



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

Pluriversal Economic Systems and the “Obligation to Incorporate”: A Loss Valuation Review

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Introduction / Motivation

The Fire

- The Hermits Peak Calf Canyon Fire (April 6, 2022 – Aug. 21, 2022)
- 341,471 acres burnt (largest human made wildfire in NM history.)
- US Forest Service claimed responsibility (two prescribed burns that went out of control and merged due to high wind conditions)
- Congressional decree allowed for subsistence and cascading events (H.R. 6833-59)
- \$4 Billion Allocated for compensation
- 1 Billion of 4 Billion allocated for administering the grant

The Problem

- Historical distrust of federal government
- Claims process is having difficulty accounting for what they perceive as “informal” economic behavior
- Bureaucratic requirements are posing a “double harm” on wildfire survivors, reinforcing power dynamics that ignite historical trauma
- Compensation is about “making whole” but the compensation process was not created holistically
- The compensation process will likely disrupt several important practices/value systems, further harming the community.



“You aren’t just burning our land, you’re burning the only protection we have from all of you!”
-- Mora community member at public session April 2023.



[Mora-area residents criticize FEMA on pace of addressing claims ...](#)

Two years later, we still have a long way to go to recover

Frustrations continue for Hermits Peak Calf Canyon victims waiting on FEMA claims

Fight for fire victims to receive fair compensation rages on in Northern NM

Threat of violence prompted brief lockdown at federal wildfire claims office in northern NM

Lawyers acknowledge clients’ frustration but call for a ‘reset button’ in light of new director, added personnel

Research Question

What is a “pluriversal” economy? How does economic value translate across and within a pluriversal economic system?

What is the “obligation to incorporate”? How do compensation systems assess damages and losses while avoiding the harm caused by the “obligation to incorporate”?

Data and Methods

- Community Based Dialogue (including student engagement and convergence science community). Attended over two dozen discussions with survivors and compensation claimants in the community.
- Review of approximately 120 articles and books across a variety of fields.
- Critical Analysis (development of a critical framework based on review)
 - Attendance at 2024 World Biodiversity Forum – panel on developing critical frameworks for environmental and ecological crisis.
 - Review/ Frame/ Review/ Reframe...

Some of the Literature Employed

Post-structuralism – theories of modernity, possible worlds, translation theory

History – History of Mora, Colonialism in Southwest US

Sociology – theories of bureaucracy

Critical economics – disaster capitalism

Cultural Economics – “realization of values” vs. “allocation of scarce resources”

International development – valuation of intangible loss

Environmental economics – valuation of nature, non-market valuation

Political Ecology – Rights of nature, stakeholder theory, world values

Economics – Asymmetries of Information, theories of money (double coincidence of wants)

Part I: What is the obligation to incorporate?

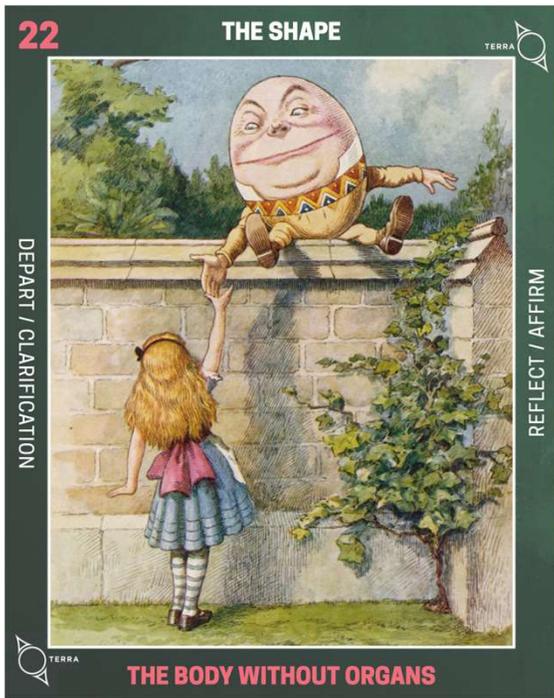
The requirement for a group of people to conform to bureaucratic processes of a dominant political and economy system.

Enforcing bureaucratic requirements often hurts those most vulnerable to crisis and disaster.

We describe in the paper why Mora is both historically resistant to incorporation and how the congressional act and related parameters (subsistence work, cascading events) compel the government to treat this situation with less of an obligation.

Compensation is both about “making whole” and about translating climactic events into damages and losses.

