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## **Chapter 6: Facilitating Repeasantization**

Adaptations to survival strategies, and specifically urban migration (Chapter 4), have not been the only responses to the exploitation and marginalization experienced by peasants in rural Haiti. Over the past 50 years, and particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a dramatic rise in local and international collective peasant resistance. This chapter first discusses the background and significance of Haiti’s grassroots peasant movement, Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP) and its relationship to the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina. It then examines MPP’s response to the 2010 earthquake, addressing why the notion of personal and social “transformation” is integral to its efforts. Finally, it explains how peasant-led resettlement informs post-disaster resettlement and, in this context, examines the interconnectedness of resettlement and repeasantization. The information and analysis provided in this chapter is necessary for critically engaging with my account of the Eco-Village, presented in Chapter 7.

### **A Legacy of Social Strength**

As described in Chapter 4, the post-colonial era ushered in a period of transition from plantations to individual small-holdings (Arthur & Dash 1999). While outsiders have often perceived the lifestyle in rural areas as a solitary existence, it is in fact deeply rooted in social interactions (Werleigh 1983). In 1929, William Seabrook did an ethnographic study of a Haitian peasant *lakou*, or communal living arrangement, that consisted of several generations of a family living in a remote mountainside village. Not only did the *lakou* act as a form of community in itself, but also almost every day, neighbors would make at least a seven-mile journey to visit the family (Seabrook 1929/1999). In contemporary context, *lakou* was described to me as “a small community; people who eat together. When there is a problem, they resolve it together; it is

solidarity” (Interview Chavannes). Furthermore, Haitian society has a tradition of *konbit*, a system of cooperation that enables peasant farmers to complete major agricultural tasks (Courlander 1960). For example, a member of a group can hold *konbit* on a certain day to clear or hoe a field; the occasion will also typically include music, singing, and eating together (Courlander 1960; Interview Chavannes). During my research, this practice was described as “many people working together” to accomplish something; it continues to be an important concept in peasant life (Interview A16).

But self-organizing and community spirit extend beyond “rural” life and geographic binaries. In the 1970s, community-based church groups broke away from the conservatism of the church to form a movement known as “Ti Legliz,” or little church, coined by Father Byas in the rural northwest and based on Latin American liberation theology (Hallward 2010; Pellett 1986).<sup>1</sup> Byas was quoted as saying, “It’s a movement of community, of solving problems collectively” (Pellett 1986). This movement spread throughout the country and was a major force in driving economic and political change during the Duvalier era. Conceptions of togetherness – of solidarity – and their importance in overcoming a context of marginalization and exploitation inspired the rise of Mouvman Peyizan Papay (Interview Chavannes) – a movement that aims to ameliorate the peasant condition.

### **Mouvman Peyizan Papay**

Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP) was founded in 1973 by current MPP Director Jean-Baptiste Chavannes and celebrated its fortieth anniversary in March 2013. MPP is a peasants’ organization that aims to create peasant solidarity throughout Haiti and fight for their cultural, social, and economic advancement (Box 3). While both men and women can be members of

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<sup>1</sup> Liberation theology emerged in South America as a response to poverty; it suggested that the

MPP, it also created the branches “Jeunes Travailleurs Paysans” in 1979, to address the needs of youth, and the “Mouvement des Femmes du MPP” in 1981, to defend women’s rights. In the Central Plateau alone, MPP has 4,184 *groupements* – community working groups with their own specific aims but committed to the goals of MPP – totaling around 54,000 members (MPP Website). I learned from current members that to become a member of MPP, one must form or become part of a *groupement* with no more than 15 people. Together, they must engage in a collective project (e.g., planting a communal field) and hold a meeting every week. Every member pays an annual membership fee of 100 Haitian Gourdes (US \$2.35). The organization actively promotes the interests of small-scale producers at domestic and international levels, disseminates information and provides training on sustainable agriculture techniques, and supports local agricultural entrepreneurship (e.g., jam, peanut butter, and dairy production; tree nurseries), among other initiatives.

**Box 1:** MPP’s Objectives. *Source:* MPP Website (my translation)

**Movement’s Purpose:**

*MPP seeks to organize all the poor peasants (men, women, young persons, and children) from all the corners of Haiti in a great national movement fighting to build a Haiti where everyone finds life. It struggles with others for food sovereignty, decent jobs, and education, affordable health care, and housing for all: for decent leisure, the freedom of thought, and freedom of speech.*

**MPP’s principal objectives include:**

Promoting the organization of all poor peasants of Haiti to fight for a society where the vital needs of man are satisfied (food, shelter, education, work, healthcare, leisure, etc.): all respecting the identity and the liberty of the people.

