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**The Development of Regions Experiencing  
High Levels of Out-Migration in Mexico:  
Analysis for maximizing the benefits of  
migration for sending regions**

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## **Preface**

Gustavo Verduzco is a distinguished professor of sociology at El Colegio de México and chair of the Sociology Department. During November 2000 he was a Mexico Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, supported by a generous grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. He wrote this paper based on his research into strategies for addressing out-migration during his period of stay at the Wilson Center.

Recently both the Mexican and U.S. governments have placed special emphasis on strategies to aid those communities that are responsible for a disproportionate amount of migration to the United States. In the context of the search for strategies to address the needs of these communities, this working paper is of particular relevance.

# **The Development of Regions Experiencing High Levels of Out-Migration in Mexico:**

## **Analysis for maximizing the benefits of migration for sending regions**

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### **I. Introduction**

During the nineties we saw the emergence of an increasingly clear division among analysts and policymakers, as they describe the migratory experience in Mexico and its effects on the development of migrant-sending zones. On the one hand, a positive, development-based perspective has emerged, which regards migration as a temporary factor that facilitates access to several types of resources beneficial to the development of sending regions. At the opposite extreme is a somewhat fatalistic perspective that regards migration as a self-perpetuating process with its own dynamic. In actuality, migration will continue as a process that contains elements of both perspectives. In this paper, however, we will focus more on the proposals that link migration to the development of sending regions and on courses of action that maximize that development potential.<sup>2</sup>

Proposals for linking migration and development have emerged despite the apparently halting progress of the pioneering area of study of migratory flows. Thus, for example, development goals already constituted one of the two mandates of the Asencio Commission:

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<sup>1</sup> Gustavo Verduzco completed his contribution to this paper during his stay at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which he wishes to thank for its support.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief introduction to the debate, albeit focussing mainly on the use of remittances, see Taylor 1999, p. 63-86. These tensions in the discussion have been evident for some time now. Appleyard (1992), for example, stated that "...although remittances are frequently cited as one contribution, ...their value or role in the development process is by no means concurred by scholars.... Scholars remain divided in their judgements concerning the effect of the use of remittances in the development process" (p.261). Martin (1990, p. 657) also noted: "if remittances are to be the external pump which primes an area for economic take-off, they need to be co-ordinated to provide the infrastructure necessary for development or sending governments must find additional funds to invest in infrastructure."

“...(Among) the key issues the Commission was asked to address (were) economic development initiatives that could be undertaken cooperatively to alleviate pressures for emigration in the sending countries”. The Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development, known also as the “Asencio Commission”, followed a provision coming from the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) with the mandate to “...examine the conditions in Mexico and such other countries which contribute to unauthorized migration to the United States and [shall explore] mutually beneficial, reciprocal trade and investment programs to alleviate such conditions” (Weintraub and Díaz-Briquets, 1990, p. i).

With regard to the timeliness of development proposals, Weintraub’s reflection is interesting in that he notes how the U.S. policy perspective on migration varies sharply according to changes in the internal historical and political contexts of the United States (1990, p. 1166 and 67). This is borne out by a recent declaration by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board, and his decidedly pragmatic support of the new migratory trends, which he justifies as a means of sustaining economic growth in the United States (Castañeda 2000) <sup>3</sup>.

One of the objectives of this paper is to provide an empirical foundation for national reflection based on a review of international experiences. We hope to suggest proposals that will enable the governments of Mexico and the United States to maximize economic and social benefits to migrant-sending zones. The paper focuses on actions intended to: 1) maximize earnings and the surplus from remittances; 2) support the destination and use of remittances; 3) create labor markets that will take advantage of the migratory experience; and 4) reinforce the values of progress, modernization and sustainable development that will encourage migrants to

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<sup>3</sup> However, after the terrorist attack of September 11, there was an abrupt change in U.S. attitude toward migration due to the presence of an economic recession. Nonetheless we believe that the migration issue will remain in the government’s agenda waiting for at least a partial solution to it.

remain in sending areas in the long term and enable international migration to be regarded as a temporary phenomenon.

We have divided the paper into three sections. The first contains several statistical analysis exercises based on data for the Mexican states with the greatest migration flows to the United States. In the second, we attempt to explain the success of certain international migratory experiences, including economic, social and demographic factors. In the third section, we examine the actions to be undertaken by the various actors involved in the migratory process in order to improve or maximize its beneficial effects. These actors include migrants and their families, the Mexican and United States governments, international aid organizations, and potential employers and investors on both sides of the border.

## **II. Migration patterns and associated variables**

Unlike other studies in which researchers tend to use individuals or households as units of analysis, in this paper our unit of analysis is the municipio (or county)<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the information we have gathered has a certain scale of aggregation in that it explores the characteristics of a population rather than individuals. Our hypothesis is that a link exists between the socio-economic characteristics of municipios (counties) and migratory flows to the United States. This hypothesis has a double reference. In places with intense migration flows, the socioeconomic characteristics of the municipios could be interpreted as “expulsion factors” that encourage people to emigrate. Conversely, these same characteristics could be regarded as the result of these migration processes, since they are places with long traditions of migration.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As a geographic and political denomination a “municipio” is very similar to what a “county” is in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> This follows the analysis of interrelations between migrations and socio-economic changes espoused by Paul Singer who argues that “expulsion factors” are based on “rejection factors” or “change factors.”

