

Determining the Causes and Durability of Transnational Labour Migration between Mexico and the United States: Some Empirical Findings¹

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ABSTRACT

While the field of transnational migration studies is expanding, one important challenge is to broaden research from a mainly qualitative approach proving the existence of transnational migration phenomena toward efforts to quantify transnational migration and pay more attention to analysing its internal dynamics and interrelationships with other (ideal) types of migration. Based on a qualitative and quantitative empirical study of (trans)migrants moving between Puebla (Mexico) and the New York City region focused on the life and work trajectories of 648 individuals and on biographical life history interviews with about 40 Mexican migrants, the article is focused on analysing and explaining the number of trips as an important indicator for transnational migration (even if transmigration could be predominantly a subjective perception and practice without constant physical movement between countries). In order to establish the empirical existence of the transmigration phenomenon, a typology for distinguishing between different types of migrants is advanced and applied to those migrants captured in the survey. The influence of personal, familial, time-, job-, and community-related factors on their decision-making processes and the number of country trips are analysed. The empirical findings will be complemented by qualitative interview material to present the case of a transnationally organized family. This case study serves, first, to demonstrate that research on transmigrant household decision-making strategies is complicated by the complexity of social and family networks, which make it difficult to clearly identify household units; second, it helps address the issue of the durability of the transmigration phenomenon by showing that transnational strategies can be adopted by family members over several generations, depending on individuals' changing needs and desires.

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INTRODUCTION

In general, researchers involved in the field of transnational migration studies agree that their object of study is “a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders” (Portes et al., 1999: 217). Further, Portes (2003) announced that an additional “measure of consensus” had been achieved in recent literature dedicated to examining such transnational migration activities. It was agreed that: transnationalism represents a novel perspective, as opposed to a new phenomenon; the term most appropriately refers to the cross-border activities of private actors; the term can only be applied to a minority of persons in a given migrant population, where the activities of this minority have wide-reaching social and economic consequences; and the form taken by these activities varies according to the social contexts in the countries involved. While defining the phenomenon is one challenge addressed in the growing body of literature on transnational migration, the issue of methodology has had less attention. Portes et al. (2002) have criticized researchers’ reliance on qualitative case studies to the exclusion of quantitative approaches (for example, see Kearney and Nagengast, 1989; Basch et al., 1997), as well as their approach of sampling on the dependent variable – two tendencies that make it difficult to measure the extent of the phenomenon in question. Portes et al. (1999) and Conway (2000) have also warned that the term “transnational migration” is at risk of losing its explanatory power if more care is not taken by researchers to carefully isolate and delineate their units of study. Portes et al. (1999) suggest that this can be accomplished by: (1) first establishing the existence of the phenomenon, specifically the number of transmigrants in a given migrant population; (2) ensuring that the migratory behaviour in question cannot be explained by other, well-established categories; and (3) investigating the durability of the phenomenon.

It is in this context that the article addresses the transnational activities of Mexican labour migrants. Already, Smith (1995 and 1997), Goldring (1996, 1997, 2001) and Portes (1996) have analysed aspects of transnational migration between Mexico and the United States from an essentially anthropological and sociological perspective. Studies by Wiest (1973) and Massey et al. (1994) have described the presence of transnational migration between these two countries using empirical data, with the latter stressing the time and community factors that stabilize such migration flows. Additionally, Portes et al. (2002) and Portes (2003) have examined the activities of transnational Mexican entrepreneurs.

While the abovementioned studies have addressed transnational migration streams at a community and country level, this article focuses, as Bryceson and Vuorela

(2002), Faulstich et al. (2001), and others have done, on transnational families, households, and social networks. Guarnizo (2003) argued recently that migrants' transnational economic and non-economic transactions and connections should be viewed together. Cohen (2001) and Conway and Cohen (2003) have focused in particular on the decision-making strategies of Mexican households with regard to (trans)migration and remittances. Using qualitative case studies, they have shown that the decisions and strategies of individual (trans)migrants are always made in the context of, and in response to, membership in a household and its changing needs, as well as that household's positioning in the broader community. This paper will present the results of an empirical study of labour (trans)migrants moving between Puebla and the New York City region that will both support and complicate their findings.

To answer methodological challenges set by Portes et al. (1999), this article is structured as follows: after describing the empirical study and the methods employed in carrying it out, a typology for distinguishing between different types of migrants will be advanced and applied to those migrants captured in the survey. This is important, as it shows that those identified as transmigrants displayed behaviour that cannot be explained by referring to the other, better-established migrant categories. The survey responses of those identified as transmigrants will then be used to examine the influence of personal, familial, and time-, job-, and community-related factors on their decision-making processes. Finally, the empirical findings will be complemented by qualitative interview material to present the case of a transnationally organized family. The significance of the case study is twofold: first, it serves to demonstrate that research on transmigrant household decision-making strategies is complicated by the complexity of social and family networks, which make it difficult to clearly identify household units; second, it helps address the issue of the durability of the transmigration phenomenon by showing that transnational strategies can be adopted by family members over several generations, depending on individuals' changing needs and desires. Following this, some concluding remarks and suggestions for further research are offered.

DATABASES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

International migration research is often based on either secondary statistical analysis of representative public surveys of national households, on population and labour market inquiries, or on qualitative case studies in selected areas. The first type of database often lacks the adequate variables and contextual information required for specific research interests; the second type is limited with regard to the generalization of findings and the performance of statistical

analysis. Existing research on the topic is marked by two basic deficiencies. The first is the predominance of qualitative case studies describing cross-border movements and activities as transnational migration or transnational social spaces and the corresponding lack of supporting quantitative data. The second and related deficiency is the tendency among researchers to take for granted the transnational nature of their objects of study without first establishing the presence of the phenomenon. (Conway, 2000; Portes et al., 1999; Portes et al., 2002). To avoid this problem the research was based on a differentiated typology of migrants where transmigrants represented just one of these types and where their existence was a question of empirical numbers and proof.

The decision to study labour migration from the Puebla region to the New York City (NYC) region was made according to different factors. Previous research (Chimal, 1990; Hernández, 1990) had revealed a long tradition of labour migration from the Mixteca region (containing parts of the states of Puebla, Guerrero, and Oaxaca) mainly to the northwest of Mexico and to the western coast of the United States (mainly California: see Motta, 1993; Velazco Ortiz, 1990, 1995). There was also clear evidence of the growing importance of remittances for the local economy in the Mixteca region (López and Cederström, 1990; Cederström, 1993; Cortés, 1995a, 1995b, 1996). Other studies detected recent and increasing migration flows from the state of Puebla to the NYC region (Preibisch, 1996; Valdéz, 1994, 1996; Smith, 1995; Cohen, 2001).

Although many community-based and anthropologically oriented case studies existed (only Cortés, 1995a, 1995b, 1996 had collected economic data and broader estimations for the Mixteca Poblana, the Puebla part of the Mixteca region), in comparison to the research related to the northwestern Mexican states like Jalisco and Michoacan (López Castro, 1986, 1988; Mummert, 1990; Massey et al., 1991; Durand and Massey, 1992; González et al., 1995), there were relatively few studies done on migration from southeastern Mexico to the United States. Much evidence indicated that international migration from this region was gaining significance both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Corona (1993) estimated that the share of migrants from the Puebla state, in relation to total Mexican international migration, increased from 2.8 per cent in 1960 to 12.5 per cent in 1990 (Herrera and Macías, 1998; Macías, 1998). At the same time there were elements of qualitatively new forms of migration in terms of “transnational communities” (Smith, 1995), transnational production, and consumption of blended music culture,² and complex and dynamic family networks spanning different places in Mexico and the United States. The latter aspect resulted from the fact that all three main researchers had personal experience with the migration phenomena from the Puebla region to the United States (for the transnational family aspect see Herrera, 2001).

