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Mexico's Southern Border War Zone

Central American transit-migration in Mexico: Causes, policy implications and human rights



Bachelor Thesis

Maaïke van Buuren, 3978028

Utrecht University

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Supervisor: Jos Bierbooms

Table of Contents

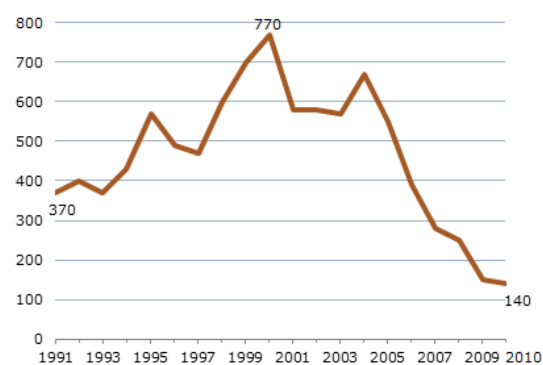
1. Introduction	2
2. Theoretical framework.....	4
3. Data Central American migrants.....	6
4. Causes of migration	9
Introduction.....	9
International causes.....	9
Intranational causes.....	13
Conclusion.....	16
5. Migration policy.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Mexican migration policies	18
Southern Border Plan	19
Interregional migration policies.....	22
6. Human rights.....	23
7. Conclusion & discussion	25
Conclusion	25
Discussion	27

1. Introduction

'War zone at the border: abuse of migrants in Mexico rises'. It is the title of a news article from The Guardian, 16 October 2015. The article tells the story of the reality that hundreds of thousands of migrants in Mexico have to deal with recently. It began with Mexico starting a campaign in July 2014 to combat illegal immigration from Central American countries to the United states, the so called Southern Border Plan. "Plan Frontera Sur [Southern Border Plan] has turned the Southern border region into a war zone," said Alberto Donis, managing director of the Hermanos en el Camino shelter, near the migrant stopping-point of Ixtepec in Oaxaca state. "Talk of human rights is a lie. Almost all of the migrants who arrive here have been abused by authorities."(The guardian, 2015). Victor Santos from El Salvador explained that Mexican agents in the state of Tabasco beat him and robbed 1000 dollar from him. Other migrants reported climbing trees and tying themselves up with belts so they could fall asleep without worrying about getting caught. (The guardian, 2015). In short does the article show that severe problems are going on concerning Central American migrants in Mexico and the lack of protection of their human rights. As this new policy is quite recent, there exists a lack of extended research on this topic.

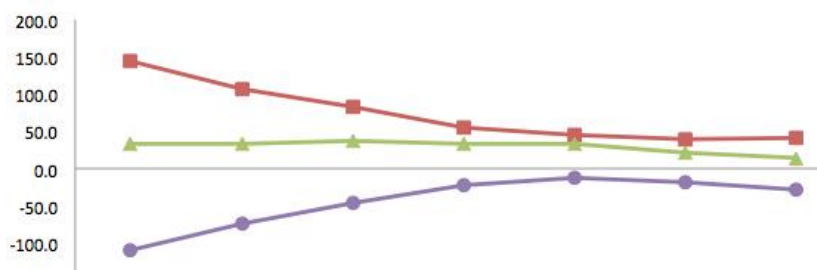
The phenomena of migration of Central Americans, including Mexicans, towards the U.S. is nothing new. However this migration flow is facing a process of transformation in the recent years. On the one hand did the flow of Mexican migrants towards the U.S. decline between 2000 and 2010, but on the other hand did the share of other Central American migrants trying to enter the U.S. increase. Whereas in 2000 an estimated 770.000 Mexicans entered the U.S., in 2010 this figure declined to the number of 140.000 Mexican migrants (Figure 1). Also the net migration from Mexicans into the United States approaches the 'zero net migration'. This means that, unlike antecedent years where more Mexicans were entering the U.S. than Mexicans returning to Mexico, nowadays there exist almost a balance between Mexicans leaving from Mexico to the U.S. and returning to Mexico from the U.S. (figure 2) (MPI, 2013). The other side of the story is that more and more other Central American migrants are captured while trying to enter the United States. Whereas in 2011 54.098 other-than-

Figure 1 Annual Immigration from Mexico to the U.S.: 1991-2000 (In thousands)



Source: Pew Research Center

Figure 2 New Migration Rate: Mexicans Leaving and Entering Mexico, Second Quarter Each Year 2006-12 (per 1,000)



Source: INEGI, 2012. Estimates based on Mexico's National Occupation and Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo, ENOE).

Mexican Central Americans were apprehended at the U.S. Border, this figure has almost tripled to 153.055 other-than-Mexican Central Americans in 2013. And in the 8 months starting from October 2013 until May 2014, already 162.751 other-than-Mexican Central Americans were apprehended (WOLA, 2014). Also the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) of the United States apprehended both relatively as absolutely more other-than-Mexican Central Americans in recent years, while the share of Mexican getting caught only got less and less (table 1).

Table 1. Apprehensions in the U.S. of migrants by country, and percentage of total apprehensions of all nationalities.

	2011	2012	2013
Mexico	517,472 (76%)	468,766 (70%)	424,978 (65%)
Guatemala	41,708 (6%)	57,486 (8%)	73,208 (11%)
Honduras	31,189 (5%)	50,771 (8%)	64,157 (10%)
El Salvador	27,652 (4)	38,976 (6%)	51,226 (8%)

Source: DHS, 2014

Although figures on migrants that didn't get captured are unknown, it is possible that the overall number of other-than-Mexican Central Americans did indeed also increase in recent years. This decline of Mexican migrants and increase of other Central American migrants towards the U.S. go hand-in-hand with a spatial shift of the migration process. This spatial shift means that a probably larger share of migrants trying to reach the U.S. has to cross two borders instead of one: The Southern Mexican border and the Mexico-U.S. border. This geographical shift also requires a scholarly shift concerning the topic of Central American migration towards the United States. While a lot of research is being conducted with a focus on migrants passing the Mexican-U.S. border, far less is known about the migrants' crossing the Southern Mexican border. In recent years security policies have been partly allocated geographically from the Northern to the Southern Mexican border, with for example the initiation on the Southern Border Plan. They did so to prevent these migrants from making this dangerous journey through Mexico, which is between 2000 and 4000 km. However less is known about the implications of these policies. In short a reanalysis is needed to understand the causes and consequences of this new pattern of Central American migrants in reach for the U.S.

In order to do so, this thesis will be divided in two parts. To start with an introductory chapter is devoted to describe contemporary scholarly debates about migration, in order to be able to understand the processes occurring in the field in the context of academic theories about migration. Thereafter the first part is concerned with statistical data about these Central American migrants and with the causes of migration. At the end of this first part an overview is being given on the interaction between different causes on different scales. In the second part the aspects of migration policies and human rights are integrated into this picture. It will be shown that migration policies try on the one hand to protect the human rights of migrants, and on the other hand they can be problematic for migrants. This is a consequence of territoriality; nation-states try to secure their territory by strengthening their borders, in order to keep unwanted outsiders out. Together these subdivisions will give an answer to the main question of this thesis:

Which are the causes for the recent transit-migration flows from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador in Mexico, and which role plays Mexico's migration policy in diminishing migration and securing human rights?

2. Theoretical framework

To get a notion of why people choose to allocate themselves from one place to another, and why to this place specifically, it's useful to understand what migration means in scholarly debates and how scholars explain the phenomena of migration. Firstly there are many different types of migrants. In the literature there exists a distinction between forced and voluntary migration. However it is difficult to distinguish between these two, as the reasons that people migrate exist on a continuum between forced and voluntary migration (Samers, 2010). In this thesis we will not discuss whether or not these migrants are really poor enough to be called forced migrants, because it is not the aim of this thesis to give an opinion about if we can *justify* this migration process, but rather to analyze the *motivations*. However it is useful to distinguish between migration for reasons of poverty or low wages, and migration of asylum-seekers and refugees, as recognized by international conventions (Samers, 2010). This study is about the first group, the so called 'economic migrants'. Though it is obvious that these so called economic migrants can also have other than economic motivations to leave their country, their situation is not severe enough to be able to get asylum. In other words is the political and social security situation in their home country not 'bad enough' on international standards to have the right to find shelter legally in another country. This study is concerned with these economic migrants as the US government did not grant refugee protection to a single person from Guatemala, Honduras or El Salvador in 2014 (U.S. Department of State, 2015). Within this study Guatemalan, Honduran and El Salvadoran are taken as case study, as it's shown in chapter 3 that they consist of 99% of the Central American migrants in Mexico.