Underlying this hypothesis is the idea that migration to the United States is of a socio-economic nature, and therefore linked to the socio-economic circumstances existing in the migrants' places of origin.<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that by observing the migratory phenomenon from the sending areas, we are ignoring considerations related to the receiving areas. These considerations are linked to the demand for labor and also have a considerable influence on migratory flows.

The data presented below are drawn mainly from population (1990), agricultural (1990), *ejido* (1988) and economic censuses (1993) carried out in Mexico. These sources were used to construct a database on the socioeconomic characteristics of the municipios. We also drew up an index of "Migration Propensity" combining information from the population census (1990) and the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (1992). This index estimates the probable proportion of the municipio's EAP that had links with labor migration in the United States during the previous period of approximately five years.

We have established three migration index categories. "Low migration" refers to a municipio in which the proportion of those involved in labor migration to the United State was less than seven percent of the EAP of the municipio. "Medium migration" refers to a municipio in which the proportion was greater than seven percent and less than 25 percent. "Intense migration" refers to a municipio in which the proportion was higher than 25 percent. However, it should be noted that this index is not intended to assess quantitative calculations of annual migration flows to the United States from Mexican municipios. It merely serves as an indicative,

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<sup>6</sup> This does not, however, mean that the phenomenon is fully covered in the variables considered here, since this is a limited exercise that we hope will shed light on certain, and not all, aspects of the phenomenon.

hypothetical reference for gauging the scope of the phenomenon in municipios by comparing them with the municipal EAP and then comparing them with each other.<sup>7</sup>

The data from the municipios include all of them in the nine Mexican states with the highest levels of migration. The main reason for restricting the universe of this study to these states is that they contain approximately 90 percent of the municipios that we have classified as having “intense” migration. We have started from the hypothesis that this current intensity is the result of the long histories of migration from these places. Hence we can assume that there may be certain differential socio-economic characteristics in these municipios due precisely to the migratory traditions of these areas. The nine states with the highest levels of migration are Jalisco, Michoacán, Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

### **Sending municipios throughout the country: an overview**

Here we are discussing migration patterns and associated variables. However, before launching into that discussion, it would be useful to have an overview of the migratory behavior of all of the country’s municipios from the point of view of the indicator that we defined above. This in turn will shed light on the observations provided below.

A total of 62 percent of the country’s 2,428 municipalities show some degree of “migratory activity” to the United States, although 18 percent show extremely low levels as

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<sup>7</sup> In order to assess the possible usefulness of this exercise, we carried out similar exercises using municipal data from the 1980 census. We also compared the results of our exercise with other partial sources of information. Through these additional exercises, we established the coherence of this indicator primarily among the municipalities with the greatest migration to the United States. The results of this exercise showed that it was indeed a good indicator, since it tallied with these other sources of information.

observed on table 1.<sup>8</sup> On a regional basis, however, we find that in the southeastern states (Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo), 66.5 percent of the municipios do not participate in this flow of the working population immigrating to the United States. At the same time, 39.7 percent of the municipios in the central states (Oaxaca, Veracruz, Guerrero, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, Querétaro, State of Mexico and Morelos) do not participate. Conversely, only 10.2 percent of those in the border states do not participate, while in the western and northern states (with the exception of the border states), virtually all the municipios have some degree of participation as seen on table 1.

Nationwide, the states with the lowest levels of participation are Tabasco, Chiapas, Veracruz, Yucatán and Quintana Roo<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, in the state of Oaxaca, 65 percent of the municipios have no migratory activity, meaning that this is a state with sharp contrasts. Over the past, Oaxaca has become a primary state experiencing migration to the United States, even though most of its municipios are not involved in this dynamic.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the municipios in this state linked to migration are scattered throughout Oaxaca, meaning that one can only speak of a relative concentration of migration from the Mixtec region and somewhat less in the Central Valley where the capital is located.

Let us now see how the municipios are distributed according to the greater or lesser intensity of their “migratory activity.” First, only 4.5 percent of all of the country’s municipios

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<sup>8</sup> “Migratory activity” is divided into three categories: “low” (from 0.1 percent to 6.9 percent of the Economically Active Population), “medium” (from 7.0 percent to 24.9 percent of the EAP), and “high” (from 25 percent to 100 percent of the EAP). Levels from 0.1 to 1.0 percent are regarded as extremely low.

<sup>9</sup> During the 1970s, it was said that the city with the second largest number of people from Yucatán was Los Angeles, California. However, these flows seem to have declined in recent years, probably as a result of the enormous economic dynamism experienced in the Yucatán Peninsula as a result of the oil boom in Campeche, cattle raising in Quintana Roo and tourism in Cancún and the Maya areas. The net positive migratory balance of recent years shows that this region has been transformed from a sending area into a receiving area.

<sup>10</sup> One should recall that Oaxacans participate in several major migratory circuits within the country, foremost among which is that of the seasonal agricultural day workers. There are also large contingents of Oaxacans in the Federal District, Tijuana, Valle de San Quintín in Baja California, Sinaloa, and the oil regions of Veracruz and Campeche.



experience “high” or intense migratory activity. This is probably an indication of the country’s phenomenon of “recurrent” migration in these areas, since the reference to the Economically Active Population (EAP) of the municipio speaks, in these cases, of a structuring of the migratory process that only takes place after many years <sup>11</sup>. Likewise, 80 percent of the municipios with “high” migratory activity are those ones with populations of fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, that is, mainly rural. Only one municipio with “high” migratory activity, Jerez, Zacatecas, has over 50,000 inhabitants (see table 2).

