

RURAL CHANGE AND CIRCULAR MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES. A CASE STUDY FROM MICHUACAN, MEXICO

Silvana Levi Levi*

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es examinar el impacto social y económico de la migración circular hacia Estados Unidos sobre las áreas rurales de origen. Se analizan diversos factores; entre ellos, la introducción de innovación en la agricultura, la penetración de capital, una mayor comercialización, la expansión de infraestructura y los cambios sociales dentro del área rural de expulsión de los ejidos localizados al norte de Michoacán.

Los cambios antes mencionados han contribuido a aumentar la importancia local de la migración temporal a Estados Unidos.

Summary

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of circular migration to the United States upon the economic and social changes in the rural areas influenced by it. Factors as innovations in agricultural practices, penetration of capital, increased commercialization, expansion of infrastructure and social modifications within rural areas will be examined. These changes have increased the local importance of temporary migration to the United States. Using case studies in Michoacan, the impact of the flow of remittances associated with this form of movement is explored.

Introduction

The influence of temporary population movement from central western Mexico to the United States on remittances and rural productivity is that it is producing a net gain in the area of origin; so if migration were to cease the village or the *ejido*¹ and population would be worse off.

The fact remains that remittances have come to play a major role in the domestic economies of the labor sending countries (Russell, 1986, p. 680). There is however no consensus regarding the value and effects of remittances within the domestic household.

Even though remittances constitute a major preoccupation in many studies they do not represent the only element which causes gain or benefit from migration in areas of origin. Such elements as transmission of skills, experience, flows of ideas, and mass communication can influence development in an area of origin.

The aim of this paper will be to examine the flows of information and remittances

* Instituto de Geografía, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Apdo. Postal 20-850, 01000 México, D. F.

¹ *Ejido* is the collective land around a settlement distributed among the inhabitants to be cultivated.

among illegal migrants to the United States and their impact upon economic and social changes in the rural areas they have left. Using a case study from the State of Michoacan the use of telegraph, telephone, mail, television, radio and education will be analyzed and related to innovations in agricultural practices, increased commercialization, expansion of infrastructure, and social modification. These changes have increased the local importance of temporary migration to the United States.

The evidence in most studies suggests that remittances are seldom used for rural development (Hugo, 1983, p. 32; Russell, 1986, p. 687). Most of it is used for food, clothing, improvement of the houses, and consumer goods.

I will try to prove that in the case of circular migration to the United States from central western Mexico, two sets of diffusion processes can be established. One comes from personal experience and affects primarily the level of living. In this case family, prestige and the importance of displaying success abroad play an important role. It is thus important to acquire consumer goods in the United States or, of the type common in Mexican urban areas.

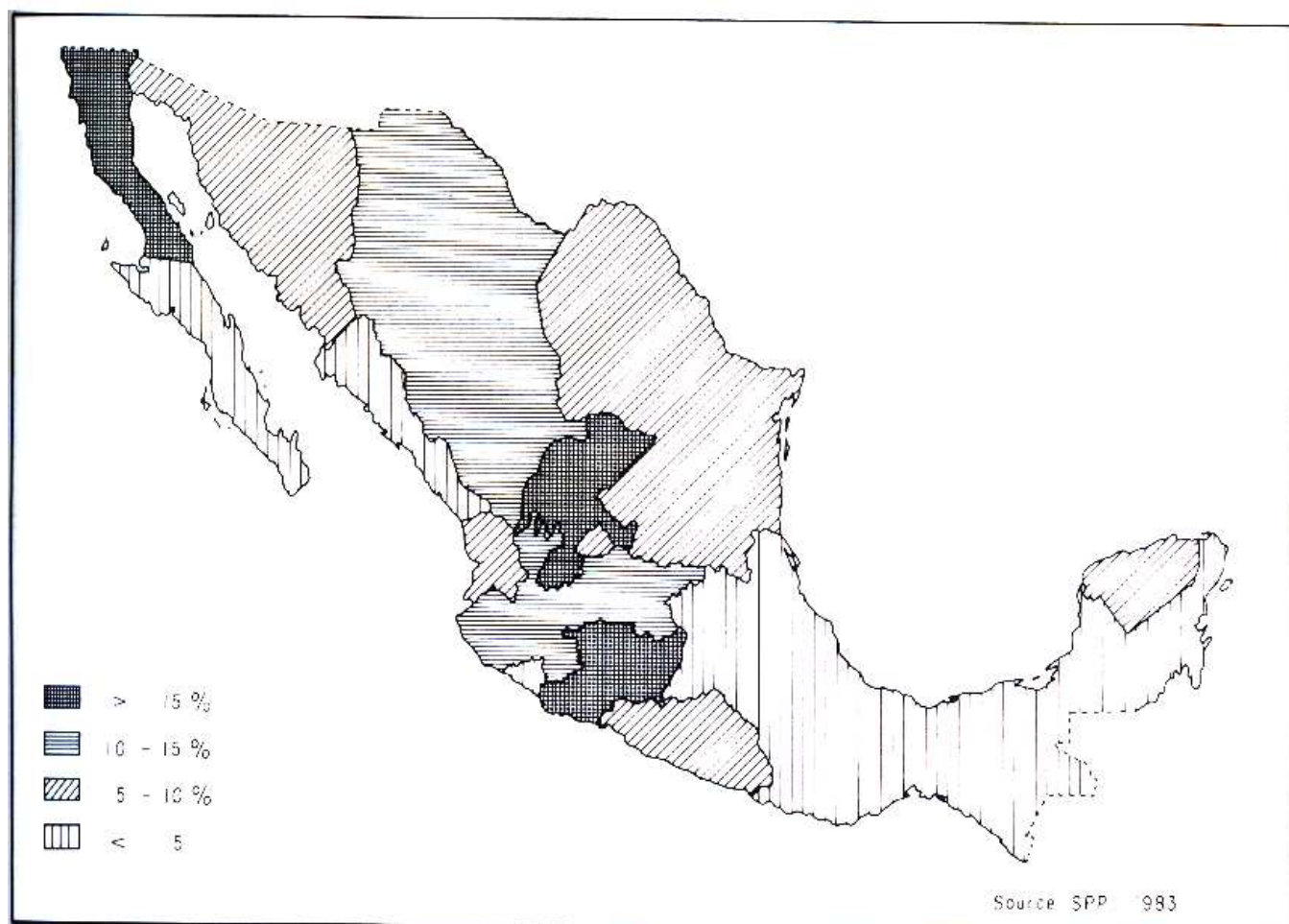
The other process of diffusion is derived not from experience in the United States, but locally in nearby areas with commercial agriculture and through the advice and economic help of the credit agencies which obviously tend to give more attention to those peasants who will be able to pay their debts but at the same time have unirrigated land, thus showing that the goals of the national rural development plans are met.

