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Entrenchment

The family also migrates and is completely transformed.
—MANUELA

Twenty-nine-year-old Manuela is the director of the Centro de Atención de Familias Migrantes e Indigenas (CAFAMI; Indigenous Migrant Family Care Center) in San Francisco de Tetlanohcan, Tlaxcala.[1] Manuela was born and raised in Tetlanohcan. Her father migrated to the United States without authorization when she was fourteen years old.[2] As the oldest of six children, she saw firsthand how migration affected her family. "It was really hard emotionally for my mother. She had to play two roles, the role of mother and father. And it was also hard for my siblings. They needed both parents, you see," she explained. Manuela went on to say that her younger siblings were able to finish high school because of remittances that her father sent from his work in the United States. When asked what it was like for her, she said, "Well, for me, I suppose it was different. I was older when he [my father] left. And I was able to go to university. But yes, it was also hard." "Also hard" was about as much as Manuela was willing to say about the impact of her father's migration on her. She was much more comfortable describing how hard migration was for her siblings and for other people in her community: "When I was young, I saw people just destroyed emotionally. It was really hard to see. And it continues, you know? Migration is not just about the migrant . . . the family also migrates and is completely transformed."

Manuela's current thinking about migration as transformative for families resulted from her participation in activities that would lead to the formation of CAFAMI. In 2001, a group of anthropology students from the Instituto de Investigaciones (Research Institute) in the neighboring state of Puebla conducted a one-year project in Tetlanohcan. The project sought to build relationships with youth through activities like photography and video. Manuela explained why she joined: "I liked what they were saying, that they wanted to help us build capacity and communicate how we were seeing things in our community." Soon it became clear that the main issue facing most of the youth was that one or both parents had migrated. Manuela and her fellow students chose to use their new videography skills to document life in Tetlanohcan for their parents in the United States. They interviewed their grandparents and others who were helping care for them. "We wanted to show them what life was like at home," Manuela said, "to help them connect to us but also for us to feel connected to them." Through this project, Manuela learned of the many difficulties other youth in her community were facing as a result of migration. She also saw how to open a space for dialogue and healing the wounds of family separation.

Manuela took a pause from the project to attend university but returned to her hometown in 2007, determined to build the same kind of community that she had been part of for women like her mother. Though migration from Mexico generally includes a significant number of women, migration from Tetlanohcan was male dominated. Tetlanohcan follows a pattern in many Mexican communities in which staying behind is feminized.[3] Many of the women Manuela worked with described themselves as *amas de la casa*, or housewives. Most of their husbands had migrated to the United States in the 1990s and had not returned. In more recent years, these women saw a second generation of migrants in their children. This new generation included many more women, but the family members they left behind tended to be their mothers and younger female siblings. This meant CAFAMI's membership remained almost exclusively female.

Over several months, many of these women spoke of their own multifaceted experiences of the migration of their family members. Those experiences and the experiences of their compatriots in other communities were encapsulated by Manuela when she said, "The family also migrates . . . and is completely transformed." Manuela's words describe the intersectional impacts of migration on both the emotional and economic levels, robbing migrant communities of their closest familial relationships and their ability to thrive economically. "The family also migrates" means that family members experience the same extractive forces that dislocate their loved ones and displace them into exploitative labor markets or as a justification for border fortification. For family members of unauthorized migrants in particular, dislocation and displacement are experienced as family separation prolonged by the illegalization of migration. Thus, spouses, parents, and children and a variety of other kinship ties are transformed into transnational relationships that are stretched and strained.

Dislocation and displacement are also entrenched through development policies that hold transnational families responsible for improving the very conditions that dislocate migrants and displace them into exploitative and/or carceral settings. Development policies touted by international banking institutions and the U.S. and Mexican governments seek to make migrant remittances central to economic betterment. Racialized as backward or economically unviable while in Mexico, migrants are characterized as "heroes" once in the United States because of the large sums they send to their families. The reliance on remittances sent by these "heroes" to improve living conditions reinforces the state's abandonment of its responsibility to provide for basic human needs and shifts such responsibility from the state to the very individuals feeling the brunt of divestment. Migrant community narratives expose the pernicious side of the hero metaphor and the myth that reliance on migrant remittances can lead to development. While remittances did improve access to certain basic human needs—clothing, food, housing, and education—they did not reverse the extractive forces of decades of economic abandonment. Though Manuela was not being strictly literal when she said "the family also migrates," the children of migrants often had to migrate because their parents' remittances could not fill the gaps left by neoliberal divestment. Thus, migrant families are "transformed" into successive generations responsible for undoing the harms of state divestment and reliance on migration.

Most studies examine one of these two intertwined dynamics—either exploring the impact of migration on familial relationships or its economic consequences[4]—but rarely talk about how the two intersect. One exception is Leisy Abrego, whose work on transnational Salvadoran families sheds light on the mixed economic and emotional impact of migration on parents who journey to the United States and their children in El Salvador.[5] Abrego writes that for migrants, "remittances are more than mere economic markers; they represent a sense of obligation between family members and often the expression of deep emotional bonds between relatives across borders."[6] This chapter examines the corresponding experiences of family members who receive remittances in both economic and emotional terms. It also broadens the analysis of migration's interwoven economic and emotional impacts beyond individual families to the community level. As the Mexican authors Rodolfo García Zamora and Juan Manuel Padilla have illustrated in their work on Zacatecan migrant communities, migration leads to depopulation, which has an impact on both family structures and economic opportunities.[7] This chapter builds on these insights in the context of diverse communities in Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco, and Tlaxcala where out-migration rates are more mixed but where migration's impacts on family relationships and community-wide economic health are similarly adverse. As the narratives here demonstrate, the impacts of migration mirror the dislocation and displacement of migrants with a third phase of the migration-as-extraction cycle—one that entrenches economic underdevelopment and family separation for those left behind.