To conduct popular education to permit poor peasants to become conscious of their situation of exploitation and domination so that they can organize and mobilize themselves, transforming this situation

To fight for genuine agrarian reform, allowing poor peasants to participate in different stages and processes of production and to be the principal beneficiaries

To work for achieving food self-sufficiency and end dependency

To fight for equality between men and women so that together they can fight for real social change

To collaborate with other organizations in the defense of popular interests

To maintain relationships with international organizations defending the rights of peasants and the poor in general

**Over the long term, MPP will do the following to achieve these objectives:**

- Establish solidarity among impoverished peasants
- Produce and control production in order to eliminate food aid in Haiti
- Organize the storage and marketing of agricultural products
- Organize cooperatives for production, processing, flow, and supply
- Combat smuggling of agricultural products
- Claim the social services of the state (schools, clinics, water, roads, etc.)
- Defend the interests of peasants in front of courts
- Fight for Creole to actually be the official language of the country
- Promote, encourage, develop popular theatre, music, dance, and religiousness

Chavannes is the figurehead of MPP. He is internationally recognized for his work in sustainable agriculture and peasant rights and often lauded by local and foreign supporters as a great leader with “anpil fòs” – great strength. He created the organization and established its methods of learning, inspired by Paolo Freire (Interview Chavannes). Opposed to the idea that one person has all the knowledge and must impart that knowledge on an “empty” mind, which creates dynamics of superiority and inferiority, MPP is committed to “l’animation non-directive,” which means that the animator (facilitator) allows the group to guide the learning process; learning is seen as a collective process of sharing, exchanging, and debating ideas

(Interview Chavannes).<sup>2</sup> Chavannes has long placed particular emphasis on writing and disseminating songs about ideas and values vital to or threatening peasant solidarity and well-being. I learned one such song on my first day in the Eco-Village, designed and mentored by MPP, where almost every person including the children knew it. The song is called *Makonnen fòs nou*, and its Creole lyrics roughly translate to: “Together we are strong. Continue fighting for Haiti. We are all the same family: we are all Haitian. We are all sisters and brothers, and singing for Haiti.” These methods reinforce peasant solidarity and, specifically, the importance of struggling *together* to ameliorate the peasant condition through *konbit*.

During an interview, Chavannes offered insight into his understanding of “development.” He said, “We can’t see development as something that can be compared to others – that we are ‘behind’ industrialized countries.” Rather, he elaborated, “changing the situation of those who are exploited, dominated, poor requires using methods that fit people’s own reality – the indigenous reality” (Interview Chavannes). To him, the method of Washington – USAID – is parachute development or, otherwise described, “envelopment.” They envelope people to press their agenda, but it does not hold. He claims that development must be conceived by the people who live there and know what must be done to change their situation (Interview Chavannes). Edelman (1999) has noted that in Costa Rican peasant movements, charismatic leadership was almost a requirement for mobilizing followers, negotiating with politicians, and/or being heard in the media. Chavannes holds a similar, seemingly indispensable, importance to MPP.

Observations of daily activity at MPP’s training center, Sant Lakay, and conversations with many members and visitors confirmed that MPP’s objectives are more than rhetoric: they

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<sup>2</sup> One example of this method was the use of images (posters) to present problematic or controversial scenes for group discussion. Participants would initiate and drive the conversation based on the issues that they identified in the poster (Interview Chavannes).

are actively promoted at the local, national, and international levels. Its radio station (broadcasted live from Sant Lakay) is not only committed to promoting Haitian culture with *kompas* and other types of Haitian music, but it also reports domestic and international news, interviews guest speakers, and disseminates information targeted toward local peasants. MPP also participates in international exchanges with foreign peasant movements and technical experts (e.g., from Cuba, Brazil), organizes large-scale protests in response to domestic and international agendas that threaten peasant interests, and sponsors various forms of trainings, mentorships, and higher education for youth. MPP is experimenting with an extensive number of innovative agricultural projects. During my fieldwork, I witnessed new forms of irrigation, rainwater collection, planting (e.g. tire gardens, discussed in Chapter 7), and harvesting/processing of tree leaves that can be turned into a nutritious (and profitable) powder dietary supplement. Additionally, the organization coordinates regularly scheduled events, such as regional groupement meetings. Chavannes reminded me that groupements are the foundation of MPP's solidarity (Interview Chavannes).