The study was designed as a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, anthropological and sociological methods which had in common a longitudinal perspective on life histories and biographies, on the one hand, and life courses, mainly labour and migration trajectories, on the other. Due to the research deficits already mentioned, this article concentrates on analysing the quantitative life course data. Data sampling followed a two-stage approach. First, according to the principle of theoretical sampling, five micro-regions consisting of defined communities (*municipios* and *barrios*) were selected. This was done in such a way as to achieve maximum contrasts concerning socio-economic development, communication and transportation infrastructure, and migration history. As a result, five sending areas were defined: (1) Chinantla-Pixtla (rural area, old migration); (2) Acatlán/Huajuapán/Tehuiztzingo (rural-village area, recent migration); (3) *barrios* and *municipios* (neighbourhoods and communities) near Atlixco (rural-urban area, recent migration); (4) Atlixco City and suburbs (urban area, structured around declining textile industry, recent migration); and (5) the industry belt between the cities of Tlaxcala and Puebla (urbanized area, modern industry structure, very recent migration). The first three of these areas are located in the southern part of Puebla state, the other two regions in the neighbouring northern and southern zones of the Puebla state capital with the same name.³ The NYC region (including surrounding areas in the states of New York and New Jersey) was defined as the receiving area of the migration flows.

Based on these regional units of reference, three different methods of data collection focused mainly on individuals were used: event-oriented questionnaires (focusing on work, migration, and general life trajectory), recorded and transcribed life histories of (more than 30) migrants, and ethnographic field work. As the findings discussed in this article are taken primarily from the survey, it is appropriate to explain the sampling methods used in more detail (see also Pries et al., 1998). From March 1996 to June 1998, persons were selected from the five regions. Potential interviewees had to: (1) be 18 years or older, (2) originate from one of the sending areas, and (3) have had at least one job event as a labour migrant in the receiving area. Persons to be surveyed were sampled in two different ways. First, at the beginning of the survey, interviewers followed a random walking method, selecting streets and *barrios* of the region where they would ask in each third house for a person who had migrated at least once to the NYC region. Second, interviewees were sought by means of the snowball system of personal contacts. These could have derived from the randomly selected persons or from interviewers' acquaintances. In total, about one-fifth of all persons surveyed were selected at random. The other four-fifths were selected according to personal recommendations in the field. All 57 of the Mexican migrants interviewed in the NYC region were selected using the snowball method. Besides the research team members, most of the 24 interviewers were qualified

local residents such as teachers, physicians, and students who were trained in groups and coached by one of the researchers.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: one related to the person's individual characteristics and another related to each job spell engaged in by the person. In this way, the individual and family situation of each person interviewed was recorded with 150 person-related variables. These included: all migration events carried out by parents, siblings, and children; work and studies of parents and partners; studies completed by the person surveyed; separations from parents; structure of households and residence during life course; kinship and family ties, etc. The core of the trajectory-oriented work and migration section of the questionnaire consisted of 24 job-spell-related variables for each job engaged in by the person surveyed in the course of his/her life. These included the dates of employment, location, nature of the work, line of business, nationality of employer, working times, means by which the job was found and entered into, destination of remittances, earnings in comparison to former job, reasons for leaving that job, etc.

For the data presented here, almost 700 surveys were conducted, controlled, and edited by the research team. For the statistical analysis, 648 valid questionnaires were codified in two different types of SPSS data files (person- and job-spell-related files). The population analysed consisted of 200 women and 448 men, and the average age was 32.3 years. The total number of persons surveyed varied according to the sending area between 105 and 161. With a total of 3,060 valid events, each person surveyed had engaged in an average of 4.7 job spells. The mean duration of each job spell was 3.6 years and each person moved on average 2.4 times between Mexico and the United States; 126 persons had even undertaken at least four moves between the two countries.

In terms of representativeness, the study falls somewhere between in-depth case study and representative survey. The total number of interviewees and the quantity of formalized questions goes far beyond the number of cases normally treated in qualitative studies. Also, the number of job spells and the quality of a longitudinal cut counting all job and migration events during a migrant's life trajectory are innovative in comparison to other quantitative studies and surveys. Despite these advantages, the survey cannot be considered representative in a statistical sense because it is not based on strictly random sampling. This is mainly due to the very topic of the research: undocumented labour migration flows from Mexico to the United States. A structural – and unavoidable – lack of exact data and knowledge about the units of analysis exists. Because the movement of the majority of migrants is undocumented, estimates of the number of people who have migrated from the state of Puebla to the United States (particu-

larly to the NYC region) vary greatly. For the beginning of the 1990s, the Mexican National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) has estimated the total to be around 47,000 people; other calculations vary between 100,000 (about 5% of the estimated Hispanics in NYC) and 500,000 migrants from the Puebla region to the NYC region (Valdéz, 1994; Smith, 1992, 1995). However, for the same period, the number of Mexicans in the NYC region alone has been estimated between 150,000 and 350,000 (Valdéz, 1994; Smith, 1995; Pries et al., 1998). Therefore, in methodological terms, a primary structural limitation is the fact that there is no exact information about the total population of migrants to be taken into account (and on which basis a random sampling could be performed and the representative quality of a random selection calculated).⁴

A second structural constraint deriving from the very characteristics of the object of study is the fluid and dynamic situation of the migrants, their employers, families, and households, which restricts the ability to define “household” or “business” as clearly cut units of reference. Insofar as labour migration is concerned, one could theoretically select the persons to be surveyed based on the business units they are working in; however, it is quite impossible to have access to an important part of the migrants’ world of jobs and work (illegal sweat shops, family work at home, work in private households as a domestic servant or gardener, etc.). Following this approach, one would also only have access to migrants who were actively working in the receiving region at the time of the interview – return migrants, for example, would be excluded. Another option would be to use the household (e.g. the head of household) as the point of reference for selecting candidates for interrogation.⁵ But our own empirical results of the surveys and qualitative interviews revealed that migrant households are very dynamic in terms of their composition and structure. Thus, whatever criteria are used to define the head of the household (most money brought in, most time spent working, etc.), this position can change over time and by definition, as can the type of household itself (see also Cohen, 2001; Faulstich Orellana et al., 2001).

As the research focused explicitly on transnational phenomena, the following questions arose: why and under which conditions can someone living and working as labour migrant in the NYC region be considered part of a Mexican-based household and/or part of a NYC-based household? (How) Could we take into account pluri-local transnational households? Of the 648 persons surveyed, 377 contributed the largest amount of money to the household income and 163 contributed the second biggest share at the time of the survey. Together, 83 per cent of those interviewed indicated themselves as the household’s primary or secondary earners. Often the position of primary earner in the house-

hold changed within short periods of a year or so. Due to the problems involved in using business units and households as units of reference, the decision was made to select individuals according to the above-mentioned criteria: region of origin, age, and engagement in labour migration to the NYC region. In order to eliminate duplicating information about a single household, only one person per family was interviewed.

TRANSMIGRANTS AS ADDITIONAL IDEAL TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT

In order to define the nature of transnational migration according to specified characteristics instead of treating it as a matter of fact, a typology of international migration and migrants was developed based on a literature review. Table 1 displays the five ideal types of migrants which served as the framework for identifying potential transmigrants among the persons surveyed. As in the typology of Mexican labour migrants advanced by Wiest (1973), which was based on a case study of 70 households in a Mexican town, a mixture of objective and subjective elements, such as actual length of stay, frequency of movement, intent, self-perception, and perception by others form the criteria for distinguishing between the migrant types.

TABLE 1
FIVE IDEAL TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

Criteria types	Relationship to region of departure	Relationship to region of arrival	Main impulse for change of region	Time horizon of migration decision
Emigrant/immigrant	roots, descent, departure, parting	integration, new homeland	economic, socio-cultural	long-term, unlimited
Return migrant/sojourner	continuous point of reference	difference to "host country" maintained	economic, political	medium-term, limited, singular
Recurrent migrant	continuous point of reference	difference to "host country" maintained	economic	short-term, limited, repeated
Diaspora migrant	(symbolic) reference to a "Land of Promise"	difference maintained, space of suffering/mission	religious, political, organizational	medium-term, limited
Transmigrant	ambiguous mixture	ambiguous mixture	economic, organizational	indeterminate, sequential

The classical ideal type most often encountered in migration literature is that of the immigrant (as perceived from the region of arrival) or emigrant (as perceived from region of departure). This person typically saves or borrows money and sells what he/she owns in order to move his/her household permanently from one place to another, parting from the old “home” and ancestors and attempting to integrate into the new “homeland”. If such a person fails to get a job or fit into the adopted society, is dismissed from a job, or has problems with immigration authorities, prompting a return to the region of departure, then he/she falls into the category of return migrant. This type describes the Chicago School of Sociology’s analysis during the first half of the twentieth century of immigration and the corresponding processes of assimilation, acculturation, integration, race relation cycles, etc. One could argue that the formation of migration policy in many nation states continues to be directed at immigrants, as are related policies defining integration measures.