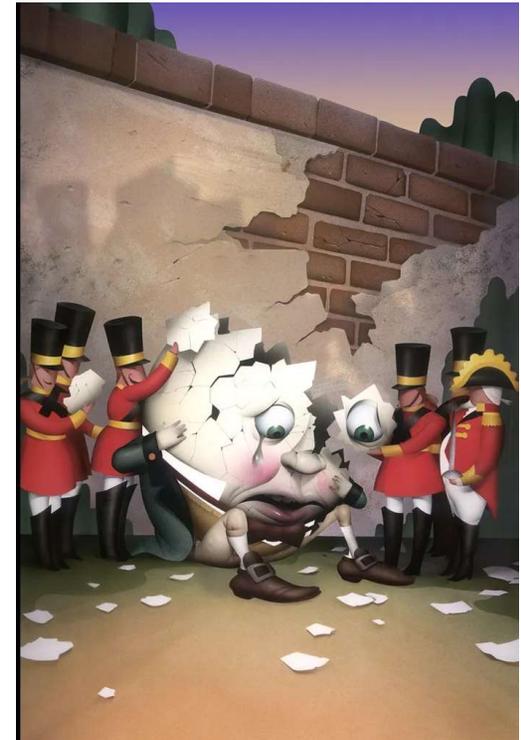
What is Humpty Dumpty?



When Humpty Dumpty falls, does the act of putting them back together...

Foreignize – retain the quality that we don't know what Humpty is ("they're Humpty") and attempt to provide support anyway

Domesticate – define what Humpty is (an egg) and build them back with the assumption that they must then conform to being an egg



Part II: What is a pluriverse?

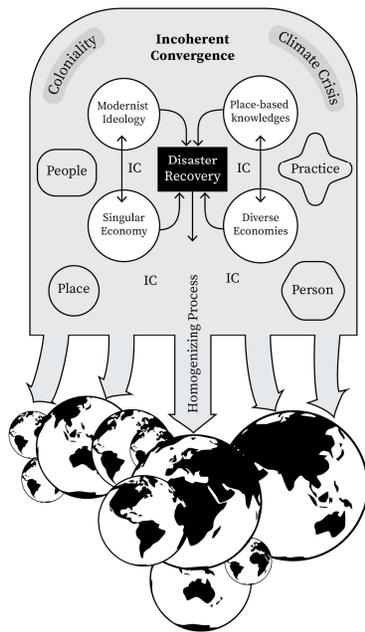


Diagram 1

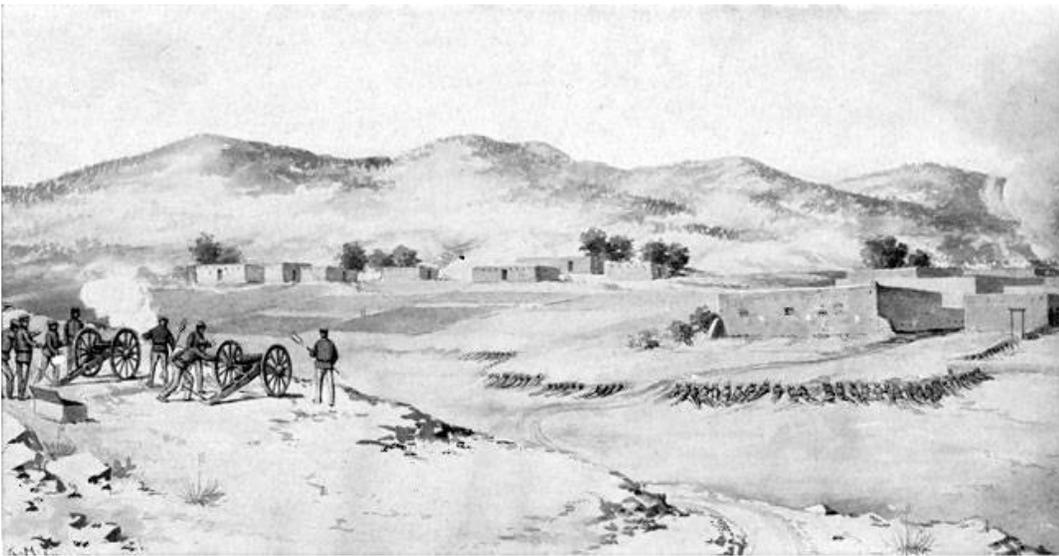
Every community is a system. Pluriverses are “world systems” seen by those within them as real and separate from others through homogenizing processes (Escobar, 2020).

