this thesis I have pointed out that meaningful spaces are produce by the spatial practices in the everyday life of a certain social body, and it is through the meanings that these practices created that this body becomes modified. By setting out this argument, I also imply that historical narratives should incorporate this fluidity in their discussion at the production of spaces and people.

Chapter 8   Conclusion, summary and further research

The key issue this thesis addresses are the materials that are used to produce the expression of a 'house' in an indigenous municipality located in the Zongolica Mountain Range. However, rather than presenting a clear division between the study of the physical world and the study of social processes (interactions), the houses are presented through everyday spatial practices that Nahua in Mixtla de Altamirano have. Therefore, the houses are explored as spaces that are lived and built (the house) but also perceived, dreamed and remembered (the home). This way of viewing the house of the Nahuas challenges the way in which classical Mesoamerican scientists have narrated Nahua past by connecting their ethnicity to certain materiality. Not just because it presents the fluidity in which this materiality is being constanlty narrated, but also, because it includes an additional movement through the way in which different generations of Nahuas remember these narrations. Consequently, rather than presenting a linear account, this thesis presents the history of the Nahua as a spiral in which both humans and their things are in constant change.

It is within these 'produed space and time' narrations that the Nahuas in Mixtla de Altamirano give fluidity to history. Consequently, this thesis captures that fluidity by presenting the dissimilar meanings that Nahuas grant to things (both the remembered ones -memories- and the ones that keep on being used). Fluidity that, furthermore, pays special attention to the rhythmic essence that the everyday life produces by mixing anthropogenic tempos (Nahuas cyclical everyday spatial practices) with those produced by the materiality that surround them. Within this narrations a cumulative knowledge is hidden, granting their history with answers to the three main questions that those who explore the past need to answer: 'why?', 'for what?' and 'for whom?. In Nahuas narrations, the answer to these questions help them bridge past with future and by doing so, their historical accounts return to the arena of politics and ethics.

Throughout this thesis, oral narratives and the way people remembered were confronted with the way in which Mesoamerican archaeologists have narrated Nahuas' materiality (or any other self-constructed body's materiality). However, by presenting these juxtaposed narratives, a dynamic history is presented, one that underlines the importance of narrating the rhythms created through the complicated relationship established between people and their things. A relationship based on the use and re-use of materiality, accounting memory and remembrance in the spatial practices of the everyday life that Nahua have. It is then, my belief that as Edgeworth (2006: 8) proposes, narratives should "*move forward from the straitjacket of hegemonic discourse*" to consider different possibilities in order to create a more flexible discourse that insists on prioritizing creativity of praxis over an unreachable objectivity; or, in the words of Wallerstein

Chapter 8

(1991: 1-4), to un-think the social sciences that have "*rarely consider the multiplicity of time-spaces that confront us, and therefore rarely concern ourselves with which ones we use, or should use, in the deciphering of our social realities*".

During fieldwork, an initial look at the houses proved that a correct definition should not start by imposing specific boundaries or previous definitions and understandings of houses. Rather, they were slowly defined through the exploration of the way in which, in this case, the Nahuas conceived, lived and experienced their space in everyday life, this means including the oral traditions that they have. Rogers (2013:264) describes, that using oral tradition to explore the space has been severely dismissed:

> "*It might seem inappropriate, reckless even, to present empirical data about housing issues and the meaning people place on their home that is so divorced from the dominant symbolic vehicles – maps, plans and policy texts- that are regularly deployed to structure socio-political knowledge of housing issues.*"

But, by changing the approach taken during fieldwork, different rhythms among generations that inhabit the mountain range appeared as radically different. It was through these diverse rhythms that a more complex relationship with materiality pointed to the importance of memories and acts of remembrance, as a way to understand the material changes.

Consequently, the houses became fluid in constant change, with a never-clear present. Rather, there is an experience space that bridges two moments: the past knowledges and the projection to the future. Nonetheless, it is within everyday life of the Nahuas that these rhythms are orchestrated, and within it, a different narrative emerges. One that prioritises continuities and discontinuities, reflecting the dialectical movement between the collective open understanding which foregrounds outside elements like water, land, animals, and resources in general, with the new materials that closed the houses and shift the collective movement into closer, individual spaces.