To delineate the ways in which migration as extraction is entrenched in migrant communities, I first trace the emotional impacts of migration on family members of migrants and then move to the intersecting economic impacts on these same families. The stories of various actors in migrant communities—including family members, returned migrants, and community leaders—reveal the overwhelming emotional loss suffered by migrant families and the limited economic gains that entrench patterns of migration. It also compares the limited benefit of remittances to migrant communities with the clear benefits to the Mexican treasury and private financial interests in Mexico and the U.S. Just as unauthorized Mexican labor migration benefited U.S. industries, including the immigration enforcement industry, remittances benefited private and public elites in Mexico and the United States far more uniformly than it advanced the economic health of migrant communities.

MIGRATION AS EMOTIONAL EXTRACTION

Like Manuela, many migrant family members addressed how they "migrated" through the loss of their loved one, changes in parenting and other caregiving structures, and changes in their view of themselves. One of the people who was most outspoken about the sense of emotional loss that accompanied migration was Gabriela, a young member of CAFAMI whose father and older siblings had all migrated to the United States. During a CAFAMI meeting in her aunt's house, Gabriela said, "When I think of migration, I think of family disintegration. It is a wound that a mother cannot overcome." Like Manuela, she saw the pain that migration caused her own mother. And Gabriela felt the pain of family separation both for herself and for others in her community.

> For us, as young people it [migration] is a disaster. I see lots of young people who are addicted to drugs because they do not have parents here. Even the priests at our church are talking about it. About how our feelings can no longer be left to the side when talking about migration.

The "disaster" that Gabriela spoke of was unfortunately evidenced throughout Tetlanohcan. As Gabriela mentioned, one aspect of this was a high rate of drug addiction among young people. Tlaxcaltec youth (defined here as between the ages of twelve and seventeen) report using drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants at nearly twice the rate of the national average.[8] Though statewide statistics do not provide reasons for this, CAFAMI organizers were very clear that most youth are using drugs to help manage the separation from their parents.

Drug use was one of the more dire consequences of migration. But other, seemingly mundane consequences had a serious impact on migrant families. Irena, whose husband, Efraím, had been migrating to the United States since 1998, spoke about the impact of Efraím's absence on herself and her children: "While he was gone, it was very hard for me. I am not from Tetlanohcan. I did not know anyone and was always just in the house." When her children began attending school, it was even harder for her. "I am like a single parent," she said. "But the children don't listen to me like they would their father. Sometimes, I just have to let them do what they want." One of the hardest things for her was the uncertainty: "Efraím will stay in the U.S. a little longer so we can build a business, but we don't know how much longer. And that, yes, it hurts me."

The disastrous effects that Gabriela discussed and Irena's extended single parenthood are directly related to the U.S. policies that have made earlier patterns of circular migration from Mexico all but extinct. Migrants like Gabriela's family members and Irena's husband must remain in the United States for extended periods because they cannot afford the cost or the physical risk of crossing the border multiple times. The migrants' entrenched displacement into U.S. industries has a mirror effect in Mexico, where illegalized migration entrenches family separation and is social consequences. Moreover, these emotional losses are not made up for by economic gains. Gabriela attends school thanks to remittances from her older siblings. And Efraím has been able to support his children's education and build a house with remittances from his salary in the United States. However, these limited economic benefits do not erase the pain expressed by Gabriela and Irena. Another CAFAMI member put it succinctly: "Migration built the house I live in, but on balance, [migration] was not beneficial because it does not help me to have a house and not have my family together."

The pain of family separation also extends to parents who remain behind while their children migrate. This was the case for Celia, whose two sons had followed in their father's footsteps and migrated to the United States. When we spoke, Celia had not seen her sons for over ten years. "To me," Celia said, "it is the saddest thing. It is like little knives in my chest all the time. And I worry. It is so hard not to see my sons, to not know how they are doing." Celia's children were the second generation of her family to migrate. Her husband had been able to send enough remittances to support their children through high school. However, their diplomas did not allow them to obtain stable jobs. Stuck in Tlaxcala's volatile and underpaid maquiladora industry, Celia's sons decided to make the journey together to the United States. Celia's family, like many families throughout Mexico, was experiencing the multigenerational nature of the migration cycle.

ECONOMIC EXTRACTION

The inability of families like Celia's to stop the migration cycle is rooted in economic development policies that do not aim to reverse the policies of dislocation outlined in chapter 1 but rather seek to entrench those policies and displace responsibility for development onto migrants. By "development," I mean the ability of communities to meet basic human needs such as nutrition, education, health care, and housing and to have a social safety net.[9] International financial organizations, the Mexican and U.S. governments, and some migration scholars have long posited that remittances sent by migrants could be used to improve access to these basic human needs in migrant sending communities.[10] Stephen Castles and Raúl Delgado Wise have dubbed this malapportionment of responsibility the "remittances to development agenda" because of the extent to which it "places the role of remittances at the forefront in . . . development."[11] In the context of ongoing neoliberal economic restructuring, the remittances-to-development agenda emerges as a means to entrench state divestment from migrant communities, privatizing and outsourcing development to the very people dislocated by such divestment.

Mexico in particular has developed policies like 3x1 that require investments from migrants in order to obtain state resources for development projects. This excludes most migrant communities, including the majority of communities profiled here. Thus, in practical terms its impacts are extremely limited. But even in the communities where 3x1 projects have been successful, the theoretical basis of the program is circular: it relies on migration to solve the economic problems that caused migration. Moreover, it offloads the state's obligation to provide for its citizens' basic human needs onto migrants, counting on "some of the most exploited workers in the world [to] make up for the failure of mainstream development policies."[12] Thus, 3x1 and other remittance-to-development programs are not designed to counteract neoliberal economic abandonment. Rather, they are new forms of neoliberalism that act to extend and concretize the cycles of dislocation and displacement as they cause communities to become reliant on remittance transfers from abroad rather than facilitate the development of local sustainable sources of income. The remittances-to-development agenda serves to entrench migration as a solution to the economic gaps left by neoliberal development.

