
LABOUR REINSERTION OF MIGRANTS RETURNING TO GUANAJUATO, MÉXICO

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ABSTRACT

Attention on migratory processes in Mexico have generally been focused towards the origin, transit, and destination of its migrants. However, return migration has recently taken a privileged role in the literature. Over the last decade, the stagnant American economy and the implementation of stricter control policies has discouraged, to some extent, the migratory flows and an increase in migrant return has been recorded. The above does not a minor issue, migrants may face serious difficulties upon reintegration. A general panorama of work allows us to argue that the majority of migrants that return to Guanajuato are found in a disadvantageous socioeconomic situation with respect to the rest of the population, which indicates that their reinsertion into their place of origin tends to be complicated. This research is based on the results of the Population and Housing Census, 2010.

Keywords: Socioeconomic conditions, return migration, reinsertion.

1. Introduction and background

Research into contemporary migratory processes, both theoretical and empirical, emphasize not only the changes that occur but also their permanence and complexity. International migration, in particular, as well as all movements in general, are part of a transnational revolution that is upsetting societies around the globe. We find that long-term migration has survived new modalities that surge as a consequence of the new patterns of accumulation, the ups and downs of economic changes, transformations in science and technology, new modes of communication and transport, political struggle, violent conflicts, religious or ethnic persecution, the war on drugs, meteorological events, climate change, and environmental degradation, among others. Therefore, the analysis of the causes and consequences has become complex in both countries of origin and destination.

Mexico is one of the countries that generates the largest numbers of migrants in the world. Practically all of Mexico's migrants moved to the United States. It is a century-old tradition that has constructed one of the most dynamic contemporary migratory systems. Borjas and Katz (2005) affirm that Mexican immigrants have formed the most numerous groups of immigrants across the 20th Century in the United States. This systematic and continuous wave has left a fortune of possibilities to understand the migratory phenomenon from all angles. Although return migration has been a parallel phenomenon to leaving migration, it has awoken greater academic interest in recent years, and also in government circles due to the conjuncture of the economic crisis, closing borders, exacerbation of anti-immigrant feelings, deportations, and concerns of possible mass returns.

Beyond the conjunctures, return migration has proven to be a fascinating phenomenon for many communities and regions of origin due to what it implies in all aspects of its dynamic. Fernández (2011) affirms that in contrast to leaving migration, research on returning migration is a relatively recent sub-discipline (barely a century in existence). However, outstanding theoretical and empirical works have been undertaken. Since the 1960s, pioneers of studies on return migration attempted to inquire from a theoretical point of view, the methodological complexity that encloses and the construction of the first typologies (Sjaastad, 1962; Appleyard, 1962; Goldstein, 1964).

In a literature review, Fernández (2011) affirms that in the 1970s and 80s interest in return migration was still stark. However, there were some revelatory investigations, due to the inertia of the theoretical-methodological contributions of the academic predecessors. Moreover, the field began to expand beyond the boundaries of Europe. Global studies now predominate, and research is profiled as more punctual and concrete. We also establish that in the 1990s there was a significant blossoming of studies of return. The quantity, as well as special and thematic diversity, can be observed in this decade. Academics were concerned about discovering the historical roots, ethnic undertones, gender differences, investment of savings, and the economic behaviour of the returned migrant, cultural repercussions and family environment, as well as case studies at the macro level. Finally, upon analysing the literature on return migrants at the dawn of this century, there is a notorious increase in research. In this regard, new topics on return arise, such as women, children, businesspeople, and mental illness, among others.

In recent years, the subject is still occupying a very prominent position. Nir Cohen (2013) affirms that return migration has been called "the largest unwritten chapter in the history of migration". Consequently, in recent decades, it has become a relevant issue in public political agendas. The growing interest for return as a political tool has been attributed to various factors, including an increase in the volume of return migrants

and policies of repatriation from destination countries, as well as voluntary movements to countries of origin or third countries. Another reason is to take maximum advantage of the wealth of skills and experiences of the returnees who, as Dustmann, Fadlon, and Weiss (2011) affirm, add their individual capacities in terms of productive strengths. Therefore, various countries have channelled programs to attract some of their migrants back from abroad.