8.1   Summary

This thesis presents the many and dissimilar narratives that help in building the concept of house in Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz. Chapter two presents the specific account of the Nonohualcas and the pieces in the puzzle that foreground the Nahua background. Although this specific account is reinforced by a national education system, it helps in disconnecting the traditional way of sharing the knowledge among the Nahuas through their oral tradition. Chapter three, takes a

closer look into the methodology that was used to explore the complicated relationship Nahuas have with their materials. Chapter four, presents the material expression of the houses in their physical form. Although there are many ways of presenting materiality, such as through photographs, drawings or oral tradition, materiality is always being narrated, defined and understood through the human eye. Later chapters present the everyday rhythms that build their sense of house and bounds ethnicity with materiality, not as a fixed category but as a fluid and rhythmic construction. While chapter five presents the social relations that produce the houses in different temporalities, chapter six, binds them with the reproduction of the everyday life that most of the times go unquestioned. Finally, chapter 7 brings together different aspects of one same production of the space called 'house' explored. Pointing out that meaningful spaces are then produce by the spatial practices in the everyday life of a certain social body, and it is through this meanings that this body becomes modified.

By presenting the materiality of the houses that connects people with their environment (to which Nahuas had to adapt) an agentic and meaningful space was built, one that includes the memory of adaptation that construct their *Nahua-ness* when producing their home Tocha. The same one that remains in the memory of the Elders and that was once shared via oral tradition. Therefore, past and future slowly modified the everyday practices that altered the self construction body that Nahuas are.

Finally, Nahua produce and reproduce with certain rhythms of repetition that involve a collective way of understanding the environment, social relations and human subjectivity. Moreover, these rhythms create a particular knowledge that is transmitted via memory that materialised with the act of remembrance 'performativity of the self' where the characterisation of the house continues being ontologically fundamental. Therefore, the Nahua use of the act of remembrance can be consider as a creative way to resist the material impositions coming from outside, but also can be used to project and reinforce the self -being Nahua- and the relationship between self and others, humans and non-humans- as free. Nahuas, therefore, signify and re-signify tradition through the meanings granted to the materials that convey in a specific time and a specific space that built their sense of self.

8.2   Suggestions for Future Work

This thesis explores the definition granted to a space called the 'house'. One of the more significant findings to emerge from the study of the way Nahuas built such spaces is the idea that fluidity, dynamism and continuities should modify the way other historical narratives (Hegemonic ones) are being written. Therefore, the new narratives should explore creative ways and promote

interdisciplinary research to understand the relationship established between people and their things. Future research might productively explore more closely pre-Hispanic houses and the settlement patterns inside the mountain range (looking in more detail at the archaeology of the mountain range) to discover the fluid ways in which people in the past used and produced the Zongolica Mountain Range. The resulting information could be compared with the orality of producing the mountain range in order to create a better understanding of these fluid ways in which people produce it. Therefore, a greater degree of accuracy on the matter that has been exposed throughout this thesis (the imbricate relationship between people and their things and the creative ways in which they use and re-use them to produce a space that can be named a house) can help in our understanding of the way humans create borders and delimitate a specific space according to their needs. It is my belief that it is in the understanding of the produced space which includes (experience and newer idea) that objects and things are understood in the scope of humans that are constantly producing different rhythms.