Secondly there are many different forms of migration, but what we are concerned with in this case is international low-income migration. These migrants are undocumented, which means that they cross international borders without being detected by authorities (Samers, 2010). This means that it's also more difficult to understand individual motivations of their choice to migrate as these migrants are not registered and thereby 'invisible' until they get caught by authorities. It's also important to be aware of the fact that dichotomous distinctions in scholarly debates about migration like 'origin' and 'destination' no longer hold (Samers, 2010). This becomes explicit in the case of Mexico. As traditionally Mexico was a country of emigration and not of destination, nowadays it is both a country of emigration and immigration/transit. Another example is the distinction about 'temporary' and 'permanent' migration, as migrants who planned in first place to be permanent can become permanent migrants and the other way around (Faist, 2008). Again we can apply this concept to Mexico, as migrants who once thought about going to the U.S. permanently might now end up in Mexico temporary. However Hondurans reported that they only stayed on average about two weeks to one month in the U.S., and Guatemalans and Salvadorans spend normally less than a week in Mexico (MPI, 2012).

In this study we are looking at these Central American migrants that are heading towards the United States. We do so because the majority of the Central American immigrants who arrive in Mexican territory don't want to stay in Mexico, but rather continue their journey toward the United States. They go to the U.S. in hope for a better life that has not been found in their own country (Munoz, 2014). In the chapter on causes of migration therefore the U.S. will be considered as the country of 'destination' and data on the economic situation of the U.S. will be used rather than the economic

situation of Mexico. However, the chapters about migration policies and human rights will deal with the situation in Mexico as this is the geographical area where the migrants experience most difficulties.

Finally the concept of 'territoriality' is important if we talk about international migration. Territorially-defined borders and immigration regulations do much to impede mobility, but at the same time they also create migration. Without borders there wouldn't exist illegal migration. At the same time borders are not fixed for eternity, but rather fixed for moments. In this moments these borders of territories have effects on migrants, and migrants have effects on the flexibility of borders. The best example of this are the strict international borders and migration policies. They exist to have a deterrent effect on migration, but in practice migrants don't stay back because of these policies, which in turn drives worried governments to reinforce borders further (Samers, 2010). In short are territories dynamic, not fixed, and re-shaped by migrants themselves through structures, social networks and institutions. Throughout this thesis it will become clear that 'territoriality' is very problematic for migrants, as this means that illegal migrants are undesirable, and therefore nations strengthen their borders to keep these people out.

3. Data Central American migrants

To understand the process of migration of Central Americans to Mexico, first we have to look at the data available about these migrants. Where do they come from, where do they go, and most importantly; why do they migrate? As these migrants are illegal migrants, it is impossible to figure out the exact numbers and characteristics of these migrants. However, by looking at the characteristics of migrants being caught and eventually deported to their home country, we get an idea of the composition of migrants' characteristics.

The probability of people from different Central American nations to move beyond borders is influenced by the distance or proximity to the Mexican border. As we can see in figure 3, based solely on the geographic location it would be most probable that the largest share of migrants would originate from the countries of Guatemala and Belize, followed by El Salvador and Honduras. If we look at the figures, this is true except for Belize as only 41 Belizean migrants of the total of 118.510 Central American migrants were deported from Mexico between the January and September 2015 (table 2). This might be explained by the fact that Belize is an upper middle income country with a GDP twice as high as the surrounding countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador (World Bank, 2015).

Figure 3 Geographic location of Central American countries



Source: www.teachingforchange.org

As we see in table 2, most of the migrants come indeed from the remainder geographically most proximate countries to the Mexican border, namely El Salvador (19%), Guatemala(46%) and Honduras(34%). Of these migrants, 20,5% is women and 79,5% is men (SEGOB, 2015). If we compare

the data from 2015 with the data from 2014 and 2013, we see a rise in the number of deportations of Central American migrants. Whereas in the 9 months of 2015 already 118.510 migrants were being deported, in the whole year of 2014 this number was 105.303 and in 2013 'only' 78.773. In chapter 5 it will be shown that this rise in deportations can partly be explained due to stricter migration policies. Besides we see a slide change in composition of migrants' nationality, as the share of migrants from Honduras decreased from 42% in 2013 to 40% in 2014 to 34% in 2015, while the share of migrants from Guatemala rose from 38% in 2013 to 41% in 2014 to 46% in 2015. However in all three years migrants dominantly come from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras (SEGOB, 2015).

A migrant group that receives a lot of international attention, are the unaccompanied minors. In 2014, there was a great boom in apprehensions of migrants under 18 without parents, as more than 63,000 unaccompanied minors were put into detention by the U.S. (WOLA, 2015). Figure 5 shows that this is a significant increase compared to preceding years. In 2015, however, apprehensions at the Northern Mexican border dropped, and an increasing number of unaccompanied migrants got caught at the Southern border. This can be explained by the implementation of the Southern Border Plan. Within this study no special attention is being given to these unaccompanied minors, as they will be integrated within the aggregate of Central American transit-migrants in Mexico.

Table 2. Total number of migrants deported, according to nationality.

	2013	2014	January – September 2015
Central America - Total	78 733	105 303	118 510
Belice	21	15	41
Costa Rica	10	12	5
El Salvador	14 586	19 800	22 973
Guatemala	30 132	42 808	54 089
Honduras	33 079	41 661	40 380
Nicaragua	804	999	1 018
Panamá	2	8	4

Source: SEGOB, 2015

So where in Mexico did these migrants get caught and deported to their home country? Figure 4 gives the answer to this question by showing that by far most of the migrants are caught just next to the Southern Mexican border. With a total of 121.260 deportations, no less than 50.464 deportations took place in the federal state of Chiapas, which makes Chiapas account for 42% of all the deportations that took place between January and September 2015. Veracruz, Tabasco, and Oaxaca, three states bordering the state of Chiapas, are the following states with successive 25.456 (21%), 14.001 (12%) and 5.193 (4%) of the deportations taking place there. Furthermore we see that in Northern regions like Baja California, Coahuila and Nuevo Leon deportations are also more frequent than in most other states. However, given the fact that in most of these northern states approximately between 1000 and 2000 deportations have been taken place, this is not a significant amount compared to the tens of thousands of migrants that are deported from the Southern states. Actually, no less than 79% of the deportations of Central American migrants take place in only four Southern Mexican States (Chiapas, Veracruz, Tabasco and Oaxaca). This signifies that the Southern border region is spatially the most important region if we want to discuss this pattern of Central American migration to Mexico and corresponding migration policies. But before discussing these

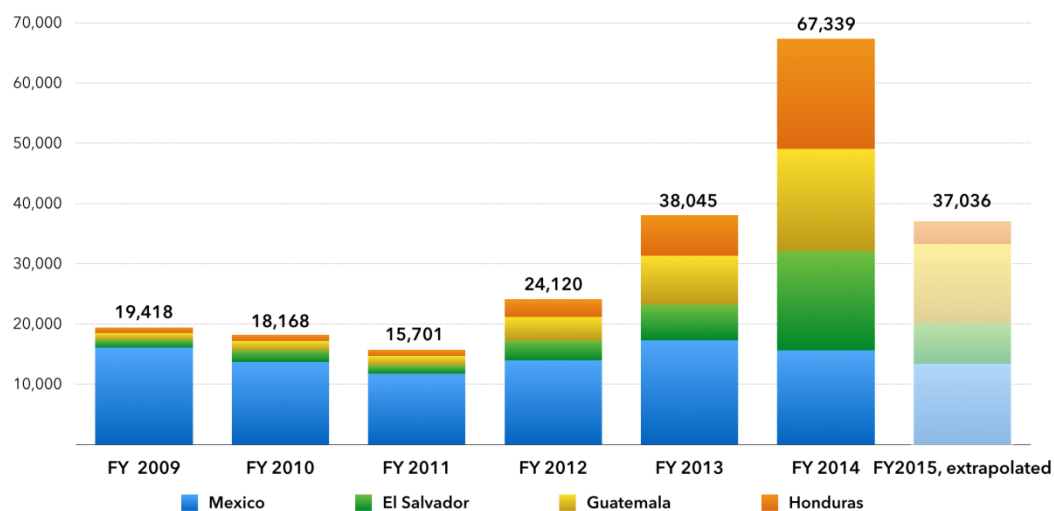
migration policies, we will first go back to the question of *why* these migrants from mainly El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are present in Mexico.

