

## **FREE TRADE AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF CITYWARD MIGRATION: THE CASE OF MEXICO**

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### **Summary**

In the last two decades, patterns of internal migration in Mexico were characterized by both transformations and perseverance. The most important changes have been a sharp increase in internal migration in the 1990s, the emergence of new destinations for migrants in the economically expanding cities in the North and the South of the country, and the transformation of Mexico City into an area of emigration. Each of these transformations is related to the nation's new economic strategy, which has been pursued by Mexico since the debt crisis of 1982. First, the regime of free trade aggravated the crisis both of rural and of urban Mexico, depriving hundreds of thousand of peasants of their means of subsistence, and reducing employment facilities in the traditional industries. As a consequence, migration rates experienced a sharp rise. Second, locations for economic activities oriented to the world market emerged as new centers of immigration, as they demanded labor for the maquiladora industries or tourism. Thus, cities in the Northern border region, where export industries are located, and in the South of the country, where international tourism is expanding, show the highest rates of immigration. Finally, due to severe economic crisis, the adverse results of economic restructuring, and other factors (earthquake, pollution etc.), Mexico City lost attractiveness for internal migrants in the 1980s. It is, however, not clear whether the trend towards emigration from Mexico City is continuing, or whether the city will be again the principal destination of immigration.

### **1. Introduction: Migration Patterns during the Era of Import Substitution**

Internal migration has a long tradition in Mexico. In 1930, at the beginning of the epoch of import-substituting industrialization, 10% of the country's people did not live in the

federal state in which each was born. Forty years later, when import substitution came to an end, more than 16% of Mexicans had migrated to another federal state. Yet, this data reflects only inter-state migration, and hence underestimates the real volume of internal movements. This can be perceived by the rate of urbanization. As early as 1930, one third of the country's population lived in cities, and in 2000 the rate of urbanization (74.6%) was comparable to that in developed countries.

During the era of import-substituting industrialization, the predominant pattern of internal migration was rural-urban movements, which were directed mainly towards the country's largest metropolis, Mexico City (the term "Mexico City" refers to the whole Metropolitan Area [Zona Metropolitana de la Ciudad de México / ZMCM], which is formed by the Federal District [the country's capital], and 41 communities (municipios) of the surrounding State of Mexico, which have grown together with the Federal District). In 1970, more than one third of all Mexican inter-state migrants (2.3 million) lived in the Federal District, and another 15% (1 million) resided in the State of Mexico. Yet, as the urban agglomeration of Mexico City is located partly in the State of Mexico, what statistically appears as immigration to the State of Mexico is in fact predominantly immigration to the ZMCM. Thus, in 1970 nearly half of all Mexican migrants lived in Mexico City.

Consequently, migration represented a key factor in the city's growth. Between 1950 and 1970, migrants counted for one third of the population increase of Mexico City; one out of three people living in the Federal District in 1970 were not born there. In the Metropolitan Area as a whole, the percentage of immigrants was even higher. Being focused heavily on Mexico City, migration contributed to an ever greater concentration of the Mexican population in the country's main metropolis. While in 1940 only 9% of all Mexicans lived in Mexico City, 30 years later the share had doubled to 18%.

In the 1970s, when import substitution stumbled into crisis, the increase in internal migration slowed down. Although the absolute number of internal migrants was still on the rise, their share in the total population barely grew (see Table 1). Moreover, the concentration of migrants in Mexico City began to decrease, as can be concluded from the shrinking share of the Federal District and the State of Mexico in total Mexican "intra"-migration. As a consequence, immigration played only a modest role in the city's growth in the 1970s (0.5% annually), and the percentage of migrants in the city's population shrank.

## **2. The Great Turn-around of the 1980s and 1990s**

A great turn-around, however, has happened during the last two decades. First, there has been a marked increase in internal migration since 1990. Although in the 1980s the trend of the preceding decade continued (the number of migrants rose, while their share in the total population decreased minimally), in the 1990s a radical change occurred. Between 1991 and 2000, the absolute number of internal migrants rose by 5.6 million; that is, by more than 565 000 annually. Correspondingly, the share of migrants in the total population grew to 20.3% (see Table 1). This increase represents, both in absolute and relative terms, the sharpest growth in Mexican history.