Appendix A The Material Data Bases

A.1 Structure, Shape and Outside components

A.1.1 Materials use to build the roof

	COMMUNITY	ROOF						
		Tejamanil	Grass	Red Clay Tiles	Corrugated Metal Sheet	Maguey	Wood	Others
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x			x		
	Axoxohuilco	x	x					
	Mexcala	x	x (trenzado)			x		
	Tlaxcantla		x					
	Tepa Ocotempa		x			x		
	Tenexcalco					x		
	Coximalco		x					
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco		x					
	Xometla		x (cane)					
	Tlachicuapa	x	x			x		
	Barrio Tercero	x	x (malinal, bambu y cane)			x		
	Barrio Primero		x (cane)					
	Capultitla		x (describe)			x		
	Col. Miguel Aleman*		x					
	Tetzilquila		x (Zacaloma)					
	Barrio Segundo	x	x (corn, palm and cane)			x		
	Barrio Cuarto		x (corn and cane)					
	Xala *		x (cane)					
	San Andres Mixtla							
Lowlands	Matlatecoya		x (cane)					
	Zacaloma		x (cane)					
	Xochitla		x (cane)				x	
	Zacatilica		x (cane)					
	Tecolotla		x (cane)					
	Mangotitla *		x					
	Cuatlajapa	x	x					

The materials used to build the roof of the smoky kitchens, although out of the 26 interviews, 24 refer to the material of grass to build the roof. The diversity of grass varied in between regions. Some also refer to the use of Tejamanil which is a pre-Hispanic woodcutting technique, and some to the use of Maguey plant. Just one community mention wood for the roof

Appendix A

A.1.2   Materials used to build the walls

| | COMMUNITY | WALLS | | | | | |
		Stone	Wood/ Cladding	Thin Sticks	maguey Fiber	Plastic Bags	Others
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x				
	Axoxohuilco		x				
	Mexcala						
	Tlaxcantla			x			
	Tepa Ocotempa		x				
	Tenexcalco						
	Coximalco		x	x	x		
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco		x				
	Xometla	x		x			
	Tlachicuapa			x			
	Barrio Tercero						
	Barrio Primero			x			
	Capultitla		x	x			
	Col. Miguel Aleman*						
	Tetzilquila						
	Barrio Segundo		x				
	Barrio Cuarto		x	x			
	Xala *		x	x (like flute)			
	San Andres Mixtla						
Lowlands	Matlatecoya			x			
	Zacaloma			x			
	Xochitla	x	x				
	Zacatilica			x			
	Tecolotla		x	x			
	Mangotitla *			x			
	Cuatlajapa		x	x			

The walls of the smoky kitchen were made mainly from two materials: Wood-Cladding and Thin sticks. However, a general tendency in the table reflects the use of wood in the colder areas, meanwhile the thin sticks are more used in the warmer areas.

A.1.3   **Shape of the smoky kitchens**

COMMUNITY	Squared/ Rectangular (dos aguas)	Oval/ Circular (Lima)	Rectangular	Others
Mixtlantlakpak				
Axoxohuilco		x		
Mexcala				
Tlaxcantla	x			
Tepa Ocotempa				
Tenexcalco				
Coximalco				
Ayahualulco				
Xometla				
Tlachicuapa		x		
Barrio Tercero	x	x		x(change new house)
Barrio Primero		x		
Capultitla				
Col. Miguel Aleman*				
Tetzilquila				
Barrio Segundo				
Barrio Cuarto				
Xala *				
San Andres Mixtla				
Matlatecoya				
Zacaloma				
Xochitla				
Zacatilica				
Tecolotla				
Mangotitla *				
Cuatlajapa				

Elders did not pay especial attention when questions regarding the shape of the building were asked. However, in one community they refer to the changes in the shape once newer materials where introduce to the community (for instance from circular shape to rectangular when using corrugated metal sheets)

Appendix A

A.1.4   Other spaces that were included in the house

	COMMUNITY	Outside Spaces							
		Temaxchali	Santocalli	traditional oven	Letrines	Green House	Animal House	Field and Seeds	Other Rooms
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x	x		x	x		
	Axoxohuilco		x						x
	Mexcala								
	Tlaxcantla	x	x						
	Tepa Ocotempa								
	Tenexcalco							x	
	Coximalco								
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco								x
	Xometla								
	Tlachicuapa							x	x (we had land)	x (church red clay stones)
	Barrio Tercero						x	x (in rancho)	
	Barrio Primero						x		
	Capultitla								
	Col. Miguel Aleman*								
	Tetzilquila							x	
	Barrio Segundo	x							
	Barrio Cuarto	x	x						
	Xala *								
	San Andres Mixtla								
Lowlands	Matlatecoya					x	x	x	
	Zacaloma					x	x	x	
	Xochitla							x	
	Zacatilica					x	x	x	
	Tecolotla					x	x	x	
	Mangotitla *					x	x		
	Cuatlajapa							x	

Other spaces that were illustrated as part of the past daily life in the Nahua communities. As shown in the table, another space considered as important for Nahuas is the fields and seeds as well as green house and animal houses. Nonetheless a further correlation between space and place have as a result the importance of this places in the lowlands, while as in the upper sides of the mountain the places to cure, pray and other activities result important.