On July 24, 2012, I attended the 4th section regional groupement meeting with four members of the Eco-Village. The meeting, which takes place approximately every three months, was attended by at least one hundred peasants, both male and female (Photo 1). It lasted the entire afternoon and provided everyone with two cooked meals. An MPP animator opened the meeting by engaging everyone in song, including *Makonnen fòs nou*. The leader then proceeded to review the history of MPP before addressing the injustices faced by the peasantry in Haiti. He explained, "We are peasants, suffering injustice, exploitation man against man; we need society, need health, and doctors for peasants, too... To have rich people while others die of hunger is not good. But en groupe, in formation, working together, reflecting together, this produces richness

... Is each groupement meeting every week? This is for creating society. It is us who must dream of another society. Groupements create richness” (Field notes, 24/7/12, my translation). The leader later spoke of MPP’s participation in La Via Campesina and the importance of participating in the global peasant movement; he stressed the need to fight for social change, reclaiming schools, security, quality food, good health, and potable water. He said it was time to end complacency, and that in 2013 for MPP’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, they would march to end the death of agriculture, to end multinational intervention (e.g., Monsanto), to end economic and political domination (e.g., industrial parks and MINUSTAH, the UN peacekeeping mission), and to promote international solidarity among peasants and poor people (Field notes, 24/7/12).

My observations and interactions made it clear that MPP does more than fight exploitation and injustice: it promotes a way of life – a way of thinking – and is committed to processes of social transformation. Therefore, while no person experiences the influence of MPP in the same way, everyone is constructing identity and place in relation to it.

**Photo 1:** Regional Groupement Meeting, July 24, 2012



## **Advocating for Change**

MPP may have emerged from a context specific to Haiti in the 1970s, but it was not alone in taking collective action to ameliorate the peasant condition. Philip McMichael (2006) traces the emergence of peasant movements to the neoliberal trajectory of global capital accumulation, which incorporated agriculture into global industrial-retailing circuits, safeguarded intellectual property rights protocols (e.g., seed monopolies) that displaced peasant knowledge, and supported globally-managed circuits of food. Peasant movements have thus emerged to defend an alternative modernism:

Arguably, ‘peasant movements’ (including land rights, ‘food sovereignty’ biodiversity and seed-saving movements) are the most direct expression of the crisis created by dispossession and ecological commodification, especially insofar as these movements manifest themselves in a diversity of responses to ‘re-spatialise’ the social and economic relations in the corporate food regime. They represent the possibility of a peasant modernism, dedicated to an ‘agrarian citizenship’, via a politics of ecology and food sovereignty anchored in an episteme of politically reconstituted place. (McMichael 2006: 408)

By the 1990s, peasant movements across the world had established enough momentum to form the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina (the “Peasant Way”) in 1993: MPP aligned with this movement. Rather than “disappearing,” as many had theorized peasants would do under modernization, they were achieving an unprecedented degree of worldwide coordination to struggle for a new vision on the world stage (Desmarais 2007). This new scale of organization makes it hard for institutions to simply dismiss peasant assertions and identity as “backwards,” “regressive,” or not “modern.”

La Vía Campesina has redefined “‘the peasant way’ in opposition to the neoliberal agrarian project through a politics that unites diverse and autonomous struggles anchored in a ‘practical ethic of peasant movement solidarity’” (Rajeev Patel 2006 as quoted by McMichael 2006: 412). Their struggle problematizes the meaning of development and who defines and

implements it (Desmarais 2007). Through political intervention and other forms of contestation, the “peasant way” generates an alternative, agrarian-centered narrative which stands in contrast to neo-liberal capitalism (McMichael 2006). One of their main positions, which according to Desmarais (2007) best captures La Vía Campesina’s vision for change, is the right to food *sovereignty*, “a broader concept [than food security] that considers food a human right rather than primarily a commodity, prioritizes local production and peasant access to land, and upholds nations’ rights to protect their producers from dumping and to implement supply management policies” (Edelman 2005: 339). This more progressive, comprehensive understanding of agriculture and food represents La Vía Campesina’s mission to defend “small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity” (Vía Campesina Website).

