



*Seasons of Migrations to the North*

*A Study of Biographies and Narrative  
Identities in US-Mexican and Swedish-Chilean  
Return Movements*

Aina Tollefsen Altamirano



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine dynamics and consequences of geographical return movements in two North-South contexts based on migrants' biographies. The thesis examines the consequences of return migration in terms of social mobility, meanings of return and the shaping of identity-place relationships for the subjects of migration. Categories of return were identified and related to evolving migration processes in the two case studies of long term labour migration and political exile respectively. The concept of 'narrative identity' was used to analyse the shaping of the migration biographies and to examine the ways migrants made sense of their experiences of emigration/exile and return. In a further step the narrative identities were discussed in relation to examples of public narratives in the two contexts.

The dissertation's case study of US-Mexican migration showed that geographical return took different shapes at the local level as the *migration process* evolved between the studied municipality in Mexico and different destinations in the USA. The initial phase of *formative return* led to the gradual establishment of a migration tradition and development of a remittance economy. Return movements turned in a later phase into an increasingly trapped migratory pattern of differentiated *circulation* between the municipality in Mexico and different locations in the USA. The 'narrative identities' of returning migrants were related to family situations (family formation, safety of the family, family commitment), perceptions of *real life* in Mexico and work identities (respected worker, independent businessman), negative experiences of migration (threat, social degradation, trapped migration), and the search and fulfilment of personal experiences. These narrative identities were contrasted with public narratives, showing the partial incorporation of some public narratives and contrasting senses of self of migrants in relation to 'imposed identities' in both the USA and Mexico.

The second case study of the dissertation identified categories of return movements in a context of changing conditions in both Chile and Sweden. Examples of categories were 'conditional return' and 'programmed return' and in the phase of *desexilio* professional circulation, continued exile and everyday life circulation. The narrative identities of *retornados* were related to family situations (children's future and education, the extended family and the family vote), Sweden as 'parenthesis' (programmed return, duty to return, political return, personal return), work identities (independent businessman, professional circulation) and experiences of exclusion (foreigner, immigrant, prolonged political exile). The narrative identities of migrants were discussed in relation to larger public narratives about *retornados* in the Chilean media.

**Keywords:** Return migration, US-Mexican labour migration, Chilean exile in Sweden, *desexilio*, biographies, circulation, grounded theory, narrative identity

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Aina Tollefsen Altamirano



# I INTRODUCTION

When you are here you want to start to fill yourself with your history, to recognise spaces, and then there are no recognisable spaces (Alejandro, 41, in Santiago, Chile after 18 years in exile).

The migration is tiring. From the United States...I have been going for 17 years and I don't have 17 dollars nor 17 cent from it (Alberto, 45, in Amealco, Mexico after emigration to the USA).

Alejandro was expelled from Chile to Sweden at the age of 23, about the same age Alberto had when he emigrated to the USA for the first time. Alejandro came to Sweden as a political refugee and Alberto became an undocumented worker in the agricultural fields in California, USA. Both of them have since moved from the North to the South, but with quite different experiences and life paths behind them. Their biographies are stories of displacements over large physical distances and of experiences from migration and exile in the North. Geographically, they have returned to former places of living in the South, but as the citations indicate, their geographical returns did not correspond to unproblematic 'homecomings'. What lived experiences were behind these migrations to the South after emigration/exile in the North? What were the circumstances and the motivations during different phases of their migration biographies? What were the consequences of geographical return in terms of everyday life, social position, identity-place relations and future mobility strategies?

The geographical events of emigration/exile and return between North and South are shared by all interviewed in this study.<sup>1</sup> Alberto's and Alejandro's stories relate to two different contexts with different character of the migratory exchange: Alberto moved within the US-Mexican context which has a long history of labour migrations, and Alejandro moved in the Swedish-Chilean context which is an example of relatively recent long-distance refugee migration. The two contexts form the two case studies in this work, where the

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<sup>1</sup> The terms North and South connote two homogenous spatial units, while obviously both North and South are heterogeneous entities. Categorisations such as North and South have been questioned in accounts of contemporary global processes, and sometimes abandoned or replaced by alternative 'mappings' of power divisions. The concepts of North and South have been used both by modernisation theorists and by world system theorists and can be said to represent a major 'geopolitical imagination' of the post-war period. Critical scholars argue that existing global inequalities and power relations make it relevant to still associate to a North-South divide in the contemporary geopolitical situation. While there exists a multitude of other power divisions and inequalities, there is also a deepening North-South divide in for instance economic terms. North and South are concepts that have been linked to physical space, but present globalisation processes have put into question an absolute spatial division between North and South. The two case studies included here are presented as examples of North-South contexts but with major differences between them.

events of *geographical return* from the point of view of *migration biographies* of migrants/refugees are in focus.

The dynamics and consequences of return migration are debated. The results from different studies are inconclusive about for instance the relationships between return migration, remittances and development processes. The question whether return migration is favourable or detrimental to progressive social and economic change in emigration countries remains unclear and cannot be answered in a generalised manner. There are empirical examples of both negative and positive effects of return migration in out-migration regions. Researchers argue further that the consequences of return migration must be analysed in a time perspective, on different geographical levels, and from the point of view of different groups and individuals.<sup>2</sup> Migrations to the North from the South take place within a transnational economy where 'the spaces of circulation and mobility rights are structured unevenly'.<sup>3</sup> Increasingly polarised socio-economic and political divisions affect migrants' and refugees' spaces of action and possible strategies. Restrictions on the rights to citizenship and an insecure legal status for migrants from the South are common in many countries in the North. Large-scale labour migrations continue to take place, however, and the economic importance of remittances from migrant workers for families and places in the South is only beginning to be recognised.<sup>4</sup>

Some researchers have looked into individual decision-making behind return migration, others have studied the rate and magnitude of return migration in different contexts, and a third field has been research on the consequences of return for development processes in the emigration regions. Furthermore, controversies exist around the concept of return itself. Criticism has been raised against the 'language of return' and there are researchers who question the underlying assumptions of different official *return* or *repatriation discourses*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hammar et al (1998) discuss the relationships between international migration, development and immobility from different perspectives. The contributors show for instance how consequences of migration may vary in time and space (Malmberg), how they relate to limited ecological space (Hermele) and how they affect different groups of people (Faist and Bjerén). For a discussion on the role of return migration, see in particular the contribution of Faist.

<sup>3</sup> Tesfahuney (1998:25).

<sup>4</sup> Broad estimates show that remittances to the South from migrant workers in the North exceed the total of official development aid (ODA) from North to South, and that remittances also come close to current levels of foreign direct investments in developing countries (calculations from World Bank data 1999, see also Stanton Russell (1994)).

<sup>5</sup> A recent volume edited by Black and Koser (1999) questions the legitimacy of the 'discourse of repatriation' that during the 1990s has become dominant in both UNHCR programs and in many

The use of a 'return' vocabulary by for instance policy makers has proven to be problematic, as policy makers' understanding of the 'home' of refugees or migrants may be different from what refugees and migrants themselves see as 'home'. Characteristic of return discourses is that they often reflect static perceptions of the links between identity and place/nation, between the migrants/refugees and their 'homelands'.<sup>6</sup> Return and repatriation are politicised phenomena and, as it seems, in particular when they take place in North-South contexts. Furthermore, and in addition to a renewed policy interest in the field of return migration, there have been examples of outright calls for repatriation of immigrant populations and refugees in many countries in the North, for instance by right-wing organisations, extreme nationalist groups and sensationalist media. While these are not new phenomena, there has been an upsurge in such expressions in many countries during the 1990s. This fact also contributes to the often controversial character of official return and repatriation policies.

### **The politicisation of migrations in South-North contexts**

The uneven character of global economic developments and the legacy of colonial and post-colonial relations form the stage of migratory exchanges between South and North, exemplified here by two case studies of geographical return movements. The initial mobility of Alberto and Alejandro - examples of labour migration and forced exile from the South to the North - became highly debated issues during the 1990s, on top of the 'agendas' of governments and international organisations. On the one hand, perceived threats of mass migrations and 'reverse colonialism' have accompanied restrictive immigration and refugee policies in the North. On the other hand, the relations between migration, remittances, return and development have become the concern of the international community, including major aid agencies.<sup>7</sup> The return of labour migrants to former countries of residence became an issue in Europe in the mid-1970s, and remained a political objective of for

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national refugee and immigration policies. The volume includes a number of case studies and provides a critical examination of the 'language of return'.

<sup>6</sup> On Swedish official return discourses see for instance Slavnic (1998), Södergran (1998), Tollefsen Altamirano (1995) and for a Nordic comparative perspective on refugee and return policies see Tollefsen Altamirano et al (1998).

<sup>7</sup> An ILO publication from 1994 entitled 'Aid in place of migration?' contains case studies from for instance Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa and Central America. The question investigated in the publication was to what extent official development aid (ODA) provided a means to reduce emigration from South/East to the North. The case studies were presented at an ILO-UNHCR conference in 1992.

instance French and German governments in the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> The repatriation of refugees was during the 1990s a major policy issue within the 'international community' and within different national contexts. The UNHCR declared in the 1990s that repatriation was *the best solution* to refugee situations, and Sweden was one of the countries that developed an 'active policy on return' as part of its national migration policy.<sup>9</sup> The so called 'push for repatriation'<sup>10</sup> in the field of asylum policies includes measures to promote, facilitate or organise the voluntary or compulsory return of refugees to former countries of living in the South.

The reasons behind and the implications of the politicisation of return at the national level and at the level of institutional practices are not addressed in this study. However, by focusing on individual migrants' experiences of emigration/exile and return, some of the assumptions underlying return policies and return discourses become problematised, for instance the relationships between individuals and national territories. Within the logic of the nation-state and the control and measurement of international migration, the individual migrant 'belongs' to a specific state territory, manifested through citizenship or residence in that country.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the return of a citizen to a country of citizenship is defined by the UN Population Division as '*the re-establishment of the normal link between a State and persons belonging to it*',<sup>12</sup> whereby return migration - in contrast with other international migrations - also is considered a human right.<sup>13</sup> In the same UN document, which deals with the measurement of international return migration, it is stated:

if return migration is to retain its special character, it must reflect the re-establishment of the normal link between a State and persons belonging to it, and from this perspective nationality is the natural way of establishing appurtenance (...) in fact, the belonging criterion is the only element distinguishing return migration from general immigration (ibid:80).

This citation is interesting in the sense that it contains three terms that, as already noted, may be highly problematic: *re-establishment*, *normal* and *belonging*.

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<sup>8</sup> Castles et al (1984).

<sup>9</sup> See not 6.

<sup>10</sup> See Wilson (1994), Harrell-Bond (1989), Frelick (1994).

<sup>11</sup> These assumptions of an 'ideal' relationship between an individual and the state are problematised by for instance Warner (1994).

<sup>12</sup> UN Population Division (1986:80).

<sup>13</sup> "Everybody has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (Part 2 of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). For a further discussion on human rights and migration see for instance UN Population Division (ibid.) and Black (1996).

'Re-establishment' indicates a return to a formerly stable situation, which may not be the case, as is also seen in this study, after a prolonged exile or emigration. The assumption of a 'normal' relationship between State and persons can also be problematic, as exemplified by the persistent existence of refugees and oppressed minorities within many nation-states. Finally, the question of 'belonging' to a national territory is complicated and often controversial. The struggle over belongings is at the core of many contemporary conflicts, and may be part of direct or indirect intents (by for example governments, institutions, political organisations) to reinforce links between 'culture', identity and territory. Groups or individuals may be excluded and considered as 'others' (despite, in some cases, formal nationality), while individuals within these groups can have many-folded feelings of territorial belongings. In the course of the study the three types of assumptions are problematised through examples from biographies and narratives of migrants.

### **The invisibility of return movements**

A paradox of the recent politicisation of return is the fact that geographical returns have often been important, but largely 'invisible' features of major migratory exchanges, not least in North-South contexts. According to Durand (1994), the best metaphor for the US-Mexican border is that of a 'double door', since significant return movements have persistently been part of the migratory exchange between the two countries. The fact that there are no statistics on emigration from the US has contributed to an 'immigration bias' in the perception of mobility patterns, when in fact migrants returning to Mexico during certain periods have outnumbered emigrants to the USA. In the case of return movements from Sweden - a country that has pursued a policy of permanent residence status for labour migrants and refugees and only recently has developed an 'active policy on return' - it is estimated that about 70% of emigrants from Sweden in the 1968-1990 period were in fact return migrants to former countries of residence. The percentage of return migrants in total emigration continued to be high in the mid-1990s.<sup>14</sup> Statistics show that more

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<sup>14</sup> Emigration from Sweden has increased markedly during the 1990s and a major trend has been a growing proportion of Swedish citizens in total emigration. In contrast with earlier periods (when foreign citizens have been in majority among emigrants) from 1993 and onwards (until the late 1990s) the majority of emigrants have been Swedish citizens. The increasing numbers and the growing proportions of Swedish citizens in emigration have led to a discussion about a 'new emigration' from Sweden (Jonsson and Malmberg, forthcoming). However, within the group of emigrating Swedish citizens about 25-30% are persons who previously have been citizens in other countries. Many of these emigrants, but not all, move to former countries of residence, which shows that there is a continued strong relative importance of return migration in total emigration.

than half of all immigrants who arrived in Sweden in the late 1960s had returned to former countries of living 20 years later.

The phenomenon of geographical return has also been quite invisible in migration research. It gained increased interest during the 1970s, but there has been a decline in the number of studies on return migration since the second half of the 1980s.<sup>15</sup> In a 1996 volume on *Geography and Migration*, the editor notes a low interest in this aspect of migration among academics:

Return migration and repatriation have receded from the research agenda at a time when they are both becoming more salient in global and policy terms (Robinson 1996:xxiv).

Still, some attention has recently been paid to the fact that geographical return movements to the South continue even in advanced stages of migration processes.<sup>16</sup> Links between different locations in the North and in the South seem to persist and are sometimes strengthened over time. Rather than one-way migration processes from South to North, there may be continuous returns, or movements back and forth. Some researchers argue that migration in fact takes the form of long-term circulation - 'circularity'<sup>17</sup> - and/or development of so called 'transnational social fields' between countries of emigration and immigration.<sup>18</sup> Given increasing economic polarisation between countries in the South and the richer nation-states in the North, this development seems contradictory. Most theories on migration would predict continued emigration and low levels of return, as the (economic) rationale for migration to the South - on both macro- and micro-levels - is weak. Still, return movements continue to be an important feature of North-South migratory exchanges, although the levels and characteristics vary considerably between different contexts. Sassen (1997), referring to the US-Mexican case, comments that the fact of continuous returns shows the extent of a 'south equilibrating mechanism' (ibid:133) in the migration process, but it is unclear what the character of this mechanism would be. Bustamante (ibid:89) refers to the 'virtual forces of gravity that propel the return of migrants', also in the US-Mexican context. Other researchers point out the unpredictability of return. Massey et al (1991) use the word 'ambiguous' about the establishment in the USA and the return to Mexico. Based on a large data base and analyses on the probability of re-

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Nationality is obviously not always indicative of return migration - 17% of all emigrants from Sweden in 1993 were foreign citizens born in Sweden (Gov. Bill 1996/1997:25).

<sup>15</sup> Gaillard (1994).

<sup>16</sup> Faist (1997), Pessar (1996), Mendoza Berrueto (eds.) (1997).

<sup>17</sup> The term in Spanish used by Bustamante (1997) is 'circularidad'.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Rouse (1991) and Faist (1997).

turn to four communities in South West Mexico the following conclusion was reached:

[E]ven after many years of experience in the United States, the concepts of integration and establishment in the United States remain insecure and ambiguous. The controversies of settlement and return are never totally defined in the emigration generation and many of those that during a period 'establish themselves' in the United States, eventually return to Mexico (ibid:338, author's translation).

In the case of the return of Chilean refugees from Sweden, there was a prohibition to return for many political refugees until 1988. From 1988, with the referendum and the initiation of political changes, increasing numbers of persons moved to Chile from Sweden. But in this case too, the question of return seems to be 'insecure and ambiguous'. Statistics show continuous movements in both directions during the 1990s, with a net emigration surplus to Chile between 1992 and 1996.<sup>19</sup> How were return movements experienced by individuals in these contexts? What were the consequences of return for migrants?

## Purposes of the study

The *purposes* of this study are

- to obtain an understanding of the dynamics and complexities of geographical return in two North-South contexts, based on in-depth biographical interviews with migrants and refugees
- to examine the consequences of return migration for individuals in the local context, with focus on social mobility, meanings of return and the shaping of identity-place relationships.

In focus of the study are the lived experiences of persons who have moved to former countries of residence in the South after emigration or exile in the North. The individual dimension of the broader socio-historical circumstances is highlighted, but without reducing migration to an individual question of decision-making or 'free choice'. The broader social, economic and political contexts are described in both case studies, and the *social contexts* of the migrants were taken into consideration in the analysis of the interviews. This was done by a focus migrants' everyday situation, their social relations and the

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<sup>19</sup> Sweden imposed visa requirement for Chilean citizens in 1989, which had the effect of restricting arrivals of Chilean asylum-seekers in Sweden. From 1990 and onwards, migration from Chile has decreased while emigration to Chile from Sweden has increased (see chapter four for further statistics).

conditions for and consequences of geographical return. The principal empirical data of the study consists of 17 in-depth life history interviews (8 and 9 in the two case studies respectively) which were made around the following themes:

- the *everyday situation* during the course of emigration/exile and return (family situation, social relations, work, housing, legal situation etc.) up to the present situation after the return
- the circumstances around the *main geographical events* of emigration/flight and geographical return
- the *meanings* ascribed to the emigration/exile and return by the interviewed persons in their migration histories.

Some important issues were identified during the course of the study and these became important for the continued analysis and interpretation of the interviews. The initial variation in the selection of interview persons in terms of social class, gender and age made it for instance possible to observe and identify processes related to these different social positions. The themes/issues that emerged during the course of the study were the following:

- the *social differentiation* of return from the perspectives of class, gender and phase in the life course. One example was the strong association between socio-geographical position and different forms of return that became apparent during the study in Mexico, together with growing insights about how the consequences and meanings of return varied according to these positions.
- the modification of the relationship between *identity* and *place/nation* through the emigration and return experiences. In the Swedish-Chilean case study interviewed persons expressed for example how their identification with nations and places changed over time and were conditioned by exclusions from both a 'Swedish' identity and a 'Chilean' identity. The identity-place relationships were in the analysis seen as part of the 'narrative identities' of the interviewed (the concept of 'narrative identity' is further discussed below).
- the concrete *localised bonds* and *attachments* developed at the places involved in the course of emigration/exile and return. The different links (material, social/family, work-related) to places forming part of the migration biography appeared as important for how return migration or continued mobility took place. Interviews in the Swedish-Chilean case, for instance, demonstrated how the return to Chile depended on continued maintenance of material, social and work-related links to places *in Sweden*.

- *future migratory strategies* envisaged by migrants/refugees after experiences of geographical return. Interviews in both case studies expressed a view on return migration as an open and unsettled question, rather than a definite move. Contrary to certain policy assumptions and theoretical frameworks, the return movement formed part of migration strategies involving places in both North and South. *Circulation* emerged as an important theme from the interviews.

In both case studies the *time perspective* was given central importance. The interviews were made with the intention to capture *changes over time* in the contexts and from the point of view of the migrants. The interviewed persons in the US-Mexican case study migrated from the 1940s to the 1990s, and their geographical returns took place between 1960 and 1995. Similarly, in the Swedish-Chilean case study both 'early' (before 1988) and 'late' (after 1988) returnees were interviewed; and their returns took place between 1978 and 1993. Thus, while each interviewed person told her/his individual biography, the biographies were also related to the changes taking place over time in the two contexts. It became obvious that national and international political changes influenced the migratory exchanges in the two contexts and they had clear consequences for the interviewed migrants' experiences and strategies.

In addition to the migrants' biographies, other types of qualitative data were used as sources and support in the analysis. These were popular song texts (so called *corridos*) and filmed (documentary) material in Mexico, and newspaper articles in Chile. Interviews with *informants* provided knowledge about diverse aspects of migration and return and were valuable in both case studies. Many informants could also often exemplify different 'public narratives' about the phenomenon of return migration.

## Geographical movements and social processes

Within human geography, and in particular within the special branch of population geography, *spatial mobility* in various forms has been a central theme of research. Migration research has focused on the course and character of major migratory movements, from both 'macro' and 'micro' perspectives. Robinson (1996) identifies three major fields of geographical research on migration. Firstly, there is the salient field of macro-level description of major migratory movements. Geographers have described geographical patterns of migration and identified movements at different geographical scales. Descriptions of patterns have provided the basis for policy formulations and monitoring of migration. A major objective within this field has been to iden-

tify emerging migration trends and to predict future population patterns. Robinson (*ibid.*) also includes within this field the classic generalisations made by Ravenstein in the nineteenth-century and Lee in the 1960s about regularities in migration based on macro-level descriptions.<sup>20</sup> The 'laws of migration' and the 'social physics' of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are associated with this branch of geographical migration research.

In the second field of geographical migration research, geographers searched explicitly for explanatory factors (often expressed as pull-push) behind migratory flows, either at micro-level (individual decision-making) or at macro-level. Major influences came from neo-classical economics (with a view of migration as an 'economically-driven adjustment process' (*ibid:xx*)); behavioural geography (introducing the concept of 'place utility') and time-geography (bringing in innovation diffusion theory, time-space constraints and the biographical focus). Migration systems and structural analyses of migration also emerged as part of this field, putting forward the view that the causes of migration should be sought for not in subjective motives or behaviours of individuals, but in underlying socio-structural processes.

Thirdly, there is a field of geographical migration research where the impact or consequences of migration are studied, for individuals, groups, places or society. This is the most recently developed migration research field within human geography, and one that Robinson links to a 'qualitative revolution' and an emergent 'paradigm shift' in the discipline. Within this field researchers started to take into consideration links between migration and social change and social theory, a development that took place later within population geography than in other sub-disciplines of human geography.<sup>21</sup> The use of qualitative methods, a renewed interest in place (as opposed to geometric space), gender-awareness and an emphasis on 'the complexities, vagaries and experiences of real individuals' (*ibid:xxiv*) characterise studies in this field, together with a focus on the economic, social, political, ecological consequences of migration in different places, regions or countries.

This study can be described as influenced by the developments identified in the third of these intra-disciplinary fields. This is exemplified by the use of qualitative methods and the focus on the consequences of mobility (in terms of social position, identity-place relations and future mobility strategies). Another similarity is the intention to examine the circumstances and motivations

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<sup>20</sup> See Lee (1966).

<sup>21</sup> See Findlay and Graham (1991) for a discussion on the so called 'separate development' of population geography in relation to other sub-disciplines of human geography.

of individuals in their socio-historical contexts, rather than seeking law-like generalisations about migration. In more general terms, research on international migration as *spatial mobility* has been the field of social scientists, while social and cultural processes related to immigration and exile (the field of 'ethnic relations') have been the main focus of humanistic research and some branches of the social sciences. Within the third field of geographical migration research, as in this study, elements of both are combined. A specific form of spatial mobility (the return migration) is studied, from the perspective of the individual, while taking into consideration social processes related to different places during the exile/emigration and return sequences.

## Conceptualisations of space and place

Major theoretical debates in human geography have centred around different conceptualisations of space and place and on how space and place are related to society and to individuals. There have been developments over time from conceptualisations of space as *absolute space* (space as a 'container', a classificatory unit, a concrete physical entity within which things and human beings are located and processes take place) to *relative space* (the space of 'spatial analysis' and time-geography, with analyses of relative distances between objects and human beings, and where space is given explanatory status) and to conceptualisations of space as *relational space* (where space is seen inseparable from social relations; and social relations are seen spatially constructed).<sup>22</sup> The latter conceptualisation of space implies that space has no independent status, but has to be understood as 'embedded' in the social relations of a society. The social relations, in turn, cannot be seen as separate or independent from their spatial contexts.

The different conceptualisations of space may be understood as providing different keys to what is perceived and studied in research on migration. The keys open different aspects or dimensions of space, place and mobility. Particular understandings of return migration, for instance, reflect certain underlying understandings of space and place. For example, laws of migration and social physics part from conceptualisations of space as *relative space*, a 'surface' space where relative distances and spatial arrangements are seen as explanatory factors behind mobility patterns. In macro-level descriptions of flows of migration, the underlying aspect of space is mainly that of a 'container' an *absolute space*, where people move between different defined units. In structuralist understandings of migration, space is also often conceptualised as an *absolute*

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<sup>22</sup> As expressed by Doreen Massey, space is social relations 'stretched out' (Massey 1994:2).

*space*; as a 'passive' physically bounded container for major socio-structural processes. A migrant's social position within the structures of society determines his/her mobility between different social class sites located in a defined physical space.

Within the third field of geographical migration research described above, the dominant conceptualisation of space is that of *relational space*. When space is conceptualised as relational the dimensions of space in focus are for instance the interpretation and communication of *meanings* of place and mobility, and the study of different *representations* of space and place, which are themes in recent human geographical studies on migration. Other dimensions are the concern with spatial practices and social relations (such as gender relations), identity and power structures in spatial contexts for both the consequences of migration *and* for the dynamics of migration. The concept of *relational space* underlies studies of the differentiated impacts of migration in different places and for different social groups in society.

Being influenced by research within this third field of geographical migration research, the present study also parts from the understanding of space as relational. Rather than following a tradition of humanistic geographical migration research and its corresponding qualitative methods, the study draws on developments within population geography (as described above), political geography and the so called new cultural geography.<sup>23</sup> This being said, it is obvious that theoretical developments in the social sciences in general have affected all sub-disciplines of human geography, and has done so to the extent that there is a considerable 'blurring of sub-disciplines'.<sup>24</sup> As expressed by Painter (1996)

It no longer makes sense (perhaps it never did) to think of separate economic, political and cultural 'spheres', each with distinctive geographical conditions and effects (ibid:1).

Still, there are some more specific influences that can be pointed out. The relation to political geography is in this study exemplified by the emphasis on the recent politicisations of return migration; the examination of the effects of national and international political changes on migrants experiences and strategies, and the consideration of 'public narratives' or discourses about migration and migrants from the South in the North. The 'new cultural geography' has been influential through the insistence within this field of geography on questioning fixed identities and on examining multiple identity formations

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<sup>23</sup> See Crang (1998) for an introduction to the new cultural geography. For influences within Swedish human geography see for instance Gren (1994), Molina (1997) and Tesfahuney (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Painter (1996:1).

in varying spatial contexts. The influence from this field is expressed for instance by the use of the concept of 'narrative identities' in the analysis of the interviews, which will be further discussed below. The move towards a 'decentring of the subject' in the field of cultural geography implies a theoretical qualification in relation to humanistic research, which commonly holds a view on the human subject as 'indivisible, singular and unique'.<sup>25</sup> In the new cultural geography the human subject is not understood as a unified and independent 'core' and *the* central source of knowledge, but as changing and formed in diverse social contexts.

Rather than starting from the level of the society, the institutions, the national political programs on return etc., my main interest has been the perspectives of individual migrants and their experiences of changing spatial contexts. The study has dealt with how larger social, economic and political circumstances were experienced by individual migrants and how individuals made sense of and formed their strategies given these circumstances. The qualitative methods permitted taking into consideration relational space in different dimensions: the social practice of everyday life; the public narratives as they affected individuals, and the different meanings of mobility for individuals. In broader terms, the dissertation examines relationships between return migration, identity formation and space/place.

## Questions of method

This study is based on two *case studies* where *grounded theory* and a *biographical approach* were used as qualitative methods of analysis. The *case study* is a common method of studying complex phenomena by looking at one or a few cases in more depth. An assumption behind the case study method is that detailed knowledge of one or a few cases may give insights relevant for other situations as well. Starrin et al (1991) characterise case study as a method permitting the study of many dimensions of a phenomenon in a particular situation. Merriam (1994) sees the case study as being *particularistic, descriptive, heuristic* and *inductive*. By *particularity* is meant that a general phenomenon (here return migration) is studied through unique cases. *Description* is needed to capture the phenomenon in as much detail and as fully as possible. The interviews in this study provided detailed descriptions of return migrants' lived experiences, which was seen as important in order to avoid a reductionistic view of return migration. By the *heuristic* aspect is meant that the case study is motivated because of lack of substantial theories or knowledge about the phe-

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<sup>25</sup> McDowell (1996:33).

nomenon. Case studies are in this sense *explorative*. In relation to the present study it was for instance noted that there are no developed theoretical frameworks that link return migration, identity formation and processes in space/place. The experiences of migrants in different spatial contexts may give insights into how identity formation takes place and migration strategies develop, and in-depth case studies can be motivated as steps towards creating a possible framework for interpretation. The *inductive* character implies that the analysis is made largely on the basis of the information obtained in the concrete case. Concepts and categories used are 'grounded' in the empirical material; in interviews, observations, statistics etc., related to the case study. The *grounded theory* approach is an example of this kind of method for analysis.

### *Grounded theory*

*Grounded theory* was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and further by for instance Strauss and Corbin (1990). The approach has continuously been interpreted and modified by other researchers. In this study I draw mainly on the version of grounded theory developed in Sweden by sociologists and social work researchers.<sup>26</sup> Within the discipline of human geography the method has not been widely used, despite a long tradition of qualitative research and uses of similar approaches.<sup>27</sup> Löfgren (1990) introduced the method to Swedish human geography in his study on youth residential mobility in Southern Sweden. In Löfgren's study, the method was used in a 'situational analysis' where social time tables for youth nest leaving were identified from interviews with young people. Löfgren used the qualitative method to examine the relationships between residential mobility, identity formation and transition from youth to adulthood.

The procedures for analysing data in grounded theory are not discipline bound but rather a general method of analysis. It is a way of organising and exploring *ideas derived from data*, in order to identify the characteristics of different social and structural processes. Most grounded theory studies are based on interviews, field observations, literature, film etc. The working method is double-sided in the way that it includes both closeness to data (grounding) and distance from data (ideas, concepts and theory). Some researchers use the term 'abduction' as characteristic of the working process, rather than 'induction'.<sup>28</sup> Abduction is the constant exchange between the obtained information

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<sup>26</sup> See for instance Dahlgren and Lindgren (1987), Starrin et al (1991) and Starrin and Svensson (1994).

<sup>27</sup> Eyles and Smith (1988).

<sup>28</sup> Starrin and Svensson (1994) discuss abduction in relation to induction and deduction.

on the one hand, and the subjective ideas and theories of the researcher on the other, while induction is understood as being free of theoretical assumptions. In the Swedish tradition referred to above researchers usually stress the impossibility of a strictly inductive method and tend to down-play the more formalistic traits of grounded theory found in the international literature. The ambition of discovering 'a new theory' is also normally modified to more limited ambitions of generating ideas, categories or perspectives that can shed new light on a phenomenon. Another ambition can be to create hypotheses that may be tested deductively on a larger sample of data. Usually a combination of different methods is used, so called *triangulation*.

Grounded theory is often used in *explorative* research, which starts with 'loose questions' and formalises findings and ideas under way. Categories and concepts should ideally be 'grounded' in the available data with the aid of a defined working procedure. A version of one such working procedure is outlined below (based on Strauss and Corbin 1990):

1. An initial selection of a research area. First interviews and gathering of data.
2. Framing of research questions.
3. Further collection of data. Selection of respondents and/or informants, for example through so called 'snowball sampling' or 'theoretical sampling'.<sup>29</sup> Search for respondents/informants according to insights from previous interviews.
4. Recollection of other data such as literature, other studies, music, poetry and statistical records and overviews relevant to the phenomenon.
5. *Open coding* of transcribed interviews with the purpose of identifying and exploring possible concepts or categories.
6. Organisation of categories according to their relationships to each other, so called *paradigmatic relationships*.<sup>30</sup> This implies connecting categories in relationships of *conditions* (causal and intervening) related to the phenomenon, the specific *context* in which the phenomenon takes place; the *action/interaction strategies* that are connected to the phenomenon and the *consequences* of the phenomenon.
7. Continuous validation of ideas, concepts and relationships against the empirical data and against existing theories.

Grounded theory is similar to other qualitative methods, which also use procedures of 'coding' in the interpretation of qualitative data. In the grounded theory tradition it is seen as both possible and desirable to approach social phenomenon in an 'unbiased' manner, by explicitly questioning earlier theo-

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<sup>29</sup> Snowball sampling is a way of selecting respondents and informants as the research process proceeds, rather than using a defined sample from the outset. Through contacts and information obtained from interviews, new interview persons are found. Theoretical sampling takes place when interview persons are selected on the basis of established or evolving theoretical ideas related to the studied phenomenon.

<sup>30</sup> Strauss and Corbin (1990:99).

ries and positions during the research process. Through this questioning earlier theoretical positions may be modified and new hypotheses developed. This study was made schematically following the working procedure outlined above.

The case studies were made with about six months between the two interview periods. The experiences from the first case study in Mexico were valuable for the interview study in Chile. Despite the differences between the contexts, several experiences were useful. A more 'theoretical sampling' of interview persons could be made, as for instance insights about the social differentiation of return had been made. On the other hand, awareness about the importance of the images of the *retornados*<sup>31</sup> and of the relations between identity and 'place'/nation was gained from the second case study, and would have been useful in the first study. However, the final interpretations and analyses of the interviews were made together and over a longer period of time.<sup>32</sup>

The differences and similarities between the contexts are further described in later chapters, but one aspect will be mentioned here. Geographical returning from the USA to Mexico was studied at the local level in a small municipality in central Mexico. The interviewed persons migrated from the same municipality and moved to that municipality after emigration to different destinations in the USA. The local socio-geographical context is described in some detail; its history and the initiation of emigration to the USA during the 1940s. In contrast, the study of return to Chile from Sweden was made in a wider urban context. The interviewed persons had lived in the city of Santiago before the exile, and in urban centres in Sweden. They did not leave from the same part of Santiago, and they returned from different destinations in the North (which was also the case of the Mexican migrants). There was thus less of a 'local context' in the same 'geographically bounded' sense as in the first case study. The flight from Chile was initiated by political factors on the national level, and at that stage less related to socio-geographical factors at the local level. Political factors at the national level were conditional for the exile and also the return to Chile. These are examples of differences in the overall contexts related to return in the two case studies.

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<sup>31</sup> *Retornado* is the term used about returning exiles in Chile. Different images of the *retornado* in Chilean media and in the interviews with migrants and informants are discussed in chapters four and six.

<sup>32</sup> All interviews were transcribed word by word and the text documents were analysed using the NUDIST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) computer program as a practical tool for handling qualitative data.

The interviews focused on the themes specified above (everyday situation, circumstances around the main geographical events, consequence of geographical return), but in the interview situation the conversations centred around other issues as well. The stories covered the stages of emigration/flight, life in exile and return, but not always in a chronological order. Naturally, the character of the interviews varied - for instance by the way the biographies were told and by the different roles the interviewed and the interviewers came to occupy during the conversations. In a few cases very few questions were asked and the interviewed person 'told the story' almost uninterruptedly, in a *performative* way.<sup>33</sup> In other cases the interviews had a more traditional form of questions and answers, without very much elaboration. The differences in the *form* and *character* of the stories raised questions about how biographies are constructed and the act of story-telling itself - including the participant role of the interviewers in this construction. Within so called *biographical* approaches used by researchers in the humanities and for instance within recent migration studies in human geography, issues related to *narratives* and the storied character of interviews are taken up.

While recognising the structural circumstances of the contexts, a biographical approach may concentrate on a few individuals and their everyday life during the life course, or a specific part of the life course.<sup>34</sup> Most grounded theory analyses are *event orientated* and focus on specific phenomena and related concepts or categories, while the biographical perspective focuses on the *persons* and their experiences during an unbroken sequence of the life course. It was here seen as useful to combine the two approaches. The grounded theory analysis permitted the identification of categories of geographical return related to their socio-geographical context, while the biographical approach gave insights into the dynamics that shaped the actions of individual migrants during their life course.

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<sup>33</sup> Baumann (1986) has written about told life history as *performance*, by which is meant that a person presents his/her story to the world though an act of story-telling, using a dramatic narrative form.

<sup>34</sup> Biographical approaches in migration research have been used by human geographers, see for instance Chapman and Prothero (1985). Biographical studies during the 1970s and 1980s used larger samples and survey data which for example were analysed with so called 'life history matrix'. For overviews see Skeldon (1995). Halfacree and Boyle (1993) propose a biographical approach with a stronger focus on qualitative methods.

Biographical interviews can have different character.<sup>35</sup> In this study they were concentrated thematically on specific periods in the persons life - when migrations took place - while other life periods were taken up more briefly. The questions concentrated on *main geographical events* or formative moments in the biography. In the analysis reflections were made about the importance of these geographical events for the interviewed in their construction of the biography. What were the specific *narratives* about *returning* or about other phases in the course of migration? What *roles* did the interviewed give themselves in their migration histories (passive victim of circumstances; neutral role in a sequence of events, active decision-making with own control)? What *meanings* did the emigration and return experience have in the person's whole life history? The biographical analysis, as developed for instance by British and Norwegian human geographers,<sup>36</sup> was thus combined with the grounded theory analysis, in order to try to integrate the understanding of the *social phenomenon* of geographical return over time with the understanding of the *lives and actions of individual migrants*.

Gutting (1996) uses the concept of *narrative identity* to analyse biographical interviews, and argues that this concept permits the study of migration as 'a *social* event without de-centring the subject'.<sup>37</sup> The biographical interviews in this study were first analysed through grounded theory coding. Further reflections about biographic *story-telling* and *narratives, form and changing roles in the biography* made the sole identification of event categories unsatisfactory. The concept of *narrative identity* as developed and used by Gutting was seen as possible way of taking into account further aspects of the individual migration histories. The analyses are therefore presented in two chapters, one based on grounded theory (chapter five) and the other on the concept of narrative identity (chapter six).

The interview situation is a situation where the interviewed person constructs his/her life history *as-told-to* the researcher.<sup>38</sup> It is a situation when events in the past are spoken about from the present situation, with a view to the future at the moment of the interview. The interview is a dialogue, not only between the interviewed and the interviewer, but also between an 'earlier' and a 'later'

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<sup>35</sup> The method was used by Lindqvist (1991) in her study of Chilean refugees in Sweden. For an overview of the use of life history method in social sciences and humanities in Sweden see Arvidsson (1998).

<sup>36</sup> Halfacree and Boyle (1993), Gutting (1996), Boyle et al (1998) and Vandsemb (1995).

<sup>37</sup> Gutting (1996:482), with reference to Werlen (1993).

<sup>38</sup> Jannetta (1996) discusses the dialogic nature of the production of life history in a study of the Métis in Canada.

self.<sup>39</sup> During the interview stories about the different phases and main events of the individual migration process are constructed and give meaning and coherence to the evolving life history. Within humanistic life history analysis the narrative has been seen as a social and historical form of representation, but Gutting points to researchers who see narrativity as *more fundamental* than that. With reference to Somers and Gibson (1994), Gutting proposes that both social epistemology and social ontology are connected to the narrative:

The argument put forward is that social life is itself storied, that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or integrate these 'happenings' within one or more narratives; and that people act in certain ways and not in others on the basis of these various story lines (Gutting *ibid*:483).

Gutting proposes that migration decisions can be seen as 'the expression of people's sense of being at any one point in time', and that this involves a change in the perception of migration from seeing it a 'behaviour' to seeing it as an expression of 'identity':

The shift from 'behaviour' to 'identity' has two major implications: the first is the full contextualisation of 'action' at the level of the individual. The second, however, locates the formation of 'identities' firmly in their cultural, social, economic and political context (*ibid*:482).

When 'identity' and 'narrative' are connected, Gutting arrives at the concept of *narrative identity*. At one particular point in a person's biography - for instance at the *main geographical events* - there are particular 'story-lines' that are salient or specifically meaningful - as expressed in the interviews. The *narrative identity*, however, is formed by many different ontological narratives, but with varying significance at different stages in the life biography. While there is an *individual* selection and incorporation of ontological narratives that shape the actions of individuals, these narratives are nevertheless *fundamentally social*:

They are formed in relational settings, in temporal and spatial configurations of people, institutions, social practices, public narratives, market patterns, the distribution of material wealth and power. In short, they are linked to what are generally referred to as structural factors (*ibid*:483).

The analysis of biographical interviews, then, involved the identification of what particular narratives that for individuals seemed to be the most salient and meaningful for the actions of for instance emigration or return. The way persons relate and understand the situation and how different constraints and

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid*:176.

opportunities are interpreted are important, regardless any 'objective' characteristics.

The results of narrative research cannot claim to correspond exactly with what has actually occurred, i.e., they are not "true" if "truth" is taken to mean exact correspondence to reality (...). Narratives can illuminate both the logic of individual action and the effects of structural constraints within which the life course evolve (Vandsemb 1995:413, 414).

In this way, following the argument of these researchers, an analysis using the concept of narrative identity is also an intent to overcome the 'structure-agency dualism' which has been much debated within the social sciences.<sup>40</sup> It is not possible to capture all the complex factors that may be involved in a persons' migration biography, but the different narratives people use when they give meaning to the main events in their biography may give insights into both individual 'driving forces' and important factors in the socio-geographical contexts.

## Disposition

The dissertation is organised in seven chapters. The second chapter takes up different perspectives on return migration from secondary sources. Common statistical and conceptual definitions of return migration and their basic assumptions and limitations are discussed. Previous research and different theoretical approaches to return migration are described. The chapter exemplifies how return migration has been conceptualised within for instance human capital and behaviouralistic approaches, and within approaches that are critical to these traditions (such as structuralist and humanist approaches). The main theoretical influences of this study become evident in the end of the chapter, when the so called *biographical approach* in population geography is discussed.

The third chapter provides the empirical material from the first case study of US-Mexican return movements. The chapter starts with a description of the socio-economic and political context in which the geographical movements took place. The purpose in this section is to account for the broader setting of the migrants' life histories. The structural circumstances of the context and the patterns of earlier migrations are outlined. After the treatment of the local context of the municipality of Amealco, the biographical interviews are presented. This presentation is based on the initial 'coding' of the interviews and

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion about the structure-agency debate in the context of migration research, see Stjernström (1998).

is organised chronologically according to an evolving migration process between Amealco and the USA. The migrants' biographies express varying experiences from emigration and return and give insights into personal perceptions of the changing conditions and consequences of return migration. The presentation is made in the form of a 'thick description' which provides the basis for subsequent analyses.

In the fourth chapter the empirical data from the second case study of Swedish-Chilean migrations is similarly presented. The wider context of the Chilean exile and return is described, in Sweden and to some extent in other countries. The concept of *desexilio* is used to characterise the situation after the political changes in the late 1980s. The initial 'contextualising' section is followed by the presentation of the migrants' biographies. As in chapter three, the section provides a description based on initial interpretations and coding of the interviews. The presentation is thematically organised around three identified important issues related to return: social position; family/social networks and localised bonds; and identity formation. Thus, in this chapter a framework of interpretation is partly developed.

The fifth and sixth chapters provide further analyses of the interviews from different angles. The fifth chapter includes 'grounded' interpretations of the interviews in both case studies, and identifies categories of return in relation to changes over time in the two contexts. The developed typologies of return are connected to their specific socio-spatial contexts, and not presented as a general typology. The return categories are set in relationship to conditions and consequences during phases of the migration processes, between Amealco and the USA and between Sweden and Chile respectively. In relation to the second case study there is also a concluding table which puts together the phases in the migration biographies (the sequence of geographical events) with examples of identified action/interaction processes in different spatial contexts.

In the sixth chapter the concept of *narrative identities* is used to analyse migrants' biographies from both case studies. The major 'presiding fictions' in the migration histories are traced and presented in the chapter. In the US-Mexican case study, the identified narrative identities are discussed in relation to larger stories, 'public narratives', as expressed in popular song texts about migrants, by informants and migrants themselves. In the Swedish-Chilean case study the narrative identities of returning exiles are related to the public narratives about *retornados* in the Chilean media in the first half of the 1990s. The chapter provides examples of the contradictions and complexities of narrative

identities (also understood as 'senses of self') in their meeting with 'imposed identities' and categorisations in different spatial contexts.

The seventh chapter, finally, contains a concluding discussion. The findings of the study are discussed and a possible framework of interpretation of return migration, identity formation and processes in space/place is outlined. The concept of *circulation* is discussed as a possible characteristic of future North-South migratory exchanges.

## II PERSPECTIVES ON RETURN MIGRATION

Research on return migration has gone through similar stages as migration research in general. It is a rather fragmented field with different theoretical perspectives existing side by side, but with shifts over time in terms of emphasis and dominant theories. This chapter provides a short overview of previous work in this field and the main theoretical developments that have taken place over the years. As described in existing reviews, there has been a shift in migration research from 'macro'-oriented approaches, to 'micro'-oriented studies, ending up in the present dominance of 'integrated' approaches, which try to account for both contextual and individual circumstances.<sup>41</sup> The chapter starts with a review of different statistical and conceptual definitions of return migration. Then there is an outline of some major theoretical traditions and their relation to return migration. The chapter ends with a positioning of the study in relation to other traditions and in terms of its theoretical pre-understandings.

### Statistical definitions

Many researchers make reference to the lack of comparable statistical data on return migration and the inconsistency related to existing definitions of return migration and repatriation. This lack is often referred to as the explication why return migration has been a neglected field of study.

Return migration has always been one of the more shadowy features of the migration process, principally because of the difficulty of obtaining satisfactory data for this phenomenon. The nets cast out in migration surveys and national censuses usually allow return migration to slip through. It was, therefore, not surprising, though not entirely excusable, that so many studies of migration proceeded as if no returns ever took place (King 1986:1).

Statistics on international migration are primarily produced by institutions at the national level and are based on classifying concepts related to the nation-state, such as citizenship. The measurement of international return migration departs, as already noted, from assumptions of the individual migrant as 'belonging' to a specific state territory, through the legal citizenship or residence in that country. Citizens of a country are supposed to have the right to enter freely to their country of citizenship, which is a form of international migration that is defined as a basic human right. It is also defined as a human right

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<sup>41</sup> For overviews of migration research within human geography see Malmberg (1997), Stjernström (1998) and Boyle et al (1998).

for a person to leave a foreign country without restriction. State control systems are in theory not entitled to stop nationals from entering their country of citizenship, or to prevent foreign citizens from leaving. This is of course the ideal case. As with many other human rights, the right to return is repeatedly violated by governments. The return of political refugees is often prevented or obstructed by governments for long periods of time.

Existing definitions and measurement of international return movements are thus connected to the nation-state and different countries' policies concerning the control of migration. Governments are primarily concerned with measuring and classifying the arrival of foreign citizens at their borders. Citizens who return to their country of citizenship do so mostly unrecorded. In some cases though, there has been a detailed statistical registration of returning citizens. Italy is an example where a unique system of documentation of returning migrants was built up under the regime of Mussolini during the 1930s. The large numbers of returnees (principally from the United States) were registered according to length of stay abroad, principal occupation, the motives for the emigration etc. Return migration to Italy is, in terms of the number of publications, the most studied return movement of all.<sup>42</sup> Based on this statistical data set Cerase made his classical studies of Italian return migrants in the early 1970s, studies that still are highly influential to the research field.<sup>43</sup>

The politicised character of definitions is manifested through the selective and varying identification of persons who are returning to countries of former residence. Central is the classification of the returnee as citizen, resident or former resident of the country to which the person returns. The concepts of residence and legal nationality are used in most national reporting systems, but they often have different meanings in different countries.<sup>44</sup> The difficulties that exist related to citizenship as an identification of returning migrants are for instance the fact that people can hold double passports and that returning migrants sometimes have changed nationality during their absence (and thus 'disappear' statistically into the category of immigrants). There is also the case where 'second generation' migrants return, having the citizenship of their parents' former country of residence, but without being return migrants. Also, refugees or stateless persons may have travel documents and no citizenship in former countries of residence (the states where they were persecuted) and they may also be denied citizenship in the country of asylum. These examples point

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<sup>42</sup> Gaillard (1994).

<sup>43</sup> See for instance Cerase (1974).

<sup>44</sup> Zlotnik (1987).

at some major problems when trying to account for specific return movements.<sup>45</sup>

As a response to the differences in national statistical definitions, the UN Population Division made an attempt in 1986 to introduce a 'universal' definition of return migration and published recommendations to enhance comparability between national recording systems. The attempt was based on the recognition of return migration as an important aspect of migration processes, and one way of capturing these movements would be better and more comparable data. The following definition was presented and discussed:<sup>46</sup>

A returnee is a person characterised by:

1. Having the nationality of the country which he or she enters;
2. having been an emigrant, that is, having spent at least a year abroad
3. and intending to spend at least a year in the country of nationality (UN 1986:81).

Nationality was promoted as the first identification of a returnee, firstly due the possibility to verify nationality through passport control, but also due to the expressed consideration that nationality is a manifestation of *belonging* that distinguishes the return migrant from other immigrants. The second criterion for identification of a returnee had to do with establishing emigration status. In this case, the UN chose the criterion of being a 'long-term emigrant', that is, having been outside the country for more than one year. The UN thus recommended the use of time as a criteria as opposed to for instance the purpose of the emigration, mainly because of the measurability, but also because

where return migration is concerned, the movements of interest are those of persons whose length of stay abroad has been sufficiently long as to leave some sort of imprint on their lives (ibid:80).

It is recognised that the choice of the one-year limit is made out of convention rather than being based on arguments about what could be considered 'sufficiently long as to leave some sort of imprint', which is also a very vague formulation. The criterion reflects the view that returning migrants are important for the emigration countries, to where the 'imprints' may be transferred. The third criterion has to do with intended time of stay in the country of citizen-

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<sup>45</sup> A recent example related to Swedish refugee policy where formal nationality was not appropriate as an identification of returnees is the case of about 5 000 Bosnians who obtained Croatian passports to seek asylum in Sweden during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Upon their compulsory repatriation to Croatia, their country of formal nationality, they were defined as returning citizens (by both Swedish and Croatian authorities), but were in fact forced immigrants. This is only one of many complicated examples related to refugees and citizenship.

<sup>46</sup> ibid:81.

ship. The argument is that a returnee should have the intention to stay at least one year, to distinguish them from short-term returnees that for instance return to visit family or for arranging another departure.

As international statistics are largely determined by control interests and in general produced and used politically it is difficult to obtain 'objective' pictures of movements.<sup>47</sup> In the case of return migration these movements have been underestimated, which has contributed to a 'one-way' image of international migration. The renewed policy interest in the field underlies recent attempts to balance this picture by measuring return migrations statistically. The United Nations Population Division proposes a measurable and unifying definition of the phenomenon, but stresses the importance of studying different types of return related to different contexts of emigration. A distinction has to be made between emigration for permanent resettlement, labour migration, irregular or undocumented migration and refugees. According to the UN 'the return of the migrant' is relevant not only in the Western European sphere of interest, and not only in the contexts of labour migration. The potential consequences of return migration in terms of changing the socio-economic structure in 'former sending countries' has attracted increasing attention.

## Conceptual definitions

The lack of an operational statistical definition and of comparable data between countries have complicated quantitative analyses of return movements at the macro-level. On the other hand, there are numerous important studies that have used case studies of limited scope to create 'typologies' of return, or conceptual definitions of return, in order to contribute to the theoretical analysis of the phenomenon. In some cases these categorisations are basically descriptive, but there are also attempts at generalisations based on the different categories of return. In the following a number of different conceptual definitions used in earlier research are presented.

### *Return migration and length of stay*

The importance of the time period spent abroad for the return phenomena was stressed at an early stage by Cerase (1974). Cerase, when studying Italians returning from the USA, categorised migrants according to length of stay abroad and found four categories. In his temporal typology he defined *failure*

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<sup>47</sup> See Miles (1993) for a discussion on the ideological production of statistics on migration.

*returns* (return after up to five years), *conservative returns* (return after six to fifteen years), *innovation return* (return after fifteen to thirty years) and *retirement return* (return after thirty years). The hypothesis put forward by Cerase was that returnees have different motives for returning depending on how long time they have been away. Early returnees were for instance identified as 'failures' (in terms of integration in the emigration country), and late returnees as being more successful. Cerase identified higher frequencies of return during two periods, firstly after six to ten years of absence, and then again after thirty years. He then related these to what he identified as crucial phases in the integration process in the emigration country. The higher returns after six to ten years were explained by the *conservatism* of some migrants who wanted to go back once they had saved a considerable amount of money. The high numbers of *retirement returns* were explained by the desire of many immigrants to return when the professional life was over, in particular in the cases when the persons had no strong social ties established in the immigration country.

That length of stay in the immigration country is related to frequencies of return seems to be the result of many studies. Although time in itself does not explain different return frequencies - many other factors influence returns and the way the 'integration process' evolves can not be generalised - it is obvious that length of stay as a general indicator is relevant in the study of returns. Empirical data from for instance Sweden show that return frequencies are higher during the first 3-5 years after arrival, and then diminish over time.<sup>48</sup>

### *Intentions at departure*

Bovenkerk's bibliographical work in the mid-70s - based on a large number of studies - categorised returning migrants in basically two types, related to the intentions of migrants when they emigrated. He distinguished between those returns that took place despite a manifested intention not to return, and those returns that took place as was intended at the departure. He concluded that in general the frequency of return depended on the initial intentions expressed by the emigrants. Return rates were high when emigrants had the intention to return and low when they did not. He also formulated general statements based on studies on internal return migration in various countries. These statements have the character of 'laws' similar to Ravenstein's laws of migra-

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<sup>48</sup> See for instance Statistics Sweden (1992) and Haggström et al (1990). On levels of return migration over time from transatlantic migrations to Sweden and Finland see Tedebrand (1976) and Virtanen (1979) respectively.

tion from 1885: 'the shorter the distance of emigration, the higher the incidence of return migration', 'the longer the emigrants stay away, the less chance they will return' and 'changes in the economic balance between the place of origin and the place of destination directly affect the volume of return migration'.<sup>49</sup>

Another early classification based on expressed intentions at departure was made by Richmond (1968) in his study of British return migrants from Canada. He defined returnees according to three *motivational types*: 1) 'quasi-migrants' who had had the intention to return to Britain at the departure; 2) 'permanent returnees' who had intended to stay in Canada but returned permanently to Britain; and 3) 'transient migrants' who moved back and forth without staying permanently in any country. Richmond thus identified a group of persons who did not intend to stay in one country and who continued to move between Canada and Britain.

### *Geographical patterns of movements*

A grouping of returning migrants according to their manifested geographical pattern of movement - a geographical typology - was made by Hernández Alvarez (1967) in his study of return migration from the United States to Puerto Rico. In this classification the focus is on discernible geographical paths, and the five categories of return that were identified are defined by actual spatial movement prior to and after return. A stands for place of birth, B is the place of residence before emigration and C is the place of return:

- 1)  $A=B, B=C$ : a migrant who emigrated from his/her place of birth, and returned to that place.
- 2)  $A=B, B\neq C$ : a migrant who emigrated from the place of birth, but returned to another place.
- 3)  $A\neq B, A=C$ : a migrant who changed place of residence before emigration and then returned to the place of birth.
- 4)  $A\neq B, B=C$ : a migrant who changed place of residence before emigration, and returned to this place of residence.
- 5)  $A\neq B, B\neq C$ : a migrant who changed place of residence before emigration and returned to a third place.

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<sup>49</sup> Bovenkerk (1974:8).