A.2 Everyday life objects

A.2.1 Objects inside the smoky kitchen

Artifacts inside the smoky kitchen

Region	COMMUNITY	Molcajete (Mortar)	Metate (Grinder stone) / Metapili (Grinder)	Comal (Griddle)	Metlatxontil (old version of Grinder stone)	Olla/Wiko/Tzinpintles (Pots/water Jar)	Cestos (Palm leaf baskets)	Petate (Palm leaf mat)	Jicara/tecomate (pumpkin bowls)	3 stones fire in the ground	Maguey fiber	Banana leaf	lime	ash
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak		x	x (local)		x (local)		x	x	x	x		x (local)	x
Highlands	Axoxohuilco		x	x (local)		x (local)				x				
Highlands	Mexcala		x		x (grind coffee)	x				x				x
Highlands	Tlaxcantla		x	x (local)		x (local)			x	x				x
Highlands	Tepa Ocotempa			x (local)		x (local)		x		x				
Highlands	Tenexcalco		x											
Highlands	Coximalco		x		x (sand for ceramic)				x	x			x (local)	
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco							x						
Middle-lands	Xometla						x (cane)	x					x (local)	
Middle-lands	Tlachicuapa			x (local)		x (local)				x				
Middle-lands	Barrio Tercero					x (local)-describe								
Middle-lands	Barrio Primero		x		x	x (local)-describe				x		x		x
Middle-lands	Capultitla						x (cane)	x	x					
Middle-lands	Col. Miguel Aleman*													
Middle-lands	Tetzilquila		x			x			x	x				
Middle-lands	Barrio Segundo		x			x							x (trade)	
Middle-lands	Barrio Cuarto		x	x (trade)		x (trade)				x			x (trade)	x
Middle-lands	Xala*		x							x				
Middle-lands	San Andres Mixtla													
Lowlands	Matlatecoya		x	x (trade)		x (trade)			x (local)					
Lowlands	Zacaloma			x (trade)					x (local)				x (trade)	
Lowlands	Xochitla	x	x	x (trade)		x (trade)		x	x (local)	x	x	x	x (trade)	
Lowlands	Zacatilica		x	x (trade)		x (trade)				x			x (trade)	
Lowlands	Tecolotla		x	x (trade)		x (trade)		x	x (local)	x		x	x (trade)	
Lowlands	Mangotitla*		x	x (trade)	x	x (trade)		x					x (trade)	
Lowlands	Cuatlajapa		x	x (trade)	x (grind coffee)	x (trade)				x		x	x (trade)	

