

CHAPTER 3

From Booms, Declines, and Time Bombs

Temporalities of Oil in Emiliano Zapata

Living in Emiliano Zapata is like living on a time bomb. We can't know if anything's going to happen to us tomorrow and we'll explode. We're exposed to that kind of danger because of the place we live in.

—Doña Isabel

The time bomb metaphor, as expressed by Doña Isabel in this quote, was frequently used by community members of Emiliano Zapata representing their feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. The oil industry has been conducting extraction and to a lesser extent also processing of hydrocarbons in the immediate proximity and on the territory for more than sixty years. It left its traces everywhere in the living environment—a process through which the space of Emiliano Zapata has been converted into an oilscape over time. The particularities about the temporal implications of oil are closely linked to the processes of wealth and growth while anticipating a certain but still not predictable decline interlocked with hopes for a new upswing. The temporal logic and complexity of oil thereby depends on the rhythms of global energy production and influences local circumstances. For localities dealing with the oil industry this implies a widening set of opportunities related to economic growth at first, as it links the upswing to a perpetual knowledge about an approaching end. At the same time, the presence of the oil industry changes the environment over time and exposes the residents and their surroundings to constant health risks. The peaks and declines of oil introduce certain patterns of social change, as it provokes fear of a soon-to-come worsening of economic and social conditions, again linked to change. Hence, they are closely interlinked with time as an analytical dimension (e.g., Cepek 2012; Kaposy 2017;

Weszkalnys 2014, 2016). Because the temporalities of oil are inseparably linked to its material and social outcomes, the temporal dimension of the oilscape is difficult to disentangle.

The temporal process of oil is not to be exclusively understood in the sense of a singular headway, playing out identically in different spaces but instead rather acts as a texture of multiple temporal processes depending on individual parameters of preconditions and settings (see D'Angelo and Pijpers 2018; Watts 2005, 2012). For a comprehensive analysis of the temporalities of oil in Emiliano Zapata, it is therefore necessary to incorporate the diversity of temporal processes of social change and cultural adjustments that play out during the history of the community with oil extraction. The approach of a temporal analysis enables a level of understanding, which goes beyond the assumption of the singular dimension of space in as a valuable analytic entity (e.g., Bear 2016; May and Thrift 2001; Munn 1992).

Due to its interlinkage with hopes and despair in relation to growth followed by a hard-to-predict crisis onset, the temporalities of oil thereby come with an undeniable dimension of uncertainty. For localities connected with oil extraction, it furthermore entails the exposure to the heteronomy of oil as a global commodity (e.g., Behrends, Schlee and Reyna 2011; Coronil 1997). In Emiliano Zapata, uncertainty characterizes the living circumstances beyond the particular moment in time, but nevertheless particularly tangible at the current turning point represented by the changing conditions after the energy reform. The community members face constant challenges for dealing with these uncertainties. In his work on "Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation," Anthony Oliver-Smith (2013) identifies an important distinction between "coping" and "adaptation" in cases of catastrophes and disasters. He claims that coping mainly refers to the context of novel crises and are developed as short-term reactions to drastic change, adaptation refers to long-term adjustments within knowledge and sociocultural patterns of the affected population (2013: 277). This chapter explores the temporal dimension of the relationship of the community members with uncertainties, booms, declines of oil, which accordingly are met with the development of local coping and adaptation strategies, through which the uncertainties can be faced and partly overcome.

For a better understanding of the chronology, I introduce the following timeline, which is intended to help the reader follow the flow of oil temporalities in Emiliano Zapata. I divided the history of the community since the foundation of the ejido until the current date into phases portrayed above the timeline. They represent the characteristic course of crisis and hardship followed by the preparations for the upswing and then boom of

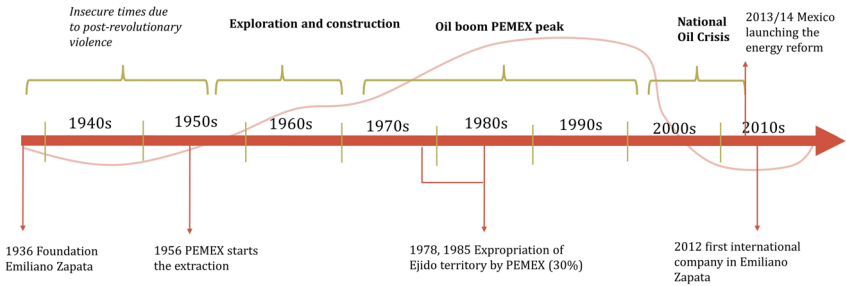


Figure 3.1. The timeline of oil extraction in Emiliano Zapata by Svenja Schöneich.

the oil industry, followed by the decline of the oil industry playing out as local crisis and the subsequent novelties introduced by energy reform. Important events, representing markers for each phase are depicted above.

Starting the Oil Story: The Before and the Beginnings of the Boom

“And here I am at the compound where the big compressor is today. Do you know which one?” Don Ramón pushes another photo in my direction, and I look at it with fascination. Finding old photographs from everyday life situations is very rare in this part of the country, where people did not have their own cameras for domestic use until the 1990s. Apart from rare shots of weddings or baptisms when a photographer was paid, there are hardly any private photographs of the 1970s and 1980s in rural areas. I am sitting in the living room, which also serves as a kitchen in a wooden house at the big family table and Don Ramón unpacked the old paper box where he keeps his treasures.

I have been waiting to see these photos for several weeks now, since he had told me already that he had them but could not find them or was not at home when I came over to see him. His house is in San Andrés, the colony of Emiliano Zapata, which is located very close to the entrance of the extraction site called Pozo San Andrés and therefore takes about twenty-five minutes to walk in the relentless sun from my host family’s house.

Don Ramón’s wife Doña GERALDA appears behind the curtain representing the backdoor of the house. She brings two cups of hot water and puts them on the table together with a can of instant coffee and a big jar of

sugar. “Do you want milk in your coffee?” she asks, but responds to her question herself immediately, “You better take some milk, otherwise the coffee will be too hot!” She vanishes again behind another curtain probably looking for a milk carton. Doña Geralda is somehow related to my host family—like almost every person here, as I have learned within the last months. She also introduced me to her husband who worked for the oil company as a day laborer for many years and who told me about the photos I am now here to see.

Don Ramón takes a small spoon from the little plastic basket on the table and puts coffee powder in his cup. I do the same and both of us start stirring while we are looking at the photos lying on the table. They always show Don Ramón himself in the 1970s and 1980s in different poses, such as standing in a freshly dug gutter where he and two other men are letting in a pipeline, on the back of a truck laden with rocks or in front of different types of heavy machinery. “I liked working in construction! My father already did the same, and he always took me with him, following the oil company wherever they would go. They would always want a new road, or a new pipeline and it was easy to find work,” he said and fishes another photo out of the box, showing him on a yellow cargo bike with two plastic food containers on each side going up the road. “Look, here I’m selling lunch to the *ingenieros*¹ at the compressors. This was when I had already settled down here. They were always very kind to me, they let me come to the compound even though technically nobody except company staff was allowed in.” A boyish smile appears on his face when he adds: “and sometimes they even invited me when they were having some beers up there.”

“But you never wanted to be one of them?” I ask taking the last photograph of him on the bike. He laughs while looking for more photos in the box but does not seem to bother to answer. “I mean, did you ever want the company to hire you as a proper oil worker?” I insist. “Technically you have been working for them for a long time, right? Always in the form of constructing something but only on those short contracts.”

He looks at me with skepticism. “No, of course not. They do not hire someone like me. I didn’t go to one of those schools, and in my family, we aren’t oil workers—we are laborers.” With that, everything seems said.

Don Ramón, like many others who came to Emiliano Zapata during the oil boom. His family were landless peasants and the oil company-provided opportunities to make a living for untrained laborers. Many people came here during the boom years, settling close to the extraction site, earning their living with hard labor. Some founded a new family with daughters of the resident peasants, like Don Ramón. The commu-

nity changed a lot during these years. “And maybe your son?” I revisit the topic. “Like, one day, maybe, he could go to one of their schools and become a proper employee.”

“Maybe,” he says, but but it sounds rather dismissive.

