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The border space in the articulation of transnational social spaces: theoretical reflection and empirical analysis

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Resumen

La discusión sobre el lugar y el espacio es un tema pendiente en la literatura de migraciones. Desde una perspectiva tradicional, las migraciones internacionales se han entendido en términos bipolares, entre un lugar de origen y uno de destino y a través de esquemas de adaptación/integración/asimilación de los inmigrantes en los países de llegada. El enfoque transnacional aplicado al estudio de las migraciones, que ciertamente constituye un reto a esta concepción rígida de los procesos migratorios, elimina en la práctica las referencias de carácter geográfico, ya que las migraciones se producen en espacios sociales y culturales sin base territorial. El artículo reflexiona sobre la articulación del espacio fronterizo, entendido como las ciudades fronterizas del norte de México, en la construcción de espacios sociales transnacionales, a partir de la Encuesta sobre Migración a la Frontera Norte (EMIF).

Palabras clave: asimilación, frontera México-Estados Unidos, migración interna, migración internacional, transnacionalismo.

Abstract

The border space in the articulation of transnational social spaces: theoretical reflection and empirical analysis

The debate on “place and space” is to be explored in the literature of migrations. From a traditional perspective, international migrations are understood in bipolar terms, from a point of departure and a second of arrival, and through frameworks of adaptation/integration/assimilation. The transnational approach for the study of migration which constitutes a challenge for rigid traditional perspectives does not take into account practically any geographical reference. According to this view, migrations occur within social and cultural spaces without a territorial basis. In this context, this article explores the role of the border space (i.e. the Mexico northern border cities) in the construction of transnational social spaces, from the analysis of EMIF (Survey on Migration to the Northern Border).

Key words: assimilation, Mexico-USA border, internal migration, international migration, transnationalism.

The discussion on space is a pending subject in the literature on migration. Space's definition in said literature has been between the theoretical demand and the practical needs to translate the concepts to operational variables from the available information (Pascual de Sans, 1993), hence, space, understood as territory, is divided into administrative regions and migration is

considered as a change, from the area of origin to a destination one. This fact represents, firstly, a problem of quantitative character. According to the size and number of zones established, there will be more or fewer displacements (see for example, Rees and Convey, 1984; Robinson, 1998); administrative divisions, besides, separate different types of migrations, for instance, internal and international migrations, when, from a perspective of an individual's migratory trajectory or a collectivity, this division can be fictitious.

Sources of information are a clear limit. Thus, translating territory into quantifiable variables, from the information from census or surveys, it is generally reduced to 'place of birth', 'nationality', 'place of residence' prior to data gathering. This systematization implies evident problems. For example, the place of birth, related to the place of current abiding, allows detecting people who have moved once, yet it neither allows learning other in-between displacements nor detecting immigrants, or establishing the possible displacements of the people in the origin zones who have left and come back.

As for broader geographic divisions, the most popular division in migration studies, both in Mexico and in the rest of the world, has been, undoubtedly, the countryside-city dichotomy, which generally has been studied in a single direction, from the countryside to the city, within the supposed urbanization and industrialization processes. In reference to Mexico-United States migration, Durand (1988) argues that the priority the study of rural environment usually has a justification or prejudice of theoretical character, since it is supposed that in the Mexican countryside is where the problems and the so-called 'factors of ejection' that determine the emigration process are.

In this same sense Rouse (1991) considers that the socio-spatial image prevailing in the discourse on the rural Mexico has been that of 'community' understood as abstract expression of the Nation-State, in the sense of a population inside closed and unique territories or places. Hence, according to this author, it is assumed that social relations where the members of these communities take part are more intense within this space than outside. That image of the rural world also implies internal coherence and a series of common features, expressed as an identity whose constitutive parts fit perfectly inside a shared way of life, where there is a series of values and opinions which have internal coherency (Rouse, 1991).

These traditional approaches have seen the phenomenon in bipolar terms: a place of origin where one leaves (generally a less developed country, in the case of international migration), and a destination place one arrives to (a better

developed country —Rouse, 1992). This traditional conception has two suppositions. Firstly, the settling is seen as a process by means of which people gradually create their social networks in the destination places and lose contact with the community of origin. Secondly, the attitudes and practices of the migrants are seen from a neo-functional perspective, as rather effective forms of adaptation to the new environment. As this author states, the emphasis on a bipolar reference framework masks the ways in which permanent migrants preserve contact with the people and communities they have left behind (Rouse, 1992).

Space and transnational approach

This traditional approach of international migration has been rebated by studies that have opted for a transnational reading of this migratory flow. Kearny (1991), perhaps one of the authors who has worked the most in this line, distinguishes, defining transnationalism, between forms of organization and identity that are not limited by transnational borders, as the ‘transnational’ corporations would be, and ‘post-national’ forms, which reflect a change toward a period where a redefinition of the National-state role takes place. In relation to this last, migration has become a basic structural characteristic of some communities that have been transformed in truly transnational ones. Such communities thus defy the defining capacity of Nation-State which they transcend (Kearney, 1991), thereby migrations occur in global spaces with multiple dimensions, composed by interrelated subspaces, limitless and often discontinuous (Kearney, 1995).

Kearney’s reflections (1991; 1995) on space imply two suppositions, which are somehow, present in the literature of anthropological nature. One, the construction of transnational communities implies a challenge for the very definition of Nation-State, up to the point that some authors have stated the disappearance of it, and even of the space understood within geographic and territorial limits. In this manner, the migratory flows and the construction of transnational communities would be created in a hypothetical ‘third space’, ‘hyperspace’ or ‘de-located trans-nations’, in any case, alien to national dynamics (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1996). Two, (transnational) localities are social and cultural constructions (communities), not geographic spaces.