The classification illustrated the different possible geographical trajectories manifested by returning migrants. In contrast with most other categorisations of international return migration the geographical level is 'place' in stead of 'nation'. The categorisation permitted Hernández Alvarez to relate international migration and return to internal population trends in Puerto Rico during the 1950s and 1960s. He found that about half of the return migrants did not return to their place of birth in Puerto Rico, and among these 50% changed place of residence before emigration. Nine out of ten return migrants were born outside the metropolitan area of San Juan, but after return about 40% were living in San Juan. The study showed that movement to the USA overshadowed internal migration to San Juan during this period, but that return migrants formed part of the internal urbanisation process as many of them changed residence after return. Concerning mobility in the USA the study showed that a larger proportion of return migrants to Puerto Rico had been moving out from New York City than would be expected on the basis of the geographical distribution of Puerto Ricans in the USA. Hernández Alvarez concluded that this 'stepping stone' pattern of movement was similar to the internal migration in Puerto Rico before emigration.

#### *Return defined by migration chain or migration process*

The definition of return migration in relation to different phases of a migratory chain or stages in a migration process has indirectly been taken up by some researchers.<sup>50</sup> Return is then seen as the possible ending of a migratory chain starting with emigration, going through a settlement process and as the exceptional case ending in permanent return. Returns can also be classified according to the different frequencies of return and the character of return related to the phases or stages in the *migration process*. Castles et al (1984) and Castles and Miller (1993) identified four phases in post-war migration within Western Europe. Their main argument was that migration, when initiated, will gain its own momentum:

although each migratory movement has its specific historical patterns, it is possible to generalise on the ways migrations evolve, and to find certain internal dynamics to the process (Castles and Miller 1993:24).

The phases of the migration process identified by Castles and Miller were the following:

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<sup>50</sup> Piore (1979), Castles et al (1984) and Castles and Miller (1993).

*Phase one.* Temporary labour migration of young workers, remittances of earnings and continued orientation towards the country of emigration.

*Phase two.* Prolonging of stay and the development of social networks based on kinship or common area of origin and the need for mutual help in the new environment.

*Phase three.* Family reunion and a growing consciousness of long-term settlement in the immigration country, increasing orientation towards the immigration country, and emergence of ethnic communities with their own institutions (associations, shops, cafes, agencies, professions).

*Phase four.* Permanent settlement which, depending on the policies of the government and the social and economic situation in the immigration country, leads either to a secure legal status and eventual citizenship, or to political exclusion, socio-economic marginalisation and the formation of permanent ethnic minorities.

Some general ideas about the character of return migration in the different phases can be derived from the above studies. The cited authors do not spell out the return characteristics in relation to their four phases, but comments about return are found throughout their writings. These general statements may be summarised as below:

*Return phase one.* Returns are frequent, migrants have the intention to return, work contracts dictate length of stay, there is an 'instrumentalist' view on emigration and return.

*Return phase two.* Returns are frequent, but length of stay is longer or people make more trips. The process is beginning to reach a 'turning point', many migrants go back, but those who stay, stay on longer.

*Return phase three.* Returns are less frequent. Families decide to stay on longer, the expressed return decision is often firm, but the date of return is postponed.

*Return phase four.* Returns are less frequent, less predictable and of more varied character. 'Retirement' return occurs, as well as 'second generation' returns. Returns can be triggered by unexpected events and are unpredictable. A majority of migrants express a desire to return, but rates are low. *Diaspora* communities develop, sometimes building on strong 'myths of return', which in some cases substitute physical return.

A process-oriented approach as suggested by Castles and Miller and others is useful in *specifying the conditions* under which different return movements take place. When a process-orientation is allowed for, there may also be a point when the concept of *return* itself becomes problematic. As expressed by Pessar (1997) concerning Caribbean emigration and return:

[R]ather unexpectedly over the course of our research on Caribbean return migration, several of us have come to conclude that the very meaning and utility of the term *return* requires serious rethinking. As Luis Guarnizo observes in his chapter on Dominican migration, after three decades of intense U.S.-bound migration, a binational society that articulates both nations has emerged. (...) This volume, therefore, calls for the jettisoning of the bipolar, settler-sojourner model of migration and recommends, instead, a more dynamic approach that affirms the transnational identities, processes, and structures that constitute contemporary Caribbean migration (ibid:3).

The various classifications of different forms of returning exemplified above reflect the complexity of the phenomenon. Classifications can be tools for further analysis but are often basically descriptive, facilitating the organisation of empirical data. They also reflect different theoretical standpoints and the degrees to which return is seen as a 'separate' or 'interdependent' phenomenon. The next sections will look closer at different theoretical approaches to return migration, as well as some central research themes. But first a description of the research field as such.

## Development of the research field

Bibliographic overviews of research on return migration include the works of Bovenkerk (1974), King (1986) and Gaillard (1994). Based on her review of 1017 works published from 1965 to 1992, Gaillard notes interesting shifts over time in terms of the geographical distribution of studies, the number of studies, and their focus. Going back before 1965, King (1986) mentions a few pioneering studies (Useem and Useem (1955) and Saloutos (1956)) but in accordance with Gaillard he points out that it was from the 1960s that research on return migration began to expand. Bovenkerk contests the view that return migration is an unexplored field of study and classifies the studies in his review according to theoretical themes common within the field. The problem, according to Bovenkerk, is not a lack of research in general but a lack of communication and co-ordination between researchers and of accumulation and integration of existing knowledge.

It is interesting to examine the spatial distribution of studies on return migration, as they reflect the geographical unevenness in the production of knowledge in this field, as well as a certain focus on particular directions of the return movement. The great majority (72%) of documents in Gaillard's bibliography deals with the *emigration* country, either exclusively (34%) or in combination with the immigration country (38%). King (1986) concludes that the *direction* of return migration that has been studied most is the return movement

from richer to poorer European countries. Of the emigration countries studied in Gaillard's bibliography, Southern European countries represent 47% (of which Italy alone accounts for 32%), North Africa 13% and Latin America 10% of all documents in the bibliography. Italy is, as already noted, the country that has been most studied of all countries. According to Gaillard this is explained by historically high rates of return migration to Italy and by the already mentioned fact that a detailed statistical recording system focused on return flows has been available since the 1930s.

After Italy (total number of documents 111) the other most studied individual countries of origin are Greece (48 documents), Algeria (46), Turkey (44), Spain (42), Portugal (42), former Yugoslavia (27), Chile (26), Tunisia (22) and Puerto Rico (22).

Of the documents dealing with return migration in relation to immigration countries, there is a strong over-representation of European countries. They account for about 70% of all studies; France alone accounts for 25%, Germany for 15%, while the U.S accounts for 18%. This distribution is not unexpected according to Gaillard:

While the U.S, Australia and Canada are important immigration countries, the question of return migration has not so far been considered as a major issue and has been relatively less extensively studied. Conversely, European countries, confronted by growing unemployment, have attempted to increase return migration to the country of origin through incentive policies. The interest in observing return migration has thus been greater when it corresponded to a political will reflected in programs for return and movements of return (ibid:13).

The political dimension of research on return migration seems in general to be important. Whether or not return migration is considered a political issue in a country, appears to be a good indicator of how much research is produced. This observation is further confirmed when looking at the volume of research and its changes over time. In the 1965 to 1992 period there is a steady increase in the number of documents especially from the early 1970s, reaching a peak in 1985/86. King (1986) as well as Gaillard explain this by reference to the economic and political situation in Europe during this period:

[I]t is tempting to suggest that this was due to the onset of world-wide recession which, especially in the West European arena, provoked sudden and marked turnabouts in migratory trends. The threshold of 1973/4 was when countries like France and West Germany stopped admitting large numbers of migrants and pressures mounted for repatriation and return (King 1986:3).

As a result a large number of mostly empirical studies were produced during the 1970s, especially focusing on European immigration countries and countries of origin in Southern Europe. A sharp decline in the number of studies occurred in 1986/87, and in 1991/1992 the total number of documents was down at the same low level as in 1967/68. But there is an important geographic variation here. Parallel to the decline in research on emigration countries in South Europe and North Africa there is a rise in the number of documents covering countries of origin in Latin America. From 1985 and onwards research on return migration has increased significantly in this region. The special profile of the research in Latin America has been on the return of refugees and displaced persons, which increased from the mid-1980s as political changes were beginning to take place and return from exile became possible.

The decline in research after 1986/87 might also be explained in political terms. The fact that the largest immigration countries in Western Europe now had established immigrant communities within their borders since generations back motivated to some extent a shift of migration policy:

[A]nother concept was developing in the European host countries: the most urgent response to immigration, and consequent numerous socio-political problems, is not incentives for return but rather policies for integration in the host country. This shift of policy is the most probable reason behind the sharp decline in interest (general and scientific) for the question of return (Gaillard 1994:15).

However, this decline in interest in return was only partial, and probably temporal. The perceived changes in the character of migratory movements during the late 1980s and early 1990s have motivated new policy approaches that put strong emphasis on return. As already mentioned, there has been a renewed focus on return during the 1990s, especially in relation to repatriation or return programs for refugees. In the European context, the war in former Yugoslavia made large-scale repatriation an issue within Europe. From the so called 'decade of return' (1973-1983) related to labour migration, the 1990s have been labelled 'the decade of repatriation'.<sup>51</sup> But there are also renewed interests in return policies for labour migrants related to North-South and West-East contexts. Recent policy initiatives concerning labour migration and return between the EU and the Maghreb countries; France and Senegal and Germany and Turkey are some examples.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> UNHCR announced 1992 to be the 'Year of Repatriation'.

<sup>52</sup> This was one of the themes discussed at the EU meeting on asylum and migration policies in October 1999 in Tammerfors, Finland.

Research efforts have thus varied according to policy interests in immigration countries. This could give the impression that return migration has not been considered important from other academic standpoints than explicitly 'policy oriented' ones. To some extent this might be true. King (1986) argues that apart from the problems with definitions and measurability, the main reason for the failure of researchers to consider return migration is that it has not fitted into dominant analytical frameworks within migration research. As noted earlier, migration has traditionally been theorised as a one-way process, most often related to the urbanisation process. Rural-urban migration has been seen as permanent moves and part of industrialisation and development processes. Return migration has been incorporated into this framework basically as permanent return as a possible outcome if settlement failed. This bi-modal model of either permanent settlement or permanent return has been the dominant theoretical approach to return. But the complexity of contemporary migration patterns has also led to changing analytical frameworks, where return movements are viewed differently. Some of these theoretical developments have taken place within research on Caribbean migration, as mentioned, and further examples will be given below.

## Theoretical perspectives

Theoretical perspectives on return migration reflect theories of migration within the social sciences in general. Despite the great volume of studies on migration many researchers point out a number of conceptual and theoretical issues that remain problematic.<sup>53</sup> Migration theories are said to be either too general (i.e. Ravenstein's laws of migration), or too fragmentary and applicable only to certain aspects of migration (labour market migration, rural-urban migration etc.). Skeldon (1990) identifies three conceptual problems in migration research which are yet to be resolved. Firstly, there is the question of the relative importance of the individual migrant as a decision-maker in relation to the 'context' in which the migrants are inscribed, sometimes also referred to as the 'structure-agency' dualism. Some researchers see the individual migrant and the decision-making process as fundamental, while other put more emphasis on the social and economic context as decisive for how migration patterns evolve. Secondly, Skeldon points out the problem of reification, that is, to what extent migration should be seen as a 'separate' phenomenon, mobility *per se*, in relation to other aspects of society. Some population geographers, for instance, have put emphasis on migration as *spatial mobility*, identifying the patterns and the measurable flows between different geographical destina-

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<sup>53</sup> See for instance Skeldon (1990), Massey et al (1993), Hammar et al (1997).

tions. Other population geographers see migration as 'embedded' and impossible to separate from other aspects of society, and thus focus on the whole situation rather than on the actual geographical movements. Thirdly, there is the issue of whether migration to some extent is 'culture-specific', and how comparison can be made between different 'cultural contexts'. Chapman (1997) has for instance highlighted the importance of studying 'local epistemologies of mobility' in order to capture how meanings of migrations are constructed differently between contexts.<sup>54</sup>

Findley (1992) describes how conceptual problems has led to a shift from 'grand theory' to 'middle-range or microlevel theories relative to place specific contexts' (ibid:90). Within human geography there has been a debate during the 1990s about the lack of theoretical developments within the specific branch of population geography. Findlay and Graham (1991) pointed out the failure of geographical migration research to integrate theoretical influences that have affected human geography in general, that is, the development of social theory and the so called 'post-modern challenge'. Several researchers have since proposed new theoretical directions in the field of population geography. One of these proposals is the 'biographical approach', which in fact is an 'old' approach within human geography, but which has regained strength in the 1990s with a somewhat different theoretical focus (see below).<sup>55</sup>

Dominant views on *return migration* can be related to the above conceptual issues taken up by Skeldon. Concerning the first, there is a rather strong tradition focusing on the returning migrants as a decision-maker. As return migration often represents a counter-stream in relation to the dominant direction of movements, there has been a tendency among researchers to stress the importance of the individual's decision in relation to contextual/structural factors. The problem of reification is also present in research on return, and the question whether it is relevant to isolate and define a 'return movement' and study it separately can be raised. The complications related to definitions and demarcations have already been discussed. Thirdly, 'cultural aspects' of return migration have been discussed in earlier work on return migration, but also in recent work on *diaspora* and on return from exile. The 'cultural turn' in the social sciences is beginning to affect geographic research on return migration as well, despite the late integration of social theory in this field referred to

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<sup>54</sup> Personal communication, September 1997.

<sup>55</sup> For the debate on the biographical approach see Halfacree and Boyle (1993), Skeldon (1995) and Halfacree and Boyle (1995).

above.<sup>56</sup> The major theoretical standpoints in relation to return migration will now be taken up in some detail.

*Neo-classical economics: human capital approach and micro-and macro analyses*

A dominating theoretical perspective on return migration during the 1970s was the 'human capital' approach, based on neo-classic economic theory. According to this perspective, labour migrants moving from a 'less-developed' society to a 'developed' society may increase their human capital in form of competence and know-how. The return of labour migrants would therefore function as a transfer of these skills to the 'less-developed' society. Emigration is thus at the micro-level seen as an investment in human capital, and the migrant should be able to profit from this investment upon return, economically but also socially. It is therefore a rational decision for the migrant to return, as the rate of return to his/her human capital will be relatively higher in the 'less-developed' society.

Within this framework, the aggregated levels correspond to the sum of individual migrant behaviour. Labour movements are determined by wage differentials, so that migration occurs from low-wage to high-wage countries. According to the same reasoning, there is an opposite movement of capital, including human capital, from 'developed' to 'less-developed' countries, as the rate of return to capital investments is higher in a 'less-developed' country. A distinction is thus made between different forms of human migrations - on the one hand, labour migration of unskilled workers, reacting on wage differentials between countries, and on the other hand, skilled workers moving in the opposite direction. Return migration should within this framework take place for two main reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, as the individual migrant increases his/her human capital it becomes a 'rational' decision to return in order to profit from this increase. Secondly, return migration of workers should take place as a result of changes in wage differentials. For instance, with the economic recession during the early 1970s, the theory predicted an increase in return migration as a result of depressed wages in the 'developed' countries.

At an aggregated level, it was assumed that return migration could become an important impulse to the development process in 'labour-exporting' countries. Labour emigration and return were seen as beneficial for both countries, both

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<sup>56</sup>A description of the 'cultural turn' in contemporary human geography and in social theory is made by Pinch (1997). See also Crang (1998).

the 'less-developed' and the 'developed' society. In the long run, these movements of labour would be instrumental in the levelling of regional differences. This was the perspective put forward in the 1970s and early 1980s by influential organisations such as the ILO, by immigration country governments and a few emigration country governments and by a number of researchers.<sup>57</sup> The perspective consequently confirmed the rationality of return programs aimed at encouraging return during this period. In short, as summarised by Massey et al (1993):

The simple and compelling explanation of international migration offered by neo-classical macroeconomics has strongly shaped public thinking and has provided the intellectual basis for much immigration policy (Massey et al. 1993:433).

This theoretical perspective turned out to be in sharp contrast with the empirical observations that followed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A number of studies focused on the regional effects of return migration, as well as the rationality of the return decision and showed that the perspective had been clearly over-optimistic in terms of the developmental potential of return migration (King 1986). Studies in Turkey, Italy, Spain, Portugal showed similar results. A consensus was growing during the 1980s that return migration, instead of being positive in developmental terms, rather contributed to the continued deterioration of the countries of emigration.

Inherent in the neo-classic economic theory was also, as already mentioned, the assumption that an economic recession in the immigration country would trigger return migration. As the economic rationale for emigration disappeared, return migration should increase. Most empirical studies during the 1970s and early 1980s - in Europe as well as in Latin America - did not confirm this prediction. Rather the opposite has been observed: recession during the 1970s had the effect of 'keeping workers overseas' (Gaillard 1994:25).

Neo-classical economic theory had then limited success in explaining the occurrence or not of return migration. It is also obvious that sophisticated analyses of the relationships between different economic indicators (wage differentials, employment rates etc.) and rates of return movements have not been numerous, due to the problems of measurability and lack of statistical coverage referred to above. While the basic assumptions of this theoretical framework have been questioned, they are still fundamental to most policy approaches in the field. Fisher et al (1997) provides a detailed discussion about these assumptions and their limitations in explaining the relationships between migration and development.

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<sup>57</sup> Emigration countries embracing this view were for instance Algeria (Lawless 1986) and Yugoslavia (Schierup 1990).

A substantial part of research on return migration takes on the issue of the individual and his/her motives for return. As noted above, Bovenkerk (1974) based the classification in his review on *intentions at departure* and Richmond categorised migrants in different *motivational types*. To some extent, the focus on the individual has been motivated by the view that return migration represents an anomaly, a counter-movement of limited scope in relation to the dominant volumes of out-migration. The explanations have then been looked for at the individual level. A result of many studies was that the determining factors for return were more 'affective' in nature in comparison with other types of migration. Questions about the selectivity in return migration were raised, such as to what extent returnees were 'failures' or 'successes'. The classical work of Cerase and the typologies of 'return of failure' and 'return of innovation' inspired many studies. Gaillard concludes from the review of many studies that the association between a short stay and 'failure' is confirmed by many researchers. But 'failure' as classified by researchers (seen as problems of adjustment in immigration countries) is not always seen as 'failure' by migrants:

Returns that researches analyse as being motivated by failure are paradoxically not necessarily experienced as such by the returnees themselves. The majority of the research projects that attempts to determine which of the attracting and/or dissuading factors have been determinant in any given situation are quite unanimous in concluding that factors of attraction exert greater influence in the decision to return, even in the case of so called failure returns (ibid:30).

During the recession in the 1970s, the question was being posed rather differently. As already mentioned, the problem became formulated in terms of why labour migrants *did not* 'go home'. The migrants who were staying permanently were from the above perspectives representing an 'anomaly'. Return migration became increasingly politicised and also a 'moral' issue:

In the early seventies, and increasingly so as the decade progressed and the northern countries decided to halt the flow of this foreign work-force, people began to attach a moral value to the question of migration and migration return. The subject of development in the country of origin entered the picture, strengthening the position of the host countries (ibid:43).

A number of studies during the 1970s and 1980s showed that many migrants expressed an intention to return, but there was a discrepancy between the number of migrants expressing this intention and actual return rates. Research that focused on the individual level was intensified, with different approaches depending on the theoretical frameworks used, such as behaviouralism or

humanism. As a reaction against the simplistic view of the individual as a rational 'economic man', the behaviouralistic approach tried to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the individual and the decision-making process. For instance, in order to understand the 'low' return rates during the 1970s, studies were made where different attracting and dissuading factors in both 'host' and 'home' countries were identified. The individual decision-making process was seen as a rational evaluation of the sum of 'pull' factors in both countries against the 'push' factors in both countries. The behaviouralistic approach permitted more factors to be considered than economic ones, thus refining earlier studies, but stayed with the basic assumptions of neo-classic economic theory.

Studies of the decision-making process of returnees have often been made after the return has taken place. It is a general problem in research on migration decisions that these may be rationalised or legitimised after the actual migration has taken place. Gaillard in her bibliographical review sums up some recurring 'motivating factors' for return migration resulting from a number of studies:

1. the needs of the family; education of children, death or illness of parents
2. retirement
3. accumulating sufficient capital
4. job possibilities in the country of origin
5. job-related difficulties in the host country
6. personal reasons, homesickness, health, etc.

On the other hand, when studies of intentions are made prior to return, it is important how the questions are formulated and in what context they are asked. As noted above, the moral value attached to return migration may influence both the way questions are posed and the obtained answers. Both immigration country governments and exile communities may produce discourses about the 'moral duty' to return to the 'home country', disregarding both individual circumstances and structural possibilities for return. Anwar (1979) showed in his study of Pakistanis in Britain the existence of a strong 'myth of return' as many people expressed intentions to return, while at the same time economic realities made those returns unlikely.

Studies on the decision-making process within the behaviouralistic approach contributed to the understanding of the complexities of the return decision. The result of questionnaires is often a listing of different 'pull' and 'push' factors, which can give detailed information of what factors individuals consider important. A major problem, however, is the common isolation of the decision-making process from the societal context. Other problems with 'pull-

push' models have to with the failure to problematize *the geographical level*.<sup>58</sup> The individual choice is seen as the central aspect, and social processes and structural conditions at the places involved (origin and destination) are not integrated into the analysis.

### *Structural and integrated approaches to return migration*

Rather few studies have focused solely on structural factors as determining return migration, but there have been reactions against the individualist focus prevalent in many studies on return.<sup>59</sup> From a structuralist perspective it is not the individual migrant who 'chooses' to return, or who returns because of personal 'failure' in adaptation. Instead, the return of migrants depends on economic, social and political structures and the development model in both emigration and immigration countries. For instance, the return of migrants can be caused by the rejection of workers from certain sectors of the economy, which depends on the economic structure and the development strategy of the immigration country (i.e. the profile of the industrial sector etc.), rather than on the individual characteristics of the migrant.

Shrestha (1988) proposes a conceptual framework where migration is viewed as a structural process that is systematically produced and reproduced. He puts emphasis on the underlying relationships between migration and *socio-economic formation and transformation* (defined as the social relations of production and the process of uneven geographical development). Labour migrations in developing countries have their origin in the colonial expansion following the industrial revolution. In the colonial economy, internal return migrations were part of a system where migrant workers migrated to European-dominated cores (cities, plantations or mining enclaves), while their wives and family members remained in the rural villages. 'Circular migration' emerged as a type of migration beneficial to the capitalist sector:

[C]olonial policies forced rural households to move and engage in some wage-labour in European-dominated cores, while ensuring that labour migrants remained socially and economically tied to their villages (and did not move to cores permanently). (...) This policy was devised to ensure that migrant workers did return to their villages (...) Most migrants were thus unable to break away from what is known as the circular 'migratory network' (i.e. close ties between migrants and their source areas) and become fully incorporated into the capitalist sector (core) as its permanent labour force (ibid:186-187).

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<sup>58</sup> Malmberg (1997) discusses the limitations of the basic assumptions of 'pull' and 'push' models from a geographical perspective.

<sup>59</sup> Examples are Amin (1974) and Shrestha (1988).

According to Amin (1974) such a system produces a vicious circle between labour migration and underdevelopment. In Shrestha's analysis, it is the emergence of a material and class-biased socio-economic structure (the geographical separation of the employer (capital) and the dependent worker) that creates the potential for migration. The individual migration or 'mobility strategy' becomes a reflection of the possibilities and constraints available in accordance with the social class position of the person - which for dominant class members means a full range of mobility choices ('strategic choice'), but for subordinate class members are restricted to the following three options ('survival choice'):

(1) to stay and make the best out of the existing relations of production in their villages (i.e., *adaptive choice*); (2) to stay and revolt against the existing regressive relations and try to transform them into progressive relations (i.e., *revolutionary choice*); or (3) to migrate to a different economic environment (i.e., *migratory choice*) (Shrestha 1988:191).

The question then becomes *why the migratory choice?* In Shrestha's view, the migratory choice is adopted because it represents a kind of middle way between static adaptation and the insecure revolutionary option and 'offers [migrants] a way out of the existing structural trap and new possibilities to improve their economic conditions'. The important question for migration research is consequently to analyse *who migrates* in terms of class position and background, because 'different class migrants have different ramifications for development and its nature'. It is further more important to analyse *why migration occurs* (by looking at the economic and socio-spatial structures) than why individual migrants move. The third major issue for migration research is to analyse the socio-economic impact and implications of migration for migrants and for development. Here Shrestha is concerned with the social mobility or change in social class position of migrants *regardless geographical destination*. Thus, Shrestha's focus is not on the fate of *places* (such as in the case of 'rural development') but the social mobility of *persons*. Migration has a positive effect on the process of development *if migrants improve their positions*. If not, migration is only a 'holding action', a 'transitory spatial escape', and not a dynamic force in the process of development. Characteristic of structuralist perspectives on migration is thus that individual motives, identities or non-economic circumstances are seen as secondary and on the whole subordinated the larger socio-economic structures.

Chapman and Prothero (1983) provide a wider conceptualisation of the 'circular migratory network', and show how circulation was part of pre-colonial societies and not only linked to capitalist expansion. In their view, circulation is not as 'transitory' as understood by structuralism or by Zelinsky's (1971) 'hypothesis of the mobility transition' and they argue that apart from being an

interchange of labour between one mode of production and another, reciprocal migration also permits the positive integration of distinct places and circumstances:

Circulation, rather than being transitional or ephemeral, is a time-honoured and enduring mode of behaviour, deeply rooted in a great variety of cultures and found at all stages of socio-economic change. (...) Such relationships, as well as the transformations experienced by both whole communities and the wider society, denote processes of far greater subtlety and complexity than can be reduced to a remorseless sequence of linearly-arranged stages from things 'rural' to things 'urban' (Chapman and Prothero 1983:619-620).

While not being strictly structuralist, many approaches to return migration seek 'context-dependent' explanations, where emphasis is put on socio-economic and historical circumstances, rather than on individual choice. Examples are referred to above in Amin's and Shresta's studies where return migration is seen as part of larger societal and migratory processes. Within a migration system approach, as originally developed by Mabogunje (1970), return migration is seen as the linking part of an integrated system. Returning migrants and the information they provide 'calibrate' the whole system through their positive or negative feed-back. The system approach to migration is widely recognised and favoured by many researchers.<sup>60</sup> However, to carry out research within this framework can be complicated as it requires strong financial and institutional support in the countries involved in the migration system.<sup>61</sup> Return migration is in the system approach not treated as a separate phenomenon, but integral to the system.

The study by Byron and Condon (1996) on Caribbean return migration from Britain and France is an example of research seeking 'context-dependent' explanations of return. Byron and Condon compare the two return situations and show that despite the similarities in migrant motivations and return goals, there are different outcomes of the migration processes in the two contexts because of their special social, economic and political circumstances. For instance, the divergence in policies by French and British governments toward the Caribbean colonies has shaped much of the present differences in return mobility. In the British case, the government restricted Caribbean immigration by passing the Commonwealth Immigrants' Act of 1962, while no such restriction was introduced in the case of Caribbean immigration to France from

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<sup>60</sup> Kritz, Lim and Zlotnik (1992), Massey et al. (1993).

<sup>61</sup> The Western Hemisphere research project on migration from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Basin to the United States is one example (see for instance Díaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991).

the DOMs (overseas departments). This led to differences in timing and scale of both immigration and return, as well as in the character of present return migration. Return migration of Caribbean from Britain is today the only significant movement taking place between the UK and the Caribbean, while in the French case there are frequent return movements combined with continued immigration and circulation. The meaning of return is therefore different in the two contexts:

In Britain, immigration policy has made return a more permanent and, consequently, difficult project for migrants to contemplate. For French Caribbean migrants in France, frequent trips to the Caribbean may evolve into final settlement in the Caribbean (ibid:96).

The authors conclude that despite these different state policies which led to different patterns of return, there are similar housing and employment situations for Caribbean migrants in Britain and France and the motivations for return and return goals are also similar. But the outcomes of individual return plans differ because of structural conditions in the Caribbean and in Britain and France respectively. The pattern is thus determined by these structural circumstances, rather than individual motivations of returnees.

### *Migration and social networks*

The importance of social networks for the dynamics of different forms of migration has been highlighted within in particular sociological migration research, but also to some extent within human geography.<sup>62</sup> Migrant networks have been studied in for instance the US-Mexican context, indicating their role in sustaining high levels of migration despite changing economic and political conditions. There is a general consensus about the importance of networks for the *direction* of migration, but as pointed out by Faist (1997), network theories have not been very successful in explaining neither the volumes of migration, nor the continued importance of return migration. It is, in Faist's view 'not clear what exactly happens in networks and collectives that induces people to stay, move and return' (ibid:188). Network theories point out how the initial migration of 'pioneer migrants' can lead to chain migration as relatives and friends draw on the experiences and contacts of the pioneers, and thus lower their costs of emigration. Studies of US-Mexican migration, for instance, have showed that during the initial stages in the local context the social diversity of migrants is limited, but as the migration process evolves, more

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<sup>62</sup> For overviews of research on social networks and migration see Faist (1997) and Stjernström (1998).

social groups take advantage of the lower costs and begin to migrate.<sup>63</sup> After a stage of 'mass migration' has been reached, there is a stagnation and decline in both the number and the social scope of migrants.

The earlier failure to incorporate sustained return migrations within the social network perspective is now addressed by an increasing number of researchers. Studies on social networks and return migration are beginning to focus on the linking of places in origin and destination countries, and on the emergence of so called 'transnational social fields'. The social ties between migrants and between stayers and migrants in the different places involved are investigated, and the perception of the migration process as a *one-way* process is questioned.

#### *Gender perspectives on migration*<sup>64</sup>

The introduction of gender analyses in migration research within human geography dates back to the mid-1980s. Chant and Radcliffe (1992) note that although gender imbalances in migration have been highlighted earlier in migration research within developing countries, there have been very few attempts to analyse these differences systematically. Their own work is pioneering in this area.<sup>65</sup> A number of other migration researchers point out both what has been termed the increasing *feminisation* of international migration, and the need for both empirical and theoretical work in this field.<sup>66</sup> By feminisation is meant that more and more women are becoming international migrants, and that their participation in for instance international labour migrations is beginning to be higher than men's, due to changing demands in the economy.

Zlotnik (1995) challenges the view that there is a general feminisation of international migration. Based on statistics on South-to-North migration she demonstrates that in terms of gross immigration and emigration, there is no clear trend towards feminisation. Instead, only in net migration do women outnumber men, as women participate less in return migration than men do. She shows that there are important differences in female and male migration to and from the United States, Germany, Belgium and Great Britain, but the causes behind these differences are not examined. Her focus is instead on the quantification and characterisation of female migration internationally.

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<sup>63</sup> Massey et al (1991).

<sup>64</sup> This section is based on Tollefsen Altamirano (1997).

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. Radcliffe (1992) and Chant (1992).

<sup>66</sup> Hugo (1995), Castles and Miller (1993).

The fact that it is possible to identify differences between how men and women migrate - within and between countries - and that women's and men's use of time-space have different restrictions in most contexts, seem to be obvious arguments for introducing gender analyses in migration research. Chant and Radcliffe (1992) see the analysis of gender-selectivity in migration as fundamental for the understanding of economic, social and demographic change in the South:

Where men and women are, if they live together or apart, whether their movement to other parts of their countries or overseas is equally or differentially constrained through economic and cultural aspects of the societies to which they belong, are factors vitally important in the interpretation of development at both local and national levels in Third World countries (ibid:1).

The gender-based division of labour together with different social and cultural constructions of female and male identities are the most important factors in the shaping of gender-selective migration, according to Chant (ibid.). These factors could be summarised in the concept that Forsberg (1996) calls the 'local gender contract' which differentiates the relations between men and women in three main spheres: societal/political life, labour market relations and family/everyday life in specific local contexts. From case studies in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia Chant and Radcliffe conclude that there are certain similarities in the way gender-selectivity works across the different contexts. Eight generalisations were made from the different case studies:

1. Men are more mobile than women, even in cases where female mobility is very high.
2. The temporary or long absence of migrant men from domestic space means that women obtain a certain autonomy, although their access to resources often is limited.
3. Men migrate 'independently' more than women do.
4. The migration of men is more often linked to direct access to employment than women's migration.
5. The range of destinations is more varied and the distances longer in men's migration - internally as well as internationally.
6. Women have fewer job opportunities at destination labour markets, they are mostly limited to domestic services and commerce.
7. The age structures of migrants vary between men and women; female migrants are young and many of them stop migrating when they marry; male migrants are also predominantly young, but they continue to a larger extent to migrate at later stages in the life cycle.
8. Men send remittances back to the 'home areas' while women keep stronger personal, economic and social ties with relatives in areas of origin.

Some caution against over-generalisation is motivated, and there are significant differences *within* male groups and female groups respectively, for in-

stance in terms of age, class and ethnicity. In Buijs (ed.) (1993) several contributions question the centrality of gender in relation to other social categories or 'differences'. Bhachu (1993), for instance, points out the problems with ethnocentrism and the lack of understanding of the dimensions of class and 'race' in the study of migrant women in Britain. She shows that even though ethnicity is important to migrant women, so is also their 'regional and class locations'. This kind of orientations do not mean an abandonment of gender, but rather a theoretical development that allows the incorporation of other subordinations and power structures into the analysis.<sup>67</sup>

Bjerén (1997) proposes a perspective of analysing gender, reproduction and livelihood strategies in the local context in order to understand mobility. Within the tradition of social anthropology migration has not been considered a 'separate' phenomenon, but has rather been seen as the spatial aspect of how social relations develop over time. Bjerén argues that it is crucial to take into account gender relations within the household and in the local context, as these are decisive for how reproduction and production are organised - which in turn structure mobility patterns. How men and women migrate depends to a large extent on what women and men do within the household. Bjerén puts special emphasis on the organisation of reproduction, as there are forms of migration that are directly linked to physical and social reproduction. The examples she gives are *demographic* and *cultural* migration respectively, and these may take place not only in within the local context, but also - and increasingly so - over international borders. *Demographic* migration is connected to changes in the household structure - the establishment, expansion, fission and decline of the household over the 'reproductive career' - and each change may imply some form of physical mobility. *Cultural* migration, as defined by Bjerén, is linked to social reproduction of identities and culture, and here return migration is a central form of mobility:

The permeability of the 'household' and the insufficiency of individual care gives when it comes to successful enculturation give rise to North to South migration in order to ensure social reproduction of identities and culture, while the promise of improved life chances under the protection of established kin groups stimulates migration in the other direction. (...) Concerns about social reproduction are the engine for considerable migration in both directions and provide some of the glue that prevents those first established abroad in a kin group to cut loose from the source of identity back home (ibid: 232).

Mobility is thus in Bjerén's view the consequence of other processes such as reproduction and livelihood strategies. The study of migrants' networks (fam-

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<sup>67</sup> McDowell (1993a:158).

ily, extended household, friends, neighbours) and biographies in both origin and destination countries is one way to capture different spatial outcomes of these same processes.

Few studies have explicitly analysed return migration from a gender perspective.<sup>68</sup> From the above it seems that the results from existing studies are inconclusive; on the one hand Zlotnik showed that women in general participate less in return migration, and on the other hand the results from Chant and Radcliffe indicated that women keep 'stronger ties' with areas of out-migration, and return more frequently. Generalisations are difficult to make, and gender analyses have to take into account contextual factors and changes, as well as the aspects of age, class and ethnicity.

### *Humanistic studies, literature and post-colonial theory*

Characteristic of humanistic approaches in general is the lack of determinism in the perception of the individual - the human being can not be primarily discussed as a 'social category' or a 'class position' but must be seen as whole, complex and unique. As discussed in the introductory chapter, in humanistic research the subject is 'indivisible, singular and unique'. Motives, symbolic meanings and feelings of individuals are studied on their own terms, and the relationship to societal contexts may be of secondary interest. The interest in humanistic approaches has increased within migration studies, exemplified by studies that relate migration to myths, meanings or literary texts.

The existence of a 'myth of return' among immigrants in various contexts has attracted the interest of researchers in many disciplines.<sup>69</sup> The way such myths are constructed and how they are explored can be relevant questions for if, how and why actual return movements take place. It is a well-documented fact that illusions and nostalgia about the 'home country' are built up during exile or emigration, but the strength and meaning of these constructions and how they relate to geographical return movements are rather unexplored. Research on diaspora communities has treated the theme of 'the myth of return' and the construction of this myth as a fundamental part of the *diaspora* situation. The term *diaspora* has historically been used with the specific reference to the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland, but according to Safran (1991) the term is increasingly used

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<sup>68</sup> One exception is Förland (1995) who uses feminist theory to analyse the return of Chilean refugees from Norway to Chile.

<sup>69</sup> Anwar (1979) and Mihailovich-Dickman (ed.) (1994).

as metaphoric designations for several categories of people - expatriates, *expellées*, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court* (Safran 1991:83).

and inherit in the *diaspora* condition is that

they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland - its physical location, history, and achievements...they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return - when conditions are appropriate (ibid:83).

In his article Safran discusses the differences between diaspora communities in different geographical contexts and in the way the myth is exploited. The myth of return to a homeland can serve both political and social purposes; within the diaspora community itself; in the immigration country and in the emigration country. In Safran's view, this so called 'triangular relationship' needs to be examined in each *diaspora* situation in order to understand the functioning of the myth of return. Brah (1996), on the other hand, argues that not all *diasporas* sustain an ideology of 'return' and that the concept of *diaspora* should be understood as an analytic category, rather than primarily a descriptive category. In her view, *diaspora* could be understood as

an interpretative frame for analysing the economic, political and cultural modalities of historically specific forms of migrancy. The concept began to suggest fruitful ways of examining the relationality of these migrancies across fields of social relations, subjectivity and identity. (...) Among other things, I suggest that the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins while taking account of a homing desire, as distinct from a desire for a 'homeland' (Brah 1996:16).

Brah discusses the relationships between the concepts of *diaspora*, border, and politics of location and widens the view of diaspora to include more persons than the persons who have migrated. In her view, the 'diaspora space' includes also persons who are seen as 'indigenous', those born in the diaspora and those who are 'staying put' in former countries of living. In her research on South Asian immigrants in Britain she found that the initial intent to 'return' many persons had in the 1950s and 1960s receded over time, and by the 1970s, the priority of return had become a 'myth of return' and accepted as such in the *diaspora* situation. She shows in her study how priorities and attentions were directed towards life in Britain, as whole families were reunited there, but the 'myth of return' remained as a myth but not as an explicit ideology of return.

Research on *migration and literature*, (as presented in King et al. (eds.) (1995), builds on the premise that 'non-academic' literature can give important insights into the nature of the migration process and the experiences of being a migrant, and thus contribute to social scientific research on migration. The text by Shumsky in the cited volume treats the return migration theme in American novels of the 1920s and 1930s and describes how the authors through the fictional characters of the novels explore the tensions inherent in the return decision. According to Shumsky there is a tendency in these novels to polarise between the United States as 'new and modern' and the emigration country as 'old and traditional'. The return decision then becomes a personal choice between these two worlds and the fictional characters make these choices consciously. In some of the novels there are two characters who personify the two standpoints, and in other cases the conflict is plotted as an internal struggle within an individual.

Exile literature is often concerned with the themes of 'home' and 'homecomings'.<sup>70</sup> A literary genre within West African fiction deals specifically with the theme of migration and return, the so called 'been-to' literature. The 'been-to' literary tradition was established in West Africa in the 1950s and a number of novels were written within the tradition until the mid-1970s, including works of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka.<sup>71</sup> A 'been-to' was a person who returned to West Africa after having been to the West (usually Great Britain or France) for a prolonged period of time and the 'been-to' became a literary character within this tradition. The 'been-to' novels give insights into the contradictions of colonial and post-colonial relations during this period. They also reflect the personal confrontations and experiences of the 'been-to' when he/she faced the concrete circumstances in an often idealised 'home country' after return. Questions of identity and affiliation are raised and examined through the characters. To be a 'been-to' is today a more common experience than in the 1950s, and this literature contributes to the understanding of many present 'been-to' conditions. The image of the former 'homeland', the creation of new identities in exile and confrontations with physical or imagined 'homecomings' are themes in this literature.<sup>72</sup>

Within critical literary studies the development of the field of *post-colonial theory* has had an important influence on contemporary debates concerning con-

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<sup>70</sup> Gurr (1981), Kirpal (1989) and Glad (1990).

<sup>71</sup> Chinua Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* (1960) is a classic book in the genre. See Lawson (1982) on the 'been-to' literary genre in general and Tollefsen Altamirano (1996) for a discussion on *No Longer At Ease* as a literary source relevant for migration research.

<sup>72</sup> See Gurr (1981). The title of this dissertation is inspired by a 'been-to' novel entitled *Season of Migration to the North* by the Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih (1969).

structions of 'homeland', and cultural identity. Studies framed as post-colonialist examine consequences and continuity of Western imperialism and colonialism and their resistances within a variety of fields. Common assumptions about links between culture, territory and identity are problematised and critically examined.<sup>73</sup> The relevance of this perspective for migration research within human geography has been pointed out in the late 1990s.<sup>74</sup>

Much early work within human geography and anthropology was concerned with identifying discrete and geographically rooted 'cultural areas' or 'regional identities', while this recent research has pointed to the impossibility of inscribing specific 'cultures' in physical space.<sup>75</sup> The concept of 'culture' within the social sciences has been moving away from the view that cultures are located and bounded, to a view where cultures are constantly changing, flexible and rooted more in the perceptions of the individual. A more critical stance puts emphasis on how constructions of 'culture' are embedded in global and local power relations. These newer concepts of culture permit the identification of institutions and practices shared by groups of people, but whose relationships are not necessarily spatially bounded, nor fixed. The highly politicised character of the construction of culture has been pointed out by a number of researchers, who identify trends towards an increasing 'culturalisation' of political and socio-economic events and processes.<sup>76</sup>

Return migration is a form of mobility that, maybe more than other migrations, has been constructed as related to issues of 'belonging', identity and territory. The migrations back to former countries of living of persons who have emigrated or lived in exile are often pictured and described as resulting from nostalgia and longing for the 'homeland', and sometimes based on 'discourses of fixed origins'.<sup>77</sup> These are examples of 'culturalisation' of political and socio-economic processes related to spatial contexts both in North and in South. A major trend in national asylum and migration policies in the 1990s is for instance, as already discussed, the incorporation of return and repatriation programs assuming 'belongings' to certain territories, when in fact such 'belongings' may be highly problematic. The question of territorial and national belonging showed to be a dilemma for some of the interviewed people in this study, as will be discussed in chapters three and four.

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<sup>73</sup> Jonsson (1995).

<sup>74</sup> See the discussion about the 'new cultural geography' in chapter one.

<sup>75</sup> Mast (1997) and Crang (1998).

<sup>76</sup> Molina (1997) and Tesfahuney (1998) provide critical examinations of the concept of 'culture' within Swedish human geography.

<sup>77</sup> Brah (1996:16).

Cresswell (1997) points out that there is a proliferation of geographical metaphors in the field of social theory, as it has developed during the 1990s with the 'cultural turn'. The 'nomad', the 'traveller', the 'migrant' the 'diaspora' and other metaphors related to movements are used not only by geographers, but by cultural and social theorists and literary critics. Cresswell examines the 'romanticisation of the nomad as the geographic metaphor *par excellence* of post-modernity' (ibid:360) and concludes that the way the nomad is used is to indicate new freedoms and movements. However, Cresswell argues that such metaphorical reductions

can serve only to negate the very real differences which exist between the mobile citizens of the post-modern world and the marginalised inhabitants of other times and places (1997:xx).

Post-modern visions of a global world with no North-South divide or centre-periphery relations fail to take into account increasingly unequal distributions of wealth and tend to downplay issues of economic and social justice. There may be a danger in conflating 'migrant thought' with 'migrant experience' as expressed by Said.<sup>78</sup> The emphasis on migrant experience and everyday life is in turn characteristic of *biographical approaches* to migration.

### *Biographical approaches*

The use of biographies, life paths and trajectories has a long history within migration research and was introduced in human geography by Hägerstrand in the 1960s.<sup>79</sup> Hägerstrand studied Swedish internal migrations but many geographical migration studies using biographical approaches have been made by geographers working in contexts in the South.<sup>80</sup> Chapman and Prothero (1983) saw the use of life-history method as useful as it permitted discussion about the *life course* according to changes in *critical events* (birth, marriage, education, occupation, land ownership) which can be related to migratory movements. They also pointed out that in order to interpret such 'longitudinal data', there has to be a 'sensitive understanding' of the people who are studied, in order to capture the 'details of mobility intertwined with other life events'.

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<sup>78</sup> As cited by Cresswell (1997).

<sup>79</sup> Hägerstrand depicted migration graphically as time-space paths of individuals and made influential studies of mobility changes over time in an agrarian community in Sweden. See Hägerstrand (1975).

<sup>80</sup> For overviews see Chapman and Prothero (1983), Chapman and Prothero (eds.) (1985) and Skeldon (1995).

Importantly, the collection of migration biographies allows for a complex understanding of the wide variety of movements over different distances at different times. Malmberg (1997) argues for an analysis of different time-space mobility patterns permitting non-dualistic perceptions of 'staying' in relation to 'moving' and of internal migration in relation to international migration. 'Staying' should not be seen as the opposite of 'moving' but instead as examples of different time-space strategies that may have the *same* or *similar determinants*. The implications of this view are that migrations are understood as embedded in everyday life and that geographical displacements should not be understood as 'discrete' phenomena:

Migration is often looked upon as a once-in-a-lifetime event determined by present conditions at origin and destination, but it is often the result of many strategic decisions that form a life course of various types of mobilities through time-space (ibid:23).

This position may have further implications as it also challenges other commonly constructed dichotomies between non-migrants and migrants. It is sometimes assumed that being a non-migrant indicates 'belonging', 'being rooted', 'an insider', 'included' and being a migrant the opposite; 'homeless', 'without roots', 'an outsider'. As pointed out by Molina and Tesfahuney (1995) in their commentary to Jonsson (1995) this dichotomy is problematic as it tends to downplay mechanisms of exclusion that take place as part of existing unequal socio-economic structures and social processes *at the places* of 'origin' and 'destination'. Non-migrants may be excluded and 'homeless' despite long-term settlements in certain places, while migrants who circulate between different places may have meaningful and enduring localised attachments in more than one place. The critique is similar to Cresswell's (above) against postmodern migration discourses - a kind of 'migrant thought' that is not related to concrete socio-historical settings and their varying structural conditions.

Halfacree and Boyle (1993) propose in an influential article a 'paradigm shift' towards a biographical conceptualisation of migration. They build partly on earlier uses of biographical approaches within population geography but adopt them to 'developed' country contexts. Chapman and Prothero (1983) commented that the methods and techniques used in studies of circularity and mobility in Asia, Latin America and Africa might prove to be relevant for developed country contexts, thereby representing a reverse of transfers 'normally found in Western scholarship, since the flow of concept and techniques would be from Third to First World realities' (ibid:622). However, Halfacree and Boyle argue for a 'new paradigm' in the sense that they oppose longitudinal studies in the conventional sense, since they see a risk that migration histories

too easily just become 'a litany of migration events for an individual'. Instead, they aim at integrating the use of biographies with developments in social theory. Firstly, they argue that migration research must leave the 'cognitive paradigm' with its stress on mental processes taking place within the individual (decision-making) and where migration is seen as a 'discrete contemplative act'. Secondly, they advocate a 'contextual paradigm' where the social setting of everyday life is emphasised and migration is understood as an 'action in time'. While this may not entirely qualify as a 'new paradigm' it represents a renewed interest and development of the use of biographies in migration research.<sup>81</sup>

The incorporation of social theory is suggested to be made for instance by linking Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to the analysis of migration. The example given by Halfacree and Boyle is the different associations to mobility between British *service class habitus* and *working class habitus*, where the former is associated to high mobility and the latter to immobility. In such an analysis the socially differentiated character of different forms of migrations may be highlighted.

Biographical approaches within migration research represent taking into account structural contextual factors, while not *determining* human beings as subjects. Vandsemb (1995:414) in a study using narratives argues that narratives go beyond the humanist individualist focus to 'illuminate both the logic of individual action and the effects of structural constraints within which life course evolve'. Gutting (1997) proposes the use of the concept of *narrative identities* to analyse biographies (see the introductory chapter on method). In general, the ambition is to take into account both 'biographically rooted intentions' and the social context:

The biographical approach complements the structuration perspective and is intended to be used to illustrate in more depth the contextual processes through which the structuration of migration takes place. Crucially, it goes beyond the humanist bias suggested by many previous uses of the term biographical to allow explicit recognition of the structural constraints and enablements moulding migration (Boyle et al (1998:80).

The biographical approach permits the in-depth study of migrants perceptions of whole life situations. 'Structures' are part of the totality and interwoven with everyday situations, relations and activities. No subject is outside of a context. This emphasis on contextuality also implies that power relations of

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<sup>81</sup> See further Hågerstrand (1975), Holm et al (1989) and Andersson (1987) for the use of biographies in Swedish geographical migration research.

everyday life are not 'a priori' defined or given, as structuralists would argue, but 'immanent' in contextual situations. This does not reduce the importance of power, but it makes it more complex and shifting, as well as linked to particular socio-geographical situations. The approach thus highlights the importance of relating migrations to the specific contexts, rather than looking for general, a-historical and a-temporal migration theories. Furthermore, rather than generation of a complex theory around a limited action and phenomenon, the focus is on the unbroken sequences of actions in a persons life. Following a few individuals throughout a biography may give another type of understanding than analysing many migrants doing the same thing within a limited space-time.<sup>82</sup> Migration is thus examined as a phenomenon taking place at a particular time in the biographies, set in their spatial context. The 'intersections' of the biographies of migrants with contextual factors on different levels are studied.<sup>83</sup>

The next two chapters present the case studies. The chapters begin with descriptions of the broader historical contexts, after which biographies of migrants are presented.

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<sup>82</sup> See Katz and Monk (eds.) (1993) and Holm et al (1989) for elaborations of this argument.

<sup>83</sup> Katz and Monk (ibid:265).

### III US-MEXICO RETURN MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY IN AMEALCO, QUERÉTARO

'We Didn't Cross the Border - It Crossed Us!'. This slogan was used by young students in Los Angeles in the early 1990s as they were demonstrating against Proposition 187, California's controversial law initiative aiming at denying public education and restricting medical services to undocumented immigrants in the state. California (together with Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Colorado) used to be Mexican territory, and this theme is still brought up in the political debate on migration, on both sides of the border. 1848 was the year when the present border between the two countries was established, and it became relevant to talk about international migrations across the border zone. The legal documents defining the present location of the border (The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 and the Gadsden Treaty of 1853) were signed during a period in history that is still politically sensitive.<sup>84</sup> The year 1848 marked the initiation of a long and complex history of migratory exchange between the two countries, which at the time of the signing of the treaties relatively recently had become independent states from colonial powers.

#### The Borderlands

Durand (1994:79) has preferred to use a metaphor of the US-Mexican border as a 'double door', indicating changing movements in both directions and with varying intensity over time. From the 1880s until about the 1960s the migratory exchange has been described as predominantly 'temporary', but during the last two decades the migrations across the border have developed into an increasingly varied pattern of movements.<sup>85</sup> This pattern is on the one hand reported to include more 'permanent' migration, and on the other hand typically consists of high levels of 'return migration'. In addition, what López Castro (1986) calls 'undefined migration' has become a growing category during the last decades. The picture is further complicated by various regional differences in patterns, where for instance the *borderlands* has become a region

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<sup>84</sup> One example of the sensitivity of the issue is the controversy that was raised around a recent Californian film project about the history of the US-Mexican war of 1846-1848. The project was halted after many difficulties, including a heated debate about how this period in history should be represented and around the contents of existing historical documents.

<sup>85</sup> Major studies on US-Mexico migration include Bustamante's work since the early 1970s and onwards (for instance Bustamante 1979, 1985 and 1997), Durand (1994); Massey et al (1991) and Cornelius (1979).

of specific interest. It is a region that exemplifies present characteristics of North-South relations and migration exchanges.

The USA/Mexico border typifies the conditions of contemporary migrancy. It encapsulates certain common thematic which frequently come into play whenever the 'overdeveloped' countries institute measures to control selectively the entry of peoples from economically 'underdeveloped' segments of the globe. This border speaks the fate of formerly colonised people presently caught up in the workings of a global economy dominated by transnational capital (...) What are the realities for those stigmatised as *undesirable* border-crossers? (Brah 1996:199).

During the last years research has intensified on the characteristics and developments of the borderlands, that is, the region around the border that is influenced directly by activities on both sides. Today this region consists of a number of 'twin-sister' towns and hosts a population of about 9 to 12 million people. It is also a fast-growing region, both in terms of economic activity and population size. This region has changed dramatically since the 1848 settlement, when the borderlands had only a small population and was a marginal area in relation to the heartland of both countries. Today the border cities are among the fastest growing cities in Mexico, and the relationship between the US and Mexican border towns has been described as 'symbiotic urban complexes'. Trade, industry, tourism and migration are integral components in this cross-border interdependence. Still, despite this recent urban growth, five-sixth of the borderland region consist of desert land.

After the US-Mexican war of 1846-1848 the majority of the Mexican population living in the area which became the new states in the USA went south of the new border. Some 50 000-60 000 people stayed on, now as foreigners in the new country.<sup>86</sup> During the time of the North American economic expansion westward, the border zone was sparsely populated and an open and vast region where people lived and went back and forth with little restriction. Migrant workers from Mexico passed the border to work, and returned in large numbers to the states they had come from, after longer or shorter labour contracts in the USA. The border towns were in this early period merely sites for passing through. The mining centres in the Northern Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sonora had during the same period attracted intern migrants from the south-western states and a process of settlement and growth due to this increased economic activity had been going on in the region. As time went by, more and more of the international workers settled in the borderlands, as well as growing numbers of intern migrants who had started out as temporary migrants to the mining centres.

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<sup>86</sup> Acuña (1980:73).

A further expansion of the borderlands took place when the second so called Bracero Program<sup>87</sup> ended in 1964 and was followed by the Border Industrialisation Program (BIP) in 1965. The latter program invited US and other foreign investors to establish low-wage assembly plants on the Mexican side of the border, so called *maquiladoras*. These plants assemble products from parts that are imported tax free and then immediately re-exported duty-free except on the value added on the labour in Mexico. In the mid-1990s *maquiladoras* employed about 500 000 workers, most of them women, and their establishment in the borderlands have contributed to continued population growth in the region. The continued expansion of this region is a major component in the continued migratory exchange between the USA and Mexico.

### **The migration from and to the Bajío region**

There are some characteristics of the Mexican-US migration that stand out as 'typical' and have been rather consistent over time, despite the growing complexity of the migratory pattern referred to above. There are six states that constitute the major emigration region in Mexico, and these states are not the border states, nor the poorest states, but the western central states of Mexico, the so called Bajío region. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century most international migrants have come from this region, and this geographical pattern has persisted for more than a hundred years.

