

THE RIVER HAS A MEMORY AND SO DO WE: STRUGGLES FOR WATER JUSTICE IN MEXICO

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FOCUS

My research examines inequalities in urban governance and water justice, drawing on a study of three, socially-differentiated sectors of the city of Villahermosa, Mexico.

The analysis contributes to a multi-dimensional approach towards justice that encompasses:

- (1) *distribution* of residents' exposure to environmental risks and access to services
- (2) *recognition* of the causes and consequences of risks and vulnerabilities
- (3) fields of *representation* available for different residential groups
- (4) residents' capabilities to *recover* from disasters and achieve everyday well-being within the prevailing urban-governance and service-provision structures.











BEROMER.

C. DE ALDAMA.





LONG-TERM TRAJECTORIES OF GOVERNANCE AND (IN)JUSTICE

- History of water governance and residents' collective, but socially differentiated, memories of flood hazards. Efforts to recuperate from disasters and cope with everyday insecurities.
- Archival research on bio-physical changes in the rivers courses, on infrastructural interventions on the river system, on people's experiences in living at risk and on social movements for water justice.

Asentamientos Ubicados en Zonas de Riesgo de la Ciudad de Valledupar y su Zona Metropolitana
 Datos Incompletos (Continuando en caso de algunos asentamientos de riesgo)

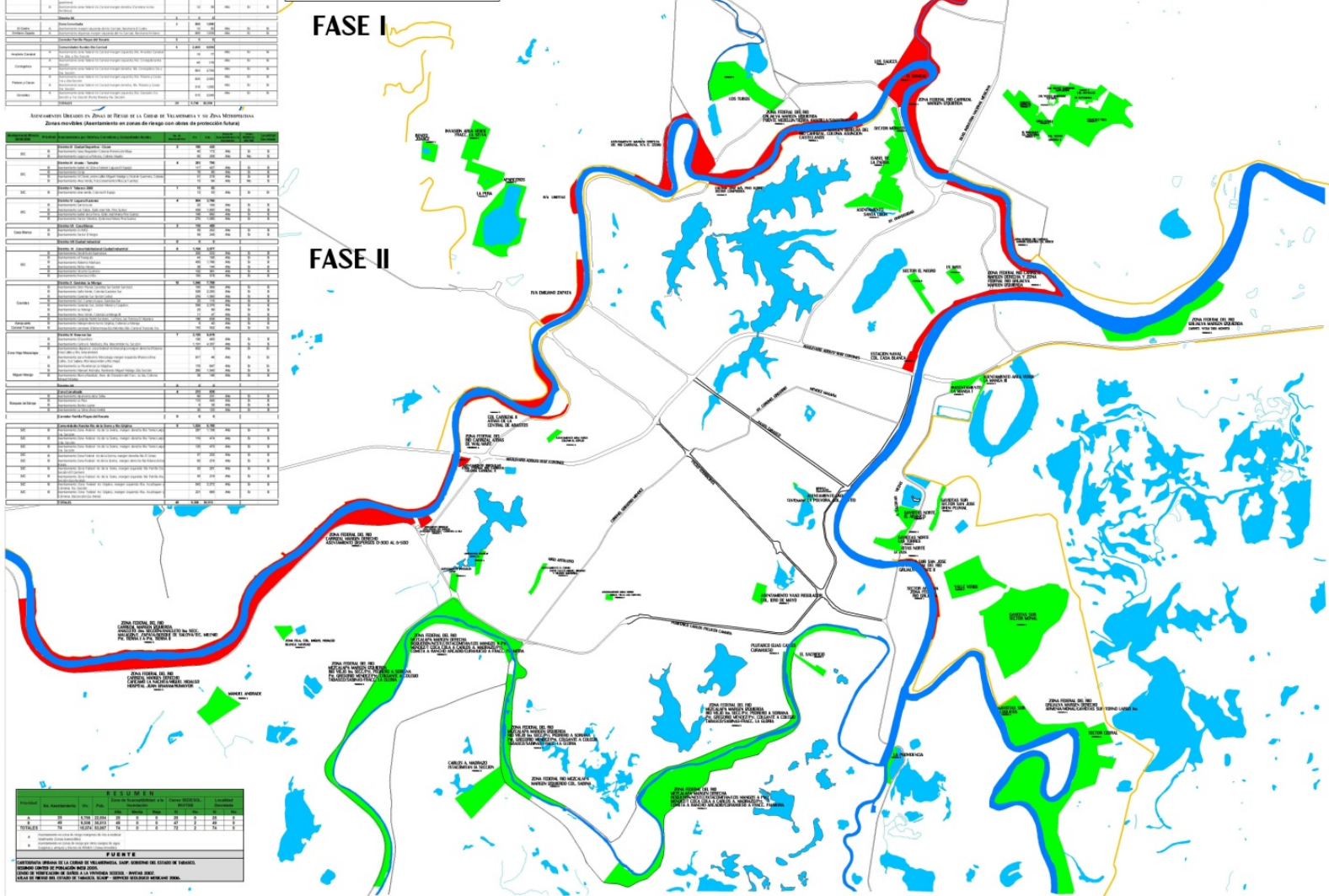
Zonas inundables (Asentamiento en zona de riesgo marginal de río)[illegible]