The majority of the municipios with “high” or “intense” migratory activity (109 municipios or 88 percent), are located in states with the highest migration levels. These are, as listed above, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí, Guerrero and Oaxaca. However, 48 percent of these municipios are concentrated in just three states: Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas. In short, intense migration does not occur throughout Mexico, but is restricted to 4.5 percent of the municipios in the country, almost half of which (48 percent) are concentrated in just three states: Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas.

As we know from various sources, it is quite possible that what are described here as places of “intense migration” are the type of municipios that have historically or traditionally been linked to the U.S. labor market. Hence, this type of place is predominantly located in the western and northern states, where the phenomenon has been most persistent.

Table 2 provides an overview of the municipios in the nine selected states according to two variables: population size and the index of their migratory activity to the United States. In the case of these states, all the municipios experience some degree of migratory activity, while over half have “medium” or “high” indices of activity, a situation that is more common in these

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<sup>11</sup> By “recurrent migration,” we mean a situation in which migratory flows are continuous in both directions for the population of a particular place or a municipality as a whole, although this is not necessarily the case from the point of view of individuals.

states in comparison with the rest of the country. At the same time, as noted earlier, most of these municipios are located in more rural settings with no more than 20,000 inhabitants.

### **The socio-economic conditions of sending municipalities**

This section presents some results yielded by three types of exercises. The first exercise described below used variables designed to record aspects of or characteristics related to salaries and investments. Its purpose was to explore the status of municipios as measured by the direct potential of their socio-economic performance. This is followed by the results of two other complementary exercises, using variables related to the characteristics of the population's socio-economic wellbeing, as described later.

Once the migration levels of the municipios were identified, an estimation exercise based on economic censuses by municipio yielded conclusive results. The approximately 100 municipios with high migration levels (i.e. with a migratory propensity of over 25 percent of the EAP) lag behind other municipalities economically, as can be seen from the salary levels, productivity and investment per establishment that are significantly lower (see table 3).<sup>12</sup>

These municipios develop lighter industry that is probably linked to the earliest agro-industrial transformations in which raw materials account for a significant share of total input. This means that their ability to attract investments with greater impact and broader multipliers is extremely limited. Results vary little by geographical zone (north, center and south-see tables 4-6). However, it is worth noting that in the south, municipalities with the least migration (less than seven percent) are noticeably poorer and more backward than others, reflecting the trap of the

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<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that the comparison is based on the arithmetic mean of each of the municipalities, regardless of size. In other words, a large municipality contributes a similar value in scale to a smaller one, whether in average salary, productivity per worker, educated population, day workers or area under maize cultivation. The technique for measuring differences between this group of municipalities and others with medium levels (between seven and 25 percent) and low levels of migration (less than seven percent) yields significances of 5 percent at the invariably lower levels of these indicators for the group with high migration. See Tables 2-5.

absolute level of poverty that prevents the very poor from opting for migration. In any case, in future exercises, it would be worth exploring these differences with specific case studies, and focussing on the degree of industrial transition experienced by the sending municipalities.

We provide a complementary overview of the socio-economic characteristics of municipios with the highest emigration levels using an analysis of the mean values of the variables proposed (see table 7). As in the previous exercise, this enables us to detect the most obvious differences among municipios.

### **A comparison between municipios with high and low levels of migration<sup>13</sup>**

One can regard two characteristics of municipios with migratory intensity as effects of emigration, although in some cases, they might also be causal factors of the latter, or at least partially so (see table 7). In municipios with “intense” migration, both the growth rates of the population and the proportion of the population that is economically active have been much lower than in those with lower migration; the latter also reflects a higher proportion of dependency among the population. The population’s growth rates should obviously be lower if they are sending places. However, the point one must emphasize here is that the decline in population does not affect the age structure as a whole, but rather all the working age population since the EAP is lower. This also has an effect on the dependency factor of the population, since a smaller working population has to support a larger, younger group.

In connection with the above, municipios with high migration levels comprise areas whose inhabitants are mainly scattered throughout small villages with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. A large population concentration usually leads to a certain economic dynamism. This is clearly more difficult to achieve when that is not the case.

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<sup>13</sup> This comparison included municipalities with “high” and “low” migration levels (456) in the following states: Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Baja California, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua and Guerrero.

Moving on to the characteristics of the prevailing productive units in these areas, places with high migration levels tend to have a larger number of hectares dedicated to maize production and a smaller proportion of jornaleros (agricultural day workers). These municipios are also places where cattle raising is an extremely important activity. These three characteristics taken together may be highly revealing, since cattle raising normally takes place on marginal lands that are of little use for farming. One should also recall that a greater relative presence of jornaleros (agricultural day workers) only occurs where there is significant farming activity, normally in places where irrigation or good weather conditions exist. Thus, the low presence of jornaleros and prominence of cattle raising in these areas might underline the low agricultural productivity of these places. There do not seem to be many possibilities for development in these types of places, at least in terms of enhancing their farming potential or increasing their cattle raising activities, since they are marginal areas as far as agriculture and livestock raising is concerned.