Figure 4 Number of migrants deported between January - September 2015, according to Mexico's federal states



Source: SEGOB, 2015. Author: M.J.N. van Buuren

Figure 5 Border Apprehensions of unaccompanied minors, 2015



Estimates based on first half of fiscal year 2015 (Oct 14 - Mar 15)

Source: WOLA, 2015

Source: <http://1.usa.gov/1j2KCR>

4. Causes of migration

Introduction

There are many theories that try to explain migration across international borders. Understanding why people migrate is in scholarly debates often connected to the phenomena of the structural global inequality between countries and regions. However the explanation of why people migrate is different for different people over time and space. Therefore there is not to be found an overarching theory about how to analyze 'the causes of migration', and in addition to this many different approaches exist to grasp this process of migration (Samers, 2010). For this thesis it is useful to look at two different scales in which factors might play a role in stimulating the movement of people. First it is important to look on an international scale. We live in a globalized world in which nations are intertwined with each other economically, politically and socially, and changes in one country can have consequences for another country. Secondly it is significant to look at a intranational scale. As we are talking about a border-crossing process, the differences between the opportunities and problems of the nations involved in this study can play an important role in the eagerness of people to relocate themselves. It is important to look at both international and national scale, as it is exactly in the *interplay between this intranational and international scale* where the process of migration takes place. This means that there are on the one hand processes taking place on international scale like the interconnectedness of people across the world and the international free trade, and on the other hand there are *differences* between intranational characteristics of countries like the national economic and social situation. These forces combined can make migration both more accessible and more tempting. After a examination of existing literature on the causes of migration, a framework was established based on a division of these two different scales. After an scholarly examination of different causes of migration (Samers, 2010), on the international scale three factors came to the front that can explain the process of migration from Central America towards the U.S., namely 1. globalization, 2. neoliberalism and 3. social networks. On the intranational scale the two factors that will be explored are 1. economics and 2. politics and security. After an analyze of these different factors it will be shown in the conclusion how these different causes that make migration accessible and tempting interact with each other.

International causes

a. Globalization

Globalization is a complex term which can encompass an abundant amount of different approaches, depending on the different academic fields that use this terminology. The sociologist Anthony Giddens defines globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens, 1991). Iwabuchi (2010) argue that globalization is linked to the growth of cross-border interaction that took place during the last few decades after the Cold war. In this time the mobility of capital, people and commodity has been further intensified by the existence of a neo-liberalism marketization, and the amplification of international flows of labor, immigrants and tourists. Other authors focus more on the economic side of globalization. Fu and Chiu (2007) argue that globalization involves the spread of the global economy to regional economies around the world

and requires integration of local economies into the global market. As a result of these growing ties, social life has been reorganized on a global scale. All these definitions have in common that they speak about an intensification of social and economic networks around the world. In other words did the world become more and more intertwined in recent decades.

Thomas Eriksen (2007) wrote a book about the key concepts of globalization. In his book he distinguishes between eight dimensions of globalization. For this case study it would not be suitable to examine all these eight different dimensions, however a short elaboration will be made on three of these dimensions as they can be useful to understand the presence of migration. One of these dimensions is *acceleration*, which means that the speed of transport and communication has increased tremendously in the last decades. Especially the acceleration of communication is important for this case study, as due to the existence of the internet, mobile phone and skype it is easier than before to keep updated about situations and events in other nations, or be in contact with your family while being abroad. A report in 2014 stated that Facebook and other social media sites are fueling the influx in immigration of Central Americans to the United States. There is no official data on how social media is used by migrants, but anecdotal evidence from smugglers, migrants and police suggests migrants are increasingly logging online to make the journey more easy. For example they can plan the journey by sharing tips, meeting fellow travelers and to keep in touch with family (Reuters, 2014). Another dimension is *interconnectedness*. The networks connecting people across continents are becoming denser, faster and wider every year (Eriksen, 2007). Here we can distinguish between two types of networks; social networks and economic networks. In paragraph 2 (neoliberalism) and 4 (social networks) these two aspects of interconnectedness will be explored. The third dimension of globalization that Eriksen wrote about is *movement*. More and more than ever before are people moving beyond territories as tourists, business travelers, refugees or migrants. Consequently migration can be seen both as an *initiator* of globalization as well as an *outcome* of globalization. In the conclusion of this chapter, we will come back to this interaction between globalization and migration.

b. Neoliberalism

As shown in the paragraph above, globalization is not only about the interconnectedness of people, but also of the economy. The growth of an intertwined free global market is connected to the idea of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism can be understood as a free market economy in which market-orientated reform policies have been taken place such as eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers, and reductions in government spending in order to enhance the role of the private sector in the economy (Boas, 2009). Especially huge multinationals have grown and benefited from this increased globalization (Eriksen, 2010). For example the American multinational retail corporation Wal-Mart Stores generated \$476.294 billion revenue in the last fiscal year of 2013-2014 (Forbes, 2015).

This global economy provokes that there exists areas where a concentration of economic activity is to be found (Dicken, 2007). Connected to this is the existence of a dual labor market, which is important if we talk about labor opportunities for migrants. This means that there exist a primary and secondary sector in the economy of developed countries, in which the first one consists of native workers and the second one of foreign migrant workers. This second sector is often connected to the

existence of informal jobs and the illegality of migrant workers. Undocumented immigration facilitates the expansion of informal employment, which creates a demand for illegal migrants, and so on (Samers, 2010). There is no doubt that illegal employment in the U.S. is present in a substantial size. In the U.S. unauthorized migrants are said to make up 5,1% of the U.S. labor force. Of the estimated 11.3 illegal immigrants, 8.1 million were participating in the labor force in 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2015). However the question is if we can really call this existence of an illegal market an *initiation* of migration, or if we would rather see it as a factor that provides for the *continuation* of migration. Also data on the informal employment in the United State is scarce, consequently an analysis on this matter is difficult to be made. But still the existence of a dual labor market in the U.S., that derive from neoliberalism, is an important element for explaining migration.

Finally, connected to neoliberalism is the 'neo-liberalism' theory. This theory states that neo-liberal policies of international institutions have resulted in greater poverty in the poorest countries. Examples of these institutions are the IMF and the World Bank, and these institutions are normally based in Western countries (Samers, 2010). In other words did the development in developed countries restrain the development of underdeveloped countries, or even exploit the underdeveloped countries by extracting their resources and highly educated labor. This uneven division of capital around the world that is being sustained according to this theory by developed countries, can be considered as a cause of the willingness of people to move to other countries. Discussion about the accuracy of this theory exists, and it is impossible to convert this global process to the context of Central American migration. However it is an important insight to think about why these economic differences still exist to such inconceivable extent in the contemporary world, especially considering the fact that people are indeed eager to cross these territorial border, despite the risks.