Mexican labor mobility to the United States

Mexican migration to the United States has a distinct regional pattern. The central-western and north-central states send most of the migrants, while very few come from the center, south and southeast of Mexico (map 1). The economy of entire villages is linked with remittances and even though Mexico is going through an economic crisis the economy of the migrant communities has grown with the income in dollars as compared with those who have had to survive with traditional resources.

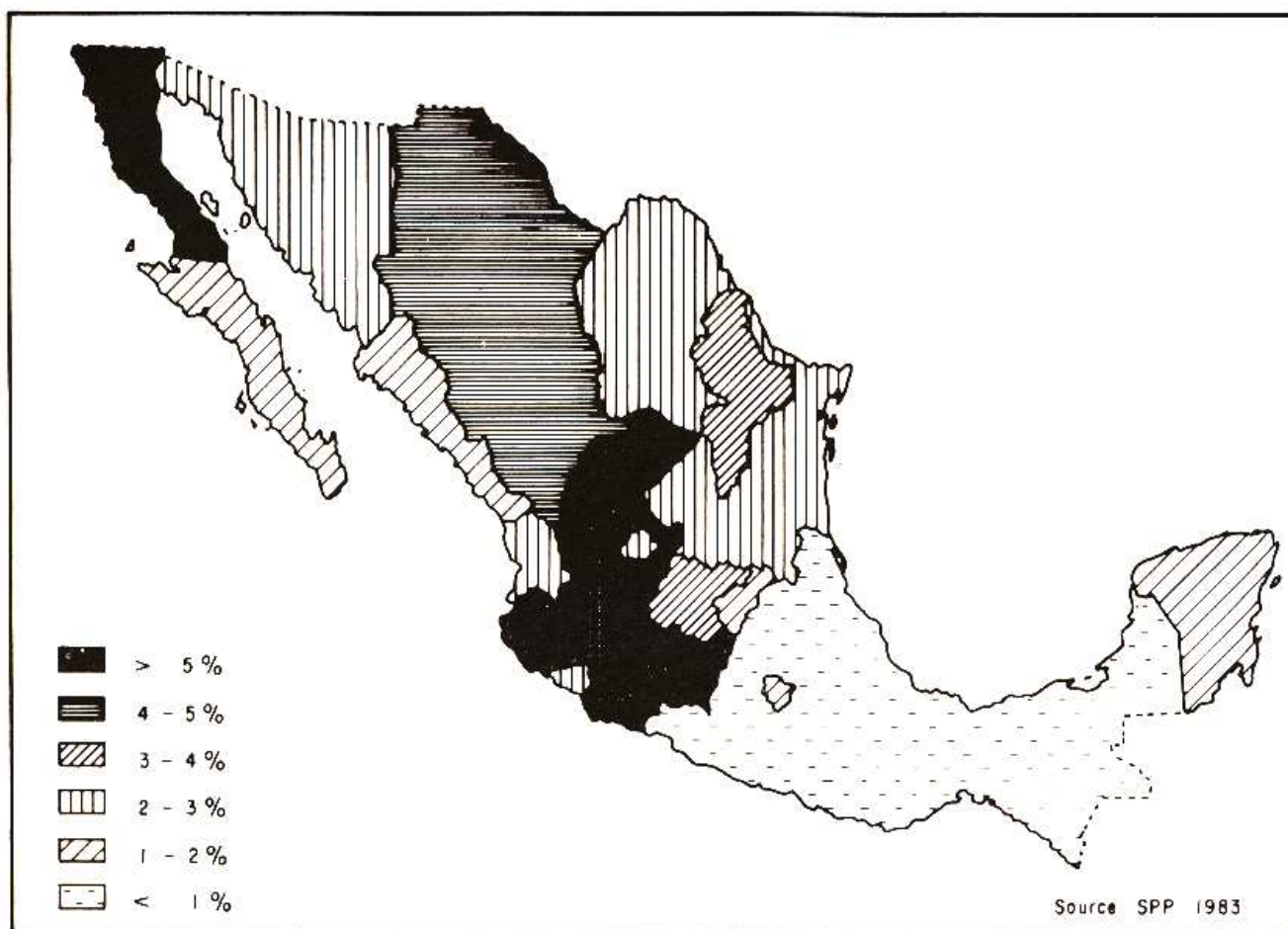
"Going north" has been institutionalized in many of the rural communities in the central western states of Mexico because the population has had a long migratory tradition and thus created a stable network of relationships in the United States. Friends or relatives with previous migratory experience created expectations and other conditions that stimulated labor movement. This explains why these states which include Zacatecas, Michoacan and Jalisco among others, have traditionally been some

of the most important sources of migrants, –these three states have 40% of the total in Mexico– especially of economically active population, (**map 2**). According to the 1980 Population Census, 45 000 people from Michoacan, 88 883 from Jalisco and 23 814 from Zacatecas had lived away from the country for six months or more, the majority being return migrants from the United States. This figure would be higher if migrants who have been away for less than six months, and those who are not considered any more as regular residents in their **municipios**² of origin, were included (**map 3**).



