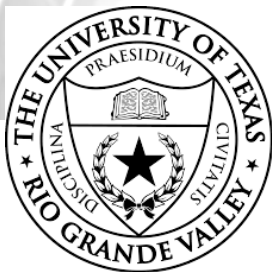


Trafficking in Persons in Central America and Along Mexico's Eastern Migration Routes: The Role of Transnational Criminal Organizations

Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera

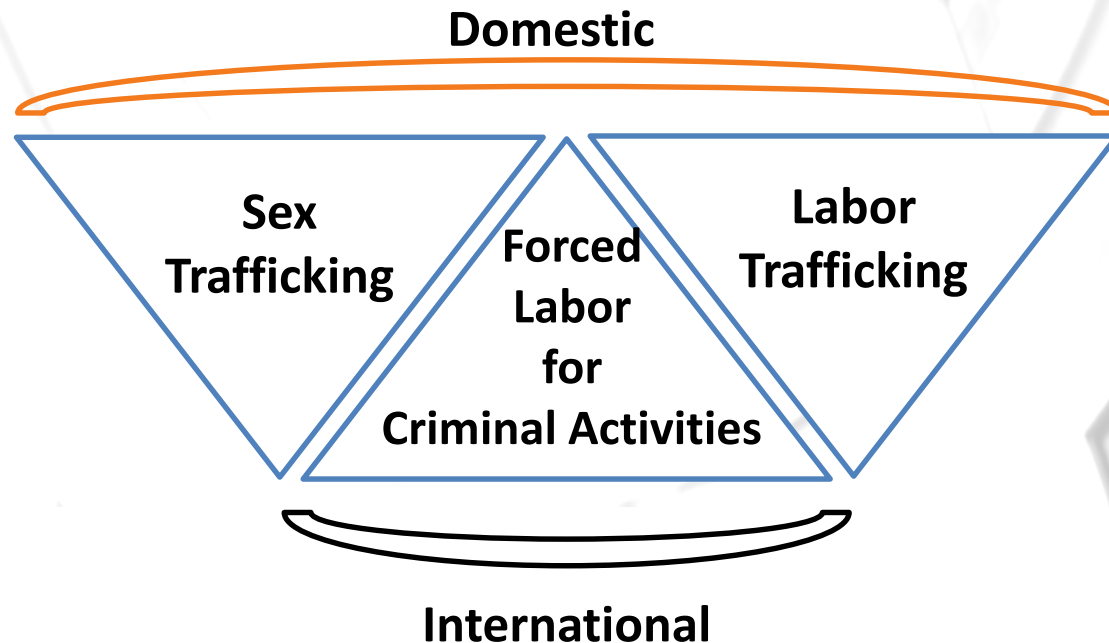
UT-Rio Grande Valley
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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
RIO GRANDE VALLEY

TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

- To explain the role of **transnational criminal organizations** (TCOs, including so-called “drug cartels”) in human trafficking in the countries of the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) and along Mexico’s eastern migration routes (2 goals, 6 objectives).
- Special emphasis was made on the subject of "**forced labor for criminal activities**" (activities related to **drug cartels** and transnational gangs or *pandillas*) in Central America and along Mexico's northeastern border.



Massive forced displacements of Central American people
escaping from violence and extreme poverty



Cases of sex trafficking and labor trafficking along the
migration routes—that allegedly involve Transnational Criminal
Organizations (TCOs) and **are intimately linked to migrant
smuggling**



Limitations of justice systems in the continent, and the **need to
further investigate** these phenomena



Goal 1. To identify the role that Mexican TCOs play in labor and sex and trafficking in order to improve government authorities' interdiction of traffickers.

Objective 1. To determine **which Mexican-origin TCOs** have expanded their repertoire of illegal revenue generating activities to include human trafficking for the purposes of labor and forced prostitution.

Objective 2. To assess the **percentage of migrants** that have been forced by TCOs to participate in criminal activities or prostitution.

Objective 3. To identify the **linkages** between Mexican TCOs with labor and sex trafficking rings.

Objective 4. To better understand the phenomenon of **“opportunistic trafficking,”** (participation of migrants in TCOs' activities, such as the production, transportation and sale of illicit drugs, execution of violence, and surveillance activities for these organizations).