The “guest worker” is representative of the return migrant or sojourner ideal type. He/she leaves home for only a limited and medium-term (not only seasonal) period and plans to return to the region of origin, which remains the frame of reference for his/her actions, self-perception, and perception by others. He/she does not dismiss, but rather “freezes” his/her household position in the region of origin for the duration of the absence. In the region of arrival, he/she creates a new household or integrates into an existing household or family with ties to the region of origin. Prominent examples of this phenomenon are the Spanish and Italian guest workers who returned from the United States in the 1920s, or from Germany in the 1980s, to their homes in Andalucia and southern Italy (Berger et al., 1978; Smith, 1997).

The return migrant differs from the ideal type of the recurrent migrant in that the latter departs the region of origin only for seasonal or occasional stays, remaining abroad for less than one year and maintaining strong household ties in the region of origin. He/she lives provisionally outside a typical household structure and accepts exceptional working and living conditions, maintaining social, political, and cultural differences to the region of arrival (see also the “temporary-recurrent” migrant type developed in Wiest, 1973).

Whereas return migrants and recurrent migrants cross the borders mainly for economic and individual reasons and for work, the driving forces behind the movements of diaspora migrants are religious, political, or organizational in nature. Cohen (1997) proposed five different subtypes of diasporas: victim/refugee diasporas, imperial/colonial diasporas, labour/service diasporas, trade/business/professional diasporas, and cultural/hybrid/postmodern diasporas. The general and defining idea for all types of diasporas is the very idea of a “prom-

ised land”, of an Empire, organization, or even “culture”, which serve as the main point of orientation and reference. According to Cohen, diasporas are marked by such features as:

- (1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries (Cohen 1997: 180).

Compared to this broad and differentiated understanding of global diasporas, the term diaspora migrant is delimited for the purposes of this article in order to place it in relation to a wider set of migrant ideal types. Thus, only those displaying the following criteria will be allocated to this category: (1) diaspora migrants have a clear orientation toward a fixed and dominant place with which they identify themselves; (2) religious, political, and/or organizational ties and motivations, not just individual or household socio-economic ones, bear a decisive influence on migratory decision-making process; (3) such migrants should differ explicitly and substantially from the other ideal types, especially from the ideal types of recurrent migrants and transnational migrants. For example, the movements between jobs and countries should be involuntary, determined to a large degree by others, and imposed on the migrant by an organization such as a company or a political association.

Finally, in contrast to diaspora migrants, the relationships of transmigrants to their regions of departure and arrival are somewhat mixed and indecisive. Transmigrants move from one place to another for economic reasons as workers or entrepreneurs, or for organizational reasons as managers or engaged specialists. Mental and physical crossings of national society boundaries are two mutually reinforcing elements in a transmigrant’s life. Transmigrants can live for a longer, but indeterminate time in one country and then shift to another country without defining a long-term residential strategy or orientation. They can live in or develop households in more than one country and rely on multi-sited kinship relations.

In sum, whereas immigrants and return migrants will stop shifting country boundaries after a while and reinforce their rootedness in either the region of arrival or departure, return migrants and diaspora migrants never give up their home or “promised land”. In contrast to these groups, transmigrants adopt a strategy of shifting between and engaging in lives in different places, countries, and even cultures. Compared to immigration, return migration, and diaspora

migration, the crossing of nation state boundaries in a transnational scenario changes the character of the migratory act.

The typology presented above is not an evolutionary model. As Portes (2003) insists, the classic ideal types of migration (here: immigration, return migration, diaspora migration, and recurrent migration) are not disappearing; rather, the new ideal type of transmigration complements them. Far from being mutually exclusive, the various types can reinforce each other according to the logic of an accelerating spiral. This elevates the importance of studying transmigration, even if its significance in quantitative terms is low and hard to measure exactly.

However, as far as the focus on transmigration is concerned, important questions related to individuals and families remain. Taking the cumulative causation argument, the migration of some people should induce further migration (from the same village, community, ethnicity, or country). But what makes some persons or household members shift regularly between places in different countries? Is circular migration between Mexico and the United States mainly recurrent migration or is there also a portion of transnational migration? Do migrants commute thousands of kilometres between Mexico and the United States to stay two or three years in one country and perhaps the same period again in the other country several times just because they fail as immigrants? Why don't they settle in their regions of origin as return migrants – are they failed return migrants?

IDENTIFYING THE TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRANTS

In order to avoid the trap which Portes et al. (1999) warned against, namely presupposing the transnational nature of the objects of study, the first step taken was to test whether the migration phenomena observed could be explained adequately by referring to the other aforementioned ideal types or whether they could best be explained by referring to the ideal type of transmigration. This section presents data from the migrants' work and life trajectory and discusses the relevance of the five ideal types in explaining the empirical findings. As indicated above, the number of trips or country shifts compared with the overall number of job shifts is considered an important variable for characterizing migration types. Therefore, all job shifts taken by the 648 Mexican migrants interviewed were counted and differentiated according to whether it was a job shift within one country (Mexico or the United States) or a job shift accompanied by a country shift (from Mexico to the United States or vice versa). A total of 468 respondents (72% of n=648) indicated that their first job was held in Mexico (either in their community of birth, where the major part of their adolescence was spent, or in another locale in Mexico), while 180 (28% of n=648) said their

first job was in the United States (NYC, the surrounding region, or other states). The high number of first jobs held in the United States reveals the “mature” nature of this international migration system. After leaving school, entry into the labour market takes place directly in the United States, not in Mexico. Almost two-thirds (n=111) of those who found their first job ever in the United States also had parents, siblings, or partners who had migrated there as well.

No one who indicated having had his or her first job in Mexico maintained this employment until the interview.⁶ Nine of the 180 persons whose first job was in the United States were in that position at the time of the survey. Of the 468 persons who held their very first job in Mexico, 173 said that their second job was also in Mexico. But the majority (295 of 468, or 63%) changed from Mexico to the United States while shifting from their first to second job. Thus, of all 171 persons with a first job in the United States, the majority (53%) shifted to Mexico simultaneously when beginning their second job. This pattern was typical for the first five jobs. The majority of those who changed jobs did so by changing countries at the same time. From the second to the third job nearly two-thirds of all persons whose second job was held in the United States (214 of 345) changed from the United States to Mexico, and 42 per cent of those whose second job was held in Mexico (88 of 208) changed from Mexico to the United States. From the third to the fourth job, 67 per cent changed from Mexico to the United States, and 62 per cent changed from the United States to Mexico. From the fifth to the tenth job the pattern becomes more equilibrated: job shifts occurred as often within a given country as they did between the two countries.

The pattern of changes in employment and locations cannot be explained sufficiently by the ideal-typical definitions of immigrants and return migrants. Two-hundred-and-sixty-eight of the persons surveyed had held five or more jobs, and in 55 to 61 per cent of cases a change of job coincided with a change of country. One explanation for the frequent border crossings undertaken by a significant share of the migrants surveyed could be that they are failed immigrants, that is, people who wanted to stay in the United States but who were forced to return to Mexico for various reasons (lack of work, legal problems, etc.). Therefore, a closer look at the reasons for each job shift and country shift would be helpful. This could also bring some insight into the explanatory power of the diaspora migration type, taking into account that in order to be classified as such, reasons other than exclusively economic ones should prevail. The comings and goings of an important number of migrants interviewed could be explained by assuming that they are just recurrent seasonal workers. If this were the case, the average duration of each job in the United States should be one year or less. The average duration of a job and the reasons for leaving it could, thus, be important for explaining the migration trajectories.