231

A.2.2 Food production in Mixtla de Altamirano

Region	COMMUNITY	maize/beans/chili	quelites	bread	Coffee	Cane	bananas	wild mushroom	other wild plants	pumpkin	tomatoe/Potatoe/Chayote	other domestic plants	wild animals	domestic animals	egg	Atole (maize beverage)	Manteca (Lard)	Panela (raw cane sugar)
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x		x (rancho)		x (rancho)	x	x	x	x	x	x	hardly	x	x	x	x
	Axoxohuilco	x (rancho)	x		x (rancho)				x			x	x					
	Mexcala	x	x	x (trade)	x					x	x		x			x		
	Tlaxcantla	x	x		x		x (rancho)								x			x
	Tepa Ocotempa	x	x	x (trade)			x (rancho)											x
	Tenexcalco	x			x													x
	Coximalco	x	x		x		x							x		x		x
	Ayahualulco	x	x		x		x (rancho)	x	x		x	x (fruit)		x		x		
	Xometla	x	x		x		x					x (orange)		x		x		x
	Tladhicuapa	x	x				x (rancho)											
	Barrio Tercero	x (trade)			x (rancho)		x (rancho)						x	x	x			
	Barrio Primero	x (trade)	x				x (rancho)									x	x	x
	Capultitla	x (trade)	x		x (local)				x (sweet potatoe)				x (armadil)	x	x			x (local)
	Col. Miguel Aleman *	x	x	x (trade)	x	x					x							
Middle-lands	Tetzilquila	x (trade)	x in coffee (trade)		x (local)					x				x				x
	Barrio Segundo	x (trade)			x (local)													
	Barrio Cuarto	x (trade)			x (local)					x (seeds medicine)				x	x	x	x	x
	Xala*	x	x		x (local)		x		x (green sauce)						x	x	x	x
	San Andres Mixtla																	
	Matlatecoya	x (local)			x (local)	x			x (chamaedorea Tr)	x		x (ejotes trade)		x		x		x
Lowlands	Zacaloma	x	x		x	x (describ)	x (local)					x (ejotes, chili trade)	x	x		x		
	Xochitla	x (local)			x		x (local)		x (green sauce)	x	x			x	x			x (local)
	Zacatilica	x					x (local)		x (chamTepej)		x (trade high)	x (orange, yucca)	x	x	x			x (local)
	Tecolotla	x	x			x	x (local)			x	x	x (fruits)		x			x	
	Mangotitla *	x	x		x		x (local)					x (fruits)					x	x (local)
	Cuatlajapa	x	x		x	x	x (local)							x	x			

A.2.3 Objects that refer to dress

	COMMUNITY	dress							
		manta (coarse fabric)	wool	Calzon and manga (men pants and blause)	Mangas and Lios (women skirts	Malacate (spindle)	waist loom	Huarache (Sandals)	colouring plants
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak		x						
	Axoxohuilco								
	Mexcala		x	x	x		x		
	Tlaxcantla	x	x		x	x	x		
	Tepa Ocotempa		x			x			
	Tenexcalco								
	Coximalco	x	x		x	x			x
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco								
	Xometla		x			x			
	Tlachicuapa		x						
	Barrio Tercero		x			x			
	Barrio Primero	x		x					
	Capultitla								
	Col. Miguel Aleman *			x					
	Tetzilquila	x	x	x					
	Barrio Segundo								
	Barrio Cuarto			x					
	Xala*		x						
	San Andres Mixtla								
Lowlands	Matlatecoya								
	Zacaloma				x (trade)				
	Xochitla			x					
	Zacatilica								
	Tecolotla								
	Mangotitla *								
	Cuatlajapa	x							

Appendix A

A.2.4 Plants use for diverse purposes

	COMMUNITY	plants		
		medicine	decoration	others purposes
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x	
	Axoxohuilco			
	Mexcala			
	Tlaxcantla	x		
	Tepa Ocotempa			
	Tenexcalco			
	Coximalco	x	x	
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco			
	Xometla	x	x	x (sweets)
	Tlachicuapa			
	Barrio Tercero		x	
	Barrio Primero	x	x	x (washing cloths)
	Capultitla		x	
	Col. Miguel Aleman *			
	Tetzilquila		x	
	Barrio Segundo	x	x (ritual to cut a flower)	
	Barrio Cuarto	x	x (used for medicine too)	
	Xala*			
	San Andres Mixtla			
Lowlands	Matlatecoya			
	Zacaloma			
	Xochitla	x	x (trade)	
	Zacatilica			
	Tecolotla	x		x (soap)
	Mangotitla *	x		x (soap)
	Cuatlajapa		x	

A.2.5   Outside objects used in Mixtla

	COMMUNITY	Machete	Mekapale	Sickle	Hoe	Press/Mill	Saw
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x				x
	Axoxohuilco		x	x			x
	Mexcala		x				
	Tlaxcantla						
	Tepa Ocotempa	x			x		
	Tenexcalco	x	x		x		
	Coximalco		x				
Middle-lands	Ayahualulco		x				
	Xometla						
	Tlachicuapa						
	Barrio Tercero						
	Barrio Primero		x				
	Capultitla	x			x		
	Col. Miguel Aleman *						
	Tetzilquila		x		x		
	Barrio Segundo		x				
	Barrio Cuarto						
	Xala*						
	San Andres Mixtla						
Lowlands	Matlatecoya						
	Zacaloma					x	
	Xochitla		x				
	Zacatilica	x	x		x		
	Tecolotla		x				
	Mangotitla *	x	x				
	Cuatlajapa	x	x				