The First Settlers: Building a Community

What constitutes the community of Emiliano Zapata today emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century from a loose settlement of farm workers and their families on the haciendas that held the property of the land in pre-revolutionary times. There is not much known about the exact numbers of inhabitants or the living conditions of this settlement because the landlords did not keep track of that kind of census data, or if they did, the documents are not available anymore. It is certain though that when the ejido was founded by a couple of Totonac families, who had been laborers on the San Andrés hacienda before, the community was rather isolated from the urban centers and relied on subsistence economy. Many of the laborers came to the hacienda looking for work and a place to stay in times of insecure property structures of land for indigenous people and the therefore shifting demographic pattern of contemporary Totonacapan. Considering the loose structure of the settlement, the low population density, and the long distance between the homesteads as was common in the area (see Kourí 2004: 48–49; Valderrama Rouy 2005: 198–99), it is very likely that a rather undefined identity existed with vague social strings to form a community. The settlers were mostly dependent on the good will of the landowners, but they were also protected by them to some extent when they stayed on their territory.

The dwellers had certain independence concerning the practice of subsistence agriculture, but they were prohibited to own their own land. On the other hand, they benefited from the cultivations set by the *hacenderos* and had access to basic goods that would otherwise have been only accessible on the market in one of the larger cities, difficult to reach. Some people from the older generation of inhabitants still remember vaguely how life was before PEMEX entered the community, and they shared with me the stories of their parents who lived on the hacienda territories.

Don Emilio is an elderly inhabitant in his eighties who was brought up in Emiliano Zapata. He recalls the stories his father and uncle told him about the life before the foundation of the ejido. At that time, most of the Totonac settlers practiced subsistence *milpa* economy, but the *hacenderos* sometimes offered goods to them they could not produce themselves.

“In those years the landowners installed a little shop. Back then we were poor, and only a handful of people. In the shop you would buy, salt or whatever you wanted to buy . . . and the landowner would give you credit.” In these stores mentioned by Don Emilio, basic provisions were exchanged for vanilla during harvest season. If the quantity of vanilla vines did not match the price for the goods, the settlers came into conflict with the landowner. However, due to the clear hierarchical structure on the hacienda, the intervention possibilities of the farm workers were quite limited. When the hacienda territory was partly expropriated in the aftermath of the Revolution in the year 1936, the ejido was founded by thirty-three heads of households and their families and named Emiliano Zapata, after the famous revolutionary hero. During its foundation the ejidatarios who managed the settlement and usage of the territory established a political organization, and for the first time, the community was governed independently by its inhabitants.

The violence of postrevolutionary Mexico during the 1930s and 1940s also shook Emiliano Zapata (see Santoyo Torres 2009). The community remained rather isolated from other communities and towns in the area except for a primary school founded in the community in 1938 where teachers were sent to from Papantla. A few years after the ejido was granted an extension in the mid-1940s, conflicts with a band of armed bandits arose as usual during the postrevolutionary years and caused further imbalances of power. The violent actions of robbery in which community members were killed, aroused fears causing many inhabitants to escape to neighboring communities. The school closed for several years until 1952 since the teachers, who were employed by the government, refused to travel to the community.

The situation became so critical that finally the military had to intervene and bring the region back under state control by the end of the 1940s. After the troops left, the area was again open to armed civilians or ex-revolutionary fighters who had brought parts of the rural areas of Totonacapan under their de facto control. Most of today’s inhabitants have family members who had to flee and relocate during this period. The community’s original structure was set during those turbulent times. The ejido had been founded only a few years ago and now the social circumstances of the area were shaped by insecurity, fear, and danger. People were living on what they could gain from their subsistence agriculture and often tried to cultivate some vanilla. As the plant was expensive and highly in demand for consumption and export in the city centers, the peasants were unable to protect their cultivations properly and a lot of vanilla was stolen by armed gangs who killed people for their yield. Selling crops on the market was also a risky endeavor.

The roads to the closest market or Santa Rosa were in a bad shape, people had to walk, carrying their goods themselves or with donkeys without any protection against possible assaults on their way. To get to Papantla, where they would get good prices on their products, especially vanilla, the people of Emiliano Zapata had to cross the river Remolino in small boats called *pangas*, which complicated the journey even more. Consequently, administrative and commercial ties to the capital and other communities minimized during those years. People then avoided going to the city if they did not have to and many farmers decided not to engage in the cultivation of vanilla anymore. Most community members lived from subsistence agriculture, producing everything they needed themselves. Therefore, despite the described risks, some of the community members describe these bygone times as an ancient era, with a nostalgia of “simpler times” and a romantic transfiguration of the past. They associate it with times when people still spoke the indigenous language and followed the traditional way of life in addition to being independent and leading a simpler but honest life in undisturbed nature, which offered them what they needed to survive. Among them was Don Clemente, an elderly community member, who remembered the old times when he was a child: “Back then, our lands were clean. There was no pollution, and we gathered our food from the surroundings. There were plenty of animals to hunt and in the creek, there was plenty, plenty of shrimp and macaw . . .”

Yet the majority of the inhabitants who lived during that time also paint a disturbing picture of unpredictable hazards and fear, underlined with the horrors of a forgotten age when people used to kill each other without reason. They describe their memories, picturing feelings of exposure and vulnerability, and the arbitrariness and unpredictability of violent acts linking the brute force to the imagination of uncivilized and “wild” natives. Don Lorenzo, another member of the older community, analyzes the violent commotions of the past, which caused his parents like many others to flee the place, in the following way: “In those times our indigenous race was not reasonable. There was only a tiny excuse necessary to get angry and the situation escalate, and, in those times, everyone was carrying machetes.” The narrative of postrevolutionary times is thereby stipulated into a fierce, raw age, where state authority was absent, and people had to fear violence, hunger and displacement. This period, in spite of its sparks of romanticized imaginaries of pureness and autochthony, can be considered a time of hardship and even a crisis in terms of social and economic stability. It was a time of insecurity and uncertainties for the population of the entire region and the newly established community of Emiliano Zapata.

When the Oil Boom hit Emiliano Zapata: The Entrance of PEMEX

The commotions of the 1940s had hardly calmed down when PEMEX entered the scene for the first time in the mid-1950s. The company found oil in a situation of economic and political instability in a community governed by indigenous peasants, without any former experience with any kind of industry or extraction. Apart from the exposure of risk due to carelessness in questions of safety and transparency by PEMEX, the inhabitants of Emiliano Zapata found themselves in a situation of powerlessness. They had very limited tools to claim their rights to property or their preferences regarding the performance of the exploration activities. Many of today's residents repeatedly call their ancestors or the ejidatarios in that time "ignorant" and poorly organized in comparison of today. Low education levels and the restricted possibilities of contestation induced a situation where the company could simply behave as it pleased without provoking serious objections. While the community members did not know about the legal framework the company should have obeyed at first, they later came to know that the company should have consulted the farmers before entering their fields and orchards. Yet, the company staff often ignored the lawful procedure.

Despite the dismissal by which the PEMEX staff claimed the territory, many people nevertheless saw how they could personally benefit from the arrival of the new powerful entity. Soon after discovering oil, the company started to build streets and bridges and secured them against robbing bands. A military sentry was built on ejido territory where soldiers could be stationed to protect the PEMEX staff and cargoes. For the community members that meant increased security, even though their own struggle with insecurity had not been the primary reason for stabilizing the region. Now they were able to use the roads and especially appreciated that the new highway and the bridge to the city centers meant they could travel without fearing for their goods or lives.

Some families, who fled the community in times of turbulence, returned to their homes to claim their rights as ejidatarios or status as rightful community members. Not all original settlers came back to Emiliano Zapata, but instead, people from other communities came looking for a place to stay. Those migrants had not been granted the title as ejidatarios, but since there was enough land in the ejido, they were allocated several plots to build new homes. Sometimes they bought the land, often in an informal way even though the land endowed as an ejido was not to be sold. Some of them settled on plots not designated for human settlement or used areas for cultivation that had been initially reserved for communal use. After the endowment of the ejido, many people had moved their home-

steads to the area designated for human settlement at first. Yet, since the ejido territory remained loosely populated, in the following years some families preferred to return to their traditional settlement patterns and disseminated again over the lands originally designated for farming only. During those years, a disordered and unregulated situation of land use within the ejido consolidated, which should foster internal conflicts and complications regarding the parcellation of the ejido land later on.

While the occupation of large parts of the ejido territory was perceived as unjust and often problematic for the farmers, many reacted by seizing the opportunity to earn money working for the company instead. During the constructions of wells and installations many younger men, especially the ones without their own parcel of land, took the opportunity to work for the company as part-time laborers. While over eighty years old, Don Hernán still recalls the times he took the working opportunities the company provided when he was a young man, as many other young and able men from the community did. Yet the conditions under which the community members worked differed significantly from the secure long-term employment the staff from the cities enjoyed at that time. The work done by local residents was mainly physically challenging construction-based labor. Don Hernán remembers: “Mostly we went to the wells to lay pipelines and tubes . . . and this machine would come which was this big, and we would hook the material there and *zaz* up it went! Yes, we used to work a lot with that.” Furthermore, the young men received only short-term contracts: “They usually hired people for one or two months. And when your contract was over, you would sign another one.”

