

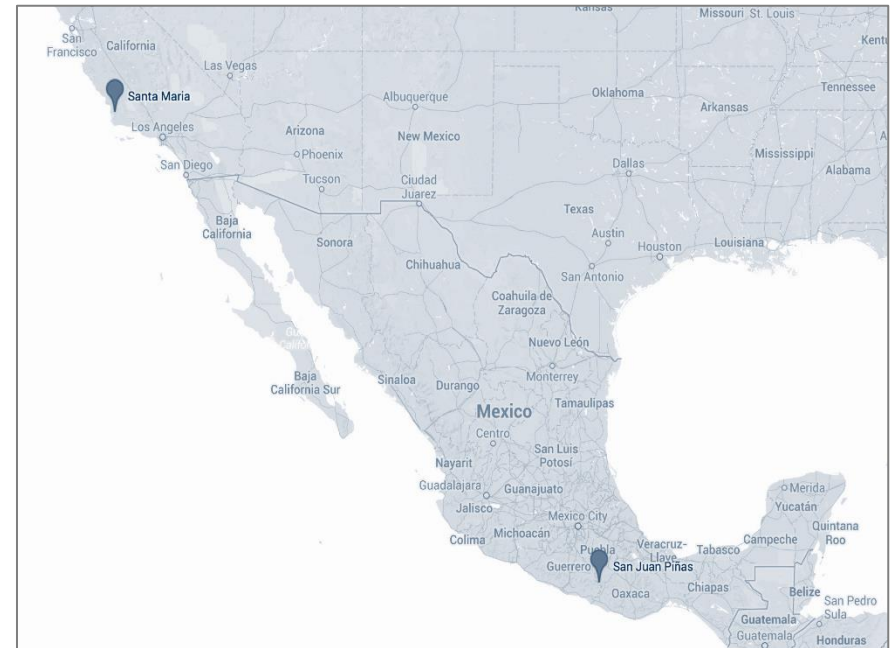
**‘The Roots are Here,  
but the Work is There’ –  
Indigenous Migration in an Era of  
Neoliberal Globalisation.**

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- › Initial findings of PhD fieldwork.
- › Indigenous [Mixteco] migrants.
- › Part of ‘Social Transformation and International Migration’ (STIM) Project.
- › Qualitative focus.
- › Primary research in San Juan Piñas (Oaxaca) and Santa Maria (California).
- › Collaboration with the Binational Front of Indigenous Organisations (FIOB).



## › STIM Project:

- Migration is one part of the process of transformation of structures and institutions, which arises through major changes in global political, economic and social relationships.

## › PhD project:

- Situate Indigenous migration as part of a wider process of social transformation.
- Uncover the developmental potential of migration for Indigenous migrants given the conditions under which it currently takes place.



## > Who is 'Indigenous'?

- Descend from the populations which inhabited the country before the [Spanish] colonization + maintain social, economic and political institutions + self-awareness.

## > Mixteco migrants:

- National -> international (newcomers).
- Social, demographic and economic characteristics vs. 'mestizo' Mexicans.



› Transformations in socioeconomic system.

- Growth of cash economy:

*'We need money. Without it we cannot buy the things we need... things like a stove or a fridge.'*

- Liberalisation of agriculture:

*'[A big problem is that] the price of coffee has gone down a lot. Before, you would get paid MX\$40 [per kg], now they pay only MX\$4.'*

- Structural lack of employment:

*'There is no money, nor jobs for anybody. And the jobs available are very badly paid!'*

› Social reproduction – inherently linked to emigration.

*'It is very complicated. The roots are here, but the work is there.'*



# Religious Change And Community Conflict

› Migration and religious change are intrinsically link in Indigenous communities.

- System of customary law requires fulfilment of religious [Catholic] tasks.
- Conversion led to community conflict and to eventual expulsion of converts.

*‘A lot of [Evangelical Christian] families were expelled from Piñas. I think that they expelled 23 families at first, then 9 more, then 4 more. That is one of the reasons why many people no longer go back.’*

› Social, political and economic impacts.



- › Increased restrictiveness of US policies.

*'The first time [in 1994] it took us 6 hours to cross the line. We walked without a 'coyote'... The last time I went back [to Piñas] was on 2002. On my way back I had to walk for 3 nights and I had to pay US\$800 to a 'coyote'... But now it is different. One has to walk 5 nights or more and pay around US\$3,500 to cross.'*

- › Transition towards permanent migration.
- › Vulnerability to deportations.
- › Lack of avenues for regularization.
  - E.g. DACA.
  - 'In the fields, you have no time to do anything. No time to study.'



- › Factors shape not only volume, but quality and developmental impact of migration.
- › Development impact of : contested and controversial.
- › ‘I do not have papers’.
  - Vulnerable to poor working conditions.  
*‘Without papers one cannot get any of the good jobs, without papers you cannot achieve anything.’*
  - Fear of ‘la migra’ and deportations.  
*‘People have been detained and deported, and their families are left here... Sometimes one cannot go out because of ‘la migra’. You cannot go out freely.’*
  - Emotional/economic cost of separation:  
*‘Even if they ask us to go back, we cannot do it. You are forced to choose between your children and your parents.’*





# Value (and Hopes) Placed in Children

- › ‘The hopes are in the children’,
  - Education and US citizenship as tools for social and economic mobility.  
*‘I am only here [in the US] for my children, so they can have an education and a good job. Maybe in an office, or as teachers. Not in the fields...’*  
*‘They have papers. They are free to come and go. . When they are older, they could get a [driving] license or even have a pension. They will be able to support us too.’*
- › Conundrum: ‘legacy’ of disadvantage.  
*‘Graduating from high school is a big achievement, attending college is a dream.’*



## › Factors shaping international migration:

- State policies (immigration, trade and agriculture) have an impact on the volume and shape of international migration -> low-skilled + irregular migration from Mexico's poorest regions.
- Other factors (religions conversions) have a significant impact too.
- Interconnection between changes at different geographical scales and the relationship between social, economic and political processes.
- Global change is experienced at the national and local levels.

## › Role of development in migration processes:

- Developmental impact of migration is affected by variety of inter-related factors: gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and immigration status.
- Need to look beyond the 'economic': complex, contextual and multi-dimensional.
- Richness of knowledge and experience of migrants and migrants relatives.

THE END

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STIM website:  
[http://sydney.edu.au/arts/transformation\\_migration/index.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/transformation_migration/index.shtml)