Goal 2. To assess the level of collaboration between Mexican-origin TCOs, transnational criminal gangs and other paramilitary groups in compelled labor and forced prostitution to improve international and intra-national efforts to combat trafficking of migrants in Mexico.

Objective 1. To determine which specific transnational criminal gangs (e.g., El Salvador's **Maras**) and other paramilitary groups (e.g., Guatemala's **Kaibiles**) **collaborate with Mexican-origin TCOs** (such as the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas) along Mexico's eastern migration routes from Central America to Mexico's northeastern border in sex trafficking, opportunistic trafficking, and other types of labor trafficking.

Objective 2. To determine which **specific activities** these other groups perform in the dynamics of human trafficking in these regions and to identify the routes in which they operate.



TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

- ❑ **Method:** Semi-structured interviews and informal conversations in the researched trafficking areas;
- ❑ **Project duration:** 18-months;
- ❑ **Field sites:** Mexico City, key trafficking areas along Mexico's eastern migration routes, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala;
- ❑ **Interview average duration:** approx. 1h 30m [Note: the duration of interviews with migrants varies substantially; sometimes migrants were interviewed in groups];

TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

❑ **# of shelters/migrant facilities: 25**

[Note: Includes visits to airports in San Salvador, Guatemala City and Honduras; INSAMI (Instituto Salvadoreño del Migrante); and ARG (Asociación de Retornados Guatemaltecos)]

❑ **# of migrants interviewed (in transit and repatriated): 140**

❑ **# of law enforcement agents, experts/academics, shelter workers, human rights NGOs/practitioners, and others: 255**