Don Hernán also mentioned the criteria laid down by PEMEX foremen who recruited community members when they started to build a new well, a street, or other kinds of construction work. The company preferred contracting young, strong men who could understand the tasks and instructions and therefore only offered contracts to people who spoke Spanish instead of only Totonac and hardly engaged with the older monolingual generation: “My father only spoke Totonac. Many people here were people *de calzón* in those times. Not now, those times are over. PEMEX only offered work to those who spoke at least a little Spanish.” Hence, the younger generation vividly experienced the advantages of the Spanish language. They responded to the requirements of its use when working for the company by only speaking Spanish instead of their native language. In combination with the high respect PEMEX employees enjoyed due to their salary and status in the peasant community, this contributed to the establishment of Spanish as the first language in Emiliano Zapata. The described pattern applied to clothing as well. The community members had usually worn the traditional white cotton clothes of indigenous peasants in the region until then, referred to as *calzón* by Don Hernán



Figure 3.2. Construction workers in the 1970s/farmers in 2018, Papantla, Mexico, 2018 © Svenja Schöneich.

due to their fabric and color. However, the clothing was soon adapted to a more practical and mundane style. The PEMEX staff mostly wore uniforms, provided by the company but also T-shirts, or buttoned shirts and jeans as the fashion in the cities. The younger community members soon adapted this style, first to resemble the reputable PEMEX staff but also because the uniforms, made from thick fabric and did not show dirt like the white traditional clothing, were considered very practical for hard labor. Since the residents could not acquire the uniforms from the company themselves, they bought them from the staff or obtained used clothes. These remain popular until the present day for activities like farming. Don Eusebio, the agente municipal in Emiliano Zapata who collected several documents about the history of his community told me about those social changes initiated by the arrival of PEMEX during an interview: “Well, the customs changed, the way of dressing. New people began to arrive with other ideas, another way of living.” He sees most of the changes that the appearance of PEMEX brought during the first boom years in the modification of the customs and points out the visible adaptation in form of the clothing style: “We started to copy them, people started to dress like oil workers because they were given the shirts, pants and shoes. To this day some people here still dress like oil workers.”

A Life on Contaminated Soil: The Boom Phasing Out

I see Doña Florentina sitting on her blue plastic chair, while I walk up the road to my host family's house. She sits there every single day, in the shade of a papaya tree doing nothing more than looking at the road, squinting and trying to recognize the people passing by, since her sight is not so clear anymore. When I arrive not more than five meters in front of her, she suddenly opens her squinted eyes. "Güera,"² she says loudly and with a bright smile. "Come sit with me for a while, did you already have lunch? It is so hot. I don't like to eat when it's so hot. Come have some Coca-Cola; it's still cold." I do as I am told, as usual.

Since Doña Florentina is the grandmother of Doña Rositas mother-in-law and great-grandmother to the children of the house, everybody in the family got to have a quick chat with her whenever passing by her house. Sometimes we bring food for her and her husband. Many relatives live close by, even though many of their own children have moved away, like so many community members in the last decade. There were eight of them, three are still living in Zapata, four are working in other parts of the country and one son died in a fire caused by an exploding pipeline in the 1960s. She has told me about her son and how he died, but I cannot even imagine the horror of losing a child that way. The boy had gone for an errand when an oil leak up stream ignited and caused a series of explosion. When the boy crossed the bridge, he was caught by an exploding gas line. I take the glass and serve myself some Coke.

"Where did you go today?" Doña Florentina asks. "Did you go to the community kitchen?" I nod and add: "I have been conducting interviews again, you know, asking people about what they know about the oil here in Zapata and about the history with PEMEX and all the accidents that happened then."

"It was horrible," she said, "but at least we have this house now."

"Yeah, that is really good. But didn't you have the house anyway?" I did not understand what the accident might have to do with her living here.

"We had the parcel," she said, "but we only had this little hut made from straw. We did not have any belongings. My husband did not earn any money, and I had the children I had to look after while doing the chores. But after what happened to my son, they gave us a little bit of money, so we could build a house of cement like we have now." I look, puzzled, at the poor-looking hut. It is made from cement and has a ceiling of corrugated sheet like most of the houses of the community. But it only has two small rooms with very sparse furniture and no bathroom, or kitchen inside like the more modern houses of other community members.

"I did not know that you built the house with the compensation that the company gave you," I stated. "What happened back then? Did you go there and ask for the compensation?"

"No, I did not ask, I didn't know anything," she says. "They came and they gave some money to my husband. Then he built the house, but he also went to the bars and some money went away. But what could I do, I had to look after the children."

I am still a bit bewildered. Even if her husband drank some of the money away, should the amount of compensation not have been much higher considering the death of a child? Too much to drink away in a community bar? "It doesn't seem like it was much money," I say.

"No, it was not, but what should we have done, they brought us papers and they gave us some money. But we don't have the documents anymore. They have been under the bed for some time but then who knows what happened. I didn't need them, but I think we should have kept them, maybe they would have given us more if my husband would have insisted."

"But wouldn't it be possible to go there now?" I ask, even though I know that such an endeavor would be unlikely to be successful.

"We don't even have the papers anymore," she replied. "They would ask, 'how much did you get?' and we don't know anymore, and we don't have proof." She takes a sip of her Coke and then changes the subject: "You know, my other son will come visit next month; he promised—you know, the one living in Monterey. He is married to that woman and they have three children, but I don't think he'll bring them . . ." I keep listening to Doña Florentina talking about her family while drinking my Coke and looking at the little cement hut built with money that was supposed to compensate for a dead child, and I shiver a little bit despite the blazing heat this afternoon.

Risky Lives: Incidents and Accidents in Emiliano Zapata

Several smaller accidents like small gas leaks or seepages accompanied the extraction close to the community of Emiliano Zapata since the beginning. It started with minor explosions during the exploration of the oil sources, which made the local inhabitants fear for their lives and their belongings when rocks flew through the air close to their homes. After oil was found the series went on with the usual smaller accidents around the construction sites, but soon culminated in several major gas explosions, two of them causing the death of community members. The first such incident was a pipeline explosion in 1966 right under the rather new set-

lements, located close to the major extraction site at San Andrés. Those happened in times when the Colonia San Andrés, approx. 1.5 kilometers away from the community center of Zapata was nascent. This part of the territory was originally not meant for settling, but many of the migrants arriving with the oil boom preferred to live close to the extraction site to sell their products or services in direct proximity to their main customers—the oil workers. Therefore, many of them settled down right beside the road where many pipelines pervaded the ground.

The accident of 1966 is known in the community and beyond in the area as the *quemazón*—ten people died and eight were severely injured due to that gas line explosion. Some of the elderly inhabitants of today's San Andrés were present in the colony during the explosion, and if they did not get burned or injured themselves, they lost family members, friends or acquaintances. Doña Rita is one of them. She is over seventy years old and owns a little house where she sometimes sells snacks on a table in her entrance yard. She was born in a neighboring community in the area and came to Emiliano Zapata when she was fourteen years old and pregnant. She earned her living selling lunch to oil workers, waitressing and cleaning in a small restaurant that had just opened. When the fire of 1966 broke out, Doña Rita was in Poza Rica where she also sometimes worked part-time at another job. During an interview she told me about the day of the *quemazón*: “San Andrés burned down. All my belongings, all that I had saved up, my radio, my clothes, my quilts . . . everything I had stored there because I went to Poza Rica. Everything burned that day.” She considers herself lucky to have survived, since she herself was not present when the explosions started. She noticed the fire when a paperboy screamed outside the little lunch restaurant she worked in Poza Rica, causing her to immediately get back home. She remembered: “It was still before opening hours when the newspaper boy outside started shouting: ‘San Andrés is on fire, San Andrés is on fire!’ And, well, I was shocked! . . . And I started running to get back home immediately!”

When she arrived in San Andrés, she only saw burnt trees and charred ruins of houses. “Everything was burned down! Everything!” she said. “The trees . . . there had been trees there—they had burned down to ashes!” Also, the other residents who survived were in shock. Doña Rita vividly remembered her own terror and the terror of the inhabitants when she saw and heard what had happened to her neighbors and friends in the fire: “It was a cry of despair everywhere . . . I don’t even want to remember it . . . When I arrived, there were many people, soldiers, policemen . . . and so many people crying and screaming, it was horrible, just horrible!”

