

Migration Permanence and Village Decline in Zacatecas: When You Can't Go Home Again

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Introduction



- Thomas Wolfe's 1940 novel
- Lopez-Castro (1986) :“El sustento [esta] en un lado y el corazón en otro”
- Transformation in literature:
 - 60s and 70s: grassroots development, import substitution, courtship by superpowers; *structuralism*
 - 80s and 90s: hopefulness tested by globalization; *functionalism*, migradollars, multiplier effects, hometown associations, translocalism and “transnationalism from below”.
- Mexico as illustration:
 - Statism & ejidos → privatiza & NAFTA
 - Emig. & remittances (\$25 billion)
 - But econ, pol factors → US nativism
 - Militarization changes patterns (*New Destinations, Beyond Smoke&Mirrors*)
 - Few studies of impacts on origins (*Impacts of Border Enforcement..*)

FRONTERA ■ Ahumada

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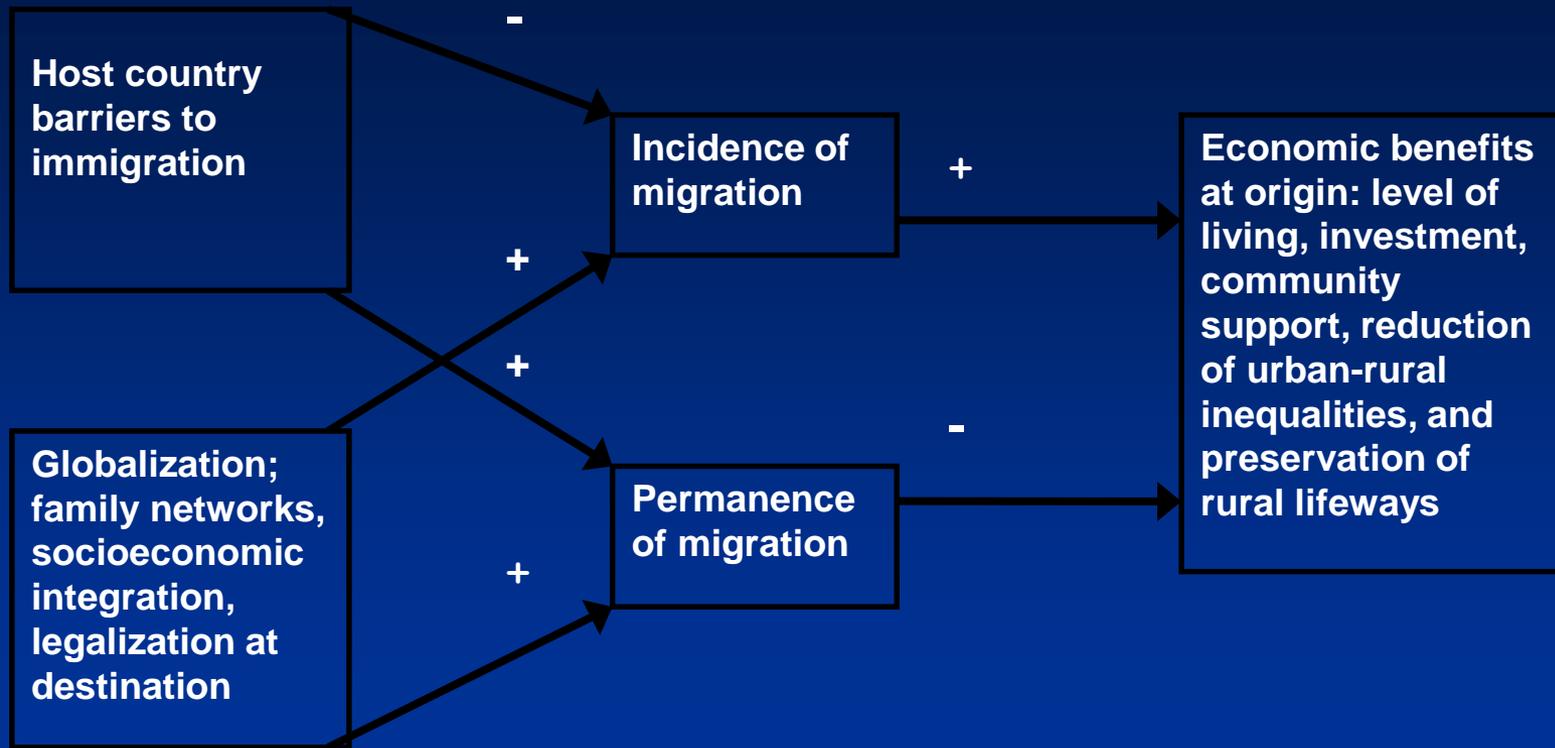