This theoretical discussion of space, which many a times has implied its denial, has been seen, to a certain extent, contrasted to the empirical studies performed by anthropologists and sociologists on transnationalism. In this sense, despite anthropological literature prefers the 'community' concept, non-delimited to territorial limits or precise spaces, but as a set of social relations and common identities. Most of the empiric studies in reality is centered on concrete localities, located in a different Nation-State, which some authors call 'transnational localities', it is, in territories with very precise administrative limits.

Nonetheless there is no explicit reference to the transnational phenomena, Mines (1981), in his study in Las Ánimas, Zacatecas, introduced the concept of 'communal migration tradition', which can be understood as a first antecedent to the concept of 'transnational community'. Later, Georges (1990) in her study on Los Pinos, community located in the region of La Sierra, in Dominican Republic, defines 'transnational community' as the set of spatial ambits of wide social relations, receptor of economic, social and cultural worldwide patterns, where the localities are inserted, and they exhibit features proper to the region, as well as reflect global patterns. In this sense Georges (1990) opines that, by means of the displacements of the migrants, the networks who communicate them in space and the capital flow (remittances and savings), the migrant communities in Los Pinos are interrelated in a complex manner yet concrete to central regions in the United States. Hence, by means of the continuous flow of people, and also money, goods and information, the settlements (of migrants on both sides of the Mexico-United States border) are easier to understand as a single community scattered in a multitude of localizations (Rouse, 1991; Goldring, 1992).

Rouse (1992), on his own, underscores the relevance of the class relation when it comes to understand the migration-settling binomial and the need to accept transnationalism as reference framework when studying the migration from Mexico to the United States in Aguilillas (Michoacan) and Redwood City (California). Last but not least, Smith (1998) studies Ticuani (pseudonym of a Mexican community) and New York, from the perspective of political and economic action of the people from Ticuani on their place of origin.

In this manner, the empiric literature on transnationalism, the concepts 'communal migration tradition', 'transnational communities' and 'transnational localities' become territories located in two different Nation-states, which in spite of lacking territorial contiguity are connected by intense social links, which are translated into people, goods, ideas and capitals flow in a neuter space.

Transnational social spaces and migratory networks

Indubitably the social dimension (relations and social links) has been the key element at the moment of determining which community or migratory flow becomes transnational. In a definition, now classical in literature, Glick Schiller; Bach and Szanton Blanc (1992), define transnationalism:

We have defined transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants build *social fields* that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated 'transmigrants'. Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations—*familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political* that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within *social networks* that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously (Glick *et al.*, 1992: 1-2, italics by this article's author)

In this sense, the concept of field or social¹ (space) has been fundamental in literature, especially, in that of sociologic nature. Being notable the centrality of the concept, Kivisto (2001) proposes to clearly difference the reading of transnationalism from three disciplines and proposes three readings of the phenomenon: that proposed from the cultural anthropology, the concept of transnational social spaces, and the conception of transnationalism as a mid-reach theory.

Faist (1999: 40), separately proposes the following definition of transnational social spaces:

Transnational social spaces are combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places (Faist, 1999: 40).

Differently from other transnational spaces (political or economic, following the taxonomy proposed by Portes *et al.*, 1999), the concept of 'transnational social space' is of a more difficult precision and specially its measurement. Political transnationalism has been, for instance, approached from the vote of Mexican people abroad or in the number of people affiliated to migrant

¹ Marina Ariza (2002) affirms that the difference between 'social space' and 'social field' is merely a preference and school of thought matter. Those located in line with the French though (Bourdieu) prefer the 'social field' concept. Conversely, authors from the geographic school in northern and central Europe (such as Faist or Kivisto) opt for the use of 'social spaces'.

associations in the United States (for instance, Fitzgerald, 2000; Smith, 2003). The economic, on its own, can be studied from the amount of remittances or the establishing of enterprises created by migrants after their return (for instance, Canales and Mendoza, 2001; Ballesteros, 2002). The concept 'transnational social space' does not only require conceptual limits, as other concepts relative to transnationalism used in literature, but also methodological tools that allow grasping the phenomenon's relevance.

It seems evident, however, that a first approximation to the concept of 'transnational social space' can be performed from the most easily quantifiable concept, that of 'migratory networks'. In this sense, socio-demographic literature on migrations has provided an important contribution as it demonstrated that consolidation and securing of the social networks among migrants, ex-migrants, and non-migrants from ejector and receptor areas is fundamental in order to understand the migratory flow's continuity and expansion in the regions of origin (Massey, 1990; Massey *et al.*, 1991). In the same way, when decreasing the risks associated to transfer, the expansion of networks in the places of origin implies a broadening of the migratory flow to groups considered less prone to emigrate (see, for instance, Fawcett, 1989; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Massey *et al.*, 1998), which is due to the fact that as social networks expand and increase, the magnitude of social capital in them also does (Mines, 1981; Tilly, 1990; Massey *et al.*, 1991).

Socio-demographic approaches, however, observe the role of the networks in concrete moments, either in the time of carrying out the survey or in the moment of performing the current or past migration, disregarding the creation and destruction processes of these social links. Indeed, as Menjívar (2000) demonstrated, from an extensive ethnographic work in San Francisco, social networks can be weakened and even be extinguished as time passes, as it occurred in the case of the Salvadorian migrants in this city, since there was no reciprocity among the members of the group, partly because of the situation of labor and economic precariousness these people lived in.

In this line, Faist (1999) proposes a typology of the transnational social spaces, precisely from said networks' duration (either brief or lengthy) and their intensity (weak or strong).