Those systems have different salient ingredients in them. i.e. Cultural values, development of practices or worldviews, relationships to market activity, responses to power. In economies the relationship to the market and what informs market values begins to deviate.

Over time, those ingredients form processes, worldviews, and ideological bases that are “realized” within community spheres – producing different “real worlds”

Some of those processes are illegible to other worlds and produces distance (power, social, etc.) Others are shared processes. We sometimes refer to economies in different “realities” as Parallel, Underground, Hidden, and Informal.

Why is Mora at a pluriversal intersection?



THE BATTLE OF MORA, NEW MEXICO

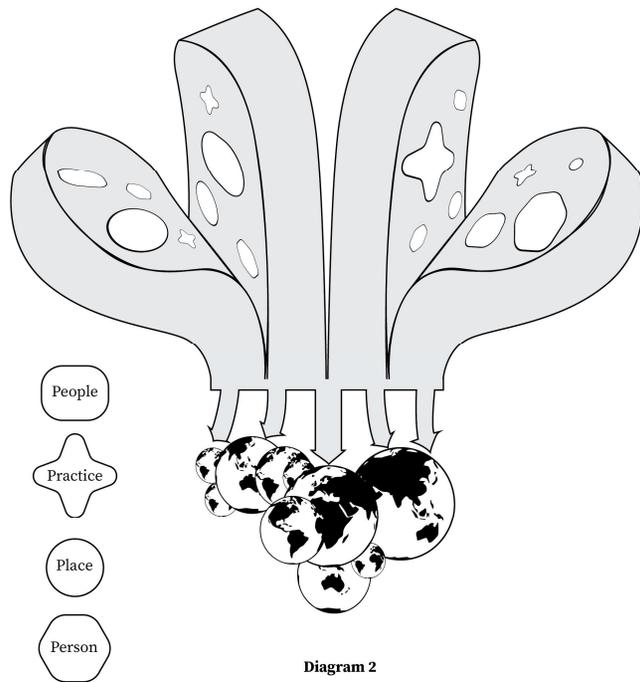
February 1, 1847

Twitchell, Ralph Emerson. *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*.

Smith Brooks Company, Publishers. 1909. Illustration by K. M. Chapman.

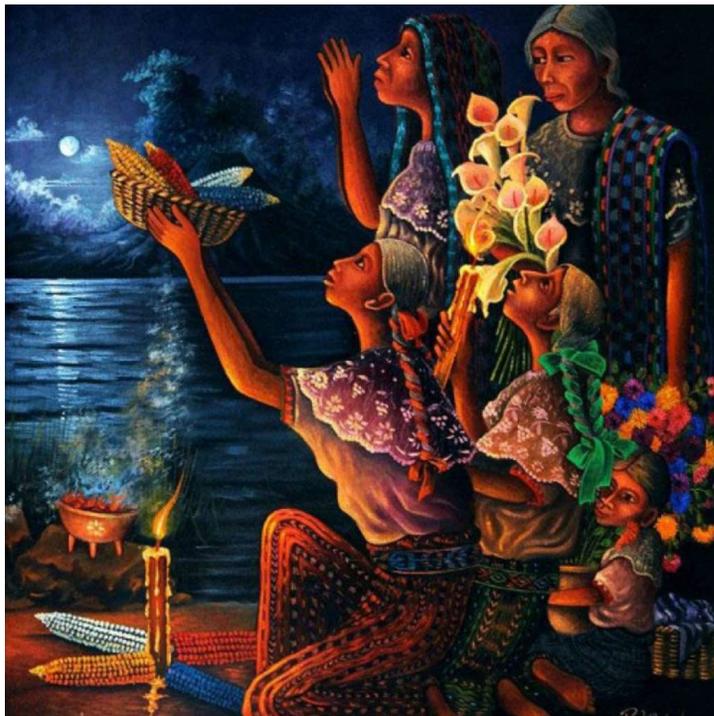
- Mora is the only unincorporated county seat in the US (population 4,169 in 2022)
- Poverty · about 20 percent higher than the rate in New Mexico: 18.3%
378,651 ($\pm 0.4\%$ / $\pm 8,012$) · more than 1.5 times the rate in United States: 12.5% 40,521,584. Ranked 2nd lowest income county in the United States several times
- Historically and Geographically situated at the intersection of Colonial and Indigenous political conflict, isolated and avoided
- Largely supports a barter economy, with mutual-aid economic values
- Heavy connection to nature and land-based identity – which produces relatively more non-market relationships