This brief analysis shows the discouraging situation in which we find municipios with “intense migration.” Given their characteristics, they appear to be trapped in a cycle of poverty and emigration to the United States. However, despite this initial pessimistic conclusion, one of the hypotheses we have put forward is that there are possibilities for development in the larger geographical areas surrounding these municipios. In this respect, several types of analysis are still pending. One of them has to do with the specific characteristics of the socioeconomic dynamics of regional urban centers, while the other is more oriented toward the central theme of this paper, in other words, the role that migrants to the United States have played in these

centers. This is a task that is still pending but one that will be crucial in gauging the possible positive impact of migratory flows.<sup>14</sup>

We will now examine the results of another analytical exercise that will show the variables linked to migration to the United States. In the previous exercises, we made observations purely on the basis of the differences in characteristics among municipios with high and low migration levels. In this exercise, we will attempt to discover the link between a set of variables and migration to the United States for all the municipios in the states selected. This exercise will show which specific variables establish this link. A link is postulated between the dependent variable (migration to the United States) and ten variables covering demographic, production, work and social aspects (see Table 8).

It is worth noting that we carried out this exercise on the municipios in the states considered without classifying their migratory situation beforehand (as was the case in the previous exercises). This means that we have included all the municipios (756) in the nine states that have traditionally been the states with the highest levels of migration to the United States, as can be seen from Table 2.

In demographic terms, a higher proportion of elderly people within a municipio's population is positively associated with migration. This situation should be regarded as a result of migratory processes, since those who leave are young, which in turn increases the ratio of elderly people to the rest of the population in these places.

Conversely, a higher proportion of campesinos (peasants) in the municipios is negatively associated with migration. It is worth noting here that by campesinos (peasants) we mean agricultural producers who are producers and allocate at least part of their production to self-

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<sup>14</sup> Several research papers underline the importance of migrations to the United States in regional urban dynamics, such as those by López, 1986; Arroyo et al., 1991; Verduzco, 1992; and Papail and Arroyo, 1996.

consumption. This also includes jornaleros (agricultural day workers), some of whom are part-time producers. As we know from the literature on the peasantry, this type of dedication to agriculture precludes to some extent from engagement in other non-farming activities, including migration to the United States. However, we should also keep in mind that no attempt is being made here to deny the presence of peasants in current migratory flows, since the unit of analysis is the municipio rather than individuals.

We observe this phenomenon in places with lands suitable for cultivation, where there is a significant presence of *ejido*-owning peasants and jornaleros (agricultural day workers). This feature is not necessarily linked to economic development, understood in the capitalistic sense, but rather to a situation which, by retaining the population in these types of activities, is negatively associated with migration.

Large-scale bean cultivation in municipios is also negatively associated with migration. Bean cultivation is linked to greater opportunities for commercialization, which leads to higher incomes for producers and less economic need to migrate. Likewise, large-scale manufacturing is negatively associated with migration to the United States. The same is also true for higher levels of formal employment in trade. In fact, these are aspects of economic activities that have usually been regarded as discouraging migration. The exercise that we have undertaken confirms this for the municipios considered.

With regard to income and education variables, the profile that emerges also tallies with the premises of greater development. The three educational variables point toward a threshold indicating the limits where behaviors are differentiated.<sup>15</sup> Higher literacy levels are associated with growing migration and actually seem to influence this process. However, the greater the population aged 15 or over that has completed primary or secondary school, the lower the

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<sup>15</sup> The respective regression indices are highly significant to 1% (see Table 8).

migration levels. Thus, literacy, but not educational attainment, seems to be linked to migratory processes. Since we are dealing with data on municipios rather than individuals, this means that places with a higher proportion of the population having completed primary or secondary school, have fewer migratory flows to the United States.

The income variable appears to influence migration as one would expect. The greater the proportion of the population with an income of less than one minimum salary, the higher the migration levels. Yet, the greater the proportion of the population with an income of two to five minimum salaries, the lower the migration levels <sup>16</sup>. Here, as in the case we described above, the higher proportion of persons with higher income levels reduces migration to the United States.

In short, places with populations with high literacy rates coupled with low educational attainment and extremely low incomes encourage migration to the United States. Yet certain conditions of a population coupled with moderate incomes are negatively associated with migration. We believe that this is a crucial finding, since it shows that a moderate degree of development at least partially inhibits migratory processes to the United States. <sup>17</sup>

### **III. Determinant factors in the contribution of migration to development**

In this section, we explore the development of regions in Mexico and the experiences of other countries. Reviewing some of the most important international experiences in the promotion of migration and in improving its contribution to the regions of origin may reveal a set of factors that explain the relative success of some of these experiences.

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<sup>16</sup> A “Minimum salary” is set according to the different regions in the country. In theory it is the estimated “minimum” amount of income which should be required to maintain a family.

<sup>17</sup> These results are particularly important since they refer specifically to municipios where migration to the United States enjoys a long tradition, dating back several generations within the families in these places. In this respect, great care must be taken not to extend these findings to other situations where migration .

Generally speaking, the development of some of these regions is associated with experiences of migration and the combination of economic, social and cultural factors.

### **Economic factors: consumption, savings and investment**

The economic rationality proposed by the new literature on the economics of migration (New Economics of Labor Migration, (NELM), Taylor, 1999) describes migration as a means of reducing family risks in the place of origin. These risks include reductions or limitations in income resulting from a fall in production, salaries, credits and other surpluses that may be invested.<sup>18</sup> The economic effects estimated by those who propose this trend are measured in direct increases in consumption, indirect increases in the multiplying effect on local production, and surpluses for investment with their respective multipliers.

Maximizing earnings for direct consumption by the migrant and his dependents is directly linked to making the most of available remittances. Expressed in simple arithmetic, the increase in available remittances for consumption, which would yield a surplus for investment, would depend on higher salaries being paid and a reduction in the migrant's expenditures on transportation and subsistence, as well as a minimization of the losses incurred by his remittances along the way.<sup>19</sup> These are mainly actions that concern salary increases, reductions in transportation and subsistence costs, and measures linked to remittances, including access to deposits in foreign currency, exchange rates and preferential interest rates and other mechanisms for attracting remittances to the financial market (for examples of Asian practices see Athukorola 1993).