Mapa 1. Percentage of immigrants that have lived, away from the country for six months or more.

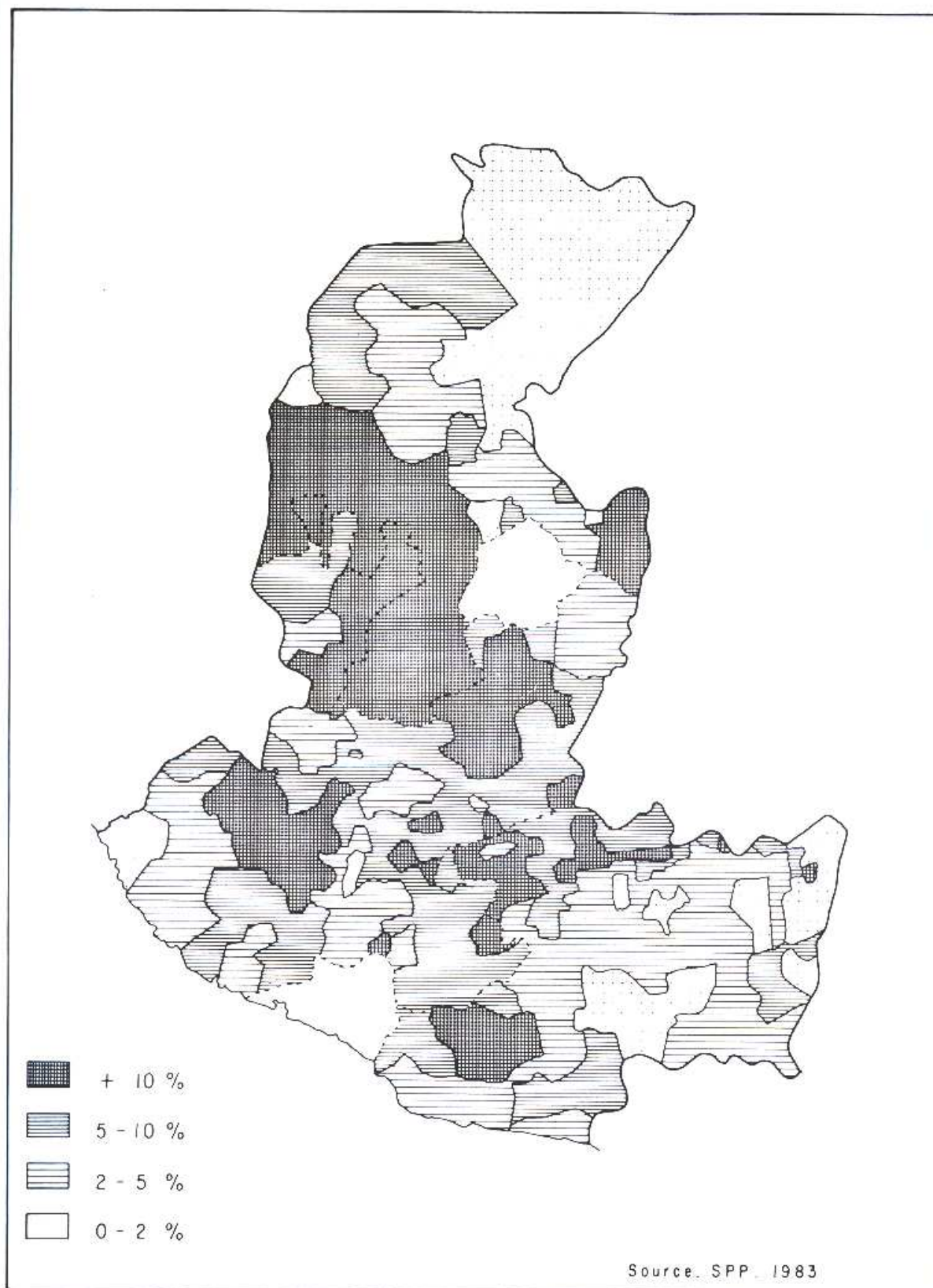
²Municipio is the equivalent to a county in the United States.



Mapa 2. Percentage at economically active population that have lived, away from the country for six months or more.

Evidence shows that the first migrants went during the California gold rush and later, during the government of Porfirio Díaz, the working population suffered the pressure of modernization, which diminished rural labor demand. There was a constant rise in the price of food and other basic goods while wages stayed low. On the other hand the United States was also going through a modernization process and Mexican labor was used mostly in the construction of railroads, telegraph lines, and hydraulic systems (Lameiras, 1985, pp. 95-96; Ochoa, 1986, p. 10).

Peasants who migrate to the United States are usually young, more than half are less than 30 years old; 55% are married, 86% are men, and usually come from rural areas and about 60% work in agricultural activities (Link, 1986, p. 7). They are not the poorest. Many of the migrants have access to land, and when they are away land is



Mapa 3. Percentage at economically active population that have lived, away from the country for six months or more. Zacatecas, Jalisco and Michoacán.

worked by **medieros**, or other members of the family (Roberts, 1980; Dinerman, 1982; Bustamante, 1983; Winnie, 1984; Lameiras, 1985; López Castro, 1986).