TABLE 2
AVERAGE DURATION OF JOB ACCORDING
TO CURRENT NUMBER OF TRIPS

		Average duration of job (in years)						Total
		$x < 0,3$	$0,3 < x < 1$	$1 < x < 2$	$2 < x < 4$	$4 < x < 10$	$10 < x$	
1st trip	Obs. freq.	171	292	212	297	153	35	1,160
	Exp. freq.	158	290	224	308	146	35	
2nd trip	Obs. freq.	14	39	45	62	22	6	188
	Exp. freq.	26	47	36	50	24	6	
3rd-7th trip	Obs. freq.	6	19	14	13	1	1	54
	Exp. freq.	7	14	10	14	7	2	
Total obs.		191	350	271	372	176	42	1,402

As shown in Table 2, only a minority of job spells, 541 of 1,402 (39%), lasted up to one year; 643 (46%) lasted more than one year and up to four years; and 218 of all job spells (15%) had a duration of more than four years. Thus, an important share of the total number of jobs indicated could be interpreted as an expression of the ideal type of recurrent migration in the sense of seasonal or limited, short-term stays. Those trips that resulted in long-term stays and jobs (lasting four years or more) in the United States and that continued during the interview period could be perceived as immigration, or at least as the intention to integrate completely in the country of arrival. Ultimately, the job spells and trips with a duration from one to four years and occurring quite frequently during the individual life trajectory could be understood either as failed immigration attempts or as a different type of migration not covered by immigration, return migration, or traditional recurrent migration concepts. Concerning the trips from Mexico to the United States presented here, the first trip reveals a certain polarized structure: more short- and long-term trips were observed than would have been expected in the case of a completely random distribution (higher observed than expected frequencies in the first and fourth and fifth columns). In the second and third to seventh trips this relation shifts. In the second and third column we find the most marked differences between

(higher numbers of) observed and (lower numbers of) expected frequencies. Meanwhile, migrants whose stays lasted less than one year could be considered recurrent migrants and those whose stays lasted more than four years could be seen as approaching the ideal type of immigrants or return migrants. Those who indicated many trips are concentrated in the one-year to four-year trip duration category.

For a more detailed analysis it is important to have a closer look at the reasons why the persons interviewed changed jobs and countries. Those interviewed were asked to name the reasons that led to the termination of each job. Frequent responses derived from the pretest (such as “I wanted to earn more money”, “I had to take care of my family or one of its members”, “I wanted to continue training or formal education”, “I had trouble with migration authorities or open racism”, etc.) could be selected, or open answers could be given. Table 3 presents the frequencies for the grouped answers as they pertain to the first six country shifts. At first glance, the vast majority of reasons fall into two categories: voluntary economic reasons (to earn more money) and family reasons. Neither involuntary terminations (dismissal or bankruptcy; $n=22+14$) nor problems with legal status ($n=10$) were of significance as compared with the first two reasons mentioned ($n=297+514$). The absence of problems with legal status is astonishing when it is taken into account that almost 88 per cent of all jobs ($n=1204$ of 1368) held in the United States were undocumented labour.

As almost no religious, political, or organizational reasons were given for changing jobs and countries, the diaspora migrant ideal type was judged an inadequate category in which to classify those surveyed. The “failed immigrant” argument for explaining the high rate of country shifts has no explanatory power either because of the lack of involuntary moves from the United States to Mexico. A closer look reveals a wavelike alternation of the prevailing reasons. Moves to the United States are significantly more often induced by economic reasons, while moves to Mexico are normally motivated by family reasons (to care for relatives, due to homesickness, etc.). One could argue that it is quite normal, and to be expected, that Mexican labour migrants go to the United States to earn money and return to Mexico to reunite with their families. But if this pattern is maintained, not only for the first or second trip, but also for the third or fourth, and if these trips are not only seasonal and short-term, then a distinctly different pattern of behaviour is at work.

These findings do not change if all job shifts are included, that is, not only the job shifts which were accompanied by a country shift as revealed in Table 3 ($n=1,013$). From a total of 1,817 job shifts (within Mexico, within the United

States, or combined with a country shift) with valid answers to the question “Why did you change out of this job?”, the following reasons and the number of times they were given were: income-related, such as to earn more money (514 times); family reasons, such as to care for a family member (710 times); disappointment with the job (269 times); bankruptcy or dismissal by the employer (167 times); voluntary departure to pursue further training or education (136 times); and problems with legal status or racism and direct discrimination (21 times). Only the latter 21 cases could theoretically point to politically or religiously driven migration. But none of these can be counted as such, because 17 of the 21 cases were related to problems with migratory status in the United States, and in four cases the reason given for migrating from Mexico to the United States was to escape prosecution by Mexican authorities for a particular offence.

The findings related to the analysis of all job terminations and of those combined with a country shift can be summarized as follows: (1) diaspora migration can be neglected as an explanatory category due to the highly economically driven character of the labour migration; (2) the frequent trips cannot be explained by referring to the phenomenon of failed immigration; (3) the duration of the trips could not be explained by the traditional recurrent migrant type; and (4) obviously complex and enduring transnational household strategies are in play. A significant number of migrants (more than one-fifth of all surveyed persons) had crossed the Mexican-US border at least four times, and not just for seasonal stays. All other (voluntary and involuntary) factors are marginal for explaining the termination of the jobs that coincided with a move between the two countries.

The migrants who have moved frequently between Mexico and the United States could simply be described as recurrent migrants. But it obviously makes a difference whether someone leaves his or her household in Mexico for seasonal or temporary short-term intervals in the United States, living alone or as a “guest” in an established household, or whether someone makes oneself at home in the place of arrival and considers planning medium- or long-term stays.

Therefore, the distinction between ideal-typical recurrent migrants and transmigrants seems significant. Even if low in absolute numbers, transmigrants could be of great importance because – due to their double or pluri-local residences – they influence the migration strategies and prospects of others (in the US and Mexico), and because they forge imageries, visions, and expectations almost to a greater extent than immigrants and return migrants. One important question remains: Why do these transmigrants continue to cross the border instead of settling permanently in one country?

TABLE 3
 MAIN REASON FOR CHANGING JOB AND COUNTRY
 (by subsequent number of changes between Mexico and the United States)

Reason		1st shift Mex- US	2nd shift US- Mex	3rd shift Mex- US	4th shift US- Mex	5th shift Mex- US	6th shift US- Mex	Total
Earn (more) money	Count.	187	43	45	10	12	0	297
	Expect.	81.2	145.7	22.3	36.9	4.1	6.7	
Family	Count.	15	374	5	101	1	18	514
	Expect.	140.6	252.2	38.6	63.9	7.1	11.7	
Dissatisfied with job/ voluntary	Count.	15	32	2	5	0	2	56
	Expect.	15.3	27.5	4.2	7.0	0.8	1.3	
Dismissal/ involuntary- individual	Count.	6	12	0	2	0	2	22
	Expect.	6.0	10.8	1.7	2.7	0.3	0.5	
Bankruptcy/ involuntary- collective	Count.	1	9	1	2	0	1	14
	Expect.	3.8	6.9	1.1	1.7	0.2	0.3	
Further training/ studies	Count.	13	7	0	0	0	0	20
	Expect.	5.5	9.8	1.5	2.5	0.3	0.5	
Problems with legal status	Count.	2	7	0	1	0	0	10
	Expect.	2.7	4.9	0.8	1.2	0.1	0.2	
Other/not applicable	Count.	38	13	23	5	1	0	80
	Expect.	21.9	39.2	6.0	10.0	1.1	1.8	
Total		277	497	76	126	14	23	1,013

EXPLAINING THE NUMBER OF MIGRANT TRIPS BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

Given that a considerable number of migrants make frequent border crossings, the number of trips is one central variable that requires deeper analysis. In the study, respondents had taken between two and 14 work-induced trips between Mexico and the United States (the MMP data indicate up to 40 crossings). As explained above, they tended to migrate to the United States for economic reasons (i.e. to earn money) and return to Mexico for family reasons. But this alone fails to offer sufficient explanation for the total number of migrant trips: why do some migrants cross the border only once or twice in their lives, while others do so ten times or more? Which variables influence the frequency of country shifts of the migrants surveyed?

As no systematic analyses of the factors behind the total number of border crossings has been conducted, some hypothetical reasoning based on previous studies accompanied the data analysis. One possible explanation focused on personal attributes like gender, education, marital status, and property ownership. It could be argued that due to the characteristics of undocumented border crossings (dangerous river passages, environment of violence and insecurity, etc.) women tend not to attempt a high number of migrant trips. Concerning education, highly qualified migrants could be expected to take fewer migrant trips due to their cultural capital, which should allow for alternative strategies. Being married (as argued, for instance, by Massey et al., 1994) and owning property should reduce the total number of trips taken. A second dimension could focus on time-related variables. The age of migrants and their cumulative work time should influence the total number of trips. For instance, the period effect of the year when entering their first job, the cohort effect of the year when beginning their first job in the US labour market, and the age effect of years lived at the time of the survey should have different impacts on the total number of trips made.