Leaving the reductionism and the mechanical relations between variables of every typology aside, the advantage of Faist's classification (1999) lies in the interrelation of time with the intensity of the networks, interrelations which leads to diverse situations, from the assimilation in the destination societies to the

construction of transnational communities as opposed. It is also noteworthy in this classification, the historic element (short duration *versus* long duration), which implies that the formation of contacts and social links is dynamic (table 1).

The articulation of social networks by means of migration is performed at different scales: individuals, families, households and communities (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). Ariza (2002) for example, has underlined that the family's centrality in the migratory processes emanates from two interrelated aspects. On the one side, it is one of the main organization axes of the migrants' lives in the destination places; and on the other side, it constitutes a decisive core in the meaning the migrants attribute to the migration experience and other social knowledge.

In this context of familial centrality and the relations in the household, the concepts on family and transnational households are distinguishable. As a consequence of migration, the familial unit is split into several disseminated cells both abroad as well as in the country of origin, or it integrates and fusions with other familial units, by means of which multi-nuclear households are made, which have continuous contact with each other. In spite of spatial dispersion, and because of the maintenance of familial networks, these different fragments

TABLE I
A TYPOLOGY OF THE TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACES

Intensity	Weak	Strong
Duration		
Short duration	<i>Dispersion and assimilation</i> The links with the country of origin are cut, often fast integration into the receptive country	<i>Transnational interchange and reciprocity</i> The links with the country of origin are preserved, often returning migration
Long duration	<i>Transnational networks</i> Social links are used in some areas (business, religion, politics)	<i>Transnational communities</i> Dense network of networks of communities without concrete location, between the origin and destination

Source: Faist (1999: 44).

interact as a common entity, which in a certain way erase the physical distances opened by migration. The new familial structure thus conformed links several local realities with the international environment and configures what has been called multi-local transnational family (Glick Schiller; Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Guarnizo, 1997). These multi-local transnational families can, in accordance with Faist (2000), have two structures. The first would be constituted by families with parents and some children in the destination places, and the other children in the place of origin, under the vigilance of relatives or friends. The second would be the result of the returning migration, where the parents at a certain age return to the country of origin, while children as adults and grandchildren decide to stay in the country of immigration (Faist, 2000). From a more functional perspective Palerm (2002) uses the 'trans-border household' concept to refer to the multi-residence of Mexican migrants in the United States, who this author qualifies as 'binational laborers' who periodically displace between Mexico and the United States.

At the community scale, the importance of networks has been explored by different authors. For instance, in a classical study, and from the comparisons of the histories of two Mexican migrant communities (Las Ánimas, Zacatecas, and Guadalupe, Michoacán), Mines and Massey (1985) analyze how the differences in the construction of networks in these communities have repercussions in the sort of migration. Responding to different migratory histories, which imply different constructions of networks, people from Las Ánimas decide to construct communities of migrants in the United States, whereas the people from the town in Zacatecas languishes both economic and demographically. The flow from Guadalupe, on the contrary, is composed by legal migrants who periodically move to the United States, yet they keep their residence in Mexico (Mines and Massey, 1985).

In a similar manner, Goldring (1992) compares two migratory circuits (Las Ánimas y Gómez Farías) and concludes that the transnational migrant circuits are places of social experiences, and can be useful analysis units to perform compared migratory studies.

The social construction of a community within migratory circuits implies that, despite the differences in access to resources, health, status, or other socio-economic indicators, people within a migrant circuit generally share many characteristics, restrictions and values for their belonging to said circuit. Under the umbrella of the 'transnational migratory circuit', according to Goldring (1992) different levels of analysis interact: localities and regions with different histories,

ways of social organization, institutions that regulate the access to resources and the patterns of access to resources such as land.

Retaking the aforementioned, Faist's (2000) typology, the second in this document, has the virtue to gather different 'sensibilities', when distinguishing between transnational spaces created from groups united by kinship (families), transnational circuits (individuals) and transnational communities, which have different sorts of links and networks. In this author's definition, the concept of 'transnational circuit' is bare of any allusion to community and even temporary references (periodic mobility), to be reduced to the idea of a group of individuals with common interests (table 2).

To sum up, in the literature the social dimension of the concept of 'transnational social space' has prevailed, and the geographic one has been delayed, in addition to pinpoint that social networks are the basic element which configures said spaces.

Intermediation in the Mexico - United States migration

The transnational approach has not displayed any interest in studying the spaces located between the destination and origin, which conform, through social links, in accordance with this analysis perspective, a single transnational community. This is a significant change from some classical studies on migrations, and in specific, from the economicist models that included distance's friction as another variable at the moment of deciding a migration. Distance and in-between space do not count, and even migratory movements are produced, for some authors, in spaces with no territorial base, such as the 'third space' or 'hyperspace' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1996)

TABLE2
THREESORTSOFTRANSNATIONALSOCIALSPACES

Sort of transnational social space	Main characteristic of the network	Main characteristic	Examples
Transnational groups united by kinship	Reciprocity	Recognition of social norms	Remittances
International circuits	Interchange	Use of the group's internal advantages	Merchants' networks
Transnational communities	Solidarity	Mobilization of collective representations	Diasporas

Source: Faist (2000: 203).

This interpretation of intermediate spaces needs to be restated, especially in the case of the Mexico - United States migration, where the migration to border cities in the north of Mexico, is often, a step previous to international migration. This previous step is logically influenced by the existence of the international border, which in the 1990's underwent a process of militarization, and causing that border cities are, in many cases, places of contention of migration to the United States (see, for instance, Massey *et al.*, 2002). This image (transit cities, border cities) is found rooted in the literature and in the popular imaginary, and avoids the fact that the border cities are, in their own, destination of domestic migration and even receptors of international migration, mostly yet not exclusively, people of Mexican origin born in the United States.