The story of the horrors of the *quemazón* in San Andrés, understandably, is one of the key narratives among the community members in rela-

tion to accidents of the oil industry. It represents a crucial moment when the hazard induced by the pipelines and further extraction installations, which are placed within the whole community territory, became visible in a horrific way. The intensity and suddenness of the incident made the community members realize the immediacy of their exposure to potentially deadly accidents that could occur at any time right under their feet.

The inhabitants of San Andrés could not keep their old parcels and were relocated to parcels PEMEX had leased from the ejidatarios further down the highway in an act of victim compensation. The ones who took the offer and stayed, hoped for less exposure to risk due to the new (and expected) less dangerous location. Others left the community to rebuild their lives elsewhere with the company's compensation money. In the old part of the community, a few kilometers away, this danger was perceived but also justified with the illegitimate nature of the settlement of San Andrés. Through the explanation that the people there had settled right on dangerous pipelines without permission, the impression that this could not happen the same way in the community center was held up in the hope of being spared such happenings. A few years later in 1969, the case of the child who died in the explosion in today's community center proved those hopes to be too optimistic. Other accidents occurred over the next few years and the community members entered into a constant state of emergency regarding the accidents. This constant insecurity created a fearful atmosphere in the community during those years.

Another important factor contributing to the perception of uncertainty was undoubtedly the lack of communication with the company at that time. The community members barely knew what was going on under their feet, lacking technical elucidation but also detailed information about the location of the planned pipelines. Another uncertainty factor surely was the seemingly improvised evacuation process. My older informants told me that they were not familiar with security training or fire drills at that time. Most of the houses in Emiliano Zapata were still, at least partly, made from natural materials, such as straw or wood, and far from being safe in case of a fire. The custom of handling open fire for cooking or religious activities³ increased the risk of becoming a victim of an exploding gas pipeline.

The community members of Emiliano Zapata mentioned a variety of accidents on a regular basis and the stories are well known, even from the inhabitants who migrated to the community later. But apart from the few severe cases where people died in the flames of exploding pipelines causing horror and fear, minor accidents and mishaps became part of everyday life in Emiliano Zapata. With improving extraction technology and safety measures, it was also possible to avoid accidents just as shocking

as those in the 1960s, but the gas leaks and the pollution of the streams and lands continued. Emiliano Zapata remains a “contaminated community” where, apart from the damage to the environment and health due to industrial pollution (see Edelstein 2018), the immediate risks of accidents represent a factor for constant uncertainty. Affected communities must find ways of dealing with these circumstances (see e.g., Auyero and Swistun 2008; DeCesare and Auyero 2017; Kirsch 2014).

The Monetary Economy Taking Over

Before PEMEX came to the Gulf coast region, the rural, mostly indigenous communities in the area were mainly living on subsistence agriculture via the *milpa* system and practiced *trueque*⁴ to sustain themselves and their families. Only surpluses and rare and expensive products like vanilla, which were sparsely cultivated were sold on the markets, allowing people to purchase the few industrial products available in the region. Those were, for example, soap or sometimes specific materials for housing, clothes, or also for medical purposes. The acquisition of such products was an exception but became the norm very quickly when the oil boom reached Emiliano Zapata.

While the agricultural practices changed with improving infrastructure, the territory occupied by the farming ejidatarios was reduced through the expropriations. The farmland was exposed to risk through pollution of the extraction industry, while selling of products and services rapidly increased with the arrival of the oil workers. Those four aspects can be considered the motor of change toward a mainly monetarily driven local economy. However, when the company entered the ejido territory for the first time, the options for commerce were quite limited for rural inhabitants. Don Umberto, one of the elder ejidatarios, remembered the economic possibility in his youth as almost nonexistent. Even though some community members earned extra money by selling vanilla, for example, there were not many options to spend that money. The shopping conditions were complicated, and the rural markets only offered basic products. “Vanilla was our main income source back then,” remembers Don Umberto. “And we almost never spent any money because if you had a peso, two pesos, what are you going to spend it on? There was nothing here to buy.” The money could be spent only in stores further away. “If you wanted to go buy groceries, you had to plan it in advance like a week or two.” he added. “Salt, soap, oil, and rice. That is what we needed, nothing more.”

When the company started the explorations the inhabitants of Emiliano Zapata were unexperienced and had no close relationship to money due

to their former living conditions. Therefore, they did not know what they could or should claim as compensation from the company nor how they could enforce their demands. Therefore, many of them accepted the company's offerings without objection. This lack of involvement can surely be explained by the low level of experience with money, but another important factor was the rather weak negotiation skills and bargaining power on the part of the community members at that time. Moreover, the lack of administrative skills is a reoccurring topic during the interviews. Don Juan is one of the first inhabitants of San Andrés. He frequently mentioned the family of one of his former neighbors who fell victim to the fire of the *quemazón* during our interviews. Even when a considerable amount of money was given to the bereaved or the victims of damages, the wealth did not last for long. "This man came home one day—drunk." He starts his story. "There was a leak in one of the pipelines under his house. When he lit a match, everything exploded! His children were burned . . . he had two children, their faces were burnt but they didn't die. The company paid compensation to the man. I think they gave him . . . I don't know about 250 or 300 thousand pesos." The amount of money given to the victims was considered quite substantial at the time. But Don Juan remembers that the money did not last long anyhow: "But this . . . the man well . . . as he drank. He was always going to the bars. He had the money in his backpack, and he spent it all."

This phenomenon described by Don Juan was a common one. Instead of saving the money or investing it in farmland, people became used to receiving compensations on a regular basis and quickly spending the money. This way, the payments hardly contributed to long-term wealth, but rather created a certain dependency, which plays out as a shortcoming now in times of the oil crisis. While Colin Filer (1990) describes lacking an internal redistribution system as the main cause for a failed positive effect of compensation payments, in Emiliano Zapata, the deceptive dependency through a reliance on the oil boom impeded long-term benefit (1990: 12; see also Banks 1996: 225). The negative outcomes of dependencies developed during boom times hitting after crisis is a common phenomenon of the consequences of the temporal rhythm of oil (Willow and Wylie 2014: 225).

Emiliano Zapata rapidly transformed from a remote indigenous settlement dependent on subsistence agriculture to a place with small businesses and wage labor, even though the cash flow was never enough to emerge as a proper boomtown. Yet, the hazards of the extraction left people dead and injured and the soil, air, and water contaminated. The people of Emiliano Zapata rarely partook in any decisions of the oil company and felt extradited to this heteronomous power. The community became

dependent on the industry at some point. Thus, when the oil boom started to fade, the local setting changed again according to the course of the temporal processes particular to oil extraction.

What Has Been Left for Us: The Decline

“Güera ven!” Doña Rosita calls from the living room. “Say hi to Don Aurelio!” I close my laptop and open my mosquito net to get up from my bed where I have been typing up today’s fieldnotes. The sun has set and the dimmed light in the room has attracted many insects flying around. I open the curtain separating the small bedroom I share with the siblings from the living room and go over to the family gathered around the computer screen. Our house is the only one with a part-time Wi-Fi connection in Emiliano Zapata, since the parcel is located at a strategic location for an antenna and the owner of the local internet café has put such an antenna on the roof in exchange for the provision of a router for the household. Doña Rosita had gladly accepted his offer since she and her children can communicate with her husband via internet now.

I see the pixelated face of Don Aurelio smiling into the camera of his cellphone. I join the four family members to wave into the camera and also start smiling. “Hola Güera! How are you doing?” he asks when he recognizes my face behind the ones of his wife, daughters, and sons.

“I’m fine thank you!” I reply, “How was rice and beans today?” His smile turns into an agonizing grin.

“Boring,” he replies, “but at least they give us plenty of food. I heard you had tamales for dinner, I’m very jealous!” Indeed, Doña Rosita had made tamales today and there were many leftovers we will eat over the next few days.

“So yummy!” I exclaim. “Isn’t it time for bed yet over there?”

Don Aurelio has been working away from home and family for several years now. He had been to quite a few of the big cities in the country working in industrial construction and maintenance. Most of the time he spent in the city of Monterrey with some of his brothers and cousins from Emiliano Zapata, who all work in the construction of industrial installations. When the work for a company is done and the part-time contracts end, he and the group of friends and relatives move to the next place where they get part-time contracts in construction again. The companies usually pay board and lodging for the workers during the time of the construction while they work hard for nine to twelve hours a day. Their salary is sent home to their families. To find the job offers, they rely on a well-organized network of colleagues and acquaintances they usually

know from former jobs and who recommend them to their bosses when they have found an offer. Currently Don Aurelio is in the Dominican Republic—it is his first time working abroad. He does not fancy the food the company provides for its workers this time, and he never misses an opportunity to emphasize how much he craves the food at home. “Well, you could cook some tamales over there, you just have to ask for a big pot and some firewood!” Doña Rosita says mockingly.