A.2.6   Objects used for ritual purposes

ritual: mayordomias, xochitlalis and faenas

	COMMUNITY	candles	Sahumador (incense burners)	animals	turtle shell	drum	grass flute	others
Highlands	Mixtlantlakpak	x	x	x		x	x	
Highlands	Axoxohuilco				x	x	x	
Highlands	Mexcala					x	x	
Highlands	Tlaxcantla					x	x	
Highlands	Tepa Ocotempa	x	x			x	x	x (trad.alcohol)
Highlands	Tenexcalco							
Highlands	Coximalco							x (trad.alcohol)
Highlands	Ayahualulco					x	x	
Highlands	Xometla	x						
Highlands	Tlachicuapa							
Middle-lands	Barrio Tercero	x	x					x (trad.alcohol)
Middle-lands	Barrio Primero			x	x	x	x	x (guitar, violin)
Middle-lands	Capultitla				x (description)	x (description)	x	x (trad.alcohol)
Middle-lands	Col. Miguel Aleman *							
Middle-lands	Tetzilquila	x	x			x	x	x (guitar, violin)
Middle-lands	Barrio Segundo				x	x	x	
Middle-lands	Barrio Cuarto	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Middle-lands	Xala*				x	x (describe)	x (describe)	x (accordion, violin, banjo)
Middle-lands	San Andres Mixtla							
Lowlands	Matlatecoya							
Lowlands	Zacaloma							
Lowlands	Xochitla	x	x				x	
Lowlands	Zacatilica				x	x	x	
Lowlands	Tecolotla				x	x	x	
Lowlands	Mangotitla *				x	x	x	(guitar, violin)
Lowlands	Cuatlajapa				x	x	x	

A.3 Ideas that help in describing the complexity of Tocha

LOCAL PRODUCTION

COMMUNITY	LIME	CERAMICS	ANIMALS TO EAT	ANIMALS TO USE	CHARCOAL	STONES	GRASS	STICKS	WOOD	BREAD	MAIZE	TOBACCO	SUGAR CANE	BANANA	COFFEE	BEANS	WILD PLANTS COLLECTED	TRADITIONAL MEDICINE	VEGETABLE GARDEN	INSTRUMENTS	CLOTHING
Mixtlantlakpak	x	x		x		x			x								x	x	x		x
Axoxohuilco	x (describe)	x			x (describe)	x	x		x												
Mexcala		x (describe)	x (describe)																x (Chilis)		x
Tlaxcantla	x	x	x	x																	x
Tepa Ocotempa		x (describe)	x (describe)	x			x		x								x		x (duraznos)		x
Tenexalco																					
Coximalco	x		x	x	x	x			x		x					x					x
Ayahualulco			x						x		x				x	x					
Xometla			x										x								x
Tlachicuapa		x									x										x
Barrio Tercero		x																			x
Barrio Primero				x					x												
Capultitla									x				x		x						
Col. Miguel Aleman *																					
Tetzilquila		x	x	x				x			x				x						
Barrio Segundo															x						
Barrio Cuarto			x	x				x							x			x			
Xala *				x (for drum)				x (for flute)												x	
San Andres Mixtla																					
Matlatecoya			x	x			x	x			x		x	x	x	x					
Zacaloma			x	x			x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x			x (fruits)		
Xochitla			x								x		x	x (purple)	x	x	x		x		
Zacatilica			x								x		x	x	x				x (fruits)		
Tecolotla			x	x									x	x					x (fruits)		
Mangotitla *			x	x							x			x	x				x (fruits)		
Cuatlajapa			x	x							x	x		x	x				x (fruits)		

237

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