From the region's perspective, and not exclusively the cities', there have been some attempts to conceptualize the 'border region' that would comprehend Mexican and American territories located on both sides of the international line. The debate on the existence or inexistence of a border region has not been free from polemic. For some authors (for instance, Bustamante, 1989; Herzog, 1990) there is only one Mexico - United States border region, based on the geographic contiguity that carries a series of intensive interchanges, however, for others (see, Alegria 2000) the concept of 'border region' has neither solid bases nor theoretical reference framework. Simultaneously, there have been debates, with no concrete results, on the definition and extension of the Mexico - United States border zone (see in this respect, Ham-Chande and Weeks, 1988; or Zenteno and Cruz, 1992). Mendoza (2001), avoiding this polemic, limits arbitrarily a territory from meridians and parallels, north and south of the border, in order to explore the possible geographic distribution of demographic events in the territory. His conclusions can be rather taxative:

The international line separates two different socio-demographic systems. The volume of people who move across the territory seems to be [...] the only common socio-demographic feature, despite the characteristics of the flow and its impacts on the territory vary on each side of the border. On the contrary migration seems to reinforce the distance there is in socio-demographic terms between northern Mexico and southwestern United States. We do not find [...] enough evidence to state there is a fusion effect of socio-demographic events; conversely, the border exercises a role of dividing line between two socio-demographic regimes (Mendoza, 2001: 52).

In this sense, in the case of socio-demography of northern Mexico, the first studies explained the supposed socio-demographic changes in the region in function of their vicinity with the United States (Ham and Weeks, 1988; Bustamante, 1989). In these context, the 'model of demographic transition of northern Mexico' was explained, transaction that was located in a more advanced phase than the rest of the country (Coubès, 2000). Nonetheless, as from the 1990's decade, there has been an approach change: the border is compared to the rest of the country, and in general, it is concluded that the changes in the north are a reflection of the structural changes produced in Mexico as a whole (for instance, the study by Delaunay and Bruegilles, 1995, on fertility; Quilodrán, 1998, on marriage). In this same line Delaunay (1995), who reviews a series of demographic indicators for the set of the country, affirms that the northern border is Mexican, yet often, it leads demographic and economic changes in the country. Nevertheless, this author avoids a clear stance on whether the border cities have distinctive features which boost changes in their socio-demographic structure, or if the latter are nothing but a reflection of the country as a whole.²

In accordance with this literature, border cities in northern Mexico are not alone as they exhibit demographic features common for the rest of the country, although they are indeed unique as they receive a considerable volume of people, migrants or not, who visit these cities. It is this aspect the one this article is interested in, the role border cities have in the construction of a Mexico - United States transnational space, where these localities are at the time destination and crossing points of migration, both from Mexico and the United States. In order to explore this dimension we have the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border (*Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte, EMIF*) whose objective is quantifying the flow of people who cross the border cities in northern Mexico.

² In the United States, studies on socio-demography from the southwest focus, generally speaking, on topics related to migration or ethnicity (specially the flow of illegal workers, for instance, Bean *et al.*, 1992; Bustamante, 2001), health (in many cases migrants' health or the Mexican users of American health services or social benefits, for example, Guendelman and Jasin 1992) or poverty (e.g., Beets and Slottje, 1994; Ward, 1995). According to most of the approaches, even though it is not clearly stated, to border, differently from other places, is a troublesome place, where the phenomena, which by the way are observed in the rest of the country, are generally stressed. When it comes to explain these indicators, one of the reasons provided on the (greater) poverty of southwestern United States is that this comes from its proximity with Mexico. Indeed, this vision coincides with the opinion of wide population sectors, included that of Mexican origin, residing in the United States' border cities (in this respect see Vila, 2000).

The survey on migration in the northern border

EMIF, carried out jointly by the National Council of Population (*Consejo Nacional de Población*), the Secretariat of Labor and Social Provision (*Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social*) and the Colegio de la Frontera Norte, in the main border cities in northern Mexico (namely, from west to east, Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, Piedras Negras, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa and Matamoros) ever since 1993.³ EMIF assembles three questionnaires related between each other, which correspond to a single conceptual theoretical framework, they quantify and characterize four migratory flows according to their precedence: south, border cities, the United States and migrants deported by the Border Patrol of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service ('deported migrants'). Seven surveys were carried out, from 1993 to 2003; the periods when the surveys are performed are yearly, with the exception of the fifth phase, which was at nine months.⁴ In this article data from the first to the sixth phase are used, which allows us to have a period from 1993 to 2001. Data from the different phases have been grouped by calendar years, as the methodology of the different phases is comparable.

In this article we will focus on the questionnaire corresponding to the south - north flow (coming from the south); it is, migrants from Mexico who arrive to the border to remain there or use it as crossing point (documented or undocumented) toward the United States. The object population of the 'coming from the south' questionnaire consists of people older than 12 years of age, born outside the United States, who reach some of the sampling cities, not residing in this border city or in the United States and with no date of return. In respect to this population it is important to mention that conceptually it surpasses the international laboring

³ The first EMIF phase (March 28th, 1993 and March 27th, 1994) was performed in 23 border localities which virtually constituted the universe of transit places of labor flow to or from the United States. Nevertheless, in the first surveying it was observed that slightly more than 94 percent of the laboring migrants moved across eight border cities: Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, Piedras Negras, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa and Matamoros. Because of this, as from the second surveying, only the mentioned cities were considered. In each of these cities, the sampling zones were delimited; these are: bus station (or the terminals of the different companies), the airport, train station (if it is in functions), the international crossing bridges, the Mexican custom inspection points. These zones were assigned as a relative measure of the size of the flow percentage the corresponding city receives (www.conapo.gob.mx/migracion_int/3b.htm).