In this regard, Jonkers and Cruz-Castro (2013) analyse the effect of returning highly qualified migrant researchers on the formation of networks, and the capacity of innovation in their country of origin. Moreover, they compare those who return to those who remained in Argentina. Dai, Liu, and Xie (2014) study the concept of *Brain Drain Reversal* in China, which refers to the phenomenon in which highly qualified individuals return to their place of origin in developing countries, having been in highly developed nations. The researchers expose the difficulties that individuals have faced for obtaining well-paid work, which inhibits their return. Rénat (2014) analyses the migratory behaviour of young university graduates from a rural region in Switzerland. The labour market is not the only variable to decide whether or not to return; other factors are even more important such as the type of home, educational level, region of origin, family roots, as well as the socioeconomic status, and the history of migration.

From a political ecological-feminist standpoint, Ge, Resurrección, and Elmhirst (2011) analysed the impact that returning migrants have on the environment and caring for water in China. It is important to highlight that in this work we observe that return migrants bring knowledge, skills, and relationships accumulated abroad with them, making the introduction of new forms of leadership and community action possible.

In a study of Egypt, Bertoli, and Marchetta (2013) establish that migrants in countries with a strong democratic tradition promote values of their countries of origin upon their return, besides positively impacting business acumen and even a reduction in fertility. Chauvet and Mercier (2014) analysed the case of Mali and explore the link between return migration and political-electoral results, where they show that there is a decisive impact in areas of greater activism.

Marchetta (2012) shows that international migrants in Egypt have a high propensity for entrepreneurial activity when they return. Return migrants have more possibilities to survive as entrepreneurs when compared to non-migrants. Another study on China (Vera, Revilla, and Schatzl, 2013) reaches the same conclusions and considers that return migrants are more likely to be linked to entrepreneurial activity.

As may be appreciated in the literature analysed, the problem of reinsertion in its many guises occupies a very prominent place in the analysis of migrants who return to their places of origin. Therefore, in this work we propose an inquiry into the socio-economic situation of return migrants in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, which may offer insight into the characteristics of reinsertion. We hypothesise that due to the years of absence, and the knowledge, habits, expertise, and labour skills that migrants have acquired, which are often incompatible with the dynamic of the place of origin, upon return the majority find themselves in a position of disadvantage with respect to the rest of the population.

2. Method

In this paper we present an exploratory analysis of the situation of returned migrants in the State of Guanajuato, based on demographic and statistical methods. All the results are our own calculations and estimations of microdata of the census sample of 2010 (Muestra Censal, 2010) undertaken by the Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística (National Institute of Geography and Statistics, INEGI). The public character of the data – open access to an electronic portal of said institute- and that the estimation techniques are standardised, allows us to reproduce the results that enable us to reflect on the issues dealt with in this work.

In terms of the operability of the variables used for the analysis of the information, in this work we consider “return migrants” as those persons who were counted in the 2010 Guanajuato census and who declared to be residing in the United States in 2005. The definition is underpinned in the question on place of residence “5 years ago, in June 2005, in what State of the Republic or in which country were you living?” We should clarify that due to the design of the census questions, we only consider those migrants who were residing in the United States in said month, therefore, it does not identify all returned migrants. For example, if the individuals lived prior to or later than June 2005 in the United States, but not specifically at that time, or if they made multiple movements but in the corresponding month resided elsewhere, they would not be registered as a return migrant under this criterion.

In this way, the number of persons sampled that fulfilled the criteria for inclusion were 5,559. The expanded sample, through the value assigned to each person selected with a determined weight as a function of the representativeness of other similar cases. We found 73,800 cases, which could be considered the amount, or at least the minimum number of returned migrants in the state.

3. Labour reinsertion of returned migrants in Guanajuato

In 2010, the structure by ages of individuals that return to Mexico corresponded to the characteristic pattern of international migration, where the number of migrants reaches its greatest number in active ages and progressively decreases towards advanced ages (Rogers and Castro, 1984). In this structure, as may be appreciated in Figure 1, there is a substantial flow of children between 5 and 9 years of age, who generally accompany their parents in the migratory process. Despite recent trends that point towards an increase in female migration with their own migratory projects, as has been documented in the literature (Castles and Miller, 2004), in the case of return migration to the state of Guanajuato, men are greater in magnitude in practically all age groups.

In terms of socioeconomic conditions, we should note that migrants returning to Guanajuato are found to be at a disadvantage in all selected indicators. For some variables, the divides are more pronounced than in others. However, it is constant, in general terms, their less prosperous socioeconomic situation. The selected indicators are related to their labour situation and position at work, work benefits, monthly income from work, and other income derived from government support programs, besides indicators on such as medical services and education.