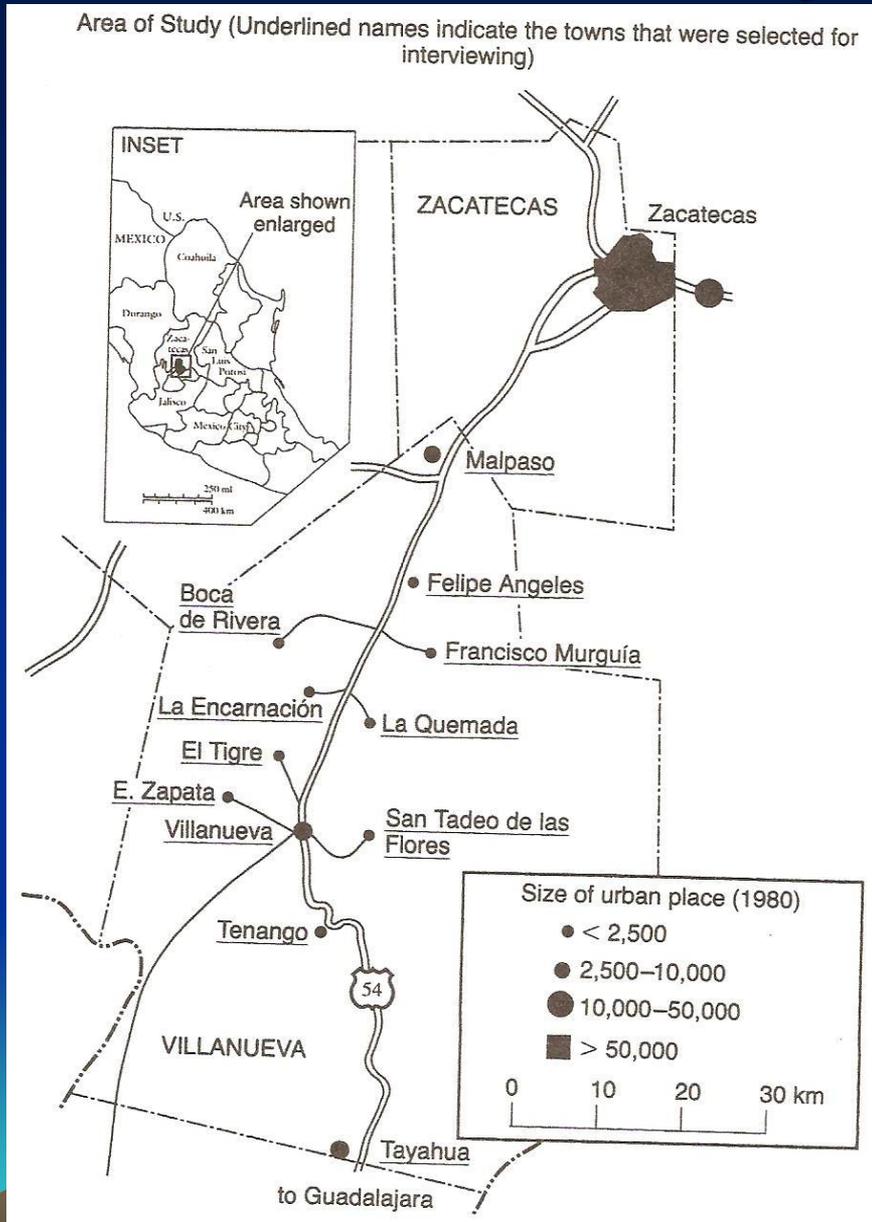


Figure 1. Migration and its Economic Benefits to Origin Families: a Model Based on Russell (1986), Lozano (1993), Jones (1998)

A Mexican Case Study



- NSF Grant (1988): four municipios in central Zacatecas (+ three in northern Coahuila). Repeat study of one (Villanueva in 2002).
- Towns and villages randomly selected within strata to preserve urban/rural proportions.
- Random households surveyed on their demographics, migration experience, expenses. Non-migrant and migrant households surveyed.
- Ethnographic interviews with a sample of households that were especially illustrative and interesting (this research resulted in my book *Ambivalent Journey* in 1995)
- 1988 marked a neo-liberal opening to the U.S.; 2002 marked stepped-up U.S. border restrictions and economic recession.
- 301 household interviews in Villanueva in 1988 and 233 in 2002.
- Mx Census, '90-'00: Mx +20%; Zac +6%; Vn -9%: cabecera +24%, villages -20%