Durand (1994: 101) points out three major factors behind the initiation of the migration of workers from the Bajío region to the United States. The first factor is related to the internal migrations that had begun in this region at a larger scale since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and were intensified during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period the Mexican economy went through regional shifts in economic activity, from agricultural production for an internal market to an export-oriented economy, fuelled by foreign investments. Porfirio Díaz invited foreign capital at a large scale, especially Anglo-American investors. The western and central parts of the country were at the time the most densely populated and had been the centre for economic development during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, basically thanks to the region's intensive agriculture and cattle-breeding. The early industrialisation and the growing exploitation of raw materials in other regions began to change the economic geography of the country. Expanding regions were now, as men-

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<sup>87</sup> Two *bracero* programs (1917-1922 and 1942-1964) organised large-scale migrations of Mexican workers to the USA during periods of labour shortages in the USA (see further below).

tioned, the Northern mining states of Chihuahua and Sonora; the industrial zones around Mexico City, Monterrey and Puebla and the states of important plantations of sugar-cane, coffee and agave for export, that is Veracruz, Yucatán and Campeche. Internal migrations from the Bajío region to the northern mining states began to take place, facilitated by a second major factor behind the initiation of migration to the USA: the railway.

The construction of the railway connecting all expanding zones with the centre and with the ports for exportation meant work for a large number of people. Most of the workers were recruited in the states of the densely populated Bajío region. Temporal labour migrations were initiated from these states, and many men went to work on the railways and when the railway line was finished they went back with the train. Thus, the region where most people lived was going through economic depression; the means for leaving were created through the railways, and, not least, active labour recruitment began to take place, and consequently migration started to become a common phenomenon. The majority of the recruited workers were men, but there were examples of household migration to the border towns as well, although at a minor scale. In some cases the railway companies paid the transport of families to the point where the husband worked.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period when the US economy was expanding strongly towards the south-western part of the country. The south-west region became connected to the industrial economy of the eastern United States, functioning as a supplier of agricultural products, cattle, and minerals. The search for gold (the Gold Rush) in California and Colorado, and silver in Nevada were important initial causes behind this expansion westward. The states on the Mexican side of the border were also affected by these developments. Together with the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sonora supplied raw materials to eastern United States.

The Mexican incorporation into the capitalist expansion of the United States was however most evident in the constant supply and presence of Mexican labour in the process. Crucial to the economic development of the time was the access to cheap labour in agriculture, railway construction, mining, and industry. Mexican labour turned out to be advantageous in this respect. The American Congress had passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, an explicitly racist legislation that restricted the formerly important immigration of Chinese workers to California. The employers needed a replacement for this labour. The legislators encouraged the immigration of white Europeans, coming through the ports of the Atlantic, but this immigration was insuffi-

cient to meet the labour demands in the South West. This led to the third major factor behind the initiation of Mexican US-bound migration identified by Durand: the change in US labour importation policy in 1882. The shift towards importation of Mexican labour implied a number of advantages for US employers: the low cost, the easy access by railway, the experience of Mexican workers in agriculture, mining and railway construction. And, above all, the advantages the neighbouring country meant for US employers: seasonal arrivals of agricultural workers and the fact that most workers were expected to return, as many longer-distance migrants had done before. Soon Mexican workers became indispensable for especially Californian economic development, with a strong concentration to certain sectors of the economy (in particular the agricultural sector).

From the completion of the railway link in 1884 a tradition to emigrate to the USA was slowly beginning to take form in the Bajío region.<sup>88</sup> Workers left on contracts, often under harsh conditions, but to jobs that were better paid than those in the depressed agricultural sectors in the Bajío region. At the time when the large investments were made in infrastructure and irrigation in California (during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), the recruiters no longer needed to go to the villages in the interior of Mexico in search of labour. They put up offices in the border towns at the points where the trains from the interior arrived. During this period there was a rapid increase in ‘spontaneous’ migration, and it was by now well-known in the Bajío region that work was available at higher wages in the United States.

The economic liberalism of Porfirio Díaz had resulted in the privatisation of communal land, which seriously affected indigenous and peasant populations all over the country, but especially in the south-eastern states of Mexico. Communal land holding systems had largely been unaffected by 300 years of Spanish colonialism, but the economic liberalism disrupted this system completely in half a century. There was a massive selling-out and expropriation of the farmlands of self-supporting *campesinos*. In the liberal project, ‘communal land’ was transformed to ‘individual property’, and the consequences were a land distribution in 1910 where 10% of the population owned 90% of the land. Díaz had given concessions and land property to foreign investors and exploiters of raw materials as part of the incentives for the export-led economic development. The losers were the *campesinos*. The revolution had its origin in this unequal land distribution. The Porfiriato period in Mexican his-

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<sup>88</sup> This early period of emigration from the Bajío to the USA is described in detail in Ochoa and Uribe (1990) who provide a collection of historical documents and essays from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

tory ended with the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. The emerging unrest in the countryside and the epidemic of the Spanish Flu in 1918 contributed further to the exodus of migrants to the North.

## Wars and migration

It is estimated that about 18 000 people per year emigrated to the United States during the revolution.<sup>89</sup> Numbers increased even more as the US entered WW I, and the First Bracero Program came into effect in the 1917-1922 period, in spite of the fact that the most restrictive Immigration Act in the history of the United States was passed in 1921. The First Bracero Program was a *unilateral* initiative, and the first to organise recruitment of Mexican workers in a systematic way. It was explicitly said to be an exceptional situation, and was a result of the pressure from US farm owners in the war situation.<sup>90</sup> When immigration from Europe was restricted in 1921, Mexican immigration numbered around 49 000 yearly during the 1920s. In his famous study from 1930, Gamio indicated that the total emigration of Mexicans in the 1910-1928 period involved more than 900 000 persons, while during the same period about 1 million returned to Mexico. Gamio stressed the temporality in the migration phenomena, and argued that the permanent migration was and had always been far less significant than US official documents indicated. The two basic reasons for this erroneous view of the volume of migration were according to Gamio, firstly, the fact that the Immigration Bureau of the United States only registered the entry of immigrants, while the emigration numbers were not recorded and thus not visible statistically. Secondly, census data gives an incorrect measurement of the number of immigrants residing in the country, as the US censuses are held in the fall, during the peak period of temporary immigration. If censuses were held in the winter, when large numbers of Mexicans have returned, they would give radically different results. Although written as early as in 1930, Gamio here pointed out what have remained key problems of migration estimates until the 1990s.

The Depression of 1929 put an end to Mexican emigration for about a decade. During the 1930s deportations of large numbers of workers took place and there was a general halt of immigration to the US. Not until the outbreak of WW II was the emigration reinitiated at a larger scale again. This time the negotiating power of the Mexican government was stronger than during the earlier period. The country had experienced a period of political stability and

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<sup>89</sup> Massey et al (1991).

<sup>90</sup> Rionda Ramírez (1992:89).

economic growth and the situation on the Mexican countryside had improved under the Agrarian Reform initiated by the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). The Mexican government pursued a policy of increasing national economic independence and control over natural resources. The expropriation of the oil industry in 1938 and the creation of the state-owned oil company PEMEX. were major steps in this direction. The second *bilateral* Bracero Program was launched, and the Mexican government negotiated the conditions for the Mexican workers under the contracts. The program lasted 22 years, between 1942 and 1964, involved about 4.5 million workers of which according to some estimates 3.2 million returned to Mexico.<sup>91</sup>

The majority of migrants participating in the program left from the Bajío region, and only four states in the region (Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato and Zacatecas) contributed with 45% of all *braceros* in the 1951 to 1962 period.<sup>92</sup> But it was also during this period that international migration started from many new states, due to the active recruitment by US officials in the Mexican countryside. Contributing factors were also the infrastructural changes that had taken place in the country; more areas had become interconnected through national railway and road systems. Important for the high numbers of migrants participating in the Bracero Program was also the fact that the early 1940s were catastrophic for agricultural production in the Western parts of the country. Three frost years; 1940, 1941 and 1942, were followed by drought in 1943, 1944 and 1945, causing scarcity of corn.<sup>93</sup> These difficult conditions thus coincided with the active recruitment of workers in many affected rural communities.

During the period of the Bracero Program the migration of 'undocumented' workers started to take place at a large scale. Employers recruited workers outside of the formal program, which meant that the rights of the workers established in the contracts were not fulfilled. This recruitment took place during the whole early post-war period, with a top during the Korean war 1950-1953. After the war there was a period of scape-goating propaganda against 'illegal immigrants' (under McCarthy), and massive deportations of Mexican workers took place in 1954.<sup>94</sup> However, the demand for migrant labour was then already established, and at the end of the Second Bracero Pro-

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<sup>91</sup> Blakemore and Smith (1983:53). As already discussed, all estimated of returns are insecure.

<sup>92</sup> Massey et al (1991:56).

<sup>93</sup> Rodríguez Batista (1992: 113).

<sup>94</sup> The so called 'Operation Wet-back' was a military operation aimed at 'securing the border'. Davis (1990) presents life histories of persons who were affected by 'Operation Wetback'.

gram in 1964 - as might have been expected by both governments - migration continued with equal intensity.

Referring to the relation between political changes and migration, Bustamante (1988) makes a distinction between what he calls the *structural dimension* and the *ideological dimension* of the migration between Mexico and the United States.<sup>95</sup> According to Bustamante, there has been a persistent structural demand for Mexican migrant labour in specific sectors of the US economy since the beginning of this century. At the same time, the ideological debate around this labour migration has varied according to domestic policy concerns, unemployment rates and economic cycles within the United States. Bustamante stresses the need to follow and analyse the relative autonomy of these two dimensions of the migratory phenomena. In other words, while movements over the border may continue with equal strength, migration policies and national discourses on migration may describe the phenomenon differently.

### Internal migrations

The 1960s and the 1970s were the decades of extraordinary urban and population growth in Mexico and internal migrations were taking place on a scale never experienced before in the history of the country. The destinations of these migrations were to the largest cities; to Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey and Puebla, but also to the border cities of Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez. Mexico went through a transformation from a predominantly rural society to an urban society during this period, counting with an urban population of 52% in 1980 and of 57% in 1990.<sup>96</sup>

As many Latin American governments during the 1960s and 1970s, the Mexican government pursued substitution of imports as its principal development strategy. Strong priority was given to urban industrial development. Industrial growth took place at high rates in the cities while the domestic agricultural sector staggered. There were limited investments in the mechanisation of agricultural production and capital was concentrated to the large urban centres, notably Mexico City. The crisis in the agricultural sector was particularly strong in areas where the potential for advanced mechanisation of agricultural production was limited. States like Michoacán, Zacatecas (in the Bajío region),

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<sup>95</sup> Bustamante (1988:22).

<sup>96</sup> CONAPO (1994). Notable is that 'urban population' in Mexican statistics is defined as locations with more than 15 000 people. The other classifications are 'rural population' (localities with less than 5000 people); 'mixed rural' (5000-9999 people) and 'mixed urban' (10000-14999 people).

Oaxaca and Guerrero (in the south) experienced high levels of out-migration. There were problems with unemployment and underemployment in the major cities, aggravated by the devaluation of the *peso* in 1976. Intern migrants became employed in the urban industrial sector but also in the growing service sectors. More women than men moved to the cities during this period, and this gender difference in mobility has been maintained over time. Most intern migrants in Mexico continue to be women, and many of them are employed in the urban service sectors.

Emigration to the United States began to include new categories of migrants during the late 1970s. Children of earlier emigrants and young adults in recently urbanised families took up the emigration strategy, often relying on the networks and migration experience of relatives and friends from their rural 'home villages' in emigration regions. These new migrants were younger, urban and with higher levels of education. More women started to emigrate than during the Bracero Programs.<sup>97</sup>

### **Migrations in the 1980s and 1990s**

During the first half of the 1970s there was an economic recession in the USA, largely linked to the oil crisis in 1973. Economic growth was slow and many formerly strong industries underwent restructuring. The Vietnam War gave a new impetus for emigration from Mexico, as the need for labour - as well as soldiers - augmented again. After the war emigration continued to increase, in particular after the devaluation of the *peso* in 1976.

In 1981 thousands of Cuban exiles arrived at the coast of Florida (the so called 'Mariel invasion') and this event led to a series of political initiatives in the USA which aimed at retaking what was described by politicians as the 'lost control' of the Southern border. The 'lost control' argument was behind legislative work for a new migration policy, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), also known as Law Simpson-Rodino. The purpose with the legislation was to reduce and control undocumented migration from the South. The law was much debated during the late 1980s and its implementation and effects have now been object for research on both sides of the border. When the first policy initiatives were taken in 1981-1982, the US had an unemployment rate of 11%, the highest recorded since before WWII. This also contributed to the political urge with which the IRCA was initiated. Paradoxically, when the law came into effect in 1986, unemployment rates were

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<sup>97</sup> Durand (1994).

down at extremely low levels in most sectors of the economy in the United States. It was rather a situation of scarcity of labour, and many of the measures directed to restrict immigration in the law text were not implemented, at least not within the first years of existence. These measures included sanctions against employers using undocumented labour (fines amounting to USD 250 to 10 000 per worker).<sup>98</sup>

The IRCA permitted the legalisation of status for about 2.3 million Mexican citizens in the USA. Resident status was permitted to 1.2 million persons who were residing in the US prior to January 1st 1982, and work permits (Special Agricultural Worker) were issued to 1.1 million persons who had worked for at least 90 days in agricultural work during a 12-month period 1984-1985. The last opportunity to apply for either of these legalisations under IRCA was in 1987. One of the most tangible outcomes of the IRCA was the further strengthening of the physical control of the border, as the Border Patrol and the Immigration and Nationalisation Service (INS) were provided substantially more funding.

Several studies indicate that the law did not stop nor reduce undocumented migration, as was the expressed intention of the legislators.<sup>99</sup> Migration continued as before, or increased. But several other effects of the IRCA have been noticed. Among these was a change in the labour markets in the cities in the USA, as undocumented workers looked for work as *journaleros* (day labourers) or sold merchandise in the streets. A harsher exploitation of undocumented workers took place as their position weakened in the labour market.<sup>100</sup> Two different tendencies have been noted as far as the *legalised* workers were concerned; firstly that the workers obtaining residence status brought over their families - some villages in the interior saw the sudden out-migration of women and children that had had their base in Mexico while the husband worked in the US temporarily. Secondly, many temporary workers continued to return to Mexico despite their legal status as residents, or SAW. The legal documents were used as means for facilitating transborder movements and the quantity and the intensity of these movements have not been reduced. A possible effect of the stronger control efforts at the border and control policies within the USA may be less returns of undocumented migrants, as these workers stay for longer periods of time to evade the risks of border-crossing.

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<sup>98</sup> Rionda Ramírez (1992:105).

<sup>99</sup> Bustamante (1988) and CONAPO (1992).

<sup>100</sup> This development was by Mexican researchers termed 'tercermundialization' ('third worldialisation') of the labour market in the USA (ibid.).

As will be seen later in this chapter, the interviews with returning migrants in Amealco gave examples of these tendencies.

The major trends in Mexico-US migration since the 1970s may be concluded as follows:<sup>101</sup>

1. The majority of international migrants has a 'rural background'<sup>102</sup> and continues to come from the traditional out-migration states of El Bajío. However, the picture has gradually become more complex in terms of regions of origin, rural/urban background, gender and social class. 'New' states such as Oaxaca and Guerrero have become involved in international migration; more migrants come from the cities; migrants have higher levels of education and more women are migrating in comparison with earlier periods.
2. The concentration of migrants' employment to the agricultural sector in the USA has diminished; from 74% of labour migrants working in agriculture in 1970, to an even distribution between economic sectors according to a study 10 years later; 37% in agriculture, 38% in services and 25% in industry.
3. Overall statistical data seems to indicate that 'permanent' migration has increased in relation to 'temporary' migration. US censuses registered an increase in Mexican-born residents from 2.2 million in 1980 to 4.4 million in 1990. The increase reflected to a large extent the IRCA legalisation program 1986-1988 (see above). At the same time it is increasingly difficult to maintain a clear-cut distinction between what is termed 'permanent' and 'temporary' migration. Many 'permanent' migrants, with resident status or undocumented, return to Mexico, and many 'temporary' migrants stay for prolonged periods of time in the United States.
4. Migration continues to be a gendered phenomenon. In internal migration in Mexico, women are over-represented by 8%. Surveys show that of 'temporary' migrants to the USA about 85% of migrants are men. And among the Mexican-born 'permanent' migrants in the USA 55% are men and 45% are women.

This general overview has shown that the patterns of migration are complex and have been modified in new forms over the years. Emigrants now come from more states, are younger, have higher education, are more urban and include more women. Migrants do not only work in agriculture and the migrations involve a diversity of destinations, strategies and life projects. The multitude of movements and the different and changing time periods migrants stay in places in both countries are difficult to analyse with the help of conventional theoretical frameworks related to migration. The movements rarely correspond to common categorisations of migrant behaviour. Research on US-Mexican migration has changed focus over the years, reflecting this increased complexity and the continued importance of migration as a social phenomenon.

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<sup>101</sup> CONAPO (1986, 1992, 1994).

<sup>102</sup> See note 96 for definition.

## Research on migration and return

Migration studies in the US-Mexican context date back to the beginning of this century. The first comprehensive studies were made during the 1920s and were motivated by the great political turbulence connected to the migratory phenomena during this decade. Both the Mexican and the US governments were interested in knowing more about the mechanisms in the migratory movements in order to develop policies and maintain a bilateral political stability. As described above, the economic-geographic changes in Mexico and the expansion of settler colonialism in south-west United States created a complementary economic-political situation by the end of WWI. The first studies that considered the complexity in both origin and destination of the migrants were made by the anthropologist Gamio and the economist Taylor in the 1930s. After these pioneering works, a period of almost 40 years passed until research began to take off again.<sup>103</sup>

The new impulse to initiate research on the migration phenomena was conditioned by the political situation and problem formulation of the governments on both sides of the border. The end of the *bracero* program in 1964 led to a debate about illegal migration and the control issues involved with it. Research during the 1970s was largely policy-oriented and dealt with issues of how to reduce the movement of illegal migrants. Major quantitative studies were made to capture the number of migrants and the amounts of remittances. The disciplines involved in the research were basically sociology and demography and main questions addressed had to do with the volume of migrants, their attributes in terms of age, education, place of origin. Large questionnaires were used to map the characteristics of the migrants and general knowledge was obtained about the geographical origin and destination of migrants, their work experiences and age.

As the phenomena started to take new forms during the 1970 and 1980s, researchers looked more into social and economic processes linked to migration. Within the structural-historical research tradition studies were made linking migration (mostly intern migration) to the development and expansion of capitalism. A need for more detailed knowledge about international migration lead to a number of in-depth case studies in rural communities, especially during the 1980s and beginnings of 1990s. There has been a gap between studies on internal and international migrations, but some recent studies have analysed the links between these forms of movements.<sup>104</sup> Important compre-

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<sup>103</sup> See Durand (ibid.) for a comprehensive review of studies in this field.

<sup>104</sup> See for instance Rouse (1991).

hensive studies using multi-level approaches, different methods and comparative techniques were made in the late 1980s.<sup>105</sup>

Contributions from other disciplines increased during the 1990s and international migration in the Mexican-US context have over time been examined more as a social and cultural phenomenon, than as a 'political problem' in US-Mexican bilateral relations. The earlier 'problem-orientation' and policy focus have been modified by a whole range of studies involving different aspects of the migration phenomenon. Influences have come from for instance the 'culture studies' debate and from social theories that re-examine previous perspectives on migration.<sup>106</sup>

Research on return migration in the US-Mexican context has had a different profile compared to research on return in the European context. It did not emerge as a specific field of study in the 1970s as was the case in Europe. Instead, return has been integrated into general migration research, often conceptualised as the last step in the individual's migration history. Massey et al. in their study of four communities in southern western Mexico in the 1980s tried for instance to evaluate the probability of return among established migrants, defined as migrants that had been living in the US for at least 3 years.<sup>107</sup> They found that the accumulated probability of return for established migrants within 30 years amounted to 70 %. The variables that most strongly seemed to affect the probability of return were if the migrant owned property in Mexico, his/her legal status, age, and years of experience in the US. A result was also that the probability of return was significantly higher for migrants with an urban background in Mexico in comparison with migrants with a rural background. The authors noted that 'those with least probability of emigration - persons with access to productive resources - are also those with the highest probability of return' (ibid:372). Their conclusion was however that despite proofs of an 'integration process' over time in the United States (less remittances over time, more money spent in the US, children attending schools in the US etc.) the establishment of the migrant families in the United States remained 'ambiguous'. Other studies have showed that the 'integration process' of Mexican migrants in the US society is similar to the pattern and pace of most other comparable groups. Massey et al. (ibid.) concluded that the question of return could not be clearly answered.

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<sup>105</sup> The studies made by Massey et al (1991) and the research project Cañón Zapata co-ordinated by Bustamante are two examples.

<sup>106</sup> Rouse (ibid.). See also Valenzuela (1988) and Anzaldúa (1987).

<sup>107</sup> Massey et al. (1991:365).

Davis (1990), in her anthropological study of Mexican-US migrations, points to the importance of the close contacts, the frequent movements and interchanges between the two countries as part of the unresolved question of return:

And, too, home is so close. A short visit is always a promise, and friends and relatives regularly come and go...Under such circumstances, ambivalent feelings are not blurred by time and distance, but are, instead, constantly renewed (ibid:200).

These citations demonstrate the 'ambivalence' of the return question, and brings up the question of how identities of migrants are related to place/nation and how different links are established to places in both countries. The following sections will describe a local context of geographical return movements and examine how emigration and return have been experienced by migrants in the municipality of Amealco, Querétaro.

### The local context: returning migrants in Amealco, Querétaro

Somos como los gusanitos. Si no nos movemos, no comemos.<sup>108</sup>  
(International migrant in Amealco).

Quieren los dos lugares al mismo tiempo!<sup>109</sup>  
(Local bank director about international migrants in Amealco).

Amealco in the state of Querétaro is located at the edge of the major emigration region in Mexico, the Bajío, and was until the 1940s unaffected by international migration. Today Amealco is a municipality where emigration and return have become part of the everyday life of many people. Remittances from workers in the USA are important for the economy of the central village of Amealco and for the small rural communities in the municipality. Many migrant workers, *los norteros* ('the northerners'), come to the village during the winter, and US registered cars are then seen in the streets of the village. The services and the commercial establishments have their best season from November to January and with the presence of the migrants there is an increase in all kinds of social activities. The experience of international migration is by now shared by many people, the majority men, from several generations in Amealco. Return movements to the municipality have taken place in a differentiated manner as the migration process has evolved from the 1940s and onwards. The municipality of Amealco is characterised by a marked polarisa-

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<sup>108</sup> 'We are like the earthworms. If we don't move, we don't eat.'

<sup>109</sup> 'They want both places at the same time!'

tion in the social class structure and the labour market is, as in most societies, highly gendered. In particular the large ethnic *otomí* population in the municipality face harsh economic conditions.

### *Socio-economic structure*

Amealco is located relatively close to an expansive area in central Mexico, which includes an important industrial sector and a diversified labour market in the city of Querétaro. The city of Querétaro is one of the medium-sized cities in Mexico that has experienced strong population growth (positive net migration) and important economic growth during the 1990s.

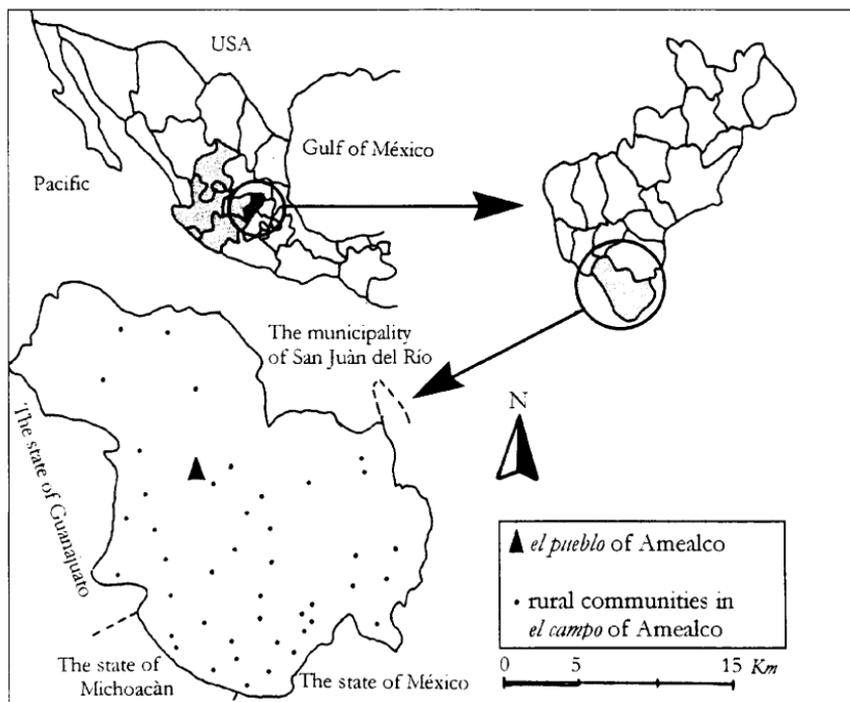


Figure 1. Maps showing the location of the municipality of Amealco in the state of Querétaro, Mexico. The map of Mexico indicates the emigration region of El Bajío.

There is an industrial corridor along the high-way from Querétaro to Mexico City that goes via the town of San Juan del Río, which is a border municipality of Amealco (see figure 1). Despite the closeness to this expansive area, Amealco is in contrast a municipality that in the regional classification system

is placed in the category of 'highly marginalised'.<sup>110</sup> This category is defined by an unemployment rate of at least 30% and a level of illiteracy at 25%. Some other indicators of marginalisation are for instance that 50% of the dwellings in the municipality of Amealco lack electricity; 35% of the dwellings have no laid floor and 40% do not have access to piped water.<sup>111</sup>

The village of Amealco is the commercial, administrative, health and religious centre of the municipality, which as a whole is predominantly agricultural. About 65% of the economically active population work in the agricultural sector, which is oriented towards the production of corn and beans, cattle-breeding and poultry (see tables 1 and 2). The conditions for agricultural production are unfavourable in many rural communities, and most of the land is rain-fed. The average altitude is about 2 600 meters above sea-level and winters are cold. Amealco used to have large forests with precious woods but these were cut down on a massive scale and exported in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then the land-use is dominated by cattle-breeding and to a limited extent agriculture.

Table 1. Occupation of the Economically Active Population in the municipality of Amealco according to economic sector (1990).

Economic activity	Occupied persons
Primary sector	6 926
Secondary sector	2 410
Tertiary sector	1 789
Unspecified	451
Total EAP	10 971

Source: INEGI (1994).

Haciendas and private *ranchos* have been the dominant forms of land-ownership in this part of Mexico. Before the revolution (1910-1920) the hacienda system organised most of the agricultural production in the area, together with smaller private *ranchos*. The changes during the revolution meant that the existing system of production was undermined, while the land reforms (the *ejido* system) failed to become a viable alternative in Amealco.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> COPLAMAR (1989).

<sup>111</sup> INEGI (1994).

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Roberto Gil in Amealco. See also Garrido del Toral and Murúa (1994).

Table 2. Occupation of the Economically Active Population according to sectors of activities (1990).

Sector of activity	Employed persons
Agriculture, cattle-breeding, hunting and fishing	6 926
Mining	69
Manufacturing industry	894
Electricity and water	50
Construction	789
Commerce	607
Transport and communication	223
Financial services	25
Public administration and defence	116
Social and municipality services	359
Professional and technical services	26
Restaurants and hotels	103
Personal services and maintenance	332
Unspecified	451
Total	10 971

Source: INEGI (1994).

As a consequence of the warfare and political changes during the revolution the bases for agricultural production in the municipality were severely disturbed. The region has no strong tradition of communal land ownership and collective forms of production, despite the important *otomí* presence, and this complicated the introduction of the *ejido* system. The *otomís* were gradually forced away from the village of Amealco by the Spanish during the Colonial period. They formed small scattered communities in the mountains and around the village.

Agricultural production went down dramatically during the revolution. There was a famine in the 1915-1917 period and outbreak of the Spanish flu in 1918 after which the first significant *internal migrations* from the municipality of Amealco were initiated. Temporal labour migrations took place during the 1920s from the highlands of Amealco to the Valley of San Juan del Río, where conditions for agriculture are more favourable. With a further drastic decline in agricultural production, migrations from Amealco to Mexico City started from 1925. In 1934 the government started to grant *ejidos* to the municipality, but the social conflicts in the countryside of Amealco were aggravating. Discontent among the peasants had its origin in the destruction in the countryside and the failures of the land reforms. In 1937 the conflicts culminated when the municipal office in the village of Amealco was put on fire by the inhabitants. The agricultural production and the cattle-breeding started to recover only in the 1940s and 1950s, and with the introduction of new and better in-

frastructure (roads, electricity, telephone) there was an expansion of commercial activities in the village of Amealco.<sup>113</sup> The land tenure system is today based on small private ranches, *ejidos*/communal land and a few larger ranches.

The municipality of Amealco has one main village, *el pueblo* of Amealco, which is surrounded by small communities and ranches, together often referred to as *el rancho*, or *el campo*.<sup>114</sup> The distinction between *el pueblo* and *el campo* is made within the overall rural municipality of Amealco and implies a socio-geographical division between persons with peasant backgrounds in *el campo* and persons with usually working, middle or upper class backgrounds in *el pueblo*. Many village businesses and properties are owned by a small number of wealthy families, whose influence in the municipality goes back to the time before the revolution. There are also numerous medium-sized and smaller businesses and service establishments in the village, which, as described above, is a predominantly commercial centre.

International migrants come from both *el campo* and *el pueblo*. All migrants from the municipality of Amealco would statistically be classified as 'rural migrants', as no locality of the municipality has more than 10 000 inhabitants. However, as will be exemplified in the migrant interviews below, at a more detailed geographical level there are important differences in the character of migration and return between *el campo* and *el pueblo*. There are for instance differences in the consequences of return migration and in the meanings and motives for emigration.

### *Gender-based division of labour*

The local labour market in Amealco has a marked gender-based division of labour. The participation in the labour market is extremely uneven between men and women; in 1990 71% of men in the municipality belonged to the economically active population, while only 9% of women did so.<sup>115</sup> This difference reflects the separation of male and female work, where men to a larger extent are formally employed and women's work is not formally registered. Women in the rural communities work in agriculture, in the households (own and other's), with small businesses and handicraft. Women sell their products and provide domestic services, often outside the formal economy. In the vil-

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113 Samperio Gutiérrez, Héctor (ed.) (1988).

114 This distinction between *el pueblo* and *el campo* was frequently made by respondents and informants.

115 The PEA is defined as persons over 12 years who participate actively in the labour market, either occupied or unoccupied during the week of reference.

lage of Amealco, women are to a larger extent employed in the industrial and service sectors.

There are two activities where male and female activities are clearly distinct: work in the village *maquiladoras* is predominantly female and international migration is predominantly male. The village of Amealco has a small industrial sector, consisting basically of six *maquiladoras*. Three of them are larger ones; one produces mushrooms for export, one is a textile industry, and the third fabricates trophies. A total of around 900 workers are employed in manufacturing industries in the municipality of Amealco, and many of them are women. Two other *maquiladoras* produce electronic parts and the last is a soft drink brewery.

Gender relations are strongly modified by social class and ethnicity. Firstly, the labour market for young women is better in the village of Amealco than in the rural communities. Young girls with working-class or peasant backgrounds may be employed as industrial workers in the factories, as domestic servants in households in the village and as vendors in the market place or in small businesses. Most *otomí* women live in peasant communities in *el campo*. The economic base for these communities is the production of corn for subsistence and the small-scale manufacture of handicraft. *Otomí* women travel to Amealco to sell their products at the market place or to the local stores. *Otomí* women also migrate to the bigger cities to sell their products.

Women from the middle or upper classes migrate internally to Querétaro, San Juan del Río or México City, or they may find work as salespersons or administrators in the commercial and service sectors in Amealco. Many also run their own businesses. It is quite common that women run businesses in Amealco and many stores, restaurants, market stands and services are in the hands of women. Some women also reach high level positions within the public or private sectors. The director of the bank in Amealco is for instance a woman. To continue to higher education or to find better jobs young women move to San Juan del Río, Querétaro or Mexico City.

Emigration to the United States has so far been a strategy adopted mainly by men from Amealco. In the local economy it is employment in the agricultural sector that dominates. The *maquiladoras* in the village hire some male workers, but they often stay only temporarily and the kind of work men are employ for in the factories is scarce (such as maintenance or reparation). The wages are low, in particular in relation to similar jobs in the USA. Men are also employed in the village services of car reparation, gasoline, or vulcanisation.

## Population

The municipality of Amealco had about 46 500 inhabitants in 1990, of which about 40% were under 12 years old.<sup>116</sup> The annual growth rate of the population of the municipality was 1.9% between 1980 and 1990; far below the 3.6% rate at the level of the state of Querétaro (see tables 3 and 4). The national population growth rate had decreased to about this level in 1994 (1.8%). Although the specific data is lacking, it can be assumed that the low population growth is due to high levels of internal and international migration from the municipality. Birth rates are high in Amealco in comparison with state and national averages. Statistics on migration at the level of the municipality are not available.

The municipality has a disperse pattern of settlements with about 60 localities of which only the head of the municipality, Amealco, counts with more than 5000 inhabitants. The largest number of localities have less than 500 inhabitants. Many of those are *otomí* communities. The municipality has more than 11 000 otomí-speaking inhabitants<sup>117</sup> and the total *otomí* population in the municipality is about 23 000 persons, which is about half of the total population.<sup>118</sup>

Table 3. Population indicators for the municipality of Amealco, the state of Querétaro and Mexico.

Population indicators	Amealco	Querétaro (state level)	Mexico (national average)
Annual population growth (1980-1990)	1.9%	3.6%	2.3%
Percentage of population under 15 years (1990)	46.4%	41.5%	38.3%
Illiteracy rate (1990)	33.0%	15.3%	12.4%
Female illiteracy rate (1990)	41.0%	19.4%	15.0%
Percentage attending school age 5-14 (1990)	67.5%	82.8%	85.8%
Female participation in EAP (1990)	9.2%	20.5%	19.6%
Average number of children per woman (1990)	3.3	2.7	2.5

Source: INEGI (1992, 1994).

<sup>116</sup> All employed persons older than 12 years are included in the Economically Active Population.

<sup>117</sup> INEGI (1994). Censuses on language do not include children under 5 years.

<sup>118</sup> Samperio Gutiérrez (ed.) (1988), van de Fliert (1988).

Table 4. Population in the municipality of Amealco, the state of Querétaro and Mexico.

Population	1970	1980	1990
Amealco (municipality)	26 526	38 389	46 358
Querétaro (state level)	485 523	739 605	1 051 235
México (national level)	48 225 238	69 800 000	81 249 645

Source: INEGI (1992, 1994).

### Remittances

The amount of remittances sent from migrant workers abroad to the municipality of Amealco is difficult to estimate. The interviewed informants and migrants agree on the importance of remittances for the economy of the municipality - both for the village commerce and for households in *el campo* - but exact information on the volumes, use and channelling of remittances is hard to obtain. Migrants bring savings with them when they return, or send money with friends or relatives who return. The amount of formal bank transfers and money orders is possible to calculate, but this information would have to be compiled from all local bank offices or exchange offices. Often the offices do not have the data systematised or accessible. Money is also sent by ordinary mail. The only locally registered remittances are telegraphic money transfers, which are documented by Telecomunicaciones de México and published in statistical records. They give a limited picture of the importance of remittances to Amealco (table 5).

Table 5. Received national and international telegraphic transfers (1993).

	From the interior	International	Total
Querétaro	72 596	28 603	101 199
Amealco	861	812	1 673

Source: INEGI (1994).

The table shows that an average of about 16 international money transfers a week came to Amealco in 1993. From this statistics it is not possible to estimate the actual value of the transfer, only the number of transfers. The relation between international and internal transfers is about 50-50, while at a state level international transfers only account for around 25% of the total telegraphic transfers.<sup>119</sup> This is only an indicator, but it shows that the relative

<sup>119</sup> INEGI (1994).

importance of international transfers is higher in the municipality of Amealco than at the state level of Querétaro.

An interview was made with the director of the bank in the village of Amealco, Irma Arias, and she put emphasis on the fundamental role of remittances for the economy of the municipality. She stressed that there has been a notable increase in the amount of money sent and brought by migrants over the years. Irma Arias started working in the bank when it opened in 1972 so she has been able to observe the changes.

At that time we had a low index, since few people went abroad. Over time much more people have started to leave, because, in reality, there are no job opportunities here. So almost all people go to the USA to work. And they send their dollars here so that their families have something to live on. This has developed a lot. During the last years we have seen that too many people go abroad. In particular in the lower classes, or among the peasants. People from here [the village] have their businesses established, and live more or less well. But people from *el campo* (...) it is no use for them to sow, it is no use to them to have cattle, and why? Because all prices go up but never the price on corn or cattle, so they have no profit from it. They go abroad to work. (...) The amount of foreign currency has increased significantly and very quickly. Years ago, if we changed a dollar check a day, or 100 dollars a day, that was a lot. Today we sometimes change 15 000 to 20 000 dollars a day to people from *el campo*.

Another interview was made with Roberto Gil, an economist and historian who periodically lives in Amealco, and he also highlighted the importance of remittances for the economy of the municipality.

I think the migration is fundamental for the economic life of these communities. The entrance of remittances is very high. (...) It is the most remunerative activity in many places and this money permits the communities to survive. It is curious to observe that people emigrate to more modernised places in order to make it possible for somehow more obsolete social forms in the countryside to survive. But that is what is happening. (...) Without this entrance of currency the village and the surroundings where the migration phenomenon takes place would experience more depressed living conditions, and there would be more misery.

## Migrants' biographies

The interviews with returning labour migrants in Amealco took place during the period January-Mars 1995.<sup>120</sup> The municipality has a rather short history of emigration (in comparison with the Bajío region) which made it possible to interview persons who had emigrated during the initial phase of emigration, and from there follow changes in migration and return experiences up to the present time. The biographies of eight male returning migrants with different class backgrounds and family situations form the major part of the empirical material. Their emigrations took place from the 1940s to the early 1990s.

Additional shorter or longer interviews were made with other migrants and informants in the municipality, but intents to interview migrating women failed. International migration is not common among women in the municipality, and the wives of migrants who were interviewed had not migrated themselves. Among the informants were the already mentioned local bank director and village historian; a bar owner, a social worker and a bank employee and several other inhabitants in Amealco. In addition to the taped interviews, the study builds on filmed documentary material.<sup>121</sup> The following table presents the profile of the interviewed (table 6).<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Amealco became the choice partly because of my familiarity with the village from earlier visits in the period 1989 - 1991 and in 1993. An alternative I initially considered was a municipality in Oaxaca, where I made fieldwork in 1988. Oaxaca is also a state where international migration has a rather short history and where it also would have been possible to trace the initiation of the migration process. However, Amealco seemed the most appropriate choice because of its geographical location close to an expansive region in central Mexico and at the edge of el Bajío region. Amealco is also the childhood village of my mother-in-law. The contacts with migrants and informants were facilitated by the contacts provided by her and persons in her social and family network in the village.

<sup>121</sup> During the time of the fieldwork, I co-operated with members of an independent film co-operative from Mexico City, who were making a documentary film on migration in Amealco. An extensive filmed material from the village of Amealco and from the rural areas around the village was produced. The work of the film team resulted in a one-hour documentary for television called 'Amealco-USA. 50 años de migración'. I am grateful to the members of the film team for the opportunity to participate in their work and to have the filmed material at my disposal as a source for this work.

<sup>122</sup> Interviews were conducted by myself and Fernando Altamirano. All names of respondents are changed as well as certain details in the biographies.

Table 6. *The interviewed persons in Amealco.*

Name	Age	Years in the USA	Occupation in Mexico before emigration	Occupation in the USA	Occupation in Mexico after return
Rigoberto	81	1944-1984	Farm work	Farm work	Farm work
Francisco	57	1957-1960	Street vendor	Farm work	Self-employed
Alberto	45	1978-1995	Farm work	Farm work	Farm work
Roberto	37	1984-1992	Electrician, mechanical work	Farm work, mechanical work, factory work	Electrician, mechanical work
Victor	40	1980, 1982, 1986	Employed in family business	Farm work	Self-employed
Alejandro	28	1985-1995	Student	Factory work	Businessman
Joaquín	30	1990-1992	Farm work	Carpenter, factory work, mechanical work	Self-employed
Eduardo	26	1988-1992	Student	Farm work, construction work	Civil servant

Six of the return migrants were interviewed alone and two of them were interviewed together with their wives. Roberto was interviewed with his wife Andrea, 18, and Rigoberto was interviewed with his wife Angela, 30. As mentioned, none of the wives have migrated to the USA. Three of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the returnees (Rigoberto and Angela, Francisco and Victor), one at the work place (Joaquín) and the others at neutral places at our disposal (Eduardo, Alberto, Roberto and Andrea and Alejandro). All interviews were conducted in Spanish.<sup>123</sup>

The following presentation of the interviews is based on an initial coding and interpretation of the migration biographies. The intention was to identify important characteristics of everyday life, circumstances around the events of emigration and return and their meanings in the person's migration history. The presentation has a chronological form, as the purpose was also to capture changes over time in the emigration and return experiences.

<sup>123</sup> The translations from Spanish to English were made by the author.

International migration from Amealco was initiated with the recruitment for the *bracero* program by the North Americans. The municipality office in the village of Amealco became a centre for recruitment. **Rigoberto**, today 81 years old, was recruited by the Americans in 1944.

The Americans came here to put up offices to contract people to go there. We all heard about it. (...) Everybody here knew that there was recruitment to the United States because the German War had broken out and they had to bring Mexican people to the fields. (...) I went in 1944...I don't remember my age...I went over Ciudad Juárez, as *bracero* to California.

Rigoberto's parents were workers at one of the large haciendas that existed in the municipality before the revolution. His mother was working as a servant and his father, as his grandfather before him, took care of the cattle at the hacienda. After the revolution when the hacienda system was destroyed, his father and grandfather managed to buy a small piece of land. Rigoberto grew up at the family ranch and this is where he lives today after his return from the United States. He has a brother who stayed to work the land with their parents, while Rigoberto was away for 40 years. Rigoberto's father thus had a piece of land when Rigoberto emigrated, but it was the brother who stayed to work with him. The brother lives at the same ranch today and he has never left Amealco. Rigoberto, who is the oldest, comments that the brother never left Amealco because 'he never wanted to go anywhere'. Rigoberto was the one who left, despite him being the oldest son. The ranch was too small to provide work for both of them, and when the recruitment of farm workers to the USA started it became an option for men from the ranches around Amealco. At the time, Rigoberto was 30 years old, married and had a young child. The marriage broke up as he left for the USA.

My first wife walked out on me when I left for the USA. I have a son in Mexico City, he is doing well. I took him away from her, I came back from the USA and I took him away from her. By law, I won against her in the court (...) She is dead now.

Rigoberto went alone and after three consequent *bracero* contracts (of 6 months to a year per contract) in California and Texas, Rigoberto 'went free', as he says, and left the organised bilateral program. He got caught by the Border Control and sent back to Mexico. He travelled back to the USA and managed to get his American passport in order as he was contracted by a ranch owner in Texas. This landlord told him he liked his work and took care of the paperwork with the Mexican and US authorities. Since then Rigoberto has

been able to move freely between the two countries. During a period of 40 years of work in the USA he has been travelling back to Amealco on a few occasions, but he has not stayed in Mexico for long periods of time. There was also a period of 20 years when he didn't return at all. His brother comments that at that time their father believed he had died. But he turned up again and occasionally travelled back and forth until he retired at the age of 70. In the USA he worked in the agricultural fields all the time.

I left from here as I have told you to pick cotton by hand, because in Texas cotton was picked by hand. Today that is out of use, now it is all by machines. But at the time of the *braceros* the cotton-picking was by hand, cotton for making clothes, right. And there they put me up on a tractor. I was very afraid, because here, what tractor had I driven? I was very afraid on a tractor.

Q: But you got used to it...

I learned it entirely well. I worked at more than 20 ranches in Texas. If I didn't like one, I went to another. I knew how to work. (...) To plough. They nick-named me 'straight furrows'. You have to plough straight (laughter) (...) I started as an irrigator. My most respected work...what I did best in the USA was water management. I learned entirely well how to channel water, to lay down pipes...I used the channels, well where they have channels. The others have pipelines. I learned this entirely well in the USA, in California and in Texas.

Rigoberto lived on the farms in small cottages provided by the landlords. Board and lodging were usually included in the work contracts. He describes his experiences in positive terms, that life was beautiful in the United States. But when he talks about his decision to return he also expresses contradictory feelings:

I wasn't going to return here, but with the last one, when the government granted me pension...well I said to myself what am I doing here? I never bought anything in the USA. The USA is very hard, paying rent and everything. I never bought anything. Then my thought was to return here. As time went by. I have the ranch here, it is very beautiful back here. It lies here at the shoulder of the land of my father, we'll go and see it when you have finished (...) I didn't want to find anything there [in the USA], I returned to my land. I worked more than 40 years but I wanted to return to my land. I didn't like the United States. Not to live there all my life, but to work, yes.

The United States was for him a place of work and not a place 'to live'. After his return in 1984, at the age of 70, Rigoberto met Angela, they got married and they now have three children. They bought additional land and enlarged the house on the ranch. Today the family lives at the ranch together with Rigoberto's brother. The economic situation for all of them is secured thanks to Rigoberto's monthly pension from the USA. The possibility to help out his family in Mexico was furthermore a motive when Rigoberto returned.

I got my pension over there, on the other side of the border. I was living there after I retired. But then I thought it would be better to return here. I'd better spend the money they are paying me here, so it stays here in Mexico. And I help my people, who are from here. So well, I live here with my wife, and my brother lives with us. We help ourselves out with this pension.

The pension is equivalent to two Mexican minimum wages. Rigoberto's children are entitled to the pension until they reach the age of 18. The children thus have a small but secure income for many years to come. 40 years of farm work provided the possibility to buy land to the ranch and improve housing, and to have a long-term income for the extended family in *el campo* of the municipality.

### *The first emigrants from el pueblo*

In the 1940s, the early period of the *bracero* program, the length of the contracts decided to a certain extent the timing of the return. Many workers went on contracts and then returned when the contracts were finished. But as in the case of Rigoberto, it was often possible to renew the contract without leaving the United States, or return and then enter again with or without documents. Work was abundant and both documented and undocumented entries took place. The control of the border was not so severe during the 1940s. During the 1930s there had been forced deportations of Mexicans, and some sources estimate that during the 1930s return to Mexico exceeded migration to the USA five to one.<sup>124</sup> A major militarisation of the border took place from 1954 with the 'Operation Wetback', as mentioned before, but the 1940s was a period of weaker control of the border.

The explicit purpose of the *bracero* program was to contract experienced agricultural workers. People with experience from *el campo* in Amealco, as Rigoberto, were leaving for the USA. But from the start people also went to the USA from *el pueblo* of Amealco, in their majority people with no or little experience from agricultural work. In the interviews migrants comment how people earlier mainly left from the village, while today the situation is the opposite. Village persons, with a commercial, service or industrial background, were among the first *braceros*, and many of those who returned are today wealthy businessmen in Amealco, Querétaro or Mexico City. **Francisco**, 57 years, from the village of Amealco, was a young man in the 1950s. He saw how some village persons had invested savings from *bracero* contracts in their

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<sup>124</sup> Davis (1990).

businesses. Two older relatives of his had been *braceros* and they were able to take advantage of their savings.

They took advantage of the capital that they brought back. They invested it in something to live on. One of them has his bars and the other bought a truck to transport animals to the meat market in Mexico City. They obtained a better living thanks to what they did. None of them returned to the USA. They stayed to live calmly - one of them is today an influential businessman, economically, in Querétaro.

However, Francisco himself had no plans nor desire to leave. His older relatives had also talked about the difficulties and the hardship in the USA and he personally felt no 'restlessness' to go. As the oldest son in his family, Francisco had the responsibility to provide for his three brothers and his mother. When Francisco was 7 years old his father died, and from that age he started to work. Francisco sold jelly and ice-cream before and after school and carried bags for the passengers at the buss station in the evenings. Later, when he was a teen-ager, he started to work as a travelling street vendor and he was doing relatively well.

I never thought of leaving. It was the initiative of one of the friends in the village, who saw that...well I was working, I frequently travelled to Mexico City to sell meat, that was my occupation....I was doing good. I didn't really have...I had no expectations about going. But I didn't save enough money in relation to what I earned. So as there were friends, partying, unnecessary expenses...this friend of mine asked me why I didn't go as a *bracero*. With the option, as he said, that if I stayed for a while, if I stayed a good time there, I could save some money. So it was really he who took care of everything, and put me on the list in the municipality office.

Francisco had older friends in the village, men he worked with and who supported him. They also gave him advice and were his mentors. The friend who listed him was one of them. He also put two of Francisco's best friends on the list at the same time. But Francisco was first negative to the idea.

I said to him, 'I have never wanted to go', and he says, 'But if your friends go'...and they were my best friends, we were always together. So I thought, well maybe...and he told me, 'you don't have to pay me the merchandise on this trip, give the money to your mother and take some with you just in case'. So I said, well if you lend me the money I will go (...). And I paid him back after a while when I had established myself there [in the USA]. In addition to that, it was a little urgent for me to leave, as I had broken up with my girlfriend.

As in the case of Rigoberto, a troubled relationship was part of the circumstances when Francisco signed on the list for emigration to the USA. The combination of this personal situation of breaking up with his girlfriend and the other factors finally made him emigrate. Among the requirements for be-

ing contracted were medical examinations and a certificate proving previous experience from agricultural work. There were examples of cases where people were sent back to Amealco because they did not pass the medical tests. Concerning the agricultural certificate the control was less severe. Francisco, who commented that 'I wasn't close to being a peasant', was one of many village persons who could emigrate despite his lack of experience. The contracts were not given by priority to persons with limited economic resources. Landless persons or the *otomí* peasants, who had the most difficult situation in the countryside of Amealco, were not among the emigrants. From the start, the emigration to the United States was out of reach for the poorest groups in the municipality. Those who went initially were either *campesinos* from somewhat better-off small ranches in *el campo*, or village men from families with their resource base in commerce, services or smaller industrial activities. Francisco had no own accumulated savings, but he had a social network in the village and was aided by the older former *braceros* from the village.

When Francisco arrived in the Texas cotton fields in the winter of 1957 he immediately started to search for possibilities to get away from the heavy agricultural work. He managed to get small side jobs and made sure to be available as soon as there were extra jobs outside the fields. Step by step he left the cotton-picking and ended up as an aid at a dairy-farm. He was pleased with this work and was given more and more responsibility. After one and a half years he was in charge of the artificial insemination of the cows, normally a veterinarian's job. He got along very well with the landlord and his family, and socialised with them during his free hours. However, as time went by he started to have health problems. The doctors couldn't help him so he returned to Querétaro and Amealco to cure himself. He got the right medicine and returned to continue his work. He thus had to rely on Mexican health care, and paid for travel expenses back and forth. He stayed in the USA until the end of his contract, and then worked without documents, which wasn't complicated - 'they protected me', as he said, referring to his employers.

But then I returned, I stayed in Amealco for three or four months. Spending money, part of the money I had brought back. I was in Amealco and I felt uncomfortable. (...) Partying, spending money...and when I saw that the amount began to diminish more and more...I said to myself, this is no good business. And so I went again.

All migrants knew that the salaries were higher in California than in Texas, so the second time Francisco intended to go there. He managed to get a contract after some months at a reception centre in the north of Mexico and arrived in Oxnard, California in 1959. He worked in the fields there for another year and a half. He was principally working with vegetables despite that Oxnard is a centre for lemon-and orange-tree plantations. The Mexican workers were paid

less but worked harder than the 'national' worker. 'They saved a lot of money on us' as he expressed it.

It was a magnificent profit we gave them, because simply in the wage per hour at 12 centavos as they gave us, the national worker was paid one peso per hour. They were saving a lot...because we, so to say, I can assure you that without exaggeration the labour we did in one day was the work the national worker did in two days, and we were not paid in the same relation.

As on his first trip, he became good friends with the owner of the farm and his family. He was not able to move away from agricultural work completely, but he managed to become more involved with the carrying and transportation of the vegetables as opposed to the cutting.

There were occasions when we worked 18 hours a day. In the dark they lighted us up with the tractors so we could see when we cut lettuce, which was the most visible of the vegetables. (...) I was young and the compatriots didn't think I would be able to work such long hours, because I am not a country person. I am a city person so to speak and I had never really worked in the fields. (...) I wasn't as the person who was doing it forcefully or by obligation. (...) I wasn't very good at cutting. So I moved into carrying. (...) But thanks to this, well, as we were working every day of the week there was no time to spend the money. I spent money only on food and sent the rest immediately to Amealco, to my mother for her to keep. (...) The only thing to do was to collect the money and send it because if you didn't there were always the temptation to go on the spree.

After a period of three years Francisco went back to Amealco in 1960. Since then he has not emigrated, but later moved to Mexico City. When he left Amealco he travelled together with 30 to 40 persons, of which the great majority quite soon returned to Amealco. According to Francisco it was among the small group of friends from the *village* that some stayed for longer periods of time in the USA. Some of them married and established themselves in the USA. They were all older than Francisco and had left with the intention to marry and settle. The same happened in the mid-1940s, relates Francisco, when many migrants stayed in the USA and married widows after the war. In his case, he felt he was too young and not ready to marry. He could have, but he didn't want to.

No, I never thought of, I never....well, I didn't like the life there, because I made the analysis that, well, I said to myself, working in the USA...I pictured myself in a situation where I would be like the *campesinos* in Mexico. I would only go the village once a week. Of course, I didn't think, I didn't think positively that maybe if I'd stayed there I would have done something, put up a business or something. (...) I never...I never really felt attracted to the idea of staying there. I felt that being there meant being isolated from many things. And really, thinking personally and positively on myself, wherever I went I would be a stranger. Outside Amealco, outside Querétaro,

if you don't have friends you are a stranger. (...) I tell you, I wasn't attracted. Because, I simply said to myself, if I work with the meat four days a week I earn more than if I work seven days a week there, 12 hours a day. So it wasn't worth while.

Francisco analysed the situation and came to the conclusion that in the long run he would be better off economically in Mexico, working with his business. The secret was to save and invest, and not spend the money as he had done before. In the USA he would be like a *campesino*, which would imply a downward social mobility for him. On his second return to the village he didn't feel 'uncomfortable' and 'restless' as he had felt on his first return.

I was lucky. I was at ease the two times I went, everything went well. Then after the three years, well, I returned. And when I returned this time I didn't waste my time being lazy. I came on a Monday and on Wednesday I was working with what I knew to do, again back in the commerce of meat. I bought meat in Amealco and went to sell it in Mexico City. And now I didn't let my capital diminish...(...) From this, well my business was set up, I became independent. In reality, I have always been working with commerce, I have never been employed in my life except for when I went as a *bracero*. (...) The second time I returned I didn't pay attention to friends, parties and alcohol...I dedicated my self to work, I didn't dedicate myself to spend. And on my second return I had helped my family, my brother was finally studying and we felt more reassured in the family.

His friend in the village had invested the money he had sent back in merchandise for his store and Francisco got the money back when everything was sold. After a few years after his return Francisco had accumulated enough capital to invest in a business in Mexico City. He married the woman from Amealco he had broken up with when he left on his first trip to the USA in 1957, and who had been his fiancée since his return. They later moved to Mexico City and got established there. Since then his business has grown and Francisco has become a wealthy person. Looking back at his experience he thinks the emigration was important to him at that particular time in his life and that he made the right decision when he returned.