	Rate of migration			Migration stock		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1960	14.48%	15.48%	14.98%	2 521	2 710	5 231
1970	16.11%	16.64%	16.37%	3 877	4 020	7 897
1980	16.96%	17.94%	17.45%	5 603	6 065	11 668
1990	17.02%	17.74%	17.38%	6 790	7 336	14 126
2000	20.07%	20.50%	20.29%	9 552	10 226	19 778

Table 1. Rate of internal migration and migration stock (in thousands), 1970 to 2000

Second, there are major changes in the spatial patterns of migration. In this regard, the most spectacular transformation is that Mexico City has turned—in only one decade—from the most important destination of migrants to the main sending area. Between 1930 and 1980, the Federal District registered a net-immigration of 2.4 million people. In the 1980s, however, the Federal District lost more than 1.1 million migrants (net), becoming thus by far the most important sending area. To make a comparison: In the 1980s, Michoacán and Oaxaca, the states with the longest and most intensive tradition in emigration, together lost fewer migrants than the Federal District. Yet, emigration from the inner parts of mega-cities is not an unusual phenomenon. What makes the case of Mexico City interesting is that the whole urban agglomeration—the Zona Metropolitana de la Ciudad de México—became an area of net-emigration. In the 1980s, migration contributed negatively to the city's growth (-0.4% annually), and estimates suppose a loss of between 290 000 and 440 000 (net) through migration (1985 to 1990). That is, Mexico City did not grow because of immigration, but despite emigration.

However, due to statistical problems, data on emigration from the Federal District overestimate the real volume of emigration. Since the ZMCM consists of the Federal District and communities belonging to the State of Mexico, the urban agglomeration covers territories in two federal states. Therefore, intra-urban removals from the inner city to the newly urbanized peripheries of Mexico City *statistically* appear both as emigration from the Federal District and as immigration to the State of Mexico. The resulting statistical distortions are substantial, because this kind of movement was undertaken by 629 879 people between 1985 and 1990, representing nearly a fifth of all migration in Mexico. Put differently, movements within Mexico City constitute by far the largest single migration flow between two federal states in Mexico.

If one adjusts the data and excludes intra-urban mobility, net-emigration from Mexico City is reduced considerably. For the Federal District, the rectified migration balance amounts to a loss of 279 149 people (1985 to 1990), which represents only 38% of the above quoted volume. Despite this correction, it still remains true that the Federal District became the most important sending state of migrants in the 1980s. Concerning the whole Metropolitan Area, net-emigration between 1985 and 1990 amounted to 223 700. Thus, Mexico City has indeed converted into an area of net-emigration in the 1980s, although the level of emigration is lower than sometimes supposed.

Regarding the 1990s, statistics suggest that the trend of emigration from the ZMCM is continuing. From 1990 to 2000, in the Federal District natural increase through surplus

in births was higher (+1.76%) than the average rate of population growth (+0.4%), which resulted in a negative migration rate (1995-2000: -1.2%). Concerning the whole Metropolitan Area (ZMCM), the trend towards net-emigration also continued. While the migration rate of Mexico City was negative in the first half of the decade (1990 to 1995: -0.37%), data from the most recent census reveal that the combined migration balance of the two federal states in which Mexico City is located (the Federal District and the State of Mexico) was negative between 1995 and 2000 (-154,000). Also, the combined share of the Federal District and the State of Mexico (that is, in essence, the share of Mexico City) in the national migration stock continued to decrease. While this reduction was very strong in the 1980s, when the combined share of the Federal District and the State of Mexico in the national migration stock fell from 47% to 41.8%, it slowed down in the 1990s. In the year 2000, 39.2% of all internal migrants lived in one of the two federal states in which the urban agglomeration of Mexico City is sited (see Table 2).