International labor migration has had a strong impact on the rural areas from where most migrants come. Nevertheless migration to the United States varies considerably within the area. In the states mentioned above there are three areas where migration tends to concentrate. a) The largest includes the north-eastern and north-western part of Jalisco and south of Zacatecas. b) Another is located to the west-south west from Guadalajara City, including some isolated areas. c) An area which starts at Lake Chapala to the east until the mountainous part of northern Michoacan and the Bajío. At the same time, major regional development centers in the tropical areas, and great urban centers have proportionally less migration to the United States.

Many of the major changes came after the Mexican crisis started, and stretches to Mexican financial crisis of 1981 to the present following a period of oil boom.

Methods and data sources. This paper is based mainly on material and experiences collected in detailed settlement studies. The settlements to be analyzed were chosen on the basis of the following characteristics: a) That they would belong to one of the **municipios** which have a strong migration to the United States and b) that someone related to the population of the settlements could assist in the research.

The **ejidos** of San Antonio and Cerro Colorado in the Municipio de Yurecuaro in Northern Michoacan were chosen for a detailed survey to every household. The following techniques were used to collect the data needed to establish the impact of circular migration on the **ejidos** and town chosen for the detailed study:

1. Interviews were made in order to establish: a) The recent history of the **ejidos** which was reconstructed, on the basis of the older inhabitant's memories. b) The history of the migrant's experience. This would help to understand their perception of the experience, problems, benefits, and changes brought about by migration.
2. Two types of questionnaires: a) A general questionnaire in December, 1985 to every household in the **ejidos**. This helped establish the demographic characteristics of the population, schooling, whether the members of the family were at the **ejido** or elsewhere, in Mexico or the United States, their cultivation practices, changes in their cultivation practices, the nature of these changes, when and under what circumstances the took place, and the role of the local government. b) A survey of the migrants who were back at the **ejido** in March

1986 was carried out. Their histories were recorded to indicate among other things, where they went, when they went, type of job, length of stay, effects of their experience on their life and work back at the village.

Study area and research context. The research reported here was designed to gather information relevant to change and diffusion of innovation in the rural areas affected by migration. The communities were studied by participant observation in which there was the collaboration of a graduate student who was related to many of the inhabitants of the **ejidos**³.

The **municipio** of Yurecuaro is located northwest of the State of Michoacan near the borders with Jalisco and Guanajuato in the region of the Bajio Zamorano, which includes the **municipios** around the city of Zamora, a booming industrial town in Michoacan.

The **municipio** of Yurecuaro has 195 sq. km, 21 547 inhabitants (SPP, 1980), and is one of the **municipios** with a high level of migration to the United States.

Cerro Colorado and San Antonio⁴ in the **municipio** of Yurecuaro were chosen as case studies. They are contiguous and function as one settlement. Their inhabitants are related through marriage and **compadrazgo**,⁵ so they provide help to each other when needed. Cerro Colorado and San Antonio are located in the south of the **municipio** of Yurecuaro by the railway that links the town of Yurecuaro⁶ with Los Reyes; on an alluvial plain that has two volcanic hills. One of them Cerro del Mogote is cultivated, and cows and goats graze there, while the Cerro Colorado and San Antonio occupy part of flat land. There were 88 families and a total of 475 inhabitants at the time of the first survey, in December, 1985. The fact that 79% of men older than 15 years old (120 persons) had worked in the United States, shows that migration has become a way of life.

³Luisa Reyna Soto García postgraduate geography student at UNAM is related to the population of Cerro Colorado and has spent part of her childhood there. The idea was that if a person who understood the peasants well and at the same time was trusted by them helped with the research, the answers would be closer to the truth, and at the same time it would be easier to understand the population's social characteristics. The rate of rejection would also be minimal

⁴During the rest of the paper we will mention both **ejidos** with the name of the larger one: Cerro Colorado.

⁵Compadrazgo is the relationship with the godchildrens parents, who usually were already very good friends.

⁶The **municipio** of Yurecuaro includes 11 settlements, one is the head which is also called Yurecuaro. This paper is about two of the rest.

Circular migration to the United States

Cerro Colorado was originally an **hacienda**, with about 30 families working on it at the beginning of the century. Men worked on the owners land who benefitted by all the produce. Part of the land was for the use of the families of the **peones** who were allowed to cultivate a small area for their subsistence. It was cultivated **a medias**⁷ and the **peon** shared the crop equally with the landowner.

At that time, inhabitants of Cerro Colorado heard about peasants from neighboring settlements who had gone north and returned with earnings which could help solve their economic problems. Five percent of migrants interviewed went to the United States during this stage, which lasted until the early 1930's. Then news arrived that the agrarian reform was being enforced and that land would be distributed. They organized themselves and on May 31, 1932 made a request for land, which was granted in January, 1937 in the form of two **ejidos**: Cerro Colorado and San Antonio. In total 1 228 hectares were distributed: 640 hectares were given to Cerro Colorado and 588 to San Antonio, of which 92 were classified as irrigated land.⁸ This meant that irrigation could be provided on those 92 hectares if the community could get the necessary funds to introduce irrigation, which at that time was not possible.

From 1937 until 1944 the villagers did not migrate to the United States because they concentrated on getting their land to produce. That was not easy, since land was distributed but not the means needed to make it produce and, consequently, they lived in extreme poverty, during the first five years. They had to resort to loans at very high interests to buy seeds.⁹

In general we could say that agricultural production declined, and the economy of the settlements entered a crisis, which was manifest in the lack of food, little consumption of goods, and systematic theft.

When the **bracero** program¹⁰ started, inhabitants of Cerro Colorado organized in small groups, and went to Irapuato, Morelia, or Mexico City in order to be recruited

⁷Peasants still use the system *a medias* (sharecropping) when they go to the United States and need someone to cultivate the land back at home.