More than anything it was useful.. to meet all types of people...From Oaxaca, from the Centre, from the North, and all of them very different. So somehow that particular period of time helped me to become a more mature person. Because of that, because I was living with many people, with different ideas, different customs. And the managers themselves were very different. Those in Texas were different for instance because they were Mexican Americans. (...) In a way it was a personal thing, a triumph so to speak, that I did it, I did go.

The people he learned to know in the USA were thus other Mexicans from all parts of Mexico. He had few social relations with people in the communities where he worked, but he learned to know his employers well. Francisco de-

scribes these relationships as important to him. The good contacts helped him to get better jobs and a better situation as a *bracero*. He particularly sympathized with one of the employers. However, Francisco was also conscious about the fact that their relationship never went beyond being worker-employer relationships.

We developed a good friendship. Beside the fact that I always, so to speak, held him at a distance. In order not to let him disrespect me or to let him give me the opportunity to make jokes. In order to keep a limit within our persons so I wouldn't disrespect him as an employer nor he disrespect me as a worker. (...) He [the employer] always knew very well how to mark his distance. He didn't give us much preference, otherwise the others would have been jealous. But he was very attentive to us. And as for myself, well, I never gave him anything in order to please him or so, it was always in terms of the work that I did.

This particular employer kept in touch with Francisco for some years and when he came to Mexico on a vacation they met and went out to a restaurant together. What Francisco describes is a relationship that was well defined from the start, and where both he and the employer had their fixed roles as worker and employer respectively. Even if he might have identified more with the employer than with the workers, they both were careful to keep their distance. Francisco saw before him that this was the social position he would have occupied in the USA, had he stayed on. Today Francisco is an independent employer himself, and this has been his goal since he was young. He mentions a teacher at school who influenced him a lot and made him pursue this goal. The important thing for him was to set up a business, and his possibilities to do this were better in Mexico than in the USA. Today he compares his situation with one of the friends he left with in 1957 and who remained in the USA.

We both went in 1957. He has just returned, after some 30 years he returned. But I think that even he, with what he receives as a pension and with all he has got, he hasn't got half of what I have. Why, well maybe because he married there and because he has his children there. (...) Those who stayed worked a lot and economically I think they earned very good wages (...) but, 30 years separated from their families, well, separated from everything.

Apart from all economic aspects, emigration to the USA from the village of Amealco is according to Francisco a very normal thing to do at a certain age. When he makes a reflection about present emigration from Amealco, he connects the phenomenon to the youth period.

At that age it is normal. Maybe you fight with your brother or maybe your father yells at you or you have a conflict with a friend about a girl or so. Something bothers you. Anyway you get a way temporarily, to be far away for a while...either to forget about

it or to stay away, or to return to see what happens. This is very normal. Then when this restlessness passes we will see. Many of those I know of in Amealco go for the adventure, there are many who stay for a month and then return home where they have everything.

### *The bracero without documents: 1960s and 1970s*

With the end of the *bracero* program in 1964 the circumstances for emigration from Amealco to the USA changed. It was no longer possible to sign on a list in the municipality office in Amealco and be recruited directly to a farm in the USA. However, the end of the program did not mean an abrupt decline or change in the pattern of emigration and return. As described above, since the early days of the program there had been a parallel development of undocumented migration. The contracts under the program specified certain employer obligations, such as social security provision, wage levels and working conditions for the migrants. The employers had to fulfil these clauses which provided several advantages for the workers. On the one hand, there were also violations and changes of the contracts on the part of the Mexican authorities, including an obligation in the 1950s for workers to cut one ton of cotton on the Mexican side (paid with Mexican salaries) before going on a contract to a US farm.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, the US farmers wanted to avoid the obligations specified in the clauses and started to employ workers outside the *bracero* program. The migrant stories confirm that the employers often encouraged undocumented migration and workers were hired without documents even during the early phases of the program. So when the program ended in 1964, undocumented migration was a well known and well established phenomenon.

When the United States stopped active recruitment, partly as a result of increased mechanisation in the agricultural sector - the cotton-fields of Texas were mechanised by 1964 - there still existed possibilities to work in the USA. In particular migrants who had established their networks and contacts with employers were able to make more trips, or help out new migrants. Undocumented migration increased further in the 1960s and 1970s, to a large extent from *el campo* of Amealco. The character of the migration started to change in the sense that border crossing without documents had to be taken into account as part of the risks and costs involved with migration.

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with informant Roberto Gil.

**Alberto**, 45 years old, is one of many migrants from the *el campo* of the municipality of Amealco. He initiated his labour migration in 1977 and is a son of a *bracero*. His father went to work on contract in 1958 and his parents and brothers and sisters are now legalised residents in the USA. The family members return to Amealco several times a year, especially his parents and his sister. Alberto himself lives with his wife and five children on a ranch in a small rural community close to the village of Amealco. Alberto owns a piece of land and produces corn, basically for subsistence. He sells corn every year but asserts that it is impossible for him and his family to live on the land. Almost every year he sells two or three tons of corn which give him enough to cover the expenses for the costs of travelling to the US to work. He has not obtained legal documents, which makes it increasingly difficult for him to continue to migrate. Alberto emphasises that he hates it. He resists leaving for work every year, and has not benefited from it economically. He expresses that he is trapped in this migration pattern.

I have been going for 17 years, and I don't have 17 dollar nor 17 cents left from it...I am sick of going to work there. I'd better stay here at home, but I go because my family is there, under other circumstances no. If they weren't there I wouldn't go. Even if it is difficult to live here, I don't need to go, well, yes I need to go, but if I could decide I wouldn't go because one suffers a lot. With the illusion of becoming rich I have been going to the United States all these years. I never got rich before I married, and less when married and with so many children. My wife says, go if you want to, I say no I better stay with you here....I will not bring back anything, going to the USA, without qualifications, without work. I don't think I will become a millionaire in a week.

Alberto does not want to leave Amealco, he is trying to stay there despite the difficulties. He describes the migration back and forth as something he has to live with, although it frustrates him. He is pessimistic about the benefits of the emigration for the migrants. The situation has in his view become worse over the years. The costs of living in the barracks, the food and transportation costs have gone up, and this makes it more difficult to earn and save money. He compares the present situation with the late 1970s when there was a mobilisation among the Mexican farm workers, inspired by the Chicano leader César Chávez. Alberto sees these times as the 'good days' because there was someone who stood up for the workers. Since then everything has deteriorated in his view. The major inconveniences for Alberto today are related to the repeated risks involved with border crossing.

I haven't been doing very well, I have had problems with *cholos* as they are called, on the border. They are bandits, thieves, who hang around there during the nights. (...) And I have had a lot of trouble with the Border Patrol. (...) Very few people are lucky. I have never liked it, because of the border crossing. I have been walking over

the hills and there the *cholos*, the bandits, assault you. Or the Mexican Police themselves, our own compatriots rob us on the border. Or the *pollero*,<sup>126</sup> when you don't know him he treats you badly. The farm owners themselves, if you don't know them or have good contacts with the managers, they punish you, shuffle you around or send you away. So well, it is a complicated problem. (...) I can't do a good job there, it's as if my blood pressure alters a lot, I don't know what it is, maybe it is the food.

Alberto is worried about his family and he doesn't want to bring his wife and children to the USA. He thinks they would be 'ruined' if he did. At the same time all his close relatives are in the USA, and he feels he has to go there because of that. The fact that the family is in the USA is a major reason for him to continue to go. He has a dilemma because he is undocumented, while they are all residents. This has created a split in the family.

Many people got their papers in order. But they sometimes also get proud and egoistic. One day my father was going to go to the USA and he had his documents and I asked him, when are You going Sir, can I go with You - I refer to the fact that there is an egoism within the family or between Mexicans themselves - and the next day in the morning I said, are You going now so I can go with You? And he says, no 'I will not bring any damned illegals with me'. But then later he came to me and said, 'Come here son, I'll help you out with the journey if you want to go' but then I said 'No I am not going with any damned immigrants so they can leave me on the border' - he had already punished me that way before.

Migrants who have documents may get in trouble if they are caught helping out migrants who are undocumented. In the case of Alberto tensions and conflicts were created within the family and that may also happen between friends from Amealco. Part of Alberto's problem with going to the USA is that he feels he is a burden for the rest of the family. He even says he feels 'dirty' when he comes to visit them in the USA. So when he migrates he moves around and changes work places all the time and he doesn't feel at ease anywhere. Despite the fact that he has his whole family established in the USA he can not take advantage of this social network, which could have helped him to a better situation. His situation is one example of the consequences of emigration on family life. Alberto thinks that continued emigration to the USA creates insecurity between the spouses. The men are away for long periods of time. The women and children stay in the community, waiting for dollars and the return of the husbands.

Often they say to themselves, he has met another woman, he is not coming back. But often that is not true, he may be missing, or he got killed. But here many people think it is true. I am not saying it is not, because many people do stay away. 'Why

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<sup>126</sup> *Pollero* is a nick-name for persons who against payment bring persons without documents over the border.

should I return if I found a woman here' 'I stay here with her, besides she is American and the other is Mexican'. (...) And it has occurred in many places that people have returned from there and they find their wife pregnant - what a confidence...

Q: These are the risks involved?

Yes, if you leave your family, you are exposed to the risk of loosing your family.

Alberto is caught in a migration pattern that does not benefit him economically, but he continues to emigrate year after year. He is unable to save money but he maintains the situation for himself and his family on the ranch. It is a frustrating situation as he is split between the desire to maintain contacts with his family in the USA and his own wish to be in Amealco with his wife and children. He is fed up with the risky border-crossing and the work in the US fields makes him sick. He is a person who has experienced the changing circumstances for undocumented migration from the 1970s and onwards and he is troubled with the rougher times. He sees no immediate end to it and he thinks he will be going the next year too.

### *The 1980s' undocumented migration from el pueblo*

After the end of the *bracero* program emigration to the USA continued also from *el pueblo* of Amealco. Young men with no agricultural background have continued to emigrate, now outside formal contracts. Victor, 40 years old, Roberto 37 years old and Alejandro, 28 years old, are men from the village who migrated to the USA, initially without documents, in the early or mid-1980s. Only Roberto's father went as a *bracero*, while the father of Victor is a businessman and landowner who never has migrated, and the father of Alejandro is owner of a small industry in the village. None of the three have experiences from agricultural work, and all of them worked only temporarily in the fields in the USA. Their life histories differ, but they have in common their explicit non-economic motivations for emigration. They didn't emigrate primarily for work in the USA but searched for something else. They express this as experiences, adventure and personal development. And they went back to the village when they had reached their goals.

Victor is today a self-employed businessman in Amealco, he is married and has three children. The family lives in the centre of the village where the business is located, but Victor also has a ranch with more than 30 hectares of land in *el campo*. When he looks back and talks about his three undocumented trips to the USA in the 1980s, they seem partly to represent a kind of 'sin of the youth' to him. Nobody in his family had emigrated before him and he was going against the will of his father, who Victor describes as a person deeply rooted in the village. He laughs when he says that 'one always changes the way

of thinking, right' and describes himself as a person who wanted to see what there was 'out there'.

As one is young and...you have like a...I wouldn't go there today. That is, only if there was a very bad situation in the country, then maybe. But as I did then, no. It was a different time, I was 20 years the first time I went. In 1980 the first time, in 1982 the second and in 1986 the third. (...) I didn't reach Los Angeles until the third time...that was my goal, to get to know Los Angeles (laughter) . (...) I think it is the age...if you don't have anything to do here, well, then you go...to gain experiences. But I think that afterwards these experiences are particularly valuable to you in your mature life. You can have...well, if there are things that you think are difficult, you have the experience to decide something. This is what I see as positive from these adventures.

Victor lived the same difficulties described above by Alberto, with the difference that he saw them more as temporal personal experiences than sufferings he would have to live with. The border crossing was risky and cost him a lot of money as he and his friend had to pay a *coyote*.<sup>127</sup> In the USA Victor worked in the fields for a short period of time, but through his friend's contacts he soon moved on to work in a construction business. He learned 'from within' the situation of Mexican undocumented workers and became aware of the difficulties, while he himself felt as a kind of observer. He came to the conclusion that workers in the USA may reach a higher standard of living, but it is impossible to save money. Only if one lives in inhuman cardboard shelters in the fields (as many migrants without resources do) it may be possible to save the earned money. To Victor himself money was never an issue and he did not save anything.

The working class lives better, they have heaters and everything...material things. But they can't save money. I saw other people, Mexicans, who lived in the hills, rustic people from the countryside...who live in shelters made of paper....and they are the ones who may be able to bring back some savings here...they do save money. But for someone like myself, I would say well, no thank you...

Q: You would be accustomed to better housing?

Well, yes, more humane, because imagine yourselves...living in the city, one needs better housing (laughter). And if you go from the bad to the worse, it is not worth while. In any case there is a lot of suffering. I came to live in a shelter like that for a period of time, because of the danger of being discovered by the Border Control.

Victor thus saw the work and living conditions of Mexican *campesinos*, and experienced them personally, although only temporarily. He became aware of negative images of Mexicans in the USA, which affected him. Victor describes a situation when he was with an employer who wanted a specific job done in

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<sup>127</sup> *Coyote* is another expression used for persons who charge money to bring people over the border.

his firm. Victor started to do it without questions, as it was an easy job and something that he had done before. The employer exclaimed surprised 'But you are Mexican, how come you know this?'

The thing is that there is much racism there, but there are also people who do appreciate Mexicans a lot. And there are people who don't. Because of the same...racism...because that you can really feel. But well, there are all kinds, you can't say that everybody...I think it depends on the person. But still...once I went to ask for work and the man threw me out...you know, in his case it was really because of...he said 'No Mexicans' and then threw me out. So there is racism but not from everybody.

Q: After they'd thrown you out for being Mexican, what happened with you?

Well I said to myself...as long as they don't hit me. You know, I let them get away with it. That way I could also save myself and be left in peace. (...) You have to think that you are there and...you have to put up with the things that happen to you.

Victor was not actively looking for a permanent situation in the USA but rather to travel around and see and learn. The question of return was however open and he was not totally sure about if he would stay in the USA or not.

Well, in a way it was...almost a question of staying for a while and...knowing, traveling, getting to know more and then...But also, well, if I would have been lucky to find a good job I would have stayed there. However, the jobs available were always of the same kind. (...) As in my case...it is only if you have a higher education that you can become...more accepted there. If not, it is always the same, you will never be able to get out.

After he had reached his goal to get to Los Angeles on his third trip he returned and he has not emigrated since. He would like to go on vacation with his family, but to travel without documents is out of question for him today. His business in Amealco is doing well, to a large extent because of the emigrants. Victor estimates that half of his sales directly relates to the dollars brought back by migrants. After his return he has tried to put in to practice several of the things he picked up when he was away. But it is not in his business but within the agricultural sector that he is making this effort.

The experience was useful. The thing is that you have to bring back knowledge from there, the things that are most valuable to you. For instance, the technology in the countryside, everything that you saw there, how they worked, right. (...) The difference is that they are very advanced technologically. In addition to the fact that they have a lot of water. The USA is very different as a country, and they really have everything structured. (...) It is a country where you can drill wells, and they really go for the water...here in Mexico we have to go and ask for permissions to drill and often the government doesn't permit it. (...) I have a ranch too, I dedicate myself to agriculture. And this is why I tell you that it has been useful to me. I have said to myself, well I have to do the same here. Or well, one has to go step by step surpassing all the

difficulties. Of course I will not be able to reach their technological level, for there is lack of capital, right.

Victor has mechanised the harvests and is looking for possibilities to drill and develop the irrigation system. He has also tried out new seeds, but with little luck so far. But he continues producing corn despite the low profits and high costs.

Here I think we pay to sow (laughter). If I calculate I see that I sometimes lose. In other words, it is only because it is a sorrow not to sow. The land is there and this is what it is for, to produce.

He is also quite optimistic about the positive impacts of emigration in terms of experiences of migrants that are brought back to Amealco.

Many people who have left, well....there are many different fields where these experiences are useful, because here they can be put into practice. And it is urgent, apart from the installation of water systems and mechanisation of the countryside.

Victor experienced a loss of social status in the USA and gained a number of valuable personal insights from it. After his return he got married and established a social position as a businessman and landowner in the village. His 'restlessness' was over and he started to put his experiences into practice. He did it not by investing more in his business - he had not saved money in the USA - but by improving agricultural production on the large ranch of his family. Victor uses the profits from his business in the village to modernise the production of corn. His goal is to obtain two harvests a year instead of one.

My father always hired a lot of people to harvest and everything...I don't do that anymore. Well, that is how my experience from the USA has been useful to me, I saw all the machines that did everything quickly. (...) The combine is fast. This year I sowed more than 30 hectares, and in two days the machine harvested it all. And that, well, that is something I saw there.

Thanks to his business, which depends on the migrants' earnings, he has the means to invest in agricultural technology that reduces the need for labour in the agricultural sector. Where his father hired a lot of persons, Victor hires a machine. The paradox is that this is one of the factors that propel even more people to emigrate from the countryside of Amealco. So the emigration and return of persons with *pueblo* and *campo* backgrounds respectively can be related to two opposite processes in the countryside. In the cases of Rigoberto and Alberto, they used their savings to maintain a static form of subsistence production in the countryside, which did not create jobs but provided a possibility to live there (in the case of Alberto periodically) with their families.

Victor, on the other hand, used his business earnings (dependent on migrant remittances) to mechanise agricultural production, which reduces the demand for agricultural labour.

**Alejandro**, 28 years old, also emigrated in the mid-1980s. His family owns a small factory in the village of Amealco and none of his relatives have been *braceros*. When he left he was only 17 years old, and in contrast with Victor he stayed for 10 continuous years in the USA and became a US resident in 1987. The idea of emigrating to the USA was something he had had in his mind for a long period of time, something he shared with some of his school friends.

I had this idea to get to know the First World, to get to know the First World because I had always been in touch with it, since my childhood, the music, and everything related to music, the arts. (...) I played rock 'n' roll in Mexico but I never had the chance to develop because of economic reasons and because of societal reasons. (...) In this village it is almost a tradition to emigrate to the United States, and at that time at our age we had heard stories, anecdotes from many people who had been there. It doesn't matter what social level or cultural level, it is just to go there. We had our minds in the United States, some for some reasons, others for other reasons.

Right after finishing high school Alejandro left for the USA together with three friends. From the start it was a real adventure for them, and a complete rupture with their previous life. They were convinced to do it the toughest way, without documents, even if they didn't have to.

In fact we were accustomed to having our homes, going to school and we were given money by our parents. Personally I had never worked in my life, so from that moment everything started to be an experience for us. (...) We crossed the border over the hills without guides, without any help, it was a unique and special experience. We wanted to live it like that, because besides, we could have obtained the Mexican documents, but we decided not to.

After a first failure to cross the border and transportation back to Mexico, Alejandro and his friends prepared themselves better for a second intent. They developed a strategy that included camouflage clothing, raincoats, provisions for a long walk, and proper clothes to put on once in the USA. This time they were successful and managed to get to San Diego. Then a rather difficult time started. They moved around and tried to get jobs in tourist areas, in small businesses and so on, but with little success. People they met, Mexicans or *cholos*, helped them out with room and food for shorter periods of time. But soon they realised that their only job option was in agriculture. They went to a plantation and worked there for a month. To Alejandro this was a shaking experience.

What we saw there was tough because the people who live and work in the countryside live in very precarious conditions. They live in prefabricated houses in the middle of the fields and under an inhumane treatment. Mexican people, in their majority humble workers, who never even go down to the city and who speak English with great difficulty, despite the long time they have been there.

Alejandro worked temporarily in the fields with the objective to save money to get to Los Angeles. By now his friends wanted to go back to Mexico so they split and he continued alone. For Alejandro it was important to get to Los Angeles and get in touch with the music and the arts. He wanted to hear his favourite rock musicians in concert. He had earned some money and his English is good so he could quickly make contacts among young musicians, mostly immigrants, in Los Angeles. He moved in with a person who also helped him to get a job in a factory. After one and a half years he changed jobs and started to work in another factory producing military equipment. Alejandro worked in the same factory for eight years, while he step by step established himself in Los Angeles. He rented a house, played music, created his own life. He also attended high school for two and a half years, but left it in order to work full time and have time to play with his rock group. From 1987 (the legalisation under IRCA) he has been a permanent resident in the USA. He feels content with himself and the life he managed to create.

I lived 10 years in Los Angeles and I had the opportunity to create my own life, to progress to a certain level and I had the opportunity to have a good car, my own belongings. I got married to an American girl. (...) I had the opportunity to help a lot of people the same way people had helped me. I lived with people of different nationalities, many nationalities, and well, I got to know their customs, foods, laws and arts. The arts in particular were inculcated on me. And of course I tried to promote my own nationality, because the concept that the Americans, or other immigrants, have about the Mexican is wrong, they don't know.

Alejandro played rock music and he primarily identified with other musicians of his own 'tendency' rather than with Mexicans or the Mexican community. He tested different styles and identities.

If you like something, for example rock music, it doesn't matter if the person who is your friend comes from China or whatever, you will not dismiss him because of the fact that he is Chinese. To the contrary, you will accept him because he is Chinese and he likes what you like. It is another kind of acceptance, because there is a rock group. I was first into heavy metal with long sponged hair. Then I made myself more hard core and curled the hair. Then I was a skinhead...this didn't work out so well because of the type of mentality that these people have...and after that I was mohawk hippie so I knew that too.(...) I had long hair and tried to assimilate the customs and the fashions of the Americans. It wasn't difficult for me, it is more than anything a question of assimilation.

As Victor he describes the situation for Mexicans in the USA as blocked in terms of possibilities for social mobility. In Alejandro's view it is practically impossible to progress or change your social position. While the circumstances are very different for a person who has some kind of education and the person who lacks education, both of them have in common a subordinate position in the USA. He discusses his experiences of the interconnection between class position and ethnicity.

It depends a lot on yourself. If you have an education, well logically you will try to find a way out to progress, to develop and connect yourself to the society there, but the level of life for the immigrant is much lower than for the Anglo-Saxon.

Q: You didn't meet Mexican or Latin people who had better positions?

Yes I did, I met quite a lot of such people, but part of their position was because they already had prestige in the countries of origin, they were important people from here or from other countries. There are not many people who have come from here with little education and been able to progress just like that. (...) The Anglo-Saxon community in general has a fixed concept about what a Black person or a Mexican or an Oriental is. (...) The minorities will never be superior to them, they are the ones who always will hold the strongest cards. If a minority begins to make its way or advance they immediately try to hold it back. It is a political question. Of course there are different classes among the Anglo-Saxons; upper class, middle class, working class and so on, but it is difficult to classify other ethnic groups than the Anglo-Saxons in different classes. They don't exist in reality. The upper class of an ethnic group other than the Anglo-Saxon is not ethnic but participates with the Anglo-Saxons. That is the only way.

In Alejandro's view, if a person of another ethnicity other than the Anglo-Saxon belongs to the upper class, that person is no longer seen as 'ethnic', but 'participates with the Anglo-Saxon'. An upper class position is thus the only way to be 'assimilated' as Anglo-Saxon. But Alejandro tried to assimilate to 'get rid of the weight of discrimination'. He comments that it was also necessary to speak English perfectly, without an accent, otherwise he would become subject to discrimination, 'it is as simple as that'. The fact that he above everything wanted to be a rock musician also created confrontations with the Mexican community.

There are neighbourhoods there in the USA where...well the Mexican, the immigrants, the Mexican Americans are traditionalists, do you understand me? "I drink tequila because I am Mexican, and because I am not a *gringo* I don't drink whisky". So they saw me with my long hair and whistled at me and so on, I don't know what they said to me...so there I was subject to friction. (...) I am Mexican, I never denied it, but simply because of questions of images I was not considered to be Mexican. But with the Americans of my own tendency I could always have my things, I had friendship and so on.

As Victor, Alejandro became very conscious about the image of the Mexican in the USA. He was frustrated about the Anglo-Saxon's generalisation of the Mexicans into 'one category', 'one sole thing' - and at the same time he opposed the traditionalist Mexican American community's view of the Mexican. He says that he was not looking for their kind of manifestations of the Mexican, which he saw as a way of 'shut oneself up, to classify yourself and then never get out of it'. In the rock group he wrote texts about the circumstances he had experienced growing up in Mexico. Alejandro puts emphasis on that it was universalism he and his friends were looking for:

We talked [in the song texts] about the oppression, of the liberty of expression, of the way of thinking of our parents, of the food and everything (...) but we tried to give it a more universal meaning, we talked about the environment, the Mexican politicians, and all kinds of repression that exist here in Mexico. You realise that it exists when you travel to another country where you find freedom of expressing many things.

The emigration to the USA made Alejandro more interested in Mexico as a country and he began to follow closely what happened in Mexico. In a way he discovered Mexico when he had left Amealco.

When I lived here in Mexico...(...) I didn't even belong to the labour force or anything, I had never worked, I was a student. So I lived a very superficial life in relation to what life really is about here. Nothing was difficult to me, I had very little information about what happened in Mexico, I didn't care, I wasn't interested. My mind was there [in the USA]. When I lived in the USA I took interest in informing myself about what happened in my country, all important events, I became involved and I even got interested in Mexican politics! And I compared it to political methods or the political system of the USA.

Despite his satisfying life in the USA Alejandro returned to Amealco at the age of 27. At that time he had recently divorced and he felt that his life was beginning to become routine.

For 10 years I worked and lived and progressed and experienced what it is to live in that kind of society. But one reaches a point when all that becomes routine, everything is routine. So after such a long time, far away from one's country...being a lover of one's customs and respectful of one's roots...that makes you return. Whether you are in France in Europe or any part of the world, I think part of it is nostalgia.

Q: How did you return here?

The return was fast. One day my mother called me and said, 'what are you doing, are you working, don't you feel good, come back here', so I returned, I grabbed my bag and my compact discs, shoes and shirts and returned.

The separation was in the background as he took the decision to return. He had arrived at a kind of turning point. He comments that he shouldn't have taken such an important decision as the marriage so quickly. He describes himself as 'conservative' and points to Mexican traditional family values, which he appreciates in relation to the 'liberalism' in the USA. He began to react against the routines of his life and reoriented his attention towards Mexico and his family in Amealco. After his return Alejandro started to work with his father in the family business. He temporarily moved in with his parents. A difference he describes since he came back is the changed relationship with friends and relatives in the village. He is no longer a teenager but an adult and he says that naturally 'the treatment is different'. He has become involved in the family business and has plans to expand it. At the moment he does not want to return to the USA but is open for it in the future. Now he is going to enjoy his stay in Mexico and 'work for his folks'. But he sees it unlikely that he will stay in Amealco.

It is difficult, the environment is difficult...in order to find means of subsistence here you need first of all to have a lot of money, then you need to be an innovator and then you must get it to work. My father is a businessman and I think I will be working with him for a long period of time and we'll see if we can do something. (...) I will have to migrate again from my Amealco, to the city, here in Mexico.

Although Alejandro felt he progressed and created his own life in the USA, he still expresses that 'real life' is in Mexico. He has to catch up with some of his school friends who today are married and have children and are doing good economically. He coincides with Victor in his view of the emigration as a valuable experience that belongs to the youth period. Coming back to the village meant that he as an adult has been given new responsibilities. But he has also maintained strong bonds in Los Angeles, where he has friends, one brother and all his material belongings.

The father of **Roberto**, 37, was a successful *bracero* from the outskirts of the village of Amealco, and his younger brothers are also emigrants. Roberto went to the USA in 1984 and stayed for six years, with only a few short returns to Amealco. At the time of the interview he had lived four years in Amealco since his latest return. Three months after he came back Roberto married Andrea and they now have a little daughter. For Roberto, the experience of emigration and return became a question of personal and professional development. Initially he did go partly for the money, but as time went by he lost interest in the economic side of migration.

Sometimes we are the black sheep and we rebel against our own parents, right, or against our system. And we want to find something new, something better, a satis-

factory condition, I don't know, in our neighbouring country. (...) When one finally returns, we can suppose that is when one has time, right, and has fulfilled the things one has been looking for. (...) After a while I wasn't interested in the money. That was the main thing, right. I learned the working system, the methods of work and the way of being, and that pleased me a lot. The money wasn't so important to me anymore, that is, it lost my attention. I put my attention on the way of being of the persons, the work, everything. So I directed my knowledge and learning to the work, certain methods, certain kinds of work. I did my work better, with a higher quality, and that was what I learned from people there. (...) I brought back the knowledge of...well a good way of living and how to work well. That helped me a lot.

Roberto describes that he fulfilled a circle and went back when he had found what he had been looking for. In his case he felt a pressure to leave for the USA, everybody was telling him to go. He says he didn't want to go, but gave in for the pressures. At the moment he also had personal troubles.

One day I wasn't feeling very well, because I was out of money. I had been spending a lot of money, I used to drink a lot. So I had lost money and I had done some bad things here in my village, and in particular to my family. Because of the wine and the drinking. That had affected my family a lot, so morally I wasn't feeling well. I was without money and with nothing. So I couldn't...well, how was I going to solve it? How could I get out of it...how, how....how was I going to do what I had to do? I couldn't. So well, my brothers had already gone and were telling me to go, and others came back telling me the same. They talked about it a lot but I wasn't interested. But finally they had been talking so much about it so, well, let's go. And so I got to know how it was.

The everyday situation of Roberto in the USA was similar to that of Victor, in the way that he moved around to different places and changed jobs many times. The difference was that he stayed for a longer period of time. After three years of work in the USA he got his papers in order under the IRCA legalisation, and from 1987 to return to Mexico became much easier. Roberto worked with his brothers in the agricultural fields in the USA for a short period of time. He left them rather soon and travelled by himself to work in Texas, California and Oregon. His main work experiences were in mechanical work, car maintenance and factory work. It was in the fields of mechanics, welding and metal-plating that he learned new and better working methods, which contributed to his professional development. He gives detailed descriptions of how he learned to do high quality work by 'induction' when he was in the USA. To Roberto these insights were part of his motivation to return to Amealco.

I am telling you, through these details I learned by induction how to do a good job. And that was what induced me, almost so, to return to Mexico. Without any problems whatsoever. The fact that I discovered this. Do you see? To do a good job. And this motivated me, I was very pleased. I said to myself, well why would I want a lot

of money? (...) I didn't bring back 20 million dollars but I did bring back something. (...) Apart from the fact that I did bring back some money, I brought back a personal and spiritual tranquillity. (...) I returned satisfied, I returned in peace with myself. (...) I now have another and better knowledge, and apart from that I think that my life has become better.

One of the employments Roberto held was in a factory outside Los Angeles. A striking fact about this factory is that the owner (a US company) runs an identical production unit in the village of Amealco - it is one of the so called *maquiladoras* located in Amealco. As described above, in Amealco the work in *maquiladoras* is to a large extent considered to be work for women and most of the workers in this factory are women. Few men work there and if they do they usually have other occupations and stay for shorter periods of time. The company actively recruits women in Amealco and the salaries are low, about the Mexican minimum wage. In the company's US production unit the workers are men, most of them Mexican labour migrants and many of them from Amealco. In the USA the work is not considered female work, it is low-paid and the workers come from ethnic minorities and are often migrants. Roberto also worked for a short period of time in the factory in Amealco so he can compare the two. He thus travelled more than 2000 km to do an identical job in the same company on the other side of the border. The wages are higher in the USA, and his position different:

I knew the job a little because I had already been working in that factory in Mexico. (...) In Mexico I wasn't working as a worker but there [in the USA] I had to be a worker...it was satisfying because as a worker I had to exercise my body, right, as well as adapt to new contracts in the form of work. Instead of working per hour we worked at piece-rates. So we forced our organisms in order to develop that work in the shortest possible time.

In the Mexican factory he did not see himself as a worker (the workers were women) but he became a worker in the US factory, and the meaning to him there was different than in Amealco. He stayed at the job for nine months. Most workers stay on shorter contracts. The work is heavy and the working conditions are tough, as in the Mexican factory. But the wages are several times higher. The *maquiladora* production in Mexico is calculated to have wage levels in a relation of 1:10 compared to US wage levels. The company uses different strategies in the two locations and employs male migrant workers in the USA (many of them undocumented), and female workers from *el pueblo* in Amealco.

While Roberto describes his return as a 'peace with himself' he is nevertheless open for future emigration and has no definite vision that he and his family

will live permanently in Amealco. He has no 'stress' to leave, but emigration is a real and open option. He also talks about his return as part of a circulation related to the access to work, where he as a documented worker may return for a while when there is strong competition for the jobs.

I returned because...(.) at that time I wasn't doing very well and I said to myself, what am I doing here? I am not producing work, work was scarce, I was only working a little and there were other people who wanted to have the jobs. I said to myself, well I will step aside and return home and probably return again later. Another year, when the times are better. A time when I can work more and do better, and as I have the opportunity to go back and forth so...that is, I have something.

Roberto comments how difficult it is to save money in the USA, and to him it wasn't a main goal when he emigrated. But he does have a vision of the possibility to go one more time to work and save enough money to invest in a business in Mexico. It would be 'the ultimate effort'.

I think it is possible that I emigrate again, why not? It would be an intent to find another place there and save and create a better economy and then return, or send the money, to do something for my family. (...) I would like to create my business here, well not so much a business but a profitable work. If I work here it will take me a long time so my option is to find a good job there, save money and return to invest here. (...) If I return [to the USA] it would be to do the ultimate effort. (...) To bring back some tools and some money and make it back here. (...) I would like to have a good garage here.

Roberto is aware of the fact that for most emigrants 'a last effort' is very much an illusion. As in the case of Alberto, who returned to *el rancho*, there is a great risk of becoming 'trapped' in the migratory circuit.

There are many people from the countryside who emigrate. They go and...well they return and...they return with something. Right. They fix themselves up a bit. In their economic systems. But then they have the necessity to go again! That is, to arrive at the situation where you say, well, now I have enough...that is difficult.

Roberto expresses ambivalence about how to handle the situation where emigration always is present as an option. On the one hand he comments that he would 'suffer mentally' if he would be thinking of going all the time. He does not want to be under that stress, and since he returned he has not felt it either. Thanks to his personal achievements he feels he has a secure and good position in Amealco. On the other hand, the fact that people come and go is not necessarily bad.

Q: People return here and stay for a while and then they have to leave again...it becomes a...way of living?

That is also true.

Q: Is it neither here nor there, a kind of double life...?

Yes. It is very good that way, too.

Roberto has an intention to transfer his knowledge and insights to other people in Amealco. He expresses a commitment to the village and people around him. In his view it is important to always think in terms of doing a good job. If a person is careful with the job and the way things are done, it will have effects in other fields of life too.

I forward some of the things I learned there to persons here. Or shouldn't I transfer my knowledge or what? I have to send them a message, give them something, even if it isn't verbal. It can be by the facts. I think that it can make people feel motivated. Right. (...) One has to point out a way for them. (...) Look. I think that when you know something, when you know how to do a good job, then when you start to do another job you will do that job well, too. If we never do a perfect or good job, then all jobs will be mediocre. But if we are careful to do a good and efficient job, all the rest will turn out good, I can almost assure you. This is what I try to forward to some persons, the bricklayers, the painters, and even the motor mechanics.

### *Return to el campo in the 1990s*

Continued low prices on corn and high production costs restrict the possibilities for persons to stay and live in *el campo*. Remittances maintain rain-fed agricultural production and the welfare of households in the countryside. In many cases rural housing has improved over time, more *campesinos* have vans and tractors and the standard of living has increased in the communities. In the 1990s emigration from *el campo* continued at a high rate. The village of Amealco experienced a dynamic, but uneven economic development. There was a construction 'boom' of new houses on the outskirts of the village, there has been a relatively significant national and international tourism to the village and several new small businesses have been established. For some of the emigrants from *el campo* of Amealco migration has led to an opportunity to leave agricultural production behind and gain an income from services or businesses in *el pueblo*. The emigration and return patterns of the 1990s include socio-geographical mobility of migrants who have left small scale subsistence production of corn in *el campo* and established small businesses or service companies in the village.

**Joaquín**, 30 years old is from a small community in the countryside of Amealco. He is the oldest of 14 brothers and sisters and lives with his mother and his youngest siblings on a small ranch. His father died a few years ago. The family owns land and produces corn, basically for subsistence. As he is

the oldest son his father didn't want him to emigrate, so he has stayed at the ranch and worked there. Three of his younger brothers are working in the USA and have not been back for about five years. He has a lot of cousins in the USA too, and it was together with one of his cousins that he finally emigrated in 1990.

Since I was a child my friends have told me what they had seen in the USA, how it was in the USA, so I was interested in it, I wanted to go and get to know it. I said to my father - this was at the time when he was alive - I asked him if I could go but he never permitted me. (...) Many years passed and my father died. As he was dead I said to myself, well now it is up to me if I will go or not, so I decided to go. That is how I came to go and I did it with the help of a cousin. He said to me, I invite you, I'll bring you there.

He felt bad about going as his mother and younger brothers and sisters depended on him and they would be left alone at the ranch, but he followed what he called his 'capricious idea' of going. After a lot of trouble on the border, where he among other things was assaulted by bandits, they finally reach a small town in Texas where Joaquín's cousin was working. The cousin is a legal resident in the USA and he introduced Joaquín to one employer who hired him for a short contract. After a while Joaquín left to look for another job together with a second cousin, who as Joaquín was undocumented. The two of them separated from the other relatives and went to work on a scrap-yard. They were well received by the relatives, but due to their undocumented status, they could not become established together with them. From this moment, Joaquín worked together with his cousin and only visited the other relatives, including his three brothers, for shorter periods of time. In the scrap-yard where Joaquín worked there were situations where undocumented and documented workers were played off against each other:

We were working there and a lot of people came and went. (...) Other people came, other Mexicans, so to speak, but they didn't like how they worked so they were fired.

Q: Why?

They didn't like their work, well, because the people who came - I and my cousin didn't have any papers - the people who came had their papers in order. And they considered that because of the simple fact that they had their cards they would be given work, and they would get paid without doing their job. And well, for the same reasons, we had to go for it and work very hard because we didn't have the papers. We didn't have anything, if we were to play around and not work that hard they would throw us out. So we worked really hard in order to be able to remain there. And that was the way we managed to sustain ourselves at that place for quite a while.

After the scrap-yard Joaquín went further north to visit his brothers. He stayed with them for a few months and worked in construction together with his cousin. Then they returned to the scrap-yard for a while until they found a

better-paid job as carpenters. Again they established good relations with the employer.

He employed up to 40 people there in different labours, some people were carpenters building walls, others put on tailpieces, others were roofers. (...) They didn't fire us. In fact, my cousin has always liked to work very hard. And I am the same, I don't lag behind, I work hard. Everybody at the carpentry was complaining at the beginning. (...) People told us, you are not going to put up with it, this guy is a strict one, he checks on you all the time (...) but he didn't complain about us.

The everyday life of Joaquín and his cousin in the USA was largely conditioned by their situation as undocumented migrants. The fact that they didn't have documents made them avoid public places and they spent most of their time at work and inside the house they were sharing with other migrants.

In fact, if we ever wanted to go to a restaurant or a bar, or somewhere to have a beer, we never went. We went to the store and bought the beers and everything and in the house, among friends, only friends, we would cook the food. So we kept each other company for a while and we could have a beer. But we didn't go out to other places. So I didn't get into trouble, and that is also the way most people do it. (...) Mexicans don't go to the movies there, they go to the video store to rent a film. Then they watch their video-films in peace.

In 1992 after two years of work in the USA Joaquín's cousin wanted to go back to Mexico. It was winter and the carpentry had closed for the season and people were laid off. Joaquín wanted to stay but his cousin wanted to return.

We couldn't work anymore, so he says to me, 'I am going back to Mexico now, do you really want to stay here or do you want to come back with me?' I felt alone, what was I going to do there? So when he returned I clung on to him. Because I had also become worried. I had been writing to my mother, to my family, and well, my mother in reality felt that she was without support. She was alone with my brothers and sisters. I was affected by that, I was a little worried, so I said to myself, I will also return to see how things are and what has happened.

Joaquín had planned to stay in Amealco only for a couple of weeks and then go back to continue his work at the carpentry. He had made a deal with the employer that if he didn't return within a month he would lose the job. When he came back to Amealco the family situation was such that he decided not to emigrate again.

With the problems that I encountered back here and everything I saw that it wasn't necessary to go to the USA. I stayed here and the truth is that since then I have dedicated myself to the taxi business.

Q: While you were in the USA how was your family doing, did you send them money?

Yes, well, I was transferring money. More than anything I calculated how much I needed for clothes and food and the rest I sent here. It was more than enough for them but the money was here in case they would have needed it. I didn't keep the money there [in the USA], everything was sent here. So they could take out what they needed and if they used it all, it wouldn't matter. Well, I returned and there was still money. (...) With that money and with what I brought with me I bought the taxi.

Since his return Joaquín has been working in the taxi business and it has been hard because the competition is strong. But he has established himself and is making it work. The business depends a lot on seasonally returning migrants. Many people come back during the Christmas holidays, or during the winter in general.

They come here, well everything starts in November. During November and the whole month of December they are coming here and in January, by the middle of January, they start to go back again. Usually, everybody who is in the USA comes back to spend Christmas and New Year with the family. And many of them are already here. It depends on the weather in the USA, how much snow there is. The USA is cold and it is snowing so people can't work, unless they work in a factory. But very often they have to move around and work in the fields and that is not permitted by the weather.

The responsibility for his mother and younger brothers and sisters made Joaquín change his own plans and stay in Amealco. He says he would like to emigrate again, if the situation turns out difficult in Amealco. Again, the problem will be to cross the border - even more complicated now as the border control has intensified - but Joaquín sees no problem in getting a job in the USA. Once on the other side, he thinks it will always be possible to get a job. There is demand for his labour. To him the emigration was not important in the sense that he learned something new from different work experiences, as Roberto did. Joaquín talks about hard work as a fact of life, in the USA and in Mexico alike. The difference is not great. Joaquín managed to save enough money in a short period of time to invest and create a business, but it was not his explicit strategy. He did not know about the money when he returned - he sent it to his family to live on - and he comments that if the money had been gone, 'it wouldn't have mattered'. To him it was important to have been in the USA so his friends and relatives cannot 'lie to me about it'.<sup>128</sup>

The experience that I gained from it [the emigration], well, working here in Mexico or working there is more or less the same. Only maybe you work a little bit in peace and quiet here. You have to work more there, it is a little bit harder there but the work in itself is almost the same here and there. So in terms of experiences...to me it was only the fact that I got to go and see the United States for myself. (...) Now I can

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<sup>128</sup> The expression Joaquín used was *para que no me cuenten*.

contradict anybody. 'That is not true, this is the way it is'. Before I kept quiet. Everybody was telling me about it and I didn't know anything, I didn't know if what they were saying was true or false. More than anything that was the experience. The work, well the labour is the same here.

The family situation of Joaquín gives a picture of how different the mobility options are for young men and women in *el campo* of Amealco. Of the 14 brothers and sisters four brothers have emigrated to the USA. One of his sisters has moved to Mexico City with her husband and another sister works in a shop in Amealco. One of the youngest brothers is working at the ranch and the other children are still at school. As the oldest son Joaquín has responsibility for the family in Amealco. His father did not want him to emigrate, his duty would be to stay at the ranch. But he took the opportunity to leave and was successful in creating a means of subsistence after his return to Amealco. As many other activities, his own business depends largely on the emigrants who return and spend money in Amealco, or who send remittances to the municipality.

### *The 1990:s - a 'floating population'?*

**Eduardo**, 26 years old, is from the village of Amealco and works as a civil servant in the municipality. He returned to Amealco in 1992, after a period of four years in the USA. He has married after he returned and has a little son. When he left he was studying at the University in Querétaro. He had studied for two years at the time of his emigration. Today he is about to finish his degree, while at the same time he has a full time job in Amealco. He was able to get a passport and visa, and went by aeroplane to Los Angeles. He says that he 'didn't go over the hills', and he has resident status in the USA. His first impressions of the USA were positive, and he immediately felt that 'I will never return, I am going to stay here. They will have to use a crane to get me away from here'. But gradually the experiences became more negative for him. When Eduardo left Mexico he also left some personal worries behind him, and these were part of the circumstances that made him emigrate. He was under a lot of pressure as he was both studying and working. Two of Eduardo's brothers were in the USA, but he had no contact with them. It was difficult for him to get a job when he got there. He moved around and worked in the agricultural fields for shorter periods of time. He also worked in the same US factory outside Los Angeles where Roberto and other migrants from Amealco worked. When Eduardo had got his papers in order he could travel to his brothers in California.

I had got a temporary resident permit, with permission to work. So I went to California and well...I didn't like the way they lived. That is, my brothers and other friends and other friends...because it was all dirty there. And the place was very...well it was a sad place. So I said to him [the brother] 'do you know something, this is a very ugly place, I can't see what...well, I didn't come here for this'.

Eduardo was upset about the situation. His disappointment was so strong that one of his brothers had to promise him to leave the place with him. They left and moved to a trailer park where they tried to establish a better situation. Step by step they created an everyday life that permitted them to save some money.

The good thing was that we planned it well. We bought a trailer, and when we had to leave the parks we just paid for the parking. We put up a grill and cooked there. And we saved money because we invested it well. And no beers. We only spent money for the food each week. Each person put in 20, 30 dollars and with that we had everything for a week. Our diversion was to go to the malls. To the markets, only to look around. (...) We did invest the money, but as I told you, we didn't like it, well I didn't like it. (...) I said to myself, well, you know, are you crazy...because this is living in retrogression.

After some time Eduardo managed to get better-paid jobs, mainly in construction businesses. He worked long hours and became critical of the exploitation of the workers. 'Only because you are Mexican you are seen as half human, you are not a complete person'. He started to question some of the working conditions and the fact that the Mexican workers were paid less than other workers. As an example he describes how he was asked to do extra welding jobs, but he refused to do it if he didn't get better paid. He also had a conflict with one of the foremen who discriminated the Mexican workers. He told the man he was going to report him to the authorities.

We had problems with the foreman. With the Chicano. But as I had my legal documents and as I know a little bit about it, we frightened him. We told him we were going to report him to 'Discrimination', that is, the authorities. Because it is against the law.

Even if Eduardo reached a better situation and fought discrimination, he became more and more negative to the idea of living in the USA. He saw things he didn't like.

The situation in the USA...the idea was initially to stay there, because of the better life there. But what life? If the children...many of them, I saw many families where the children...well if in Mexico things are going wrong, we do have a family integration. But not in the USA, where the children don't...Nothing. Heroine, drugs, robberies. (...) You don't know where your children will end up, your wife. Everything is

different. Because of that I chose to return. And if I go again it will be to work. It is difficult, I'd have to think twice about it.

Eduardo was upset about the violence, drugs and insecurity where he lived, and longed for a more tranquil situation. He felt he couldn't walk on the streets without fear of robbery or assault. But at the same time he comments that the USA is the most secure place to be if an accident happens. He compares the efficiency of US police and fire brigades with Mexican inefficiency. And in material terms the USA is far more advanced, but 'spiritually it's a different thing'. In the end he felt he had no future in the USA where 'there is money but no options' as he expressed it.

In Mexico there are more possibilities than in the USA. From my point of view, because there are many points of views. I have seen many people, friends from here, they come and go, come and go, and as they come they go and as they go they come. They come with money 15 days, a month, to the bar, then they have to borrow money to go again. And I know people who have been there [in the USA] for five or six years. Nothing. That is the problematic situation. And therefore I returned, I choice to return because here there are more options to progress.

Eduardo stresses education as the only way out of the trapped situation of the migrants. He is disappointed with how education is 'not valorised' among Mexicans in the USA, nor in Amealco. But he is well aware of how he with his background could return, while other migrants might want to return but can not do it.

Many people don't return anymore. Because of the same situation. People who leave from here stay there because of the situation they live here. I am not from the upper class, nor the lower class, I am middle class or upper middle class. But many people who leave from here don't return because of the same thing. The economy. (...) Even if they want to, they can't return. (...) People from *el rancho*, because they are the ones who go most. (...) Many people depend on the people who are there. That is why they don't return. But they don't bring their families. Very few bring their families.

The optimal migration strategy, in Eduardo's view, would be to emigrate to the USA to get an education there and then return to Mexico. That would to him be the only possibility to obtain the best from the two countries, and that is what he wants for his daughter. If he has the opportunity he will let her study abroad so that she can come back and get a good job in Mexico. His own experience from emigration lead to a revaluation of his earlier expectations and images concerning a life in the USA. He describes the emergence of a 'floating population' between Amealco and the USA as a consequence of the difficult conditions. The time of the *bracero* contracts is by contemporary re-

turnees sometimes pictured as the 'golden days' as emigration today is seen as more risky and with less possibilities to return successfully with money.

There have been many changes. At that time they had contracts, that is, they went to work from sunrise to sunset. (...) I am sure that people then said, 'Thank you USA, I built my ranch, I made my business, I made my little career, or I did something'.

Despite this there are new groups who have started to emigrate to the USA - as in the case of Eduardo - persons with higher education. Women from *el campo* are also beginning to emigrate to a larger extent, while very few women from *el pueblo* are international migrants. Interviews with women in the village confirm that the emigration strategy is not common among women. Rosa, a 28-year old bank employee, comments that she has never considered going to the USA, it is 'not her thing'. In her daily work she is in contact with the persons who receive remittances through the bank, and she has a good insight into their lives. If she would consider leaving the village, she would go to Querétaro or Mexico City to study or look for a job - but she already has a good job and has no plans to move. Rosa considers emigration to the USA as a male 'youngster' phenomenon and says that it is sad that there are no opportunities in the village for young men. She could think of going 'maybe as a tourist, to see' but not the way her brother and other young men from the village go. She has heard many migrant stories from her brothers and their friends.

Some of them get lost there. We have lost track of one of my brother's friends. But most of them come back in December. They spend all their money and leave again in February. They get restless, there is no work here.

A bar owner in the village also calls contemporary migrants 'a floating population'. In his view, this mobile population has increased during the last years. When earlier migrants stayed in the USA or returned to Amealco, now it is *ni allá ni acá*, 'neither there nor here'. The returnees are described as being restless, they are like 'captured lions' and 'cannot connect here'. The local bank director expressed it as 'they want both places at the same time!'. Interviews with both migrants and informants gave examples of how there is a *circulation* between Amealco and different places in the USA, and where place attachments of migrants include more than one place. In the analyses in chapter five and six the theme of *circulation* and other main themes from the interviews will be taken up again. Before these analytical chapters, however, the next chapter provides a presentation of the empirical data with migration biographies from the second case study of return movements in the Swedish-Chilean context.



#### IV SWEDISH-CHILEAN MIGRATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF CHILEAN *DESEXILIO*

##### The initiation of the Chilean exile

Contemporary migratory exchanges between Sweden and Chile have their origin in the military coup of September 1973, which caused the greatest exodus of people in Chilean history. Estimates of the number of persons leaving the country to different destinations vary between 160 000 and 250 000 to around 300 000.<sup>129</sup> Members of social movements and politically active persons related to *Unidad Popular* and the Allende government became targets of persecution and forced into exile. Political parties and labour unions were immediately prohibited and the democratic institutions, the Senate and the Parliament, were dissolved and replaced by the military junta. A law-decree in 1973 made it a 'legal procedure' for the regime to expel political opponents from the country. The initial period of generalised terror was followed by systematic and widespread repression, to a large extent executed by DINA, the security police installed in 1974.<sup>130</sup> In the beginning of 1975 the military issued a law-decree which gave political prisoners the 'exile option' - a strategy of the regime to expatriate the political left, while responding to international pressures. Thousands of people applied to exchange prison sentences for exile. The initial destinations of the refugees were to countries that at an early stage responded to UNHCR appeals and provided asylum for Chileans. Depending on the negotiations between UNHCR, the governments of the asylum countries and the regime, political prisoners could leave the prisons and be transferred to exile countries.

During the 17-year long dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet people continuously fled from Chile, and persons from all social backgrounds were affected. The formal prohibition to return to Chile for political refugees was gradually abandoned during the late 1980s, but political repression of opposition groups and individuals continued during the decade of the 1980s. After increased social mobilisation and protests in the 1983-1986 period and an attack against Pinochet in 1986 there was a wave of oppressive measures by the regime, in-

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<sup>129</sup> Gaillard (1990) and Llambias-Wolff (1993). The Chilean Commission on Human Right and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have estimated the number of political exiles to around 200 000 persons.

<sup>130</sup> DINA was the security organisation of the military regime, led by one of Pinochet's pupils Manuel Sepúlveda. The installation of DINA strengthened the position of Pinochet vis-à-vis other members of the military and the organisation became an important tool in the seizure of absolute power by Pinochet.

cluding a series of political murders.<sup>131</sup> More people were forced into exile, among them persons who had returned and who had to leave for a second exile. Despite these set-backs, the political transition from military to civilian rule proceeded during the late 1980s. Pressures for political changes had become strong and moderate opposition groups had gained political and economic influence in Chile. Social and political mobilisation by different NGOs in Chile (supported by the exile community and international organisations) undermined the position of Pinochet, who lost the referendum in 1988. Presidential elections were held in 1989. In March 1990 Patricio Aylwin became the first elected Chilean president in 17 years.

During the first years of the dictatorship of Pinochet an extreme neo-liberal economic policy was initiated. Political repression together with a series of economic crises during monetarism in the 1970s and 1980s increased the exodus of people, in particular to other Latin American countries, where migrations had taken place in earlier periods. The overall number of Chileans living abroad was in 1988 estimated to be 1 677 000, of which the majority lived in other Latin American countries.<sup>132</sup> Labour migrations from Chile to the expanding oil and gas production centres in Patagonia - a long-established migration pattern - increased during the early 1980s and were facilitated after the fall of the Argentinean military government in 1983.

The economic policy of monetarism stood in stark contrast with the earlier development strategy supported by the governments of Frei (1964-1970) and Allende (1970-1973).<sup>133</sup> Like Mexican politicians during the same period, Frei and Allende pursued the strategy of import substitution. Characteristic of this strategy was the strong influence and role of the state in the economy and society at large.<sup>134</sup> During the mandate periods of Frei and Allende the public sector reinforced its control over direct investments, the industrial production and the resource exploitation. The purpose with import substitution was to create a diversified economy with national industrial production, mostly oriented towards the domestic market, a common strategy in many Latin American countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Chile's one-sided dependence on

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131 Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR), a militant wing of the Communist Party, established in 1983, was linked to the attack against Pinochet. The organisation played a role in the 1983-1986 popular protests against the dictatorship in Chile (for an interview with one of the founders of FPMR, Sergio Buschmann, who lived in exile in Sweden, see Wright and Oñate 1998).

132 Chilean Commission for Human Rights 1988, cited in Eastmond (1989).

133 de Vylder (1990).

134 The strategy of import substitution was in many aspects linked to the work of UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) a Santiago-based research and documentation institute led by Raúl Prébish.

one major product for export - copper - was a great obstacle to economic independence, as copper prices were fluctuating at international markets. Copper mining in Chile was furthermore dominated by foreign capital, in particular by US multinational companies. The socialist Chilean government challenged US economic interests in the early 1970s and nationalised US copper companies in an intent to get control over production and exports. The government of the USA and a number of US companies and interest groups initiated a hostile campaign against the Chilean government, which played a significant role in the de-stabilisation and final overthrow of the Allende government.<sup>135</sup>

These external factors aggravated the internal political and economic problems of high inflation and instability. Strikes and social conflicts took place in Chile which played in the hands of the domestic opposition against Allende. A number of radical social and economic changes had been initiated by *Unidad Popular's* five-party government, with the ambition to build a welfare state with public health care and education available to all social classes. Land reforms and land redistribution, support to neighbourhood councils, nationalisation of private companies and banks and democratisation of the educational system, were part of the political program. These intents were abruptly halted by the military take-over in 1973.