For the detailed analysis, five dimensions with corresponding sets of independent variables were selected to explain the variation of the “number of migrant trips” as the dependent variable. Four of these dimensions referred to person-related variables (respondents’ individual characteristics, their embeddedness in family and community, whereby $n=648$ cases) and one dimension was related to job-spell-related variables (conditions of each job event in the work and migration trajectory of the persons interviewed, whereby $n=3,060$ cases). The four dimensions of the person-related variables were: variables related directly to the individual (gender, education, marital status, and land ownership), time-

related individual variables (age at time of survey, age at entry into very first job, date of first job in the United States, cumulative total work time, and cumulative work time in the United States); family-related variables (education level of spouse and parents, migration of spouse, parents, and children, main provider of household income); and community-related variables focusing on the region of origin (socio-economic development, communication and transportation infrastructure, and mature or recent migration). In relation to the work-event-related trajectory, variables for all jobs were distinguished from variables that applied only to jobs in the United States.

As a result, the variables were grouped into the following five dimensions: (1) individual-related variables, (2) time-related variables, (3) family-related variables, (4) community-related variables, and (5) work-related variables (subdivided into “all jobs” and “jobs in the US”). Tables 4 and 5 present some results from the data analysis. Categorical regression analysis was applied to the categorically independent variables (dimensions 1, 3, 4, and 5), and a simple regression model was used for the numerical independent variables (dimension 2).⁷ Table 4 shows the significance of the person-related variables according to the four dimensions. First of all, the variables in all four dimensions (individual-related, time-related, family-related, and community-related) bear an influence on the total number of trips taken by the respondents, with a probability of more than 99 per cent. However, looking at the squared regression coefficient (R^2), there are important differences concerning the correlations between the number of border crossings and the four dimensions.

The individual-related variables of gender, education, marital status, and land ownership explain 4.1 per cent of the migrants’ number of trips. It is surprising that neither gender nor land ownership correlate strongly with the number of migrant trips. Their relative significance in the overall multiple regression coefficients are 6.5 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively. The gender aspect influences patterns of work trajectory (like branch and upward mobility), but there seems to be little correlation between gender and the number of migrant trips. This could indicate that men and women are equally likely to be immigrants, return migrants, or transmigrants (see Herrera, 2000; Goldring, 2001).⁸

According to Massey et al. (1998), the variable “land ownership” is quite important for explaining the probability that migration will occur at all (see also Díez-Cañedo, 1984: 131f). Nevertheless, the findings suggest that it does not have a great influence on the number of migrant trips. Education level explains more than half of the total correlation of the four individual related independent variables (52%); the higher the level of education (as ordinal variable), the higher the probability of many trips.

TABLE 4
PERSON-RELATED VARIABLES EXPLAINING
TOTAL NUMBER OF MIGRANT TRIPS

Dimension	Independent variable	Beta*	Rel. weight/ singular sign	R**	R2**
1. Individual-related (n=600, CATREG)	Gender	.046	6.5	.202	.041; significant at 99%; toler. coefficient >0.97
	Education	.138	52.0		
	Marital status	.113	37.9		
	Land ownership	.030	2.9		
2. Time-related (n=648, REG)	Age at survey	0.19	Y at 0.99	0.19	0.036
	Cumulative work time	0.213	Y at 0.99	0.213	0.045
	Cumulative US work time	-.202	Y at 0.99	0.202	0.041
	Age first job ever	0.247	Y at 0.99	0.247	0.061
	Age 1st US job	-0.044	Y at 0.99	0.044	n.s.
3. Family-related (n=455-647, CATREG)	Education father	-.135	62.3	.188	.035; significant at 99%; toler. coefficient >0.84
	Education mother	-.058	17.7		
	Migration father	.044	10.0		
	Migration mother	0.47	8.5		
	Migration siblings	-.026	1.8	.165	.027; toler. coefficient >0.93
	Education spouse	-.067	24.8		
	Migration spouse	-.134	24.8		
	Migration children	-.172	Y at 0.99		
Main household income	.125	Y at 0.99	.125	.016	
4. Community-related	Region of origin (n=648, CATREG)	.204	100	.204	.041; significant at 99%

Note: *Beta = z-transformed Regression-Coefficient; **Multiple R and R according to grouping and (categorical, ordinal or numerical) variable level and testing for collinearity (tolerance coefficient after transformation).

This corresponds to the findings made by Portes (2003) regarding transnational entrepreneurs. Additionally, deeper analysis of education reveals an astonishing polarization – respondents who only attended part of primary school (*primaria*) and respondents who had finished high school both had a higher number of border crossings.⁹ Married respondents showed more migration trips than singles, people in “free partnerships” (*unión libre*) and widows (this is coherent with well-known findings; see Wiest, 1973; Portes, 2003).

To prevent multi-collinearity effects, the time- and family-related variables were treated separately or in subgroups. In general, four of the five time-related variables (except age at first US job) have a relatively high level of influence on the total number of trips (each of them roughly as high as the four individual-related variables put together). Of all the time-related variables, the age of the person surveyed at the moment of the interview influences the number of trips with a z-transformed regression coefficient of 0.19 and represents 3.6 per cent of the total determination on the number of trips. The cumulative total work time also correlates positively with the number of trips, which could be expected – the older a person and the more cumulative work time in general, the higher the probability of many migration trips. But in the case of the cumulative US work time, the correlation is inverse: those persons surveyed with long records of US work time tended to have taken fewer trips there. This reflects the weight of the extended stays in the United States. The same negative correlation applies to the age of the respondent upon entering the first job in the US, but in this case without statistical significance and with a low beta of 0.044; the younger the person upon entry, the more shifts between Mexico and the United States.

It is interesting to note that family-related variables have a strong correlation with the number of migrant trips; the sum of the four correlation coefficients is more than double the correlation coefficient in the case of the four individual related variables. The education level of the father and migration of the spouse and children correlate negatively with the number of trips (i.e. the lower the father level of education, the higher the number of trips undertaken by the respondent, while the father’s migration raises the probability of a high frequency of crossings being exhibited by the respondent). If the respondent is the primary contributor to the household income, the probability is higher that the respondent will cross the border frequently. These results are coherent with general migration findings, especially with qualitative data from rural Mexican migrants’ household strategies (Conway and Cohen, 2003) and with transnational families’ strategies (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). Besides the person-related variables which could explain in part the number of migration trips, where the number of cases by definition is limited to the number of persons surveyed (n=648) there are the job-event-based variables where the number of cases is much higher because each person interviewed indicated a mean of 4.7 job spells.

TABLE 5
JOB-EVENT-BASED VARIABLES

Dimension	Independent variable	Beta*	Relative weight	R**	R ²
5a. Work-related: all jobs (n=1,037, CATREG)	Occupation	.169	23.8	.377	.142; significant at 99%; toler. coefficient >0.79
	Business location	-.091	8.0		
	Number of employees	-.056	0.5		
	Relation to employer	.097	7.4		
	Contract type	0.51	2.3		
	Colleagues' region of origin	.096	6.2		
	Source for information for entry	.210	35.6		
	Wage difference from former job	.028	0.8		
	Who made decision to change	0.67	3.0		
	Reason for change	-.997	8.0		
	Weekly hours	.071	4.4		
5b. Work-related; only US jobs (n=905)	Employer's ethnicity	.171	22.3	.379	.144; significant at 99%; toler. coefficient >0.98
	Legal status	.085	3.6		
	Help in housing	.047	1.2		
	1st destination remittances	.268	54.5		
	2nd destination remittances	.159	18.4		

Note: *Beta=z-transformed regression coefficient; **Multiple R (for categorical independent variables) and R (for numeric independent variables).