Migrant community narratives expose the extent to which the remittances-to-development agenda is a myth. As Irena and Celia describe, remittances help families meet basic necessities, build better homes, and educate their children, but they do not sustainably increase access to food, shelter, and education for the community as a whole. Rather, the remittance-led development model results in further dependence on migration and remittances, entrenching the economic gaps that dislocate people from their home communities and displace them into exploitative industries in the United States.

The Myth of the Remittances-to-Development Agenda

Some 228 miles south of Tetlanohcan, Don Margarito Santos, one of the *autoridades* (public officials) for Laguna Guadalupe de Yucunicoco (Laguna), summarized the impact of migration on communities as a whole. In talking with me about conditions in Laguna, Don Santos lamented: "People think that migration is a benefit, but we don't have anything in my pueblo. If we can get good work [in the United States], we can build a house for ourselves, buy clothes, a car. But it does nothing for the whole pueblo."

One of the other key resources "the whole pueblo" needed was water for the small farmers, which would require an irrigation line. Once an area that could thrive on rain-fed agriculture, the Mixteca region where Laguna is located had seen climate change–induced reductions in annual rainfall from the 1980s on. The lack of irrigation in this region is tied to resource distribution policies beginning in the 1960s that favored government support for large commercial farms close the U.S. border and actively disinvested from small farms like those in the Mixteca. These policies destroyed the livelihoods of almost all small farmers, forcing them north to find work. Don Santos and many others had migrated from Laguna precisely because of this lack of irrigation and cuts to agricultural supports from the 1980s. To try to help other community members stay in Mexico, Don Santos and other migrants had raised about $150,000 MXN on top of the moneys they sent to their families to participate in 3x1. The basic structure of 3x1 is to match private funds collected by migrants from a particular community with equivalent levels of public funding from the three government, federal, state and municipal levels with jurisdiction over that community. The community's governing municipality collects funds from federal and state agencies and then disburses these "three" parts to match the migrants' funds. To be eligible, migrants have to form a hometown association in the United States that collects funds exclusively for use in the 3x1 program. Don Santos was a member of a hometown association and raised money for the association over and above the amounts he sent to his family members.

Because Don Santos was part of an Indigenous community that had set up an *autoridad* (collective governing council) under the *usos y constumbres* (ways and customs) form of government,[13] the funds for the 3x1 program should have been disbursed through the budget line item Ramo 33.[14] But as Don Santos explained, "The resources do not get to us. We were supposed to get $325,000 MXN in 2012, but we were left with only $120,000 MXN." In this case, Don Santos was describing the unwillingness of the state government of Oaxaca to release funds to the municipality of Santiago de Juxtlahuaca, which in turn could disburse funds under Ramo 33. The efforts of Don Santos and his fellow community members finally forced some resources to be released in 2017, which allowed the pueblo to build an irrigation system. However, even those funds were not fully distributed.

> This year [2017], we were able to get resources for infrastructure projects, but the money did not cover all the expenses of the project. We got $57,000 to $67,000 MXN under Ramo 33. But it did not cover all the cement that we needed. We got water to come to the lower half of the village, but those that live up the hill don't have water. They have to draw water from the well below and walk up with it.

At least part of the reason for the delays was the political disagreement between the autoridad that Don Santos and others were part of and municipal government, which was led by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI; Institutional Revolutionary Party). The PRI in Mexico has a long history of selectively distributing funds only to those who supported them in prior elections,[15] and Don Santos and others supported the opposition party. Thus, a combination of patronage politics and what seemed to be bureaucratic inefficiency was impeding rather than supporting the project that so many migrants had contributed to. The result was that nearly ten years after migrants raised funds, half of the community in Laguna was still left without the necessary resources to make their land usable.

Similar patterns played out across the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. In the village of Santa María Natividad, years of work by autoridades in Mexico and the community members in the United States resulted in the approval of a 3x1 project in 2009 to build a drainage and sewer system. The hometown association had raised $250,000 MXN, and the project was decided on by a process involving the autoridades in the village and migrants living in the United States. Like the irrigation project in Laguna, it took years for the federal, state, and local governments to disburse their share of the funding. And as in Laguna, the residents of Santa María Natividad had supported the candidate opposing the then-mayor of their governing municipality, Ixtapantepec Nieves. By March 2013, when I visited Santa María, the autoridades held a day-long meeting to discuss how to obtain the funds that remained undisbursed. Their discussions included potential political as well as legal interventions. Their efforts worked to some extent as they were able to receive some funds. However, by 2017, it had become clear that there were insufficient funds to complete the project. Pipes had been laid, but they had not yet built the water treatment system for sewage. This led one of the organizers working with the autoridades in Santa María to lament, "All that work will amount to nothing if we can't finish the project." In effect, the enormous financial contribution made by migrants themselves was in danger of being wasted due to bureaucratic maneuvering.

While the communities in the Mixteca were able to participate in 3x1, the vast majority of communities in Mexico cannot. As Manuela's father, Rodolfo, indicated, "We had a hard time trying to use 3x1 [in Tetlanohcan] because the minimum contribution from us is $100,000 MXN, and many people do not have that kind of money. You also need a club in the U.S. with a permanent person to help organize the funds." Empirical data show that Rodolfo and his neighbors' inability to participate in 3x1 was not unique. Only one percent of remittances sent by migrants is matched through 3x1.[16] In 2013, about 584 municipalities participated in 3x1,[17] whereas 1,123 municipalities showed at least a medium level of out-migration during the same period.[18] Tlaxcala, the state that Rodolfo was from, had a few 3x1 projects listed. However, Tabasco, the state where many of the migrants interviewed were from, did not have a single project.