However, La Vía Campesina does not propose *one* alternative agrarian way. As a movement comprised of more than 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries, representing approximately 200 million farmers, it is an “autonomous, pluralist, and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other type of affiliation” (Vía Campesina Website). While the capacity of La Vía Campesina to transform great diversity into unity is one of its greatest strengths, it is critical not to dismiss the heterogeneity of and within peasant movements, which must explore their own “alternative identities, new solidarities, alternative social spaces, and alternative political cultures” (Desmarais 2007: 25). Each movement is negotiating its own culturally and contextually specific vision for the future and how it can be achieved. In the case of MPP, this meant adapting to and negotiating the consequences of the 2010 earthquake, which as described in the last chapter, spanned geographic divides.

## MPP's Earthquake Response

During interviews, I learned that immediately following the earthquake, MPP opened the gates of Sant Lakay to shelter and provide basic necessities for hundreds of survivors, while providing food and resources for hundreds more on a bi-weekly basis (Interview A16). But after eight months, it needed to reclaim the facilities for the organization and thus provided people with basic resources for settling elsewhere. By fall 2010, Chavannes, who had developed his vision for an Eco-Village, was asking for applications to live there. With funding and support from UUSC, ground for the Eco-Village was broken in June 2011 (Interview A16). However, its creation was a response to disaster-induced displacement of arguably “urban” citizens, not for poor peyizans already in the area. How did this fit into MPP’s vision? There is, of course, the argument that it was the “natural,” humanitarian response to crisis: Haitians were in need and foreign funds were flowing in. There is also the argument that because urbanization has decreased rural political clout (Edelman 2006), it was an opportunity to gain attention from the earthquake while realizing an alternative way of living. But these alone do not explain why MPP chose to assist in the form of an Eco-Village when many other options existed.

In his own words, Chavannes describes the purpose of the Eco-Village as “to re-create communal life, to recreate solidarity between people” (Interview Chavannes). He elaborated:

I want to demonstrate to those who fear life in Port-au-Prince ... that life can be better. The ecological village [Eco-Village] is, first, for receiving victims of the earthquake, showing people living in Port-au-Prince in poor conditions that people can live and stay in the rural setting doing agriculture. What agriculture? Peasant agriculture – ecological agriculture – that produces healthy food to nourish the family *and* the village. So, it creates a model of decentralization but, at the same time, reestablishes the communal life that exists in the peasant *lakou* – in the peasant community, living in solidarity.... The community fights for solidarity, fights to respect the environment.... This is the route to development. (Interview Chavannes, my translation)

What this indicates is that the peasant condition is not bifurcated along “urban” and “rural” lines. MPP’s Eco-Village seeks to develop and promote an alternative way of life to capitalist modernity (McMichael 2006: 416); MPP thus envisions its struggle like another peasant movement, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST),<sup>3</sup> Brazil’s Landless Workers Movement, a movement invested in all those who are exploited by neoliberalism:

In seeking to reconstitute the ‘rural’ as a civic base through which to critique the Brazilian development narrative, the MST develops cooperative forms of rural labour, reproduces staple foods for the working poor, and offers livelihood security to the urban unemployed. This new *campesino* politics self-consciously connects not simply with other agrarian and indigenous movements, but also with those united by the exclusions of the neoliberal model. (McMichael 2006: 414)

MST, a “without-land” movement, has led to the creation of a “without-home” urban movement (McMichael 2006). This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of urban and rural poverty and reinforces, albeit from a different angle, that deactivation does not mean the disappearance of a struggle that spans artificial boundaries (Tacoli et al. 2008). As McMichael (2006) notes, the links between hyper-urbanization and peasant dispossession cannot be ignored: *campesino* politics seeks to use principles of ecology to reverse the “centralisation of economic resources and its catastrophic human and environmental consequences” (McMichael 2006: 415).

Haiti’s 2010 earthquake revealed just how many people had been drawn to resources centralized in Port-au-Prince, where millions of Haitians suffered without any sense of social security – land, home, money, livelihood, or services – in the earthquake’s aftermath. MPP’s vision, then, includes helping these people. To understand how MPP is facilitating resettlement through repeasantization, I turn to the practices of MST. MST has long pursued agrarian land reform by resettling people who have faced rural exclusion or development-induced

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<sup>3</sup> MST is “a mass social movement, formed by rural workers and by all those who want to fight for land reform and against injustice and social inequality in rural areas” (MST Website).

displacement through land occupations. The movement prioritizes the intangible dimensions of life often neglected by top-down recovery efforts (Wittman 2005).