Analysing the dimension of work-related variables (Table 5), the number of cases increases above 1,000 for all jobs and to n=905 for the valid values of job variables that only apply to jobs in the United States (see variables in section 5b of Table 5). Each of the two subdivisions of variables (5a and 5b) explains little more than 14 per cent of the variations in the total number of respondents' trips. Considering the z-transformed regression coefficient (beta) of each variable and their relative weighting in the overall multiple regression coefficient of the

subdivision of all jobs (5a), the following two variables had a relatively high relevance for explaining the number of migrant trips: “occupation” (manual work in industry lowers the probability of many trips being taken, while work in restaurants, hotels, and commerce increases the probability) and “source of information leading to the job” (the number of trips increases as the weight of information provided by family and friends decreases).

The questionnaire included some variables related particularly to the work situation in the United States that do not apply to the respondent’s jobs in Mexico (like migration status, etc.; see section 5b of Table 5). These variables contribute almost 14 per cent to the explanation of the variation of the number of respondents’ border crossings. The share of employers in the United States who originate from the same community or region as the respondent decreases with the total number of trips undertaken by the person surveyed and, at the same time, the probability of non-Latino immigrant employers increases with the number of border crossings. Help finding housing provided by family members and friends decreases with the number of migrant trips, but the relative weight of this variable is low. The same is – surprisingly – true for legal status, which has no significant correlation with the number of respondents’ trips. As the number of movements between Mexico and the United States increases, the most and second most frequent recipients of remittances shifts from parents to spouses and children, and these two variables (most and second most important receivers of remittances) represent three-quarters of the overall variance in Table 5. Thus, family networks are very important for organizing the movement between the two countries (travel, job searches, housing). Family-, time-, and work-related variables best explain the number (and also the duration) of migrant trips. Among all work-related variables, those that intersect with familial matters (reasons for changing jobs or destination of remittances) explain most of variation in number of migrant trips.

Some of the older, less-qualified persons with a large migration trajectory are frequent border crossers. They normally seek manual work in industry and construction – the classic case of labour migration between Mexico and the United States. However, younger persons with a higher level of education entering the labour market (even those beginning their first job at a higher age) seek jobs in the service and commercial sectors, and some of them enter into the transmigration pattern early. For transmigrants, the decision to migrate is normally made by the household and family. Migration is neither planned as long-term definitive emigration nor as short-term seasonal recurrent migration, but as a middle term and open ended stay “at the other side”. Decisions are made collectively and sequentially in the sense that a new situation (in work, in the household, etc.) can cause a new migration decision.

For some migrants, border crossings (dangerous and expensive ones covering long distances) that lead to employment elsewhere, followed by a return and renewed consideration of repeating the experience are part of a complex transnational life and household strategy. Obviously, a number of the migrants surveyed would have preferred to live in Mexico and work in the United States. Is this just a transitory phenomenon on the road to complete immigration or return migration? Our findings suggest that transmigration will be a durable and increasingly important part of international migration. The following example of the transnational family of Doña Rosa is not representative but instructive in terms of the underlying logics of transnational household and family strategies.

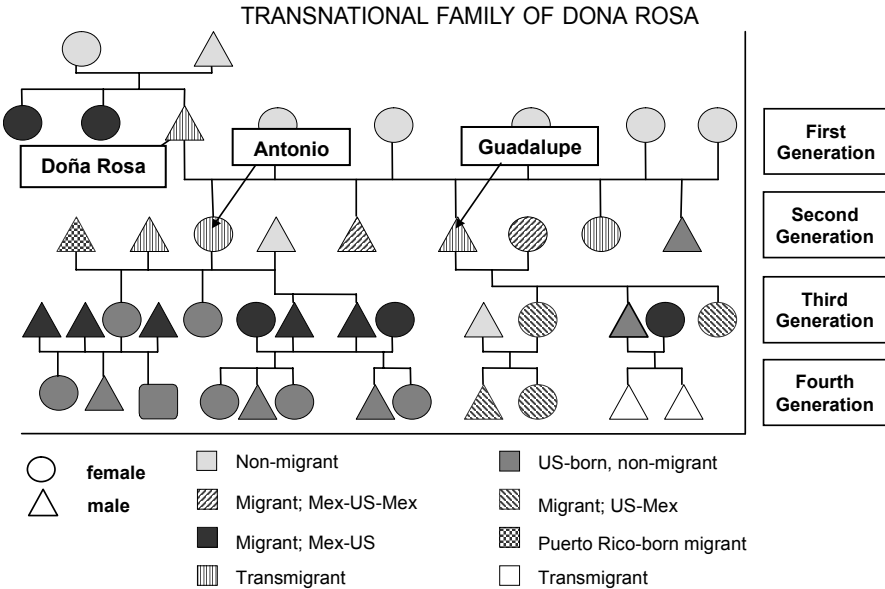
THE TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY OF DOÑA ROSA: TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY STRATEGIES AND THE QUESTION OF DURABILITY

The qualitative interview material provides an important means of contextualizing the quantitative data findings. A good example of the existence of transnational social spaces and life structures is the transnational family of Doña Rosa, a 70-plus-year-old household head of a complicated and transnational clan structure, from which five persons belonging to different generations were interviewed (see Figure 1 and Herrera, 2001). One part of the family network lives in the United States (mainly in the NYC region), another part lives in Mexico (mainly in the Mixteca Poblana region), and many family members move back and forth between the two sides during the course of their lives. For instance, one woman, Maria Luisa, crossed the border from Mexico once because she was *soltera con hija* – an unmarried mother. She left her daughter with her parents and went to NYC to earn money, but then returned to live and work in Mexico for a while. When asked which region or place she considered her homeland she replied, “My homeland is where my family is” and refused to predict precisely where she would and wanted to grow old. Outside a formal social welfare and security system, the wider family clan is its functional equivalent – and it spans from Puebla up to NYC.

Maria Luisa’s is a typical example of a life lived between two countries. Knowing both sides of the border, she – as well as the majority of her family network – will admit to having certain advantages and disadvantages in both Mexico and the United States. Some of her brothers or sisters probably will become “good US citizens” and integrate themselves in NYC as immigrants (with multiple or fragmented identities). Others will feel more like Mexicans and return (or try to return) to their region of origin. But Maria Luisa will not be able to decide. If her relatives argue that she has to decide and develop a clear strategy, that she “should know where she belongs”, Maria Luisa will reply that “none of us is

forced to decide between either his/her father and his/her mother so why should I be forced to decide between Mexico and the United States?"

FIGURE 1



Source: Elaborated by Fernando Herrera; adapted by Ludger Pries.

This standpoint could be interpreted as the outcome of a cautious life strategy of not forcing things. Perhaps it emerged because Maria Luisa tried to become a good US citizen and felt that her internalized Mexican history and culture were stronger, or because she failed to integrate herself for several reasons. In sum, frequent border crossing could be an indicator of intended but failed immigration, but it also could be an indicator of transnational life strategies and organizing life in pluri-local transnational social spaces, instead of in social spaces that are bound to a single territory or place.

The family of Doña Rosa (for more details see Herrera, 2001) is definitely a very particular, rather than representative, case. Nonetheless, it makes some general issues very obvious. In transnational migration contexts it is very difficult to define a household or family unit as the clear point of reference for analysis. Cohen (2001) analysed transnational migration “as a stage specific and predictable process influenced by macroeconomic forces and local economic trends and practices [whereby] the choice to migrate is rooted in household decision making and in response to the development cycle of the domestic group” (Cohen, 2001: 955). Conway and Cohen (2003) proposed a complex household

negotiating model to understand the dynamics of remittances sending practices. Though the empirical findings discussed earlier confirm most of their arguments, the case of Doña Rosa shows that social and family networks are often so complex that it is almost impossible to identify clearly distinct household units where decisions are taken.

In the case of Doña Rosa, each of her daughters and sons made his/her decisions on migration in the context of primary kinship relations. However, social units belonging to Doña Rosa's broader clan network made decisions in NYC that had direct implications for other social units in the same place or in the Mixteca-Poblana region. Even during the short period of our data collection (three years) the composition of many households in the Mexican and NYC research regions changed substantially. In some cases the head of the household changed (from one generation or gender to another). In other cases the main economic contributor to the household shifted. In other cases still the number and composition of the active and inactive household members changed considerably. Wiest (1973) distinguished between three different types of households (conjugal family, extended family, female headed household), and it seems that transnational migration in general leads to a differentiation of household composition and interrelation between locally bounded households. In the special case of Mexico the social institution of *compadrazgo* (a kind of socially generated godparent or sponsor relationship; see Nutini and Bell, 1989; Pries, 1997) complicates the family and household structures and widens the options and possibilities for transnational migration.