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<sup>18</sup> "If credit risks are severe and migration enables families with migrants to overcome them, migration and remittances should have a positive effect on local production." (Taylor 1999, p. 76).

<sup>19</sup> Recent estimates reported in the national press set the cost of sending remittances between 10 and 12 percent of the value of those remittances (*El Financiero*, March 2000, p. 1 and 15). However, the losses caused by currency exchange may be more or less costly according to estimates that have recently begun to emerge.



By considering the indirect effects of consumption, the message of the new micro-estimates (“micro economy-wide effects”) is that the main restriction on local multipliers is the lack of a local production capacity capable of responding with its own supply to the various cycles of the resulting demand, in order to meet new demands, whether direct or indirect, locally.<sup>20</sup> Hence, the management of external resources injected in a timely fashion into certain migrant communities, anticipating this required expansion of supply or local productive capacity, would be a facilitating action that governments and other investors could undertake.

Planning investment in migration zones that have been targeted for support to maximize multipliers and therefore the development of these zones should ideally combine public investment (infrastructure, commercialization, etc.) and private investment (both national and possibly partly foreign), as well as the participation of the remittances and savings of migrants together with other resources.<sup>21</sup> Other studies in developing countries have recommended, in addition to improving the speed and safety with which remittances are transferred, targeting certain regions of migrants as key receptors of investment and supporting or developing regional and national development banks to channel remittances into productive investment (Russell 1992, p. 277).

With regard to Mexican migration, economic policy has generally behaved in a rather aloof manner toward sending zones. With very few exceptions (including recent cases in

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<sup>20</sup> An elegant reference to the controversy with fatalists over multipliers can be found in Taylor’s most recent contribution: “...Rather than concluding that migration inevitably leads to dependency and a lack of development, it is more appropriate to ask why productive investment occurs in some communities and not in others.” This is followed by a quote from Durand and Massey acknowledging different conditions or degrees of development among the communities that achieve success in the creation of new businesses and in other investments (1999, p. 73).

<sup>21</sup> The basic agenda for economic conditions has been more or less defined for many years, although the difference may now lie in taking advantage of the experiences recorded in case studies to focus policy support efforts on problems that policymakers once thought could be simply alleviated by the market. Proposals by the Asencio Commission (Weintraub and Díaz Briquets, 1990, Vol. 1) were mainly limited to investment measures and international trade. We now understand that more integral and more localized proposals must be put forward for the specific contexts of individual communities.

Guanajuato, Jalisco and Zacatecas, which would be worth analyzing in more detail), municipios with high migration levels have not benefited from productive investment or from investment in public works.<sup>22</sup> The ratios of Federal Investment to Production and of Public Works to Total Municipal Spending have remained relatively low and declined over time (Tables 9 and 10). Extending this type of analysis to the quality of public investment by municipio and to the flow of foreign investment would obviously bolster the argument that the concentration of resources complementary to migrants' remittances in their regions of origin would eventually reduce the pressure to migrate. In other words, we are suggesting that further investment studies linked to the theme of retaining migrants, should be undertaken.

International experiences are riddled with contradictory results, yet successful cases make it quite clear that triggering economic development has involved ensuring that the sum of resources invested in a community are put to work in the same direction. The exercises in accountability and the estimation of multipliers in community studies carried out by Taylor, Yúñez and others<sup>23</sup> are valuable contributions that allow one to distinguish among communities with varying potential, as well as serving to illustrate the effects of migration over time. Analysts had already recognized the need for this type of case study research more than ten years ago, as seen in certain chapters of the Asencio Commission's report. In this report, an influential analyst wrote: "Research is needed on better ways to channel remittances privately to promote development (e.g., pilot projects and case studies) and how to link international grants and loans with remittances to foster job-creating development" (Martin 1990-vol. II, p. 663). Given that

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<sup>22</sup> The estimated proportion of municipal resources allocated for public works and development has remained extremely low and actually declined over the past decade in municipalities with both low and high levels of migration.. By 1997, the percentage of municipal funds spent on public works was limited to 19.1 percent in sending zones, considerably down from 1989 when investment in public works in sending zones totaled nearly 30 percent of municipal resources.

<sup>23</sup> These studies employ a commonly used methodology for social accountability with general equilibrium models applied to the specific economics of each migrant community. See Yúñez, 1998.

remittances have generally proved more important than other resources of this sort, this recommendation is increasingly justified.<sup>24</sup> Without denying that these new studies will be both appreciated and welcome, we believe that we can already propose a number of measures to increase the development impact of remittances based on evidence gathered to date.

The development perspective as it relates to migration usually meets with resistance from other development opinions that hold that public support and discriminatory private incentives should be channeled to less favored places, since the latter do not even have the benefit of remittances or migrants' savings. However, favorable evidence supports the theory of combined efforts.<sup>25</sup> The European experience in the 1970s and 1980s already suggested paying highly focussed attention to specific regions and communities and analyzing their potential or receptivity for maximizing migrants' contributions (Rogers 1990, pp. 926-9). For example, a region with high levels of migration to other parts of Europe was identified in Friuli, Italy, which developed successfully during the 1970s, largely as a result of return migrants establishing small businesses with the help of access to credit and some advisory services. These initiatives, however, were based mainly on valuing the skills, experiences and work ethic that the migrants brought back with them (*ibid.* p. 924).