“They would never allow an open fire in here! And surely it wouldn’t be the same as the tamales from Zapata,” he responds.

Doña Rosita smiles contentedly. The last time she has seen her husband in person was four months ago when he came home for two weeks. When he does, he usually brings presents for the children and buys them new shoes or paint for their room. Last time he even brought a cellphone and also the computer screen we are looking at right now is a present from one of his rare visits. As a young man in Emiliano Zapata, he learned to weld, and PEMEX paid good money for short-term contracts for welding pipelines. When the boom subsided, many landless young men remained without their usual source of income and had to look for a place where they could earn money and maintain their families.

“When are you coming back?” I ask, as I always do when talking to him.

And he replies as always: “Soon, I hope! I hope to be there for Christmas. Only God knows!”

“They have to let you go for Christmas don’t they?!” the younger daughter interrupts. “We are going to make *pierna al horno!*”

Don Aurelio smiles. “I’m sure they will princess.” He surely would rather be home for Christmas but staying longer also means that the company would prolong his contract for a few more months. And being aware of the difficult economic situation he does not know when and where he could start earning money again after that. So, if the company offers him another contract, he will certainly stay and thus ensure another couple of *quincenas*⁵ to send home.

After Oil: Dealing with the Downturn

With the fading boom PEMEX reduced its investments into the extraction sites of San Andrés. The activities have never stopped completely but since the late 1980s they have experienced a serious downturn, which worsened in the 1990s. In addition to falling oil prices on the world market, the sinking productivity of the sources also led to a decline in the industry in Emiliano Zapata. Don Eusebio, the agente municipal, as many of the other

community members, was aware of the fact that some of the oil wells would get exhausted soon. He assumed that the company would move their activities to other more productive oil regions and supposed that the industry then focused on other more promising regions and abandoned the wells and installations on the San Andrés oilfield. "The oil activity went on to Campeche," he suspects. "Here they're only doing the necessary minimum to maintain some of the wells that already existed." By the time the company began to withdraw from the area, most community members worked partly in the agricultural sector, still vivid in Emiliano Zapata. Strictly relying on wage labor for the company was not common as job opportunities were only stable for a short time. The residents who had access to farmland cultivated crops such as maize or citrus fruits and during the harvest season, helping hands were needed throughout the region. On the territory of Emiliano Zapata itself, the possibilities of living through agriculture decreased over the years.

The lack of income was partly balanced by other work activities, but more and more people relied on regular income through compensation payments from the company if their fields were damaged. By this, people got used to the situation that receiving compensation payments from the company was sometimes more lucrative than selling their own agricultural products. This expectation, but also in part the dependency on the company's payments, intensified with the increase in pollution and with the relatively high costs of citrus production that have to be carried out hiring day laborers and organizing logistics and sales. These circumstances reached a degree to which agricultural production was only second to possible payments from the oil company and some inhabitants began to use it as an income strategy speculating for damages and expecting compensations. Doña Regina, a forty-year-old single mother of two told me about an example for such a strategy: "I have a brother-in-law who has orchards with oranges and lemons, which don't produce fruit anymore. But he doesn't want to sell it, he is even planting more orange trees," she said. "He says that if PEMEX damages them, the more trees are on the parcel, the more they will pay him . . . That is the mentality of the people here today," she alleged. "They're just waiting for PEMEX to come and drill on their parcel to receive compensation money. That's all they want."

When the company partly withdrew from the community, PEMEX also assumed less responsibility regarding compensation or community support. With decreased damages and accidents, the distribution of compensation payments became less frequent. Today many community members regret that the assumed opportunities had not been seized enough. Many of my informants mentioned other oil rich communities who were in bet-

ter shape than Emiliano Zapata and a vast majority of the community members agreed that the community was in a rather bad situation because of the poor negotiation skills of their own local authorities.⁶ Doña Regina sees those strategies of waiting for compensations as a cause for the downturn. She also regrets the lost opportunities through which the local authorities could have seized the situation while the boom still lasted. With respect to the oil boom that passed, she claimed: “There was more movement then, but I feel that people didn’t know how to take advantage of the possibilities. Back then they could have asked for a lot more.” She is mainly holding the local authorities of the past accountable for the lost opportunities: “They were the one who should have claimed more benefits for the community knowing how PEMEX profited from the oil wealth, but they never did anything.” Furthermore, she condemned the lack of ambition of people who, in her opinion, are content with very little when they would have had the chance to claim more.

Soon the time of the boom became part of the collective memory as “good times” of prosperity and economic opportunities in Emiliano Zapata. Until today, many of my informants associate the oil company strongly with possibilities for work. Even though the accidents and damages are remembered as factors for constant anxiety on the one hand, the possibilities the company brought had also changed the economic strategies of the community in a way difficult to reverse for several reasons. First, the community members had become accustomed to the short-term contracts awarded in the industry for construction workers, security guards, or service providers. Many young men had been trained in construction and since the number of inhabitants increased significantly during the boom, when most people found a way of making a living in and around the industry, there were not many other possible professions. This phenomenon is widely known and has been described for other Mexican communities located in oil rich regions at the time as well (see Cancian 1994: 82). In the time of industrial development more and more people—particularly men—started working outside agriculture and a “trucking and construction generation” emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s. With the decline of the industry in their own region many saw no other option than to migrate to industrial centers (1994: 32). Also, people, especially young men, from Emiliano Zapata began to increasingly emigrate in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, this phenomenon in Emiliano Zapata is relatively weak in comparison to other communities of the country where male migration and therefore absence has shaped the local demography to an extreme degree (e.g., Gónzales de la Rocha 1993; Pauli 2000, 2007a, 2007b). In Emiliano Zapata, the presence of men is still guaranteed by many of them working in agriculture as day laborers or in other sectors in the cities.

Because of the proximity of the community to larger cities such as Poza Rica with more employment opportunities and rather well-functioning transport infrastructure, the pressure to migrate may be lower than in other, more remote communities, but it is still palpable.

Being Young in Emiliano Zapata: Generation Gap

While only a few elderly inhabitants of Emiliano Zapata remember the times before PEMEX came, the younger generation grew up in times of the oil boom. The presence of the company and the constant industrial activities around the extraction site accompanied the younger generation of the 1970s and 1980s. They were not yet born when the major deadly accidents happened, but their childhood was determined by economic growth and social patterns adapted by their parents. Now the new generation can also be considered “children of the crisis” who have not warily experienced the first emergence nor the boom times of the oil industry but rather the decline, later during their teenage years. This generation represents a crucial link concerning the awareness of oil temporalities, as it can actively shape the collective perception and molding of the current situation and the future in terms of dependency, reliance, and positioning toward the oil industry.

The generational gap in knowledge, lifestyle, and education in Emiliano Zapata is immense compared to communities in other regions, which reflects the extreme character of changing conditions in the country on a national level. However, the gap between the times of the founding fathers and mothers experiencing the violent aftermath of the Mexican Revolution in a Totonac community and the current situation embedded in a digitized world that demonstrates the global reach of the oil industry is more drastic than in many other national contexts. The infrastructure emerging around the extraction sites and the connection of the community to the rapid industrial development culminated in the current circumstances. An essential aspect of intergenerational differences is the access to the public education system. Today, the younger generation of Emiliano Zapata has the opportunity to attend two secondary schools in their community: the Telesecundaria, which opened in 1987, and the Telebachillerato in 1998. A degree from those schools allows them to apply to universities and colleges across the country, even though rural education standards oftentimes do not meet the requirements of high-ranking public universities.⁷ Those possibilities distinguish them from their parents’ and even more from their grandparents’ generation where higher education was not an option for children of indigenous farmers.

Most parents in Emiliano Zapata appreciate these educational opportunities and encourage their children to study, expecting that this measure will someday improve their social and economic status. Since the parent generation has experienced the oil company's presence throughout its life, it is strongly influenced by the idea that economic wealth is inseparable from the oil industry. In general, PEMEX employees are still perceived as wealthy and have a prestigious status compared to farmers. Therefore, most adults in Emiliano Zapata today hope for their children to become a proper employee of the oil company instead of pursuing a kind of small-scale agriculture associated with low profit and backwardness. Also, many people perceive the work of the oil employees as less wearisome and more rewarding, which guarantees a better income and job security compared to the agricultural sector. Among survey respondents, 60 percent want their children to become employees of an oil company. This shows that the hope of improving the economic and social status of their children is linked to a job in the oil industry.⁸ Therefore, it must be distinguished between construction works with short time contracts and other kinds of hard physical labor for low-skilled workers and a prestigious employment at PEMEX.