In order to relate the qualitative case of Doña Rosa to the survey data, Table 6 indicates the composition of the household the persons surveyed had lived in during the course of their lives. To avoid complicating the data presentation, only the first six places of residence are presented – the maximum indicated was 14. They are divided into locations in the United States and Mexico (as the “I don't know” and “no answer” options are not listed in Table 6, numbers for the first place of residence do not add up to 648). Even in the first place of residence, quite complex household compositions could be found: 161 of the 601 respondent residents in Mexico indicated at least three of the different groups listed in Table 6 as having lived in their first household; 34 mentioned four different groups. The first US trip (US numbers in the “second place of residence” column) normally led to accommodation with “others”. But even here there are very complex household constellations: 22 respondents indicated that at least three of the listed groups, that is, at least two different kinds of family relatives lived with them during their first stay in the United States. Over the course of the migration/residency trajectory, kinship relations became more important for the composition of households during stays in the United States.

TABLE 6
COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING
TO SEQUENCE OF PLACE OF RESIDENCE (POR)*

	1st POR		2nd POR		3rd POR		4th POR		5th POR		6th POR		Total
	Mex.	US	Mex.	US	Mex.	US	Mex.	US	Mex.	US	Mex.	US	
Grand-parents	72	0	9	8	11	2	4	0	3	0	1	0	110
Parents	596	3	40	14	262	3	21	8	57	0	7	0	1,011
Sisters	482	2	66	41	211	27	24	52	48	10	8	14	985
Parents-in-law	0	0	3	43	3	3	4	1	4	2	2	0	65
Partner	85	0	18	43	57	11	19	23	27	8	9	6	306
Children	85	0	7	17	76	6	8	10	27	6	8	4	254
Others	38	0	87	357	47	53	27	131	14	17	5	32	808
Respondents	601	3	164	410	416	75	78	170	146	28	27	47	

Note: *Multiple answers, without "no answer/I don't know".

While in the second place of residence 87 per cent respondents lived with "others", only 68 per cent did so in the sixth place of residence. Conversely, while only 41 per cent of respondents mentioned the presence of family members in the second place of residence, 51 per cent mentioned their presence in the sixth place of residence. In the sixth place of residence (US), eleven of 47 (or 23%) respondents had at least two different groups residing with them, and three respondents (6%) indicated the presence of three groups. At the same time, in the sixth place of residence (Mexico), eleven of 27 respondents (41%) mentioned the presence of at least two groups, and eight respondents (30%) had at least three groups living with them.

In general the following conclusions could be drawn: (1) the household structures of Mexican migrants are very complex in terms of the different kinship groups integrating them; (2) these household structures seem to be more complex in the Mexican regions than in the United States; (3) even in the United States there are still relatively complex household structures that tend to result in a stronger kinship composition in the residency trajectory; and – derived mainly from the qualitative data – (4) household structures vary strongly according to the dominant economic and social functions of at least three generations of direct kinship relations.

Figure 1 shows the potential durability of the transnational strategy over several generations. Of the twelve individuals in the fourth generation of Doña Rosa's transnational family (the only rectangle represents an unborn child and has to be neglected here), the majority (seven persons) could be considered US-born non-migrants, whereas two approach the ideal type of US-born migrants to Mexico and two others could be categorized as transmigrants. This is a clear signal that further research should take into consideration the durability and long-lasting patterns of transmigrants. The very fact that we often found transnational migration configurations in contexts of mature and settled migration processes underlines the possible durability of transmigration; transnational migration seems not to be just a temporary and passing phenomenon which is subsequently replaced by return migration or immigration. Rather, it is most probably a viable life strategy and option for some migrants which intersects with the life and household schemes of other parts of the migration flows. This is congruent with the argument developed by the "new economy of migration", which states that international migration is a convincing household strategy of risk diversification for coping with individual and collective uncertainties.

CONCLUSION

Our quantitative and qualitative data indicate that there is no common trajectory or pattern in the life courses to be derived from this study of Mexican labour migrants. Depending on a household's collective decisions and strategies, individual strategies, luck and period or cohort effects, sequential migration can lead to various outcomes. It can evolve into a typical emigration/immigration process; it can begin and end as a typical return migration process; it can begin as a typical return migration process and end in the decision to emigrate or adopt a transnational strategy. A family or household's initial migration event can lead to different outcomes for different parts or subgroups of families, leading, for instance, to successful immigration and incorporation in the United States for one part of the family, to successful return migration for a second part of the family, and to a transnational life over several generations (as in the case of Doña Rosa) for another part of the original family. Even successful immigration to the United States can, in the second or third generation, lead to some family members developing transnational migration strategies and projects. At the moment, the data basis seem too small for quantifying different patterns, generalizing special conditions for specific outcomes or even developing general "laws" of international migration.

The research suggests that the ideal type of transmigration comes nearer to the nature and dynamics of a part of migration reality than the other ideal types of

immigrants, return migrants, and recurrent migrants. Even if quantitative evidence remains scarce, the transmigrants' impact on the nature of the international migration process as a whole should not be underestimated. One group of Mexicans surveyed had already stayed for a longer period in the United States and had settled permanently in the NYC region; they can be labelled immigrants. Another group had stayed for a longer period of time in Mexico after their return and expressed no desire to cross the border again for work; they come close to the ideal type of return migrants. A third group of persons went for short periods of one year or less; they come close to the recurrent migrant ideal type. A fourth group (depending on the scope of the transmigrant concept applied, about one-fifth to one-tenth of the 648 persons interviewed) had taken a higher number of extended trips between the two countries, but most of these movements were neither the typical seasonal migration nor the typical short-distance border commuting; this form of migration spans thousands of miles between the sending areas and the NYC region and comes close to the ideal type of transmigration in the context of transnational family and household strategies.

Although the majority of work trajectories analysed exhibit familiar patterns, another group of migrants seems to be developing their life biographies and strategies neither exclusively in the receiving area (NYC) nor in the sending areas in their country of origin (Mexico). Their work and residential trajectories span two countries and several places. The time horizon of their life planning is not fixed and long term (i.e. "my life project for the next 20 years is to become a US citizen"); rather, it is sequential and focused on the short or medium term (i.e. "only God knows our destiny; I will plan the next two or three years and then see what to do after that"). Thanks to the dense transnational social space they are constructing and reconstructing they are able to move relatively easily between the two countries. Based on family ties, they get jobs in NYC; due to family needs and loyalty, they also move back to Mexico when pressured by the norms of the larger transnational social and family network.

These typical transmigrants had taken five or more trips during their work and migration trajectory. Each of their jobs normally lasted several years. The reasons for changing from one job to another (and often thereby moving from one country to the other) were characterized as "voluntary". It is remarkable that problems with legal status, dismissals, or bankruptcy represented only about one-tenth of all reasons given for changing jobs. This was surprising because the vast majority of employment activities occurred without formal permission to work and reside in the United States, i.e. those interviewed had worked as *indocumentados* (Pries, 1996, 1998, 2001a). The individual and collective biographical life projects, everyday life as well as the life trajectory as a sequence of places of residence span different geographic spaces.

To speak of transmigrants is not to idealize the often precarious situation of international migrants. Transmigrants are not the new sovereign cosmopolitans who move freely and voluntarily between different locales, places and opportunities without problems. Transmigrants adapt themselves to uncertain and unpredictable situations, learn to manage risks and to live with them, accumulate cultural and social capital (Espinosa and Massey, 1997; Palloni et al., 2001), and pay high transaction costs in and between two countries. As far as residency and work are concerned, their life planning is not fixed and long term, but sequential and focused on “exploiting opportunities”. The transmigrants are not free to define the conditions in which they act. But the horizon of realizable actions and expectations is not limited either to the region of departure or to the region of arrival, but spans between and over them.