Partial Layered Ontologies



Layer 1 -- Person		
Individual Property Rights (Linear)	Property, Lost Potential Income; Punitive Monetary Compensation	3-6 years
Layer 2 -- Practice		
Cultural Reproduction (Cyclical)	Catalyzers and Support Mechanisms of practices	Generational (10-50 years)
Layer 3 -- Place		
Ecosystemic Considerations; Non-human stakeholders; Biodiversity (Curvilinear)	Proxies for stewardship; Representative Agents of Place, Caretaker	Geological (1000s years)
Layer 4 -- People		
Community Identity (Macro-Systemic)	Cultural Institutions	Civilizational/Existential (100-500 years)

The Case of the Curandera



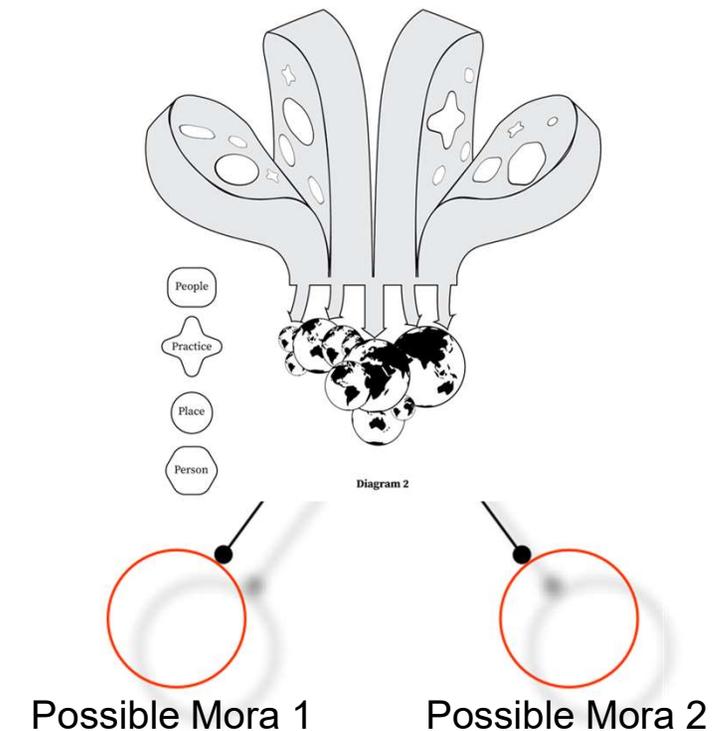
Claimant	Translation Function	Ontological Layer
Doña Gabrielita	Domesticating (Monetary)	Person, Place, Practice, People
Government (e.g. Mora County or NM Acequia Association)	Domestic and Foreignizing (Monetary and In-Kind)	Practice and People
Other (e.g. Trust or NM Acequia Association)	Foreignizing (Monetary and In-Kind)	Place, Practice and People

- 1) an individual (personal property, lost income, health damages, etc.)
 - 2) a practitioner/teacher of a craft she is no longer going to be able to practice
 - 3) a member of a class of people that suffered a collective loss; and
 - 4) a person with personal, professional, cultural and emotional links to the land/ecosystem that got damaged.
- * Who else receives compensation and of what kind for the place, the practice, either as a legal agent or as a legitimate representative of a practice

<https://www.nmhistoricwomen.org/new-mexico-historic-women/curanderas-women-who-heal/>

Conclusions/ Policy Implications

- Mora's "informality" should be seen as "pluriversality" -- changes the way it and places like it should be treated, especially as subjects of assistance (compensation or otherwise).
- Criteria/framing for a pluriversal lens
- Adds depth to the compensation process and helps address complexity of the claims process (is the process foreignizing or domesticating?)
- It can be an evaluation tool – to what degree is a place changing and in what direction is it going based on the key ontological elements selected. i.e. is Mora becoming less focused on place and more on notions of individual property?
- Partial Ontological Layering can be a starting point for policy discussions, particularly when processes like compensation are configured.
- Gives support organizations a vocabulary for community engagement.



Challenges and/or Caveats

- Not an empirical study... yet
- Is a work in progress...
- Avoiding cultural essentialism (Mora and FEMA)... both are changing and can/should change. The point is for them to grow and evolve in a way that is aware of the choices and needs of each.
- Four papers being developed out of this concept
- 1. Placing the problem of “pluriversal economy” in an international development context
- 2. Follow-up to TN paper on Diverse Economies and “incoherent convergence science”
- 3. Historical review of the “obligation to incorporate” as a disaster economy problem
- 4. Framing of problem in terms of information asymmetries, particularly...

Thanks!
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