Of all the measures undertaken in other countries in recent decades to facilitate the contribution of migration to migrants' places of origin, promoting development in these areas appears to have achieved the greatest consensus. The few successful experiences in the link between migration and development in migration zones have always been due to successfully linking complementary support measures to the specific development of the most obvious

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<sup>24</sup> The comparison between world remittances (U.S. \$61 billion in 1989) and official aid for development by OECD members (U.S. \$47 billion that same year) speaks for itself (United Nations 1997, p. 53).

<sup>25</sup> The underlying argument is deeply rooted in regional development theories that agree that combining conditions ensures the take-off of areas, regions or communities. These theories range from perspectives involving the theory of centers of development (Perroux) to more conventional principles of regional economics (Richardson).

resources in each region. Likewise, the European experience tends to relegate other types of measures or incentives to the background, such as incentives to encourage migrants to return or measures to facilitate their reintegration implemented at other times (pp. 919-21). In any case, these repatriation measures appear to be unrelated to the current Mexican context.

### **Social factors: employment, education and family environment**

#### *Employment and work experience*

Sooner or later, proposals for retaining migrants in their places of origin end up developing the job-creating potential of these places, making the option of international migration both unnecessary and unattractive. Considerations include the number and quality of new jobs created. New jobs include self-employment and other jobs as a result of the multipliers or indirect effects of derived demand described earlier.

The type of self-employment described in the literature usually involves setting up small businesses, generally small family businesses that the migrant himself runs (Cornelius 1990; Rogers 1990; Russell 1992; Escobar and Martínez 1990). This recipe is frowned on by some analysts, who believe that migrants should not be saddled with the responsibility of making decisions regarding the economy of their place of origin: "...to expect migrants to be proficient at turning savings into production is unrealistic. Migration is likely to have a larger effect on development...where migrants do not have to play the simultaneous roles of workers, savers, investors and producers." (Taylor 1999, p. 74).

Indirect employment as a result of derived demand (employment multipliers) may be considerable. However, once again, it will depend on the responsiveness of the local productive

supply. This, in turn, will be greater the less the migrants' economy is integrated with other domestic markets<sup>26</sup> (ibid., p. 78).

As far as the quality of jobs is concerned, work experience would be expected to provide the migrant with new skills, the complementary condition being that he will be able to secure employment on the basis of these skills. A practical way of estimating a better quality job is to link it to higher salaries. Indirect evidence indicating improved job quality is provided in Greenwood and Zanhiser (1998), who estimate that on their return, migrants earn over and above what they earned before they migrated. This estimate includes the greater profitability in salary terms for the migrant as a result of a year's experience in a particular job. The comparison between the earnings obtained after migrating and the earnings obtained after having remained in Mexico in order to study is even more dramatic, since the year spent as a migrant yields higher earnings.

Obviously, not every migratory experience involves the acquisition of skills that can be utilized on the migrant's return. This is due to either the relative sophistication of the job he held in the United States or the irrelevance of the migrant's experience as related to existing economic opportunities in his sending region (Arroyo, 1991). Employment in factories or service provision using sophisticated tools and automated systems, for example, may constitute an experience of over-training that would prove difficult to utilize on the migrants' return to primarily rural communities. At the other extreme, there are certain domestic skills such as gardening, plumbing and so on that will not be as highly valued in the job market in the migrant's place of origin as they were abroad (Martin 1990, p. 663). However, there are undoubtedly many cases of experiences that can be utilized.

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<sup>26</sup> "...Remittance multipliers and income gains are sensitive to villages' economic structures...A large part of the benefits from migration becomes concentrated in regional urban centres, even if the remittances do not go there" (Taylor 1999, p. 78).

The aim is to anticipate the possible relationship between employment in the receiving and sending areas, which should involve the participation of both the sending and receiving governments and communities in order to obtain better results. The point is to use the experiences documented to date in order to design reasonably well-planned schemes that can be reasonably well implemented (here the term “reasonable” refers to the degree of imperfection with which the goals can be expected to be achieved). Among the communities to be included in such schemes, it might be possible to interest existing “twin” communities or cities in the two countries and to promote a similar relationship among others.

Past interventions have obviously not been as transparent as one might have wished. In addition, some of the anticipated benefits have been used for other ends, which results in potential beneficiaries will resist new proposals. The assignation of quotas or privileges in the reception centers administered by the Bracero Programs of the 1940s and 1950s (see Martin 1998, p. 881-3) marked past projects. And practices of bribery and a culture of *coyotes* (López Castro 1998), which have led to the consolidation of extensive networks of vested interests, have continued to mark projects up until the present. These vested interests will put up resistance to change.

Nevertheless, some lessons have obviously been learned along the way, meaning that one should avoid the extreme fatalism that would simply lead to the continued existence of the present makeshift arrangements. This would not allow the new directions suggested by recent literature to be fully exploited. The time has come to design new schemes, perhaps including a new, properly administered “Bracero”-type plan that would include measures to locate communities of origin and define the tasks to be undertaken by the migrants at their point of destination. A plan of this nature would also incorporate the new possibilities provided by the

internationalization or globalization of activities into which they would be incorporated on their return.<sup>27</sup>

Migrants' skills or jobs related to domestic chores, cleaning buildings or offices, or in the restaurant and hotel trade could be useful for those returning to urban or tourist development areas.<sup>28</sup> Manufacturing skills will obviously be more useful when factory jobs are available for migrants on their return, rather than for migrants from very small communities in extremely rural areas. Jobs in the countryside, such as harvesting fruit and vegetables, will provide useful skills for those returning to jobs in agriculture, particularly where crops are sown commercially.