c. Social networks

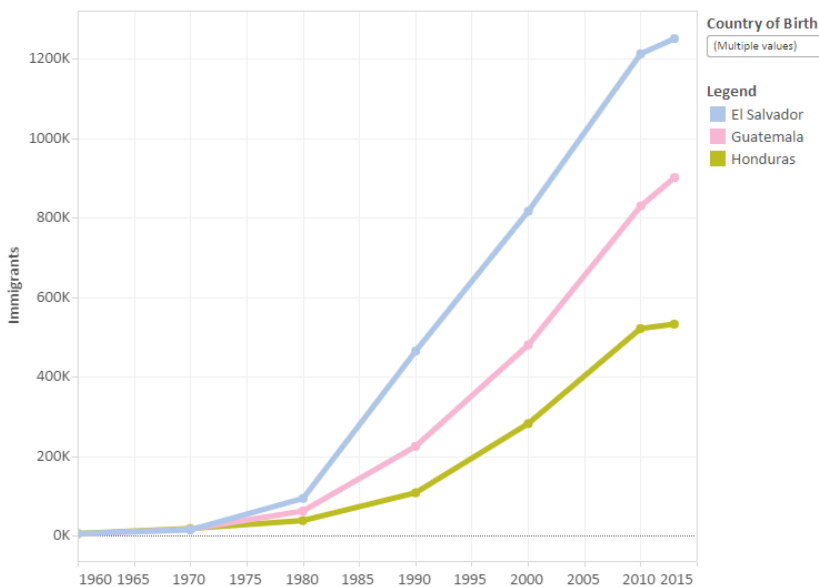
Mass migration has led to new patterns of transnational interconnectedness, linking people interpersonally, often through kinship, across continents (Eriksen, 2007). Social networks can be seen as "webs of interpersonal interactions, commonly comprised of relatives, friends, or other associations forged through social and economic activities that act as conduits through which information, influence, and resources flow" (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). For migrants these networks can be very beneficial as they can strengthen their social capital in a certain location. Chaney (2015) pointed in his article about Central American migrants heading towards the U.S. to the significance of transnational social networks in the establishment of new migrant destinations in the American South. He shows that it is easier for migrants to, in this case, go to the U.S. if they already have relatives or friends living there, as they can provide the migrant with information. Furthermore they can provide the migrant possibly with resources like money, or they can influence or have agency to provide the migrant with a job or housing.

Take the example of the 36-years old Honduran Axel. Axel's first trip to the U.S. was unsuccessful because he lacked necessary transnational contacts and support to make the journey. The second time however, he succeeded with the help of a friend in Houston who lend him money and shared information about how to cross Mexico. His wife Isabel joined him a few years later. She told that "While Axel was in New Orleans, I would talk to people in Las Lomas (Honduras), usually at church. I knew who wanted to migrate. Sometimes, someone's aunt would approach me to tell me her

nephew from another village or Danlí wanted to go and if Axel or Ned needed workers. I talked to Axel every day on the phone and mentioned who was looking for work.”. In the end around 50 people migrated to the U.S. with the help of Axel and Isabel (Chaney, 2015). This case study shows that having international social contacts is very important for both choosing to migrate to the U.S., as well as succeeding in this trip.

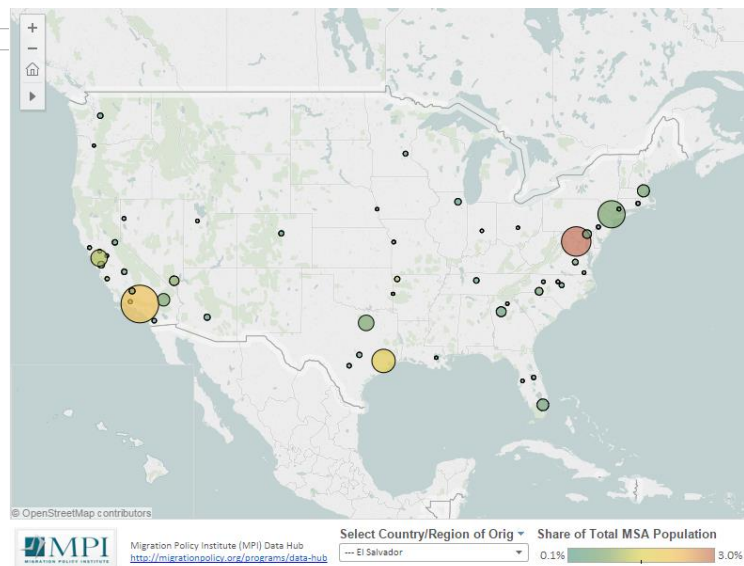
In 2013, approximately 3.2 million Central American legal immigrants lived in the United States. Of these 3.2 million, approximately 1,3 million came from El Salvador, 900.000 from Guatemala and 530.000 from Honduras (Figure 6). In figure 7 it becomes clear that of this total amount of migrants a large share is centered in certain cities. These cities can be seen as nodes, places where the culture of migrants have developed (Samers, 2010). For example 189.000 (21%) of all the immigrants from Guatemala residing in the U.S. live in the metropolitan area of Los Angeles (MPI, 2015). Also 279.000 immigrants from El Salvador live in Los Angeles, and 171.000 of them live in Washington (Figure 7). Notice that here we are talking only about legal migrants; in reality these figures will be even much bigger. The existence of these concentrations of Central American migrants in the U.S., make it possible for new migrants to use this social network of already settled migrants in the United States. As these social relations can provide new migrants with information and resources, it becomes more accessible for future migrants to take the step to migrate.

Figure 6 U.S. immigrant population by country of birth



Source: MPI, 2015

Figure 7 Immigrant population in U.S. from El Salvador by Metropolitan Area



Source: MPI, 2015

Intranational causes

a. Economics

Economics, and especially economic differences between countries, obviously play an important role in the comprehension of the drivers of migration. Therefore it's no surprise that scholars definitely did not neglect the importance of the economic factors. Most of the theories about the causes of migration indeed have their fundamentals in the economic aspects. In the paragraph *neoliberalism* an elaboration was already made about the *dual labor market theory* and the *neo-liberalism theory*. Later on in this paragraph, the new economies theory will be added to this, but first a practical approach is being used in order to complement the more abstract approach of the international explanations. This results in the relevance to analyze the national economic situation of respectively El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and the United States. An economic situation analysis on national scale provide us to understand from an economic perspective the push and pull factors for migrants to move across borders. Therefore data about the economic situation of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador on the one hand, and the U.S. on the other hand has been analyzed. For this analysis data from the World Bank (2015) is being used.

Both Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras are lower middle income countries. Guatemala is the biggest economy in Central America, but is among Latin American countries with the highest levels of inequality. Honduras is also facing significant inequality, and it will be a challenge for Honduras to enhance rural productivity and diversify sources of rural income, since most of the country's poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. El Salvador experienced sustainable economic growth and poverty levels declined in the last decades, however does crime and violence threaten social and economic development. If we compare the GDP of the three countries with the GDP of the United States, it becomes clear that the inequality between these countries is really substantial. GDP is used here instead of GNP, as GDP only looks at the value of goods and services produced within the country, whereas GNP also includes income earned by residents from overseas investments. For our study it is only relevant to look at capital within the borders of the nation, as a lack of GDP might mean that people are eager to move beyond this national border.

Table 3. Economic characteristics, per country.