❑ **# of prisoners interviewed: 11**

406 interviews

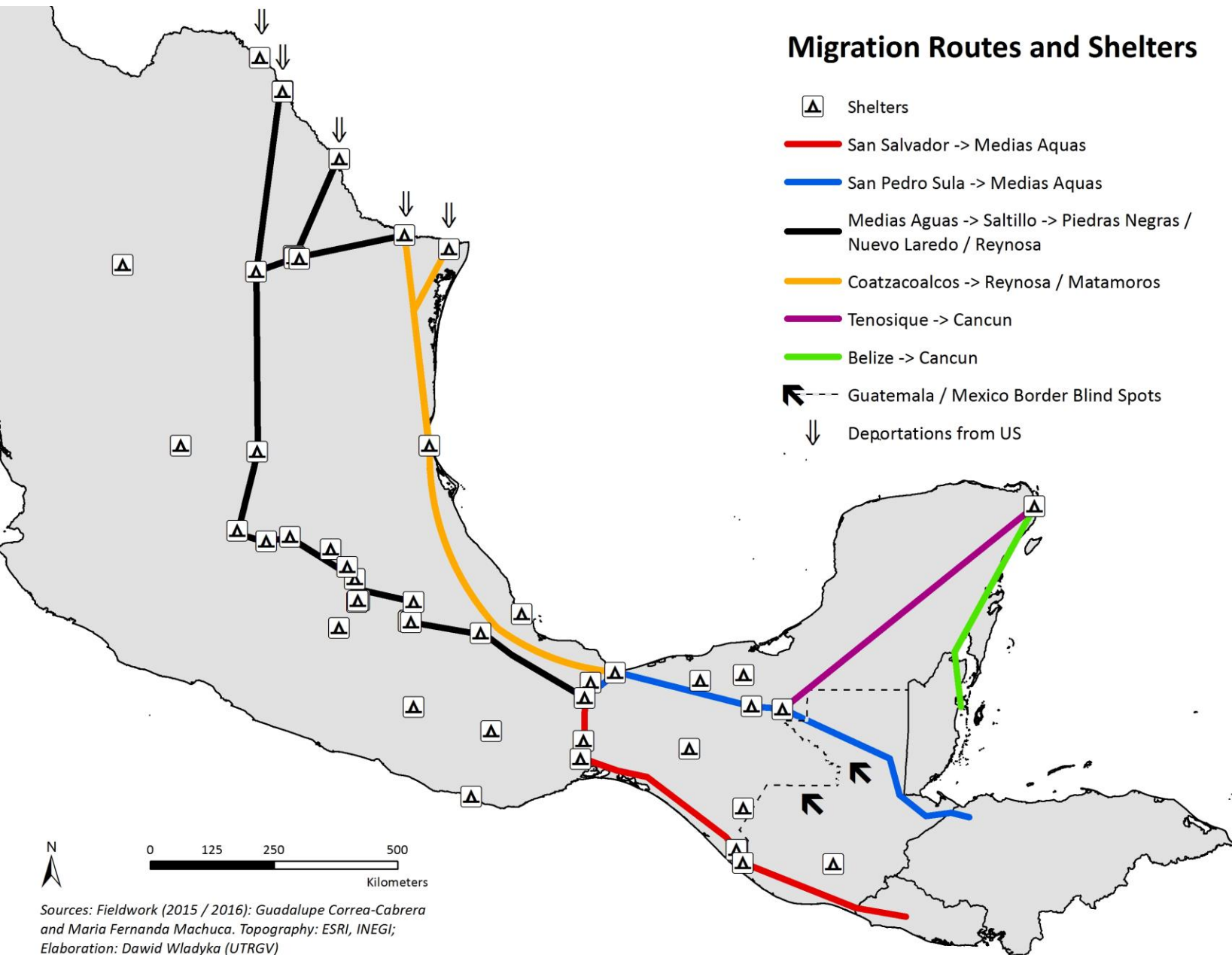
Shelters and other migrant facilities

1. *Casa del Migrante Albergue Belén* (Tapachula, Chiapas)
2. *Centro de Ayuda Humanitaria a Migrantes* (Chahuities, Oaxaca)
3. *La 72* (Tenosique, Tabasco)
4. *Casa del Caminante J'Tatic Samuel Ruiz García* (Palenque, Chiapas)
5. *“Las Patronas”* (Amatlán de los Reyes, Veracruz)
6. *La Sagrada Familia* (Apizaco, Tlaxcala)
7. *Casa del Migrante Frontera con Justicia* (Saltillo, Coahuila)
8. *Albergue para Migrantes Frontera Digna* (Piedras Negras, Coahuila)
9. *Casa del Migrante San Juan Diego y San Francisco de Asís*
(Matamoros, Tamaulipas)
10. *Senda de Vida* (Reynosa, Tamaulipas)
11. *Albergue del Migrante Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Reynosa, Tamaulipas)
12. *Casa del Migrante Nazareth* (Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas)
13. *Casanicolás* (Monterrey, Nuevo León)
14. *Hermanos en el Camino* (Ixtepec, Oaxaca)

Shelters and other migrant facilities

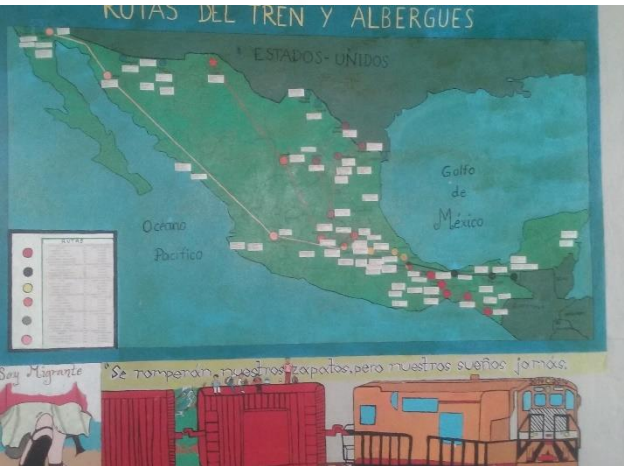
15. *Estancia del Migrante González y Martínez* (comedor or soup kitchen; Tequisquiapan, Querétaro)
16. *Casa Tochan* (Mexico City)
17. *Todo por Ellos* shelter (Tapachula, Chiapas)
18. *Casa de la Mujer* shelter (Tecún Umán, Guatemala)
19. *Casa del Indigente Nuestra Señora del Refugio* (Matamoros, Tamaulipas).
20. *Instituto Salvadoreño del Migrante* (INSAMI)
21. *Asociación de Retornados Guatemaltecos* (ARG)
22. *Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero* International Airport (El Salvador, San Salvador)
23. *La Aurora* International Airport (building of Guatemala's Airforce)
24. *Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado, CAMR* (San Pedro Sula, Honduras)
25. *Fundación Ciudad de la Alegría* (Cancún, Quintana Roo)