<b>Migration stock and share in all Mexican internal migration flows, selected states</b>			
<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Distrito Federal (2 289 097; 33.5%)	Edo. de México (2 875 372; 25.5%)	Edo. de México (3 911 185; 27.6%)	Edo. de México (5 732 542; 29.0%)
Edo. de México (1 034 960; 15.1%)	Distrito Federal (2 423 426; 21.5%)	Distrito Federal (2 011 233; 14.2%)	Distrito Federal (2 026 311; 10.2%)
Nuevo León (403 336; 5.9%)	Nuevo León (616 886; 5.4%)	Baja California (777 188; 5.4%)	Baja California (1 298 580; 6.6%)
Veracruz (328 126; 4.8%)	Jalisco (560 278; 4.9%)	Jalisco (717 918; 5.0%)	Jalisco (957 908; 4.8%)
Tamaulipas (321 966; 4.7%)	Baja California (512 284; 4.5%)	Nuevo León (714 154; 5.0%)	Nuevo León (897 539; 4.5%)
Jalisco (244 452; 3.5%)	Veracruz (499 425; 4.4%)	Veracruz (586 775; 4.1%)	Tamaulipas (744 368; 3.8%)
Baja California (233 910; 3.4%)	Tamaulipas (447 836; 3.9%)	Tamaulipas (530 665; 3.7%)	Veracruz (687 408; 3.5%)
Chihuahua (166 090; 2.4%)	Puebla (253 368; 2.2%)	Chihuahua (356 015; 2.5%)	Chihuahua (667 739; 3.4%)
Morelos (164 504; 2.4%)	Morelos (253 239; 2.2%)	Puebla (352 154; 2.4%)	Puebla (609 267; 3.1%)
Sonora (163 709; 2.4%)	Sonora (243 572; 2.1%)	Morelos (341 417; 2.4%)	Quintana Roo (507 372; 2.6%)

Table 2. Migration stock in selected states, 1970 – 2000

Data on internal migration reveal that the Mexican migration system underwent some decentralization in the last two decades. While the combined share of the State of Mexico and the Federal District fell significantly, Baja California and Chihuahua in the North of the country, Puebla in the centre and Quintana Roo in the South-East are attracting a growing number of internal migrants, increasing thereby significantly their share in the national migration stock (see Table 2).

Yet data in Table 2, which report changes in the migration stock, do not give information about migration balances. Moreover, they include intra-urban movements within the ZMCM, and that is why they overestimate “real” immigration to the State of Mexico. Dealing with migration balances and excluding the intra-urban mobility within Mexico City, changes in Mexican migration patterns become more obvious. Between 1985 and 1990, the most important destination for internal migrants was Baja California in the North, followed by Chihuahua (North) and Quintana Roo (South-east). The State of Mexico came only in fourth place, and the Federal District had, as already shown, a negative migration balance (see Table 3). The emergence of new poles of immigration is also reflected in the share of immigrants in the population of Quintana Roo (54.8%) and Baja California (47.1%), which are the highest in all of Mexico.

	<b>Adjusted migration balance</b>
Baja California	180 255
Chihuahua	77 933
Quintana Roo	73 841
Edo. de México	60 799
Morelos	51 614
Nuevo León	47 597
Tamaulipas	39 697
Jalisco	39 645
Querétaro	38 593
Aguascalientes	26 527

Table 3. Migration balance, 1985 to 1990

The decentralization of the Mexican migration system is also shown by the magnitude of the individual flows. The two largest are a) one which goes from the Federal District to the State of Mexico (15.8% of all movements between 1985 and 1990) and b) one in the opposite direction (2.3%). Excluding intra-urban mobility within the ZMCM, the largest single flow goes from Sinaloa to Baja California, followed by migration flows from the Federal District to four states in the central region (Puebla, Jalisco, Guanajuato and Michoacán) and the movements from Yucatán to Quintana Roo. The largest single flow heading to the State of Mexico (and hence very probably to the ZMCM) comes only in tenth place.

Another important component of the modifications in the Mexican migration system is the growing importance of small and middle-sized cities. Urban growth in the 1980s was fastest in cities with fewer than 50 000 inhabitants, followed by those with a population of 100 000 to 249 999. On the other hand, cities with more than a million inhabitants grew at a slower pace than in the decades before. This new trend in

urbanization was influenced by the altered migration patterns. The cities with the highest rates of immigration (percentage of immigrants in the total population) such as Cancún, Tijuana, Ensenada, La Paz, Nogales or Ciudad Juarez are without exception smaller than one million people, most of them having between 100 000 and 249 999 inhabitants.

Hitherto this paper has described major transformations in the patterns of cityward migration since the 1980s. In the following sections, these changes will be analyzed in the light of the deeper integration of Mexico into the international division of labor and the corresponding socio-economic restructuring. Four aspects must be discussed: 1) The sharp increase of internal migration in the 1990s, 2) the emergence of new destinations for migrants, 3) the turn of Mexico City from the main receiving area to a city of net-emigration in the 1980s, and finally, 4) the role of Mexico City in the Mexican migration system in the 1990s.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

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