⁸These data were obtained from the archives of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. The petition of land was signed by migrants who had come back from the United States.

⁹The got *maíz habilitado*. Corn seed was lent at 100% interest.

¹⁰The *bracero* program (1942-1964) was established as an emergency program to aid the United States economy which needed agricultural workers, since the workers had gone to war or were working in the better payed jobs of the war industry. Since the mexican labourers were payed less, the northamerican managers pressed for the program to be prolonged (López Castro, 1986, p. 8).

to work in the United States, usually in California. Travel expenses were paid by the employer. During this period (1942-1964), 23% of migrants travelled for the first time. Jobs lasted only from 45 to 90 days, and migrants went to the United States more than once. The main change that occurred during this period was the introduction of sorghum in the early sixties,¹¹ which displaced corn as the main crop. The inhabitants also changed their clothing from the typical rural, white cotton trousers and shirt, to the urban type. According to informants, at the end of the 50's they were better off: they had the corn and beans needed for their subsistence. During the period of 1965-1972 there was relative stability and peasants produced enough for subsistence with some surplus to sell in the market. At that time 10% of the inhabitants travelled to the United States. The ejido land is no longer evenly distributed, the average holding is three hectares and not every household owns land.

The last wave began in 1973 and was still going on in 1986 during the last visit to the ejido. This last group of migrants (61% of all migrants) has been away for periods that range from several months to four years. Some went to California but most work in industry in Chicago.¹² The average number of trips per migrant was 3.6. The average age was 17.5 for single and 22 years for married men. 70% of migrants were single when they made their first trip. Among them there is the tacit obligation to travel before they plan to marry in order to bring in enough money to build and furnish a house and have a big wedding party.

Migrants have created a network of relationships which allows them to cross the border, get to Chicago, find a job and a place to live. In general the risks involved have been reduced; which helps to explain the youth of migrants. During their stay in Chicago migrants work hard and spend very little. They live in groups of 6 or 8 persons in apartments located near their work, sharing expenses, and saving as much as possible. In general they are integrated into well established immigrant communities. They find work in industries with small firms many of which are located in immigrant areas (Bailey, 1985, p. 223) so they do not have to learn English or integrate into the United States society. Some of their savings are sent home by money orders, and the rest taken back with them they return home.

¹¹The first person to cultivate sorghum got the idea in Penjamo, Guanajuato, in the Bajio, on his way back from the United States. When he had good results the diffusion of sorghum started and soon was the most important crop in Cerro Colorado. He was also the first person to plow with the help of horses.

¹²The employment of illegal workers is increasingly an urban phenomenon where persons work in the manufacturing sector (Bean *et al.*, 1984, p. 689; Bailey, 1985, p. 221).

Back at home, when a peasant leaves, land is cultivated by either another member of the family, direct or extended, with the help of women and children, or it is cultivated a **medias**. Only 7% of the land was declared to be left uncultivated. "Rural circulation and the shift to wage labor employment have been mutually reinforcing" (Standing, 1985, p. 17).

The Mexican government has put a great effort into the provision of electricity in rural areas, particularly since the early 1950's. Even though the request was made in 1973, it was not until 1981 that Cerro Colorado got it. The reason was that the inhabitants who would benefit by it had to raise 30% of the cost of wires and poles. Electricity has helped to use the irrigable land through the electrification of pumping units.

Even though in theory the **ejido** had 92 hectares of irrigable land, the first well was dug only in 1979 and equiped in 1981; a second was being built in 1986. With irrigation and some investments obtained from a) loans from Banrural¹³ and b) money sent by the migrants, commercial crops began to be substituted for the traditional ones. Land use became more intensive and on the 7.5% of irrigated land, two cycles (spring-summer and autumn-winter) were cultivated, instead of one, (spring-summer). New areas were opened to cultivation and wheat and vegetables started to diffuse. Some peasants who have rain-fed (i.e. unirrigated) land, work on their fields during the spring-summer cycle and the rest of the time are employed on the irrigated land.

In 1980 the first tractor was bought with a loan from Banrural.¹⁴ By 1986 they had 8, of which 6 were bought with the savings of migrants, and 2 with credit from Banrural. Tractors are replacing the labor of absent peasants at seed time by doing the work of the members of the family or employed peasants. To save labor in the harvest they organize in groups and rent the reaping machinery in La Piedad, Michoacan.

It is important to show success back at home. After the debt which was acquired to cover the expenses of the trip to the United States was payed back, 100% bought clothes, 93% bought durable consumer goods, 35% bought land and 71% built or repaired their home. To accomplish that, they had to travel several times with a minimum over-all stay in the United States of two years.

¹³ Banrural is the bank related with the rural activities. In 1987 Banrural got 45% of the budget for agricultural activities of which 87% was for credits to ejidos (Álvarez del Villar, March 17, 1987, p. 13).

¹⁴ Banrural gives credit to buy machinery to the ejido as a whole so in theory it should be payed for and shared by the community.

A road has broken the isolation of the settlements which were previously linked to the nearby towns only by a secondary railroad. The road is difficult to use during the rainy season but, since the train runs only once a day, it is the only access of the **ejidos** to the nearest settlement and main road at all other times.

The type of consumer durable goods introduced are not only a consequence of migration but also of the introduction of electricity and of the road. Of the total of 88 dwellings in the two **ejidos**, 86 have gas stoves, 86 radio-recorders, 84 color televisions, 81 blenders, 39 stereo record players, 25 sewing machines, 28 refrigerators, 18 electric fans, 4 washing machines and one an electric organ. The population is also changing habits by consuming different perishable goods, such as Coca Cola, cookies, and potato chips brought by trucks that take advantage of the presence of the road.