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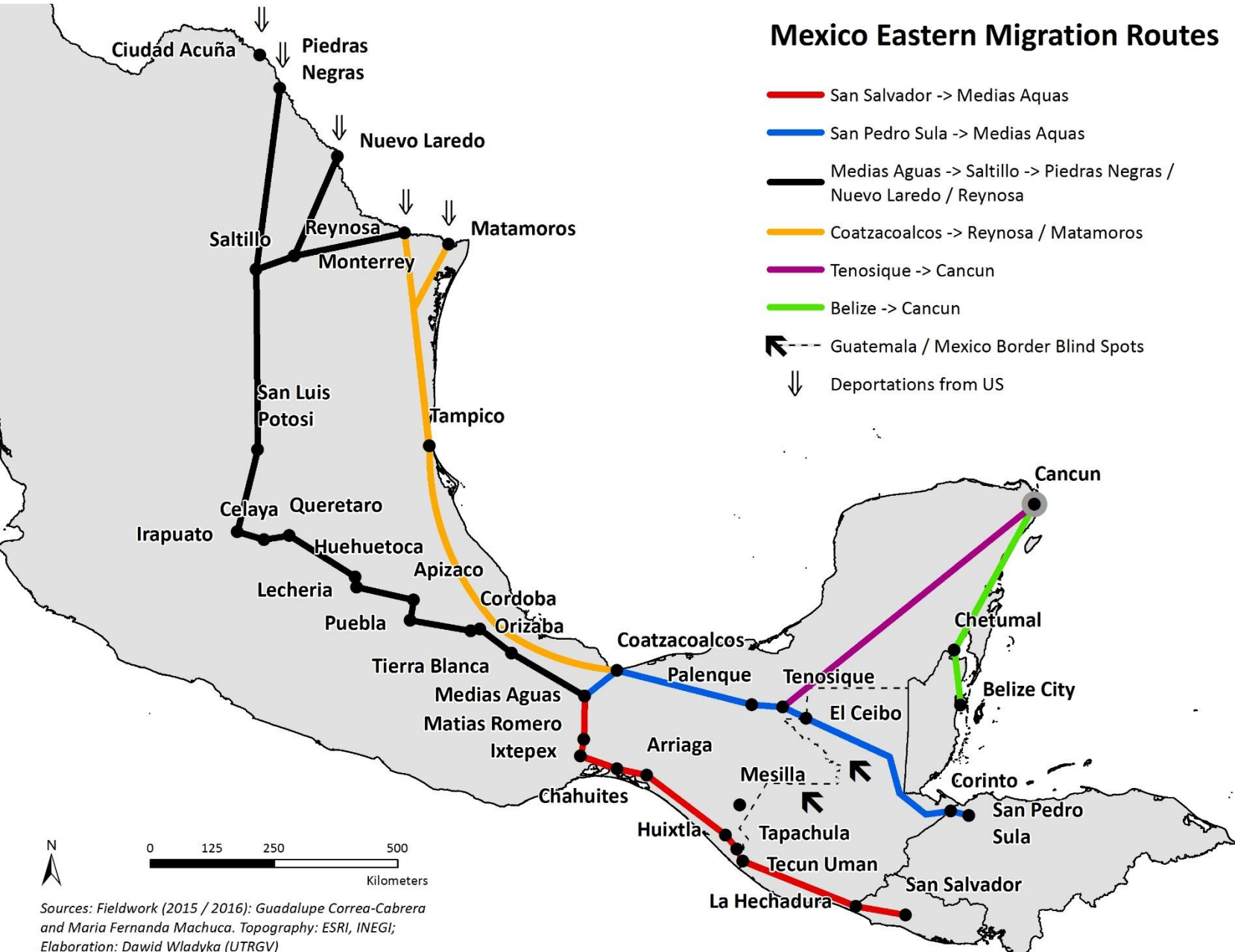
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Maps and routes