To put into perspective the level of state involvement in development projects, Rodolfo García Zamora points out that in 2006, the Mexican government spent $15 million pesos (the equivalent of about US$1.3 million) on 3x1 *for the entire year*, while Mexican migrants were remitting $62 million pesos

TABLE 4 Similarities in Use of Remittances across Communities

	Tabasco	Oaxaca	Tlaxcala	Puebla
Community organization present 2012–17	None	FIOB founded 2004	CAFAMI founded 2007	CAFAMI expansion 2016
No. of 3x1 projects in state in 2013	0	35	7	20
Uses of remittances #1	Basic necessities (n = 21)	Basic necessities (n = 10)	Basic necessities (n = 14)	Basic necessities (n = 6)
Uses of remittances #2	Education (n = 7)	Education/build a house/buy land (n = 5 for each)	Education (n = 7)	Build house (n = 4)

(or US$6 million) *a day*.[19] Consequently, the entire amount spent by the Mexican government equaled not even 10 percent of what its citizens from abroad contributed to Mexican households. As the stories from the Mixteca region show, the low levels of support provided by 3x1 and the political corruption that exists in many municipalities have led projects to stagnate. Meanwhile, the gaps left by neoliberal underdevelopment—gaps like lack of irrigation or basic sewer drainage—remain intact and even entrenched.

Dependency on Migration

The failure of remittance-to-development programs like 3x1 to reverse structural economic gaps parallels the more widespread inability of remittances from individual migrants to lead to economic development for communities as a whole. Where access to 3x1 was limited, all of the migrants and migrant families profiled participated in individual remittance transfers. The amount of money that migrants remit each year is quite significant, whether viewed at the individual, familial, community, or even countrywide level. Individual migrants like Rodolfo and Irena's husband, Efraím, reported sending close to half their earnings to their families in Mexico. Their narratives are consistent with studies showing that undocumented migrants sent 49 percent of their earnings and documented migrants sent 44 percent of their earnings to family members.[20] Rodolfo's and Efraím's family members—Manuela and Irena, respectively—reported being able to meet some basic human needs like food, shelter, clothing, and access to education with these remittances (table 4). At the community level, individual remittance transfers are even higher. For example, the communities of Soyataco and Chiltepec, Tabasco, received as much as US$10 million a year from 2013 to 2018.[21] And at the national level, remittances provide a significant infusion of income for the Mexican economy overall. In 2018, Mexico received US$33.4 billion in remittances from its citizens abroad, making remittances one of the largest contributors to Mexico's gross domestic

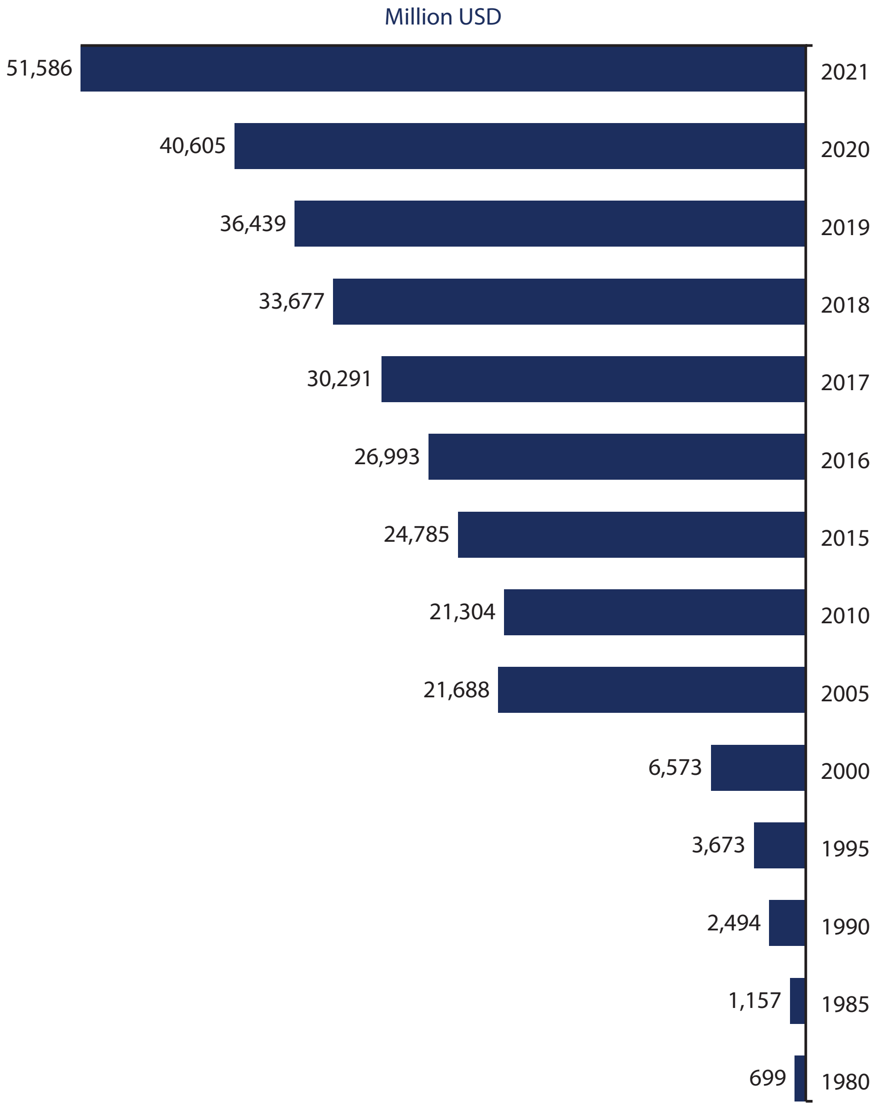

FIGURE 14. Remittances Sent from the United States to Mexico, 1980–2021.

product (GDP) (figure 14).[22] Despite these very large distributions of funds from relatively low-income individuals, it is clear from the collective experiences of people in migrant communities that these funds were insufficient to build up the industries destroyed by neoliberal economic restructuring. In particular, remittance investments in agriculture or land, in small businesses, or in education made important improvements for individuals or families but were unable to reverse state divestment from agriculture, manufacturing, and education (see chap. 1). They left intact the dependence on migration.