The labour aspects that may offer a global panorama of the socio-economic situation of returned migrants and their relative position with respect to the rest of the population of the place of origin. Employment tends to be a barometer for the quality of life of individuals and households. An adequate labour situation increases the likelihoods of accessing public services, being integrated into systems of social protection, and

having greater educational and cultural services, among others. In the case of migrants who return to Guanajuato we may observe one of the highest proportions of unemployed persons²¹. While 2.8 percent of the population in Guanajuato was unemployed, in the case of persons residing in the United States in 2005, this value increased to 7.1 percent (See Table 1).

In addition to Table 1, which compares the labour position that may be considered an indicator of the quality of work. It is possible to observe some coincidences among groups of the population selected. In terms of the proportion of employers or workers who are self-employed, we do not find significant differences between returned migrants and the rest of the population. A sector of returned migrants (23.0%) have had the initiative to start their own productive projects. However, this brings us to the attention of the difference between those who are labourers or temporary workers 18.2% of those who return from the United States, while only 6.7 % of the rest of the population have this occupation.

Table 1. Guanajuato: labour indicators selected according to place of residence in 2005 (percentages)

Labour situation		
	United States	Guanajuato
Employed	64.6	48.4
Unemployed	28.3	48.8
Seeking work	7.1	2.8
	100.0	100.0
Work situation		
	United States	Guanajuato
Employed or working	43.1	59.4
Labourer	18.2	6.7
Assistant	7.0	4.9
Boss or employer	2.2	3.2
Self-employed	23.0	22.3
Unpaid family worker	6.5	3.5
	100.0	100.0

Source: own estimations based on census simple data, INEGI, Muestra Censal 2010 (microdatos).

²¹*Unemployed population.* Persons 12 or older in the week of reference seeking work because they were not linked to an economic activity or job. Definition of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. Glosario del Censo de Población y Vivienda. Recuperada de <http://www.inegi.org.mx> [5/nov/2014].

It is likely that the disadvantageous situation and position of returned migrants is impacting the body of income. In general terms, in the case of Guanajuato, income reported in the population census may be considered as low. Moreover, remuneration for migrants are even more precarious. In summary, Figure 2 shows the average income by work, which reached 4,842 pesos for residents of Guanajuato and reduces to 4,489 pesos for those who lived in the United States. Another indicative piece of information is the percentage of non-remunerated workers. In other words, who realized work activities without receiving income: among the returned migrants which reaches 13.7 percent, while the rest of the population is 7.3 percent.

Table 2. Guanajuato: monthly income by job according to place of residence in 2005 (Percentage)

Minimum monthly salaries	Pesos in 2010	United States	Guanajuato
Unsalaries	0	13.7	7.3
Less than 1,000	1 to 1,675	7.3	9.3
1,000 to 3,000	1,676 to 5,025	53.9	50.6
3,000 to 5,000	5,025 to 8,376	16.6	18.8
5,000 to 10,000	8,376 to 16,752	6	10.1
> 10,000	> 16,752	2.4	4
		100	100
	Monthly (Pesos)	4,489	4,842

Source: own estimations based on INEGI, Muestra Censal 2010 (microdatos).

Other sources of income reflected in the Population Census originate from government programs such as “Oportunidades” (Opportunities), “Procampo” (Pro-Country), and other kinds of scholarships and supports. In the case of the population that remained in the state of Guanajuato, close to 15% have income derived from this framework. In the case of individuals who returned from the United States, this value reduces to around 4 percent. Although social assistance programs tend to be limited to resolve only the socioeconomic problems of families, they do help to offset the immediate needs. However in the case of persons returning from the United States, these supports tend to be scarce.

One indicator of the quality of work are the benefits that employees receive such as Christmas bonus or paid vacations. Once again, in this rubric returned migrants are at a disadvantage. The data show a poor situation in general in the state of Guanajuato, where around half of the population do not have these benefits. However, the situation is even more critical for those who return from the United States: 72.8 percent do not receive a Christmas bonus, and 81.2 percent have no right to paid vacation (see Table 3).

Table 3. Guanajuato: population that receives labour benefits according to place of residence in 2005 (Percent)

	Christmas Bonus		Paid Vacations	
	United States	Guanajuato	United States	Guanajuato
Receives	27.2	54.3	18.8	44.8
Does not receive	72.8	45.7	81.2	55.2
	100	100	100	100

Source: own estimations based on INEGI, Muestra Censal 2010 (microdatos).