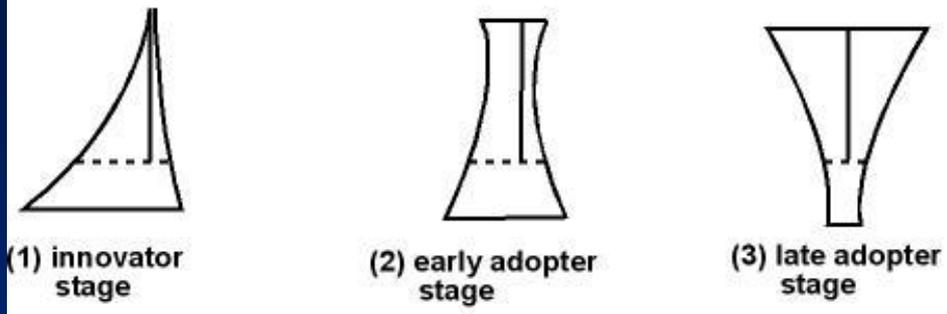
Figure 2

Table 1. U.S. Migration and Migration Permanence: Families in Villanueva Compared Over Time, 1988 & 2002

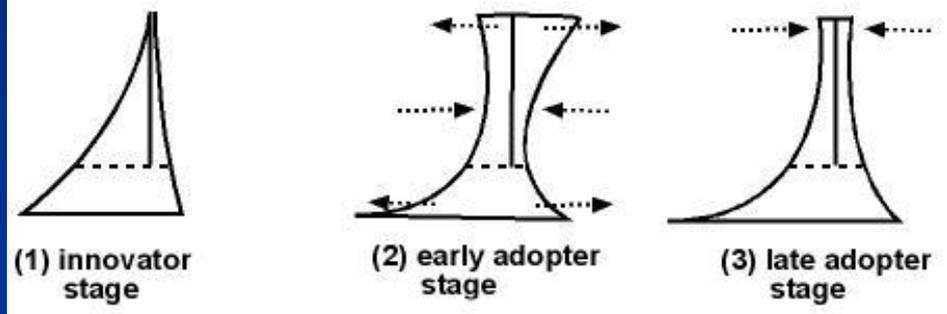
Indicator		1988	2002
% of total families:	(n=)	(301)	(233)
with an ever-migrating U.S. migrant		68.1	51.9
with no working time in the U.S.		31.9	48.1
with up to 2 years working time in the U.S.		21.3	12.9
with 2 – 5 years working time in the U.S.		18.9	9.4
with 5-10 years working time in the U.S.		14.3	8.6
(a) with more than 10 years working time in U.S.		13.6	21.0
% of migrant families:	(n=)	(205)	(121)
(b) averaging more than 1 year/migrant, latest trip		43.7	64.5
(c) with at least one legal migrant, latest trip		21.2	44.6
Means (migrant families only):			
number of months working in the U.S.		79	183
months on latest trip, average		21.8	23.2
percentage of migrants that are legal, latest trip		23.6	66.9

- Definitions: migration permanence, legalization.
- Incidence of migration declined (non-migrants increased by 50%).
- Permanence increased (% with more than ten years rose by 50%.)
- I.e., the municipio’s temporal migration profile bulged out at the top and bottom, constricted in the middle: from “smokestack” to “hourglass.”
- Another sign of increasing permanence: % of HHs averaging more than one year, most recent trip.
- Legalization increased (related to networks, home ownership, integration, etc.)
- Inhibition of migration possible; but also movement of entire migrant families outside the municipio—thus removing themselves from the possibility of being interviewed.
- Barriers not totally responsible: breaking of transnational origin ties as part of natural process.