## **Realizing an Alternative Vision**

### *MST and “transformation”*

According to Hannah Wittman (2005: 96), MST realizes agrarian reform in Brazil using “a process of intentional community-building through resettlement and the production of locality,” referred to as “emplacement.” She explains that resettlement shifts people and property, “creating new social and environmental relations and permanently transforming both symbolic and physical landscapes,” and therefore these settlements are “sites of changing identity, community, and livelihood that build individual and collective histories and relationships to surrounding physical spaces” (Wittman 2005: 96). In this context of immense change, MST facilitates resettlement by fostering personal and social transformation, developing collective consciousness, and providing on-going political participation through a multiplicity of symbolic and physical practices (Wittman 2005).

For example, MST uses political education programs “to develop a sense of personal and individual responsibility to act in support of the collective good of the broader landless community, based on a collective historical experience” (Wittman 2005: 103). Acts of occupation symbolize the coming together of individuals into an imagined community and popular struggle. And MST activists shape new ideas and behavior by addressing notions of “worldliness” and “idealism” through song, theater, and chants (Wolford 2003). As described earlier, many of these practices, aside from land occupations,<sup>4</sup> are also used by MPP. The regional groupement meeting that I attended clearly had a political agenda that explained

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<sup>4</sup> I do not know of any instance in which MPP has engaged in land occupation.

peoples' hardships in terms of a collective history of social and economic injustices. Moreover, an MPP-orchestrated demonstration against Monsanto's donation of hybrid seeds to Haiti in 2010 drew approximately 10,000 people expressing their concerns about multinational corporations that distort the agricultural economy with genetically modified seeds (Field & Bell 2013).<sup>5</sup> It symbolized a united demand to remain free from the dependency that these seeds – emblematic of modernization as “progress” – often create. These are the types of events that build collective identity.

Wittman (2005) asserts that the process of emplacement is particularly important to the reproduction of community and locality because “migrants” must work with local resources in a new physical setting to “engage in co-production of the physical and the social to shape their own sense of emergent place, and construct a shared identity and history” (Wittman 2005: 97). Co-production is an integral part of transformation for those experiencing re-peasantization, as it requires initiating or renewing a relationship with the earth. MPP's agronomists play an important role in working with peasants to promote more efficient *and* ecological practices. In a number of ways and for decades, MPP has regularly facilitated personal and social transformation to create solidarity among peasants; assisting resettlement, then, is not about creating an artificial “plan” but rather incorporating members of the Eco-Village into the wider MPP community.

Escobar argues that these processes are influenced by the “skillful disclosing” of movement leaders/activists, which promotes their own specific vision:

In political situations, identity involves ethical commitments by activists. Such commitment operates through a practice phenomenologists call skillful [*sic*] disclosing, that is, the creation of spaces in which new ways of knowing, being,

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<sup>5</sup> They also engaged in symbolic burning of Monsanto seeds.

and doing might emerge as historical possibilities out of given problematic situations (such as a form of oppression). (2008: 23)

Yet “skillful disclosing” does not guarantee certain results; the ideals of a movement are negotiated by the realities of its constituents, making some MST settlements more successful than others (Wolford 2003). For instance, one person described settlement abandonment in the following way: “People who join the MST and then leave, and hang around defaming the movement, these people did not experience any social transformation. I think that people don’t change because they don’t want to. You have to have a lot of strength and courage and even sacrifice, because many times we have to leave things aside, to enter into this struggle. If you can’t do that, you will never be able to carry out a transformation of yourself” (as quoted by Wittman 2005: 107). The values and practices conveyed by peasant movements must be negotiated into peoples’ realities, explaining why “ideal” and “real” are never the same. The issue then switches from how peasant movements promote transformation to how people actually process it.

### *Identity and place*

Two processes that emerge as critical to transformation are constructions of identity and place. Escobar (1998: 203) describes identities as:

...constructed through everyday practices at many levels. From the realm of daily tasks and activities, which create microworlds, to the construction of the more stable, albeit always changing, figured worlds, identity construction operates through an active engagement with the world. There is a constant tacking between identity, local contentious practice, and historical struggles that confer upon identity construction a dynamic character.