⁴ The first phase of EMIF took place between March 28th, 1993 and March 27th, 1994; the second from December 1994 to December 13th, 1995; the third, from July 11th, 1996 to July 10th, 1997; the fourth, from July 11th, 1998 to July 10th, 1999; the fifth, from July 11th, 1999 to April 10th, 2000; the sixth from April 11th, 2000 to April 10th, 2001; and finally the seventh, from April 11th, 2001 to April 10th, 2002. For further information go to www.conapo.gob.mx/migracion_int/principal.html.

migratory flow properly said, for it comprehends people whose stay in the border zone is due to a visit to relatives or friends, study or leisure, with undefined returning date.

Finally, EMIF allows distinguishing two sorts of migrants: those who, being interviewed on their intention of stay, express they want to enter the United States ('transit migrants') and those who want to remain, even though temporarily, in the Mexican border city where the interview was performed ('border migrants').⁵

Migratory networks as spaces' articulators

The literature coincides in stating the relevance of social networks to understand the flow of people, goods, capitals and ideas and, thus, the construction of transnational social spaces (see, table 1). EMIF, in this sense, contains several recurring questions in demography that allow an approach to the study of social networks.

A first approach is given by the question relative to the fact of having relatives or friends in the border city, both for those who are in transit toward the United States and those migrants who opt for residing, although temporarily, in the border cities in northern Mexico (border migrants). The question does not detail kinship degree or the years the people have known each other.

Graph 1 shows quite revealing results, as more than a half of the border migrants comprehended in the 1996-2001 period had relatives or friends in the Mexican northern border. Besides, this pattern is clearly ascendant in the 1990's. Migrants in transit toward the United States, conversely, do not show a clear tendency in this entry, however, this is always found under that registered in the case of border migrants. These data seem to show that the fewer the number of relatives and friends migrants have in the northern border of Mexico, the greater probability they cross into the United States.

⁵ Border migrants are those who state that the reason of their visit to the northern border is in order to work, look for a job or a residence change. Migrants in transit to the United States are those who declare that the reason of their 'visit' to the border is in order to cross into the United States. The rest are people who are visiting the north because of a particular reason (relative visit, shopping) or students.

Deepening into this line, tables 3 and 4 show the help provided by relatives and friends in the migrants' last trip, distinguishing by sort of migrant, either border one or in transit to the United States. In this sense, it is interesting to underscore that those in transit do not only have fewer acquaintances in the border cities, but also their networks are noticeably less solid than those of border migrants, who want to live at least temporarily in northern Mexico. Hence, with the exception of 2001, in the rest of the years when the survey was applied, border migrants, in a proportion oscillating from 20 and 25 percent, received some kind of monetary help from relatives and friends in order to perform their previous migration (table 3).

This indicator is dramatically reduced to 10 percent, and what is more, there is not a so continuous pattern, in the case of the transit migrants to the United States (table 4).

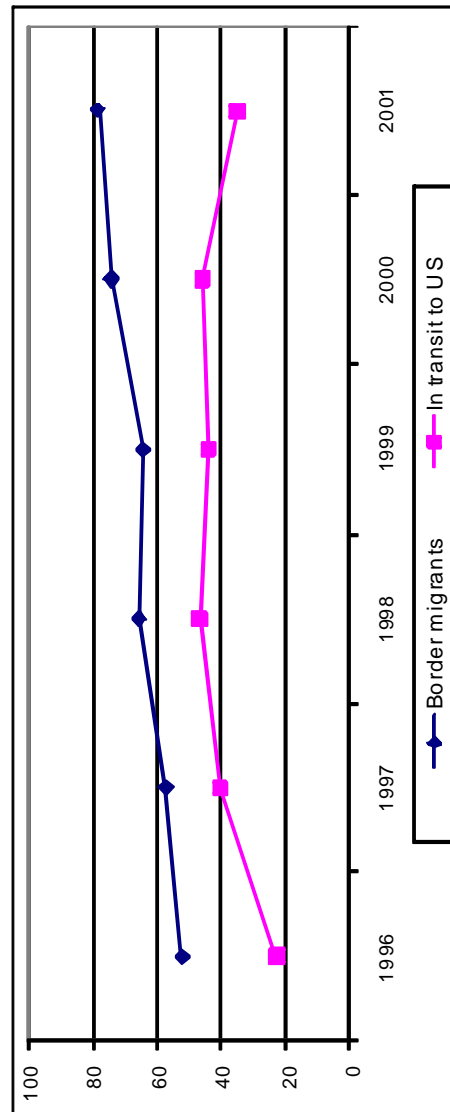
It is precisely the continuity in the pattern the basic difference between both migrant groups analyzed in this section. Whereas border migrants have a homogeneous pattern as for help received from relatives or friends along the decade of study, those who are in transit have patterns with less defined profiles (tables 3 and 4).

Indeed, the help in the search for employment is an indicator that demonstrates the networks' quality. In the 1996–1998 period, more than 40 percent (and about 30 percent in 1999–2000) of the border migrants had help to find a job in their last visit (table 3). In the case of migrants in transit, help never reached 20 percent of the total, except in 1998 (table 4). From this, one learns that networks' solidity in border cities is basic for understanding a person's decision to remain in Mexico or go into the United States.

