

Wednesday, 8 January / Miércoles 8 de enero

14:00-15:30: Salón Rubí

Special Session / Sesión Especial

**International Labor Migration and Changing Latin American
Landscapes and Societies**

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**La migración laboral internacional y cambios en paisajes y sociedades
latinoamericanas**

Co-Chairs: Claudia Radel, Mariel Aguilar-Støen

This panel will bring together researchers from geography and other disciplines, who are engaged in research on the impact of international migration on landscapes and societies in Andean and Central American countries, including Mexico. Each panel participant will summarize key research questions addressed, methods and research approaches, and key findings to date. Each panel participant will be asked additionally to summarize key research questions addressed, methods and research approaches, and key findings to date. Each panel participant will be asked additionally to articulate one key theoretical contribution and one key potential policy-oriented application. The objectives of the panel are to (1) enhance communication across research projects, (2) identify commonalities, contradictions & contrasts, and points of intersection, and (3) encourage cross-project collaboration. Time will be allocated to discussion among panel participants and the audience.

Esta sesión reúne geógrafos e investigadores de distintas disciplinas que participan en investigación sobre el impacto de la migración internacional en los paisajes y sociedades de México, Centroamérica y la Región Andina. Cada participante resumirá las preguntas claves, métodos y orientación del estudio, y resultados principales a la fecha. Cada integrante de la sesión también articulará una contribución fundamental de su investigación a la teoría y un aporte clave a la política pública. Los objetivos del panel son: (1) fomentar comunicación entre investigadores; (2) identificar similitudes, diferencias y puntos de intersección; (3) estimular la colaboración entre proyectos. Habrá tiempo para el diálogo entre participantes en la sesión y el público.

Agriculture, land tenure and international migration in rural Guatemala

Mariel Aguilar-Støen,* Matthew Taylor** and Edwin Castellanos***

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In this paper we ask: what is the effect of migration and remittances on land tenure, agriculture and forests? We base analysis on empirical evidence from four rural communities in Guatemala. Our results suggest remittances improve access to agricultural land by migrant families. Improved access to land by migrants fosters, depending on context, more equitable local land distribution patterns or land concentration by migrant families. Changes in the country's political economy combine to stimulate these patterns. Remittance money contributes to securing land rights by migrant households. However, although migrant households are acquiring land, the trend does not challenge the traditional skewed land distribution in the country. Regarding the relation to forests, we did not observe significant changes in two of the communities, we observed forest decline in one and forest recovery in the fourth community. A trend away from a reliance on the land for survival results in forest recovery.

Keywords: remittances, coffee, palm oil, land-use change.

Landscapes of migration and rural transformation in Chinandega, Nicaragua

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This talk is an exploration of preliminary findings from the first stage of fieldwork undertaken for the Mesoamerican Migration Project (PI Radel) in the department of Chinandega, Nicaragua. The project examines the relationships between international migration and agricultural and environmental change in Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua. I draw on participatory workshops, key-informant interviews and household survey data to address the following two interrelated themes. First, I examine findings related to the importance of cyclical and temporary migration from the region to El Salvador and its impacts on smallholder agriculture. Second, I discuss the role of land tenure as an important factor in regional migration processes.

Keywords: migration, Chinandega, Nicaragua, land tenure

Uncovering Nodes in the Transnational Social Networks of Hispanic Workers

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My research addresses the little studied but socially salient processes and tactics that transnational Latino migrants rely on to successfully emigrate, locate employment and housing, as well as the impact

their activities have on sending communities. I focus on two migrant groups: an established group from Guanajuato, Mexico and an emerging group from El Paraíso, Honduras whose association extends into northern Nicaragua. The places of origin and destinations of these groups form geographically discernable nodal networks that overlaps in the American South. Members of the latter group are first-time immigrants to the United States. The novelty of their migratory experience makes a fascinating case study on how small communities in Latin America transition into transnational migrant societies. I compare the older, established Mexican migrant group with the Central American migrant group to identify similarities and nuances in migratory patterns, strategies, and the socioeconomic effects on sending communities.

Keywords: Transnationalism, mobility, qualitative methods, social networks

Debt Landscapes: Migration, Loan Default, and Land Change in Rural Guatemala

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A confluence of new challenges and costs associated with undocumented migration from rural Guatemala to the United States has led to a growing frequency of ‘failed’ migration and migrant debt. Insurmountable debt among sending households is increasingly resulting in loan default and seizure of loan collateral assets, most commonly land. Debt and dispossession are profoundly shaping socioeconomic and physical landscapes in complex and contradictory ways. This presentation, drawing from three months of qualitative research in Guatemala’s rural western highlands, offers preliminary findings on the scale, attributes, and implications of a new political economy of migration finance and dispossession. Research on “debt landscapes” asks important questions for scholarship on migration and land change, US border security and migration policy, moral economies of migration finance and debt, the shifting opportunities and constraints for *campesino* livelihoods, and the broader role of regional land tenure patterns and histories in producing variation of this phenomenon.

Keywords: Migration, debt, dispossession, land, Guatemala

Libre Movilidad, Politics, and the Migration-Development Nexus: The case of Ecuador

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The recent history of migration from and to Ecuador exemplifies many of the trends in international migration in Latin America. Numerous countries are attempting to use international migration for development purposes. Migrants are no longer seen as “selfish,” or having abandoned “la patria,” rather governments have come to see migrants as an instrument for national development. Ecuadorans overseas have been conceptualized as belonging to the “quinta region.” Furthermore, Ecuadoran deportees continue to arrive from the United States, and the Correa Administration briefly tried to enforce its rhetoric on *libre movilidad*, even as Ecuador has become the latest “gringo” retirement/second home destination. This paper will use a case study of Ecuador to examine recent

trends in Latin American migration, the politicization of the migration, and attempts to use migration for development purposes.

Keywords: Ecuador, international migration, development

Impact of migration on land use and gender relations in Calakmul, Mexico

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We review findings on the linked impacts of labor out-migration on smallholder land use and gender relations within the municipality of Calakmul, southeastern Mexico. Over more than a decade, we have tracked patterns of labor out-migration as a response to economic and environmental stresses on local farming systems. Employing household surveys in 1997, 2003, 2007 and 2010, sometimes combined with in-depth qualitative interviews, we examine the resultant impacts of male household heads migrating to the USA, and more recently, of young women migrating to the close-by tourism corridor of Cancun. We examine the associated land use changes for smallholder households, with mixed implications for household food security. We review the gendered dimensions of changing household economies, with an examination of changes in the gendered relations of agricultural production. In particular, we interrogate the gender empowerment potential of observed shifts in the control of agricultural assets (land and cattle).

Keywords: agriculture, food security, gender, Mexico-southeastern, migration