The regime of Pinochet went directly against all the above ambitions and started to draw back state control over the economy, privatise publicly owned companies and resources, open up internal markets and let free trade and market principles govern the economy. Social reforms were halted and the social movements violently destroyed. de Vylder (1990) describes the economic development during the dictatorship in three phases: a first phase between 1973 and 1975 when real wages went down by 30%; inflation increased; unemployment went up to 25% and industrial production collapsed. During the second phase between 1976 and 1981, GNP growth rates increased, public expenditure was further cut down, the Chilean currency was devaluated and wages continuously pressed down. Deregulation of the economy continued under the influence of the 'Chicago boys', who were backed by the authoritarian regime and given free hands to pursue the economic policy of monetarism.<sup>136</sup> After years of problems the Chilean GNP per capita reached in

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<sup>135</sup> The destabilisation policy of the USA included boycotts of Chilean products, freezing of international credits and aid and financial support to different opposition groups in Chile. See de Vylder (1990), Eastmond (1989) and Rojas (1988).

<sup>136</sup> The 'Chicago boys' were a group of economists at the Universidad Católica in Santiago who had studied for Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago, USA. After the military coup they became more and more influential in Chilean economic policy and were closely connected to the

1981 the same level as had been obtained in 1973, but with lower real wages and higher unemployment. Debts rose rapidly in the late 1970s with credits easily available on the international finance market, and during 1982/1983 the economy plumed into a deep crisis. A gigantic flight of capital took place. GNP fell more than 15% in 1982 and 1983 and unemployment went up to 30%. The debt per capita was among the highest in the world and total debt in 1983 was USD 18 billion.

During the third phase identified by de Vylder; 1983-1989, the state's influence over the economy increased and restrictions were introduced on capital movements; tariffs were reintroduced and the Chilean currency was devalued and held undervalued during the 83-89 period. A strategy of export-promotion was intensified and economic growth began to reach high levels. Unemployment declined but continued to be high and social polarisation increased over the whole period. The privatisation of the state social security system, effectuated under Pinochet, contributed to the increasing social inequalities.

Since the late 1980s, Chile has experienced an unprecedented economic boom, with economic growth at record levels and substantial increases in foreign direct investment, in particular since the fall of Pinochet.<sup>137</sup> During the 1989-1992 period, when there was recession in the world economy, Chilean economic growth continued at 10% a year.<sup>138</sup> These developments took place in combination with decreasing unemployment rates (down to 4.4% in 1994) and downward inflation rates. It is in particular the primary export and service sectors that have been expansive, while the manufacturing sector has had more limited growth. The political context of the so called 'jaguar economy' in Chile has been more complicated, with the unfinished transition to democracy and the continued social marginalisation and insecurity for large segments of the Chilean population. The polarisation between social classes in the Chilean society is illustrated by the fact that 20% of the income earners earned 61.5% of the total national income in 1993.<sup>139</sup> Chile has, according to researchers, one of the 'most skewed income distributions in the world'.<sup>140</sup> In UN statistics, Chile ranks today among the 'high human development' countries in the

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military regime. The 'Chicago boys' implemented a neoliberal monetarist program in Chile, inspired by Friedman's ideas.

<sup>137</sup> Net foreign direct investment in Chile increased from USD 144 million in 1985 to USD 5,417 million in 1997 (UNDP 1999).

<sup>138</sup> Jones (1998).

<sup>139</sup> University of Chile (1993) cited in Jones (ibid.)

<sup>140</sup> Hojman 1993, cited in Jones (1998).

world, but about four million Chileans (about 25% of the population) were in 1992 estimated to live below the national poverty line.<sup>141</sup>

## The Chilean *desexilio*

These political and economic changes in Chile created a new situation for thousands of Chileans living in exile mainly in other Latin American and European countries. As the return became possible in formal, juridical terms - through the political decisions during the transition - there is a new phase in the exile situation which Benedetti (1984) has called *desexilio*, the 'after exile'. Benedetti's literary work interprets the Uruguayan exile and his concept of *desexilio* was used by one of his literary characters, Don Rafael, in a short story. Don Rafael expressed that the *desexilio* might become as difficult as the exile.<sup>142</sup> The concept has been taken up by several authors, for instance Luján Leiva (1997) who uses *desexilio* exclusively in relation to physical return to the 'home country'. A similar interpretation is made by Kamisky (1999) who analyses *desexilio* (when return takes place) as a contrast to the passage from an exile situation to a *diaspora* situation, which she calls a process of 'acculturation'. An alternative interpretation of *desexilio* is that it is of a condition that can be lived both in the country of exile and after physical return to a 'home country'. *Desexilio* would then be understood as an 'after exile' condition that may involve varying relations to space/place and to mobility. Diaspora, in contrast, implies a physical location different from a the 'home country'. *Desexilio* is thus a concept to capture the passage from exile to the subsequent stage - in which the question of geographical return has to be problematised, but not necessarily resolved. Return movements to Chile have in the 1990s acquired new meanings, not only for individuals or groups in *diaspora* situations and persons who have migrated to Chile, but also for the 'home country' and 'host country' governments who have taken steps to promote return and repatriation through active policies. The condition of *desexilio* depends on different 'home' and 'host country' policies and practices, not only in the field of migration policy, but also for instance in the fields of immigrant policy, citizenship and labour market policies. Before coming back to the question of *desexilio* and its different expressions, the next sections will look at the geographical destinations of Chilean refugees, the policies of refugee reception and some studies of the Chilean exile in different countries.

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<sup>141</sup> In Human Development Report 1999 15% of the Chilean population is reported to live below the poverty line, defined as having an income of less than one dollar a day. The national poverty line in Chile is defined as USD 820 dollars a year (USD 2.2 a day). See Petras and Leiva (1994), cited in Luján Leiva (1997).

<sup>142</sup> Benedetti 1984:96

## Destinations: the political contexts of refugee admission

The majority of the Chilean refugees obtained asylum in Latin American and European countries, but the dislocation of Chilean refugees involved as many as 120 countries.<sup>143</sup> While the overall numbers of refugees in different countries vary between different sources and years, estimates show that major asylum countries were Venezuela, Spain, Germany, France, Canada, Italy, Sweden and Australia (tables 7 and 8).

*Table 7. Destinations of Chilean refugees (1984).*

Destination Country	Per cent of total
Latin America	47
Venezuela	44
Western Europe	37
Spain	10
France	8
Italy	7
Sweden	6
North America	8
Canada	8
Australia	5
Eastern Europe and Africa	3

Source: Llambias-Wolff (1996).

*Table 8. European destination countries for Chilean refugees (1990).*

Destination country	Chilean refugees
Eastern European countries (total)	20 000
Western European countries (total)	106 000
Sweden	35 000
France	12 000
FRD	12 000
Switzerland	10 000
Spain	10 000
Italy	10 000
Belgium	7 000
Norway	7 000
The Netherlands	3 000

Source: Sjöquist (1990).

<sup>143</sup> Llambias-Wolff (1996).

During the first years after the coup Argentina was a major destination country for Chilean refugees, but the military coup in Argentina in 1976 closed the door for Chilean refugees. The wave of military take-overs in the Southern Cone in the 1970s made it impossible for refugees to seek asylum in the region. After changes during the 1950s from military to civil regimes in a number of Latin American countries, the 1960s and 1970s saw an opposite trend of repressive regimes taking over in many countries. Military coups took place in Brazil and Bolivia in 1964, in Ecuador in 1972 and in Uruguay in 1973. At the time of the coup in Chile, many Uruguayans had already fled from Uruguay to Chile and Argentina. Brazilians and Bolivians had also sought asylum in Chile and were forced to leave with the Chilean refugees after 1973. By 1976, all Chile's neighbouring countries were military regimes, and Chilean refugees became targets of persecution in Argentina together with other refugees from the Southern Cone.

Persecuted persons depended largely on the ability of international organisations and foreign embassies to organise departures, and on countries of asylum outside the Southern Cone to be willing to accept refugees. Remaining options within Latin America in the late 1970s were Venezuela and Mexico. Several countries had opened their embassies in Santiago for asylum seekers (France, Italy, Mexico, Sweden, Venezuela), and thousands of people went abroad via the embassies. In Europe, governments held different positions in terms of their preparedness to provide asylum. Joly (1996) describes the different political contexts of refugee admission and how these influenced the destinations of Chileans in Europe. Factors such as the political affiliations of the government in power, previous colonial relations, historical ties, the state of the economy and domestic considerations were, as today, part of what Joly calls the 'political construction of asylum'.<sup>144</sup> Countries with hostile relationships with the Pinochet dictatorship such as Sweden and France provided asylum for many refugees from 1973 and onwards, while for instance Conservative governments in Great Britain refused the entry of Chileans. With the change of governments to Labour in the mid-1970s, refugees began to be accepted to Great Britain. According to Joly, the trade relations with Pinochet's Chile (including arms trade) of the British Conservative government under Thatcher in the early 1980s, and the common adoption of both countries of Milton Friedman's monetarism, were behind the British denial of asylum for Chileans during that period. Similarly, due to its relationships with the dictatorship of Pinochet, the USA was a 'reluctant host' and only a small number

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<sup>144</sup> Joly (1996:17).

of Chileans were initially admitted as refugees - after close screening by US authorities.<sup>145</sup> The reception of Chilean exiles thus varied greatly over time with political and economic changes in asylum countries.

The geographical dispersion of Chileans to all continents nevertheless demonstrated a preparedness of many countries to provide for resettlement, often organised by the UNHCR, in reaction to the brutalities of the Pinochet regime. Widespread provisions of protection in 'far-away' countries stand in contrast with present trends in the handling of refugee situations by the international community and national governments. A major reorientation towards regional solutions has taken place since the late 1980s, and main policy instruments have become so called safe havens in neighbouring countries; promotion of 'internal flight alternatives', temporary protection in first asylum country and promotion of quick repatriation. Chilean refugees have been more indirectly affected by these policies changes in later phases of the exile, as the great majority still lived in exile in the late 1980s. As discussed in the introductory chapter, repatriation discourses and 'active policies of return' have come to dominate refugee policies in many 'host countries', and affect not only groups who recently have been admitted under temporary protection, but also indirectly persons who have lived in exile for many years and who in many cases have obtained permanent residence permits or new citizenship. The prolongation of the Chilean exile also distinguishes it from the exile of the other Latin Americans from the Southern Cone. After the fall of the military regimes in Brazil (1979), Argentina (1983), and Uruguay (1985), the majority of exiles from these countries re-migrated to the Southern Cone. The political contexts in 'home countries' became central for how exiles were portrayed and received as they came back.<sup>146</sup> The next section presents some findings from studies of the Chilean exile in different countries.

### Living in exile in different countries

The experiences of exile must according to Eastmond (1989) be studied in their particular historical setting and socio-political context. There are important differences between exile situations, involving specific power relations in both the country of origin and the country of destination. The responses and strategies of exiled individuals and groups are also different, depending on

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<sup>145</sup> Eastmond (1989).

<sup>146</sup> Luján Leiva (1997) gives examples of experiences of *desexilio* by Uruguayans, Brazilians and Argentineans through the literary expressions of exile writers. In Brazil, for instance, the returning exiles were portrayed as potential de-stabilisers of the fragile democracy.

circumstances and perceptions of the refugees. In Eastmond's view, the important common ground in the refugee condition is however the forced character of displacement and the impossibility of return. Further characteristics are the 'open-ended uncertainty of existence' in another country and 'the struggles with identities over time'.<sup>147</sup> Eastmond studied the Chilean exile in the USA and her focus was on the social and cultural processes which gave meaning to the experiences of exile in a community of Chilean refugees in California.

### *Exile in the Belly of the Beast*

Eastmond describes how the exile in the USA initially was seen as a landing in 'the Belly of the Beast' from the point of view of the refugees. The USA provided a 'reluctant and inhospitable' welcome to the refugees, with no assistance programs (in contrast with the programs provided to Indo-Chinese refugees), and with a preliminary status on entry with no guarantee for permanent resident status. Initially, the refugees did not want to be involved with or dependent on any part of the 'US system', and they relied on mutual support, self-help and voluntary contributions in the local context where they arrived. According to Eastmond, the Chileans had a strong initial orientation towards return, and expressed that they did not intend to stay in the USA. The group went through feelings of being 'dispossessed', of being 'shipwrecked', 'forgotten' and they relied on support within the group to handle the situation. They had feelings of insecurity and feared that agents of the military junta would reach them in the USA. These fears increased after the assassination of Orlando Letelier, a minister in the Allende government, in Washington D.C shortly after the exiles' arrival in the USA.

Eastmond analysed the refugees' relationship to the place they came to and showed that the exiles' perception of the life situation in exile as transitory was reinforced by the character of the local environment where they lived in the USA. Silicon Valley in California, a region of rapid economic and demographic growth, has a lack of 'local tradition', many people are 'on the move' and there is a diverse and changing social and physical environment. Silicon Valley is also a context where there are relatively few Chileans and they became 'invisible' as a group and not recognised as a separate minority. The Chileans were usually seen as Hispanic or Mexican by the majority population in the region.

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid*:2.

The study of Eastmond showed however how the initial phase of a kind of 'liminality'<sup>148</sup> changed into an everyday life of work, family and community activities in Silicon Valley. Most exiles were families with small children. Two-thirds of the men were manual workers from the industrial and mining districts in Chile and one third of all (men and women) were students or white collar workers in the public sector and had lower middle-class backgrounds. In the working-class households, many women had been housewives and had little experience of formal employment. With the acute demand for workers in the electronic industry in Silicon Valley and the need for incomes for the families as the exile was prolonged, the Chileans - both men and women - entered the labour market. This meant changing everyday routines for the families, including changing gender relations and changing community activities. When the possibilities for return increased after a decade in exile (the gradual changes in the politics on return in Chile in the mid-1980s) and the phase of *desexilio* began, most men and women had become 'affluent workers' in the US factories, and were caught up in economic obligations. Most families had invested in education for their children, they had bought houses and accommodated their lives pragmatically. The long-term goal to return to Chile was maintained by many, but the responsibility shifted 'from the collective to the individual'.<sup>149</sup> The initial community strategy concerning return thus successively turned into individual life strategies, creating major dilemmas within the families. Eastmond stresses the ambiguity and open-ended character of exile, and noted that many families were planning for return after more than a decade in exile.

### *Phases of exile in the French context*

Vasquez and Xavier de Brito have made numerous studies of Latin American refugees in France, and in one of their later texts they draw conclusions from different studies to identify three general phases in exile (Xavier de Brito and Vasquez 1998). Their theoretical framework is a 'diachronic' perception of exile, where generalisations of certain experiences are made. Their main point, however, is that despite 'universal' characteristic, a gender perspective must be integrated in the analysis. In their view there are significant differences between men and women in the meanings attributed to experiences of exile throughout its different phases. The basic approach of their analysis is psy-

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<sup>148</sup> Liminality is an anthropological concept related to rite of passage and is understood as the uncertain, undefined situation between two different statuses (such as social position or incorporation in a group).

<sup>149</sup> *ibid*:104.

chological. They also use myths as a tool of analysis, as myths in their interpretation is understood as the symbolic synthesis of the personal experience. In the case of the experience of exile, it is the classic myth of Ulysses that is used for analysis. The components of the *punishment* and the *prohibition to return* are the main features in focus from the myth. The hero Ulysses longs for his returning to the idealised home, Ithaca, where he was recognised and loved. It is a longing for a lost space and a lost time. When Ulysses finally returns, he is able to recover his status and reunite with his wife Penelope, who has been waiting for him. Xavier de Brito and Vasquez want to examine how women's experience of exile can be interpreted through the myth of Ulysses. The female protagonists in the myth of Ulysses are represented as immobile on the islands, and not as travelling on a journey as Ulysses. They have secondary roles, such as protecting Ulysses (Athena), waiting for him (Penelope) seducing him to stay away (Calypso) or transforming his nature (Circe).<sup>150</sup> The founding myth of exile has a masculine hero, while, according to the authors, the experience of exile is gendered. They proceed to specify the identified gender differences in the three defined phases of exile.

According to the authors, the first phase of exile in France had some essential characteristics shared by men and women. These included the traumas of the forced departure, the imposed destination and the prohibition to return. They also included mourning, a moral commitment to the country they left, a feeling of temporary life in exile and an enclosure within the group of exiles. However, already in the first stage, women, in particular those who were political activists, felt that they were given secondary roles. The everyday life of women became a treble workday with domestic, professional and political activities. Men could more easily re-create their status as political activists and intellectuals. Interviewed women felt that they lost their previous status as intellectuals and had to turn back to traditional roles.

In the second phase, a process of so called 'transculturation' took place, during which the differences between men and women increased. This was because everyday life in exile became differentiated along traditional gender lines. Women got in touch with other adults, teachers, parents, other immigrants/refugees as they were in charge of child rearing, contacts with nurseries and schools, shopping and domestic work. These contacts made women take a more critical look on their identities and to question the existing gender relations. Sooner than men, they became involved in activities outside the exile community. The authors note the importance for Latin American women of the French feminist movement (which was particularly strong in the 1973-

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid*:222.

1980 period) but they do not generalise about the influence of feminist movements on women in exile.

In the third phase, finally, after a prolonged exile, all 'certainties were shaken' in the context of the geo-political events in the late early 1990s, and as the return to the 'home country' became an option in the phase of *desexilio*. The authors identify major differences between men and women also in this phase. Firstly, women expressed *fear* related to returning; fear of being overpowered by the influence of the extended family in the 'home country' and fear of returning to old roles. Another fear was that they would lose the political, moral and material stability they had worked hard to obtain in the exile society. They were afraid of not finding a place when they returned, but be confronting a second exile. These fears made the decision to return difficult, but at the same time there were many women who stressed the temporary character of staying in the new country. According to the authors, it is in particular women who 'come and go' between the countries, while it is not a common behaviour among men. They conclude that 'returning' was easier for men, and their reinsertion in Chile worked better. Men felt more sure about their social status, were concerned about their professional and political reinsertion and worried less about the influence of the extended family and possible social marginalisation. The authors thus generalise the experiences of men and women respectively, which, as discussed in chapter two, may be problematic. There are many differences within groups of men and women, not least in terms of for instance social class and phase in the life course. In the interviews made in this study there are examples of very contrasting mobility strategies of men and women in comparison with the generalisations made above.

### *Gender and social class in exile: Chileans in Scotland*

Kay (1987, 1989) studied how a group of Chilean men and women experienced the exile in Scotland in the early 1980s. She also found that the initial loss felt by all exiles had different meaning for men and women. Men felt they lost power as they were banished from public life, lost their citizenship and were seen as 'helpless creatures' by the British public at large and by the administrators of refugee assistance programs. There was further a class dimension in the male experiences, as middle-class men felt they lost personal autonomy and influence, while working class men expressed a loss of the collective power they had had in unions and political organisations in Chile. The losses that women experienced were differentiated from most men's, but not uniform among the women. Two major contrasting sets of experiences were identified by Kay: on the one hand the experiences of a group of 'public-

private' women, and on the other hand the experiences of a group of 'private' women. The first group consisted of women of middle-class backgrounds, who were used to work outside the home and who had lost their access to public life during exile:

Being female in British society was experienced as much more oppressive by this group of women than what they had known in Chile, where gender subordination had been cushioned by class privilege. Chilean middle-class and professional women had experienced no significant opposition to, nor difficulty in finding, work outside the home in Chile. Their labour was often in demand and, given their material situation, they had been able to combine jobs with domestic responsibilities by engaging a maid. (...) They perceived gender differentiation to be more marked in Britain than in Chile, contradicting the popular view that less-developed countries are more sexually stereotyped and restrictive for women than the developed world. (Kay 1989:110).

In the second group of women, consisting of persons who had been housewives in Chile, there was a sense of loss of the kinship networks in Chile. The women became solitary and felt that motherhood was more burdensome in exile, as the responsibility fell on the individual woman instead of being a shared female concern. They also felt that motherhood was socially devaluated in Britain. On the other hand, the housework was experienced as much lighter in exile, and the women appreciated the higher degree of rationalisation of domestic labour. The overall changes during exile meant that gender relations were 're-negotiated', but not through a collective strategy. Many women became 'silent', and the responses and adjustments to the new situation were made mostly in the private sphere. In the group of 'public-private' women, the setbacks during exile were seen as temporary, and many thought they would regain their previous privileges once they had returned to Chile. At the time of Kay's study, the military regime was still in power and return had not yet become an option for the exiles.

## Return movements to Chile

Return movements from exile countries to Chile can be divided into two major phases.<sup>151</sup> Wright and Oñate (1998) describe the phases as firstly, 'exiles' return' (1978-1988) and secondly 'return to a new exile' (1988-1994). The later phase would correspond to the *desexilio* phase mentioned before. The returns during the first period, prior to 1988, were few and for many exiles prohibited. It was a period of (asymmetrical) 'double flows' where a small number of exiles returned while more people continued to flee.<sup>152</sup> A number of law-decrees

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<sup>151</sup> Sjöquist (1995) defines the phases as I. 1980-1989 and II. 1990-1994.

<sup>152</sup> Kozak (1990).

from the military regime declared that the return of refugees, *retornados*, was permitted, while in practice political refugees were still banned.<sup>153</sup> The Amnesty law of 1978 declared that all citizens who had been sentenced to exile by a military or civil court should be able to return - in practice this was not allowed for.<sup>154</sup> In 1982 the regime published lists of the names of a smaller number of people who should be permitted to return. The declaration was an intent by the military junta to improve its reputation, in response to years of international pressure and opposition within the country. In the fall of 1988 Pinochet finally issued a law-decree declaring that the prohibition to return to Chile was revoked for all Chilean citizens in exile.

Under the military regime support for returning refugees was provided by different NGOs and via the IOM office in Santiago.<sup>155</sup> The IOM became a central organisation for co-ordination of different return programs. This organisation was established in Chile already in 1956, with the aim to promote programs for immigrants from Europe and different exchange programs for Chilean professionals. After the coup in 1973 the organisation remained in Chile, but with a new profile. The IOM became the principal logistic organiser, together with the UNHCR, of the transfer of political prisoners and refugees from Chile to different exile countries. In 1973 the IOM was assisting in the transfer of persons who had managed to flee the military to the territories of foreign embassies in Santiago. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1974 an agreement was signed between IOM, the ICRC and UNHCR and the military regime on a program to bring political prisoners out of the country.<sup>156</sup> In the 1974-1979 period 7 200 persons were transferred to exile under this agreement. IOM estimates that from October 1973 to the end of 1989 the organisation has assisted in transferring more than 30 000 people.<sup>157</sup>

Return of refugees under the period of military rule did take place, but on a small scale. International pressure together with the consistent work of NGOs within the country contributed to certain shorter periods of 'openings' in the political situation, which could lead to occasional returns of refugees. Manifestations of resistance by the opposition were in turn repeatedly followed by

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<sup>153</sup> A large number of people were on the 'L-list', that is they were 'limitatos' (limited), prohibited to return.

<sup>154</sup> Llambias-Wolff (1996).

<sup>155</sup> International Organisation for Migration. Some member states of the IOM had bilateral programs directed to returning refugees from their countries. These programs were co-ordinated by the IOM, who obtained the funding from for instance Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Spain.

<sup>156</sup> The so called 'Programa de Salida al Exterior de Detenidos en virtud de la Ley de Estado de Sitio' of December 4<sup>th</sup> 1974 between the military regime of Chile, UNHCR, ICRC and the IOM.

<sup>157</sup> Kozak (1990).

new phases of increased repression, which forced more people out of the country. This first phase was thus characterised by minor returns and continued expatriation.

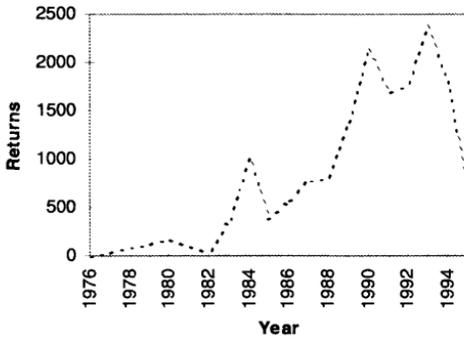


Figure 2. Return to Chile under UNHCR/OIM programs 1976-1994  
Source: IOM (1995).

After the referendum in 1988 and the elections in 1989 a significant increase in returns took place (see figure 2). Kozak (1990) describes how the role of the IOM changed again in Chile, as the new civil government declared its intention to promote the return of refugees and repair the damages caused by the military regime.<sup>158</sup> A national return office, the Oficina Nacional de Retorno (ONR) was installed in 1990 to provide support to returning refugees. The ONR conducted activities from the spring of 1990 to September 1994 when the office was shut down.<sup>159</sup> In addition to general programs directed to all returnees there have been special programs/incentives for certain groups of returnees according to their former country of exile. The IOM has been the administrator of these 'host country' programs as well. Governments of different destination countries earmarked support or programs for persons returning from their specific country - this meant that some of the returnees have had higher levels of supports while many other have returned with low or no support.

<sup>158</sup> In 1989 the CDP (la Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia) declared in its Government Program (Chapter II concerning Human Rights) that "the State will develop an active policy to promote the return of all Chileans, creating the possibilities of their full reintegration" (cited by Kozak 1990, authors translation).

<sup>159</sup> Controversies around the ONR emerged in 1994 and 1995 as irregularities were discovered in the management of the custom exemptions provided to returning exiles. The media debate around the controversies contributed to a negative image of the *retornado*. See further chapter six where this media debate is discussed.

The ONR has published fragmented data on the profile of the registered returnees. In a 1994 publication of the ONR the total number of returning refugees to Chile (during the 1990-1994 period) is estimated to 52 557 persons.<sup>160</sup> Up to 1992, a total of 26 828 persons had been registered by the office, either as 'head of families' (8 698 persons) or as family members. The profiles of the returnees according to region of exile and year of departure from Chile are presented in tables 9 and 10.

Table 9. *Returning refugees to Chile according to region of exile.*

Region of exile	Percentage of returning refugees
Latin America	39
North America	12
Europe	46
Oceania	2
Africa/Asia	1

Source: Oficina Nacional de Retorno (1994).

Table 10. *Returning refugees to Chile according to year of departure from Chile.*

Year of departure from Chile	Percentage of returning refugees
Before 1973	6
1973-1976	52
1977-1980	16
1981-1984	10
1985-1988	6

Source: Oficina Nacional de Retorno (1994).

A number of studies and reports exist on the process of reintegration of *retornados* in Chile. Many of them are made by psychologists, social workers or pedagogues connected to different NGOs working with returnees. Baeza (1988) made two subsequent surveys for PIDEE (a Chilean NGO) of 45 children who had returned from 13 different exile countries, during the time of the dictatorship. The second survey was made two or three years after the return, in 1987. The purpose of the survey was to collect the life experiences of the children after their arrival to Chile, with special focus on their family situation, school situation and their relation to the society at large.

<sup>160</sup> ONR (1994).

Common for all children was a fear that their parents would suffer problems of repression after the return, in particular in divided families where only one parent had been allowed to enter Chile. The children reacted against the reality of living under a military regime, which they were unaccustomed to after having lived most of their life in exile. The result of the surveys showed that the socio-economic background of the family was decisive for how the children handled the encounter with the Chilean society. In families from upper class backgrounds and where the two parents had returned, the youngest children were pleased with the situation at the time of the second survey. They often attended alternative schools attentive to their needs and did not suffer materially or in terms of their health. The teenagers were more negative, though, and felt that they had been pressured by the parents to return. For children of middle-class backgrounds the situation was more problematic, as their families had suffered significant economic difficulties after return. Unemployment, low wages and inappropriate housing were major problems. The extended families in Chile were not able to provide housing or support for longer periods of times. The children from these backgrounds attended schools where they did not receive special support and where they were afraid to state openly that they were *retornados*. In this group the youngest children had most problems, while teenagers had conformed more to the situation. The latter often shared a strong 'political motivation' with their parents. In the group of children with working class or peasant backgrounds there were the greatest difficulties of all in terms of the economic situation, schooling and health. The children reacted strongly against the situation in Chile and were affected by poverty, including malnutrition.

Another study made for PIDEE before the fall of the regime focused on bilingual children who were taking Spanish courses after many years of exile.<sup>161</sup> Through these classes, the teachers became aware of many of the difficulties that children encountered. Often they had felt obliged by parents to return to Chile and felt insecure, afraid and anguished. The teachers identified the characteristics of the language learning process of the children, and noted that learning a language took place twice in their lives under similarly difficult conditions; first the learning of a new language in the exile country during the first, often traumatic, phase of exile. Secondly, they learned Spanish again in Chile under a military regime, in a pressured situation after return of their families. PIDEE promoted courses for children where not only the linguistic problems could be dealt with, but also the social and emotional situation for these children.

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<sup>161</sup> Morris Barrios (1988).

## Chileans in Sweden: exile and *desexilio*

Sweden became a major destination country for Chileans in Europe right after the coup in 1973. As already noted, there had been rather few migratory exchanges between Chile and Sweden prior to 1973. The first major arrivals to Sweden took place in the 1974-1978 period, and increased again in the 1986-1989 period (see fig 3). About 11 000 Chilean citizens live in Sweden, and in total about 26 000 Chilean-born persons, which is the largest Chilean *diaspora* in Europe. From 1988 emigration to Chile from Sweden began to increase, and from 1992 there has been a period of net emigration from Sweden. The statistics show a peak in return movements in 1994 (figure 3). A Swedish NGO estimates that about 6 000 persons have been participating in its return programs, while according to the ONR in Chile the number of returnees from Sweden 1990-1994 was around 7 000 persons.<sup>162</sup> As seen in figure 4 there is a decline in returns from 1994, and in the 1994-1996 period more Swedish citizens emigrated to Chile than Chilean citizens.

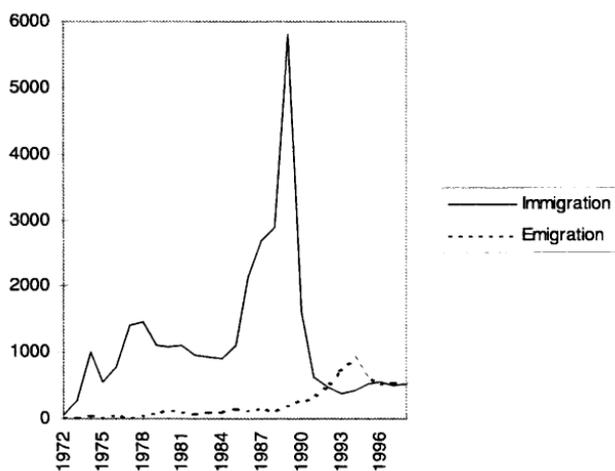


Figure 3. Immigration from Chile to Sweden and emigration from Sweden to Chile 1972-1998.

Source: Statistics Sweden.

<sup>162</sup> Sjöquist (1995).

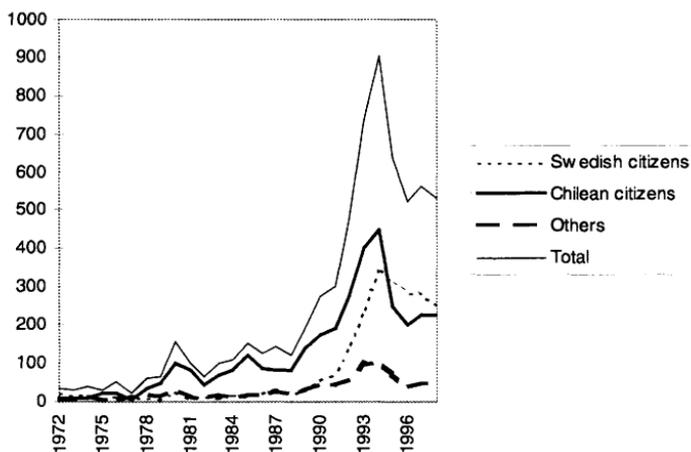


Figure 4. Citizenship composition in emigration from Sweden to Chile 1972-1996.  
Source: Statistics Sweden.

The Chilean exile in Sweden has not been a major research theme within Swedish social sciences, but some important studies have been made. Lundberg (1989) and Lindqvist (1991) are two of the most cited works, and later studies include Luján Leiva (1997), Olsson (1997) and Borgström (1998). Lindqvist and Olsson studied the Chilean group, while the other three studies also include other Latin American refugees.

Lundberg's study analysed the Latin American exile in Sweden and Western Europe, and focused on the 'political generation' of younger middle-class intellectuals who arrived during the 1970s. Lundberg looked for the common ground in the exile experience of this political generation, and identified certain main themes and strategic points in the exile. The study was based on interviews and conversations with Latin American refugees and on literary expressions of exile writers. Exile was in Lundberg's study conceived as a *career*, in the sociological sense; an interrelation between the individual and the society. The identified dimensions of the exile from this perspective were, firstly, the movable 'back of the stage' - the country that had been left - and secondly, the 'frame', - the country of asylum. These two dimensions shaped the exile's life experience. The *meaning* of exile was for this 'political generation' collectively expressed in terms of an intended return to home countries as political subjects. Lundberg showed how the meaning of exile became modified as exile was prolonged. For some, to return back to a changed country meant 'a struggle to re-conquer a space, rather than an incorporation into a natural

community', and for others the changed meaning of exile meant a life situation in the exile country similar to that of other immigrants (ibid:192).

Lindqvist (1991), on the other hand, did not primarily look for the common ground of the exile experience in Sweden in her study, but examined the differences *within* the group of refugees who arrived in Sweden. She noted that many studies of refugees have started from the assumption that the political exile is an encounter between two distinct cultural systems and that the major differences are those between the 'host' country's cultural system and the cultural system of the exile group. Lindqvist pointed out the contradictions and inconsistencies within the group of Chilean refugees, and argued that both the Swedish authorities and intellectual refugees promoted a 'homogenisation' of the Chilean refugees:

Swedish authorities and intellectual refugees seem to agree that the Latin American exile is highly educated, of middle-class background and has great expectations on life. Refugees of working-class backgrounds are always described as a marginal group with doubtful refugee status. And when this category is in the centre of investigations, the interest is directed towards problems of managing a Swedish life. The concern of investigators is how to help them balance between two cultures (ibid:84, author's translation).

The conclusion of Lindqvist's study of Chileans in Malmö was that many of the divisions and changes over time were related to different class positions. She identified three main moments of the cultural process that took place in exile: during the first years in Sweden a merging of identities took place and a common refugee identity was embraced by the Chilean exiles. After some years of experiences in the Swedish society, the past, the own commitment and the closed collective life began to be questioned. The third moment of the process was when the collective was dissolved into different individual and family projects.

In her study of the artistic expressions of Latin Americans in Sweden, Leiva (1997:6) points out certain characteristics that have distinguished the Latin American exile in Sweden (the Chileans being the major group) in relation to the exile of Latin Americans in other countries. Firstly, the exile in Sweden was a political exile in its first phase and came to include economic components in its later phases. Leiva does not make a clear-cut distinction between political and 'economic' refugees, but sees later expulsions from Chile as related to the economic policy of the military regime.<sup>163</sup> Secondly, it was an exile

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<sup>163</sup> The character of the Chilean exile in Sweden is commonly described as 'political' in the first phase and 'economic' in the second phase. This can lead to oversimplifications and neglect of the

to a country without historical connections to Chile - the Swedish emigration to Chile has been minor (in contrast with Italian, French and Spanish emigration/exile to Chile), and economic and cultural relations between the countries have not been important. Thirdly, the exile in Sweden did not include the most famous cultural or political activists from Latin America - the 'elite' of the Latin American exile went to Mexico, France and Spain. Fourth, the Chilean exile in Sweden was what Leiva calls 'poor economically' but developed artistically creative activities in addition to militant political activities.<sup>164</sup> And last, the Chilean exile in Sweden was particularly criticised by the military government in Chile because of the political activities; the solidarity expressed by the Swedish government in the reception of refugees; the support to human right organisations and the role of the Swedish embassy in facilitating the flight from Chile.

Swedish research on integration processes within the fields of psychology, education or sociology has focused on different groups of immigrants in Sweden, in some cases on Chileans but mostly on Latin Americans as a group. Working in the field of education, Borgström (1998) studied what she calls the socio-cultural identity development of Latin American youth in Sweden. She examined the conditions for identity formation (with special focus on language training and socio-cultural situation) of young people of Chilean and Argentinean backgrounds in Sweden, based on in-depth life history interviews with eight young persons and other qualitative data. The study gives insights into the young people's views on their identity and what they considered important in the contexts where they grew up.

The study was made in the suburbs of Stockholm and Borgström followed the interviewed from age seven to the age of 18-19 years in different school and housing situations. The relationships with the parents' former country of living were for the young people maintained in different ways, and they identified with being 'Chileans' and/or 'immigrants' but not solely with being 'Swedes'. Borgström found that the teen-agers felt that they were not allowed to belong to the Swedish society and that they lived 'between two worlds'. She presents the life histories focusing on the early school years, high school and senior high school, when the last interviews were made. The contexts of identity formation taken into consideration in her study were the society, the

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fact that the second major wave of expulsions from Chile in the mid-1980s was closely related to the repressive offensive of the military regime in the 1983-1986 period.

<sup>164</sup> Other authors also emphasise that the exile in Sweden was distinct in terms of socio-economic background of the exiles: 'While high-profile and more highly educated exiles tended to gain entry to countries like Mexico, the United States, France, and Spain, Sweden took in many more workers and individuals without previous international connections' (Kaminsky 1999:xvii)

neighbourhood, the school, the group, the family and specific events. The young persons were found to have double identities, but this could mean either a feeling of having access to both world or to feel 'in-between'; a 'half person' not belonging to either of them.

A shorter article by Olsson (1997) similarly deals with the living 'between two countries' of Chilean migrants who returned to Chile after 1989. The tendency pointed out by Olsson was a possible development of a Chilean 'diasporic community' where, according to Olsson, the Chilean migrants 'identify more with this *diáspora* than with the local community in their homeland'. Olsson argues that these movements between Sweden and Chile are part of a global trend where migrants in exile no longer are isolated from social networks in their 'homelands' and where new formations of 'exile-based communities' will take place.

### **Migrants' biographies**

The interviews with returning exiles took place in Santiago during the month of November 1995. The contacts with respondents and the preparations for the interviews were made in September the same year.<sup>165</sup> The persons who were interviewed have varied backgrounds in terms of age, gender, social class background and the timing of return.<sup>166</sup> The profile of interviewed is presented in table 11.

Evita and Roberto were interviewed together, while the others were interviewed alone. Three of the interviews were conducted at work places - in the cases of the two self-employed persons, Victor and Alberto, and the journalist Rosario. The rest of the interviews took place in the homes of the returnees. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, except one where also Swedish was spoken.

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<sup>165</sup> Preparations in Santiago were made by Irene Molina, who also conducted interviews with informants and three of the eight interviews with returnees. Further interviews with informants and the five remaining interviews with returning exiles were made by Irene Molina and myself in the month of November 1995.

<sup>166</sup> Two persons returned before the political changes in 1989 and the others in the second phase of *desexilio*.

Table 11. *The interviewed persons in Chile.*

Name	Age	Years in Sweden	Occupation in Chile before exile	Occupation in Sweden	Occupation in Chile after return
Victor	57	1984-1990	Self-employed	Mailman	Self-employed
Juan	24	1979-1993	Child	Student	Student
Rosario	40	1976-1984	Student	Student	Journalist
Alberto	58	1988-1990	Self-employed	Shop employee	Self-employed
Evita	31	1987-1993	Secretary	Cleaner	Secretary
Roberto	33	1987-1993	Factory worker	Cleaner	Taxi driver
Violeta	51	1973-1978	Public administrator	Administrator	Writer
Eva	29	1978-1992	Student	Nursery-school teacher	Student
Alejandro	41	1977-1984, 1992	Student	Student, Nurse, Cleaner	Medical doctor

The following presentation of the biographies is, as in the first case study, based on the initial coding and interpretation of the interviews. Subsequent chapters present the grounded theory analysis and the concept of 'narrative identity' are used for further analyses. As before, the intention was to try to identify important characteristics of everyday life, circumstances around the events of emigration and return and their meanings in the person's migration history. The presentation has a chronological form, as the biographies of the two 'early' *retornados* are presented first, but is mainly organised around three broad themes. The first theme is *social position* related to return and is based on the interviews with Violeta, Rosario, Evita and Roberto. The second theme is *family/ social networks and localised bonds*, and this section is based on the stories of Alberto and Victor. The third theme is *identity formation* and return, and here the biographies of Eva, Juan and Alejandro are in focus.

### Social position in exile and *desexilio*

The migration stories presented initially in this section are concerned with return and 'social mobility' as well as return as a 'duty' in political terms. The biographies of Violeta, 51 years old and Rosario, 40 years old exemplify the experiences of two women who have pursued a successful professional career after their return to Chile. They are both of upper middle class backgrounds and their exile experience did not mean a loss of social position after return. In a similar way, but from a different social position, the young working class

couple Evita, 31 years old, and Roberto, 33 years old, were able to use the Swedish experience as a kind of social 'trampoline' after return.

*I chose between two lives'*

**Violeta** worked as head of a department in the Chilean public administration under the Allende government in the early 1970s. Only a few months before the military coup, Violeta, her husband and their two daughters moved to Stockholm in connection with a job opportunity for Violeta's husband. Being a public administrator under the socialist government, Violeta could not return after the coup and she became a refugee *in situ*. She and her husband divorced shortly after their arrival in Sweden, and her ex-husband managed to return to Chile after a few years. Violeta and the children stayed in Sweden. She thought it was going to be so for ever.

I was about to stay there permanently, I lived with my children. (...) I had made my life there, I was working, had finished a master degree and was about to start my Ph.D. studies. (...) I learned Swedish well and had the possibility to work. I had a friend there who was a personnel manager. (...) I worked in two public offices. (...) I was employed as an administrator, as I had all with me, all my titles and everything. (...) I worked during the summer and afterwards they offered me to stay, to have the job!

Violeta also worked as a social assistant, interpreter and maternal language teacher in Stockholm. She met a Swedish man and moved with him and the children to the university area of Frescati. Their life was 'well affirmed' as Violeta expressed it, with her work, the children and housing. She felt very good in Sweden and relates how the Swedish 'idiosyncrasy' did not disturb her, on the contrary, she liked it. Her social network was strong in Sweden with many close friends, including her fiancée's family.

One day after six years of exile Violeta got a phone call from Chile. A misunderstanding had made her relatives in Santiago believe that she had decided to return to Chile and she was offered paid tickets for her and the children. In this situation the question of return became acute for her, as Violeta furthermore got the information that she had a chance to return.<sup>167</sup> The phone call awoke many thoughts. Violeta found herself in a situation where she felt she was about to choose between two different lives. She sensed that she really had the choice in her hands.

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<sup>167</sup> She had avoided the 'L-listing' that was made in 1978. The regime published a list with names of persons who were formally prohibited to return to Chile.

When the moment of taking the decision came, I thought, well here I have two possibilities, I have two options that I have to consider. The only liberty one has in life is to choose between this kinds of options, everything else is imposed on you. (...) I returned very quickly. I cut off the ties, I didn't leave any ties there, I couldn't do it because as I said, I returned very quickly. (...) The most crazy thing is that I thought I was going to stay for ever, and I was among the first who returned!

The decision was surprising to Violeta herself, but behind it there were also very conscious considerations. Later in the interview, she expressed these considerations when she discussed her different work experiences in Sweden, for example as a social assistant in the suburbs of Stockholm.

I had begun to get involved in the issues of the maternal language teachers and we were about to form a union. Because well, in particular the Finns and the Turks, who had been there for a longer period of time, they were getting very upset. About the fact that their kids had a terribly difficult time, you know, I was beginning to see that maybe it wasn't...It was like you have to decide what kind of life you want to have in the end. I knew what was coming.

In the year of 1978, Violeta saw the potential problems of future discrimination and exclusion of immigrant children and youth in Sweden and she did not want to submit her children to that. Despite her own situation, where she had been able to avoid any kind of discrimination, 'I was seeing people from my own class', she saw the experiences of the Finns and the Turks and they were not optimistic. She saw that there would be political struggles in Sweden as well as in Chile, and that they would be different in character.

The kind of life you want to live...because if one stays in Sweden, one begins to fight for one's rights there, so I said to myself, no, I'd better return to Chile. Chile was under full dictatorship. (...) Why would I be fighting for my rights here [in Sweden] if I now got this crazy possibility to return? And the emotional question for me was tremendous.

Violeta had already consciously changed her professional career due to the political situation in Chile. Instead of a career within public administration she concentrated on the study of literature and became a writer. Back in Chile she pursued this career. Today Violeta is an established film-maker and writer.

All these years have been...imagine, raising my children, maintaining myself economically - not only maintaining myself but also doing my own things! And in fact, I have managed to do that, I have written my books, I have done my things. I have been working politically, first against the dictatorship, and then I engaged in the work with women. (...) I have been moving around much in my life. (...) The only thing I missed from Sweden was the affective thing - well, afterwards I had another relation-

ship, very good and everything, but the fact of breaking up a good relationship is hard anyway. I never returned [to Sweden] after that.

The class position of Violeta was an important factor in giving Violeta the possibility to choose, as she felt, between two different lives, and both of them were 'good alternatives' for her personally. She knew that in Chile she would be able to 'do her things' thanks to her social and professional background and her material base. Her situation in Sweden was well established, but she saw a future possibility of discrimination of her children on the basis of 'race' - 'I knew what was coming'. This kind of discrimination would not happen to her children in Chile. The anticipated political struggles around the issues of discrimination in Sweden were not something she wanted to deal with. If she was to engage in political struggles then the situation in Chile was a more urgent case to her. Even though it implied cutting off important emotional relationships in Sweden, in particular to her fiancée, she decided to return.

*'You have to return!'*

The political imperative to return, or a 'duty' to return, was a predominant theme in the story of **Rosario**, a journalist who in 1984 returned to Santiago after nine years in Sweden. She was a young woman, 20 years old, when she came to Sweden in 1976. She relates how she arrived in Uppsala, where her sister lived in exile and where she entered an 'exile identity', a political identity that she describes as 'ready for her'. Her political consciousness was reinforced as a result of her everyday life in Sweden, where she studied and engaged intensely in party politics and solidarity work for the Chilean case. She went back for nine months in 1982 when her mother got seriously ill, and in 1984 she returned permanently to Chile. Rosario expresses her decision to return solely in political terms.

I never had the liberty to enter completely into the Swedish society, because I had a country behind that was calling me, like a shadow. It was saying to me 'be aware, you are not Swedish, you are not allowed to stay here for ever'. I also had a Party behind me telling me the same thing all the time. 'You have to return, you have a commitment with your people, yes!' (...) I was always a stranger, I spoke Swedish with an accent. I know Swedes who live here [in Chile] and they don't have a country demanding them. A country that has a claim on them, who permanently reminds them that their work is necessary. (...) So it is very different, when you are in another country, in this case Sweden, and you feel that your case is something unsettled, a demand...Including, there is a certain culpability involved, to be able to be there, when people here are having a hard time. The relationship one has with one's country is unresolved.

Rosario had feelings of guilt when she lived in Sweden and she expresses the strong obligation she felt to return to Chile. Back in Sweden in 1983, after her long visit to Chile, she broke her contacts with the exile party she had worked with and approached feminist groups in Sweden. She then returned to Chile in 1984 and started working with different NGOs and the Chilean feminist movement. Her return was also closely connected to her mother's illness. Rosario describes strong positive feelings in her meeting with Chile after her return, and she travelled to work in different parts of the country. In Chile, she has been keen to down-play her experience from living in exile and she has had no interest in maintaining contacts with other *retornados*.

I was very afraid of being rejected, so I felt I had to approach this new reality with a lot of humbleness. I had been away, helping from the exile, but from the exile and not here, so therefore I had to have an attitude of permanent apprenticeship. (...) I felt a need to open myself to this country. There are many returnees who have an everyday attitude of distance to Chile. They are permanently criticising it and overestimating their experience of living elsewhere. To me this was very uncomfortable. I never liked that.

Like Violeta, Rosario became involved in work with feminist organisations after the return and she describes herself as an 'expressed woman' in Chile. She has left party politics behind and has an established position as a journalist. However, this intellectually motivated commitment has had an emotional price. She is now going through a life crisis.

Now, I have had my costs, you know. In this very moment I am in crisis...I have gone through many years of brutal social commitment (...) I turned 40 with a worn out body, that is, from many years of permanent commitment, with effects for my whole everyday environment, my affective relationships...(...) And besides, this country has changed a lot. I am still about to wake up and see that I am living in another Chile, definitely. It has cost me a lot to adapt to this new Chile. Very much. I am still a little nostalgic, paradoxically, about Chile of the dictatorship.

Rosario's narrative expresses a strong ideological motivation for the decision to return, but a major factor was also her concern for her mother in Chile. The meaning of her exile was as she sees it to work politically for Chile, and Sweden became a life in 'parenthesis' to her, despite the many years she lived there. The country was 'calling her' to return. However, the transition of Chile to democracy has not been what she expected. Her observations concerning the public treatment of the *retornados* is an example.

Today, under democracy - within brackets - I have the sensation that on the national or public level, the theme of the *retornado* has only been dealt with from an economic perspective. (...) It is an economic theme, not a cultural theme. This is not a country that has opened its pains and wounds, to the contrary, they are still there, restrained.

(...) An important part of the present Cabinet consists of *retornados*, but despite this there exists for example no legislative body for political refugees who could be given protection in Chile. (...) So to speak about *retornados*...today the economic relationship with Swedish businessmen is more interesting than the social and cultural relationship with the Swedish social and political sphere. (...) So at this moment the *retornado* can be a bridge, a nexus, a channel for Chilean capital in Sweden and Swedish capital in Chile. But the *retornado* is not an economic bridge, the *retornado* is not an assistant in economics. The *retornado* is a victim of many years of crime against human rights. So everything is seen from another perspective, with the consequence that the *retornado* are not occupying the role I would want them to occupy in the Chilean transition, which is a political role. (...) And there are hundreds of adolescents here who speak a funny Spanish because they come from somewhere else. And they feel strange, which is a sad thing.

### *The loneliness of exile*

From another social position, **Evita**, 31, and **Roberto**, 33, experienced a six-year long exile in one of the suburbs of Stockholm. They both have working-class backgrounds and during their stay in Sweden they worked with cleaning. After their return in 1993, they have managed to create a better social and economic situation than they had before the exile, but for Evita, the experience in itself was 'totally negative'. This was mainly due to the fact that she had health problems for long periods of time in Sweden. She did not have a social network and felt lonely and depressed. She missed her parents very much. Evita has some remote relatives in Sweden and Roberto has a social network in the exile community, but they did not develop a social life or close contacts where they lived. Their three children were born in Sweden and Evita spent much of her time in the apartment with them. But she also studied Swedish and worked as a cleaner in hospitals and nursery schools. Roberto worked long hours with cleaning and had a little more social contacts. Evita had no difficulties learning Swedish, but her initial desires to study and learn new things became blocked in Sweden.

Somehow I had my head closed, I was closed in my mind. I did not manage to think more about it. (...) I liked languages...and to progress and study other things, but no, no I couldn't. I was in a way blocked with everything, everything. (...) I never tried to integrate myself, to do what I liked to do. I never did.

Q: How did the decision to return come about?

Because of my problem. (...) I had to return, I couldn't continue like that. I returned alone and he [Roberto] returned later, about six months later.

After the return the family first lived with Evita's parents, and two years later they moved to their own apartment. Evita has returned to her work as a secretary and she has been doing very well, although she is still without a perma-

ment appointment. She describes how she entered a workplace and was able to better her position very quickly. She doubled her salary within months and was offered a job as the secretary of the chief director. This was, she believes, due to her skills, informal style and ability to gain confidence. Evita was not using the formal mode when she addressed her superiors and she became friends with them. She ate lunch and socialised with the managers rather than with the other secretaries.

I dropped the formalities of address with three of the managers. And the other secretaries were going around with their 'Mister', 'Madame'. And I found that to be hypocritical. They talked negatively behind the back of the person, but still 'Mister', 'Madame'.

Q: You were not showing the same kind of submission?

No. You know, I thought, they are so young, why are they using the formal mode of address?

Roberto: One comes back with another mentality. There, in Sweden, everybody calls each other by their Christian names. And it is not because of lack of respect.

This informal style, confidence and lack of submission helped Evita to gain a better position in her job as a secretary. In this sense, Evita knew how to take advantage of experiences from Sweden, despite her limited work experiences there. Her health is also better after she moved back. Her parents give her and Roberto strong support. Roberto has also been doing well after the return. Thanks to the savings they accumulated in Sweden they could invest in two cars and he now works with them as a taxi driver. Their plan is to stay in Santiago, 'and fight here when we are here'. The option of going back to Sweden to work is still there, however, in particular for Roberto. He has a social network of friends who move back and forth between the countries, and who have work and family relations in both Sweden and Chile.

## **Family/social networks and localised bonds**

In all the biographies above, the migrants' family situations and stage in the life course were important components of the circumstances behind their return to Chile. Violeta was worried about her children, Rosario had concerns about her mother who was ill and Evita was missing her parents in the loneliness of exile. Roberto returned after his wife Evita had moved back together with the children. The combination of these family concerns with the other factors described above had bearing on their migrations back to Chile. It also seems that different 'turning points' around the event of return often were related to family situations. Under the present theme of *family/social networks* and *localised bonds* the importance of the family and life course situation is fur-

ther illustrated by the biographies of **Victor** and **Alberto**, now in combination with other factors.

A concern with long-term planning for a practical possibility to return was a major theme in the story of Victor, while in Alberto's case the family network in Chile was of central importance. Victor and Alberto are men in their late 50s, and have after their returns in 1990 established own small enterprises. Their life histories are quite different, but they have in common the practical strategy they pursued before and after return. In a sense they fit into a 'prototype' image of the *retornado* envisaged in many return policy programs. The economic and entrepreneurial aspects are central here. The design of return programs often favours a kind of 'entrepreneurial' return, and Alberto and Victor both participated in the PRAL return program.<sup>168</sup> Victor had maintained the material assets of his business in Santiago while he was away, and Alberto had established a shop in Santiago before he was forced to leave. However, many of the return programs of this sort have not been very successful, and have not lived up to the often very high expectations.<sup>169</sup> The extent to and the context in which programs can be instrumental in the return process of individuals and/or families are exemplified by the migration histories of Alberto and Victor.

### *'We programmed ourselves'*

Victor and his wife Luisa came to Sweden shortly after the tragic death of their oldest daughter in Chile in 1984. In 1976, the family suffered repression and was offered asylum through an embassy, but Victor and Luisa decided to stay on in Chile. After the loss of their daughter, they sought asylum for their younger son, and he soon left for Sweden. Victor and Luisa remained as long as they could in Chile, but were forced in exile later the same year. They spent a short time at a refugee reception centre in Sweden, before they moved in with their son in his apartment. For six years they lived with him in an old working-class residential area of a middle-sized town in central Sweden. Relatives of Luisa lived in the same neighbourhood (since their flight from Chile in 1976), so they had a family network in Sweden when they arrived. In Chile,

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<sup>168</sup> PRAL (Programa de Retorno y Apoyo Laboral) was a return program initiated by different NGOs in 1985. The program has provided economic support to *retornados* and support to small business projects and projects for labour market integration in Chile. PRAL obtained support from exile country governments and Sweden contributed to the PRAL program with funds corresponding to 50% of the PRAL budget.