Transmigrants and transmigration are theoretical-analytical ideal types, not actual empirical figures. Some empirical evidence of the “explanatory force and fruitfulness” of this ideal type can be found already in the history of international migration (Smith, 2001). Yet, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this new ideal type seems absolutely necessary in order to understand and explain current social reality effectively. The classic types of migrants (immigrants, return migrants, recurrent migrants, and diaspora migrants) are no longer sufficient. In reality, the phenomena addressed by the new ideal type of transmigrants are not necessarily exclusive to that type, but probably triggered by phenomena already observable in the other ideal types of migrants. However, without enlarging the conceptual framework to include recognition of pluri-local social spaces, we will probably lose touch with a growing part of the reality of migration and, thus, be unable to sufficiently understand and explain it.

Transmigration, insofar as it presents an increasingly viable alternative to the more recognized forms of migration (immigration, return migration, recurrent migration, and diaspora migration), could have far-reaching social and political consequences for nation states that still formulate migration policies based only on the classic categories. With transmigration, the nation states lose control over “their” territories. But to what extent could and should they try to regain it? What effect could transmigrants, as compared to immigrants, have on notions of “social integration” or “social adaptation”? Much of the globalization debate of the last decade has focused on the emerging economic, cultural, and political aspects of transnational dynamics, and on the structures of businesses as well as public and non-profit organizations. Transmigration makes us aware of a new “transnationalism from below”¹⁰ that is being constructed by decentralized and barely visible social practices, symbolic systems, and artefacts belonging to millions of private social actors. Can and should new governance structures be developed for transmigrants, like global or pluri-national citizenship or global or

pluri-national courts of justice? Finally, transmigration raises questions about social development: (How) Can transnational social spaces be used for political democratization, regional socio-economic development, and transnational social justice and solidarity? In order to adequately address these and other pressing issues, further research and debates are required.

NOTES

1. I appreciate the long and creative debates with my colleagues Fernando Herrera and Saúl Macías and give thanks to Doug Massey and the members of the Mexican Migration Programme at the University of Pennsylvania for fruitful discussions, and to Jennifer Elrick for her critical reading and suggestions on content and language. The anonymous reviewers made substantial comments and suggestions to a previous version – I appreciate the fruitful virtual cooperation but feel completely responsible for all errors this article might include.
2. In 1995, the local Puebla Radio Network FM 105.3 broadcast a very interesting series of song testimonies written and composed by Pueblan migrants in New York, which was elaborated on in New York by Enriqueta Silva, Óscar López, and Carlos Arellano.
3. In order not to complicate references here, we include this Tlaxcaltecan area when speaking of the migration taking place between Puebla and New York.
4. In their two-fold sampling strategy, Portes et al. (2002: 282f) use census data in order to define city blocks in which a systematic random sampling of dwellings would be possible. But due to data restrictions they had to use 1990 census information for a survey conducted in 1998, which is a large time lapse for a rapidly changing population. For our context, official United States and Mexican census data have to be handled with caution because, by definition, they lack exact information on undocumented migrants. As in our survey, about nine-tenths of all US trips indicated were undocumented. Official accounts – more so if they date from a decade before – can not be accountable for representative estimates or sampling procedures.
5. The Mexican Migration Project at the University of Pennsylvania has collected data in more than 50 Mexican communities based on the principle of interviewing the head of household. The research includes several communities in Oaxaca and in Puebla, but the latter had not yet been analysed at the time of our data collection; see www.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig.
6. This is just a result of the sample definition: only persons who had had at least one job in the United States were eligible to participate in the survey.
7. Due to missing values – and our refusal to replace them by modes or other artificially produced values – an integrated overall model for the variables of all five dimensions would have reduced significantly the number of cases (to $n=344$, with an overall R^2 for the four dimensions of 0,241).

8. Thanks to the hint of one of the anonymous reviewers, it is worth noting that this does not mean that gender does not matter, but that the differences between male and female migrants did not appear as correlations. It might be that gender declines in importance as the number of movers from a place increases. For instance, a correlation on first moves only would show gender as significant or at least correlative of outcomes.
9. This and the following variables correlate significantly with the number of country shifts in a crosstabs-calculation at 99 per cent probability.
10. See the following: Smith and Guarnizo, 1999; Ong and Nonini, 1997; and related comments in Pries, 1999, 2001b.

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DÉTERMINER LES CAUSES ET LA DURABILITÉ DE LA MIGRATION TRANSNATIONALE DE MAIN-D'ŒUVRE ENTRE LE MEXIQUE ET LES ÉTATS-UNIS : QUELQUES RÉSULTATS EMPIRIQUES

Alors que s'étend le champ des études sur la migration transnationale, l'un des enjeux importants est d'élargir la recherche, de s'éloigner d'une démarche essentiellement qualitative prouvant l'existence du phénomène de la migration transnationale, et ce dans le but de quantifier cette migration et d'analyser sa dynamique interne et ses interrelations avec d'autres types (idéaux) de migrations. L'article s'appuie sur une étude qualitative et quantitative empirique de (trans)migrants se déplaçant entre Puebla (Mexique) et la région de New York, étude qui porte sur la vie et la trajectoire professionnelle de 648 personnes ainsi que sur des entretiens avec environ 40 migrants mexicains. L'article présente le nombre de voyages comme indicateur important de la migration transnationale (même si cette dernière pourrait surtout relever d'une perception subjective et constituer une pratique sans qu'il y ait pour autant de déplacement physique constant entre les pays). Dans le but d'établir l'existence empirique du phénomène de la transmigration, une typologie a été développée, qui permet de distinguer différents types de migrants, et appliquée aux migrants mêmes qui ont fait partie de l'étude. Se trouve analysée l'influence de facteurs personnels, familiaux et de facteurs liés au temps, à l'emploi et à l'entourage sur leur processus de prise de décision et le nombre de voyages entre pays. Les résultats empiriques seront complétés par des entretiens qualitatifs pour présenter le cas d'une famille dont l'organisation est transnationale. Cette étude de cas sert en premier lieu à démontrer que la recherche sur les stratégies de décision des foyers de transmigrants est rendue complexe par l'existence de réseaux sociaux et familiaux, d'où la difficulté de clairement cerner des foyers individuels. En second lieu, elle aborde la question de la durabilité du phénomène de la transmigration et montre que des stratégies transnationales peuvent être adoptées par des membres d'une famille sur plusieurs générations, en fonction de leurs besoins et envies qui changent au fil du temps.

DETERMINANDO LAS CAUSAS Y DURABILIDAD DE LA MIGRACIÓN
LABORAL TRANSNACIONAL ENTRE MÉXICO Y LOS ESTADOS
UNIDOS: ALGUNOS RESULTADOS EMPÍRICOS

Si bien los estudios sobre la migración transnacional están en plena expansión, cabe el desafío de ampliar la investigación para encarar, desde una perspectiva cualitativa, la existencia del fenómeno de migración transnacional con miras a cuantificar la migración transnacional y conceder mayor atención a analizar las dinámicas y relaciones internas con otros tipos (ideales) de migración. Este estudio, basado en un estudio empírico cualitativo y cuantitativo de (trans)migrantes que van desde Puebla (México) a la ciudad de Nueva York, se centró en la vida y trayectorias laborales de 648 personas y se realizaron entrevistas biográficas a unos 40 migrantes mexicanos. Por tanto, el artículo se centra en analizar y explicar el número de viajes como indicador importante de la migración transnacional (incluso si la transmigración puede ser predominantemente una percepción subjetiva y práctica sin un movimiento físico constante entre los países). A fin de establecer la existencia empírica del fenómeno de la transmigración, se ha establecido una tipología para distinguir a los distintos migrantes, y se ha aplicado a aquéllos que formaron parte de esta encuesta. También se ha analizado la influencia de los factores personales, familiares, de época, trabajo y comunidad en el proceso de toma de decisiones y en el número de viajes al país. Los estudios empíricos se han completado mediante entrevistas cualitativas para presentar el caso de la familia organizada transnacionalmente. Este estudio por casos sirve para demostrar primero, que los estudios sobre las estrategias de toma de decisiones de hogares transmigrantes son complicados dada la complejidad de las redes sociales y familiares que impiden identificar fácilmente a los hogares; segundo, para ayudar a encarar la cuestión de la durabilidad de la transmigración al demostrar las estrategias transnacionales que pueden adoptar los familiares de diversas generaciones, que dependen de las necesidades y deseos cambiantes de las personas.