The *ingenieros* are perceived as wealthy but oftentimes less hard-working than workers or farmers. As trained staff members with permanent contracts they enjoy a number of benefits not granted to untrained workers on temporal contracts. Being part of the Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana (STPRM), which is particularly powerful in Poza Rica and closely linked to the dominating PRI, they usually have access to the company-provided education and health system, as well as to well-paid lifetime employment and, in some cases, even hereditary employment for their offspring. Local campesinos who work as day laborers for the company are not among the beneficiaries of the STPRM, and although they receive lower wages, they are usually hired to do the "dirty work" (see Quintal Avilés 1986, 1994). Many teenagers therefore also aim for a career in the oil sector with the idea that they will later belong to the "petrolero elite." Talking to Gabriel, a seventeen-year-old student of the Telebachillerato, he described the strong affinity of his classmates for a career in an oil company for a variety of reasons. When he told me about his classmates, he alleged: "They want to study petrochemical engineering. Something related to oil." He himself, however, doubted that a career in the oil industry would really bring the intended wealth now that the industry declined. Most of his classmates continue to pursue a career in oil extraction because they assume it would still be easy work with many benefits: "They practically get tricked into thinking that that's a job where you earn a lot of money and do almost nothing," Gabriel said. "They

think that if you become an *ingeniero* you will be well paid, and once you retire you will receive a monthly pension, or something like that." Yet, especially since the crisis, that type of employment is hard to get. PEMEX hardly hired new employees during the course of the crisis and many members of the old staff have already lost some social and financial benefits that have been strongly associated with being a *petrolero* for several decades (see Breglia 2012: 34; Stojanovski 2012: 310). The downturn of the oil sector has led to a decrease in employment opportunities. Having received higher education does not necessarily entail better prospects in rural areas in Mexico because of the lack of job opportunities or universities, leaving young people aspiring higher education and better employment circumstances with migration as the only viable option.

For many of the families of the ejidatarios, agriculture is the supporting economic pillar. Also, during the times of the oil boom, most of the ejidatarios and their families dedicated themselves to the cultivation of citrus fruits and maize, while also working for the oil company as short-term laborers. In times of crisis the intensification or return to agricultural activities is the obvious option. But many of the inhabitants do not have access to enough land since they never were ejidatarios and did not arrange the possession of land. They came to work in and around the oil industry and are heavily affected by its decline. Therefore, they cannot bequeath land to the new generation either. Even for those who have land, maintaining agriculture is a hard way to earn one's living in today's Mexico. The small-scale agricultural sector in the country is strongly affected by the Mexican "crisis del campo" (agricultural crisis) that has weakened the national agrarian sector for several years (see Olmedo Carranza 2009). In the case of Emiliano Zapata, other hindering factors like the practice of monoculture requiring expensive fertilizers and the environmental damage left by the extraction add on to the difficulties. Large parts of the territory are not fertile enough for the self-consumption of families who have land, let alone an appealing economic alternative. This lack left many families of Emiliano Zapata in a difficult situation regarding the future of their children and many families who used to find some way to make their living with a whole set of different occupations, now have to look for other opportunities. However, not all residents of Emiliano Zapata solely blame the oil company's withdrawal for the current economic downturn. Other possible reasons mentioned include the low price for citrus fruits, the industrial damages to the soil and water, which complicate farming or the general economic crisis on a national level.

The situation of crisis and an improved system of public education in comparison to the generations before, have caused many students to leave the community after their graduation, to study and/or work in other parts

of the country. Also, the less skilled younger people who may not be able to afford a private college or do not seek higher education often migrate at least for a while to one of the more industrialized regions of Mexico, such as Monterrey or Reynosa. For young single women it has become conventional to leave for the more touristic spots in Mexico, such as Cancun, where they take full-time employment as maids in the big hotel complexes of the Rivera Maya. Oftentimes they do not have an individual choice. The pressure for migration to maintain the family has become the most important factor why many of the community members wish for the oil industry to return and revive the extraction activities. Partly those hopes are met due to the restructuring of the oil sector in from of an energy reform, which promises a revival of the oil industry.

After the Monopoly: Oil's Temporalities Continued

"My son will drop you off!" Don Germán insists emphatically.

"Well, thank you very much. It's no problem to walk, it's not that far away." I try to be polite and not to strain the hospitality of my informant too much after the interview we just conducted for almost an hour and a half. But I am honestly glad he offered to organize a ride back to my house. It is already dark, the streetlights are dim, and up the hill where Doña Rosita's house is located, lamps are nonexistent. When the night falls, the street dogs become more aggressive and bark at anyone who passes, and I would feel more comfortable having some company on my way back.

"You shouldn't go alone. Doña Rosita will be angry at me if I let you go alone." He smiles. Don Germán's son Emilio has heard his father calling and comes down the stairs. "You'll drop the Güera off," Don Germán says, and Emilio does not have any objections. He grabs his car keys from a little cupboard by the doors and looks at me. I quickly put my recorder into my bag and give Don Germán a cordial goodbye before we walk to the jeep parking outside the house. It is a nice new car and the sign on the side has "Oleorey" written on it. It is recognizable in the whole community since very few people drive such a car in Emiliano Zapata. It is the only one with an oil company's name on it.

Emilio opens the door for me, we get in, and he starts the car. He slowly drives down the road and turns in at the main road. Emilio does not talk much. His father has asked me twice if I could not teach him some English since he assumes that this is what would get him promoted more easily, but Emilio himself does not show so much enthusiasm in the face of his father's ambitions.

"Thank you so much for driving me," I say to break the silence. "It has gotten dark so fast." He nods and yawns. "Are you tired already?"

"I'm *still* tired," he replies. "I have been working a lot of night shifts. In one hour, I have to get back to work."

"Where is it exactly that you work now?" I want to know. I know he works for Oleorey, one of the newer companies around that started to operate some of the oil extraction facilities in the area. It is rumored that his father got him the job as part of the deal when he was negotiating for compensation money with the firm because some of his cattle died after drinking the polluted water of the river that had been contaminated due to a spill a few months ago. The company did not want to pay at first since it was only the subcontracted entity for operation and referred to PEMEX as the company in charge. PEMEX then did not want to pay anything either because they blamed the operator. In the end, Don Germán stayed persistent and received the compensation with support of other aggrieved parties of the community. His son started his job there a few weeks later.

"I'm working in a processing plant close to Poza Rica," Emilio says.

"And you are living here with your parents?"

"At the moment I do. But I'm currently building my house," he says with pride in his voice. "Have you seen it? I'm building the second floor right now. Tomorrow more workers will come. Then a few months later the windows will be done as well."

I have seen the house under construction close to his father's parcel. It is a nice one. The general custom in Emiliano Zapata would be to move into a new house as soon as it has four standing walls and a roof, even though it remains under construction for much longer, but Emilio seems to have plans to not move in until it is done. One reason for that is that the house of his parents is large enough for him to stay there until his new home is finished. "It looks very nice already," I say appreciatively. "It seems like the company is paying well."

"It's not bad. Only the night shifts are tiring but I shouldn't complain." We already arrived at the big pothole at the foot of the hill where I live which is almost impossible to cross with a car and difficult even with a jeep. More so at night.

"I can jump off here!" I say, so he stops the car. "Thank you very much again! Have a good shift today." I open the car door.

"No problem really. Also, I've slept all day almost. I will be awake soon." He grins.

"Get home safely."

"Will do!" I reply and shut the door. I turn around and take the last ten meters up to our entrance door with long strides. The light inside the

house is on, and Doña Rosita already opens the door before I can get to it. “There you are, Gürea! It’s dark outside already! Did Germán’s son drop you off?”

“He did!” I confirm.

“Well, that’s good. Does he want to learn English yet?” Doña Rosita shuts the door behind me after I slip in.

The Fall of the Monopoly: The Beginning of a New Era?

After the decline of the national oil industry, which on the local level was accompanied by a significant withdrawal of PEMEX from Emiliano Zapata, the energy reform was supposed to revive the industrial activities. In fact, new oil companies that had been commissioned to operate the installations but could not acquire them as property yet, already entered a few years before the implementation of the energy reform due to changing regulations of sub-employment. Nevertheless, PEMEX was still the major entity performing the extraction. Recently, new firms started to take over several installations on the San Andrés oilfield and thereby started to reactivate and renovate some of the foremost abandoned infrastructure. The first company conducting activities in the San Andrés oilfield was Oleorey, a Venezuelan firm with an operating contract from PEMEX. Therefore, the main proprietor of the installations on the San Andrés oilfield continues to be PEMEX until the actual takeover of Oleorey, which was planned but not executed yet. Oleorey, therefore, not only takes over the physical installations but already holds certain responsibilities with regard to community relations. Furthermore, Oleorey also subcontracts other smaller firms for special tasks, yet the company still answers to PEMEX in every regard. The process of overtaking oilfields is therefore in process, which can create unclear structures regarding the corresponding tasks of each operating or subcontracted firm.