Nonetheless, it must be taken into account that a part of the border migrants who want to stay, temporarily at least, in the north of Mexico, also wants to cross into the United States in the future. Namely, 35 percent of the border migrants in the 1993–1997 period expressed their intention of migrating to the United States. This figure, however, decreased to less than 20 percent in 1998–2001 (graph 2).⁶

⁶ There is also a small percentage, always under 10 percent, of migrants who are in transit to the United States who do not want to cross into the United States. This datum is at first, incongruent, and can be understood as a crossing displacement. Migrants have it clear they want to cross (intentions of crossing), but they do not want to do it immediately. It can also be the case of false answers.

GRAPH 1
MIGRANTS FROM THE STATES OF THE REPUBLIC
WHO DECLARE HAVING FRIENDS OR RELATIVES IN THE CITY OF SAMPLING
1996-2001 (PERCENTAGE)



NB: Not including those who visit the city for the first time, nor those who visited the city before 1991.
Source: EMIF, phases one to six

TABLE 3
MIGRANTS FROM THE STATES OF THE REPUBLIC WITH MEXICAN
NORTHERN BORDER AS DESTINATION (BORDER MIGRANTS). SORT OF HELP
PROVIDED BY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS IN THE LAST MIGRATION TO THE
CITY OF SAMPLING, 1996-2001 (PERCENTAGE)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Sort of help						
<i>Monetary lending</i>						
Yes	29.0	25.6	25.8	21.6	22.0	16.9
No	71.0	74.4	74.2	78.3	77.1	83.1
No Info/No Ans	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.0
<i>Accommodation and/or food</i>						
Yes	79.2	83.3	83.2	79.7	76.7	88.3
No	20.8	16.7	16.8	20.2	23.2	11.7
NI / NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
<i>Assistance to find a job</i>						
Yes	43.7	40.4	41.8	32.9	28.9	33.4
No	56.3	59.6	58.2	67.1	71.0	66.6
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
<i>Hired</i>						
Yes	3.1	1.8	9.2	4.9	3.8	0.8
No	96.9	98.2	90.8	95.0	95.4	99.2
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.0

NB: proportions calculated from the total of people who declared having relatives and friends in the city of the interview.
Source: EMIF, phases one to six.

TABLE 4
MIGRANTS FROM THE STATES OF THE REPUBLIC IN TRANSIT TO THE
UNITED STATES (MIGRANTS IN TRANSIT TO THE UNITED STATES). SORT OF
HELP PROVIDED BY FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN THE LAST MIGRATION TO
THE CITY OF SAMPLING, 1996-2001 (PERCENTAGE)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Sort of help						
<i>Monetary lending</i>						
Yes	0.9	8.4	27.1	12.0	9.3	8.9
No	99.1	91.6	72.9	84.5	90.6	91.0
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.1	0.1
<i>Accommodation and/or food</i>						
Yes	38.7	83.0	77.0	59.8	75.3	58.9
No	61.3	17.0	23.0	39.8	24.6	41.0
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.1
<i>Assistance to find a job</i>						
Yes	0.0	18.3	34.6	17.5	6.2	2.8
No	100.0	81.7	65.4	79.3	93.7	97.1
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.1	0.1
<i>Hired</i>						
Yes	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.6
No	100.0	100.0	99.9	95.9	99.7	99.3
NI/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.1	0.1

NB: proportions calculated from the total of people who declare having relatives and friends in the city of the interview.
Source: EMIF, phases one to six.

These data indicate that border cities have retained a growing percentage of the flow directed to the north (including both the border cities and the United States) along the 1990's decade. They could also indicate that when the migration is stated as a short one, among border migrants, a substantial part of the people going north wants to go back, in the short or mid term, to their places of origin.

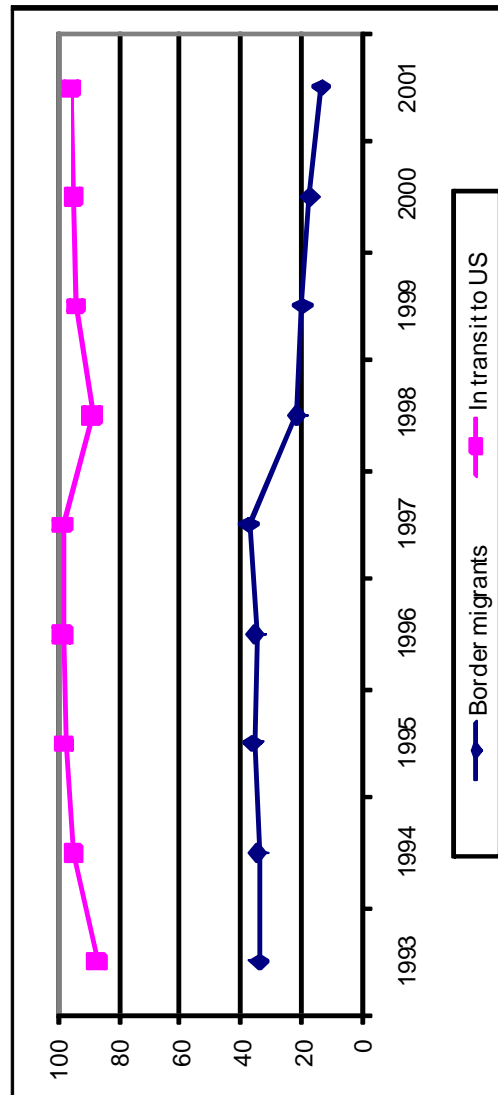
Time migrating, characteristics and destination of the flow to the north

In the previous section networks' solidity is appointed as determinant for the migrant to decide whether to stay or not in the border cities in northern Mexico. The question to be stated is up to which extent there are not differenced demographic characteristics according to the migrants' destination. This is to say, it is stated whether the two territories (border cities in Mexico and the United States) compete for the same sort of migrant or, on the contrary, the flows that go to a place or the other are substantially different as for their socio-demographic characteristics.