A. Few Immigration Restrictions



B. Significant Immigration Restrictions (at middle stage)



Key:

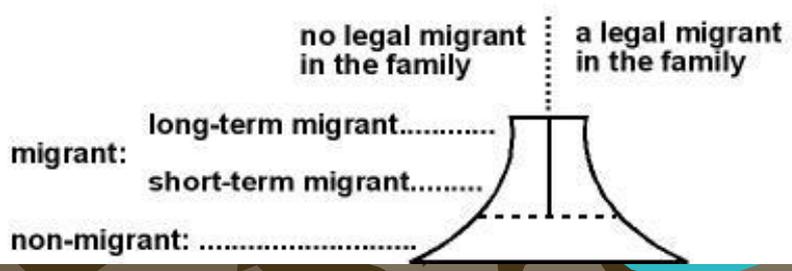


Figure 3. Migration Pyramids: Time Profile and Legal Status for Families at Different Stages of Wage-Labor Migration, Based on Mexican Research

Table 2. Economic Impacts: Families in Villanueva Compared Over Time, 1988 & 2002

Indicator		1988	2002	Ratio, 2002/ 1988
Total families:	(n=)	301	233	
% with 5 or more possessions		21.6	50.6	2.34
% who received remittances, past 12 months		45.2	37.3	.83
% who invested in agric./truck in past year		27.9	13.7	.49
% who gave to community project in past yr		60.2	72.0	1.20
% who lived in rural area (villages)		64.1	64.8	1.01
Migrant families:	(n=)	205	121	
% with 5 or more possessions		22.0	55.4	2.52
% who received remittances, past 12 months		57.6	60.3	1.05
% who invested in agric./truck in past year		30.7	17.4	.57
% who gave to community project in past yr		62.4	77.7	1.25
% who lived in rural area (villages)		63.3	78.5	1.24

- The just-observed decline in incidence and increase in permanence of migration should have negative repercussions [remittances=1/3 income]
- Note that receipt of remittances dropped; agricultural investment cut in half (developmental implications)
- Possessions increased along with giving to community projects.
- Migration permanence acting in two ways to lower remittances and reduce agricultural investments: (1) shifting HHs center of gravity; (2) leading to abandonment of origin
- Lower panel of Table 2 indicates migrant families holding their own [e.g., remittance increase, agricultural investments declined less than for total families, so non-migrants showed more economic deterioration].
- A gradual abandonment of rural Villanueva for the United States?



Impressions from 2005 and 2008

Villages such as Boca de Rivera, San Tadeo de Flores, and Emiliano Zapata (Figure 2) are not only declining in population, but are increasingly represented demographically by non-migrant families or by migrant families with older, inactive migrants and/or absentee migrants living permanently in the United States. Agriculture has become a less viable option for them, these families have aged and as remittances and government support have declined. Once active places during Christmas fiestas, these villages have become moribund, with trappings such as colored lights on the city square but little celebration and few people. Some ornate homes, paid for with U.S. dollars, are occupied for a small part of the year.

Stagnation in these villages has doubtless led to a decline in rural lifeways, if by that term we mean agricultural pursuits, human/environment interactions, and the traditional cultural practices that are based on rural livelihoods (for example, ties to indigenous foods, religious celebrations, dress, and communal institutions)(Klooster 2005). Some rural dwellers have moved to nearby towns and cities, for access to services and entertainment lacking in the villages.

EL H. AYUNTAMIENTO
CONSTRUYE ESTA OBRA
PAV. BOCA DE RIVERA ATITA
PARA BIENESTAR DE SUS HABITAN-
TES. PROGPAMA 3X1

CONNACIONALES	\$ 696,214.15
GOB. ESTATAL	\$ 696,214.15
GOB. FEDERAL	\$ 696,214.15
GOB. MPAL	\$ 696,214.15









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\$2.00

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The county seat of Villanueva presents a different story. It has absorbed migrants and non-migrants from the nearby countryside in addition to higher-status internal migrants (including return migrants) from larger Mexican cities who seek out the town for its tranquility and low cost of living. During the Christmas season, Villanueva is in continuous fiesta, with carnivals, bands, itinerant merchants, and celebrating people, including migrants and residents alike. The town's economy is in transition from agriculture to services and retail activity, supported by (1) migrant remittances; (2) tourism; and (3) service to the pueblos in its hinterland.











Conclusions and Further Discussion

- The positive impact of U.S. migration at the family level must be seen in light of general village stagnation and population decline due to out-migration and aging in rural areas such as Villanueva. This decline continues despite communitarian investments through the 3x1 program.
- Contrary to those who see the social impacts of migration largely in terms of family disintegration, migration may bring political reform, women's rights, investment in social capital (education, health, community projects, etc), as well as social remittances (behaviors and attitudes transferred from destination back to origin). Migration permanence threatens these positive social impacts.
- Nevertheless, Mexican migrants from the "hollow core" (the traditional migration hearth region) remain effectively outside government social programs, outside the globalized economy, and outside the mainstream of Mexican life. U.S. migration is likely to be their preferred option for some years to come.