<sup>169</sup> For an evaluation of the PRAL project and similar projects see Sjöquist (1995). It was estimated by Sjöquist that about 65% of the small business projects failed in the 1990-1994 period.

Victor and Luisa left everything in preparation for their future return - they sublet temporarily their house with furniture and Victor's workshop fully equipped.

We lived a comfortable life [in Chile]. Leaving for Sweden did not mean change to us. I would rather say that we lowered our standard of living. And we lowered it not because we didn't have money, but because we came with the idea of saving money in order to return with something. (...) The truth is that we left Chile with the idea of returning in five years. That was our plan. (..) And we programmed ourselves for that. I left the [Swedish language] studies quickly because I wanted to start working.

Luisa and Victor managed to get jobs after some initial difficulties. Within a year they both worked double shifts and together they held five jobs. Victor worked in a workshop and Luisa in a school kitchen during the day; and in the mornings they shared three turns of newspaper delivery.

We had two turns of delivery in addition to one turn by car. I got up at 1.30 a.m., went for the newspapers and then back to the apartment to pick up Luisa. From there we went out to deliver the papers, until six o'clock in the morning. Then we rested a little while, had breakfast and went out. I left Luisa at her work and went to the workshop. (...) Well, we were in the same until we returned. We hated the work. (...) We had an active life, in fact we worked a lot and slept very little.

After six years of continuous work in Sweden the family returned. Their son had moved to Uruguay earlier and in late 1990 Victor and Luisa were back in Chile, where their son joined them. They were able to take advantage of the exemption from duty proclaimed by the Chilean government and in Chile they obtained loans and support from PRAL. In addition to bringing in their household and capital goods, including a car, they also invested in machinery and brought it to Chile on the same occasion. After two years in Chile, the support from PRAL had led to the possibility of obtaining bank loans for further investments. Victor then travelled and bought further machinery in Sweden and brought it back exempt from duty on two additional occasions, before the Chilean return policy concluded. The family was thus able to take advantage of existing programs and the policy was instrumental in the development of the company that they now run in Santiago. On the other hand, they did not benefit from Swedish return programs.

Q: When you were in Sweden, did you present yourselves as returnees and did you receive some kind of support?

No, no nothing. We had asked for the travel expenses, but they told us we did not have the right because when we came...we should have asked for...what is it called.. the status of political refugees. And we never did that. So we stayed as 'family unification'. So therefor we did not have the right. (...) They told us that we could insist.

But we didn't, we paid our travel expenses. We left the door open there too, with no debts. The thing is to keep one's head high wherever you go.

While Victor personally is very positive to the other programs he has been involved in, he is also aware of his own special case. He does not recommend his strategy to everybody else.

The truth is that a business is good for one person and very bad for another. (...) The important thing...what is really important is previous experience. (...) This has been the big mistake here. Of people who have returned and who have no business experience, neither of small nor big businesses. So they fail. With their first mistake, their world falls into pieces, and it's over. One person begins to fail, and then one after another. Nothing comes out of it. (...) We were very well received by PRAL, they evaluated our project and they immediately told us it was approved. (...) We were one of the few who fulfilled and paid. (...) They even gave us a diploma.

Today all members of the family work in the company and they have also additional employees. Since they came back they have been working long hours and have not been able to travel around in Chile as they dreamt of. When they worked in Sweden they had the dream of travelling around Europe before they returned, a dream that never came through.

We came on Saturday and I started to work on Monday. (...) I entered a wheel of work that has not stopped until this moment. Then Luisa went to Sweden for six months, it occurred to her to go and work there. And when she came back, we had work for her here, so she has stayed working here. (...) We have had a lot of work, my wife doesn't get a peso of wages here, and she works a lot. In addition, she takes care of the whole financial part, which is very heavy. My son and I take out a small salary, only the necessary to live comfortably.

Luisa has a central role in the company and she works full time without a formal salary. The possibility to return has depended on the joint efforts of the three family members, in a household strategy. However, the household is not a homogeneous 'unit', but composed of persons with different positions and perspectives. In this household, Victor maintains a 'traditional' patriarchal role, as the head of family, and he sees Luisa as 'dependent' despite her full-time work in the company. These gender positions are also confirmed when Victor discusses the situation when Luisa was the first of them to get a job in Sweden.

I have been working since I was 14 years old, so it was difficult for me to depend on someone. Besides, I am independent since many years back, because I am self-employed. So for me it was very difficult, and for Luisa too, because Luisa was accustomed to having to depend only on me. Because she hadn't been working before, she only helped me with paper work sometimes. So it was difficult for us. But we soon got started, adapted ourselves, and Luisa started to work.

Luisa's situation was in many ways different from Victor's in Sweden, and she had an everyday life where she became more involved in social relations in the local context. She quickly got a job, she went to the Swedish language classes and got close friends with a Swedish woman who thereafter has visited them in Chile. She also became a Swedish citizen and she has relatives in Sweden. Luisa's links to Sweden are thus in many senses stronger than Victor's. It is also clear that both Luisa and Victor are concerned about maintaining the 'door open' to Sweden.

Luisa became a Swedish citizen. The idea of Luisa to become a Swedish citizen was because being that, she could return with me as my wife. And, if that would be the case, I could go to Sweden any time because I am married to a woman who is Swedish citizen. In other words, we hold on to something. But without the idea of returning anyway. If I was to decide, I wouldn't live in Sweden. Not because I think Sweden is bad but because it is not mine. (...) It is not my country (...) I don't feel realised there. That is why I returned here and I can tell you, after a month I didn't even remember that I had left Chile. I never miss Sweden.

So even though they were 'programmed' for the return, and worked for it with firm determination, they were, or maybe in particular Luisa was, concerned about 'holding on to something' in Sweden. Victor suddenly said:

So the idea is to continue here. But I wouldn't have any problems with returning to Sweden. In fact, I would return, but then to never return back to Chile. If there was a military coup. In that case, I don't stay here. I would sell everything, cheaply if I had to, and leave. I would leave and never again return to Chile.

Q: Why, because you accept Sweden or because you don't accept the conditions here?

Well, I lived through an experience, I did not want to leave. In 1976 we had a problem of repression. The whole family, including my wife. On that occasion Sweden offered us asylum. (...) And I did not want to leave, neither did Luisa. I wanted to stay and see what would happen. But after losing a child. The truth is I don't want to go through that experience again. (...) I lost 50%, we had two children. So that would be the motive.

Victor and Luisa want to maintain an 'open door' to Sweden, in particular in case there would be another coup. Their strategy of 'programming' and saving for the return became a way of handling the exile situation and in some way be able to lead a life with continuity and meaning. But the goal could not be to return at all costs. They made 'rational decisions' in exile, but rational decisions are relative, and this rationality is limited by many factors.

Q: If there hadn't been a change of governments in 1989, do you think you would have returned anyway?

It is a difficult question to answer because...If there hadn't been a change, I don't know. I don't know if...well, we had already lived through an experience, so to return again to the same dictatorship...it would be a ridiculous thing to do. To return and live with the fear that at any moment...So I can't really answer that way.

Despite this insecurity, Victor puts emphasis on the need to take a decision and then follow it. Once a decision is taken, then one must stick to it, 'program' oneself for it. One consequence for Victor was that he became an 'observer' in Sweden, while his attention was focused on the return. But he would not have a problem with staying in Sweden, if that was to be the decision.

I am a person who always has know what I have wanted. (..) There are many people who are still there [in Sweden] and who will never return, but they continue to dress themselves up for the return. (...) They never took the decision to plan what they would do. Always return, return, but they did not know to what. So I said, why don't they make a plan and that's it? Or they stay or they return! And if they return, prepare for it! (...) So therefore I tell you that if I had to go [to Sweden], I would go with the idea of not returning to Chile. Because in that way I could put down new roots in another place. I could...I could even learn the language and I would create something. Besides, Sweden is a country which...if you are willing to live there...*to live*, with all the racists there may be, it is a country where you can live comfortable and enjoy it. In fact, I even had a boat.

Because of the decision to return and the 'programming' Sweden never became a country *to live* in for Victor. Now he thinks that it could have been, if he had taken that decision, and the boat is a kind of symbol of possible *life* in Sweden. But in the foreground of his story is the strategy to live only temporarily in Sweden and to create an economic and practical possibility to return to Chile. His everyday life has been dominated by a consuming 'wheel of work', both in exile and from the first day he returned to Chile. Today he is deeply worried about the characteristics of the Chilean economy and the difficulties for *retornados* to find a livelihood as 'the economic problems are very very grave'.

### *'The democratic vote of the family'*

Alberto, who returned the same year as Victor, also expresses a pessimistic view of the everyday economic, social and political situation in Chile. The social polarisation, poverty and lack of social security have been paramount problems in Chile of the mid-1990s. Economic growth and market liberalism have not been to the benefit of all Chileans, and there are many *retornados* who also encounter difficulties. Alberto and his family have moved to Valparaíso after their return, a main harbour city to the West of Santiago.

If you take a trip around Valparaíso, you can see that it has never been poorer than it is now. You can blame the dictatorship and whatever you want, but there has also been five years of democracy now. And while there is democracy, here on the streets....In Viña up on the hills, people are poor, very poor.

At the time of the interview, five years had passed since Alberto, his wife and two children returned from a three-year long exile in Sweden. He ran small businesses in Chile before they had to leave the country in 1988. Already in 1973 his first business in Valparaíso was destroyed by the military. After that he and his family lived for many years as 'internal refugees' in Chile, changing residence often, and circulating between different places. In 1986 with the increased repression and tension, the family got indications that they had to leave the country. At that time, the family lived in Santiago, where Alberto ran a small business. They left, via the Swedish embassy.

We had the fortune to be able to choose where to go. Canada, Australia, Sweden or Switzerland. They gave us a week to decide. We worked out...different parameters of what could be the best for us, because we didn't know how long time this issue would last - our whole life, a couple of years. (...) And finally we opted for Sweden, fundamentally because we got indications that children were a little privileged there. (...) We had our children, 8 and 10 years old, and it was for them that we chose Sweden.

After a short time at Halstahammar refugee reception centre, the family decided their destination in Sweden, without having a social network, relatives or previous knowledge.

We didn't know anything and then we were to choose. And...looking at the map and considering everything we decided the area of Gothenburg. As it is a port...so we could be a little...like in Valparaíso. And luckily enough they placed us in a municipality very close to Gothenburg. And there we lived.

The children went to school and learned Swedish. Alberto studied Swedish, wrote articles, gave lectures and worked in a book-store. His wife worked as a maternal language teacher. They lived in what he describes as a good neighbourhood.

It was a neighbourhood under construction. A medium sector neighbourhood, with a good level. A very good level. So practically there...we were three immigrant families there, all three Chilean. No more. Nobody else. And the Swedes, no problems at all. Not a cry-out, not a bad word. (...) It was a good experience for us...and personally, for me, a very satisfying experience, I liked it very much. And to be honest, I did not want to return. Honestly, I didn't want to because I had the inclination or the idea or hope that the children would have a better education there. Not in economic terms,

but in terms of their personal preparation. An exam, a profession...all that. Really. But the democratic vote of the family...they said that the heart, Chile, everything...I had to accept the majority and we returned by the end of 1990.

There were many things Alberto found attractive in Sweden - the library system, the educational system, the natural environment. He felt at ease in Sweden. Alberto is mapuche and he established contacts with the sami people of Northern Sweden and he travelled all over the country as an invited lecturer. As a politically active person, he had hopes when the change of governments took place in Chile in 1989. But this was not the reason the family returned to Chile.

No, the fundamental motive was...that my wife and my son, the oldest of the children, wanted to return. Their reasons were, the grandmother, the grandfather, this and that. Sentimental reasons I would say. Frankly speaking, sentimental reasons. Not even longings, but very sentimental things. It was the prestige of the family.

After the political changes they returned, and Alberto and his wife initially had grand hopes about the new democratic regime. They thought there would be an intense period of political work, things to build up, to work out. 'All that had been lost for 17 years'. But the hopes vanished after the first years and their disillusion augmented. For Alberto, Chile of today is a broken society. Five years of democracy started with hope and optimism, but has for Alberto transformed into a pessimistic view of the future. And when *retornados* are concerned, the greatest harm to the returnee community has in Alberto's opinion been done by the *retornados* who now are part of the established political elite and are taking advantage of the present economic system.

I think that the worst favour some *retornados* have done to the exile in general, are the activities of the returnees who now engage in a bullying political activity. Because they are doing it really badly. All these sociologists, political scientists...(...) The people who now are members of parliament, ministers, under-secretaries...and who during exile did not do what they now are doing, in their investigations, in their NGOs, travelling back and forth, - that is discrediting. Because people get an image of the exiled and start to believe they all were in the same situation. They don't imagine people living in the segregated municipalities outside Stockholm or Gothenburg, with difficulties. (...) So there is a certain disdain for the people who return. (...) They are sure that the exile is a panacea, of passing a good time...there is a sector of the population who thinks the returnees come back with a lot of money and are egoistic enough not to distribute it after return.

Alberto started a small business in Valparaíso with support from PRAL. Despite his many years of experience as an entrepreneur and the long hours of work in the business, the income is low. Alberto's wife did not get back her job at the university when they returned and she is no trying to find alternative

jobs. Alberto describes the situation as a constant struggle, economically and politically. His primary concern has always been the education of the children who now are 15 and 17 years old.

They are about to finish high school, and in Chile, then what? After you finish high school? If you can't go to the university, what will happen? Well that is dramatic. It is terribly dramatic. (...) In this moment there is a desperation in the children...that they don't want to, sincerely they don't want to study. *For what?* It is very worrying.

The family obtained different types of support when they returned, both in Sweden and in Chile. But, 'no return program can change the Chilean reality', as one of the informants expressed it, a woman at the IOM office in Santiago. Alberto refers to returnees from different countries who after a while give up and go back to the former country of exile. 'They don't resist, they go back'. The plan of Alberto and his family is nevertheless to continue with the business for a couple of more years, and then, if it doesn't get better, sell and move on to another part of Chile. Sweden is not an alternative for them anymore. The door is closed.

There was a moment, when it was already too late, that I blamed myself for not having renewed my residence permit. I now think it was too negligent, or I thought it was going to get better here, that it was going to get better for everyone. And frankly, I am not speaking about myself, a better situation for me personally. So I regret that a little, that I did not do it. But well.

Q: You would have liked to keep that door open?

Yes, exactly. Now for the children.

On the other hand, Alberto also expresses doubts about a life in Sweden, or 'Europe'. He has an extensive social network in many European countries, and of *retornados* to Chile from different countries. To try to return to Sweden is not necessarily the best option either.

Because, for what reason? To try what? The fact is that things are not so good in Europe either. (...) I found that in any case one is a stranger there. No matter how well things are going for you there, one is still a stranger. So what would be the meaning of it?

## Identity formation and return

The migration histories of the two youngest respondents came to centre around issues of national identity, racism and exclusion in Sweden. They both came to Sweden as small children, as their parents were exiled from Chile in the mid-1970s.

*We were supposed to be Swedish'.*

The youngest of the two, 24-year old **Juan**, came to Sweden with his parents and five brothers and sisters when he was six, and he returned, alone, to Santiago at the age of 22. He felt it was impossible for him to be included as a 'Swede', despite his efforts and explicit will, and this affected him to such a degree that he left Sweden against his own will.

I had never in my whole life thought of living in Chile, never, I had never planned to do it. I was the most Swedish in my family. All my brothers had been to Chile to visit, but I hadn't. They asked me, aren't you going, but I said why should I? I asked, what the hell has Chile given me? Why the hell should I go there? (...) So it came as a shock to my parents when I told them I had been accepted to the University in Chile. What!! You, Chile?? What happened? (...) So you can imagine how angry I was to move here, when I never even had planned to move to Chile. You can imagine how tired I was with....everything at home.

Juan thus refers to Sweden as 'home', but he has ambivalent feelings about it. He grew up in a working-class neighbourhood in a middle-sized town in the South of Sweden. In school he felt that he and his Spanish-speaking friends were treated differently, 'always as a special case'; 'somehow like the tail' of the class. But he describes the overall life situation of the family as good during the first years in Sweden. Both his parents worked and his brothers and sisters were doing good at school. But then the 'social failures' started, as Juan expresses it. The oldest brother and a sister, who had been a top student, dropped out of school and were experiencing social and personal problems. This affected the younger children a lot. As Juan became older, the conflicts between 'Swedish' and 'immigrant' youth became increasingly difficult in the neighbourhood where they lived. Juan took this personally, and he felt he was in between the two groups. He had a lot of 'Swedish' friends who assured him that he was 'Swedish' but for him it was becoming obvious that others did not see him as 'Swedish':

My friends always told me "you are Swedish Juan - but those damned Turks, they can go to hell. But you are Swedish, sure, you are like us". My friends thought so, but the others didn't think so, they also had immigrant friends who they told "Ey, Felipe, you are Swedish, but Juan he is...". So I noticed, I didn't know what...I was always lost, I didn't know where to stand...and my friends demanded that I should 'love Sweden to death' and so on...while when I was alone...there was always someone looking down at you or reminding you that "hey, you are an immigrant".

A number of circumstances coincided and made the situation in Sweden unbearable for Juan. He had finished high school and qualified for university studies, but failed in the last entrance test to a university program he had applied to. He wanted to continue to study, despite the fact that he was the only one within his group of friends who wanted so. He felt pressures from his friends and wanted to get away from problems that were emerging among some of his closest friends. His parents divorced. The recession struck hard in Sweden during the first years of the 1990s, with high unemployment rates especially for young people. Racist expression and practices became more open in this period and Juan felt he couldn't protect himself against all the negative images of immigrants that surrounded him:

During the last years I was mentally feeling really bad. I turned on the news, always something about immigrants. Read the news, always about immigrants. Always, always about immigrants, or Chileans, here and there, here and there. And you feel bad about it. You feel like shit about it. (...) You don't notice first, that it really gets to you, but unconsciously you are deeply affected. So I reached a certain limit, and then I thought, no, that's it. That's it, I'm leaving Sweden.

In contrast with Juan, 29-year old **Eva** took the decision to return at a very early stage in her life, and she became, as she expressed it, rather 'drastic' in her decision. She was going to return, and 'that was it'. She grew up with this perspective, and in 1983 at the age of 17 she returned to Chile for the first time, alone, for six weeks. She then returned again in 1990 for three months and then in 1991 to stay for a longer period of time. At the time of the interview she had lived four years in Chile. She believes the circumstances around her forced departure from Chile influenced her for a long time and led to her firm decision to return to Chile. She was 12 years old when she left Chile and the departure was a painful experience. She did not have the time to say goodbye to her closest friends.

It was a very fast departure. (...) I came home from school and from there I had to leave, for obvious reasons, to a security house with my mother and my brother. After that I never returned to my home, from there we went to Sweden. (...) My mother suffered a lot. We children didn't really understand, and I least of all, as I was the youngest. Nobody ever informed me about anything. I just left and thought I'd be back in Chile soon, I thought it was something temporal - in fact it lasted for 14 years. (...) Just imagine, on a Monday or Tuesday, I don't remember, I don't care, I come home, dressed in my school uniform, and a relative tells me we have to leave because my mother is in danger. (...) After about six months in Sweden I received a letter from my best friend where she asked how I could leave her like that, why did I do a thing like that, how could I be so mean as to leave without saying anything to anybody? But what could I do?

Eva grew up with her mother and brother in 'ghettos', as she says, 'always between Fittja and Alby'.<sup>170</sup> Her mother had no family or friends in Sweden. After the first eight months in a refugee reception centre they were 'placed' in an apartment in Fittja:

It was Fittja or Rinkeby, that is, those were the places where the reception centre placed us. And my mother didn't have a clue, Fittja was just Fittja, she didn't care, ghetto or not. We were in a city with a language we didn't know at all, so an apartment....that was the important thing. Of course, it was a neighbourhood with problems, and now I would never go there.

Eva finished school, took a university degree and started to work as a nursery-school teacher. During her university studies she lived in a student apartment in the university zone of Bergshamra in 'a much better neighbourhood', and this was where she lived when she left for Chile. In contrast with Juan, who had a similar neighbourhood 'career', she did not have 'Swedish' friends when she grew up in Sweden:

The majority of my friends are Latin Americans, one Swede or so, foreigners in general, but not many Swedes, no.

Q: Why, do you think?

Because of the position I had when I was living in Sweden. With this question of "I am Chilean" and the fact that I always wanted to return. It didn't even have so much to do with the Swedes, but more with myself, I didn't get involved with them. In fact, I came to a ghetto and there the differences are greater. You know, it's as if the Swedes don't bother much about you, I grew up in a ghetto-type of environment and there the thing was a little "we" against "them".

Eva and Juan, both Swedish citizens, thus grew up with completely different positions in terms of what they saw as their 'national identity'. Juan tried with all means to become accepted as a 'Swede' while Eva lived 14 years in Sweden seeing herself as 'Chilean'. Juan was offended and hurt in everyday situations when people around him didn't consider him to be Swedish. Olof Palme and Per G Gyllenhammar, his idols, represented to him a society that he supported wholeheartedly, manifested in the 'Swedish system' and in Swedish history in general.

Sweden, the countryside - to me that's the most beautiful...I love it...I know Sweden's whole history. Back home in Sweden I have a collection of 24 books, the best books on Swedish history. I loved Sweden as a country, it's history and everything. So you can bet I feel disappointed when they treat me so badly...(.) I knew the whole history, everything about Sweden. Much more than my Swedish friends knew about Sweden.

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<sup>170</sup> Fittja and Alby are suburbs of Stockholm.

Juan participated actively in the youth organisation of the social democratic party and was involved in party politics for several years. In this context he felt he was treated as a Swede, and 'as a teenager, not as a Chilean'. Because his Swedish is perfect he often got questions about whether he was adopted as a child. Over time Juan got more and more contradictory feelings about his national identity. Examples are given in the stories he relates about his relation to the Swedish flag. In the interview he describes experiences from several situations where controversies around the flag have occurred:

Then, when I wanted to grab a flag, later when I was older, immigrants came to me and called me Swedish. "Ah, you think you're Swedish, you should be with us, you bloody deserter, do you think you're a Viking or what...you are dark-haired, damn it, you shouldn't come here and believe anything." (...) And the Swedes said "What the hell are you doing with the flag?". Then you find yourself in a situation where you don't know what to do...on the one hand they demand that you should feel Swedish and the others wanted you to pretend to be Swedish, but you should still be an immigrant. That's where I really began to understand the meaning of racism and how fascism can emerge...and why we had to take the blow, we 'dark-heads' as they called us.

In these situations Juan was defined as an 'immigrant', both by the other 'immigrants' and by the 'Swedes'. He partly blames what he calls the 'new immigrants' for this dilemma and expresses the problem in terms of that Sweden received 'too many bad immigrants'. When he talks about this he is suddenly on the other side of the 'we'-'them' divide.

I worked a lot with the immigrants, to guide them. In the youth centres. And I heard a lot of shit and I was so disappointed with the immigrants. I quarrelled with them every day. (...) They are more racist than the Swedes are against them. And then you also understand why the Swedes are so racist and why many immigrants are racists against the new immigrants. (...) [Sweden] received more people and those who were hit were the old immigrants. Because a Swede can't tell the difference. (...) He only sees your face, the colour of your skin, and your hair. He doesn't see more than that. Because, you know, you can't walk around with a sign on your head saying "I have lived in Sweden for so and so long time, I have studied at the university, I love Sweden and live in Sweden, long live the King and the old Swedish Kingdom!". What the hell would that look like??

In this description, the 'immigrants' become the problem, rather than the 'Swede' who can only see 'your face, the colour of your skin and your hair'. This is also expressed when Juan discusses a possible return back to Sweden, in which case he would move to a place with no immigrants, where he would be the only immigrant in the village. This would be the only way for him to be able to feel at ease, and not to be 'misunderstood'.

If I ever return to Sweden I will live in a place where there are the least possible immigrants. The minimum. In order not to feel this conflict between ...like between the two groups, one group of Swedes and one of foreigners...in which I am in the middle and...I don't want to be in conflict with neither of them...it's really a drag (long silence).

A way out of the paradoxes and contradictions was for Juan to move to Chile. Against his previous plans and against the expectations of his family he planned for the return, took a student loan and left for Chile. In this way he was able to continue his university studies and fulfil his career plans, while at the same time getting away from the circumstances in Sweden. He could strengthen his professional identity. But in his search for a national or cultural identity, to be 'Chilean' did not become an option either. He is not a 'Chilean' in Chile.

I come here and I speak with an accent and everybody calls me 'gringo'. Do you get it, what a blow! I come here to...and I realise rather quickly that I am an immigrant here as well as in Sweden. Quite simply I belong to a lost generation. I don't feel at home anywhere, it doesn't matter if I live in Kuwait or in Brazil, it's the same thing. (...) I can't say that Sweden is my home. Neither can I say that Chile is my home, it is not possible. Do you understand me? (...) We were supposed to be Swedish and we should stay for ever in Sweden, and we should fight for Sweden, die for Sweden and work for Sweden. But with all this, with all these problems, many immigrants are leaving Sweden.

To Juan, Sweden is not 'home' anymore. Juan sees his future as one where he will be moving around between different countries - he also thinks he has an advantage in his professional career as he has access to all the big markets of the world. As a Swedish citizen he can work in the European Union, and from Chile he can work in Mercosur and NAFTA. 'If it's full here, I go there; if there's nothing there, I come back here'. This international career perspective is a solution to his experiences of exclusion. The intention of Juan was not to return to Chile, and he is did, he is turning it into a professional career strategy of *circulation*. With his background and his age, he belongs to a group of 'new emigrants' from Sweden in the 1990s.<sup>171</sup>

For Eva, her strong orientation towards the return and her being 'Chilean' made her life in Sweden calculated and planned in relation to her professional

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<sup>171</sup> See note 14. In the period 1968-1992 70% of emigrants from Sweden were citizens of other countries. During the 1990s the total emigration from Sweden has increased significantly, as well as the proportion of Swedish citizens among emigrants. In the 1968-1992 period 11% of Swedish citizens emigrating had before been citizens of other countries. In 1996 they were 25-30% of Swedish citizens emigrating. The probability of emigration from Sweden is four times higher for naturalised Swedish citizens than for non-naturalised Swedish citizens (SOU 1996:55).

career, her work, savings and citizenship. She quickly finished her degree to have her title in order to be able to return and work in Chile. For years she saved money, both for herself and for her mother. The life of Eva's mother is in many ways intertwined with Eva's, and she cannot clearly distinguish between the timing of her mother's return decision and her own.

I saved money during many years in Sweden. In fact, this apartment was bought with the savings of my brother, myself and my mother. Because the goal we had was to buy something for my mother, so she would have a place where she wouldn't have to pay a rent. (...)

Q: Do you feel in any way that the fact that she returned also affirmed you in your decision to return?

Well, I have thought about that. In fact it was as if...I don't know who took the decision first, I don't know if she did or I did, but it was very much a thing that happened, just like that, to both of us. To her and then to me, to me and then to her. (...) Apart from the fact that the desire to return had always been there.

Eva had first returned alone in 1990, which was 'simply the goal I had put up'. That time it didn't work out though:

It was as if it was a process I couldn't fully assimilate. In fact, when I left Sweden I was very sad, in a sad mood. It hurt me a lot to leave my friends, it was like NO, no, this was not the moment. I went back to Sweden, worked for six months and then returned definitely in 1991.

She applied to advanced university studies in Chile, as a Swedish citizen, and started to study in Santiago when she returned. In this way she was able to continue towards her professional career in Chile. She now has a little son, who was born in Chile. Despite a very established life in Sweden, with a strong social network and many close friends, she never identified herself as 'Swedish'. After the return when asked about her national identity, her answer is clear:

Chilean, of course. (...) The reasons I applied for [Swedish] citizenship were not very sentimental.

As Juan, she sees her future as one where Sweden is included, in one way or another. As she expresses it, 'the ties are not broken', - but if she returns she would change her life strategy.

If I ever return to Sweden again I would take a completely different position.

Q: In what way?

In integrating myself completely in the society, I don't care if the guy next door is Chilean or Swedish.

Q: You would try not to live in a neighbourhood with immigrants?

In all cases, I would try not to live in a neighbourhood with immigrants, particularly if I return with my son. I would try to become more involved.

Q: You are a Swedish citizen and speak Swedish, I imagine that wouldn't be a problem for you.

No, no problem at all. I have a job, I have everything to live, economically I would do good, I wouldn't have any problems at all. In reality, I could go any time I want; I have a job, well, if I don't have one I can get one.

During the four years Eva has been living in Santiago, her life has been very busy with her university studies, work and family life. She has struggled hard to organise a good life, to manage economically and to create a 'good atmosphere'. She lives with her little son and her mother in the apartment they bought together.

Life is very accelerated, but it is life, it is a good life. You don't have time to stop and think about insignificant things. (...) It is tiring but it doesn't stop being motivating, it doesn't stop being challenging. To me, to return [to Sweden] now would be a personal failure. That would mean that I didn't make it. (...) For me, it is a challenge, and not an easy one, to really succeed in becoming part of this society. (...) it is difficult, but not impossible.

Eva describes the return to Chile as 'a personal question'. In comparison with Juan, she discusses less the situation in Sweden when she talks about why she returned. Her life in Sweden was working out well. However, when she talks about the future she refers to experiences of racism and discrimination in Sweden.

That's one of the strongest reasons for me not to return to Sweden. Because, frankly speaking, I will always be a foreigner there. My Swedish is perfect, and if I looked for jobs on the phone, they would give me the job, but when I said my name - this really happened - my foreign family name, they said, 'we'll call you, we'll think about it' and that was it. (...) You always have to try to demonstrate that you know, that you're not stupid. (...) If you are sensible, these things get to you, they affect you. But I think that everything depends on how you take it. It may affect you a lot, but there may also come a moment when it just doesn't bother you. But it is impossible not to be bothered if you walk on the street or gets on the subway and there are three skin-heads threatening you. That is scary, and I was scared many times, *many times*.

Both Eva and Juan have lived most of their life in Sweden. They grew up in socio-economically marginalised neighbourhoods, but during the few years prior to their return, they had moved to 'better neighbourhoods'. In terms of language, schooling, work and social networks their lives were similar to most persons of their age. They were 'integrated' in Sweden by 'objective' criteria. Despite this, both of them felt excluded from the Swedish society and both have experienced labour market discrimination. But they handled everyday

experiences of exclusion differently. In the case of Juan this directly influenced his decision to return to Chile, against his plans and his explicit will. For Eva, the return was part of a personal life strategy she had had since she was a little girl. She had recurred to an identity as a 'Chilean' in her childhood and in her teens. To her, discrimination in Sweden was more one of the reasons she hesitated to return to Sweden with her son, despite her citizenship and her job opportunities. Her return was also closely interlinked with her mother's return to Chile.

For both Juan and Eva, to return to Chile was a way of handling questions of identity and inclusion/exclusion. They both see probable future migration strategies as a circulation between Chile and a place 'with no immigrants' in Sweden. For Juan, the return didn't mean that he was able to resolve the contradictions he had lived with, as he soon realised that he is seen as a 'gringo' in Chile. Eva feels that at last she is no longer discriminated, but this is not because there is no discrimination in Chile:

I wouldn't change that for anything, to come to a place and feel that I have the same rights as everybody else....including, regrettably, more rights, as I come from another socio-economic level. This is also unjust, and if we are talking about discrimination, it exists here too, but I personally haven't felt it, and I think at this point I am not going to be affected by it anymore.

Both Eva and Juan have middle-class backgrounds and in Chile their class positions were further strengthened, which influence their identity formation. In a way they have been able to re-establish a social position that was 'lost' by their parents during their exile in Sweden.

*'There are no recognisable spaces'*

The biographies of Eva and Juan may be contrasted with the story of **Alejandro**, a medical doctor in his mid-40s who came to Sweden as a 22-year-old, directly from the prison cell. He now feels 'closer to the Swedish than to the Chilean' and is after the return concerned with questions of identity and where to live to avoid exclusion. Back in Chile after 18 years in exile he is profoundly disappointed with the Chilean society and regrets not having 'devoted himself' to the exile society when he was away. He lost his Swedish resident permit as he emigrated to a third country for eight years, and then when he wanted to return to Sweden he was denied a permit and expelled to Chile. In this way his return was traumatic.

I wanted to return, to me it was imperative to return to Chile, but not in an obliged sense...without alternative. I returned to Chile the same way I left, without alternative...(…) I came to Chile in August (...) in a denigrating personal situation, that is, on the very bottom. I didn't want to return like that...(…) I returned to my mother's house, which I didn't want to. Everything was very complicated, very complicated. Well, and when you are here you want to start to fill yourself with your history, to recognise spaces, and then there are no recognisable spaces.

When Alejandro forcibly left in 1977, his wife and little son remained in Chile. At the moment he thought it was the best, as he didn't want them to suffer exile because of *his* political problems. After some years they divorced. The rupture of this family situation as a consequence of his exile marked his later personal relationships. Together with his political commitment, which was focused on return, it meant that he felt unable to establish a family life in Sweden.

I simply didn't want to feel tied up in order to be able to return. Neither did I want to be in the same situation that I caused here in Chile at the moment I left. A matrimonial situation, children... No, I did not want to commit the same barbarity from before. (...) That is one of the effects of not wanting to devote oneself to Sweden, despite the fact that you feel good. (...) It really was because of that, because of the lack of devotion. If I had married, I would have stayed in Sweden.

The life in Sweden formed him in many ways and Alejandro stresses the fact that he is 'very Swedish' in his 'philosophical framework', 'work dynamic' and 'situational thinking'. Alejandro exemplifies his Swedish identity with the fundamental role that the Swedish language has in his life. The Swedish is part of him and he continuously reads Swedish literature.

I think it is part of my integrity, that is the problem, the Swedish language...I was so young when I came to Sweden, you know. The language! Or it may not be so much the language, but more the fact that through the Swedish language I can *understand myself*. There are many things I can't understand through the Spanish language, nor through Chile, and I think that my richest personal growth took place in Sweden.

Q: Your entrance into adulthood?

Yes, it was the exact moment and in that sense the Swedish languages continues being a fundamental link.

Alejandro lived in the Old Town of Stockholm during his years in Sweden, except for one year when he lived in Alby. He got the apartment through Swedish friends. In Sweden he was director of one of the main exile organisations, and he developed close contacts with the youth organisation of the Swedish social democratic party. His life was part of what he calls 'the Chilean dynamic' and he was involved in the work of Chilean refugees 'but I didn't live with them, which was a difference'. After his return to Chile he has re-

flected upon his life and feels a gratitude towards Sweden. He thinks he was fortunate.

In general, my life in Sweden was good. Well, in strictly personal terms, I was not a person who suffered discrimination. Primarily because I didn't live in the ghettos. (...) And maybe because I had the capacity to move in order to obtain certain successes in the Swedish society. Like the apartment, to live well, not live in ghetto, and also to recognise the system as such, independently of the observations that you can make from a political or economic point of view. I think that in a way they offered us a broad spectrum of possibilities.

The majority of his personal friends from exile have returned to Chile, and they form a kind of small *retornado* community. To Alejandro this social network is crucial; it is based on common experiences and they all maintain close contacts.

It is a question of intuition, a question of skin. We are in the same, trying to integrate ourselves here, looking for some kind of correspondence. We help each other to integrate, in order to be able to continue being what we are, without losing everything we have been. It can be that a person loses what he or she has been, and that is the most painful, for a person to try to conserve his or her whole history.

The situation in which the returnees find themselves in Chile is in Alejandro's story linked to the position of the refugees in exile. He describes a common feeling of frustration, as the painful process of integration in these countries was not justified, nor the lack of complete devotion to the country of exile. These experiences create a certain rejection of Chile, a country that not has been 'generous with the people who at one moment were prepared to die for this country'. Alejandro describes the difficulty of living in prolonged exile, and not be able to 'see the countries we were living in'. This also led to identity confrontations.

The problem is that the confrontations [of identities] are strong especially when you live fundamentally devoted to the return to your country, devoted to certain types of party or organisational routines, etceteras, which always were part of the dynamics of Chile. Chile was the centre, and this was what destroyed many people in terms of their personal development, which made them stagnate. But well, there are always confrontations and criticisms, but finally one tends towards equilibration.

Q: One thing may be criticism against other people, but another question is the normal critique of society a person can express in any country.

Of course, a critique which continues here in Chile. (...) But the critique in Sweden was different. I think it was because we didn't want to see the country we were living in. We didn't see the qualities of the country. One can engage in conversations, like any citizen of the world, about the pros and cons of a society - that is one thing - but to live bitterly dependent on a critique of a country of living, that is something pathologic.

*The politics of 'conditional integration'*

If Alejandro had a chance he would leave Chile and return to Sweden. He has lived four years in Chile now and sees no progress, no future. He has encountered many difficulties professionally, politically, personally. He thinks his political commitment to the Chilean society was unjustified. Firstly because he could not devote himself completely in his personal life. Secondly, it was unjustified because the Chilean society he worked for in exile is nothing like the society he now has returned to. He lives a double deception. In Alejandro's view Chile has in no way recognised its returning refugees.

No recognition at all. Above everything, the recognition you get is from people who are outside, and not part of the same processes; Swedes, Nicaraguans and others, not the Chilean here in Chile. The Chilean doesn't give a shit if you were two or three years in prison for a just or unjust cause. (...) In general nothing is recognised to us; in the last instance we are strange elements in this society, and you can feel it.

Alejandro's history of exile and return contains a number of paradoxes. In moments of deception he formed important relationships with persons he never expected to become involved with. When he worked in a home for the aged in Sweden he developed a close friendship with a pensioned military of the Swedish Airforce. As a person who has been subject to imprisonment by the Chilean military regime, to Alejandro this relationship became an interesting and contrasting experience.

I really saw another dimension of the Swede. Of course, you are associating with a military man. The old man, well he wasn't so old, but deteriorated, consumed; I learned a lot from this man. I always think of him, because he was a very cultivated man, he taught me many elements; that is, he gave me references so that I could gain more experiences; he gave me bibliographies, books and other things; and we played chess together. It was an interesting relationship. (...) The experience was good with this man, maybe because he was so forlorn. He gave a different opening to the dimensions of his life, and I was delighted with it.

Another paradox in his life was that after his return to Chile, the persons that most of all lent support to him were people from the church. The Catholic church in Chile has been associated with the military regime, and as a politically active person on the Allende side Alejandro was surprised with the reception the church gave him. It stood in contrast with the attitude of many other groups and organisations in Chile.

It was, in terms of work, the best I have seen of support based on solidarity. It was tremendous. Without any kind of questioning, they did not even ask me what party I belonged to. 'You are a *retornado*, perfect, no further questions', that is, 'we know that you were in exile' and that was the end of it. (...) The priest told me 'you are a good person, for me there are no problems, provided you demonstrate your capacity as a medical doctor, no problems'.

Apart from the political difficulties, Alejandro struggles because he feels he has not been able to create a satisfactory personal situation, in economic terms. He never worked with the purpose of accumulating benefits to himself.

I don't have anything, in private terms, nothing. The problem is that I never worked in order to have things, to have money. I worked for the education and for the solidarity, and that doesn't give you any money. And I returned to a country where none of these elements is valorised - and I don't think there is a country in the world today where this kind of background is valorised. So I blew it. I have to start to adapt to the new market, and that is sad, because I am 40, not 25.

The experience of Alejandro is that the Chilean society has not been able to handle the return of refugees in a constructive way, in particular not the professionals.

In Chile they gave themselves the luxury to reject professionals, through their politics of examinations and through...how shall I express it...their politics of conditional integration. (...) I think it is a crime to the Chilean society. (...) There is an enormous potential in the returning professionals. The country ought to have special programs to reactivate different segments of the society in order to get connected with new people, instead of rejecting them. They don't say it in public, but through technical measures you become aware that you are outside.

The 'politics of conditional integration' is related to the image of the *retornado* in Chile. As described in the interviews, the construction of the *retornado* identity in Chile has had largely negative connotations. It is an identity that for instance Juan refused to accept and in the story of Rosario she describes her explicit strategy to avoid being labelled *retornado*. The imposed identity of *retornado* makes it difficult for returned exiles, as Alejandro expressed it, to 'continue being what we are, without losing everything we have been'.

In the next chapter the grounded theory analyses of the personal stories from the two case studies will be presented. The first analysis is of the US-Mexican case study, followed by the analysis of Swedish-Chilean case. The chapter includes four concluding tables of the interviews from the latter case study and ends with a concluding discussion.



## V RETURN MOVEMENTS AND SOCIO-SPATIAL CONTEXT

Grounded theory analyses focus on events and incidents as *action/interaction phenomena*, rather than on persons or cases as such. In this chapter the phenomenon of return migration will be analysed in terms of its relationships to identified social processes in the spatial contexts of the case studies. After having outlined the migration biographies in the previous chapters, this chapter provides an interpretation of the return phenomenon in relation to political, social and economic changes taking place over time in the studied contexts. The chapter does not present a general typology of return, but identified categories of return related to the two contexts. The analysis of the interviews focuses on the geographical return movements as part of a *collective migration process* evolving over time in the two case studies. While not being primarily concerned with individual migrants' biographies in this section, the analysis provides a 'grounded' interpretation and is based on the interviews with migrants and informants and on the other data provided in previous chapters.

As discussed in the introduction, this dissertation can be described as broadly dealing with relationships between return migration, identity formation and space/place. In this chapter the main focus is on two of the 'legs' of this triangle; namely the relationships between return migration and spatial context. Chapter six, in turn, brings in the dimension of identity (narrative identity and public narratives) in relation to return migration and context.

The grounded theory analyses thus resulted in the identification of categories of return in the both contexts. These were for instance 'investment return', 'consolidation return' in the US-Mexican case and 'programmed return' and 'professional circulation' in the Swedish-Chilean case (see below). These categories were then related to different action/interactions taking place in the contexts over time. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that identified categories in a grounded theory analysis may in a subsequent step be related to what they call the *paradigmatic relationships* of the main categories.<sup>172</sup> These relationships are by these authors divided into the *causal conditions*, the *intervening conditions*, the *context* and *consequences* of the main categories. The same terms are used here, except that I use the term *structural/historical conditions* instead of *causal conditions*.

While the migration process cannot be captured in its whole complexity, the picture evolving from the interviews is a 'grounded' interpretation of the changing conditions and consequences of different forms of geographical re-

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<sup>172</sup> Strauss and Corbin (ibid:99).

turn movements. These movements are linked to the phases in the migration processes and to different social processes in Amealco and in the USA, and in Chile and Sweden. As a whole, they form hypotheses about the dynamics and consequences of geographical return in these contexts.

### Case study one: geographical movements to Amealco

The *structural/historical conditions* bearing on migration in this context have been described in chapter three. The agricultural expansion in South West United States during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the entrance of the USA in the world wars and the expulsion of other ethnic minorities from the USA led to successive and massive recruitment of workers in Mexico. The negotiation of the bilateral *bracero* program in the 1940s took place in a political situation where the Mexican government had a relatively strong position, partly due to the 1938 nationalisation of the oil industry. A number of guarantees and provisions for the workers was built into the program, rights that gradually were undermined by both US and Mexican authorities. The implementation of the *bracero* program led to the initiation of the migration process from the municipality of Amealco in the state of Querétaro, a peripheral municipality up to then unaffected by international migration. Other conditions at the later stage of the *bracero* program were related to the intensification of recruitment during the Korea war 1950-1953, which was followed by one of the largest forced deportations of Mexican workers ever, the so called Operation Wetback in 1954. The successive mechanisation of the Texas cotton-fields was a major condition causing the termination of the *bracero* program in 1964.

The *intervening conditions* that structured the selection process for emigration under the bilateral program were social class, ethnicity, gender and individual biography (age, family situation, time-space location, personal contacts). Firstly, recruitment was directed to experienced male agricultural workers. However, the strategy of emigration also became attractive to persons of non-agricultural backgrounds from *el pueblo* of Amealco, who saw a possibility to accumulate investment capital from one or a few spells of emigration to the USA. Initially, an important group of village persons emigrated. The second major group of early emigrants were mestizo peasants from *el campo*, the small rural communities around the village of Amealco. The recruited peasants were not the poorest and landless but rather from the 'middle strata' with small land properties. Despite their strong presence in the rural communities, the *ethnic group* of otomís were excluded from emigration. Emigration required a resource buffer to cover living costs and some costs of transportation until first payment, which excluded the poorest peasants, among them the otomís.

Selective information about the recruitment, the listing procedure and the final selection of *braceros* from the lists may also have excluded the most marginalised groups. In addition to the local selection process, many potential emigrants were denied access for *health* reasons. The medical tests at the larger recruitment centres further north meant that many persons were sent back to Amealco before reaching the USA.

In their *individual biographies* the early emigrants had reached stages of life as adult men, about to form families or already married. In the case of emigrants from *el campo* the presence of other siblings that could stay and work the land of parents, as well as being younger among siblings, were facilitating conditions. Of importance were the *time-space location* and *personal contacts* of individuals in rural communities where information about recruitment started early. In the village there was a certain group of businessmen who together considered the emigration strategy, and persons affiliated to them could gain information and advice.

The analysis of the conditions structuring the migration process between Amealco and the USA shows the existence of three phases with shifting character. During the first phase the migration process was initiated and consolidated. The second and third phases were very dynamic in terms of the changing subjects of migration and of modes of mobility. The three phases will now be presented in more detail.

*First phase of migration: the bracero program, investment return, consolidation return and short spell return. 1942-1964.*

Return movements to Amealco during this initial phase of the *bracero* program took different shapes, and a main consequence in the local context was that they contributed to the successive formation of a migration tradition. This overall *formative return* was composed of the three identified categories of *investment return*, *short spell return*, and *consolidating return*. The return movements of the first generations of *braceros* to Amealco were central for the continuous movements from the municipality.

a) *Investment return* was the return of the business persons from *el pueblo*, who went on one or a few longer contracts and then returned with considerable savings. These were invested in already established or emergent businesses, which made this already prominent group gain even higher social status. The intervening conditions for investment return were pertinence to the middle or upper social class in *el pueblo*, localised bonds in the form of business estab-

ishment, or a strong family resource base. Of central importance was the stage in the individual biography, as married men or men with a fiancée in *el pueblo* would return and invest the savings, as opposed to unmarried business persons with strategies of establishing themselves and forming a family in the USA. Favourable structural conditions in the local context were the expansion of infrastructure to the village of Amealco during this period (in particular 1950s and 1960s); as the communication systems; roads, electricity, telephone, financial institutions were established and developed during the decades and the links to urban centres in the state and the centre of the republic were strengthened. Emigration leading to *investment return* was exceptional, of relatively long duration (up to 3-4 years) and non-repetitive.

The consequences of *investment return* were productive investments in small village businesses; individual advancement, status and satisfaction; opportunities for further (internal) migrations and formation or enlargement of families. The major consequence in terms of the migration process was the strong demonstrative example of emigration as a possible avenue for individual and/or household progress. *Investment return* created a powerful return narrative that also will be taken up in the next section, and contributed to the construction of a major positive image of emigration to the USA.

b) *Consolidation return*, in turn, took place to the small communities in *el campo* around the village. Minor economic savings from shorter, repetitive emigrations were invested in the improvement of ranches, extension of animal stock, land or agricultural equipment. The intervening conditions for *consolidating return* were pertinence to social class of *campesino*; localised bonds in the form of land and ranch; family ties (wife, fiancée, parents) in the rural community and achieved savings in the USA. Structural conditions in the countryside of the municipality continued to be unfavourable; a continued lack of infrastructure improvements such as irrigation systems; low productivity of the land; low corn prices and rising costs of fertilisers and other inputs. The consequences of *consolidation return* were improvement in housing and living condition in the countryside; limited mechanisation of agricultural production; increased social status and personal satisfaction of return migrants, but continued lack of economic solvency. Rather than propelling internal migrations to emerging industries in Querétaro, San Juan del Río and Mexico City, further emigrations to the USA were initiated or repeated from *el campo*. The importance of *consolidation return* for the migration process was the demonstration of the viability, although limited, of emigration as a road to improving and maintaining the situation for households in *el campo*. Return migrants provided information and migration stories crucial for helping others to emigrate, and demonstrated their capacity to support families. Individual return narratives related to this

category will be taken up in the next chapter together with public images of returning *campesinos*.

c) Finally, as the third element of the overall *formative returning* of this first phase, *short spell return* took place both to the village of Amealco and to the rural communities. The harsh working conditions in the North American fields, the short duration of contracts and individual circumstances made migrants return after very short periods of work under the *bracero* program. The main consequences of *short spell return* were the continued information diffusion and story telling about migration, important for the formation of the migration tradition. Anecdotes about the horrors of the cold climate, the sufferings in the fields, the long work hours, the bad food, the costs and risks etc., became important contrasting narratives to the largely encouraging migration stories referred to above.

*Second phase: trapped circulation, youth return and retirement return. 1964-1988.*

With the end of the *bracero* program in 1964 the formal conditions for emigration and return in Amealco changed. Previously documented migration turned into undocumented or 'illegal' migration. However, migration without documents had been taking place during the whole *bracero* period, largely encouraged by land owners and employers in the USA. Enforcement of illegal status took place through ideologically motivated ad hoc 'operations'; deportations and intensified border controls, but was not systematic. With the end of the *bracero* program, contracting of workers moved to the US side of the border, and to individual contacts with employers. During the period up to the end of the Vietnam war social mobilisation for the rights of agricultural workers intensified, and the first major strikes and organised labour activities took place.

Conditions in Amealco were different during this phase, as the migration tradition had been established and there were men in their middle ages in both *el pueblo* and *el campo* who had been *braceros*. The knowledge and accumulated experiences from the *bracero* period were available to young people through the migrant stories communicated by these older return migrants. Information about certain employers in the USA was spread. These employers were not geographically concentrated or located within a defined area in the USA. Rather, they were scattered throughout the states of California, Texas and a few other states, but these few land owners became known in the municipality. There was no formation of a geographically bounded migrant community in the USA, but rather a dispersed and flexible pattern of movements from the municipality. Letters from emigrants, music cassettes, videos and remittances

continued to be sent to Amealco, and the influences became more general. Sons of *braceros* could 'inherit' the migration experiences, networks and advice from their fathers, and village youth got the information from school friends, childhood friends and their relatives. Intervening conditions for emigration from Amealco during this period continued to be social class, ethnicity, gender and individual biography.

In terms of *social class* the emigration of peasants with small land-holdings from the rural communities persisted, in particular among the sons or relatives of early *braceros*. The *otomís* and the landless rural population continued to be excluded. To a limited extent women, and sometimes whole families, began to emigrate from the countryside, for shorter or longer periods of time. In their *individual biographies* emigrants now also included unmarried men in younger ages, related to experienced migrants through family relations, friendship or neighbours. From *el pueblo* emigrants would now come not only from business, but also from working or upper middle class backgrounds, but without being the sons of the early village emigrants. New groups of village emigrants would be younger men, recently out of school and/or temporarily un- or sub-employed, and men with higher education. As earlier, women from the village were not emigrating, but either taking advantage of the relatively better labour market for women in the village, or migrating internally to San Juan del Río, Mexico City or Querétaro.

The *structural/historical conditions* were during this period increasingly related to internal dynamics in Mexico, such as the uneven character of the industrialisation process, and less to the economic cycles and active recruitment of US employers. The initial conditions had changed, but the migration tradition and the internal factors contributed to the perpetuation and expansion of migration from Amealco. Despite strong national GDP growth and an intensified urban industrialisation in Mexico, overall unemployment rates grew high, in particular in rural areas. The capital intensive character of the import substitution policy, the limited effects of corn and other subsidies in rural areas, and the demographic growth in the labour force, aggravated the employment situation in general. In the municipality of Amealco these structural conditions led to an increasingly difficult situation in *el campo*. The tangible evidence of improvement and better maintenance of ranches in migrant households, as opposed to other rural households, favoured the emigration alternative. The absence of major industries and constructions in *el pueblo* of Amealco created high male unemployment rates, in particular among working and middle class youth.

During this phase the character of return movements to Amealco changed in relation to the earlier period. The overall characteristic during the period was labelled *golden prison return*, under which three categories of return were identified. A dependence on *migradólares*<sup>173</sup> was beginning to develop, both in individual households in the countryside and in terms of the village economy. The popular perception of the US as the 'golden prison'<sup>174</sup> corresponded to migrant stories describing the impossibility to survive on the small ranches and the need to maintain sources of work in the USA. In this phase migration gained momentum and involved more people, including younger men from the village and women from *el campo*. The transfer of dollars from emigrating workers increased from the 1970s and onwards, leading to the development of a 'remittance economy' in the municipality. This economy developed cycles which affected the overall economic activity in the municipality: The months of November and December were peak periods for remittances. Then, as many migrants returned during the Christmas holidays, remittances were low during December and January. On the other hand, returnees spent money during their stay in the municipality. In February and March when emigrants were back in the USA and started to earn money again, remittances recommenced on a lower level. The *consequences* of golden prison returning were the emergence of the first forms of *circulation* between Amealco to different locations in the USA, and a somehow changing image of returning migrants. The three categories related to golden prison return were identified as *trapped circulation*, *youth return* and *retirement return*.

a) The return of peasants to the small ranches in *el campo* around the village of Amealco changed gradually from the initial consolidation of rural households during the *bracero* program into a *trapped* migration pattern, with increasing dependence on incomes from migration. *Circulation* between social and family life in Amealco and a work life in the USA developed, often separating spouses temporarily during large parts of the year. While *trapped circulation* took place at different intervals, it often followed the cycles of the remittance economy referred to above, and was repeated over long periods, sometimes decades. *Circulation* was identified as being part of a migration pattern involving Amealco and *different* places in the USA. Rather than a community-to-community pattern of movement between Amealco and one specific destination in the USA, circulation involved many places. Women from *el campo* began to emigrate temporarily or for longer periods of time together with spouses. Returning migrants were during this period both documented and undocumented, and many of the undocumented legalised their status under

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<sup>173</sup> *Migradólares* is an expression for dollars earned during migration.

<sup>174</sup> Exemplified for instance in a popular *corrido* 'La Jaula de Oro' by Los Tigres del Norte.