Data in this section, differently from the previous section, are grouped in accordance with the migrants' final destination, not with their temporary destination, since as it has been previously seen (graph 2) a part of those who declare that their stay's motive is to look for employment, to work or change residence in the north of Mexico express their intention to cross into the United States in the future.

Hence, table 5 shows two clearly different profiles between border migrants, understood as those who want to stay in northern Mexico, and those who want to go toward the United States. The latter are older, have a larger proportion of married people and come, in a greater proportion, from western Mexico. Conversely, the border migrant is younger, their probability of being single is higher and their origin in Mexico is less defined. There are also observable differences as for labor insertion of both groups in the 30 days prior to migration.

GRAPH 2
MIGRANTS WHO DECLARE CROSSING INTO THE UNITED STATES IN THE FUTURE,
1993-2001 (PERCENTAGE)



Source: EMIF, phases one to six.

These profiles have several points of interest; in the first place, they once again underline the importance of networks, since it is Occident, with a migratory tradition close to a hundred years (see in this respect, Cardoso, 1980; Durand; Massey *et al.*, 2001), the zone which nurtures the flow toward the United States. In the second place, data suggest that migration to the United States is composed by adult people, not youth who, in spite of being married travel alone (it is also relevant the low number of women). The flow with the Mexican northern border as destination is younger; for this last group, the change of residence to the border cities in northern Mexico can probably be associated with a rupture with the familial environment and an insertion in the border labor market can be considered as very dynamic, at least compared to the labor markets of the migrants in Mexico (see for instance, Zavala de Cosío, 1997).

Probabilities of crossing into the United States

Thus far, we have seen the relevance of network and the difference between the migratory profiles toward the Mexican northern border or the United States. Below we present two models of logistic regression, whose end is to explore which the average migrant is; who, once decided the migration, has the greatest probability of crossing the international borderline. In both models the dependent variable is the intention of crossing (do not want to cross in to the United States = 0; do want to cross = 1), and the independent variables include gender, age according to age groups, year of the survey, labor experience in the 30 days prior to the migration, having relatives or friends in the northern border or not, and precedence according to four large geographic areas (Occidental, Border, Peripheral and Central Region; regionalization taken from Durand, 1998). Model 1 is exclusively referred to border migrants, those who want to remain in Mexico, at least temporarily, a part of them, as we have seen, wants to cross into the United States. Model 2 considers both border migrants and those who have decided to cross ('transit migrants'). It is worth noticing that model 1 predicts better than model 2 the probabilities of crossing, as it is observable in the more reduced verisimilitude logarithms in the case of the first model.⁷

⁷ Two more models were proved; they included the interaction of the variable 'year of surveying' with 'origin', since according to the literature there has been an expansion of the areas of origin during the 1980's and 1990's decades (see for example, Marcelli and Cornelius, 2001; Mendoza, 2004). This is to say, the literature seems to point to a diversification of the ejector areas in Mexico and it was attempted to compare the probabilities of crossing of the new ejector areas during the 1990's decade, in relation to the probability of international crossing of a migrant from the occidental zone in 1993. However, in spite the models reduced the logarithm of verisimilitude ($-2 \log\text{-likelihood}$), most of the interactions were not significant.

In this sense, table 6 gathers the betas and beta exponentials of the different models, as well as their statistical significance. Gender, in the first place, is highly significant (< 0.01). In the case of the border migrants (model 1), the probability that a woman crosses the border is half the probability for a man (0.53). Conversely, for model 2, the probabilities of crossing, however also lower for women, are closer to those of men (0.96).

The year of crossing is also highly significant (< 0.01). The probabilities for a migrant to cross the border, compared to 1993, the year of reference, differ in models 1 and 2. This does not show a clear temporary evolution and the probabilities of crossing are close to one in several years. It does not seem, thus, to affect the year of crossing, as no clear tendency is observed; the flow seems to be rather steady in the decade. Instead, if we only observe border migrants (model 1), the evolution is totally opposed. While in the 1994 – 1997 period the probabilities of crossing are similar to those of 1993. As from 1998, these are always lower than in 1993. It can be seen that which has been previously stated, border cities retain a larger proportion of the flow toward the north in the second half of the 1990's decade (model 1, table 6).

Both models also show that the probability of crossing increases with age, nevertheless the progression is more stressed in the second model. This progression of crossing probability must be understood in the framework of the aforementioned, the average age of the migrants who want to enter the United States is older than that of those who want to stay in Mexico, moreover let us remember, we are working with the flow, it is, displacement. It seems logical to think that older people, who apart from this, have a greater probability to have documents to cross the borderline than those younger, displace more frequently between Mexico and the United States.⁸

As for the migrants' procedence,⁹ Occident, reference category, is the emigratory zone par excellence. The probabilities of crossing are reduced to a half, compared to the traditional region, in the case of the central region and to a fourth part, when the origin is the border or the peripheral states. Here

⁸ A table of contingency between the fact of having documents to cross the international border and age shows that the percentage of people with documents is larger among the older age groups, and lesser in the group of 12-19 years of age.

⁹Occident: Aguascalientes, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas.

Border: Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora and Tamaulipas.

Center: Federal District, State of Mexico, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Morelos, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala and Oaxaca.

Periphery: Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz and Yucatán.