In this sense, identities are often misrepresented as homogenous and static when they are in fact the products of on-going contestation and personal experiences with one’s world. Accordingly, big life events like natural disasters contribute to the definition and redefinition of identity, but so

do the routine chores of daily life. Escobar's notion of identity creation also suggests that because everyone encounters processes of internal or external conflict, they are at least in part formed by their approach to adversity. Long (1996) posits that people generate unique responses to problems – as individuals or as groups – based on their engagement with interpersonal networks, community and/or neighborhood, church or similar institutions, and/or through an appeal to widespread value positions. He adds that people do not simply respond to distant market conditions or to programs and services offered by “outside” public or private interests; rather, “on the basis of ‘local’ knowledge, organization, and values, they actively attempt to come to grips cognitively and organizationally with ‘external’ circumstances, and in so doing the latter are mediated or transformed in some way” (Long 1996: 43). This reinforces de Haas’ (2009) point that labels like “involuntary” and “voluntary” become problematic insofar as they conceal the many processes that are simultaneously interacting to shape one’s engagement with the world.

Identity construction is intimately connected to place-making. Escobar (1998: 30) argues that “place continues to be important in the lives of most people, if by place we mean the engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed.” This is directly tied to Dorreen Massey’s (1994) argument that places are processes, not static sites, and Wittman’s (2005: 96) argument that “social constructions of place, identity, and scale offer nodes of resistance to the homogenous world culture of globalization.” This conception of place as an aspect of life to be embraced plays an important role in the Eco-Village, where people are processing relatively new relationships to the land. Therefore, as suggested by Wittman’s research on MST, place is in

some senses a physical relationship – co-production with the earth demands a physical attachment to the land that provides food and income. In other ways, it is ideological – peyizan identity and degrees of “peasantness” are intimately connected to how one perceives place. Escobar (2008) notes that place-making creates both local and regional worlds as well as hegemonies and resistance; in many ways, MPP’s efforts to create “place” with the Eco-Village can be seen as a form of resistance to mainstream recovery efforts. Both identity and place emerge from heterogeneous processes with diverse outcomes; no one person’s construction of identity or place is the same as another person’s reality.

But why then, if people are so dynamic and adaptive, are resettlement initiatives still so often unsuccessful or even harmful? One argument is that because identity and place are relational, contentious, and constructed through “active engagement with the world,” when that world is dispersed, so are the multiplicity of factors, including livelihoods, interpersonal networks, communities, and institutions, that were previously used to create identity and place (Escobar 1998: 203). While the relational tension of what *was* in the past will always play a role in framing the present, if the proscribed, planned conditions of resettlement lack various features of the past – as Scott (1998) and others argue that they always do – then constructions of identity and place are limited in some capacity. Of course, people will adapt, accessing capacities through which to survive, even thrive, but with nostalgia or efforts to recreate another identity or place. If, however, people can find new or alternative sources through which identity and place can be negotiated and its contestations resolved (i.e., personal/social transformation), then the draw of the “other” is tempered and possibly reconceived, albeit never eliminated. This is what the Eco-Village, supported by the MPP community, stands to offer: a new community, history, and values on which to negotiate on-going constructions of identity and place.

## **Beyond “Resettlement”**

While resettlement in rural Haiti has taken a number of forms (e.g., Pandiassou; Eco-Village; returning to family), some efforts have pointedly sought to use transformed and transforming Haiti as a milieu for linking survivors’ grievances to a different imagining of the future: MPP’s disaster resettlement initiative is the materialization of its vision for an alternative agrarian future. MPP explains people’s material scarcities and social concerns through a history of wider social and economic injustices and offers earthquake survivors new foundations for constructing identity and place. This is not to say that these processes could not occur or interact under more normal circumstances, but that the magnitude of this disaster, amplified by a context of urban-rural interconnectedness, was unprecedented. It was a catalyst – one of many possible forms – that heightened and intensified the potential for significant change. With disasters, “every feature of a society and its relations with the total environment may be impacted. Coherence and contradiction, cooperation and conflict, hegemony and resistance, as they are expressed through the operation of physical, biological, and social systems and behavioral practices, become manifest” (Hoffman & Oliver-Smith 2002: 7). For that reason, Haiti is unique, but many of its lessons can be applied to other contexts in which widespread change has been prompted by extreme circumstances. The next chapter will provide my account of the Eco-Village and analyze how processes of resettlement, repeasantization, and personal and social transformation converge in one project.