IRCA between 1986 and 1988. With the legalisation, family reunion in the USA became a more viable option, as the risks involved with border crossing were eliminated. On the other hand, for the same reason, legalisation also facilitated *circulation*. Localised bonds in the USA, in the form of material assets and social and family networks, were being established by migrants from Amealco, but not as part of a place-based community of migrants from the municipality. Local bonds and attachments were limited and often temporal due to social exclusion and insecurity in the USA. The main social relations in the USA continued to be worker-employer relations, and the asymmetrical relations between the places involved in the circulation were largely maintained: social and family life in Amealco, and work life in the USA.

b) *Youth return*, on the other hand, took place to *el pueblo* of Amealco. The 'youth' period within middle and upper middle classes from the village became more marked during this phase, (in relation to the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s), and stands out in relation to the situation for young people from *el campo*.<sup>175</sup> In the early *bracero* period emigrants from *el pueblo* were adult men, but in this later phase of the migration process emigrants were younger men, and not established in terms of professional situation and/or businesses, and without own households. With the existence of a migration tradition and influences from the USA in the 'modernisation' process, youth from *el pueblo* started to emigrate already in their teens. In contrast with the early emigration from *el pueblo*, largely oriented towards accumulation of investment capital, youth emigrants in this phase sought adventure and personal development. Intervening conditions for *youth return* were an established resource base in the village through parents' businesses or professions. In individual biographies, emigrants had recently left school, with no immediate job opportunity and with a network of friends in the same situation and/or with migrant experience. Intervening conditions for *youth return* during emigration in the USA were experiences of *downward social mobility* and of *discrimination* in the labour market. Rather than investment capital, these migrants brought back new personal experiences and/or professional insights. The 'youth period' was completed and the 'youth task' fulfilled upon return to *el pueblo*. *Youth return* took place after relatively long periods of time in the USA, or after several repeated trips. The consequences of *youth return* were inclusion in adult activities (family businesses, own businesses or professions), formation of family, planning for

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<sup>175</sup> The emergence of a distinguished 'youth period' has in social science research been conceptualised as related to overall modernisation processes. These processes develop in a differentiated manner and begins within the upper social classes to be followed by other social classes in later stages. Löfgren (1990) discusses the concept of 'youth' not mainly as an age, but a 'task' to be resolved in modernised societies: the development of the skills and competence required in a modern, capitalist society (Mörch 1985, 1989 cited in Löfgren 1990).

further migrations (internal and international) and local diffusion of professional insights or entrepreneurial ideas.

c) *Retirement return* began to take place during this second phase of the migration process. The early emigrants reached the age of retirement during the 1980s and workers who had been established for many years in the USA, often in different places, returned to *el campo* or to *el pueblo* after retirement. The consequences of *retirement return* depended on the socio-geographical background of the migrant and on how the everyday life situation in the USA had developed during emigration. In addition to bringing back savings, return migrants were supported by a monthly pension from the USA, which in *el campo* could mean investment in land, improvements of ranches and a basic income for an extended family for a long period of time. In *el pueblo* retirement return meant shorter or longer term establishment of affluent migrant families, who demanded new housing and new consumer products. The construction 'boom' in parts of *el pueblo* of Amealco was initiated during this second phase, and continued in the third phase.

### *Third phase: modified circulation and transformative return. 1988-1990s.*

From the mid-1960s until the mid-1980s undocumented border crossing involved relatively low risks, and the difference between undocumented status and documented status was not as marked as it became in the subsequent period. When the IRCA legalisation terminated in 1988, it became very difficult to obtain legal documents for new emigrants, and border controls were intensified. These changing conditions marked a new phase in the migration process, where *legal status* became an increasingly important intervening condition for emigration and return. The polarisation between documented and undocumented migrants increased, both in terms of the risks and costs involved with migration - in particular border crossing - but also in terms of working and living conditions in the USA, for instance by the effects of different policy changes in the USA.<sup>176</sup> In addition to this, undocumented migrants were not able to take advantage of migrant networks to the same extent as before, as they would jeopardise the situation for documented migrants. These circumstances increasingly played out migrants against migrants and contributed to the splitting of networks, including family networks. Returning during this period became more differentiated according to undocumented or documented status, while the intervening conditions continued to be similar as in earlier

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<sup>176</sup> One example is the 'Save our State' initiative in California and the new legislation limiting the rights of residents in relation to the rights of US citizens.

periods. In addition to *modified circulation* (documented and undocumented respectively), an emergent category during the 1990s was *transformative return*.

a) The *modified circulation* taking place in the third phase thus included both documented and undocumented migrants and involved both *el campo* and *el pueblo*. Documented circulation continued to the rural communities as in the earlier phase, fomenting the multi-locality of the migration pattern and strengthening the remittance economy. Proposed legal changes in California, low wages in Texas and other conditions influenced the destinations of migrants, creating an increasingly dispersed geographical pattern of movement on the US side of the border. New destinations included US Northern and Eastern states and Canada. Legalisation had the effect of family reunion in the USA, but also of more frequent returns and/or longer periods of living in Amealco. For legalised immigrants in the USA, returning to Amealco was facilitated, with the option of emigrating again at any time. During period of scarce work and due to the fact that undocumented migrants would stay longer and compete for the jobs, legal residents in the USA would return to Amealco. The risks for enforcement of employer sanctions remained low and undocumented workers continued to be able to find employment as they provided attractive cheap labour. Thus, after IRCA documented migrants returned more readily, while undocumented migrants would stay in the US for longer periods of time, postponing or cancelling their return.

Village *youth return* continued similarly, while *circulation* of village youth now also emerged in a trapped migration pattern. *Youth circulation* took place, with the consequences of new and modified images and narratives of return migration to the *el pueblo*. The Mexican middle and upper middle classes faced changing structural conditions during the mid-1990s, and in particular small businesses and industries were struck by the peso crisis in 1994/1995. This affected the employment situation for village youth and contributed to *circulation* and new emigration. The large scale legalisation under IRCA did not stop the entry of undocumented migrants, but they started to face more risks. The migrant stories about the border-crossing in the 1990s include more elements of violence, robbery, abuse and dangers of deportation.

b) *Transformative return* was identified as a return category of the 1990s, taking place to *el campo* of Amealco and involving the *social mobility* of the returnee. While other categories of return had consequences of strengthening social position or improving standard of living within the same social class, *social mobility* (changed social class position) was the consequence of *transformative return*. Intervening conditions for *transformative return* was *campesino* social class back-

ground, *localised bonds* in the rural community (land and family responsibilities, for instance as oldest son in the rural household), and *undocumented status*.

In the *individual biography* migrants would be young, male, unmarried and having affiliation with experienced migrants, documented and undocumented, but without previous migration experience. Emigration leading to *transformative return* was of relatively long duration and non-repetitive - similar to emigration leading to *investment return* during the *bracero* period. However, conditions for emigration, working and living in the USA were radically different from the circumstances related to *investment return*. Firstly, the non-repetitive character and long duration of emigration were in this case due to the risks and dangers of undocumented border crossing, and less to a meditated strategy of accumulation of investment capital.

Another changed condition was the position on the US labour market. As undocumented labour, migrants were highly attractive in certain sectors where they competed with legalised workers, and they worked longer hours for lower wages. The conditions for everyday life were also changed by their undocumented status, and migrants experienced *exclusion* from public spaces and isolation during their non-working hours in the USA. The *localised attachments* in Amealco were different in that instead of an established or emerging business in the village, *transformative returnees* had strong family/community commitments and responsibilities in the countryside.

The consequences of *transformative returns*, as of *investment returns*, were productive investments in small village businesses; individual advancement, status and satisfaction; planning for further (internal and international) migrations and formation or enlargement of families. In terms of the migration process *transformative return* had the consequence of being a demonstrative example of *undocumented* emigration as a possible trampoline for individual and/or household social mobility, despite the increasingly harsh conditions in the USA.

A summary of the analysis is presented in figure 5 which shows the different categories of return during the different phases.

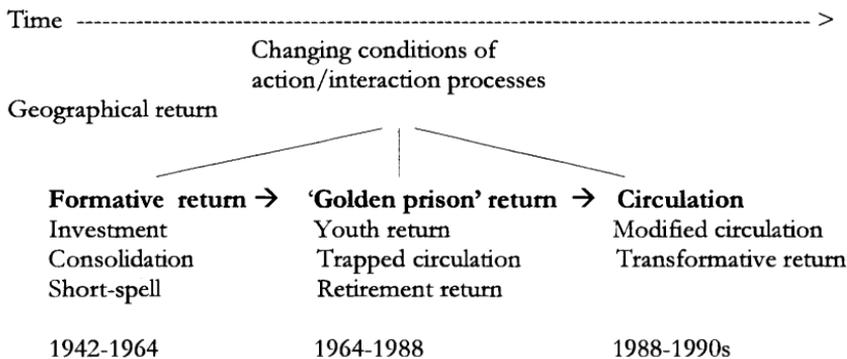


Figure 5. Results of the grounded theory analysis: identified categories of return during different phases of the migration process.

### Conclusions

The grounded theory analysis of the first case study identified categories of geographical return movements and related these to structural/historical conditions, intervening conditions and to an evolving migration process in the local context in the municipality of Amealco. In the initial phase of the migration process *formative return* led to the gradual establishment of a migration tradition, as migrants returned with capital, resources and experiences and demonstrated the potential benefits of emigration. When the migration process gained momentum a 'remittances economy' developed as household and village businesses' dependence on migrant remittances from the USA increased. Return movements during the second phase involved an increasingly trapped migratory pattern of *golden prison return*, which included forms of trapped circulation between the municipality in Mexico and different locations in the USA. The socio-geographical differentiation of return movements was marked, in particular between agricultural workers returning to *el campo* on the one hand, and working and middle class migrants returning to *el pueblo* on the other hand. The circulation pattern became part of migration to the rural communities, while emigration of village youth could become a social trampoline in terms of professional development, investments and further (internal and international) migrations.

With changes in US legislation and increased border controls during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the importance of *legal status* for migrants was accentuated. Undocumented emigration continued, but a polarisation between documented and undocumented migrants took place. In the mid-1990s a growing

'floating population' moved between the USA and Amealco. Documented migrants returned more easily and frequently and maintained the option of further emigration, while undocumented migrants stayed longer in the USA. Undocumented status also split social and family networks and undermined the possibility to build localised communities in the USA. The initial character of the US recruitment in the municipality (in terms of socio-geographical background of the migrants) contributed to a disperse pattern of migration, which was maintained over time. Migration of 'pioneers' who consequently inspired and patronaged followers, based on family and social networks, took place in a path migration pattern, but did not lead to a geographically bounded 'settlement' process in the USA..

In the beginning of the migration process, the migrants initiated their emigration as adults in the phase of life when they had formed families or were about to form families. In later stages, emigration also became a 'youth' phenomenon and involved migrants from other social backgrounds. While family and social networks are important in all the migration histories, they also have their limitations. These are not only due to the disruptions of families or social networks because of differences in legal status, but they also reflect the polarised social class structure in the local context. The migration is scattered and takes place to different and changing destinations in a 'sun-fan' shaped pattern of movements between the Amealco and different destinations in the USA. Return movements during the third phase were part of continued *modified circulation* of documented and undocumented workers, both to the rural communities and to *el pueblo*. Return of undocumented rural migrants also led to *social mobility* and investment in village businesses and services during the mid-1990s. As mentioned, the differentiated character of emigration rendered difficult a formation of an 'ethnic community' from the municipality or development of institutions related to Amealco in any one particular location in the USA.

The second part of this chapter will present the results of the grounded theory analysis of the second case study. A similar structure of the analysis is used. The section also includes four tables that summarise interpretations from the case study where the whole migration biographies are considered. The table puts together examples of identified social processes over time in relation to migrants' phase in the life course and social position.

## Case study two: Swedish-Chilean return movements

As the previous section, this analysis is an interpretation of the changing conditions for, and consequences of, different forms of geographical return movements to Chile from Sweden from the initiation of exile in 1973 and until 1995. The identified categories of return were related to the two major phases of the Chilean exile and *desexilio*; the first phase of return under the dictatorship (1973-1989) and the second phase of *desexilio* from 1989 and onwards.

The *structural/historical conditions* behind the forced exile of Chileans were described in chapter four. As characteristic of political exile situations, factors at the *national* level (the repressive regime) condition both initial dislocation and the possibility to return. In the first phase return movements were fundamentally dependent on the rulings of the military regime, while the phase of the *desexilio* opened for new and varying forms of return movements. The forced character of exile and the prolonged period of repression in Chile stand in contrast with the case study of US-Mexican labour migrations. There is no local and collective migration process in the sense of the first case study, where a migration tradition was established and where stories and information were communicated in different phases of continued movements. In this case study, in contrast, political repression affected individuals and families in unpredictable ways. Exile led to ruptures of individual life trajectories and dislocation took place largely beyond personal control. When repression had continued for many years, family and social networks were also being built up in the exile countries. These networks were important for the destinations of those who fled in later periods of the dictatorship. Persons who fled after the increased repression in the 1983-1986 period could to some extent take advantage of existing family and social networks in particular exile countries.

The coup took place in a political context where the Swedish social democratic government, supportive of Chile's elected socialist president, at an early stage took measures to provide protection for Chilean refugees in Sweden. The continued admissions of refugees depended on Swedish immigration and refugee policies in the early 1970s, where family reunification rights had been granted in the 1966/1967 immigration regulation act, and the grounds for seeking asylum were extended in 1975.

Given these national political conditions, the *intervening conditions* that structured the exile and *desexilio* were social class, gender and individual biography (age, family situation, social networks). The repression affected broad seg-

ments of the Chilean society and persons of different social class backgrounds were forced into exile. Politically active persons of middle-class, upper middle-class and working-class backgrounds arrived in Sweden, followed by, or together with, their family members. During the initial phase, men and women of middle-class backgrounds and their children were in majority, while in later phases more exiles of working-class backgrounds arrived in Sweden, as well as persons of other age groups (through family reunification).

The different categories of return and their relationship to changing conditions over time will now be discussed in more detail.

*First phase: conditional return and clandestine return under the dictatorship. 1973-1989.*

Return movements to Chile during the early phase of the exile were conditioned by the political situation in Chile and the prohibition or restrictions on return for exiled persons. Persons who had become refugees *in situ* (having left Chile for Sweden before the coup) could formally return, but were running high risks of persecution. The same applied for persons who were removed from the L-lists or not listed during the 1980s - there could be a formal possibility of return, but problems of repression often continued in practice. Intervening conditions for return in this period can be defined as *social class position, gender, phase in the life course and the maintenance of economic and social bonds in Chile*. Politically active persons had to change jobs (from public administrators, university employees, teachers, union workers to non-public sector jobs) and adapt to new circumstances, which might imply high personal and economic risks and costs. Return also led to changed strategies in terms of political activism (expressed in involvement in NGOs or feminist movements, as opposed to party politics) and a need to down-play or hide the fact of having lived in exile in everyday situations. Identified categories of return in this phase were *conditional return* and *clandestine return*.

a ) *Conditional return* took place of persons who had managed to avoid listing and prohibition to return, and had the resources to start a new career in a politically 'neutral' sector. *Conditional return* included the movement to Chile of well-educated women who managed to find a new career, and at the same time continue their political work within the NGOs, churches and feminist movement in Chile. The consequence of conditional return was social mobility in Chile, and the exile experience could be used as a 'social trampoline'. The personal ruptures in exile and after return also had emotional consequences and costs. The contexts of return in Sweden were a worsening of discrimination of immigrants in Sweden (in labour market, housing and chil-

dren's school situation) and a strong political and ideological commitment to return within the Chilean exile community.

b) *Clandestine return* was another identified category during the dictatorship. Returns took place of political activists, mainly men, of both middle - and working class backgrounds who from 1978 returned to continue political underground activities and/or armed resistance against the military regime. Clandestine return often lead to new periods of exile, due to the high risks involved. Families were divided, as for instance the wife and the children returned under the conditional circumstances described above, and the husband clandestinely. The insecurity and risks of all family members were high and children were under strong pressure.

*Second phase: changing conditions of desexilio, entrepreneurial/programmed return, extended family return and forms of circulation. 1989-1990s.*

The political changes in Chile during the late 1980s, the amnesty for political refugees in 1989 and the installation of a civil government in 1990, together with a booming economy, changed the conditions for return to Chile in the early 1990s. The recession years of 1990-1993 in Sweden led to high unemployment rates, in particular among young people and persons of migrant backgrounds. The varying expressions of *desexilio* took place during a period of rather dramatic social, political and economic changes in both Sweden and Chile. As exemplified in the migrants' biographies in chapter four, the *desexilio* had varying meanings and expressions for individuals, depending on for instance social class position and phase in the life course. The analysis resulted in the identification of the two return categories of *entrepreneurial/programmed return* and *extended family return* in this phase, in addition to three categories of *circulation* between Sweden and Chile.

a) *Entrepreneurial/programmed return* was conditioned by previous business experience, existing return programs in Chile and social/family networks and localised assets in Chile. This form of return depended on a whole household's strategy involving the work of spouses and grown-up children to manage a business establishment in Chile. Intervening conditions were arrival in Sweden in later stages in the life course, long work experiences in family businesses and grown-up children. Life in Sweden was largely seen as a 'parenthesis' and everyday life was structured around the programmed return; to save money, spend as little as possible, and return when possible. This gave the life in exile a kind of meaning and continuity, but to the cost of weariness and social isolation, and feelings of being a stranger. The consequences of entrepreneur-

rial/programmed return were establishment of a business in Chile after return and a continued dependence on Sweden as an 'open door' for political and economic security.

b) A second identified category during this second phase was *extended family return*. Exiled persons and households who had had an everyday life situation in Chile where they depended on the extended family, returned under *desexilio* to recover this situation of mutual support. The returnees had relied on a strong family network in Chile and had no family/social networks in Sweden. Intervening conditions for *extended family return* were working class background and stage in the life course of being young and married with small children. Everyday life in Sweden was characterised by low-paid work in the service sector, isolation and loneliness. The life in Sweden became a 'parenthesis' despite initial household strategies to become established and stay longer. Consequences of *extended family return* were a continued dependence on the extended household in Chile after return (in terms of housing and help with the children) but with prospects for social and economic mobility as a result of savings and professional experiences from life in the exile country. A further consequence of *extended family return* was continued links to Sweden in the form of maintenance of work relations and a social network of 'circulators'.

Three categories of return explicitly pointed towards continued *circulation* between Chile and Sweden during the phase of *desexilio*. These were *professional circulation*; *continued exile circulation* and *everyday life circulation*.

c) Overall changes in the Swedish-Chilean context with high unemployment rates in Sweden and strong economic growth in financial, service and export sectors in Chile created conditions for return of new groups of exiles during the early 1990s. Intervening conditions for *professional circulation* during *desexilio* were arrival in Sweden in an early age, a middle-class background, Swedish citizenship and social and family networks in both Sweden and Chile. *Professional circulation* took place as a response to discrimination in Sweden and to negative experiences of exclusion from national identities in both countries. Consequences of *professional circulation* were social mobility, access to expansive labour markets and temporary living in different countries.

d) Intervening conditions behind *continued exile circulation*, in contrast, were arrival in Sweden in a later stage in the life course, strong political commitment to return and no establishment of a family network in exile. Exclusion from both national identities took place for political reasons and exiles were stigmatised on the labour market after return. The difficulties with finding a job

and continued political problems led to a prolongation of the condition of exile through new departures.

e) The last identified category was *everyday life circulation* which involved a pragmatic organisation of activities in places in both countries, based on family/social networks and localised bonds in Sweden and Chile. ‘Real life’ after return to Chile depended on continued migrations to Sweden. Contacts with employers, periods of study, relationships to family and social networks were maintained through continued circulation. Intervening conditions for *everyday life circulation* were arrival in Sweden as child/youth, Swedish citizenship, middle-class background and experience of growing up in ethnically differentiated areas and attending Swedish schools.

The above analysis is summarised in figure 6.

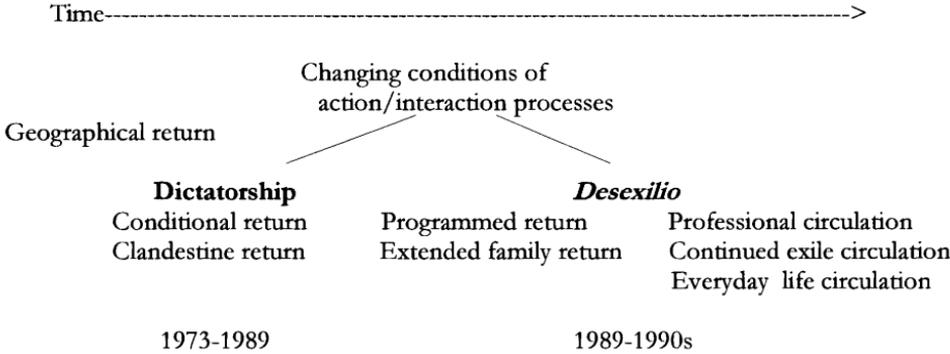


Figure 6. Results of the grounded theory analysis: identified categories of return in phases of the migration process.

In addition to the above analysis in this case study, the migrants’ biographies and identified examples of action/interaction processes were put together in four tables. The tables, which should be read as a summary of the case study, focus not only on the *event of return* but include the whole migration biography of the interviewed. The tables list examples of identified processes at different stages of the migration biographies, as interpreted from the empirical material. Each table departs from the defined intervening conditions of social position and phase in the life course of the exiled persons (as indicated in the heading of the table) at the time of the flight.

Tables 12 a-d. Summary of migrant biographies and examples of action/interaction processes from the Swedish-Chilean case study.

12 a) Exiled as adults, women, upper middle class background.

Phase in the migration biography	Social position and phase in life course	Examples of action/interaction processes		
		Identity formation	The creation of family/social networks and localised bonds	The making of a migration strategy
1. Life before exile	Woman with upper middle-class background	Social class identity, political and national identity	Material assets, strong social/family bonds	Open question
2. The event of flight	Political persecution	Exclusion from national identity	Together with nuclear family	Forced exile
3. Exile	Maintenance of social class position 'Good' neighbourhood Social inclusion	Social class identity Political exile identity 'Foreigner'	Nuclear family situation Capital savings Social and professional network Citizenship	Become established in Sweden Return as political subject
4. The event of return	Concern about children/parents No acceptance of social degradation	Escape stigmatisation as 'immigrant' Save children from discrimination	Rupture of personal relations Rupture of localised bonds	Conscious strategy to return
5. Life after return	Professional career, exile as social trampline Political subject	Avoid identity of 'retornado' Social class identity, professional identity	Material assets, Social networks Extended family relations	Open door to exile country Few or no visits to exile country

12 b) Exiled as adults, both genders, working class background (young adults) self-employed (middle-aged).

Phase in the migration biography	Social position and phase in life course	Examples of action/interaction processes		
		Identity formation	The creation of family/social networks and localised bonds	The making of a migration strategy
1. Life before exile	Man and woman of working class background; self-employed middle-aged man	Radical working class identity Businessman identity	Minor material assets Extended family network Professional assets	No migration strategy
2. The event of flight	Political persecution	Exclusion from national identity	With partner or nuclear family	Forced exile
3. Exile	Downward social mobility Social isolation Working class position in labour market	Lost professional identity Postponed personal ambitions	Capital savings Loss of extended family support Relationships with employers	'Programmed' return Life in exile as parenthesis
4. The event of return	Household strategy Age of the children	End of parenthesis Regained sense of self	Bring savings and capital goods Bring machinery	Planned timing Return step by step
5. Life after return	Social and economic gain Social mobility	New social and/or professional identity	Productive investments Professional skill	No plans to migrate Sweden open door for security

12 c) Exiled as young adult, man, middle class background.

Phase in the migration biography	Examples of action/interaction processes			
	Social position and phase in life course	Identity formation	The creation of family/social networks and localised bonds	The making of a time-space strategy
1. Life before exile	Middle class man university studies	Political and national identity	No material assets, political network, family situation	Open question
2. The event of flight	Political persecution	Exclusion from national identity	Alone Rupture of nuclear family situation	Forced exile
3. Exile	Upwards or no social mobility 'Good' neighbourhood Social inclusion	Exile identity 'Immigrant' label Professional identity Swedish identity	No capital savings Social and professional network	Return as political subject
4. The event of return	Forced	Loss of political, professional and Swedish identity	Bring professional exams	Forced return
5. Life after return	Social and material degradation Professional exclusion No political position	'Retornado' label Exclusion from Chilean national identity Swedish identity Identification with exile network	No recognition of exams Economic and social problems No material assets	Return to exile

12 d) Exiled as children, both genders, middle class background.

Phase in the migration biography	Examples of action/interaction processes			
	Social position and phase in life course	Identity formation	The creation of family/social networks and localised bonds	The making of a time-space strategy
1. Life before exile	Child with exiled parents, middle class background	Child	Minor material assets, best friends, relatives	No
2. The event of flight	No control or choice	No control or choice	Together with nuclear family	No
3. Exile	Swedish schooling, Marginalised neighbourhood, labour market discrimination	Goal to become Swedish Chilean national identity Exclusion from Swedish identity Stigmatisation as 'immigrant'	Social network among 'immigrant' youth Savings Language and cultural skills Citizenship	Stay in Sweden for ever Return to Chile as soon as possible
4. The event of return	Solve the problem of social exclusion, fulfil social ambitions Parent's return	Escape racism Escape identity as 'immigrant' Confirm 'Chilean' identity	Bring savings Return together with close family members	Not planned Successive steps towards return
5. Life after return	Chilean university exam, 're-establish' middle class position	Seen as 'gringo' or <i>retornado</i> Professional identity	Material assets Social/family and professional network	Circulation

The grounded theory analysis of the second case study identified categories of return movements in a context of changing conditions in both Chile and Sweden. The initiation of exile, the long years of military rule and the phase of *desexilio* formed the social, economic and political background in Chile. In the Swedish context, migrants experienced that change took place from a society of 'solidarity', to a society with practices of exclusion and categorisation of 'immigrants' in everyday situations. The recession of the early 1990s affected in particular youth and persons of migrant backgrounds by increased rates of unemployment. The migration histories showed how the return and *desexilio* had different consequences and meant different things for individuals depending on the political situation, the phase in the life course, social position and the family/social network.

During the dictatorship *clandestine* and *conditional* return took place. Conditional return depended on the possibility to return 'unnoticed', to change personal career and avoid the dangerous stigma of having been exiled. Interviews showed that a strong social position could be used to avoid personal exclusion as 'immigrant' in Sweden. Despite this, there was a perceived threat of racial discrimination of the children. A strong social position and a material base in Chile made a life choice to avoid this possible. Sweden became a trampoline for further social mobility in Chile. A *retornado* identity could be avoided by adopting to the situation with 'humbleness' and downplay the exile experience, not socialise with other *retornados* and commit oneself to local social work.

In the phase of *desexilio* there were new forms of return movements. *Entrepreneurial/programmed* return and *family* return took place. The first was exemplified by a strategy to 'program' oneself for a future return. The exile situation was experienced as a 'parenthesis' with no illusion nor ambition concerning inclusion in the Swedish society. A social and personal price was paid in terms of isolation, marginalised living and postponed personal hopes or ambitions. The door to Sweden was kept open for security reasons. *Extended family* return took place as exemplified by situations when exile became an unwanted life in 'parenthesis' and with lack of social and family network in Sweden. Close relationships with and dependence on family support in Chile continued after return. Other expressions in the phase of *desexilio* were different forms of *circulation*; *professional circulation*, *continued exile circulation* and *everyday life circulation*. These were based on establishment of family/social networks and localised attachments in both countries, or of exclusion from national identities in both

countries. The varying forms of movements indicate an emerging migratory circuit between Sweden and Chile.

## VI RETURN MOVEMENTS AND NARRATIVE IDENTITIES

The identified return categories in the previous chapter were related to conditions and consequences in their spatial contexts, but were not directly connected to the individual migration biographies or the 'subjects of migration'. Individuals could (in principle) move between these different categories, or their individual biographies might embrace one or more categories. Event orientation is characteristic of grounded theory analyses, while biographical approaches focus more on the understanding of what shapes the action of the *individual* in the course of his/her whole biography. Questions of meanings and identity formation are taken into consideration. Longer sequences of events and actions are involved, and migration 'decisions' may be conceptualised, as Gutting proposes, as 'the expression of people's sense of being at any one point in time'.<sup>177</sup> The concept of 'narrative identity' will be used here to interpret some major 'presiding fictions' in the individual's account of the process of exile/emigration and return. The chapter identifies migrants' narrative identities from both case studies and these are discussed in relation to the ways in which they are part of, or contrasting with, more general stories, or 'public narratives'. In the first case study, these public narratives will be exemplified by *corridos* and through images of migrants from interviews with informants. In the second case study, the individual narratives will be discussed in relation to constructions of exiles and *retornados* in the Chilean media during the early and mid-1990s.

Cockburn (1998) discusses how the 'sense of self' of an individual is confronted by different 'imposed identities' in specific spatial contexts. She studied women's organisations in situations of conflict and gives examples of how individuals and groups may both draw on collective identities *and* maintain their 'senses of self' as part of peace-building and social mobilisation. There are parallels between Cockburn's concept of 'sense of self' and 'narrative identity', and they both part from the view of the human subject as socially constructed and changing over time. In a similar way, the 'imposed identities' in a spatial context are part of different 'public narratives' or discourses. Throughout a person's migratory history, the narrative identity of the person may change, be modified or reinforced.<sup>178</sup> The use of the concept of 'narrative identity' as opposed to discourse analysis is a choice made as a consequence of the perspective of using individual biographies in this study. The

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<sup>177</sup> Gutting (1996). See the discussion in chapter two on biographies and the concept of narrative identity.

<sup>178</sup> Cockburn (1998) provides a thorough discussion about 'sense of self' in relation to 'imposed identities', in her study of women's projects in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine and Bosnia/Hercegovia.

analysis has its starting point in the migration biographies, and arrives at the point of contrasting narrative identities with certain public narratives. Some of the larger discourses in society are identified but not explicitly studied as in a discourse analysis. This section provides an interpretation the narrative identities of the interviewed persons, as expressed through their migration histories. The first part of the chapter deals with migrants' narratives in the US-Mexican context, and the second part identifies narratives in the Swedish-Chilean context.

## **Between the USA and Amealco: migrants' stories of return and circulation**

### *Narratives of life and work in different places*

Rigoberto's story contains two main narratives which seem to have had varying significance over his life course. These were identified as firstly, what could be called the *respected worker* narrative and secondly, one that was named the *real life in Mexico* narrative.

The *respected worker* narrative is based on Rigoberto's sense of professional identity as an agricultural worker in the USA. In contrast with the situation for *campesinos* in Mexico his work was in demand and better paid in the USA. Growing up on a small ranch where his father and grandfather had managed to buy a small piece of land (after having served at the hacienda before the revolution) Rigoberto had lived the harsh conditions for agricultural workers in this region. These did not improve after the land reforms. In the USA he got paid 'every week', his work was 'respected' and he had food and lodging provided at the ranches etc. In contrast with the situation in Mexico in the 1940s the massive recruitment showed that agricultural workers were in demand in the USA - 'they needed us' - as Rigoberto expressed it. Wages were higher, and living conditions better: 'the children grow tall in the USA'. While Rigoberto refers to structural conditions of wartime in the USA and scarcity of work in Mexico, he did not see himself as a passive victim of circumstances when he emigrated. After a short contract as a *bracero* he says he 'went free', and moved between work at different ranches in Texas and California. His own mobility permitted him to avoid the worst working conditions and to have some control over his work career: 'if I didn't like one I went to another'. 'I knew how to work'. As he had the US passport could also move freely between the countries. During his working life he did return to the relatives at the ranch, 'his people', in Amealco on a few occasions, but not for long peri-

ods of time. His work was in the USA and he continued to go back there. He also said that 'I did not plan to return to Mexico'.

However, while the work obviously hold him in the USA for 'half his life', he did not consider USA as a place 'to live': 'I did not like the life there'. The *real life in Mexico* narrative centres around his continued relationship with the rural community in Amealco. This is a second dominant theme in Rigoberto's biography, which conditioned his everyday life during his work career in the USA. The idea of *real life* in Mexico shaped his actions during his emigration in the USA, while he was a worker there. This is in particular expressed in his decision not to buy land in the USA, but to continue to live in the small cottages for workers at the ranches. As an American citizen he was offered to buy land by the government 'but I didn't want to', 'I never bought anything there'. The only *localised attachments* Rigoberto established in the USA were his working relations with particular farm owners. The *real life in Mexico* narrative meant that when it came to a decision to buy land, Mexico was the chosen option. He had all the legal rights in the USA, but apart from his work, his *commitment* was in Mexico:

I wanted the money to stay in Mexico...(..) I wanted to help my people from here.

The *real life in Mexico* narrative became most significant as Rigoberto's professional life was over. As he stopped working he 'had nothing' in the USA. He bought land at his father's ranch in *el campo* of Amealco and returned. He identifies himself with the rural community of his father. His languages are Spanish and he is also *otomí* speaking and says that he now has forgotten all English words. But his identity-place relationship is not only linked to the rural community in Amealco, as he also says 'I am half American', 'I lived half my life there', 'I did not plan to return to Mexico'.

Rigoberto unites the contradictions of being a full-time worker in the USA during his whole professional life, and at the same time a person committed to the rural community in Mexico. These contradictions were also those that had to be overcome through the establishment of the migration tradition in the municipality, a tradition by which migration became socially accepted. Since way back in Mexican history there have been negative images of emigrating peasants, who were portrayed as 'traitors' working on US farms rather than on Mexican land. There are *corridos* (popular songs) from the period after the Revolution encouraging the peasants to stay in Mexico and be grateful for the land reform promoted by the revolutionaries. In Amealco, where the conditions on the countryside were harsh and the long history of private land ownership and ranches severed the introduction of the *ejido* system, these *corridos*

could be perceived as particularly demanding. In one *corrido*, 'Campesino asalariado'<sup>179</sup> for instance, the peasant is encouraged not to leave his people and his land behind. The land reform of the revolution is praised in the song, and the agricultural bank and the government are pictured as the peasants' helpers, representing the Revolution. If the harvest is bad, the peasant is told not to give in. The message is that if the peasant doesn't work his redistributed land in Mexico, he is an ungrateful traitor. He has a *duty to stay*, and Mexico is *his owner*. The second section of the song is a description of how the *braceros* are driven like young cattle across the border and treated like dogs in the North American fields. The *braceros* end up being helped by the patron saint of Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe, they come crying to the Mexican consulate, and are finally protected under the Mexican flag.

In another *corrido* 'Los que cruzaron'<sup>180</sup> from the same period and by the same writer, the emigration is pictured not only as morally wrong, but also dangerous and caused by misguided ambition. A history is told in the beginning of the song, of the death of six named men who were shot as they went over the border as *espaldas mojadas* ('wet backs'). They were brave men from the ranches but they risked their lives because they were ambitious, looking for money and trying their luck on the other side. In the end there is a pray to the Virgin of Guadalupe for a miracle that would make 'our beloved brothers' not leave their land. The conclusion of the song is that it is better to be poor than to travel in foreign lands, and the native country is the best place for work. One should not look for money spilling blood on the other side of the border.

The songs are thus full of warnings directed to peasants in Mexico. The *corridos* are traditional epic ballads that often take a critical stand against the government and where the hero always is found among the peasants, the workers, the poor. Enemies of the Mexican people are heckled. So the exhortations of the *corridos* are directed to the Mexican peasants, using both patriotism, humour, warning examples and religion in encouraging them to stay in Mexico.

The call 'Don't go to the North!' has a long history, as shown by González Navarro (1975). Already during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) there was a political debate in Mexico where the press blamed emigrants for leaving Mexico. The political and economic situation during the Porfiriato promoted workers to leave, not least because of the recruitment by the railway constructors, mining companies and plantation owners in the North. But the

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179 'Salaried peasant'. In Gomez Gomez Hnos (ed.) (1972).

180 'Those who crossed over', cited in *ibid.*

press aligned with Díaz, as well as the oppositional newspapers argued against emigration on the basis of patriotism and put the blame on the workers for abandoning their native country:

[They are] victims of their imprudence to move from where they had secure work to run around as adventurers in foreign and not always hospitable lands.<sup>181</sup>

Good workers never have to leave their country, and as for the lazy, incompetent and depraved, they fail everywhere.<sup>182</sup>

With these negative images of the emigrants, it is not surprising that the people who subsequently returned from the USA also often were pictured in negative terms. In a very cruel *corrido* called 'Ya llegaron los norteros'<sup>183</sup> recollected in 1924, the return migrants are ruthlessly criticised and ridiculed. In this *corrido* the migrants are pictured as having returned only to brag with their new clothes and to depreciate other people. They use English words to show off, they lie to their wives, and look down on 'those who wear short trousers'.<sup>184</sup> They think they are different from when they left, but, as the song goes, they are all the same under their fancy outfits. Just because they have returned from a foreign village doesn't mean they are not *campesinos* any more. They can not get rid of '*lo naco*' and '*lo ranchero*'.<sup>185</sup> Even if they can say '*yes*' they don't know anything new, they are just 'cow-feet'. The things they bring back are worth nothing, 'here on our ground'. In the song there is also an affirmation that 'we don't need the North', that there is work to do in Mexico. The song is saying that everything about a return migrant is false, the clothes were not even bought by the migrants, they don't have any money, and are still prepared to sell house and everything in Mexico for a ticket to the North. The tone is disdainful. It is also oppressive in the sense that it says that 'a *campesino* is always a *campesino*' and cannot be anything else. If the returnees take off their shoes, everybody will see their *patarrajada*, 'hardened feet', the evidence that they have walked barefoot.

The public imperative of a 'moral commitment' of peasants to stay at the Mexican land thus goes back to long before the Revolution with its struggles for land reforms and social justice. The Mexican peasant earned constitutional rights to land through the Revolution, but also a 'duty' to work and produce

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181 *Imparcial* Nov. 3 (1906), cited in *ibid*.

182 *Imparcial* February 26 (1910), cited in *ibid*.

183 'The Northerners have returned' by Eduardo Guerrero (1924), cited in Ochoa and Uribe (1990).

184 The *calzones* are short cotton trousers traditionally worn by peasants in the Mexican countryside.

185 Degrading expressions of being 'indian', 'rural'.

for the country. Mexico first fought for independence from Spain, and then resisted invasions from both France and the USA. The Revolution was a reaction against the unequal distribution of land during the economic liberalism of Porfirio Díaz during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when foreign capital, in particular North American capital, was invited to Mexico. To emigrate to the country of the 'enemy', the USA, instead of working at Mexican *ejidos* was in popular revolutionary songs and in nationalist public discourse pictured as an act of treason.

These public narratives or discourses about migrants from *el campo* are only partly incorporated in Rigoberto's story as expressed through his biography. Some of these would categorise Rigoberto as a 'traitor', while he saw himself as a 'respected worker'. In the USA, on the other hand, the dominant public narrative of the *bracero* excludes Mexican migrants from other social identities than being workers - the USA as a 'place to work, not to live'.<sup>186</sup> Rigoberto's commitment to Mexico, 'his people' in the rural community in Amealco and to the land of his father became more significant to him at a later stage in his biography. At the time of his return to the municipality, the image of returning migrants to *el rancho* had changed, but not his social class position.

#### *The family commitment narrative*

Joaquín, from a small ranch in *el campo*, expresses a narrative identity that centres around the adventure and *personal experience* at the point of emigration, which took place in the beginning of the 1990s. In contrast with Rigoberto and Alberto who have similar backgrounds, he does not express any economic or work related motives for his emigration. To Joaquín the main thing was to travel and 'see for himself'. To have the possibility to come back and participate in the story-telling about migration and be part of those who 'have been there', 'so they can't lie to me about it'. However, during emigration he worked hard and saved money which he sent to his mother in Amealco. As an undocumented worker, he had to accept the conditions, he worked hard and he was able to find several jobs.

The movement back to Amealco was shaped by a *family commitment narrative*. As the oldest son, he had responsibilities for his mother and his younger brothers and sisters, in particular after the death of his father. He had left as a 'capricious idea' of adventure and while he was away he was worried about his

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<sup>186</sup> This public narrative is further discussed in relation to the narratives of the youth period in this chapter.

mother and how she was doing on the ranch. This same family commitment influenced his life in the USA, as he sent everything he earned to his mother. He was concerned that she would have everything she needed while he was away. When he came back, there was money left and he could start his own business in the village of Amealco. The emigration thus led to social mobility and investment in a business. This was neither the purpose at the point of emigration, nor the motive for moving back to Amealco. Joaquín also expresses that he would like to emigrate again, but for the time being, the *commitment* to his family in the rural community prevents him from going.

### *The American dream - in Mexico*

During the 1950s in the village of Amealco, Francisco saw how his older friends were successfully investing savings in businesses after a few trips as *braceros*, and he was finally convinced to go. There were tangible evidence of successful 'investment returns' in the 1950s and 1960s and many of the businesses and services in Amealco were created or enlarged with the help of *bracero* capital. Francisco describes in his story how he since school had been motivated by the idea of becoming an *independent businessman*. At the time of emigration, Francisco's had since childhood worked hard to provide for his family, and he was determined to save money, invest and create his own business. He was already doing relatively well in his small business activities in Amealco, working towards his goal there. His *independent businessman* narrative was founded on the conviction that with initiative to progress, it is possible to start with two empty hands and work one's way up to economic independence. The older friends convinced him that emigration would help him realise his plans faster.

This goal permeated his life during his years in the USA. He took the initiative and became the leader of the group of emigrants from the municipality. He quickly established social contacts with employers and managed to get better jobs, within the framework of the *bracero* program. In most of the situations Francisco describes throughout his biography he is in one way or another trying to improve his situation, to move up, to pursue his goal. He is very conscious about the strategy of the American employers and their logic; the way they made a 'magnificent profit' out of Mexican migrant workers, the way they recruited, examined medically, and distributed workers to different farms in the USA. He was prepared to temporarily accept those conditions, as long as they served his own interests in saving capital. His strategy was *individualistic* and he held his distance both to the employers (maintaining a strict worker-

employer relation) and to the Mexican peasant workers (often taking the role of the link or intermediary between *braceros* and employers).

This *independent businessman* narrative has similarities with one major public narratives in this context: the ideology of the *American dream* of the self-made man. But the story of Francisco is that if he was to achieve his goals, he *had to return to Mexico*. In the USA, his position was restricted in terms of social mobility, and if he had stayed he would have been 'like the *campesinos* in Mexico', as he expressed it, at the bottom of the social class structure. He did not like the everyday life there, 'going to the village only once a week' 'isolated from many things'. When he had obtained his capital, he could build on his business and social network in Amealco to establish his business, while in the USA he was an employed worker - 'the only time I have been employed'.

A second dominant 'story-line' in Francisco's biography is his goal of *family formation* in Amealco. At the moment of his first emigration, Francisco had split temporarily with his fiancée in Amealco, a girl from one of the wealthiest families in the village. In order to be able to marry her and form a family, he had to obtain a stable economic situation. As an independent businessman he would increase his chances to achieve this goal. Although Francisco mentions this between the lines in the interview - the other narrative about his migration is more explicit - this goal of family formation underlies his emigration and return strategies. It was significant for his life in the USA and the decision to return. Some of his friends got married and stayed in the USA, but he expresses that he was too young and 'not interested'. He aspired to 'marry better'. A few years after his second return he had his business established, and he got married to his first fiancée.

A 'success story' such as Francisco's represents another image of the returning migrant than that of the 'traitor' discussed above. It fits into a public return narrative about the poor migrant (although mostly portrayed as from *el campo*, in contrast with Francisco) who emigrates to the North and returns as a millionaire. A legendary public person who personifies this narrative and who frequently appears in the press is Salvador Espinoza, better known as *Gastón Billetes* ('The Money Spender'). Five *corridos* and a number of stories have been written about this 'personality of contemporary Mexico'<sup>187</sup> who left a small ranch in Zacatecas in 1967, at the age of 22, and returned as a multimillionaire to the city of Jerez, Zacatecas after many years of work in the USA. He is the owner of numerous companies and hotels and has invested millions of dollars in Jerez. His story is of course an extreme and exceptional case, but neverthe-

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<sup>187</sup> *El Fianciero* (1999).

less influential as his life story is reproduced in songs and popular anecdotes. The category of *investment return* which took place to Amealco in particular during the early phase of the migration process, and which depended on the specific conditions in terms of class background, village resource base and phase in the life course, is one rather specific form of return, but corresponds to this major popular narrative. In contrast with the negative image of the returnee as a traitor of the Revolution, the returning migrant became pictured as a successful entrepreneur investing productive capital in Mexico.

### *The trapped migration narrative or the 'cosmic cowboys'*

Alberto's migration biography is complex and involves almost two decades of continuous circulation between Amealco, where his wife and five children live, and the USA, where his parents and other relatives live, temporarily or for longer periods of time. A major narrative throughout his biography is what could be called *the trapped migration narrative*, which centres around his experiences of being a migrant worker in a system where he has little control and where he feels he is exploited and 'shuffled around'. To him, migration is dangerous and has left him without savings despite many years of emigration. He initiated the emigration 'with the illusion of becoming rich' but this illusion has turned into disillusion. The *trapped migration narrative* includes his involuntary exposure to

- the dangers involved with *undocumented border crossing* - bandits at the border, violence, increased control by US and Mexican border authorities
- exploitation by different employers in the USA and middlemen who charge undocumented migrant workers for transport, food and lodging etc., at increasingly higher prices
- the health risks
- the insecurity in the large barracks where workers live at the farms in the USA
- the split and conflicts within his own family due to his undocumented status
- the continued separation from either his wife and children in Amealco or his parents and siblings in the USA
- the impossibility to accumulate savings, despite his cultivation of corn on his land holding in Amealco and his continuous work in the US fields

Alberto is tired of 'coming and going', and sees himself largely as victim of circumstances with little possibility to change the situation. He is pessimistic about the future, and conditions are deteriorating in comparison with earlier

periods. He always gets jobs in the USA but the working conditions and the overall circumstances make him feel he is gaining less from it than before. The ambivalence he feels in relation to going to the USA is also expressed through a second major narrative in his biography; the *safety of the family* narrative. To Alberto, a more permanent living in the USA is impossible due to his undocumented status and his unwillingness to expose his wife and children to all the risks involved. He does not want to 'ruin' his family. The family lives at the ranch outside the village of Amealco, the five children go to school in the community and he and his wife have no plans of bringing them to the USA. This major concern shapes his actions, and he tries to stay as long periods as he can in Amealco. This makes it even more difficult to get out of the trapped situation, as he goes for short periods, and cannot earn 'enough' in the USA.

The trapped or forced character of migration and return has also correspondence in public narrative. The characterisation of the USA as the 'golden prison' is for instance a theme in *La Jaula de Oro*, one of the greatest hits of the band *Los Tigres del Norte*, which in a few verses captures some major constraints of Mexican migrant workers in the USA. The metaphor of the 'golden prison' is relevant for migrants who are trapped in a migration pattern where the circulation becomes a 'holding action',<sup>188</sup> a mobility between 'one class site to another',<sup>189</sup> without leading neither to social mobility nor to economic improvement. One public narrative in Amealco which was told by one informant was the saying that 'the first month you are afraid of the *bracero*, because he spends a lot of money, the second month you feel sorry for him because he is broke'. Alfredo gave another version of this saying: 'the first month you should be afraid of the *bracero*, because after a month he will be looking for a loan'. This perpetuation of migration in a circulation pattern is in the case of Alberto connected to the *bracero* migration of his father, who worked in the USA for many years and who became a resident there. This 'inter-generational' connection between Amealco and the USA is a major factor behind Alberto's continued circulation.

But circulation does not imply that changes are not taking place. Informants commented about how for instance the dress and consumption styles have changed radically. One informant called migrants the 'cosmic cowboys'. The expression refers to the creative dressing in bright colours, with combinations of styles from the USA, the borderlands and the Mexican countryside. These styles stand out in the village, and as another informant said, they look 'not Mexican, nor American'. In addition to the dressing, the 'cosmic cowboys' are

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188 Shrestha (1988).

189 Miles (1987:7) cited in Boyle et al (1998).

recognised by their cars and their music from the borderlands. But these changed images are not part of a radical economic or social transformation in *el campo*. The socio-geographical structure is rather cemented with the aid of migrant remittances and returns, in a perpetuated pattern of movements. While remittances and returns may have *improved* the economic situation, they do not necessarily lead to social mobility or changes in the social structure. A migrant from *el campo* is from *el campo* also after returning from the USA. The cosmic cowboys, in a popular saying, 'come and go and as the come they go; as they go they come'.

One of the informants, the owner of a bar in Amealco which is a place of reunion for migrants from *el rancho*, gave his view on the changing image of this group of emigrants, the agricultural workers. The returnees to *el rancho* have reached an improved standard of living over time:

Now they are not who they used to be, those who came in *huarachitos* [sandals], now they come in their cowboy boots, they come in jackets and hats...their crop hanging on the side, the same style they use at the border. I see persons who are not Mexican nor Americans...(...) The majority of them are from *el campo*, people who have more necessities than others, right, and because of that they search for that kind of life. They are very much influenced in their way of life, in their communication with other people.

Yes, the changes are notable. To be sure, they are no longer those humble persons from before in their *huarachitos*. Today they speak out loud, they consume, and they come differently dressed. Today you see them shining their shoes. Before they even came barefoot, today they have pointed boots.

We all like to be seen. They don't want to come here and feel defeated. They say, 'I will dress well because I am used to it from there', and they come here to show themselves to their friends and to everybody. Every Sunday there are dances here where exclusively people from *el campo* participate (...) because people from *el pueblo* don't go there. (...) There are *conjuntos nortños*<sup>190</sup> here now, they are the ones who make the crowd, you see them every Saturday and Sunday, they are the ones who really create the atmosphere.

There is a sense of liminality in the narratives about the 'cosmic cowboys'. The description about the trapped circulators' national identities is ambivalent, as they are described as neither Mexicans nor Americans.

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<sup>190</sup> Small bands playing the typical 'Northern' music from the US-Mexican borderlands.

The *real life in Mexico* narrative reappears in the biographies of Victor, Roberto and Alejandro, but from another social class position and with its major significance at a different stage in their biography than in the case of Rigoberto. The narrative identities of the three of them at the point of emigration were very different from Rigoberto's, and none of them expressed economic or work related motives when they emigrated. Their biographies are analysed together, as the 'story lines' of their biographies have many similarities. At the point of emigration, their 'presiding fiction' were variations of an *emigration as personal experience* narrative, with some or all of the following components:

- go to the USA is an adventure, travel and learning experience: the border crossing, get to the big cities, the music, the culture
- the youth period is the time to go, one is 'restless', there is nothing to do right after high school
- one should leave in order to change the way of thinking of one's parents, of the system, to feel personal freedom and to create one's own life
- leaving is a possibility to get away from personal conflicts, problems, and have time to grow as a person
- if one 'makes it' in the USA, then one may stay on there

The experiences of everyday life in the USA drastically modified the 'presiding fictions' at the point of emigration, in the sense that working and living in the USA also included experiences of social degradation and discrimination. Alejandro's and Victor's biographies contain stories about how they felt they were categorised into a fixed notion of the 'Mexican', which limited their options and made them conscious about discriminatory practices in the labour market. These experiences were expressed through a narrative of *social degradation* in the US:

- Mexicans are seen as one sole category by the Anglo-Saxons, as a 'half human' but a 'good worker'.
- Regardless your professional or educational background, you will be given 'spade and hoe', because of 'the colour of your skin'.
- Mexicans are not allowed to progress in the USA.
- The USA is a country with money but no options.
- US technology, working methods, organisation and higher education are efficient and should be transferred to Mexico

Part of the personal experience of emigration was the confrontation with an image of the Mexican in the USA that was felt as being negative and containing racist undertones. Victor, Alberto and Alejandro coincided in their frustration over experienced prejudgements and stereotyped images. To Alejandro it was a shocking experience to discover the living conditions of Mexican migrant workers in the USA, and he became conscious about both the situation of minorities in the USA *and* about Mexican social class structures and politics during his emigration. The three of them had own concrete experiences of discrimination, but they were also 'observers' in the sense that they did not directly depend on the work in the USA. Victor said he had to 'put up with it' and that he 'let them get away with it' and that he would not go to the USA today except for on vacation with his family. The perceived images of 'the half human' and the 'good worker' were described by the three of them as part of the *social degradation* narrative.

In the interview with Alejandro he develops his view that the Anglo-Saxon has an 'already fixed notion' of all minorities, including the Mexican. In particular the recent political developments in California with the proposal of Law 187<sup>191</sup> is mentioned by Alejandro. With this law proposal and the discussions around it, the relegation and discrimination of the Mexican, of the illegal worker, became 'public domain' as he expressed it. Before, it was almost 'forbidden' to talk this way. His concern is that the Californian kind of politics makes it difficult for all Mexicans. Everybody with 'the type of skin' is seen as a 'wet-back'.

It is difficult for all Mexicans; Mexico-Americans, Mexicans, or illegals, because in us the Anglo-Saxon sees one sole category, we are all the same thing, so this also affects persons who live legally in the United States or are American citizens.

One informant, an returnee who own a bakery in Amealco, comments that the political changes in California are beginning to lead to new mobility strategies of the emigrants from Amealco:

Even up to last year there were many cars - as it always has been here - from California, California, California; there was not a car without license plates from California. And now, as they started with the new law to throw people out, or to not let people work there, they come from Texas, Texas, Texas. In other words, now they go to other states where that law doesn't exist...they look for other ways.

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<sup>191</sup> See Mehan (1997) for a discourse analysis of the public debate in the USA about Proposition 187.

Californian politics are part of public narratives in Amealco, and even though the law proposal finally did not pass, it affected people through the debate that followed the proposal. It was felt that the discrimination of Mexicans was legitimised. That Mexicans are seen as 'half human' (*mitad hombre*) was also expressed by Eduardo in relation to his confrontation with the working conditions of Mexicans in the USA. Employers pay lower wages to Mexican workers than to North Americans, because of 'the type of skin', as he put it. In the USA, Mexicans are seen as 'stupid', 'underdeveloped', 'backward', 'one sole category', 'the same thing', 'mules', 'ignorant', 'poor', 'illegal', 'badly judged', 'spoiled', 'without value', 'destructive', 'reserved', 'not articulated', 'from *el campo*', 'wet back' (collection of expressions from the interviews). In Alejandro's view, the racism is not directed only against Mexicans, but against all immigrants 'who are not blond, tall, with blue or green eyes'. He sees it as 'a political question', where the Anglo-Saxon always 'holds the strongest cards'.

At the same time, both Francisco and Victor comment that Mexican workers are valued in the USA because there is always demand for their labour. This is a second main image of the Mexican as expressed in the interviews; that of the 'hard worker'. By promoting this image, employers also play different groups of workers off against each other, for instance undocumented migrants against documented migrants. Alejandro, Victor and Alberto commented that Mexican workers are preferred by employers because they 'yield well'. This perception goes back to the time of the *braceros*, when as Francisco said, 'we gave them magnificent profits' because of the low wages paid to Mexicans and the high productivity of the workers in the fields. The image that Mexicans were 'labour' and not persons living in the USA became established then.

Expressions from the interviews related to this image were for instance that the Mexican in the USA is 'obliged to work', 'has to take any job', 'without rights', 'high productivity', 'consistent', 'valuable when needed', 'we are only for the fields', 'humble', 'traditionalist', 'moralist', 'appreciated for the work', 'doing good jobs', 'fighter', 'respected'. The hard working Mexicans are compared to the North Americans, who also are farmers, but not in the same sense. They are the landowners. 'Can you imagine an American harvesting oranges?' asked Eduardo. In his view the Mexicans are doing jobs that the Americans do not accept to do anyway. If they did they would 'charge a fortune'. *On these terms* the work of the Mexicans was appreciated and 'respected'.

The confrontation with the imposed images of Mexicans in the USA affected the narrative identities of Alejandro, Victor and Roberto. They all formulated critical standpoints in relation to these prevailing circumstances. In the case of

Alejandro, his emigration experience meant that he became aware of 'what life really is about' in *Mexico*, something he wasn't interested in before emigration, as his 'mind was in the USA'. Roberto had incorporated part of the 'public narratives' of 'a good Mexican' when he first emigrated:

I brought the same idea with me when I went to the USA. 'Well I am Mexican, but I want to be a good Mexican here in the USA'. Do good jobs, work hard, dress properly, eat well without living in great style, and without going astray.