To show the contrast brought about by the introduction of these items I will try to describe the dwellings. There is a front porch which is used as living room, and in the back three rooms. The family uses one of the rooms as a bedroom, the second is used as a grain storage (unless another family lives in the same house) and the third is a small kitchen. The rooms are placed one besides the other, they have brick walls but most still have earth floors which are kept clean by moistening them often. Piped water is only beginning to be installed, and at the moment it has not been piped indoors. Until the 1970's, houses were made by the peasants using local materials; now most of them are made of bricks and use specialised labor. Only one house, built in 1986, probably the house of the future in the area, had proper floors but with more or less the same layout as the traditional one, this house is the only one that had a bathroom.

The **ejido** has a primary school but many of the children do not finish the six years. There is a tendency for girls to have more schooling than boys. That is due to the fact that girls help their mothers, thus staying in the village while boys have to help their fathers out in the fields. In general they perceive education as an ornament, but value basic literacy as a means of communication with the family when away from home. The image of success brought about by migration is reflected in boy's plans for the future. They propose to go to the United States as soon as they are old enough.¹⁵

Very few migrants have settled in the United States. In general migrants do not want to migrate definitively. The reasons given are: a) the salaries they get are high as compared to Mexico's but are too low to live off in the United States with a family

¹⁵ 51 children, older than ten, who attended the local rural primary school in 5th and 6th grades were asked to write about their plans for the next ten years. Many girls would have liked to go on studying while boys wanted to go to the United States and earn some money before they married.

which has an average of 8 members,¹⁶ and b) their life in Cerro Colorado is more relaxed. When they migrate they do so with the intention to earn and bring back the most they can, and to accomplish it, they have to work very hard.

Data from fieldwork in Zamora have shown that young men to whom factory employment is available still prefer to migrate to temporary jobs in the United States (Arizpe, 1981, p. 643). Those who migrate are not the poorest. The majority of migrants from Cerro Colorado to the United States are men that have small land holdings to cultivate and are not unemployed; yet in Cerro Colorado 60% of the peasants said they migrated because they needed to raise their income. They migrate to increase prestige by having more mechanized equipment and more goods. This means that "the pull factors override the push factors in encouraging part of the Mexican migration to the United States" (Arizpe, 1981, p. 646). In Cerro Colorado, as in other places (see for example Cornelius, 1979, p. 73) the reason given to migrate to the United States instead of going to the more developed areas in Mexico, is the gap there is between wages in the two countries.

The money is sent by money orders but some, especially those who travel for the first time use the telegraph. According to the telegraph office in the *municipio* of Yurecuaro over 110 000 dollars were received in 1985. The amount is high if we consider. After they sell their sorghum crop for cash (1 500 kg per hectare, in rainfed land) the peasants get for a year's work only more than half the minimum wage for a month in Mexico City (Soto, 1987). They also cultivate the corn needed to subsist and have some animals which can be sold in case of need. To provide extra cash for exchange, household members, exercise options to produce income, women sew, knit, or make rosaries by the hundred (strings of beads used by Roman Catholics), which are bought by intermediaries to be sold in the cities nearby. Even if we add in those options, income is very low.

Changes brought about by migration

Until 1980 the capital saved during work in the United States was still used in domestic expenses and in some improvement of the home. The main changes in agriculture during the 1960's were the introduction of sorghum as the main crop instead of corn, and the use of some fertilizers. After 1980 there was a major change.

¹⁶ Among rural peasants children are considered assets as they contribute to family earnings. For that reason and the fact that mortality is higher in rural Mexico, the fertility level is high among peasants.

Modernization started in agriculture. Electrical appliances, which in Mexico are more typical of homes in the urban settlements, were bought or imported. **Table 1** shows the difference between their possessions in 1980 and 1985.

Table 1 Number of dwellings

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
Year	80	85	80	85	80	85	80	85	80	85	80	85
Ejido												
San Antonio	184	196	30	33	0	33	24	31	3	30	0	9
Cerro Colorado	260	279	42	55	0	55	34	55	9	54	1	19

Source: SPP, 1983 (for 1980).

1) population, 2) number of dwellings, 3) with electricity, 4) with radio, 5) with television, 6) with refrigerator.

It is worth noting here that when asked if their migratory experience had brought any change in their homes or working practice at the **ejido**, the answer was in general negative. Their perception of change brought about by their migratory experience is to have an exact replica of what they have seen in the United States which is impossible due to the different physical and social characteristics. In a way they are right since 95% of those who built a house, bought agricultural land, or a tractor went to Chicago and worked in activities that were not related with agriculture.

The main changes introduced during the 1980's have been:

a) The introduction of infrastructure such as electricity and the construction of an earth road.

b) In the homes, the type of stove has changed and electric appliances were brought in.

c) The type of home is changing from one with a very simple layout and completely built with local material to one with modern requirements, built with bricks, a bathroom in it, tiled floors, a tank which allows them to have running water, and there are even plans for the first two floor house.

d) Improvement in agriculture, with the introduction of irrigation, tractors, and a greater use of fertilizers.

e) There is a monetarization of the economy. When they come back they have money which creates the need to acquire consumer goods which need the introduction of plumbing or electricity in their homes.

f) There is more job specialization since plumbers, electricians, builders are now needed. The society changes from a traditional to a modern technical one. As a greater volume of the population adapts urban social life, a diffusion of social and economic change takes place among migrants as well as among those who stay home. To accomplish the above, communication among migrants and their relatives and friends in their places of origin play an important role, not only because of the affective links but also because the migrants are the economic basis of their society.

The extended peasant family in the areas we are analyzing as well as in other areas with circular migration (Lameiras, 1985), provides the means to travel, food for the first days, looks after his wife and children while he is away, cultivates his land and looks after his animals. Relatives and friends in the place of destination introduce them to the new environment, provide them with a home, food and help them find a job.