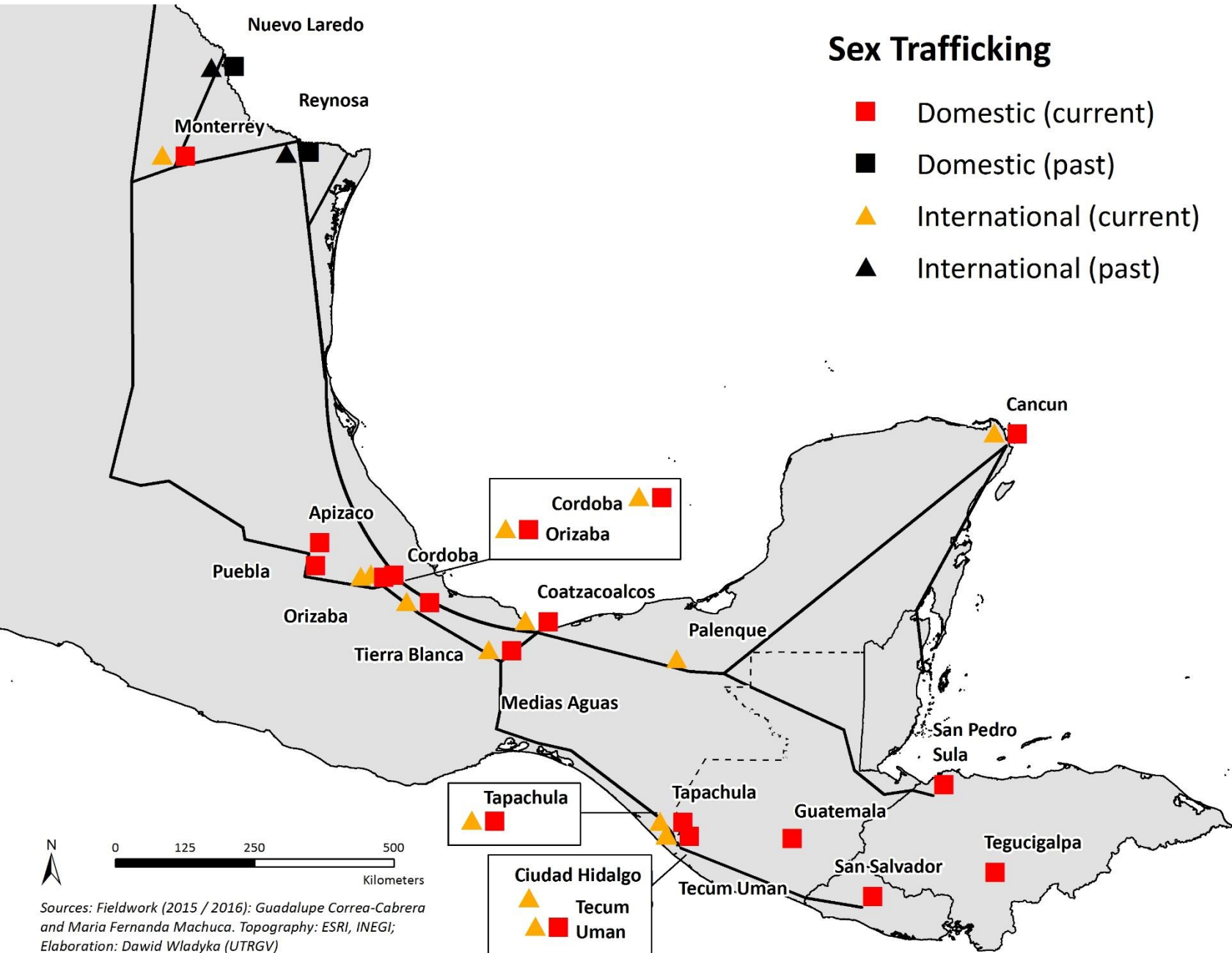


“La Bestia” (The Beast)