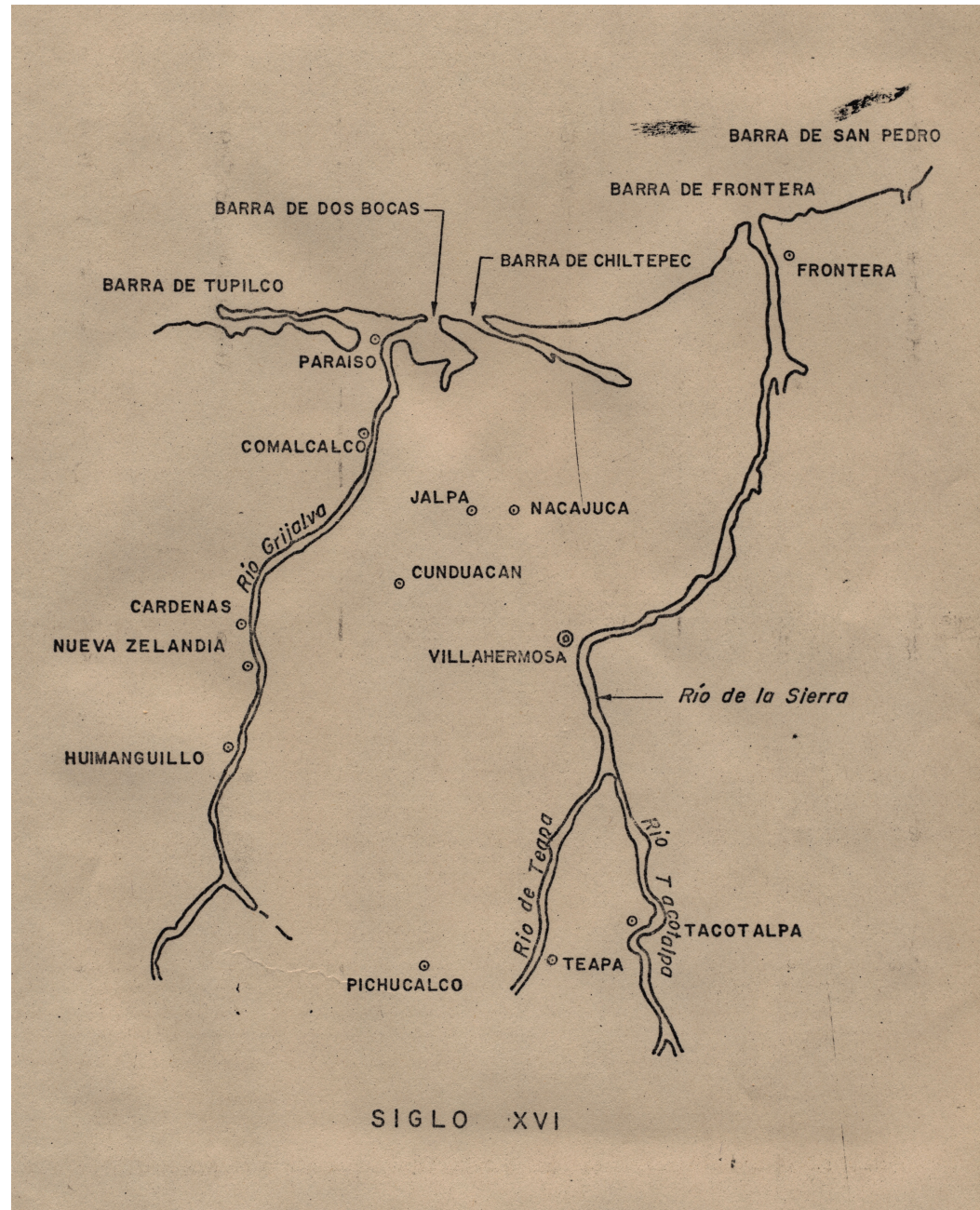
ASENTAMIENTOS URBANOS EN ZONAS DE RIESGO DE LA CIUDAD DE VALPARAISO Y SU ZONA METROPOLITANA
 Sistema de Información Geográfica en apoyo de planes con objeto de protección ambiental