Even if they establish themselves in the United States the first generation will return to their place of origin at least once every year or two to participate in the local **fiesta**, weddings and deaths in the family or for Christmas. As we can see, much of the population mobility is oriented to the family rather than the individual and this contributes substantially to the flow of remittances, since the desire to increase wealth flows especially to parents, wife and children, is frequently the reason for mobility in the first place (Hugo, 1983, p. 40). For the same reason migrants have strong communication links with the family thus influencing with their ideas their way of living and farming practices.

Though the migrant returns often while he is away there are several ways in which he communicates with the family: a) Mail is an important mean of communication between migrants and their families. According to data provided by the post office of the **municipio** of Yurecuaro in 1985, 13 224 letters were sent to the United States *versus* 14 000 elsewhere in Mexico, and 7 275 were received from the United States *versus* 9 203 from other parts in Mexico. In their letters they tell their family about their job and life in the United States.

Migrants tend to be young, but because they have the experience given by travel, their father consider their opinions about land and cattle. It is common to ask for advice in their letters to their sons. Almost always migrants send money orders to be used on their land or home or be distributed among the members of the family. In each case they specify how it is to be distributed.

It has been important since the 1920's for a peasant to know how to read and write before he migrates. However not all the members of the family were literate, especially before the 1970's in which case the radio is used as a mean of communication. There are programs in which between one song and the other messages from the migrants to their families and friends are transmitted. The importance of the cultural impact of the United States has grown through the mass communication media, especially radio, and television (Miranda, 1984, p. 129). Television plays an important role, since it has become a part of their life. It helps to increase the speed of change with programs generated in the cities and which reflect the developed urban way of life. That and the advertisments, increase local expenditure on consumer goods produced outside the rural economy.

Before the introduction of television, the inhabitants of Cerro Colorado, sat with groups of friends and relatives to discuss the events of the day making oral tradition an important part of their knowledge about their village.

Why is it that in 80 years circular migration brought about only a few changes and suddenly just in a few years there was modernization in agriculture?

Evidence from this and other studies, on the effects of migration on the rural area influenced by it, show that, priorities given to the use of remittances to produce change pursues the following order: *a*) they pay the debt acquired to travel to the United States, *b*) they use it for subsistence expenses, *c*) they repair their homes, buy furniture, electric appliances and ornaments, buy land, and *d*) only after all the items mentioned above are acquired and if the proper conditions are given, such as availability of credit, irrigation or electricity, agriculture is modernized.

Cornelius's (1979, p. 74) prediction, that a consequence of the devaluation of the peso would be an increase in the illegal migration to the United States, came true in the case of Cerro Colorado. With the present crisis inflation has the effect of increasing the difference in wages and is another pressure for labor to go "north" (Muñoz, 1985, pp. 160-161). A cause of the modernization is that they have larger savings, due to the rapid devaluation of the Mexican peso. This has attracted the attention of credit

agencies, which have made more money available to them.

In Cerro Colorado more than half of the male migrants interviewed had gone to the United States in the last ten years. It is interesting to note though that in Cerro Colorado this has been the cause of the modernization of agriculture, a relative improvement of their houses, and the inclusion of durable goods in their homes; but their social relationships and habits are still the same. Migration creates new needs in the inhabitants which in turn bring about changes, and the speed of these changes depends among other things on the scale of migration (White and Woods, 1980, p. 2). Where a sizable number of migrants is involved, collective action or pressures may have a strong effect on the social relationships of the area and productive system (Standing, 1985, p. 37).

The society is very traditional, with customs that we would find very old fashioned; each member of the family has a role and definite tasks. Still there is some change, for example, female labor helps in the fields as a consequence of the absence of men, which was unheard of some years ago.¹⁷

When migration is circular, the home community accumulates returned migrants who have the attributes of innovators and also a further range of experience as a result of migration that may make them more likely to be innovative farmers (Preston, 1980, p. 198). Besides even though through the history of the *ejido*, migrants have been the innovators, most of the ideas for changes, especially in agriculture, and innovations were brought by local migrants, not from the United States, but from the Bajío,¹⁸ which is not far from the study area and has more or less the same geographical characteristics and where land is similar to theirs.

The improvement in agriculture is due to two main reasons: a) Most of the consumer goods considered important are in the migrants home, and the home itself has had some improvements. b) There are some political factors which help to increase the use of remittances in investment for modernization in agriculture. The National Rural Development Policy gives special attention to unirrigated land. The *ejido* can borrow to buy agricultural implements, get fertilizers and get an insurance in case they lose the crop. In migrant areas to the United State there is less possibility that the peasant

¹⁷ All their customs are very traditional. Their courtship and marriage customs are practically the same as in the early 1930's.

¹⁸ The region called Bajío occupies part of the States of Guanajuato and Michoacan. It has long been an important developed agricultural region known as: *El granero de México*. Cerro Colorado is located in the Bajío Zamorano which is near the area known as El Bajío.

cannot pay, so political goals can be met without too much loss.

On the other hand when the peasants deal with the government agencies they learn to demand governmental services, especially those they have seen in the neighboring regions. The problem is: how could the population manage to keep up with the increased local expenditure if circular migration to the United States were to cease?

Migration occurred due to inequality and will eventually establish inequality. At the moment there is not much difference in the amount of wealth among the population of Cerro Colorado. Nevertheless the value of land, for example, is increasing rapidly as a consequence of the relatively large amounts of cash *ejidatarios* have. Remittances are increasing the demand for consumer goods, and creating inflation. The whole economy of the town is related to the income of the migrants.