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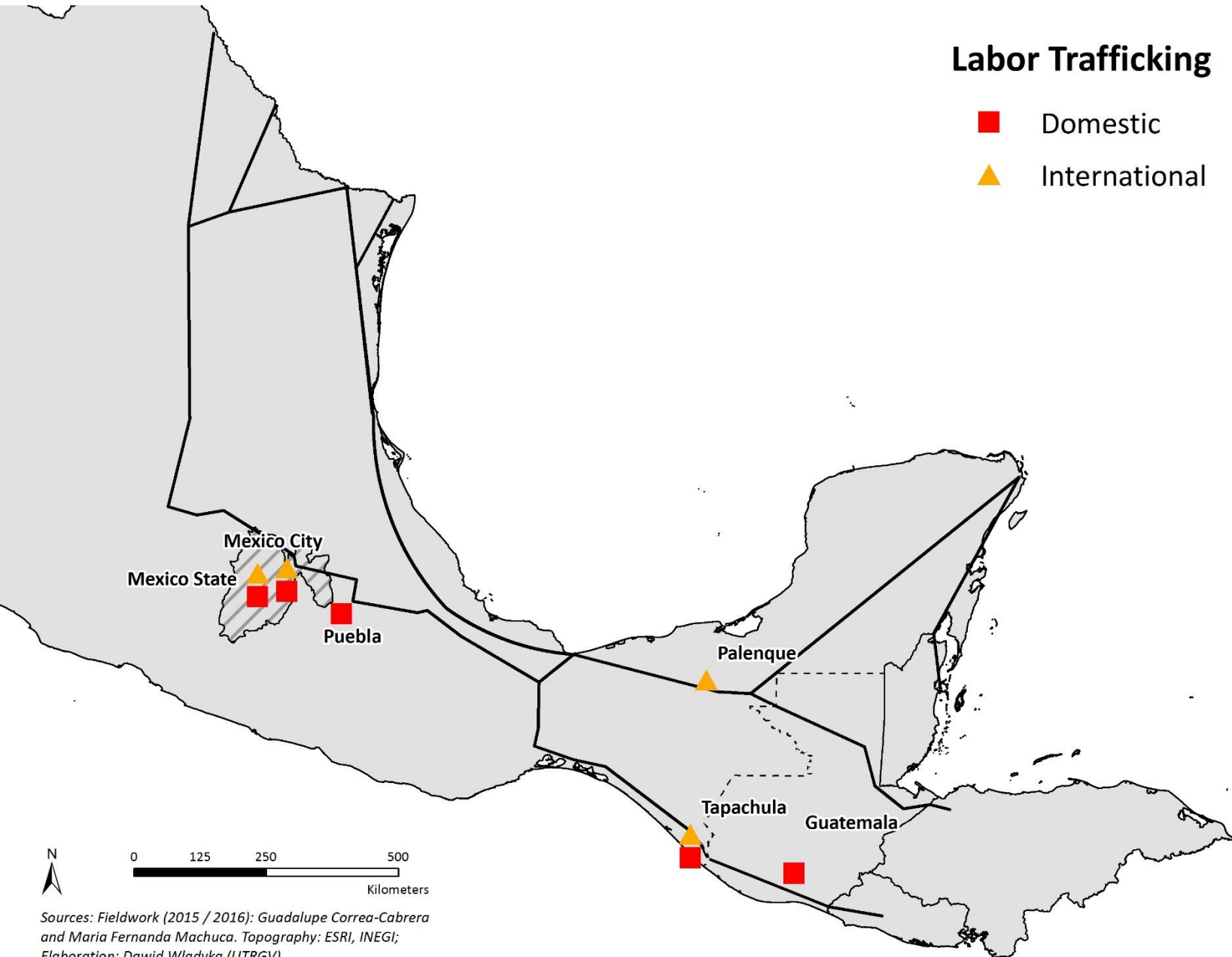


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Sources: Fieldwork (2015 / 2016): Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera and Maria Fernanda Machuca. Topography: ESRI, INEGI; Elaboration: Dawid Wladyka (UTRGV)