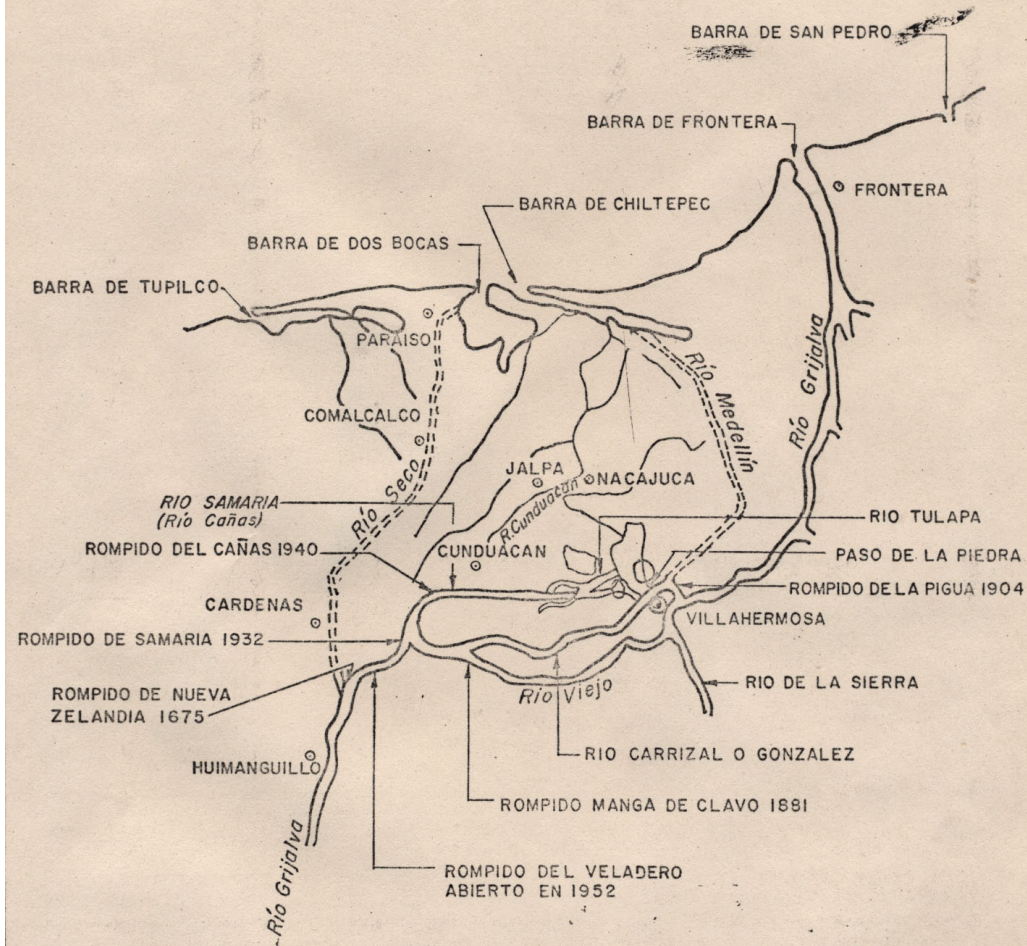
zonas rocosas (Asentamiento en zonas de riesgo con obras de protección natural)