Abandonment of Small-Producing Agriculture

One of the most important uses of individual remittances, from the migrants' perspective, has been the acquisition of land. Land has historically and contemporaneously been viewed as a source of financial security and freedom in rural Mexico. Indigenous communities have struggled to maintain control of land since the sixteenth century. In the more recent past, after decades of land confiscation and consolidation under Porfirio Díaz (1876–80, 1884–1911), the Mexican Revolution broke out in large part to wrest control of land from large plantation owners. As a result of the Revolution, the Mexican Constitution contains Article 27, a unique provision that in its original form declared that all land belonged to all people in Mexico and gave the government power to seize large landholdings for the purpose of redistributing it to agrarian communities as *ejidos* (collectively owned parcels of land with usufruct rights).[23] The same provision restricted the amount of land that could be owned by foreigners.[24] In the twenty-first century, access to land continues to have deep meaning for many small farmers, hearkening back to the revolutionary struggle engaged in by many of their ancestors. However, the ejido system established by Article 27 only redistributed a small fraction of the arable land and that small fraction has been subdivided into ever smaller parcels for successive generations. To realize their dreams of landownership, then, small farmers take work in northern Mexico or the United States to earn enough money to buy additional tracts that they aspire to make profitable. These aspirations have been stymied by the interests of Mexican and U.S. elites who successfully cast these small farmers as less economically viable and therefore less worthy of support than their large, corporate counterparts.[25] These characterizations resulted in far more support for large, irrigated, export-facing commercial farms than the small producers who became migrant farmworkers. Thus the promise of Article 27 has been undermined by a continued effort to enrich large corporate interests at the expense of small farmers.

One of these small farmers was Don Remedio, who took work as a contract farm laborer in the United States to realize his dream of owning his own land. With his earnings in the United States, Don Remedio was able to buy a one-hectare parcel after he returned from his first trip in 1980. For the first few years, Don Remedio was able to make enough profit from this small parcel to pay his family's expenses. However, those earnings dropped dramatically after the neoliberal reforms of 1982–88 gutted agricultural supports for small farmers. Don Remedio explained:

> I used to farm cacao and coconut. The government co-op used to buy from us for about $2.50 MXN a kilo. We used to harvest so much that we would get about $3,000 MXN biweekly but no more. The government stopped supporting us. The co-op closed about twenty years ago [approximately 1993]. We were losing huge amounts of money, like $7 million MXN.

When Don Remedio said "the government stopped supporting us," he was referring to the decreases and eventual termination of price supports for small producers like himself. These supports, along with other agricultural subsidies for small farmers, were cut sharply—by 85 percent—between 1980 and 1989.[26] At the same time, large commercial farms continued to enjoy stable or even increasing levels of public support, effectively distributing resources away from small producers like Don Remedio to large corporate farms like Anderson Clayton. The impact of these changes on small farmers in the South and Southeast in particular was devastating. The price of the cacao that Don Remedio grew on most of his land dropped a colossal 70 percent between 1984 and 1992.[27]

Exacerbating the manufactured drop in prices for locally produced goods was the elimination of existing public support for stabilizing agricultural earnings. In saying that the government co-op was "no more," Don Remedio was referring to the elimination of the cooperative store run under the now-defunct Mexican agency, Compañia National de Subsitencias Populares (CONASUPO; National Company of Popular Subsistence).[28] CONASUPO's main role prior to 1986 was to provide fairly intense support to agriculture in the form of import tariffs and quotas, price supports for producers of stable crops, and subsidies for agricultural inputs like fertilizer and machinery.[29] It also guaranteed a market for farmers and a minimum price in those markets.[30] However, the IMF saw cutting CONASUPO's budget as key to fulfill the austerity goals it set out for the Mexican government as a condition of its loans.[31] By 1991, CONASUPO had severely reduced its supports for all crops other than corn and beans, and by 1999, the agency was terminated altogether.[32] Don Remedio, like millions of other small producers, were caught in a vicious cycle labeled economically unviable for failing to thrive in these austere conditions while funding continued to flow to large corporate agribusiness.

The inability of small farmers like Don Remedio to make their lands profitable was exacerbated by NAFTA in 1994. Because of NAFTA, small grain farmers in Mexico (e.g., corn, wheat, and sorghum producers) would soon face competition from highly subsidized and mechanized U.S. imports. Due to widespread public pressure, the Mexican government introduced a program they said would counteract NAFTA's most disastrous impacts. The Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo (PROCAMPO; Program for Direct Support to the Countryside) would subsidize farmers at a level amount per hectare, ostensibly targeting supports to the smaller producers. However, access to the program was limited in ways that actually excluded small producers like Don Remedio. The payment by hectare model extended and exacerbated Mexican policies benefiting large agribusinesses. Don Remedio's one hectare would only have drawn about US$68 a year,[33] less than one-tenth of what he had invested from his own earnings in the United States a decade earlier. Meanwhile, many large corporate farms could stand to obtain upwards of US$10,000 a year.

Political corruption added to the inability of returned migrants to make use of PROCAMPO, even when they had more land. Don Remedio's neighbor, Don Pablo, had secured eight hectares with his earnings from the United States in the 1960s. But making the land profitable was challenging because, as he said, "[the government] do[es] not want to risk giving you money because there is no irrigation so you are at the mercy of the rains," and "there are no banks that give agricultural credit. There is not that custom." These structural barriers, faced equally by farmers in the Mixteca, made sustaining a living from the land difficult for Don Pablo. After many years, Don Pablo was one of a few small farmers to gain access to PROCAMPO but never saw the funds he was promised, much like the communities in the Mixteca never saw their 3x1 funds materialize. Don Pablo detailed his experience with PROCAMPO as we toured his landholdings.

> About six years ago [approximately 2006], [the] government . . . took us to a meeting and said that they were going to give us $10,000 MXN annually. They gave us a card that we could use to go to the bank and get the money that they deposited. But after the first time, they never deposited money again. The money just stays between themselves. There is little help for the farmland. They say that they are spending millions but it does not arrive.