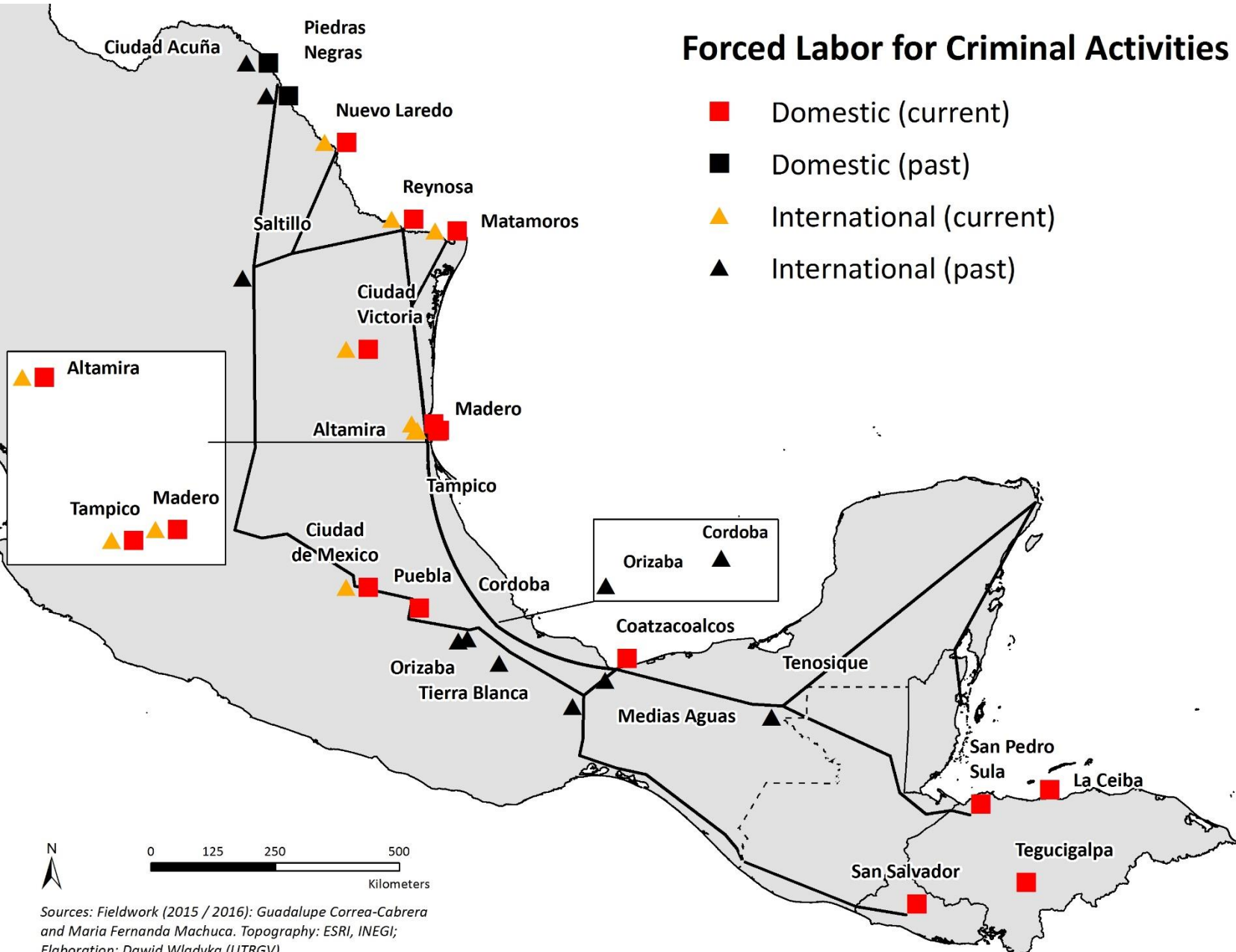
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TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Forced Labor for Criminal Activities

- Domestic (current)
- Domestic (past)
- ▲ International (current)
- ▲ International (past)



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TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

- ❑ Cases of sex **trafficking** and labor trafficking along Mexico's eastern migration routes—that involve Mexican drug cartels and other criminal groups—are **intimately linked to migrant smuggling**.
- ❑ Massive forced displacements of Central American people **escaping from violence and extreme poverty** significantly increase vulnerability of victims of human trafficking.
- ❑ The relationship between drug cartels and independent labor/sex trafficking rings seems to be mainly **opportunistic**. We have essentially found that human trafficking rings and drug trafficking organizations operate separately, but collaborate. They specialize in certain activities in order to maximize benefits. In sum, these groups collaborate, but are not managed by the same people.
- ❑ There are severe **limitations of the justice systems** in Mexico and Central America that prevent efforts to combat human trafficking (and particularly trafficking of migrants) in this region.