### *Education*

With regard to the three types of experiences described in the previous paragraph, migrants' degree of educational attainment can also be used to make better use of their work experiences.<sup>29</sup> The most highly educated should undertake manufacturing jobs, whereas those with very little previous instruction can generally perform farm work. The service sector might be able to benefit from those with some grasp of English, although one should perhaps not expect too much in this respect.

The literature has little to say on the education of a migrant's companions and offspring. References usually cite teaching them their language of origin among factors that might facilitate repatriation following a lengthy stay abroad (see Rogers 1990 on repatriations from Germany to Turkey).

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<sup>27</sup> It is revealing that the Mexican Embassy in the United States has suggested focussing on the advantages of making more productive use of remittances. By way of an example, it cites the success of Mexico's experiment in cooperation with Guatemala with day workers who come to work in the coffee plantations in Chiapas (*El Financiero*, March 23, 2000, p. 34).

<sup>28</sup> See Arroyo, 1991. There is an overwhelming bias against including the service sector in modernization schemes. An exception to this is the study by Secofi-UNDP (1991).

<sup>29</sup> We are discussing an aspect of selectivity of migrants that has been virtually ignored. Most studies have positively associated the variables that express human capital (education, previous experience) with the tendency to migrate. See, for example, Taylor et al., 1996, pp. 409-410.

### *Family environment*

Another set of factors concerning the selectivity of migrants could be the condition of their families, their ages, gender composition and so on, factors that have been widely documented in the literature of the past three decades (see summary by Verduzco and Unger, 1998). One should define these factors explicitly beforehand to guide the selection of migrants from communities with high levels of migration, in order to optimize the expected results of remittances, experience and impact on the productivity of the economic activity in the migrant's place of origin.<sup>30</sup>

Among other factors, it would be worth considering the hypothesis that migrants and their families experience a three-stage life cycle in the relationship between remittances and development, with most remittances being sent back during the intermediate or second stage (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 409). The main characteristics of this stage are those that would be attempted to be duplicated in a controlled program. That would mean designing a program that would attempt to ensure higher earnings as a result of a better fit with the job market and ensure the greatest number of remittances. During the second stage the family does not move, as tends to happen during the third stage, when the family may decide to settle permanently abroad. The goal of this program would be to help the family avoid moving into the third stage.

### **Cultural factors: modernization and attachment to ones roots**

A subtle aspect that has yet to be satisfactorily explored is the extent to which migrants decide to settle permanently in the United States. There is a widespread perception in the United States that all immigrants arrive with every intention of settling there. Conversely, those on the Mexican side of the border believe that migrants enjoy their lifestyle in Mexico and that they

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<sup>30</sup> Verduzco and Unger (1998) identify municipalities with high migratory density. That list could serve as the basis for favoring the selection of potential migrants by combining the positive contributions of migration on a larger relative scale in these communities.



have no intention of settling in the United States, meaning that many of them might return. For practical purposes, what interests us here is that return migrants should be encouraged, rather than discouraged. Attempts should be made to make the best use of migrants in order to modernize their place of origin or local communities so that they will be more likely to return home.

Practical measures to this effect range from ensuring every migrant's return ticket to making the return to Mexico attractive to those who have accumulated capital and belongings. These incentives will also offset the uncertainty migrants currently face as they consider returning home. Measures for improving the handling of remittances and the convertibility of capital have been dealt with in other sections. Here we are envisaging other actions that will facilitate the importation of equipment, cars and domestic appliances as part of the measures to facilitate reintegration.

Special dispensation could be provided for importing equipment and work tools, particularly if they are related to the activity that the migrant intends to undertake on his return. This has been done to some degree in Europe with relative success (Rogers 1990, p. 921). Over the past decade, Conacyt has also incorporated this dispensation with relative success into its programs for the repatriation of qualified professionals. In all fairness, migrants should be given at least the same dispensations for importing their belongings (including vehicles, domestic appliances, work tools etc.) as professionals are.

Other partially successful measures worth examining have been attempted in Europe and certain Asian countries (see Rogers 1990, p. 923). These include regional development banks' identification of investment opportunities in projects in promising sectors that can be operated by self-employed migrants and perhaps even provide employment for a few others in the same

community. In Friuli, Italy, those who worked in factories abroad have been given assistance in finding jobs, on the grounds that they possess new skills and an industrial work ethic (ibid., p. 924).

#### **IV. The actors and their contribution to regional development through migration Migrants and the U.S. and Mexican governments**

There are many measures that governments can implement to enhance the contribution of migration to migrants' places of origin. Most of these will be the separate responsibility of each national government, yet others will require the joint cooperation of both governments. The measures can be reviewed on the basis of the three "R's" in migration: Recruitment, Remittances and Repatriation.

##### *Recruitment*

A recruiting initiative like the Bracero Program could be revived, albeit under a different name, but in any case it should be jointly implemented by the two governments. Arrangements in which neither government intervened and private agents would act directly as both employers and operators would be preferable (Martin 1990, p. 662). From the Mexican perspective, however, the government (primarily the federal government, with the cooperation of certain state governments) is perhaps the only organization that would be able to coordinate the expected benefits of migration with other forms of support for the focussed development of zones selected for recruitment. Any reservations about the government's efficiency (including corruption) could

be offset by the communities themselves, whose members would be responsible for monitoring government action.<sup>31</sup>

The idea behind selecting the regions and communities from which the recruitment would be carried out is to lend coherence to the aim of directing investment to these areas (Russell 1992). Other authors have suggested specifying even more details related to recruitment from specific communities, sectors of activity that will be given priority, and credits and managerial advice that will accompany the development of the community of origin where recruiting is carried out (Rogers 1990, p. 927).