	GDP per capita (2014)	GDP per capita (2014)	GINI (PPP)	Unemployment (2014)	National poverty (2013)
Honduras	\$2,434	\$4,372	53,7 (2013)	3,9 %	64,5%
Guatemala	\$3,667	\$7,111	52,4 (2011)	2,9 %	53,7%
El Salvador	\$4,129	\$7,957	53,5 (2013)	6,2 %	29,6%
U.S.	\$54,629	\$54,629	41,1 (2013)	6,2 %	-

Source: Worldbank, 2015

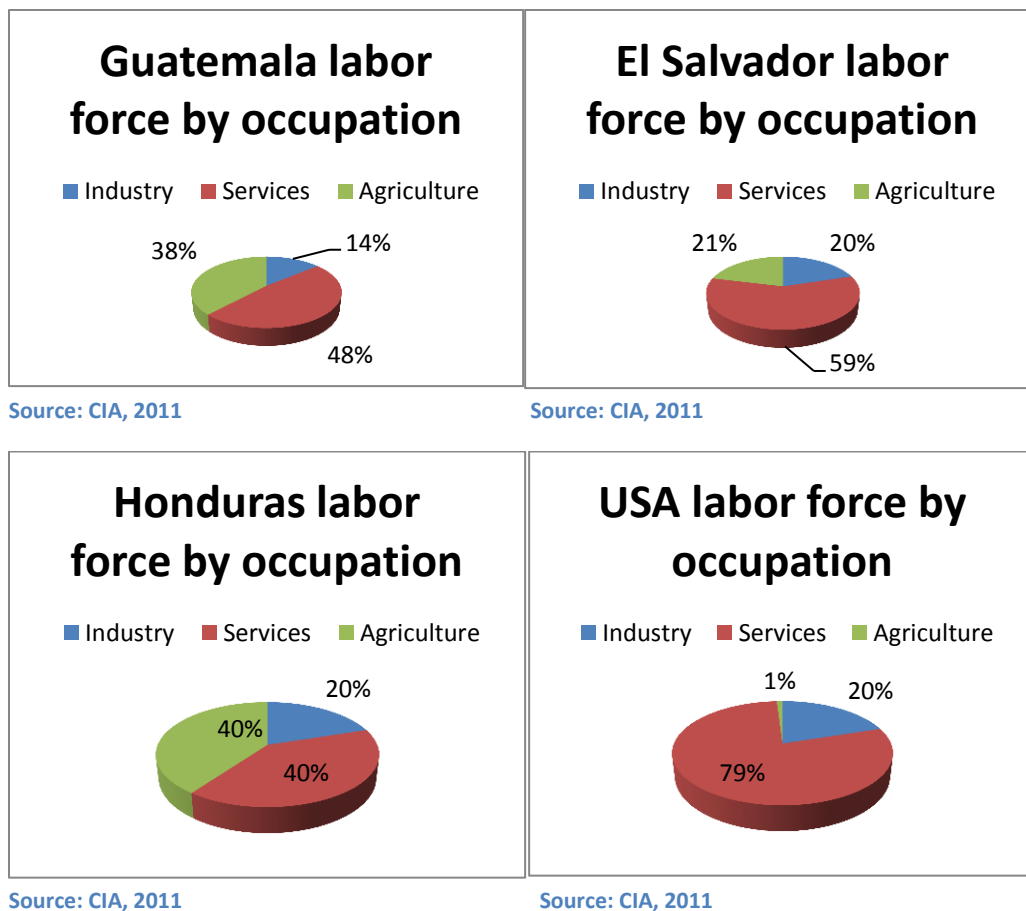
In table 3 it becomes clear that it's Honduras that scores worst in GDP. GDP per capita in the United states is more than ten times higher than the GDP of these central American countries, with an GDP

of \$54,629 per capita in 2014. However using GDP is based on exchange rates, which may distort the real differences in income. To also take into account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the countries, we can use the variable of GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP). Although the Central American countries score slightly better here, the United States still stands out significantly with a GDP (PPP) of \$54,629 per capita in 2014.

All countries face high inequality with GINI scores around 50. In this way they slightly diverge from the United States which had a GINI of 41,1 in 2013. If we look at poverty level, the Central American countries are scoring not good either. The national poverty headcount ratio is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines. National estimates are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys. In Honduras more than half of the country lives in poverty, and El Salvador scores 'best' with almost one third of the inhabitants living in poverty. Unfortunately data about the U.S. is not available on this topic. If we look at the percentage of people living on less than 3 dollar a day, Honduras scored 34,5% in 2013, Guatemala 26,5% in 2011 and El Salvador 11,5% in 2013. These figures show that GDP is low and inequality and poverty are high in these Central American countries, especially in comparison with the United States. Finally if we look at unemployment, this doesn't seem to play a role. However in the paragraph about politics and security it will be shown that not the availability of employment is the problem, but the existence of gang members.

Another aspect that is important to look at is the labor force by occupation. As shown in figure 8, in the three Central American countries and especially in Honduras, still a large share of the labor force is employed in the agricultural sector, while in the U.S. only 1% is employed in the agricultural sector. This means that in these Central American countries, a lot of families are still only dependent on their agricultural earnings, which can be an economic risk in years of bad harvest due to an unfavorable climate. Therefore it is profitable for people to diversify the allocation of scarce resources, and migration is a suitable way to do so. Connected to this is the new economies theory. This theory is not about enhancing the income of an individual, but to diversify the income of an family or household. If a member of a household migrates, remittances can be a stable income source to minimize economic risks. (Samers, 2010). In 2014 \$5.544 billion entered Guatemala in remittances, 8.6% more than the \$5.105 billion received during the previous year. Honduras received \$3.44 billion in remittances, 11.2% more than the previous year and El Salvador received \$4.2172 billion in remittances, an increase of 6.7% compared to the previous year. (Central America Data, 2015). These figures show that diversifying income using remittances is a common practice in these Central American countries.

Figure 8. labor force by occupation per country



b. Politics and security

We've seen all over the world that political conflict and violation of human rights causes people to go on the move. However, as stated in the theoretical framework, in the case of Central American migration towards the United States, political conflict and the social security situation in the countries of origin is not severe enough to count as an asylum-seeker. However this doesn't mean that these factors cannot be motivations of migrants to leave their country. Especially if we look at the high levels of crime and violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, it is not hard to imagine that the insecurity can play a role in the flight towards another county.

Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have all experienced political conflict in the recent history. In El Salvador a civil war ended in the early 1990's, in Guatemala a peace agreement was being signed in 1996 after 36 years of civil war, and Honduras was confronted with some minor conflicts at the end of the 20th century like the existence of the Battalion 3-16 which assassinated and tortured political opponents of the government during the 1980s (Booth, 2014). Now politically peace returned in these countries. In Guatemala the democratic stability increased significantly after the end of the Civil War, and the same counts for El Salvador in terms of consolidating peace and

democracy (World Bank, 2015). The improvement of the political situation in the last years does show that the political situation of these countries might not be a main cause for migrants to cross borders. However corruption rates are high, especially in Honduras. The Corruption Perception Index shows how corrupt an country is with a score close to 0 as being very corrupt towards a score of 10 as being not corrupt. The United States scored 7,3 in 2014, whereas Guatemala scored 3,2, El Salvador 3,9 and Honduras scored as low as 2,9 in 2014 (Transparency International, 2015).

The World Bank (2011) released a report 'Crime and Violence in Central America', in which The World Bank states that in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, crime rates are among the top five in Latin America. The Word Bank states that for Guatemala an increasing important challenge is to improve the security levels of citizens. Not only in social but also in economic terms this is important, as an estimated 7.7 % of the GDP is being lost due to crime and violence. About El Salvador the World Bank says basically the same; that crime and violence has a negative effect on the quality of life of citizens in the country, and that it threatens social development and economic growth.

