

# COMMONS FORUM *Response*

Response to: Demographic Change and Commons Management: A Focus on Migration, by Leticia Durand and Rosalva Landa

## **What Types of Social Capital are We Talking About?**

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The Durand and Landa essay provides an important statement about the possible effects of migration upon common property resource managements systems. In this case, the authors argue that migration to the U.S. from Mexico is disrupting the social relations in the communities of origin, because the social capital associated with ejidos is being eroded. Indeed, this could be the case, but I would want to know more about the migration processes at work in each community, the quality of social capital resources, the source and recipients of social capital, and the quality of the ejidos in question, before I would agree.

Recent scholarship about Mexico-U.S. migration indicates considerable variability in the size and quality of Mexican- U.S. migrant networks. For quality, it is has been argued that trust and reciprocity are the key ingredients of some migrant social networks, given the risks of migration. How might this relate to social capital in places of origin? It could be that communities with pre-existing, strong ejidos might have high levels of social capital that translate into strong migrant social networks. Or, perhaps strong ejidos diminish the likelihood of outmigration initially. Subsequently, communities that are latecomers to the migrant stream may suffer greater disruptive effects. In other migration scholarship, it has been noted that transnational ties from destinations back to origin communities can affect community investments, political structures, and environmental outcomes in communities of origin. How might these factors affect ejidos' social capital?

By posing the claim that migration undermines the social capital associated with ejidos, the Durand and Landa essay raises an intriguing question in my mind. If social capital is associated with ejidos and social capital is also a key ingredient of the migration process, then how are the two types of social capital related to each? Are they fungible resources or is the comparison one of apples and oranges? My guess is that they are one and the same, but that Durand and Landa might consider widening their lens to consider a variation in migration processes and associated social capital, as well as variation in ejidos and associated social capital. A fully elaborated set of possible cases, may reveal important insights on the character, content, and formation of social capital.

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