We can expect that increased commercialization, penetration of capital, dependency upon remittances, and unemployment of the peasants who do not own any land will produce inequality in the near future and peasants who have access to the irrigated land will be wealthier than the others.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Luisa Reyna Soto García for her collaboration in the field work; Mansell Prothero for his helpful comments and suggestions on the research, Arthur Morris and Colin Clarke for their comments on the paper.

References

- Alba, F., "Mexico International Migration as a Manifestation of its Development Pattern", *International Migration Review*, 12:4, 1978, pp. 502-513.
- Alba, F., "Temporalidad de la Migración Internacional: Aspectos económicos y socio-políticos", en *Investigación Demográfica en México*, CONACYT, México, 1980, pp. 431-435.
- Álvarez del Villar, G., "Petricioli: 1987 no será un año fácil", *unomásuno*, marzo 17, México, 1987, p. 7.
- Arizpe, L., "The Rural Exodus in Mexico and Mexican Migration to the United States", *International Migration Review*, 15:3, 1981, pp. 626-649.
- Arizpe, L., *Campesinado y Migración*, SEP, México, 1985.

- Arroyo Alejandro, J., W. W. Winnie y L. A. Velázquez Gutiérrez, *Migración a centros urbanos en una región de fuerte emigración - el caso de occidente de México*, Universidad de Guadalajara, México, 1986.
- Bailey, T., "The influence of Legal Status on the Labour Market Impact of Immigration", *International Migration Review*, 19:1, 1985, pp. 220-238.
- Bean, F. D., H. L. Browning y W. Parker Frisbie, "The Sociodemographic Characteristics of Mexican Immigrant Status Groups: Implications for Studying Undocumented Mexicans", *International Migration Review*, 18:3, 1984, pp. 672-691.
- Bustamante, J. A., "Emigración indocumentada a los Estados Unidos", en *Indocumentados mitos y realidades*, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, El Colegio de México, México, 1979, pp. 23-60.
- Bustamante, J. A., "The Mexicans are Coming: from Ideology to Labor Relations", *International Migration Review*, 17:2, 1983, pp. 323-341.
- Chapman, M. y R. Mansell Prothero, "Themes on Circulation in the Third World", *International Migration Review*, 17:4, 1983, pp. 597-632.
- Cornelius, W., "La migración ilegal mexicana a los Estados Unidos. Conclusiones de investigaciones recientes, implicaciones políticas y prioridades de investigación", en *Indocumentados mitos y realidades*, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, El Colegio de México, México, 1979, pp. 69-110.
- Dinermann, Ina R., "Patterns of Adaptation Among Households of U. S. - Bound Migrants from Michoacan, Mexico", *International Migration Review*, 12:4, 1978, pp. 485-502.
- Fan, Yiu Kwan y A. Stretton, "Circular Migration in South-east Asia: Some Theoretical Explanations", en Guy Standing (ed.), *Labour Circulation and the Labour Process*, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, London, Sydney, Dover, 1985, pp. 338-357.
- Hugo, G. J., *Population Mobility and Wealth Transfers in Indonesia and other Third World Countries*, Papers of the East-West Population Institute No. 87, Honolulu: East West Center, 1983.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, *X Censo General de Población y Vivienda. Integración Territorial*, México, 1987.

- Lameiras, B. B. de, "Cultura criolla y migración en la ciénega de Chapala", *Relaciones*, 24:3, 1985, pp. 91-110.
- Link, T., "Un tema polémico: las migraciones", *Travaux et Recherches dans les Ameriques du Centre*, 9:5, 1986, pp. 5-7.
- Lipton, M., "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution", *World Development*, 8:1, 1980, pp. 1-24.
- López Castro, G., "Migración de michoacanos a Estados Unidos", *Travaux et Recherches dans les Ameriques du Centre*, 9:5, 1986, pp. 8-10.
- Miranda, F., "Mestizaje cultural de un pueblo migratorio del occidente de México", *Relaciones*, 19:2, 1984, pp. 123-134.
- Muñoz García, H., "La emigración laboral a los Estados Unidos: algunas reflexiones", en *Audiencia Pública sobre Trabajadores Migratorios*, UNAM, México, 1985, pp. 160-163.
- Ochoa, A., "Arrieros, braceros y migrantes del oeste michoacano (1849-1911)", El Colegio de Michoacán, inedit.
- Preston, D. A., "Rural Emigration and the Future of Agriculture in Ecuador", in D. Preston (ed.), *Environment, Society and Rural Change in Latin America. The past, present and future in the countryside*, John Wiley, 1980, pp. 195-208.
- Secretaría de Programación y Presupuesto, *X Censo General de Población y Vivienda, 1980, Jalisco*, México, 1985.
- Soto García, L. R., "Economía campesina y migración a los Estados Unidos", en *Memorias del XI Congreso Nacional de Geografía*, Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, México, (en prensa).
- Standing, G., "Circulation and the Labour Process", en G. Standing (ed.), *Labour Circulation and the Labour Process*, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, London, Sydney, Dover, 1985, pp. 1-39.
- Roberts, K. D., "Agrarian Structure and Labor Mobility in Rural Mexico", *Population and Development Review*, 8:2, 1982, pp. 299-322.
- Roberts, K. D., "Household Labour Mobility in a Modern Agrarian Economy: Mexico", en G. Standing (ed.), *Labour Circulation and the Labour Process*, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, London, Sydney, Dover, 1985, pp. 358-381.
- Russell, S. S., "Remittances from International Migration: A review in perspective", *World Development*, 14:6, 1986, pp. 677-607.

White, P. y R. Woods (eds.), *The Geographical Impact of Migration*, London and New York: Longmans, 1980.

Winnie, W. W., *La movilidad demográfica y su incidencia en una región de fuerte emigración. El caso de occidente de México*, Universidad de Guadalajara, México, 1984.