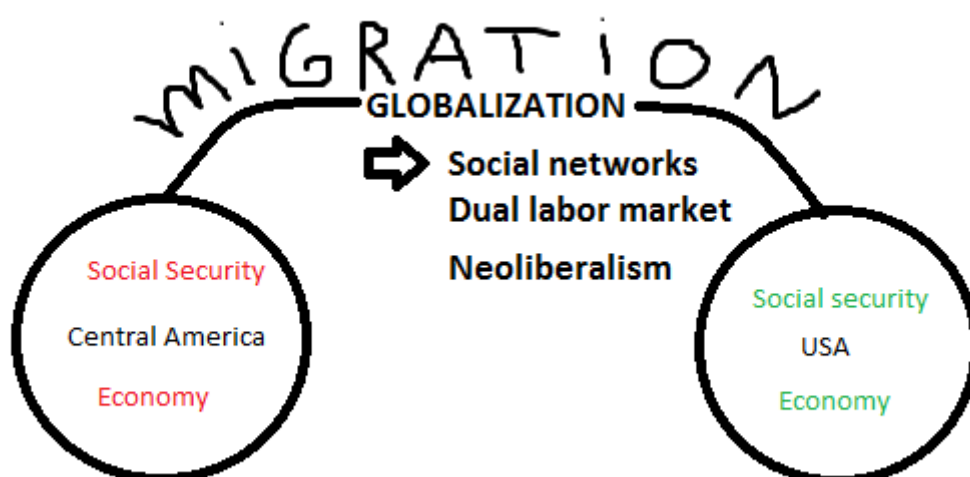
In the previous paragraph it has been showed that unemployment is not a problem. However, the existence of crime is. A Guatemalan man named Eduardo explained his reasons for migrating to the United States: " ... I am migrating for work. The work is hard in Guatemala, it takes a lot out of you and they pay you very little. There is more work, like in the maquilas (factories) where you can gain more, but there is a lot of extortion by los mareros (gang members), they put a tax on you and you have to pay them monthly. If you don't pay them, they kill you." (Vogt, 2013). This is a good example of the difficulties and dangers that these people have to deal with every day. The homicide rate in El Salvador is still high with 40 per 100.000 inhabitants being murdered in 2013, but it has increased significantly in recent years as in 2011 this number was still 70. Honduras is worse, as it is the country with the highest homicide rates in the world with 84 per 100.000 inhabitants being murdered in 2013. (UNODC, 2015). These three Central American are amongst the most dangerous and criminal countries in the world, which plays a role in the choice of people to find their security somewhere else.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been showed that migration is caused by different factors on different scales. The lack of economic and social possibilities in El Salvador, Guatemala and especially Honduras is the primary cause of why people feel the need to leave their country and to find their luck somewhere else. These national situations are in sharp contrast with the relatively good social and economic situation of the United States. It is due to these differences in social and economic national characteristics of the countries that fuels the primary cause of movement. However this is not the whole story, as processes on international scale serve as a *bridge* to make movement becoming more accessible and tempting. The overarching force on international scale is globalization, which provokes that migrants are part of transnational social networks, and that neoliberalism creates a world market in which illegal employment becomes consistent. Migrants are better informed than ever before due to the existence of social media, besides the abundance of social migrant communities in the U.S. helps the migrants with information, resources and jobs. In the introduction of this chapter the importance of looking both at international and national scale was highlighted, as

it is exactly in the *interplay between this intranational and international scale* where the process of migration takes place. This is true, as the main *primary reasons* for migration (convergence in social and economic intranational characteristics) is accompanied by *stimulating forces* on international scale (globalization). In other words does the process of globalization, and the corresponding social networks and dual labor markets, provide migrants with a path to start their travel and to succeed in their travel.

Figure 9 framework of causes



Author: M.J.N. van Buuren

However, we all know that, despite of these globalizing forces, border crossing is still extremely difficult. Until now we have spoken about the stimulating forces and the possibilities of migrants. However, a crucial factor that constrains movement across borders has been left out of this picture; migration policies and territorial defense. Universally illegal migration is seen as an undesirable phenomena, and therefore nations try to prevent or diminish this process from happening by legislation. To secure their territory, they strengthen their borders. These laws and border defenses can be very problematic for migrants. Besides, the fact that migrants are illegal, makes them vulnerable for violence and exploitation. However, on the other hand migration policies also exist to secure human rights. In the next chapters the topics of migrant policies and human rights are integrated into this study.

5. Migration policy

Introduction

In the introduction it has already been made clear that although a lot of research has been conducted on the crossing of migrants of the Northern border of Mexico with the U.S., much less is known about migration and Mexico's Southern border. This might be explained by the fact that the Southern border was for a long time not an area of concern. The focus was always on the northern border as this was the relevant border to stop all Central Americans, including Mexicans, from entering the territory of the United States. Furthermore did Mexico chose to increase interior enforcement to stop migrants from Central America, rather than concentrating on controlling its southern border. For example between 2000 and 2008, Mexico doubled detention facilities for migrants from 22 to 48 facilities (MPI, 2013).

However, with the recent shift in which less Mexicans and more other-than-Mexican migrants try to enter the United States, it becomes more relevant to enforce the Southern Border of Mexico. And that is exactly what happened. A WOLA report of 2014 stated that the U.S. was placing a greater priority on assistance to secure Mexico's border region, as this zone was seen as porous and poorly controlled (WOLA, 2015). In March 2015, Kay Granger, Chairwoman of the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, stated that "Our neighbor, Mexico is on the front lines of combating the illegal migration issue and we must do all we can to help Mexico strengthen its Southern border.". In line with this, Mexico's Southern Border Plan (Programa Frontera Sur) was announced on July 7, 2014. According to the Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto, the programs aim is to "protect and safeguard the human rights of migrants who enter and travel through Mexico, as well as to establish order at international crossings to increase development and security in the region" (WOLA, 2015). In the next paragraphs it will be discovered to which extend these goals are being achieved. Another relevant change in the migration policy is the birth of the Mexican 'law of migration 2011', which aims to ensure humane conditions for migrants through Mexico (MPI, 2013). In this chapter it will be explored how we can understand the migrant policies in Mexico both in the past and present, including the law of 2011. Also an extensive investigation of the characteristics and the effectiveness of the Southern Border Plan is being held. Finally the manner in which interregional policies try to combat migration is being conducted. In chapter 6 the effect of these policies on human rights are being discussed.

Mexican migration policies

Mexico hasn't experienced large migration flows in the past since the independence from Spain in 1821. However immigration policy has always been an important topic in Mexican legislation (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). In the beginning of the twentieth century, the legislation on migration was consolidated with 'The first general law of migration of 1908. With this law for example sick, mentally ill, anarchists, minors under 16, beggars and prostitutes were restricted to enter Mexican territory. In 1926, The Second Law of Migration established that all individuals could immigrate to Mexico. In 1947, the Second General Law of the Population was issued, which inclining towards a natural increase in the population instead of a migratory increase (Munoz, 2014). Three decades later, in 1974, a new law was established that would last until 2011.

Whereas before 1974 the migration laws were relatively liberal, this changed in 1974 as Mexico experienced a population boom combined with the arrival of refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador in Mexico (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). Part of the 1974 law program was to better distribute the population, considering the possibilities of development in diverse regions of the country based on natural resource potential (Munoz, 2014). Also family based immigration was prioritized, and employment-based immigration was restricted (MPI, 2012). In 2008 a reform to an article took place about the possibility to put migrants into detention. Before the year 2008 migrants were punished with up to 10 years in prison, providing authorities with an easy way to obtain money and commit abuses against undocumented migrants. The reform of 2008 retained this from happening, in the hope that this type of abuse would subside (Munoz, 2014). However in the chapter about human rights, it will be shown that unfortunately migrants are still exploited by officials. There have been various other attempts to reform individual articles of the law of 1974, but none with an huge impact on human rights. Than the constitutional reform of 2011 took place. This reform was hardly needed as Mexico's economic and political circumstances were not the same anymore as 30 years ago. Whereas Mexico was under the rule of an authoritarian regime in 1974, in recent years it became increasingly linked politically and economically to the rest of the world, and to the United States, in particular (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). The circumstances under which the 1974 law was fitting and functional, simply didn't fit the Mexico of 2011. The law of 2011 stated a guarantee of human rights of all people in Mexico, including undocumented transit migrants (Munoz, 2014). With this law, Mexico not only address the country's present migration problems, but it also helps Mexico meet international treaty obligations (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). Furthermore the law aims to recognize the rights of long-term immigrants and to promote migrant integration by ensuring equality between Mexican natives and immigrants. Another interesting aspect of the law of 2011 is that the Mexico government realized that it should treat Central American migrants in the same way as what it asks from the US government in terms of treatment of Mexican migrants (MPI, 2013). Therefore there exist critique on the real objective and efficiency in this law, on which chapter 6 will elaborate. If the law of 2011 would be observed completely, human rights of migrants in Mexico wouldn't be violated anymore. Unfortunately this is not the case.

Southern Border Plan

Like the migration law of 2011, according to the president of Mexico the Southern Border Plan of 2014 was also established to protect and safeguard the human rights of migrants in Mexico. Added to this it's goal was to establish order at international crossings. So what does this mean? The Wilson Centre (2014) explains the Southern Border Plan as having the objective to protect migrants entering Mexico, and to manage the ports of entry in Mexico to foster prosperity and security in the regions. The program includes five components.