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Edad de la mujer al momento de la infección (en años)	Período de latencia	Causa	Efectos potenciales	Probabilidad de infección
Menor	< 12 años	Relaciones o interacciones sexuales con heterosexual	Gravidez precoz	Alto debido a la presencia de una alta concentración de células, glicógeno, etc.
Medio	12 - 18 años	Relaciones o interacciones sexuales con heterosexual	Gravidez precoz	Alto debido a la presencia de una alta concentración de células y glicógeno en la vagina y al alto nivel de la actividad sexual
Mayor	> 18 años	Relaciones o interacciones sexuales con heterosexual	Gravidez precoz	Alto debido a la presencia de una alta concentración de células y glicógeno en la vagina







RESUMEN

During the flood, I thought that I have to be strong no matter what happens. I didn't mind losing things as long as nothing happened to my family...Here people are masons, craftsmen, metalworkers, shoe-repairers, butchers, chicken-vendors, fruit-sellers, seamstresses and tortilla-makers by profession...We're poor but we have the right to do what it takes to move forwards.

(Josefina, 12 Aug. 2011)

SOCIAL MEMORY AND COLLECTIVE FRAMING

- Informal residents' narratives of grievances and ways to rebound from disasters are not purely individual.
- They are collectively framed and historically anchored; based upon residents' memory of marginalization and upon their social position as materially and symbolically deprived people in comparison to other residential groups.

RESEARCH CHALLENGES

- Data often scattered in different parts of the world, gathering requires time-consuming work.
- Most of institutional documents destroyed when the government changes.
- Politically volatile issues, careful consideration of not causing any harm.
- Who speaks and under which conditions? Which kinds of issues are emphasized and which ones are left unknown. Need of long-term, hidden knowledge of political games, social networks and cultural meanings.
- Conceptions of accountability and justice vary across different countries and cultures; in segregated societies also within different population groups.

CULTURAL MEANINGS

Feelings of vulnerability closely linked to cultural identities and symbolic relationships with nature. Unpredictable rivers have an overwhelming presence in residents' lives, as the metaphors commonly used demonstrate:

- 'The river is always there'
- 'The river has a memory'
- 'The river searches her course'
- 'The river takes revenge'
- 'The river rushes in like a snake attacking'
- 'The river does not respect anybody'



MOVEMENTS FOR WATER JUSTICE

- Justice movements employ heterogeneous conceptions of justice and change their agendas according to the conditions.
- In water-justice struggles in Tabasco, long-term environmental conflicts, struggles for social justice, livelihood security and human rights are interwoven, in a situation where catastrophic floods are linked to questionable operation of dams, inadequate urban planning, poor sanitation services and environmental hazards caused by the oil extraction.





HETEROGENEOUS MOVEMENTS

- Justice movements are far from internally homogeneous and they often have complicated power relations. Categorical distinctions between local resistance and outside intervention are difficult to justify.
- Important to pay attention not only to organized movements with high media exposure, but also to fragmented concerns with hidden forms of resistance. Institutional structures and politics of governance often seriously constrain open mobilization.





FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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