This kind of reduction and fixation of identity was opposed by Alejandro and Victor, and in the case of Alejandro, he also opposed what he saw as a fixed identity promoted by the Mexican Americans in the USA. Instead, he and his group of friends tried to express 'universalism' in their music and otherwise. They did their things on the basis of common musical and political interests, not on the basis of nationality. Emphasising the 'Mexican' would in that context be a way to 'shut oneself up, to classify yourself and then never get out of it'.

Around the event of the migration back to Mexico, the three of them expressed narratives centred around the following components:

- when *the personal experience* is fulfilled and life becomes routine, it is time to move back and start *real life* as an adult in Amealco
- when one has obtained professional insights and personal tranquillity it is possible to go back
- emigration to the USA is a good experience in adult life, one can decide things, bring back 'an idea about work' invest and implement US technology and working systems and modernise agricultural production.

This change of emphasis indicated the termination of the *youth* period, and adult life with responsibilities was about to begin. The references to emigration as a 'youth' phenomenon in the *village* are made in relation to the emigration in the 1980s and 1990s, at a time when the migration process had reach a stage when there was already an established migration tradition. The earlier returnees to the village were adult men, and their emigration was framed more in terms of accumulating investment capital, in order to start or expand their businesses. In contrast, the young emigrants from the village completed their 'youth period' when they came back. Alejandro, Victor and Roberto resolved the youth *task* in the sense that they re-established their or their families' social positions in the village as persons contributing to the 'modernisation' of the municipality. Within this logic, they occupy positions as 'agents of change'. Alejandro entered his father's business, making plans for expansion to Mexico City. Victor invested capital and materialised his ideas about the

modernisation of agricultural production. Alberto wanted to 'give a message' to persons in the municipality: 'or shouldn't I transfer my knowledge or what?'

In these examples, the conclusion of the 'youth period' was a geographical return to the village and fulfilment of the *task*. The three of them moved to Amealco, but not as part of an inevitable or definitive 'return migration'. Alejandro's *localised bonds* to Amealco are his family and family business, but as part of further business activities he will move on to Mexico City. He also has many of his belonging and a social and family network in the USA. Alberto and his family are constructing a house and he has preliminary plans of further emigrations to the USA, where he has his truck and tools. They both have resident status in the USA. Victor, on the other hand has strong localised attachments in the form of his family, the family business and a large land-holding and has no plans of going to the USA, other than with his family 'on vacation'.

The time-space movements of Alejandro, Victor and Alberto show very different patterns, but they are involved in the same social process in the village of Amealco. From their class position, emigration was not a 'survival move' but a 'strategic move'.<sup>192</sup> Their emigration did not imply social change or capital accumulation, but a personally rewarding experience helpful for the fulfilment of their social roles and consolidation of their class position. They furthermore reformulated many of their earlier views and standpoints after return. Previous parameters changed. The incorporation into family or village life was not a return to a static, similar situation as before emigration. Alejandro formulated a critical view and a new political standpoint as a consequence of emigration. Eduardo also moved back with a strongly politicised position and a radically different view of US society. The images of the two contexts were changed through the migration experience.

### *Don't go to the North'*

Another aspect of the development of a distinct 'youth period' is the emergence of a definable 'youth problem'. There are images of returning youth to the village as 'captured lions', the 'restless' the 'uncomfortable'. Returnees from the North who cannot 'connect' and who 'want both places at the same time', as one informant exclaimed. In the interview with Eduardo some more 'threatening' images of returnees emerged, images where the returning mi-

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<sup>192</sup> Shresta (1988:196).

grants are associated with problems. Eduardo expresses a narrative which could be called a *North as a threat* narrative, where he gives examples of negative influences from the North, which the returnees may bring back to the village - 'they come back with ideas from there'. Among the influences that Eduardo names are junk food, family disintegration, violence, criminality, soap operas, drugs, divorce, insecurity. In his narrative the North represents a threat also in the sense of US dominance over Mexican economy; for instance by the loans to Mexico in relation with the 'peso crisis' 1994, and the selling-out of Mexican oil to the USA. In the view of Eduardo, the only positive influence from the USA would be that migrants came back to Mexico with an education from a university in the USA.

In the interview with Roberto and his wife Andrea, she expressed a similar image of the returnees. In her view they come back 'unbalanced':

There is more unbalance in the persons. (...) Some even return with another personality, I don't know, other kinds of clothes, more 'rock n' roll' according to them, I don't know. (...) I notice the change in the way they express themselves; here people talk in a sort of decent way - I don't know, it depends - but they come with their bad language, some with vulgarities.

Q: Is that noticeable among the young?

Yes, and there are also cases among the men, sometimes they maybe feel more liberated, younger, I don't know.

These images of the migrants to the village as a kind of 'youth problem' is strengthened by the difficult labour market for young men in the village during the 1990s. Not only working class, but also adolescents from families with a commercial or industrial resource base and/or with possibilities to study face a difficult labour market. For some of them emigration becomes a way of handling the youth *task*, often together with friends in the same situation. So far, young women are not among these emigrants. As already discussed, for young village women, internal migration to larger urban centres continues to be the main mobility alternative. The 'youth problem' is mainly associated with male village migrants, and not with returnees to *el rancho*. The image of the 'captured lions' is connected to some of the old themes in the early *corridos* referred to above: the morally wrong, the taking of foolish risks; the 'bragging' and changed behaviour after return and the destruction of family life. In contrast with the earlier period, these images today mainly concern returnees from other social backgrounds than the *campesino*.

To Eduardo the emigration led to a changed perception of both Mexico and the USA. His intention was to stay and his very first impression was that he would, but he ended up disillusioned. He comments that he from his upper

middle class position had the possibility to return, while those who are worse off are not able to return, because there are people in Amealco who depend on them. In particular undocumented workers stay on in the USA, with their families divided between the USA and Amealco. At the point of going back to Mexico he expressed similar *safety of the family* narrative as Alberto, in addition to his *threat* narrative. Part of the picture for him was also the fact that many undocumented workers competed on the labour market, which made situation unbearable to him as he was no longer prepared to accept the conditions. He, as other documented workers, migrated to Mexico, while undocumented workers stayed on.

The narrative identities of the returning migrants have given examples of different 'presiding fictions' about events in the individual migration biography. Narratives were related to family situations (family formation, safety of the family, family commitment), perceptions of *real life* in Mexico and work identities (respected worker, independent businessman), negative experiences of migration (threat, social degradation, trapped migration), and the search and fulfilment of personal experiences. These narrative identities were contrasted with some public narratives about migrants and migration, showing the partial incorporation of some public narratives, but most of all contrasting senses of self of migrants in relation to 'imposed identities' in both the USA and Mexico. The second part of this chapter will deal with the narrative identities of returning exiles from Sweden to Chile and some public narratives about *retornados* in Chile.

### **Narratives of return and circulation in the Swedish-Chilean context**

In the previous case study the migrants' narrative identities were discussed in relation to stories about migrants as reflected in *corridos*, popular songs. In this section individual narratives will be discussed in relation to constructions and images of exiles and *retornados* in the Chilean media during the early and mid-1990s.<sup>193</sup> The narratives about leaving Chile expressed in the interviews concern the forced departure, the violent rupture of the earlier everyday life situation. The different ways the rupture was dealt with and how exile led to *desexilio* are expressed in the migration biographies. The discussed 'narrative identities' are of course simplifications of the complex and changing identities of

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<sup>193</sup> The articles about *retornados* were obtained from the CIMAL/IOM archive of press-cuttings in Santiago during the field work in 1995 and cover the period 1991-1995.

individuals, but they are examples of how identities are formed in a social context and how they may change in relation to place and mobility over time. The expressed senses of self of exiles who moved back to Chile were interpreted from the interviews, as well as some major 'imposed identities' encountered during different stages of the migration biography.

*Narratives of life here and now: the concern for children's future*

Shortly after her arrival in Sweden, Violeta started to create an everyday life situation oriented towards a permanent life in the exile country. She lived by what could be called a *here and now* narrative, with a goal to establish herself socially and professionally as soon as possible. She did not look back, and she did not plan to return, her life in exile was not a parenthesis. Life had to go on. In a few years she and her children were 'well established', she had 'made her life'. She was part of a privileged sector of the society and managed to obtain a social class position in Sweden similar to the one she had in Chile. Despite her own situation, however, she began to see potential problems of discrimination of her children because of their immigrant background. This changed her 'presiding fiction' about a permanent life in Sweden. Her concern for her *children's future* meant that she took a chance to return to Chile, despite the risks under the dictatorship. In Chile she was able to create a new career and avoid the stigmatisation of being *retornado* in public sector employment under the dictatorship, largely because of her strong personal, economic and social resources. In this phase of return movements, the *retornados* had to return 'unnoticed', as described by Noemí Baeza, social assistant at the PIDEDE,<sup>194</sup> in an interview in *La Nación* in 1994. Their return depended on social class position and country of exile:

The Chileans who have returned to the country have had difficulties to reintegrate depending on the period they returned, the continent they came from and their professional level. Because under the military regime they had to fight, in addition to everything else, against the dangerous stigma of having been exiled, and consequently, had to pass as unnoticed as possible.

Violeta managed to return 'unnoticed' and she cut off all her ties and contacts with Sweden. Her narrative of living *here and now* continued to be central to her identity, and she quickly went on with her life project in Chile. She fulfilled her goals concerning the children's future and she reached her own professional goals. However, she also expresses during the interview that due to the

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<sup>194</sup> PIDEDE is a Chilean NGO working with different reintegration programs in support of young *retornados*.

fast departure, she feels that Sweden is something 'unfinished' for her, something she has not assimilated and which touches her emotionally. Violeta does not express her narrative identity as related to place or nation, but rather to her social class position. She did not accept the prospect of her children becoming subjects of discrimination or social degradation. The role she gives herself in her biography is a role of active decision-making with own control.

### *The demands of the country: nationalist return narratives*

When Rosario came to Sweden in 1976 she entered an 'exile identity' as she describes it, an identity that she found existed in the Swedish context, 'ready for her'. The exile identity was founded on a *duty to return* narrative. Rosario never felt she was free to enter the Swedish society; as 'the country' demanded her. The duty to return reinforced another component in Rosario's narrative identity in Sweden, which was that of being a *foreigner*. This was an imposed identity, but also incorporated in her sense of self. She lived nine years in Sweden as a *foreigner*.

I was always a foreigner, I spoke Swedish with an accent. (...) I had a country behind that was calling me, like a shadow. It was saying to me: 'be aware, you are not Swedish, you are not allowed to stay here for ever'.

Since her return to Chile in 1984, Rosario has dissociated herself from a *retornado* identity and, as Violeta, avoided the 'dangerous stigma of exile'. She felt she had to approach the 'Chilean reality' with humbleness and with an attitude of 'permanent apprenticeship'. Her narrative identity has after return incorporated a what could be called a *conditional integration* narrative.<sup>195</sup> Her 'integration' in Chile after return was conditional in the sense that she consciously downplayed her experiences of exile and devoted herself completely to the 'Chilean reality'. She does not want to have an identity in Chile as someone 'distant', or associated with being *retornado*.

I had a very strong necessity to open myself up to what this country is. There are many *retornados* who have an everyday attitude of distance to Chile, they are permanently criticising it and overvaluing their experiences from where they have come from.

Rosario has for many years been involved in political and social activities in Chile, which is a continuation of her political commitment and *duty to return* narrative. But her identity in relation to place has nevertheless since her return

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<sup>195</sup> The expression comes from the interview with Alejandro.

incorporated a narrative of *the Swedish*. To her, the Swedish is something that belongs to her private everyday life in Chile. She recognises the importance of her nine years in Sweden for her sense of self, in a formative period of her life, but she does not emphasise it in relation to other people and sees nothing 'exotic' about it.

For me Sweden is really around the corner, it is not on the other side of the continent. It is a close reality, I know details about Sweden. (...) I shared Chile much more with the Swedes than I can share Sweden with the Chileans. Obviously because the Sweden that I knew was at least a Sweden that - I know that this has changed - but when I knew it, it was a Sweden that was extraordinarily *solidaria*.

The relationship with Sweden is for Rosario today also a *point of security*. She is a Swedish citizen, speaks Swedish and sees her Swedish passport as a political and economic security. Rosario comments that in the social class that she belongs to there is less knowledge about Sweden, which also contributes to the little importance she gives *the Swedish* in her social relations.

Sweden is often much more well-known in working class sectors, than in the sector that I belong to, which is the middle-class sector. Because people in these [working class] sectors have relatives in Sweden, it is as simple as that. So there are women who don't even know Santiago, but they know as the palms of their hands Gothenburg, Lund or Malmö, because of the letters that their sons, grandsons, nephews send them...(laughter) in this sense these are beautiful stories.

Rosario's sense of self thus includes *the Swedish* in an everyday life sense, as part of her own sense of self and personal history, but she sees the *retornado* identity as an imposed identity that she does not want to incorporate. When Rosario returned in the 1980s, before the political changes, the *duty to return* narrative she expressed fitted into larger narratives of the political left, of many NGOs and social movements in their struggle for democracy in Chile. By the mid-1990s, however, the 'debt' or 'duty' of former exiles were also part public narratives of another character. In the Chilean press of the mid-1990s one finds articles that speak, with an ironic tone, about the 'profile of the *retornado*'. In *Diario La Segunda* an interview was made with the director of the Oficina Nacional de Retorno from which the journalist constructs a 'profile of that Chilean called RETORNADO'.<sup>196</sup>

The *retornados* came with the spirit to reintegrate in the society, full of expectations; willing not to begin from zero, but to support the Chilean process and deliver their knowledge ('many think they have a debt to Chile'). But they have met, after a parenthesis of 20 years, a country where the system has changed absolutely...either be-

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<sup>196</sup> *Diario La Segunda* (1994).

cause of the expectations they brought, or because of what they had heard about Chile from the outside, or because of their new habits ("we have to think of the person who lived two decades in Switzerland").

The illustration to the text in the article is a drawing of a stout bearded man who comes carrying a bag and a package of merchandise, in addition to a wagon loaded with three shining new cars. The article was written in a context when irregularities had been discovered in the management of the provisions of exemptions of customs duty created for *retornados* as part of the national return policy. Commercial middle-hands and persons related to the ONR were accused of being involved in a business taking advantage of the rights to import cars duty-free from the exile countries. The middle-hands earned big money from selling imported cars in Chile. The whole affair contributed to a largely negative image of the *retornados* and the press and television covered the story from different angles. Headlines in *El Mercurio* blamed the *retornados*: 'The frauds of political *retornados* are of magnitude'<sup>197</sup> and 'Another 26 vehicles confiscated in the fraud of the *retornados*'.<sup>198</sup> Other media focused on the middle-men and the corruption of the ONR, as in *Segundo Cuerpo*: 'Lucrative business at the cost of the exiles',<sup>199</sup> in *La Nación*: '*Retornados* denounce pressures'<sup>200</sup> and *El Siglo*: 'Indications of corruption'.<sup>201</sup> In the article in *Diario La Segunda* cited above the journalist wrote under the headline of 'The polemic final account of the *retornados* from exile':

Ex-communists, ex-socialists, ex-MIRists returned with 'Van' or Mercedes Benz free of duty. Others preferred to sell the exemption, and there were more than one scandal...

A fiscal investigation of the ONR was made as the office closed on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1994. The scandal became a theme in the political debate and the *retornados* became pawns in the game between different political fractions in the elections of 1994. Journalists who investigated the ONR revealed furthermore that the office had withheld close to USD 20 million that belonged to different NGOs working in support of the *retornados*. One of these NGOs, the PIDEE, announced in *La Nación* that the organisation would not be able to fulfil their already scheduled activities, as the ONR had withheld 40% of its funding for a program directed to children returning from exile.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *El Mercurio* (1993).

<sup>198</sup> *El Mercurio* (1993).

<sup>199</sup> *Segundo Cuerpo* (1993).

<sup>200</sup> *La Nación* (1993).

<sup>201</sup> *El Siglo* (1993).

<sup>202</sup> *La Nación* (1993).

### *The family vote and children's education*

Before their departure to Sweden, the lives of Alberto, his wife and children were conditioned by an *internal exile* in Chile where they moved around and frequently changed places within the country to avoid persecution.

There was personal persecution...so...with my wife, we didn't want to go, we didn't want to and we didn't go. We were not going to go, we stayed here in Chile, circulating between different places. At last we ended up in Santiago. (...) we lived a life in instability, going north, going south, north again, then to Argentina, then back...

In 1988, when they left, exile felt 'ridiculous' as at that time they, and many others, believed in the soon fall of Pinochet. After their return and with the political, social and economic problems they have encountered, there has been a continuity in the *internal exile* narrative.

It hurts me to have returned. It hurts me. Now it hurts me more than before. Because in the beginning I had hopes, that the democracy was coming. (...) that we would have a political platform.(...) But no. (...) I think I will work here a few years more and then maybe sell - the problem is that the family doesn't follow me in this - I want to go the south. I want to move to the South to live.

Alberto did not want to return to Chile, but the other members of his family did. His wife and children wanted to be close to the extended family in Chile, 'the grandmother, the grandfather, this and that, sentimental reasons I would say'. The *family vote* narrative decided and they returned after a rather short period of exile in Sweden. After five years in Chile Alberto thinks it was a mistake to return, in particular because of the educational situation for the children. One major recurrent theme in Alberto's biography is the importance of the *children's education*. When he and his wife were forced into exile, the United Nation gave them one week to decide, and they chose Sweden because 'we got indications that the children were a little privileged there'. During the years in Sweden, Alberto became further convinced that he wanted the family to stay there.

I did not want to return because...I had the desire, or the idea, or the hope that the children would have a better education there. Not in economic terms, but in terms of training, in obtaining a...degree or a profession.

Today, when the family has returned Alberto would have wanted to have the 'door open' to Sweden 'for the children'. He is worried about the situation in Chile today, where the privatisation of the educational system have made uni-

versity studies very expensive, and where the class character of education has become accentuated. The quality of the education has also deteriorated in his view. Many new private universities have been established, with varying academic levels and 'it is the parents who pay for the degrees'. The insecurity of the family has continued after return and Alberto wants to emigrate, if there is an opportunity. The door to Sweden is closed and they have no legal possibility to return.

*Exile as parenthesis: the story of the programmed return*

Victor and his wife Luisa were exiled in 1984 and arrived in Sweden with the conviction that they would be able to return to Chile in five years. They 'programmed themselves' for that. This *programmed return* narrative was central for Victor's 'narrative identity' during the years in Sweden, and his and his wife's everyday life was conditioned by it. Victor also expresses an *independent businessman* narrative, based on his identity as an entrepreneur. After their fulfilment of the programmed return and the obtained goal of being an independent businessman, Sweden still plays an important role in their lives. This is expressed in Victor's third major narrative of an *open door* in relation to Sweden, where the household strategy has been to 'hold on to something' in Sweden. The door had to be open, in case of a new military coup. If that happens they would leave for Sweden 'and never return again to Chile'. Victor would program himself again and 'settle there'. He also has concrete links to Sweden related to his business:

I went to buy machinery on two occasions. I went to Sweden to do this, I could have gone to Germany. But I went to Sweden. For one very simple reason. I know the medium. I know the place, I know the prices, and I stay with relatives.

To Victor and his family the return programs were helpful and instrumental. Other *retornados* could not benefit from them. A debate took place in Chilean media where on the one hand the director of the ONR and other official representatives were positive about the benefits and effectiveness of the programs, while on the other hand associations of *retornados* raised critical questions about for whom the programs were designed. Groups of former exiles provided resistance against major public narratives about the *retornados* and a national network of associations was created.<sup>203</sup> At one national meeting, referred to in *El Siglo*, the so called class-biased vision of return was opposed:<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> The association held a third national meeting on Aug. 20<sup>th</sup> 1993 (Tercer Encuentro Nacional y Metropolitano de Retornados).

<sup>204</sup> *El Siglo* (1993).

There is a class-biased vision of return. The experiences of the few *retornados* who have become established are divulged, and the poor and the workers, who form the immense majority, are hidden. (...) The programs for labour market re-integration, principally those with credit assistance as part of the joint program of the German government and the Banco del Estado, reproduce the elitist and mercantile logic that reigns without counterbalance in this society. Those *retornados* with major resources or with high qualifications have had access to credits and have relatively favourably installed themselves in economic activities. In contrast, the *retornados* who brought little or nothing from their exile and who don't have an education or job qualifications - the great majority - not only returned as they left, but they have also been subject to the economic discrimination affecting the popular sectors.

The media debate thus reflected a resistance on the basis of class among a group of former exiles who pointed out the social class differences among the *retornados*. They criticised that political refugees with 'economic migrant' strategies, based on their specific entrepreneurial backgrounds, were idealised in return programs and the media. María Teresa Almarza, who works for the NGO Cintras, expressed in an interview in *La Nación* that *retornados* pass through difficult phases of 'dis-encounters' and competition between 'those who suffered most or those who have most merits, between those who left and those who stayed'.<sup>205</sup> The cleavage between the majority of *retornados* and those 'who have money or are distinguished politically' is discussed in the article:

The political class did not have to prove anything. Many of them returned surrounded by that aura and that *glamour* of those who had international backing to publicly criticise the regime of Pinochet.

One of the politicians who returned from exile in Venezuela (today an elected senator) was interviewed in the article and he points out the importance of financial autonomy, in order to work politically in Chile. He had the means to install his own enterprise as he returned:

I think that the re-integration depends on your relative autonomy. If I had needed a permanent job in a private company, it would have been at the cost of silence. I was offended by the lack of solidarity, the rupture of bonds and the resignation.

The awareness of how difficulties after return were related to socio-economic backgrounds of *retornados* is further reflected in an article in *Análisis* where the importance of the destination country also is addressed.<sup>206</sup> The journalist cites an ONR employee who reports that exiles who return without means mostly

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<sup>205</sup> *La Nación* (1994).

<sup>206</sup> *Análisis* (1992).

do so from other Latin American countries and from former socialist countries. The article continues:

Even if it is difficult to make a socio-economic characterisation of the *retornados*, as among them there are poor, middle class, and even some who belong to the upper class of the country, the poor encounter the major difficulties, and in particular those who lived in exile in developed countries. The reality they knew and lived there makes their return to places of origin even more traumatic, as in many cases the social environment they left and to which they now return have become even more impoverished than before.

In an earlier issue of *Analisis* an interview was made with María Isabel Andrade, a *retornada* from Belgium, who relates that in Belgium the exiles were discriminated and labelled as the 'dark-heads', but after return they had to face social exclusion related to class:<sup>207</sup>

We came into collision with the class structure, which is very rigid in Chile, and we were down on the same social rung we one day had left.

In the interview she is also critical of members of the political class who returned from exile as she thinks they have abandoned their 'practical solidarity' for a 'discursive solidarity', giving priority to their personal options. The narrative identity of Victor as *independent businessman* who programmed his return and invested savings thus corresponds to an existing public narrative in Chile about *retornados* as entrepreneurs and capital investors, a narrative that also has been contested in public media debates by *retornado* associations of exiles with working class backgrounds.

### *The personal return: everyday life in two countries*

Eva's narrative identity was during her first years in exile closely related to her feelings about how she left Chile. She reinforced a 'Chilean' identity based on a *personal return* narrative, and she never tried to be 'Swedish'. In her everyday life in a 'ghetto', in Eva's words, in Stockholm 'it was 'we' against 'them'. It became a personal question for her to return. She prepared for the return while on the surface she led a life that did not differ from the lives of her friends. She finished school, took a university degree, worked, saved money and built a strong family and social network in Sweden.

However, it was the *personal return* narrative that motivated Eva in her everyday life, affected her decisions and influenced her in her professional orientation.

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<sup>207</sup> *Analisis* (1991).

After four years in Chile she feels she has not yet been able to create her own 'atmosphere' but is determined to do so. Living in Chile is a 'good life' but it is also difficult. Eva's everyday life situation depends on her further relations with Sweden - she is a Swedish citizen, she travels to Sweden, she has obtained Swedish funding for studies, and she maintains social and family ties in Sweden. However, she feels that she always will be treated as a 'foreigner' in Sweden and she is reluctant to move there for a longer period of time. She draws on a *circulation* narrative in which her everyday life includes the two countries. Circulation becomes related both to pragmatic and practical issues of work and studies and to maintaining her social and family network. The *circulation narrative* is mainly expressed as a strategy for making it possible 'to live' in Chile, where she is creating 'her life'. As she holds the option open of bringing her son to Sweden for a longer period of time, there is an ambivalence in her story. This ambivalence is connected to her sense of self as 'Chilean' and her return narrative. If she moves to Sweden again, she would 'take a different position' and 'integrate' herself. She is not convinced about what to do and her practical circulation narrative is more oriented towards permitting a life situation in Chile:

I have the door open, to do it sporadically. If the situation gets very critical I can go and work for 6 months and then come back. That way I have it open, but not in the sense of going there and start all over again - although it wouldn't be to start all over - to move again, no.

### *Stories of continued political exile: exclusion and circulation*

Alejandro describes his experiences of exile and return as a painful process, politically and personally. He was forced out of Chile by the Chilean regime and he had to go back to Chile from Sweden because of Swedish immigration policy. The involuntary character of his return and the political treatment of the *retornados* in Chile made his return problematic from the beginning. He has reformulated his earlier life strategies as well as personal and political standpoints, and is planning to leave Chile again. His *political identity* is strong and he has no platform for political activity in Chile.

Alejandro's story contains a critical evaluation of his own identity, his attitudes, strategies and perceptions. He is re-examining his earlier standpoints and finds himself in a process of formulating a new identity after return where, as he expressed it, he can be the person he is now, 'without losing what I have been before'. His *political identity* plays a major role and has affected his personal life strategies in many aspects, for instance in his professional life. He has not accumulated saving as he has never worked 'in function

of having things, of having money. I have worked in function of education and in function of solidarity, and that does not generate money’.

Alejandro’s life in exile was shaped by the major ‘presiding fiction’ of a future return as a political subject to Chile. This conditioned his everyday life in Sweden; his social and personal relations and his perception of the Swedish society. A consequence of this identity was a ‘lack of devotion’ in relation to the society where he lived and impossibility for him to ‘see’ the country of exile. His life project was characterised by being ‘fundamentally devoted to the return to your country’. The political work against the dictatorship and in support of democracy in Chile overshadowed any personal goals or objectives related to himself as an individual.

Today he strongly rejects his earlier ‘presiding fiction’. He thinks it was unjustified both in terms of what it implied for him personally during life in exile, and in terms of the - as it turned out - unmotivated political commitment to Chile. Chile is for Alejandro today a country where the people who were exiled are rejected and where there is no real recognition of the *retornados*. The rejection from the society is in Alejandro’s view not made in political rhetoric but through the practices of institutions, employers, media and through common attitudes of ‘the Chileans’. Alejandro calls it an overall context of *conditional integration*. Contemporary Chile is a country where, in Alejandro’s words ‘the source of inspiration, the centre, the axis of movement of everything, is money’. One public narrative of *retornados* as suspicious persons who had lived a golden exile was criticised in the media debate in the early 1990s. An article in *Analisis* provides a summary from an interview with a *retornado*:<sup>208</sup>

There are three visions about return. One is of those who administered the coup and who continue to discriminate and who curiously appear to have suffered more than the very victims of repression. Then there is this mass who accuse you of having left and who think that you had it fantastic, while there was suffering here [in Chile]. And finally, there are relatives and friends, who do like you, but out of pragmatism ask you what you have returned to.

The previous return motivation of Alejandro was transformed into a disillusioned vision of a *prolonged political exile*. He is trying to leave again, after four years of ‘intending something’ in Chile. Alejandro has a *Swedish* identity that for him contains different components and where the language is central. Alejandro’s sense of self is that he is more ‘Swedish’ than ‘Chilean’. In Chile, as opposed to when he lived in Sweden, he has incorporated more of this Swedish identity. He has thus identified with places *where he is not*, places pro-

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<sup>208</sup> *Analisis* (1991).

hibited to him. Exile is prolonged through further mobility, but it seems also to become a condition he lives in regardless of *place*. Alejandro's social network largely consists of other 'mobile exiles' and he has not developed localised assets of material character in either country.

Both Eva's and Alejandro's narrative identities express situations of being trapped, situations of dependence on (and in Alejandro's case exclusion from) both Sweden and Chile. Their feelings about national identities and future migrations are ambivalent, and their circulation narratives are conditioned by what they describe as factors beyond their own control.

### *The extended family narrative*

Evita couldn't live with the loneliness she felt in exile, she deeply missed her parents and brothers and sisters. She arrived in Sweden with the conviction that she was going to adapt and progress, that Sweden was 'where she lived now' and she would accept it. But she returned, 'not because of the country but because of the family'. The *extended family* narrative is strong in Evita's identity. She lived with her parents before she and her husband were forced to leave, and for two years after the return. She felt that the six years of exile were 'like a dream', a 'totally negative' experience. Today Evita and her family have moved to their own apartment, where she feels 'tranquillity, everything relaxed, more calm'.

Evita's narrative identity is dominated by the importance she gives to the family, both the extended family and her own. She had doubt about whether it was good or bad for the children to return to Chile, but 'we have to move forward with them here'. Evita expresses that 'we are here now, we have to fight here'. With their backgrounds they don't have access to the jobs with the best salaries. As Roberto, Evita's husband, said:

Chile is for a few. It is not equal for everybody. In my case for example: Evita is secretary and I finished Cuarto Medio and that was it. Which means that when I look for a job I will be doing assistance jobs or cleaning or similar kinds of jobs...(…) but the people who earn money, they do earn money here.

Roberto sees a lot of poverty in the marginalised neighbourhoods. He thinks that despite their own difficulties in paying for their apartment, they are fortunate in relation to the many poor people. Through his taxi business and Evita's job they have improved their situation, but it is in no way secure. On the whole, the everyday situation of the family has improved after return,

thanks to the savings and the skills they acquired. In relation to a *retornado* identity, they both distance themselves:

Q: Do you feel like *retornados*? Does that word mean something for you?

No, no.. (laughter).

Roberto: You know, I think that...we never wanted to be more...we have always tried to be very clear about the changes we went through when we lived there [in exile]; sufferings, loneliness; we always tried to be the same persons we were before. That is, we are the same, whether we returned with money or whether we did not return with money.

The *retornado* is thus for Roberto and Evita negatively associated with someone who have returned with money and who has changed during exile and feels 'more' after returning to Chile. Their own senses of selves are different, and they do not want to be seen as *retornados*. Their family and social network have been maintained over the years, and are important for their motivation to 'stay and fight' in Chile.

### *Being in-between: the narrative of professional circulation*

Juan experienced strong contradictions between his own sense of self as 'Swedish', and imposed identities of 'Chilean' and 'immigrant'. He felt pressured to leave Sweden and return to Chile, a country he had not been to since he was a child. He grew up with a 'presiding fiction' of *Sweden as home*, and rejected a Chilean identity. After his return to Chile he has reformulated his view of Sweden as his 'home' and expresses that he no longer has a 'home'. There is also a contrasting narrative in his biography of having been denied to be 'Swedish', already 'since nursery school'. From the moment he arrived at the refugee camp in Alvesta he was treated as 'different'. The 'immigrant' label was imposed on him which he realised as he became politically active and conscious about the mechanisms of exclusion in Sweden. He tried to be Swedish, but he was treated as 'the tail' in school, always as the 'special case'. His sense of self as Swedish was successively undermined and when he defines the 'Swedish', he describes it as something 'different'.

The Swedes has their own characteristics: first of all they are all blond, with blue eyes, they are rather big, they are cold in their way of being, and if you have a Swedish friend, it is a friend for life.

The contradictions between the two narratives that formed his identity made him feel *in-between* his 'Swedish' friends and his 'immigrant' friends. In the neighbourhood where he grew up conflicts were common between different

groups of youth, often along the lines of ethnic background, and he had the role of the mediator. He took the decision to go to Chile, which he expresses as a way of 'saving himself'. After having lived a few years in Chile, Juan does not identify himself solely as 'Swedish' or 'Chilean', but somewhere in-between and, in practical terms, as both. He is categorised an 'immigrant' in one country, and a *retornado* in the other and 'belongs nowhere'; he says he is part of a 'lost generation'. Concerning the *retornado* identity, he is really upset.

Q: When you hear the word *retornado*, do you feel like a *retornado* or do you feel like something else?

I get furious...it really annoys me. Because *retornado*...I am not. It was my parents who...(…) Nobody asked me, I was brought by the circumstances. I did not leave the country by my own will. (...) It [*retornado*] sounds like something ugly. (...) Afterwards they come to Chile and think they are the rich ones, they think they are Europeans. So that too, as I said before, I come here and I am equally treated as a foreigner. In my course they call me 'the Swede'.

On the other hand, Juan also sees advantages in having access to two contexts, two 'markets'. In practice, he takes advantage of being both 'Swedish' and 'Chilean'. He has an education, some professional experiences and language skills. An emerging narrative in his identity is a *professional circulation* narrative. He talks about himself as a person who will be circulating between work in different countries; in particular in Latin America and Europe. He has social and family networks in both Sweden and Chile, and members of his family are moving back and forth between the countries. His 'return' to Chile has turned out to be one station in a circulatory lifestyle, where he feels that he does not 'belong' to one specific place or nation. So while he did not want to leave in the first place, he today sees the possibility of gaining professional experience in both countries and move between the different labour markets. 'Sweden lost its investment' as he expressed it.

Juan's *professional circulation* may become part of the mobility of the 'new globalized business elite' in Santiago, an elite that is increasingly integrated in the 'social core' of the world economy.<sup>209</sup> The business elite consists of well-educated, well-paid professionals and business people, who come from the middle and upper classes in Chile. After the 'boom' years of the 1990s the Chilean business elite started to participate more in a 'wider transnational diasporic 'social core' at the global scale'<sup>210</sup>. This social core is characterised by a common lifestyle in terms of housing, consumption, media influences and

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<sup>209</sup> Jones (1998).

<sup>210</sup> *ibid*: 314.

foreign travel patterns. In the study by Jones the *retornados* are given a central role in the formation of this elite.

Significantly, many of the new employees in the expanding business elite were 'returning Chileans', exiles of the Pinochet years. (...) The business managers I interviewed thought that the *retornados* were a key group taking up professional a business jobs (ibid:310).

Jones cites from one of the interviews with a 36-year old male Chilean Manager of a Chilean bank, who sees the *retornados* as a group that will demand certain jobs and consumption:

Many people who left when Pinochet was under control have now come back and they have often lived in Europe or the US....and had jobs and...[the] experience of life away from Chile. When they come back here they want more of the things they saw in the US: the jobs, the education for their children, the houses and cars and so on (ibid:310).

This image of the *retornado* as part of a mobile business elite class contributing to the development of the Chilean economy (filling the demand for professionals in the private finance and business sectors) contrasts with the identity of *retornados* as it was constructed in public narratives in the newspapers and other media revised during the field work, and in the interviews with the migrants. But similar images of the *retornados* are also reflected in for instance IOM programs. The IOM in Chile changed their policies in the beginning of the 1990s towards *circulation* rather than 'return policies'. The IOM proposes that concepts of brain-drain and exodus are inappropriate.<sup>211</sup> Instead, the organisation argues for the development of programs oriented towards 'facilitating circulation'. The aim would be to assist persons to emigrate, establish links, and work in different fields in the region or in the North, and instead of promoting the *return* of qualified exiles from abroad, these persons could function as important links/contacts between the exile country and Chile. They would assist in promoting the further emigration of people from Chile, in order to increase international co-operation and interchange. IOM also proposes that Chileans in the diaspora could function as 'non-traditional ambassadors' for Chile in the world.

This 'circulation thinking' stands in contrast with the return focus in many international organisation and 'host governments' when it comes to refugees and migrants from the South. To the business elite, *circulation* may become a 'normal life', increasingly facilitated by different national policies that are de-

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<sup>211</sup> IOM (1991).

signed to attract them. However, as exemplified in the interviews, migrants and refugees without higher education or access to substantial economic resources also live and circulate as part of their everyday lives. Families, social networks and work places are located in different countries, between which individuals move and where they stay during different periods of their lives. Circulation in these cases may be restricted and controlled by legal status (lack of residence permit or non-access to citizenship in one of the countries), and individuals may feel coerced into the circulation pattern. Without means and access to sufficient resources the circulation is not 'free' and 'facile'.

The narrative identities of the *retornados* showed differences in the meanings of exile and return for individuals over time. Narratives were related to family situations (children's future and education, the extended family and the family vote), Sweden as 'parenthesis' (programmed return, duty to return, political return, personal return), work identities (independent businessman, professional circulation) experiences of exclusion (foreigner, immigrant, prolonged political exile), national identities ('Chilean', 'Swedish') and intents to be included (Sweden as home, live here and now and conditional integration). The narrative identities of migrants were discussed in relation to larger public narratives, or discourses, which for individuals could become 'imposed identities' they had to confront and deal with. The events of geographical displacements in the migration biography led to changes in narrative identities and the formulation of new 'presiding fictions'. Examples of these were different narratives of *circulation*.

The last chapter of the dissertation consists of a concluding discussion. A framework of interpretation of return and circulation in North-South contexts is outlined. The importance of considering the 'subjects of migration' is stressed in light of contemporary restrictive migration policies and harsh conditions for labour migrants and refugees in South-North contexts. Findings from the case studies and their implications for future studies within this research field are discussed. The chapter also includes some reflections on the use of methods.



## VII CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Return movements to the South after labour migrations and forced exile in the North are examples of selective spatial events shaped by complex historical and geographical circumstances. Contemporary debates and migration policies in the North have largely focused on 'threats' of migrants and refugees moving from South to North, and restrictive control policies have been developed to limit perceived 'flows' or mass migrations of persons in these directions.<sup>212</sup> South-North migrations have become 'unwanted and strongly restricted'<sup>213</sup> but continue to take place - often under difficult conditions - and seldom in a uni-directional fashion. Return movements to the South form an important part of the migratory exchanges between North and South, and may increase in importance over time.

This study has focused on the everyday lives and experiences of individuals who have migrated within contexts of North-South relations. The case studies have highlighted the 'subjects of migration' but not in isolation from their particular socio-historical contexts. The dynamics and consequences of this form of mobility for individuals have been in focus and categories of return were identified and related to evolving migration processes in the two case studies. The concept of 'narrative identity' was used to analyse the shaping of the migration biographies and to examine the ways migrants made sense of their experiences of emigration/exile and return. In a further step the narrative identities were discussed in relation to examples of public narratives in the two contexts.

The dissertation's case study of US-Mexican migration showed that geographical return took different shapes at the local level as the *migration process* evolved between the studied municipality in Mexico and different destinations in the USA. The initial phase of *formative return* led to the gradual establishment of a migration tradition and development of a remittance economy. Return movements turned in a later phase into an increasingly trapped migratory pattern of differentiated *circulation* between the municipality in Mexico and different locations in the USA. The 'narrative identities' of returning migrants were related to family situations (family formation, safety of the family, family commitment), perceptions of *real life* in Mexico and work identities (respected worker, independent businessman), and the search and fulfilment of personal experiences. These narrative identities were contrasted with public narratives,

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<sup>212</sup> For analyses of South-North migrations constructed as 'threats' see for instance Tesfahuney (1998) and Hermele (1997).

<sup>213</sup> Hammar and Tamas (1997:11).

showing the partial incorporation of some public narratives and contrasting senses of self in relation to 'imposed identities' in both the USA and Mexico.

The second case study of the dissertation identified categories of return movements in a context of changing conditions in both Chile and Sweden. Examples of categories were 'conditional return' and 'programmed return' and, in the phase of *desexilio*, professional circulation, continued exile and everyday life circulation. The narrative identities of *retornados* were related to family situations (children's future and education, the extended family and the family vote), Sweden as 'parenthesis' (independent businessman, professional circulation) and experiences of exclusion (foreigner, immigrant, prolonged political exile). The narrative identities were discussed in relation to larger public narratives about *retornados* in the Chilean media.

The analysis did not at this level go further to a systematic discourse analysis of for instance return policies or migration discourses in the two studied contexts. This would be a possible continuation for future research. Another possible continuation would be an extended examination of emerging migratory circuits between North and South. What are the relationships between migration circulation, remittances and socio-economic change in the places forming the 'nodes' of such circuits? How may 'collective identities' be constructed of migrants moving in North-South circuits? This question has also been raised by Faist (1997):

[T]ransnational social fields seem to depend on *twofold local assets* that are located both in the sending and the receiving countries. If such transnational spaces exist for longer periods of time, e.g. longer than the first generation of migrants, effects are expected to be seen not only on the level of exchange but also on the level of collective identity (ibid:273).

The case studies gave examples of emerging forms of *circulation* between North and South. The concept of *circulation* challenges dominant theoretical frameworks within research on international migration. The self-sustaining character of migration processes has in some contexts led to continued South-North migrations, but not in linear one-way process. As shown in the two case studies, return movements to the South continue even in later stages of migration processes, and the returns may have different character depending on the stage in the migration process. Research on international migration has often pictured migration as an exceptional phenomenon in time and space, a discrete event that ultimately leads to permanent settlement in a 'host' country, or, in a few cases, to permanent return to a 'home' country. Major research efforts have thus been dedicated to the study of processes of 'integration' in a 'host' country or 're-integration' in a 'home country'. This linear

framework of interpretation of migration is inappropriate in relation to the findings of this study. Other researchers have similarly pointed out the problems with this framework.<sup>214</sup>

The framework of interpretation as it developed during this study is described in the following. It is argued that an analytical framework needs to take into consideration relations between mobility, identity formation and the specific spatial contexts in order to account for the complexities of the movements and avoid reductionist understandings of exile/emigration and return. Frameworks of interpretation require incorporation of return and circulatory movements into the analysis, but not as exceptions or 'transitory' phenomena. The framework of interpretation outlined in this study includes the following components: space conceptualised as relational space; the identification of specific context-dependent migration processes between North and South; the individual biography (phase in the life course, social position and narrative identity) of migrants; the consideration of localised bonds (family/social networks, material bonds) and public narratives about migrants in North and South. Figure 7 summarises the framework of interpretation.

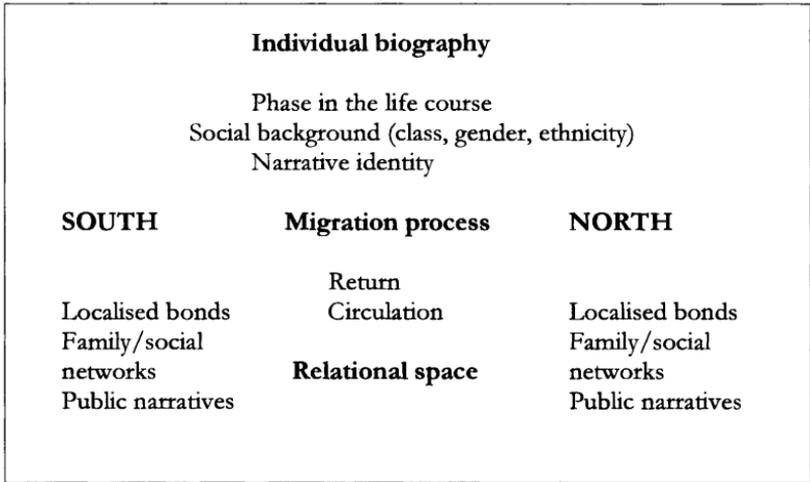


Figure 7. Components in a framework of interpretation of North-South return and circulation.

### Space conceptualised as relational space

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the conceptualisation of space as *relational space* implies for instance focus on social relations and power struc-

<sup>214</sup> Pessar (1997). See also recent work by Olsson and Grandin (1999).

tures, the meanings of place and mobility, the formation of human subjectivity and identity, and the study of different representations of space/place. Understood as *relational spaces*, specific North-South contexts may be described as 'overlapping territories'<sup>215</sup> and migration as 'embedded' in the social spaces of everyday life in places involved in the migratory exchanges.<sup>216</sup> Several kinds of spaces, or dimensions of space, are involved, and some of these dimensions may be examined through in-depth interviewing and interpretation of migrant biographies and narratives. Migrants move between different interrelated spaces: between the particular social relations and spatial practices in each place, between different public narratives related to each place, and between places that have different meanings for individuals in her/his everyday life during the phases of the migration biography. As exemplified in the interviews, migrants are connected to social space in the form of for instance citizenship, residence status etc., acquisition of land, housing, equipment and the formation of family/social networks and work relations. Migrants are furthermore affected by representations of space (public narratives and discourses, narrative identities) and communicate meanings and feelings connected to mobility and places.<sup>217</sup>

### **Identification of specific migration processes in North-South contexts**

The overall contexts of North-South migrations are characterised by strong restrictions on mobility in the direction from South to North (through control of labour migrants and asylum seekers), while the movements from North to South are less restricted in formal and legal terms. However, the way *migration processes* between countries in the North and in the South develop vary significantly, and the way this takes place has to be studied from case to case. A tendency during the 1990s has been that return movements are encouraged in certain contexts, through return policies of governments in the North, both concerning labour migrants and concerning refugees from the South. Temporary protection status and guest worker programs imply compulsory repatriation after defined time periods in the North. The character of migratory exchanges between North and South is highly differentiated, between those who belong to the mobile 'business elite', refugees and asylum seekers and labour migrants.

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<sup>215</sup> Said (1993).

<sup>216</sup> Halfacree and Boyle (1995), Malmberg (1997).

<sup>217</sup> See Massey (1994) for a theoretical discussion on the interrelations between different dimensions of space.

The importance of the legal status of migrants and refugees was exemplified in both case studies. The overall national and international political changes affected the way the migration processes evolved and conditioned the mobility of migrant workers and exiles. Legal status became a major factor in the later stage of the migration process between Amealco and the USA, and in the Swedish-Chilean context the question of citizenship was central for the forming of migration strategies. The split between documented and undocumented migrants, within families, between friends and relatives, the difficulties involved in border-crossing, the impossibility to build localised communities were consequences of illegalisation of Mexican migrant workers in the USA. Undocumented status made migrants stay longer in the USA, and avoid to return because of the risks involved, while legal migrants were able to return to Mexico. In the context of Swedish-Chilean migrations the importance of an 'open door' between the countries was stressed, and the praxis concerning the right to renew residence status, the access to Swedish citizenship or to have double nationalities were of central importance. Stronger restrictions in South-North mobility make the return migration a more difficult project to realise and thus make migrants prolong their 'seasons' in the North, although they might have the intention to move on. A secure legal status facilitate for migrants to materialise intended moves and also to circulate between countries. This was exemplified in the migration biographies where documented status facilitated return and circulation to Mexico, while undocumented status forced migrants to stay for longer periods of time in the USA.

### **The individual biography**

The dissertation has dealt with how individuals have experienced a specific form of geographical mobility within two larger contexts of changing social, economic and political circumstances. Intents were made to interpret and exemplify the complex relations between different 'time-spaces' and individuals' return movements. In the first sections of the case studies, the *historical time-space* of the contexts was outlined. The US-Mexican and Swedish-Chilean historical context of social, political and economic relations were briefly described. Secondly, the time-spaces of the *migration process* between the countries were interpreted. The migration processes' own dynamics and own 'time' started with particular forms of mobilities, which changed into other forms in later phases. Finally, there has been a major focus on the *biographical time-space*, that is, the migration biographies of individuals. The relations between the first kinds of 'time-spaces' with the biographical time were interpreted from the interviews.

The individual biographies gave examples of how return migration had different consequences depending on the stage of the migration process, the phase in the life course and the social position of the migrant. This could be described as examples of complex 'intersections' between biographical time, historical time and process time.<sup>218</sup> The importance of household and family situation, intra-generational links, concern for children and the extended family were exemplified. Return migration could for instance take place in relation to a specific 'turning point' related to the individual biographical situation (a divorce, a broken relationship, a call from a relative, a friend's invitation). There were examples in the interviews where such 'turning points' 'triggered' the return movement, by making the connection with all the other circumstances. The 'turning point' in an individual biography is not necessarily a 'factor' behind the return, but rather a kind of immediate circumstance that relativises the other factors.

The social differentiation of migrants reflected existing power relations and social structures in both contexts. In the US-Mexican case study, for instance, migrants described themselves as being categorised as 'one sole category' in the North, but there were important differences in the consequences of return and circulation depending on social class backgrounds in Amealco. The interviews gave examples both of losses and gains in social positions as a consequence of migration and return. In Amealco the differences between migrants and non-migrants seemed relative in relation to the continued social polarisation between persons of different class backgrounds. The migration and return of persons to *el pueblo* and to *el campo* were connected to contrasting socio-economic processes in the local context. Migrants were mobile for different reasons, related to their social positions. The migration biographies in the US-Mexican case study exemplified a disperse 'sun-fan' shaped mobility in terms of the destinations of migrants in the USA and their social positions through the phases of emigration and return. While the social backgrounds were varied in Amealco they closed in on very few social positions in the USA. After the return, previous social positions were reinforced or maintained, and there were examples of social mobility. The disperse character of migration in terms of destinations in the USA has been exemplified in other studies, for instance in Brah (1996), with reference to Rouse (1991):

[T]hese migrants have established several outposts in the United States (...) There is frequent traffic and communication between these outposts in the USA and Aguilla [the village in Mexico], with 'homes' dispersed in several places. In a sense they are *simultaneously migrants and settlers* negotiating their personal agendas in a political con-

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<sup>218</sup> Katz and Monk (eds.) (1993) discuss such intersections from a feminist perspective. See also Malmberg (1997).

text in which the demand for their labour has been set against increasing political pressure for tighter immigration control. (...) Mexican workers now suffer resentment for 'taking our jobs' in the USA and in Mexico. (...) Thus there emerges the paradox of the *'undocumented worker'* - needed to service lower rungs of the economy, but criminalised, forced to go underground, rendered invisible; that is case as a phantom, an absent presence that shadows the nooks and crannies wherever low-paid work is performed. (ibid:200-201).

The lived experiences of migrations to the North were also shared collectively among returning migrants, expressed in migrant stories and anecdotes by persons from different social backgrounds. These stories and the accumulated knowledge communicated by them continuously maintain the migration tradition. The wide acceptance of the migration phenomenon reflects how migration has become fundamental for the economy of both rural communities and the village, despite the often harsh conditions and difficulties involved.

In some migrant biographies families or households were divided between the places in North and South, either within the nuclear family or as an intra-generational division. The everyday life of labour migrants to the USA from Mexico was closely connected to worker-employer relations in the agricultural field or in factories, construction or services. Migrants everyday social relations in the USA were in the interviews mostly with employers and other migrant workers. Other social roles or positions in the USA were difficult to obtain. Everyday life in terms of housing and leisure time would be determined by legal status and social and family networks in the USA. The asymmetrical relations between the countries led to divided lives, with the economic base located in the North, and the social and family network located in the South. Bonds were created in different places over international borders and instead of permanent 'returns' there were forms of circulation, also referred to as the 'floating population'.

The case studies illustrate major differences between return from exile and return from labour migration, while there also were similarities in the experiences. Exile situations imply drastic and involuntary ruptures of earlier life trajectories, which mark persons' lives for long periods of time. Initially, the meanings of return are fundamentally different in an exile situation than in a situation where there is no formal prohibition to return. The way the phase of *desexilio* actualises the return question is furthermore different from cases of labour migration. Over time, though, there are similarities in experiences, and the distinctions between return from exile and return from emigration may become 'blurred' and not always clear-cut. Similarities were also seen in the situation of young migrants in the North in the two contexts. These young persons had largely different experiences and backgrounds, and the contexts of their emigration and return were very different, but their expressions about

how they were 'constructed' by the majority society in the North were similar. Being an 'immigrant' in Sweden and being 'Mexican' in the USA implied experiences that resembled each other.

In the interviews with the younger migrants and exiles there were furthermore similarities in the way the 'homeland' was discovered during life in the North and in the consciousness about and relationship with 'another place' while leading an everyday life in emigration/exile. Rather than a strong expression of 'belonging' to either national territory, there were examples in the interviews where questions of identity-place/nation relations were relativised and undramatical. Multiple place relations were part of a pragmatic organisation of activities in both countries. The creation of a *real life* after return, as expressed in some of the interviews, depended on the continued links and mobilities to the North. Rather than dualistic either/or national identities, there were interviewed persons who struggled with imposed national identities and exclusions from identities and their relations to their own complex senses of self. The categorisation of *retornados* in Chile was for instance resisted through intents to maintain an integrated sense of self to 'be what we are, without denying what we have been'. Lived experiences included what seemed to be unavoidable confrontations with different imposed categorisations during the course of the biography. There were stories which expressed intents to break away from categorisations, which sometimes appeared as a component behind the geographical mobility, a way of 'saving oneself', to avoid 'becoming someone' different from one's sense of self.

### **Narrative identities and public stories - some final reflections**

The narrative identities of migrants as interpreted from the interviews were in the case studies related to larger public stories in the form of popular songs and media constructions of migrants. In both the studied contexts, these public narratives expressed ambivalence and changes over time in relation to the 'northerners' and the *retornados* respectively. In the US-Mexican case the negative images of the 'traitors' returning from the North changed into positive images of 'los norteños' providing the economic security of the municipality. Further narratives re-incorporated the images of 'threats' from the North in the form of migrants returning with 'ideas from there'. In Chile the constructions of *retornados* as political 'threats' under the dictatorship, were changed in the phase of *desexilio* to public narratives of 'suspicious persons' and persons who had lived a 'golden exile'. Ambivalence was exemplified with further constructions of *retornados* as victims of exploitation and human rights violations, and of persons belonging to an emerging transnational business elite. The ten-

sions and contradictions between 'host' and 'home' country public narratives about 'belongings' and the senses of self of migrants and exiles were exemplified in the interviews. The selective incorporation of certain narratives and the dis-identification with others were expressed as for instance the example of Rigoberto's narrative identity as 'respected worker' in contrast with the public narrative of the migrants as a 'traitor'.

The biographical approach, as presented by Boyle et al and Gutting, goes 'beyond the humanist bias' in the interpretation of the biographies. The understanding of the subject is thus different, both in relation to humanist and to behavioural geography, and this is important for the theoretical understanding underlying the use of a biographical approach. In my interpretation, the biographical approach proposes a view on the subject not as unified and fixed 'core' but as changing and formed in social relations in different spatial contexts. In relation to discourse analysis, the perspective permits consideration of the contradictions and complexities of the individual's motivations and meanings and avoids 'determining' subjects as the bearers of different dominant discourses. A difficulty of using discourse analysis in relation to biographies of individual migrants may be

a kind of discourse determinism which implies that people are mechanistically positioned in discourse, a view which leaves no room for explicating either the possibilities for change or individual's resistance to change, and which disregards the question of motivation altogether (...) (Henriques et al 1984:204, cited in Brah 1996:120-121).

At this level of analysis, rather than seeing the individual as bearer of certain identified discourses, the 'narrative identity' expresses the selective incorporation of larger stories in the social contexts of the migrants; both in terms of internalised dominant discourses *and* resistance against and dis-identification with these discourses. The importance of and the compositions of these 'story lines' may change over time and in relation to the phases of the migration biography. Thus, the biographical approach seeks to interpret how the meanings and understandings of mobility also change over the life course with the narrative identities of individuals. The general sequence of events, related to the historical context and the migration process, intersects in complex ways with the sequence of events that takes place in the individual biography. The larger stories that form part of the contexts (such as different public narratives) and the 'presiding fictions' of individuals, shape these events and give them their different, often contradictory, meanings.



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