1. Regular and ordered migration: To regularize movements across the southern Mexican border, improvements will be made to the temporary work and visit permits. In this was Guatemalan can stay legally temporary in Mexico's border region.
2. Improvement in infrastructure of border security: five border zones will be enhanced, improvements to mobile checkpoints will be made, and five border crossing attention centers (figure 7) will be built to provide medical care and facilities for unaccompanied minors.

3. Protecting migrants: Put in place medical units in Chiapas for migrants and support improvement to migrant shelters.
4. Regional shared responsibility: Increase partnership with country in the regions to combat criminal groups operating in the border region and creating a shared database of migrants crossing the border. Also Mexico will host the next regional conference on migration.
5. Interagency coordination: The Southern Border Plan will be led by the Ministry of the Interior, together with the local governments of the border states.

The WOLA report (2015) stated that the most notable change due to the Southern Border Plan is the increased presence of the National Migration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM*). In 2015 the INM transferred at least 300 of its agents to the southern border zone from elsewhere in the country. Also from August 2015 onwards officials try to prevent migrants from boarding *la bestia*. *La bestia* is the name for the cargo trains which are often used by migrants to continue their journey to the North. The report makes also clear that the Southern Border Plan didn't cause an increase in the presence of armed forces or state police (WOLA, 2015). Figure 10 gives an overview of locations where army and checkpoints can be found, but also places where migrants are being helped like migrant shelters. It shows that migrants are deported in the Southern part to El Carmen, Guatemala. It also makes clear that the army is only to be found more inland, not next to the border. Finally there are many Mexican Navy Bases at the border; however, as the border between Mexico and Guatemala is 871 km, the map indicated that there are still a lot of locations across the border that are not secured.

Figure 10 Mexico's Southern border area from a migration perspective



Source: WOLA, 2015

Figure 11 The cargo train routes in Mexico (La Bestia)



Source: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2013

So what is the influence of this Southern Border Plan on the migration from Central America towards the United States? As shown in chapter 3, the total amount of Central American deportations has risen from 105,303 deportations in 2014 to 118,510 deportations in the first nine months of 2015. WOLA argues that this incline in deportations is indeed connected to the Southern Border Plan. Also most of the migrants that get deported already get caught close to the border instead of more inland, which has also been shown in chapter 3. Another consequence of the Southern Border Plan is that migrants don't use the cargo trains like before anymore. In figure 10 is shown that the trains run indeed all the way from the Southern Border at the towns of Tapachula and Tenosique to the Northern border with the United States. Minister Osorio Chong asserted "We cannot continue to allow that they [migrants] put their lives in danger" (El Economista, 2014). It is true that riding *la bestia* is a really dangerous way of traveling, as many migrants fall of the trains and loose limbs (Sorrentino, 2012). However, WOLA is concerned about the new dangers migrants face as they now take alternative modes of transportation and routes north. A multiplication of routes has taken place; where before the majority would go by cargo train, now some go by taxi, others by boat along the coast and others ride the train but then starting in cities further north on the route, like Ciudad Ixtepec and Coatzacoalcos (figure 11). One of the problems of the multiplication of routes is that shelters established along the train routes to provide humanitarian assistance are not accessible for these migrants anymore. Another problem is that routes have become more complex and longer, which probably caused smugglers fees to rise from US\$6,000–8,000 before the Southern Border Plan to US\$9,000 and 10,000 (WOLA, 2014).

Interregional migration policies

During the 1970s, Mexico considered the U.S. as the only meaningful diplomatic partner. However, since migration emerged as a regional challenge in the 1980s due to civil wars and the refugee crisis, collaborate responses between Mexico and the other Central American countries have multiplied. Mexico signed agreements with the other countries for the orderly and secure repatriation of nationals from those countries. In this way Mexico wants to extend the concept of shared responsibility for the migration flows. In 1989 the bilateral sub-commission on Migration issues was created between Mexico and Guatemala. Also the regional conference on migration is held annually, whereby different countries discuss illegal migration, the war against terrorism, organized crime and human trafficking. Also in 2002 the high-level group on border security (GANSEF) was created by Mexico, Guatemala and Belize, to give the border regions of Mexico special interregional policy attention. Finally since 2004, inhabitants of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua can move freely throughout the member countries without Passport (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). This makes it probably easier for El Salvadoran and Honduran to get close to the Mexican border.

Migration is already for some decades an important subject of the U.S. and Mexico. This is of course caused by the presence of many Mexican migrants in the United States. In 2000, the Mexican president Fox saw emigrants in the U.S. as emigrants as “heroes” for the economic contributions they made towards Mexico’s development. That’s why it was very much in the interest of Mexico to call for bi-national negotiations with the United States to address immigration reform. In 2001 these bilateral negotiations took place, with the intent of finding ways to face the multiple challenges and opportunities associated with trans-border migration (Gonzalez-Murphy, L. V., & Koslowski, R, 2011). Like stated before, the law of 2011 also partly evolved due to pressure from the U.S. that if Mexico wants the U.S. to treat Mexican migrants in a good manner, Mexico should also take good care of migrants in their territory. Nowadays the U.S. is helping Mexico with securing its southern border. In 2014, when at once a lot of unaccompanied minors tried to enter the U.S., U.S. officials from President Obama communicated to the Mexican government the importance of doing more to stop the migration flow. The same year the Southern Border Plan was established, which suggests that the U.S. strongly encouraged Mexico to set up this project. Although there is limited transparency regarding dollar values, recipient units, equipment, and training, still there are some clues about what the U.S. contributes to Mexico. In July 2014 the US government was working to provide support to Mexico’s southern border initiative and intend to provide US\$86 million. The State Department’s 2016 foreign assistance budget request to Congress called for US\$14 million to support the strengthening of Mexico’s borders (WOLA, 2015). It clear that the US increased its assistance to strengthen Mexico’s southern border. However, exact figures on this are not available.

6. Human rights

Mexico and the U.S. may see it as a problem that migrants are entering their territory, but above all it's the migrants themselves who face severe problems, as migrants in transit are characterized by structural vulnerability. Vogt (2013) conducted a study about the structural violence of undocumented Central American migrants in Mexico. According to this study, Central American migrants have always encountered abuse in Mexico since they began migrating in the 1980s. However, in recent years, direct violence and exploitation have become far more systematic and inescapable. The Salvadoran migrants Manuel explains that “..But now, with these groups that are kidnapping, they are organized together with the police and they carry weapons, heavy artillery. The same police that denounce them are the ones who protect them. . Imagine, they kidnap 20, or ten or even five people and they ask for \$5,000 for each one. They know that their families will send money even if they cannot afford to.”(Vogt, 2013). What is striking here, is that the group that is supposed to secure human rights and justice, namely the police, are apparently the ones who take advantage of the vulnerable position of migrants.

This exploitation of migrants by officials has been the case for decades already, as when it was still allowed to put migrants into detention, authorities committed mistreatment, abuse, and sexual violations in the migratory detention centers. Unfortunately this hasn't changed, as even the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) recognized that ...“irregular migrants are subjected to a situation of clandestinely in which diverse actors, such as business, authorities, tenants, service providers, and even other migrants, contribute to the exploitation and extortion...” (Munoz, 2014). The precarious conditions and the lack of judicial protection are two factors that allow this abuse of human rights to take place. A Salvadoran man called Ever explained “I want a normal life without the threat of being killed. This is what we are all looking for even though on the journey we suffer a lot. We fall into the hands of criminals and kidnappers, rapists, people who steal whatever you have. These are the things that we all have experienced.” So while in transit, migrants may be used to smuggle cargo, sell their body, be exploited for labor, and being organs to traffic (Vogt, 2013). Besides, as migrants all around the world, Central American migrants are being conceived negatively. Migrants men are associated with violence, as introducers of alcoholism and drug use into local communities and as having social ills. Women are often seen as prostitutes and as being sexual immoral, and as being bad mothers who leave their children behind (Vogt, 2013). Of course this negative perception of these migrants has a negative influence on the migrants themselves, and might even foster exploitation and abuse of migrants because migrants are seen as ‘less human being’.