Don Esteban, a man in his sixties, originally comes from Emiliano Zapata. He is an ejidatario who resumed responsibility in the assembly of ejidatarios, and he is also the head of the water committee. As such he is familiar with local politics and takes an active part in community decisions. He learned about the presence of the new company when company staff members came to the assembly to inform the community members about the new operator. However the new structures and responsibilities of each firm are not always comprehensible to him; they are not comprehensible to most community members. “Well, the one that is in charge here now is Oleorey, but there is another company that is coming to work here, Oleocell, Olliver . . . who knows what they’re called. They work for

Oleorey, and Oleorey cooperates with PEMEX, so many different agreements . . ." he told me, sighing. The names, tasks, and responsibilities of the new companies therefore often remain assumptions or hearsay to Don Esteban and other community members. When any problem arises, no one knows whom to contact. Therefore, this transition phase between operating companies often implies a certain degree of confusion in terms of accountability. Many now hope for an improvement of the local economy but are concerned about the agreements, which had been reached with PEMEX and were valid until now, being cancelled under the command of the new company.

Don Alberto is Don Esteban's neighbor and a fellow office holder within the ejido council. His major occupation is the cultivation of maize and oranges, and he has observed several times that PEMEX reimbursed farmers for the loss of crops because of seepages. Now that PEMEX is withdrawing and the new firms take on more responsibilities than the state-owned company did for many years before, he is worried that possible damages might not be compensated in the future, as he and others have gotten used to over the years. When I interviewed him, the company was still reacting to compensation claimed: "Well, yes, in fact one year, two years ago, they were still paying for the damages and answered some of our claims. Until recently they were still paying compensations." Yet Don Alberto worried that this might be the last time that the company would pay anything.

Even if the actual responsibilities of the new firms must become clear in the future, the notable revival of the industry made many of my informants hope for an improvement of the economic situation at the same time. Unfortunately, the hopes have not yet been fulfilled. The new firms mainly brought their own personnel and organized the accommodation and catering themselves, instead of hiring local community members. Furthermore, they did not show the engagement many had hoped for. Don Esteban therefore remains pessimistic despite increasing activities in the oilfield through the new firms. "Well, it got a little better ultimately. But since some time has passed, it's not so easy to get jobs now," he said. "Right now, it's Oleorey who's in charge, but they don't need laborers. They're just maintaining the wells that are already there. There is no employment or work for the people here."

Nevertheless, some of the changes that came with the arrival of the new firms are perceived as positive. Even if the new companies may not offer so many job opportunities, people acknowledge that at least fewer accidents have occurred since they took over. Don Ernesto is a shop owner who was born and raised in Emiliano Zapata. He has witnessed the times of the PEMEX boom, and he saw the company withdraw and the installation wither. The lack of maintenance of the installations has become a risk

factor for possible accidents and damages. Now that Oleorey took over, new safety measures are in place and the risk is mitigated. Don Ernesto therefore expressed mixed feelings about the arrival of the new company, while he acknowledged the virtues of better safety measurements: “Since Oleorey started operating, things changed for better. For better because there have been no more deaths, but also for worse because there are no jobs anymore. But they are more careful with the maintenance. It’s safer here now.”

While the community members welcomed the revival of the extraction activities in Emiliano Zapata in general as a sign of the improving economic situation, they are skeptical of the real benefits for them. Some of their claims have already been complied by the company but most residents believe that they have done too little. Even though the new company began to contribute to the construction of public building, many people still felt that the virtues provided just had the purpose of appeasing them. Don Alberto, like many others, feels betrayed by the oil firms that offer “breadcrumbs” in his eyes rather than real recompense: “Well, yes, because they already started to give us breadcrumbs, and now they have built us a roof for the community center as well as the community kitchen, and they gave us an ambulance. But this is still too little. They just want to calm us down.” The results of the questionnaire reflect this ambivalent attitude regarding the presence of the new firms. While 22 percent of the respondents agreed, that the general situation has improved since the new firms took over, 21 percent agreed that the situation worsened. However, 24 percent of the respondents feel unsure about whether it has become better or worse and agree with the statement that the situation in general did not really change.⁹ The low consensus on the issue among the people of Emiliano Zapata shows their contentment and uncertainty concerning the arrival of the new companies until today.

A Look into the Future: Imagining the Time Bomb

Currently, national politics regarding the hydrocarbon sector are in a state of transition. The oil boom faded out and a crisis has induced times of economic hardship, which led to structural changes also affecting life in Emiliano Zapata. The community members that have gotten used to the presence of the oil industry had to adapt to the economic downturn and are now confronted with a new panorama. The arrival of the new firms has not yet brought the desired improvement. The economic situation in the community itself is regarded as disastrous by many residents, even more so for those without access to farmland. The current situation of

upheaval has increased the perception of uncertainties in the future, while also widening the geographical gap of supporting networks through emigration. Many community members, therefore, hope for a revival of the industry despite the possible negative impacts increasing again. The predictable end of oil sources by conventional extraction is the reason for extended investment in new technologies to access sources that have been difficult to extract in the past (see Ferrari 2014: 23–24; Haarstad 2012: 1; Svampa 2015: 66). One of the technologies designed to extract formerly unreachable hydrocarbon assets is fracking (Willow and Wylie 2014: 223). Fracking therefore bears the prospect of becoming another “boom story” within the history of hydrocarbons, which is already characterized by the rhythm of booms and declines in regard to conventional means of extraction. The implementation of fracking therefore adds on to the existing uncertainties linked to this predetermined temporal process (Appel et al. 2015b: 2).

While existing conventional hydrocarbon sources are considered exhausted, the development of so far unused sites through the application of new technologies might stimulate the industry and improve the economic situation in Mexico. Nevertheless, those deliberations come with further risks. The energy reform has only brought a light revival of the activities so far, and the new companies have not satisfied the needs of the community members yet. Since the implementation of the reform and the endeavor to exploit new oil and gas resources through fracking, the issue since has also become an important topic of discussion at the national level (see Castro Alvarez et al. 2018: 1322; de la Fuente et al. 2016; Hernández Ibarzábal 2017: 364; Silva Ontiveros et al. 2018). For a layperson without any further information, the exact places where fracking has been applied are hard to distinguish from other types of fossil fuel extraction since the effects are often very similar. It is more complicated because under Mexican law, it is not mandatory to declare in what way and where fracking is applied—a fact that creates a great uncertainty among the possibly affected population (see Hernández Borbolla 2014; Silva Ontiveros et al. 2018). Veracruz and particularly the northern part of the state is the region where most fracking projects have been initiated so far according to the national media (Cruz 2018).

Also, in Emiliano Zapata the rumors of possible fracking applications have arrived in recent years. Many community members started worrying about possible increased risks of pollution and damages. These circumstances have led to a situation where many people in Emiliano Zapata express the perception that they are “living on a time bomb.” Fracking is closely linked to environmental and health risks, and this risk can be understood as a practical understanding of the dangers of fracking (Cart-

wright 2013: 204). In Emiliano Zapata, the risk is acknowledged, but there is some uncertainty that fracking is even taking place.

Don Francisco and his family live close to one of the many installations. He has seen the company staff coming and going and he has observed their activities, but he could be never sure what the implications for his living environment actually are. When asked about the purpose of the pipelines passing under his house and leading directly to what seems to be an extraction well, he knew that they contain possibly harmful substances: “The gas comes from over there and the pipelines come from that side . . .” he said pointing at the visible lines in front of his house. “These ones are containing congenial water, dirty water, but the ones containing gas come from that other side. They all are affecting us!” and he added: “as I was saying it’s . . . like a time bomb. It does affect us, but, well, I don’t know what some of them are for exactly.” The time bomb is a common image used by many of my informants during conversations and interviews. It implies the idea of something harmful right under one’s feet that could do harm at any time. The image captures the temporalities of oil in Emiliano Zapata in a comprehensive way, connected with notions of heteronomy and unpredictable risks as well as the inevitable finiteness of abundance. The community is currently in a phase of change, where the oil boom has subsided, the crisis has left its traces and a new era of oil politics is heralded. This is accompanied by the presence of new firms and the buzzword “fracking.”