The theme of money not arriving unfortunately resounds through all of the areas profiled in this book. In Tlaxcala, Don Isaís experienced impediments similar to those of Don Pablo and the returned migrants in the Mixteca. Don Isaís said that when he attempted to apply for PROCAMPO, "They told me no, they will not help me because I went abroad." Clearly, prior experience as a migrant is not a disqualification as Don Pablo was able to participate in the program as a returned bracero. Both Don Pablo's experience of being promised money that never arrived and Don Isaís's experience of being blocked from applying altogether highlight the myriad ways in which the implementation of these policies is corrupted. These political manipulations, combined with the paucity of funds available for distribution to small farms, means that very few returned migrants can make agriculture profitable even with investment from abroad.

Where migrants like Don Remedio, Don Pablo, Don Isaís, and those in the Mixteca continued to face roadblocks to materializing sustained benefits from their remittance-based investments in agriculture, large corporate farms enjoy the majority of government support. More than half of all agricultural supports still flow to large commercial farms in northern Mexico, despite the fact that the majority of producers in Mexico are small. This skewed distribution of resources is rooted in paternalistic characterizations of larger corporate enterprises as "economically viable" and small producers like Don Remedio as requiring "a social welfare approach."[34] The resulting flow of resources entrenches patterns of divestment from migrant communities that dislocate and displace people into the extremely exploitative agricultural labor markets in northern Mexico and the United States.

Abandonment of Locally Based Manufacturing

The remittances-to-development agenda extends beyond agriculture to maintain that remittance-based investments in small businesses should be able to produce sufficient income to replace migration as a source of sustenance and economic betterment.[35] However, as with remittance-based investments in agriculture, migrants faced unfair competition from larger businesses, impeding the returns they could garner from their investment. In Tetlanohcan, Tlaxcala, for example, migrant families like Irena and Efraím's were unable to overcome the "maquiladorization" of their community with local businesses. Parallel to its investments in large commercial farms, the Mexican government has invested since the late 1980s in expanding the maquiladora sector in Tlaxcala. In particular, large U.S.-based clothing retailers located assembly plants in Tlaxcala, displacing the local artisanal embroiderers into contingent, low-paid work. Irena was one of thousands of women displaced from local production into the maquiladoras with unsafe conditions and unstable hours. Efraím also worked in the sector, but the couple found that they could not meet their expenses with the unsteady and low-wage work. The displacement of local industry and investment in corporate retailers eventually displaced Efraím into the United States, separating the family for a lengthy period. When Irena and I spoke, Efraím was trying to remit enough to cover both the family's expenses and a business selling shoes and embroidered blouses. The money that Efraím sent allowed Irena to purchase materials and a storefront with the goal of showcasing her goods. However, the remittances are not sufficient to allow Irena to stop working full-time in the maquiladora. "I hardly do any business," Irena lamented. "[So] we are dependent on remittances." Thus, despite Irena and Efraím's sacrifices, their ability to turn their investment into a sustainable income was elusive.

A similar pattern emerged in Chiltepec, Tabasco, where multinational oil companies had pushed small shrimpers out of business starting in the 1980s. One of the most well-resourced returned migrants to Chiltepec was Serena, who had worked in the United States as a jaibera for over a decade. Serena tried to use some of her earnings to open a business. "With the money that I made in the last years [in the United States], I bought a restaurant on the malecón of Chiltepec called El Costeño," she said. Serena's investment was significant, using almost half of the US$20,000 that she had saved from her work in the United States. But she also invested wisely. As she explained, "I bought [the restaurant] from my mother-in-law, so I did not have to pay a lot." Serena and I were speaking in the restaurant for the better part of a day, but there were no customers in El Costeño or other nearby restaurants that had been opened by returned jaiberas. After talking several times similarly uninterrupted by customers, Serena conceded, "The restaurant does not make much money."

The lack of customers on Chiltepec's malecón stemmed from the same maldistribution of resources as that found in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Just as the Mexican state provided disproportionately higher support for corporate agribusinesses and maquiladoras, public support and infrastructure were distributed away from small local businesses like Serena's toward multinational oil companies. As outlined in chapter 1, foreign corporations like Exxon and British Petroleum benefited from the privatization of Mexican oil refining and regulations prohibiting shrimp farming. These policies devastated Chiltepec's historic fishing and shrimping industries and spurred massive out-migration. Migrants like Serena who tried to invest in the local economy were thwarted by ongoing support for those same multinationals that spurred the building of U.S.-based hotel and restaurant chains in nearby El Bellote. These chains bustled with activity while Serena's and the other jaiberas' restaurants remained empty. A fitting metaphor for the distributive inequities was the road to Chiltepec. A two-lane, paved highway from Tabasco's capital ends in El Bellote, a physical marker of the support for that enclave and the economic abandonment of towns like Chiltepec on the other side of the highway. Serena and other returned migrants were trying to push for the highway's expansion so that travelers could patronize their local businesses, but as of 2013, they had not been able to secure meetings with any state or federal officials. Just as with agriculture, the distribution of state support away from small enterprise created a structural barrier to the success of remittance investments like Serena's.

Even businesses that had more success for their immediate owners had limited impacts on the surrounding community. When Don Santos said, "People think migration is a benefit, . . . but it does nothing for the whole pueblo," he was explicitly referring to his pueblo, Laguna. But his words encompass the experience of many of the communities in the Mixteca. In nearby Santa María Natividad, for example, Luna and Ricardo had returned to their hometown with several thousand dollars that they were able to save from their time in the United States. Ricardo was now an autoridad, one of the governors of the town, and I spoke with Luna and him during the autoridades meeting at which they discussed the 3x1 drainage pipes project. Luna and Ricardo had a business raising and selling goats. "There is a market for these goats," Luna explained. "We sell them for festivals and celebrations. We used to sell to a wholesaler in Huajuapan [the closest town], but he paid cheap so now we sell them directly to people because they know us." Indeed, as we spoke, one of their goats was cooking as part of the formalities for the autoridades meeting. According to Luna, large goats like the one being cooked for the meeting we were attending sold for $1,800 MXN or about US$175. Luna and Ricardo and Ricardo's cousin Juan raise and sell about three hundred goats a year, netting the business associates about US$45,000 annually. From this, they have to maintain their own families, pay for festivals as autoridades, and help support other family members who have not migrated. The total sum Luna and Ricardo earn in a year is lavish for Santa María Natividad. Yet their earnings do not necessarily have what economists call "multiplier effects" that benefit the community as a whole.[36] Luna and Ricardo's business did allow them to earn a sustainable income for themselves but not enough to employ or create adjacent sources of income for neighbors. As long as large-scale support was limited to multinational corporations, migrant investments in smaller enterprise would continue to spur more migration but would not be able to offset the divestment from migrant communities.