The migration law of 2011 is a step in the good direction to secure human rights of migrants. Due to this law of 2011, the National Immigration Institute has set up Beta Groups, which were formed from the need to assure the well-being and health of the migrants. In 2014, 21 Beta Groups were operating in 9 states near the Northern and Southern border of Mexico. According to the INM, this project has provided important results and saved many lives (Munoz, 2014). However, the law of 2011 also receives a lot of criticism and skepticism. Some are concerned about the real objectives of the law, as some view that Mexico mainly set up this law to ensure human rights of Mexican

migrants in the United States. Also some observers are afraid that the lofty legislative aims are stymied by a lack of political will, lack of financial resources and a lack of institutional capacity (MPI, 2013). As the Migration Policy Institute (2012) states it: "The law of 2011 represents an important advance and laudable achievement; but its mere existence does not resolve deeply rooted problems such as inefficiency, corruption, or a lack of institutional coordination". According to a recent article from InSight Crime (10 November 2015), a report from WOLA (2015) states that 'Mexico's Southern Border Plan fuels violence'. Hence, though these improvements in the legal framework are present, the lack of implementation causes that violation of Central American human rights remains a big problem in Mexico.

7. Conclusion & discussion

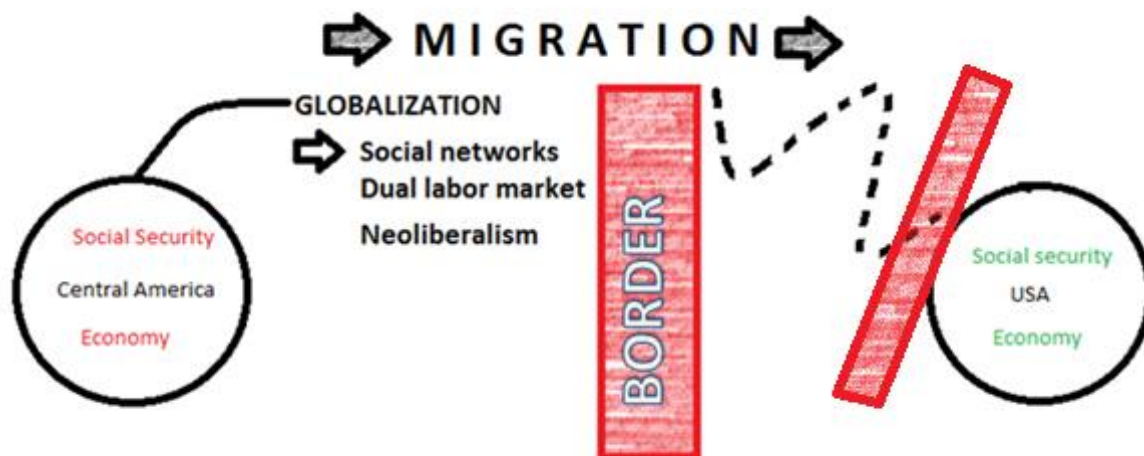
Conclusion

There has been a shift in migration flows towards the United States, whereby relatively less Mexicans and more other-than-Mexican Central Americans try to build up a new living in this 'prosperous' Western nation. This shift is accompanied by a change in geographical significance concerning migration towards the U.S., as these Guatemalan, Honduran and El Salvadoran migrants also have to cross Mexico's Southern border. Throughout this thesis, it has become clear that Mexico's migration policy has also anticipated on this geographical shift by introducing the Southern Border Plan. Within this thesis, the main question is:

Which are the causes for the recent migration flows from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador in Mexico, and which role plays Mexico's migrants policy in diminishing migration and securing human rights?

At the end of chapter four an explanation of the framework of causes has already been given, clarifying the interaction between these different causes on both international and intranational scale. It was made clear that the differences between the economic and security situation (intranational scale) of the nations are considered as the primary causes of migration. Globalization, neoliberalism and social network (international scale) are considered as the stimulating causes of migration (figure 9). However, this network of causes neglected the presence of territory, borders and migration policies. In chapter 5 and 6, attention is being given to the functioning and efficiency of these migration policies. When integrating these into the framework of causes, we get another picture of the process of migration. In figure 10 it's evident that the causes that provide for the process of migration, are hindered by the existence of territorial borders and migration policy. When migrants are able to cross the first border, the Southern border of Mexico (in the middle of figure 10), two changes take place due to Mexican migration policy. The first is that, due to the Southern Border Plan, there is an increased presence of security in the border area of Mexico, which causes that many of these migrants already get deported at the provinces close to this border (chapter 3). The second change is that migrant's routes diversify, as a multiplication of often longer routes takes place. That's why the line after the border is projected as a curved (different routes), dotted (little migrants 'succeed') line.

Figure 12 network of migration: causes and policy



Author: M.J.N. Van Buuren

Figure 12 shows that the Southern Border Plan, which entails the strengthening of the Southern Mexican border, has made the transit-migration through Mexico more challenging for migrants. Also does the policy makes the journey more problematic, as human rights of migrants are still violated by authorities and others. Connected to this, because of the multiplication of routes, it gets harder for migrants to reach places of humanitarian assistance like migrant shelters. The law of 2011 was implemented to guarantee human rights of all people in Mexico, including undocumented transit migrants. The acknowledgment of the Mexican government of the importance of migrant's human rights is a step in the good direction of improving the marginal and vulnerable status of migrants. However, questions about the real objective of the law of 2011, and a lack of political will, financial resources and institutional capacity stand in the way of achieving the goals. Hence Mexico still has a long way to go to be able to ensure the human rights of transit-migrants from Central America, as current policies on this matter are failing to do so.

Chapter 3 displayed an increase in deportations in Mexico of El Salvadorans, Hondurans and Guatemalans. This increase in deportations is caused by the stricter migration policies, especially the Southern Border Plan. The objective of this migration policy of 2014 is to control the flows of migrants, and to keep out illegal unwanted migrants. This is an expression of territoriality, put into practice by securing the Southern border. However as shown in Chapter 2, Samers (2010) stated that migrants don't stay back because of migrant policies, which in turn drives worried governments to reinforce borders further. Also WOLA (2015) didn't find it probable that migration would be decreasing due to these policies, as the most notable effect of Mexico's migration crackdown has been changes in how migrants are traveling. And as shown in the introduction, the apprehensions in the U.S. also increased in 2015, even if they didn't sharpen their migration policies. These statements together claim that there is no evidence that the Mexican migration policies decrease the influx of migrants towards Mexico. It might be even true that transit-migration flows towards Mexico have

risen; however more research is necessary to confirm such a claim. In this way Mexico fails both in securing human rights of Central American migrants, as in diminishing Central American migration towards Mexico. Therefore WOLA (2015) states that, if we want the situation to improve, U.S. assistance to Mexico must address the push factors of migration from Central America, rather than strengthening its border.

Discussion

In this thesis a literature study has been conducted on the causes of transit-migration towards Mexico, and on the influences of the Mexican migration policy on the diminishing of this migration and on the human rights of these migrants. The conclusions found within this study, are best to be understood as being preliminary investigation conclusions. This thesis tried to explore the most probable causes of migration, and the most likely implications that migration policies have on migrants. However, to verify the findings in this thesis, further research *in the field* is needed. Anthropological research on motivations of migrants themselves could clarify the extent to which each of the causes explained in chapter 4 actually play a role in their decision making to start their journey. In this sense anthropological research would give inside in the ratio of relevance of different causes. Also in this thesis the story of what's going on in Guatemala, on the other side of the South Mexican border, is neglected. Further research on the Guatemalan attitude towards migration would help to give more insights in the interregional process of migration. Equally an in-depth study on the influence of the U.S. on the Mexican migration legislation would provide us to understand better the interests of both the U.S. as Mexico concerning the migration debate. Connected to this it would be significant to look deeper into the influence of an increase in unaccompanied minors on migration policy, both in Mexico as in the United States. Finalizing this thesis might be a useful starting point for all scholars planning to do a research on the topic of Central American transit-migration towards the United States.

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