### *Remittances*

An additional advantage of focussed recruiting would be the creation of an opportunity to make a better use of remittances. Better identification of the recruiting communities will facilitate the rapid, safe sending of remittances, at a lower cost (Russell 1992). Leaving these operations up to existing banking systems does not guarantee that the benefits of migrants from small, isolated communities will be maximized (Appleyard 1992, p. 261). Better conditions will be in place to ensure that the few local or regional banks in these areas will be able to concentrate remittances and channel them into productive investments.<sup>32</sup> This will obviously also facilitate linking what is earned from remittances from migration to official financing and international aid (Martin 1990, p. 663). Likewise, substantial amounts could be earmarked for certain localities in each region, in order to achieve a minimum level of installation that would enable other dynamic externalities to be utilized.

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<sup>31</sup> The aim is to use past experiences to anticipate solutions that could maximize the benefits of a new attempt similar to the Bracero Program. Several examples can be found in the copious literature reviewing this program. See, for example, Martin 1998.

<sup>32</sup> See the official position described in the previous footnote on *El Financiero* newspaper.

### *Repatriation*

Measures for repatriating or returning migrants to their place of origin will have to be undertaken jointly in order to be effective (Rogers 1990). A key ingredient in making a migrant's return attractive is to value his working experience in terms of improved skills (the upgraded skills mentioned by Athukorala 1993). This is also linked to the fact that repeated trips do not necessarily mean a higher income for the migrant. A recent paper suggests the opposite, in other words, that after the first three times, migration begins to translate into lower salaries for the same person (Carrillo 2000).

### **Investors: Private banks, private investment and international organizations**

The focussed development perspective we have been suggesting is now more likely to be considered than perspectives that prevailed only a few years ago. This results from the current intrinsic conditions of the Mexican and U.S. governments and their relationship to one another, as well as the current mandates of international organizations. The actions or policies preferred during the 1980s generally included the mediation of the market, such as actions aimed at promoting exports and encouraging private and foreign investment and intellectual property rights. (Apropos of this, see the list of objectives associated with the IMF, the World Bank, USAID and others in Weintraub (1990, p. 1166-7)).

## **V. Conclusions**

We have linked the migratory experience and the development of migrants' places of origin from a positive, development perspective. This perspective regards migration as a temporary phenomenon that facilitates access to various types of resources that are beneficial to the development of sending regions.

On the basis of the experiences we have reviewed, it is possible to propose actions that would 1) maximize the foreign current surplus of the salaries earmarked for remittances, 2) support the destination and use of remittances, 3) create labor markets to take advantage of the migratory experience, and 4) reinforce the values and recognition that will encourage long-term settlement in migrant sending areas.

By focusing our analysis on municipios with high migration levels, we discovered highly specific socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that can be summarized as follows. There are approximately one hundred, mainly rural municipios existing in conditions of obvious economic underdevelopment. This underdevelopment in these places is reflected in significantly lower salary levels, productivity and investment per establishment than in other municipios. These places develop lighter agro-industries with a limited capacity for attracting investments that would produce greater impacts. Results vary little by zone, although it is worth noting that in the southern part of the country, unlike in other areas, municipalities with less migration are noticeably poorer.

Likewise and in relation to the objectives of this study, the following points should be emphasized. First, in the three states with a long tradition of migration (Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas), there are several areas in each state with more intense migration, reflecting the greater spatial breadth of this particular phenomenon as well as its greater spatial concentration. This in turn confirms one of the hypotheses put forward at the beginning of this paper that planned resources must also be channeled into some of these places in order to multiply the impact of remittances more effectively.

At the same time, as seen in the text, the presence of farm workers, together with commercial crops, speaks of certain productive conditions in the municipios that would be able

to reduce migratory flows. This means that some resources should be channeled into these potential areas so that they can be developed in this respect, thereby influencing the emigration flows from these places.

Moreover, manufacturing and trade, even at the low levels at which they take place in these places, might be sufficient to reduce migrations, as suggested in one of these exercises. Diagnoses must therefore be carried out in sending areas in order to specifically implement this type of measure in order to increase these productive activities.

The educational and income profiles that emerged as one of the results speak of minimum conditions of wellbeing that could also influence the reduction of migratory flows. This leads one to the conclusion that, to the extent that Mexico increases these levels, there will also be a decline in migrations from this type of area.

At the same time, maximizing the benefits of migration is directly linked to obtaining the greatest benefit from available remittances in these and other municipios. These remittances are also linked to salary increases in the receiving areas, reductions in transportation and subsistence costs in the United States, and measures related to remittances, including access to deposits in foreign currency, and exchange and interest rates.

Likewise, as mentioned earlier, indirect effects depend on combining other external resources that must be injected in a timely fashion into certain migrant communities, thereby anticipating the response that will be required from local productive capacity. This effort will go hand in hand with the selection of certain regions of migrants as priority receivers of investment and support from national and regional development banks. By selecting these regions, policymakers will help channel the remittances and available resources from these banks and

international aid providers in the same direction to maximize productive, employment-generating investment.

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