The Education Gap

Migrant investments in land and small businesses cannot overcome one of the most widespread gaps left by neoliberal restructuring and still experienced by migrant communities despite decades of out-migration and remittance investments: the lack of funding for education. Nearly all of the migrants interviewed indicated that at least part of their earnings went toward paying for educational expenses for their children. This was equally the case for migrants who journeyed north in the 1960s as it was for those whose journeys occurred over forty years later. Education is underfunded in rural areas of Mexico, and people must pay fees. As I learned from Don Santos, even in 2017, after large sums of migrant remittances had been invested in community projects in Laguna, "there are a lot of necessities in the community." He went on to specify, "The school needs work, we need electricity. The school we have is only a *primaria*, and it is not comfortable because there are no windows. We don't have a *secundaria* or *preparatoria* in the town. The kids who can go to Santa María, which is about 35 to 40 minutes [away]." Don Santos's description of his particular locality reflects larger patterns of divestment from education in rural states like Oaxaca that mirror other patterns of resource maldistribution favoring industry in the north of the country.[37] These patterns pushed successive generations of parents to migrate from all of the areas profiled. And it also pushed some of the children whose education was funded by remittances to migrate themselves.

A significant gap left by educational divestment, as outlined by Don Santos, is the lack of support for building schools in rural areas. As a result, parents in places like Laguna are required to pay to transport their children to schools in far-off villages or city centers. These additional expenses, not faced by parents in larger urban settings, exacerbate educational inequality in rural areas. Don Santos's nearby neighbor, Elfego, related that the lack of schools in San Martín Duraznos pushed him and now his two oldest children to migrate. Elfego began migrating in 1985 before he had children. However, he continued to migrate for much longer than he had planned to try to help his children receive more education than he had. When we spoke, Elfego beamed as he told me, "With the money I made in the U.S. I was able to educate all four of my children through *secundaria*." Because of the slowdown in investments in education, there was no secundaria in San Martín Duraznos. He had to send his children 30 kilometers (about 18.5 miles) to Santiago de Juxtlahuaca. Elfego and his wife decided to have their children commute rather than stay in town because the journey was about an hour each way. But this added to the expenses for the school. “We had to pay for the travel to Jux, and we had to pay for books, the subscription fee (tuition), pay for internet that they used at the school and other things.” With all of these expenses, Elfego was not able to pay for his children’s education beyond secundaria. “The oldest started to attend Santa Domingo Tonalá [about two hours away on the road to Huajuapan] for *preparatoria*, but we just could not afford it.” As a result, Elfego’s oldest two children journeyed to the United States to work, entrenching migration as a survival strategy for Elfego’s family.

The experience of Elfgeo’s immediate family mirrors the reliance on migration at a community-wide level in all of the regions profiled. A closer look at migrant narratives from Soyataco shows how migrant investments in education have devolved from supporting children to complete higher education to requiring support for children to enter and complete high school. Those like Don Pablo and Don Remedio who migrated from the 1960s to the late 1980s were able to facilitate significant social mobility for their children through a bachelor’s degree. Even then, some of these children migrated due to suppressed wages. But as adherence to neoliberal economic policies became entrenched, migrants who sought to replicate these returns in the 1990s and 2000s were thwarted by deepened cuts to education spending. In these later years, people were pushed to migrate to pay for basic pre-college educational fees.

In the 1960s, Don Pablo had used his earnings from the Bracero Program to “achieve sending my eight children to school. . . . They all finished their studies, and we are at peace, thank God.” But this “peace” was not achieved immediately. Don Pablo described how one of his children had to migrate despite becoming a doctor. “He actually went to the U.S. illegally because he could not find work here. But he did not like it there, did not like having to look for work every few weeks, so he came back. He works in Nacajuaca now but has a very low salary.”

Almost twenty years later, as the IMF-led economic transformation was under way in Mexico, Don Remedio was remitting money from his trips to the United States and Canada. He told me about one of his key achievements from these trips: “I educated all nine of my children. They are all professionals now.” Like Don Pablo’s family, Don Remedio’s family experienced a significant step up the economic ladder thanks to the investment of remittance dollars. However, by the early 1990s, the Mexican government decentralized school funding and governance, resulting in a sharp decrease in education funding in rural areas like Soyataco. Primary and secondary schools began charging tuition to support their budgets. The enormous sums remitted by Don Pablo and Don Remedio could not counteract these ongoing cuts to education. Their neighbor, Elias, migrated in 1999 precisely to pay for the additional costs of high school brought about by neoliberal disinvestment. Elias explained:

> I never intended to go to the United States. If the basic education was more affordable or I was able to earn enough to pay the fees, I never would have gone. I agree that parents should pay something for an education. People should contribute. But right now, the fees are ridiculous.

The "ridiculous" fees that Elias had to pay were new in Soyataco and forced many more people to migrate. Though Elias eventually succeeded in supporting his children to complete high school, he could only do so by migrating to the United States, and his separation from his family lasted much longer than Don Pablo's or Don Remedio's. Thus, while Elias's family certainly benefited from migration economically, they endured an emotional cost. And like Don Pablo's and Don Remedio's private investments in their family, Elias's investments did not improve access to education in Soyataco as a whole.