The overwhelming majority of the community members I talked to had a very unclear idea of what fracking actually was or what the implications for them would ultimately be. Since no one was informed about possible fracking activities on their territory, the first time many of them came in touch with the issue was during a conference held by NGOs in 2015. Until today most local knowledge stems from information given out at that event, but not everybody attended it. Even though the conference and the local protest against fracking was captured within the regional press and the event had been diffused by various NGOs in the country (Ejatlal 2017), the interviews revealed their limited knowledge of what fracking means. Most of my informants were familiar with the term yet almost none of them could explain the technique and why it was supposed to be harmful.

Don Alberto, like many others, recall what the NGO has told the community members and expresses his doubt whether the technique is already being applied. Since he has no further knowledge about the technical details, he is unsure about the possible implications that might affect the people of the community. When he told me about the oil workers who now again revive older extraction wells, he became alert: “When they are

working, we don't know if they are already using that technique. They alone know what they're doing and we don't know anything about it." What he knows about fracking is limited to rumors and suspicions: "Well, the people who claimed that they came here to inform us about fracking say, that the company is going to drill I-don't-know-how-many kilometers using certain chemicals and that there will be a lot of pollution. But that's all I know."

The community members know that fracking could include harmful outcomes, but considering the negative effects of conventional extraction techniques, are already a part of everyday life in Emiliano Zapata, the community members are unsure whether fracking has been applied or if the perceived damages are caused by conventional extraction. The uncertainty about fracking being applied or not, therefore, adds on to the concerns about possible consequences and the perception of a lasting risk from the extraction industry ultimately leading to the impression of "living on a time bomb."

The Temporalities of Oil and the Time Bomb

The temporalities of oil and its inevitable process of booms and declines are deeply intertwined with the history of Emiliano Zapata. They thereby contribute to the constitution of the space as an oilscape. The effects of the temporalities of oil play out as part of a "social time-bomb-effect," within which rapid industrial growth during the oil boom led to social change, modifying norms and social organization, which then culminated in unfulfilled expectations of long-term benefits when the boom fades and established dependencies prove non-viable leading to processes of social disintegration (see Filer 1990; Banks 1996). The process of peaks and valleys inherent to oil introduced a reordering of social patterns, while provoking anxieties due to industrial hazards, eco-risk, and an anticipated worsening of economic and social conditions. Oil extraction in Emiliano Zapata is linked to a specific perception of peaks and valleys as an analytical dimension. Yet, there are some particularities of the conditions of oil extraction in Emiliano Zapata that function as distinctive features within the analysis of the temporalities of oil and local consequences.

Founded as a settlement of indigenous farm hands on a hacienda, the community emerged under the rule of big landownership and at the time of the endowment as an ejido, it underwent the unruly and violent times of postrevolution. The arrival of the oil industry then offered safety and implemented new economic opportunities that benefited many community members. This process caused an opening to the markets and a

turn toward casual labor. Accidents and damage caused by oil extraction brought new types of insecurity and concern for the lives and health of the residents. Until today, the oil industry in Emiliano Zapata is associated with economic growth and the improvement of living conditions on the one hand and damages to the environment and terrifying accidents on the other.

For several decades, the community had become accustomed to the presence of the company. When the oil crisis began and PEMEX increasingly withdrew, the community members faced new challenges in an uncertain situation. Again, they responded with an adjustment of their lifestyles, and looked for economic alternatives, for example widening the scale of family and belonging through migration. The premise of adaptation also applies in light of recent changes brought about by the partial revival of the oil industry under changed conditions such as the end of the PEMEX monopoly. The insecure economic situation, which emerged in recent years, has been met with responses such as seizing the improved education strategies for the younger generation and a diversification of occupations to earn the family income, often involving emigration of individual family members. Nevertheless, PEMEX had maintained its presence in the community and large segments of the population continued to rely partly on their economic ties to the oil industry, such as the provision of certain services and the sale of products. Job opportunities in construction or maintenance of the oil infrastructure have meanwhile mostly vanished for the people of Emiliano Zapata and many inhabitants have sought opportunities elsewhere, while sending remittances to their families. Thus, the community members expanded their support networks beyond the regional scale, as a coping mechanism during the crisis.

The detailed look at the implications of oil temporalities in Emiliano Zapata shows how the local residents respond to the uncertainties dictated by the inevitable temporal processes of oil. Nonetheless, it also shows them not only as objects to temporalities of oil, but also as active shapers of their community and lifestyles and responding to the challenges that they are presented with. Furthermore, the contemplation of the local reality under the conditions of oil in a temporal context reveals some underlying patterns, which go beyond the mere description of the industry impacts. Unpredictability and uncertainty have always accompanied the living conditions in Emiliano Zapata. Even during times of the oil boom, the community experienced more than security and growth; it found itself at the margins of the urban centers, which emerged around the oil industry in the area. Since the community had never been the preferential place for the development of a flourishing oil town in the classical sense, Emiliano Zapata fails to feature the characteristics of a typical “boomtown story”

(Gramling and Brabant 1986: 179–80). This situation caused by precarious labor conditions and a lack of benefits through development of a social infrastructure positioned the community at the margins of the national wealth generated by the oil industry (see Parry 2018).

In the community, the determination of uncertainty goes beyond the statement that the future is uncertain for all people. Here uncertainty goes further than the possibility of thwarted plans by an unforeseen event. It is linked to risk exposure through industrial pollution and possible accidents, as well as to anxiety about insecure future conditions in a post-boom era. At present, the inhabitants of Emiliano Zapata are at a turning point, which could be the possible beginning of a new crisis or a mitigation of the situation in the sense of a “boom-bust-recovery cycle” (see Brown, Dorins, and Krannich 2005) and they are looking into an uncertain future of another phase of the temporal process of oil. However, a closer look at the temporalities in Emiliano Zapata also shows how these uncertainties have always been dealt with. Despite their anxiety in the face of uncertain times, the community members have always found creative ways to cope. They have developed strategies to manage the “time bomb,” which are constantly being revised and adapted, to respond to the challenges faced within the temporalities of oil.

Conceptions of time regarding resource extraction can only be understood in their plurality of cycles, durations, and velocities represented by the different levels of peaks and valleys immanent to oil (see Bear 2016; D’Angelo and Pijpers 2018). These temporal processes affect the space described as oilscape around the location of oil extraction sites, which also incorporate a particular material dimension and sociocultural particularities. These three aspects are closely intertwined and must be considered as complementary parts of a comprehensive complex. The role of material implications of oil extraction for the constitution of a “time bomb” in Emiliano Zapata, as well as the way they physically play out over time will be discussed in the following chapter.

Notes

1. *Ingeniero* technically translates as “engineer,” but in Emiliano Zapata, it is a term used for any type of PEMEX staff.
2. Light-skinned persons are usually referred to as *güera* or *güero* in Mexico.
3. Altar candles are used on every house altar in almost every home in Emiliano Zapata. The syncretistic practice of having candles during every hour of the day for the household saints is still alive in the community even now, as it is in many Mexican households (see Valderrama Rouy 2005: 199).

4. A form of barter trade performed in Mexico since precolonial times among indigenous communities, not involving currency but products (see, e.g., Flagler 2007; Licona Valencia 2014).
5. In Mexico, employees usually get paid every two weeks, or after fifteen (*quince*) days. Migrants then mostly send the remittances immediately so the families in Emiliano Zapata and many other places in Mexico go to the city twice a month where they can find the cash machines of Western Union or other providers to pick up the money their family members sent.
6. "Nuestra comunidad está peor que otras porque nuestras autoridades negociaban mal con PEMEX/las empresas petroleras."
7. Mexico has several prestigious public universities. The students must pass the entrance exam and can enjoy education for a very low charge, adapted to their economic possibilities. Nevertheless, the bars for the entrance exams are high and most rural schools do not fulfill the necessary education level to prepare their students to pass the exams. Students of the UNAM, for example, are recruited mostly out of special preparation schools from which all nine located in Mexico City. Even though special scholarships for marginalized groups such as indigenous people are available after students have passed the bar, it remains almost impossible for students from rural areas with no additional tutoring to pass the entrance exams at the higher ranked universities of the country. This has been criticized for a long time but remains the norm until the present day (Reina 2016; Seco 2013).
8. "Yo quisiera que mis hijos reciban un trabajo en PEMEX/las empresas petroleras un día."
9. "Desde que las nuevas empresas petroleras (como Oleorey) entraron se ha empeorado la situación general" / "Desde que las nuevas empresas petroleras (como Oleorey) entraron la situación general no ha cambiado" / "Desde que las nuevas empresas petroleras (como Oleorey) entraron se ha mejorado la situación general."