Another aspect is access to satisfactory health care. In this regard, almost half of returned migrants to the state of Guanajuato do not have a right to medical services. Only 12.5% belong to the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (Mexican Institute for Social Security, IMSS), or the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado (Institute of Safety and Social Services of the Workers of the State, ISSSTE). One success of the Mexican government has been to offer the possibility of accessing health services through Seguro Popular (Popular Insurance), for those who are not affiliated to IMSS nor to ISSSTE. A little more than a third of returned migrants have been able to access the services that this body of the Secretary of Health offers (see Figure 2).

Finally, a factor that may explain, in part, the social conditions of the population is education. In Guanajuato, both those who remained in the State of Guanajuato and those who resided at some time in the United States have a very limited school education. Among the first, 72.9% have a maximum level of studies as secondary school, while among returned migrants this value increases to 83.4%. In any case, it is evidence of the educational backwardness of the state.

Table 4. Guanajuato: last year of studies approved according to place of residence in 2005 (percentage)

	United States	Guanajuato
Primary or less	51.25	48.27
Secondary	32.16	24.61
High school or technical studies	12.11	14.35
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.48	12.77
	100	100

Source: own estimates based on, INEGI, Muestra Censal 2010 (microdatos).

4. Discussion

According to Durand, Massey, and Zenteno (2003), large scale migration to the United States started around 1900 when the railway penetrated the interior of Mexico and connected the trains system to the north of the border. Of the migrants, close to a third were from Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. The Central-Western region that became exposed to the greatest train traffic, and also where they paid the lowest salaries in the country at that time. This means of transport did not make the rise of a market at a national level that contributed to the appearance of new national economic geography, it also impacted like never before on the capacity of mobility of a population traditionally limited to their places of origin (Durand and Arias, 2005). With it began the formation of regions of origin and destination of Mexican migration to the United States. The process evolved from a distinctly regional phenomenon, to become in the last decades a phenomenon of national proportions, in terms of the country of origin and destination (Durand, 2007).

The regions of origin are historically formed from the roots of an initial recruitment of migrant workers and later entrenched with social, family, community, ethnic, and regional networks. The countries of origin were constructed based on the concrete demand for labour for a determined labour activity. After that, processes of population concentration were forged in specific zones until they created neighbourhoods or ethnic communities that were gradually consolidated due to personal networks or relationships (Durand, 2007).

Then, at the beginning of the 20th Century, we can determine that there was an ejection region of Mexico, the states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato, states that by the 1920s provided little more than 60% of the migrants to the United States (Gamio, 1991:31-32). Many are the factors that explain this migratory tradition of the zone. To start, this was a very populated zone, especially the Bajío and los Altos, which are very important urban zones and densely populated rural zones. The train communicated this region with the north of the country (Taylor, 1991), where crooks and contractors channelled migrants to regions of development in the United States. Given the historic character of international migration from Guanajuato, this state has become a privileged laboratory of observation of this phenomenon where it is clear that we see the tendencies and the tradition of migration and return in the neighbouring country to the north. In this regard, this research provides elements of analysis on the socioeconomic situation that returned migrants find themselves in.

A global appreciation of the results found in this work indicate that the majority of migrants that return to Guanajuato are found in a disadvantaged social situation with respect to the rest of the population. The above confirms the hypothesis of a difficult reinsertion and highlights, in which employment in general terms is precarious, which is reflected in low incomes, scarce benefits, and limited access to health services.

However, we should point out that a fourth of returned migrants are self-employed, or employers. This agrees with Marchetta (2012) who sustains, as already mentioned, that international migrants have a higher propensity to opt for entrepreneurial activity when they return.

This work leaves unanswered the question of what mechanisms impede many migrants from capitalizing on their knowledge and skills acquired in places of destination. Therefore, we must examine the segmentation that exists between the different subgroups. In this work, we analyse the returned migrants in a compact way, however, it is clear that reinsertion can have fewer shocks according to certain personal and social characteristics. The socioeconomic situation may be determined by age and sex of migrants, duration of stay and return, education, domestic and extra-domestic context, among others. Lines of investigation that are still pending include a more profound study based on *ad hoc* interviews that allow us to overcome the limitations of the census.

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