A similar pattern emerged in Sanctorum, Tlaxcala, another rural community that was abandoned by Mexican policy makers in the drive toward neoliberalization and the remittance-to-development agenda. As in the rural communities of Oaxaca and Tabasco, schools in Sanctorum began to charge fees when their public funding was reduced in the 1990s. Isaís, a migrant from Sanctorum, explained, "Before you did not have to pay for these schools. But now you do. Now you have to pay for fees, uniforms, books, internet. And sometimes they collect money for other things for the teachers." These fees could total as much as $2,500 MXN (US$250 USD) a year for primaria, $3,000 MXN a year for secundaria, and $5,000 MXN a year for preparatoria. For small farmers like Isaís, this represented close to 30 percent of their income. Since 2000, Isaís had been migrating to Canada as a contract laborer to pay for his children's education. Seventeen years later, he was still working so that his children could complete college degrees. As Isaís explained, his continued migration was necessary in an economy that had simultaneously decreased support for basic education and increased the credentials necessary to obtain almost any kind of work. "It is different today, the type of life," Isaís indicated. "You need a college degree now for any work. If you have a college degree, you can get paid."

Isaís's neighbor Julio exemplified the need for ever higher educational levels for a wider range of jobs. Julio was the child of U.S. returned migrants. He had grown up in Sanctorum and was able to complete high school thanks to his parents' contributions to his educational fees. However, he was not able to turn that diploma into a sustainable job in Sanctorum. Julio described applying for jobs in offices and even at restaurants and being turned down for a lack of credentials. The one job that Julio could get was work in a maquiladora, but Julio said that the pay was low for what they wanted and more importantly, "the work was too temporary." As a result, even after the investment that Julio's parents made in his education, he had to migrate to the United States to "get ahead."

About 22 miles from Sanctorum, in the more urban center of Tetlanohcan, Rodolfo was reflecting on his ability to help Manuela and her younger siblings attend school. However, Rodolfo also saw the larger economic picture, beyond his family and even beyond his community in Tetlanohcan. "Migration benefited my family," he said. "I sent money to maintain my children. But I think that the remittances helped the government more than my own family. It helps the government to say all this money is coming into the country." Rodolfo was describing the importance of remittances as a source of foreign exchange for countries like Mexico. The availability of foreign exchange in developing countries is seen as a sign of the country's overall economic health and leads to better credit ratings and the ability to attract foreign investment and loans.[38] By 2006, the nearly US$26 billion sent in remittances had joined oil exports, foreign direct investment, and the maquiladora sector as the leading sources of foreign exchange for the Mexican government.[39] And by 2019, remittances had reached US$36 billion, surpassing oil exports to become the leading source of foreign exchange.[40] As longtime scholars of the Mexican economy have observed, "For Mexico's macroeconomy, remittances are the most dynamic source of foreign exchange and the mainstay of the balance of trade."[41] "Migrants' hard currency," argue others, "helps reposition the country in the global financial world, subsidizes the import of goods and services to modernize national industries, and maintains the consumption of foreign goods."[42] Remittances from migrants like Rodolfo, Elias, and Elfego are the vehicle by which the Mexican government has managed to leverage additional foreign debt and maintain a good credit rating. And while the foreign investment this attracts could theoretically assist in improving overall economic conditions, it actually operates to redirect resources from small local enterprises like those of Serena, Irena, and others and toward multinational corporations.[43]

In addition to shoring up the Mexican treasury, the billions of dollars remitted by migrants help families subsist and partially cover the social costs and minimal infrastructure previously supported by public investment.[44] As exemplified by the stories in this chapter, remittances helped cover the costs of basic necessities for families like Irena and Efraím's, helped pay for educational expenses for the children of Elias, Elfego, and others, and helped all of these families build better homes. Thus, remittances enrich the Mexican state in two key ways—by allowing it to continue to show the world an economically stable face and by allowing it to argue to its own citizens that it is pursuing economic development for their benefit without taking responsibility for that development.

Migrant remittances also contribute to the profits of U.S.-based institutions involved in the transfer of funds from migrants to their families. By 1996, Western Union and MoneyGram controlled the transfer of 97 percent of moneys remitted from the United States.[45] These two companies abused their market share and extracted from migrants through transaction fees, temporarily investing migrant's hard-earned funds before transferring them and artificially establishing exchange rates disfavoring the dollars migrants were seeking to transmit.[46] Though these practices were eventually curtailed, they laid the groundwork for what would become a "remittance transfer industry," involving a number of U.S.-based corporations in the delivery of funds from migrants to their families abroad.[47] In the 2000s, the bilateral Partnership for Prosperity encouraged migrants to use formal banking institutions, transferring much of the profit made by money exchanges to multinational banks. Companies like J. P. Morgan Securities and Merrill Lynch and Company made hundreds of millions of dollars by securitizing the expected amount of remittances that would enter the formal banking system as a result of the Partnership for Prosperity.[48] The remittance transfer industry became so profitable that a wide range of corporations, from AT&T to CitiBank to WalMart, became involved.[49] These companies joined their counterparts that extracted from migrant labor or migrant incarceration with extraction from migrants' efforts to support their families.

Migrants like Rodolfo and migrant family members like Manuela see the benefits that inured to U.S. corporations and Mexican governmental interests while their communities suffered. They recognize the effects of the remittance-to-development agenda as foisting migrants into the role of heroes that can develop the nation while the state continues to forgo its obligations and successive generations are dislocated and displaced. They experience the pain of family separation, even family disintegration, as migration became entrenched as the model for economic development. And migrant communities are responding to the abandonment of their communities with organized demands and programs to wrest resources from the state, create local alternatives to migration, and build bridges to reconnect families. These efforts are highlighted in the next chapter, showing that migrants are not passive participants in the migration-as-extraction cycle but rather actively seeking to disrupt that cycle and replace it with greater self-determination and greater economic and emotional stability.