TABLE 5
MIGRANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES, ACCORDING TO THEIR FINAL DESTINATION

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>Demographic profile of the migrant to the United States</i>									
Women (%)	3.9	3.0	2.7	4.6	3.8	18.9	13.5	18.8	16.6
Average age (years)	31.0	30.3	31.3	31.9	32.3	31.7	33.9	36.3	35.7
Heads of family (%)	66.3	69.5	67.1	69.1	71.1	52.4	64.0	67.0	70.7
Married (%)	57.5	56.9	60.7	63.8	63.4	50.6	57.4	70.0	65.0
Single (%)	39.1	34.8	35.5	33.5	32.0	44.0	35.0	24.4	26.7
Precedence: occident of Mexico (%)	48.4	61.5	55.7	50.7	61.2	37.5	47.0	43.3	46.2
Worked 30 days before the current migration (%)	66.1	70.0	56.8	49.2	56.3	85.8	86.5	89.3	88.0
N	450 265	134 702	354 573	179 352	248 405	202 975	414 096	362 084	137 707
<i>Demographic profile of the border migrant¹</i>									
Women (%)	9.2	4.7	8.2	7.1	9.8	11.7	14.7	13.4	11.8
Average age (years)	27.5	26.4	27.4	30.5	28.0	28.2	29.1	29.8	28.4
Heads of family (%)	54.3	52.0	52.1	61.6	51.5	44.8	51.8	52.9	55.0
Married (%)	42.2	50.4	45.4	53.7	46.0	35.6	43.2	45.9	42.7
Single (%)	51.3	46.1	50.6	42.0	48.5	55.2	49.5	44.3	46.6
Precedence: occident of Mexico (%)	26.6	36.0	30.5	23.8	33.4	25.3	25.0	23.0	28.6
Worked 30 days before the current migration (%)	72.4	78.8	72.5	72.5	72.1	79.0	90.0	88.7	93.0
N	530 339	190 298	415 539	191 121	267 903	325 076	527 564	507 495	172 152

Source: EMIF, phases one to six.

¹ Migrant who wants to work, look for a job in the Mexican Northern border and does not want to cross into the United States.

differences between both models are not so marked. Similarly, the fact of having worked previously in the places of origin or having relatives and friends at the border negatively affects the intentions of crossing, reducing them, in both models to 40 and 30 percent, respectively.

Conclusions

This article constitutes a first reflection on the articulation of the border space, exclusively understood as the border cities of northern Mexico, in the construction of transnational social spaces. This reflection has been carried out from a South-North perspective; this is, from the perspective of people who from Mexico head to the North. In this discussion we have stated in the first place, the need to incorporate the Mexican northern border cities, intermediate spaces, to a more general reflection on space in transnational Mexico - United States migration. On the one side, EMIF data have been presented, this survey measures migratory flow in the main border cities in northern Mexico, which become, according to said survey's methodology, in observation points of the displacements in both directions South-north and North-South. Relating the theoretical issue to the empiric one is not an easy task and for such purpose the line of the migratory networks has been chosen, which according to the literature, are the key elements when it comes to understand the construction of transnational social spaces.

This article states the novelty of approaching the transnational phenomena from EMIF, a survey that measures the flow, and not the migrants stock, nonetheless, logically a part of said flow will end up establishing in the border cities in northern Mexico or in the United States. The subjacent idea is that, at least, from a geographic perspective, the transnational social spaces are located in territories united by the migrants' displacement, which can be shaped as migratory circuits, following the concept proposed by Goldring (1992) or Mines and Massey (1985). These migratory circuits imprint a 'character' to the territories which make it up, similarly to the manner territory modules the migratory flow. It is in this last line that this article's approach tries to explore the articulation of the intermediate border space in the construction of a transnational space between Mexico and the United States.

TABLE 6
LOGISTICAL REGRESSION MODELS OF THE ESTIMATION OF PROBABILITIES
OF CROSSING INTO THE UNITED STATES

	Model A Border migrants		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
<i>Gender</i>			
Women	-0.65	0.005	0.53
<i>Age</i>			
20-24	0.06	0.004	1.06
25-29	0.55	0.004	1.73
30-34	0.95	0.005	2.58
35-39	1.01	0.005	2.73
40-44	1.00	0.005	2.71
45-49	1.08	0.007	2.95
50 and over	1.04	0.006	2.82
<i>Year</i>			
1994	-0.07	0.005	0.94
1995	-0.08	0.004	0.92
1996	-0.14	0.005	0.87
1997	-0.10	0.004	0.90
1998	-0.55	0.005	0.58
1999	-0.75	0.004	0.47
2000	-0.95	0.004	0.39
2001	-1.26	0.007	0.29
<i>Precedence</i>			
Border	-1.46	0.003	0.23
Periphery	-1.51	0.005	0.22
Center	-0.53	0.003	0.59
Worked in the 30 days prior to migration	-0.51	0.003	0.60
Has relatives or friends in the border	-0.35	0.002	0.70
Constant	0.13	0.005	1.14
-2 log likelihood			17.465

Reference categories: men, 12-19 years of age, year 1993, precedence from the occident of Mexico, has not worked in the 30 days prior to migration and does not have relatives or friends in the border.

TABLE 6
LOGOSTICAL REGRESSION MODELS OF THE ESTIMATION OF PROBABILITIES
OF CROSSING INTO THE UNITED STATES
(CONTINUATION)

	Model A Border migrants		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
<i>Gender</i>			
Women	-0.65	0.005	0.53
<i>Age</i>			
20-24	0.06	0.004	1.06
25-29	0.55	0.004	1.73
30-34	0.95	0.005	2.58
35-39	1.01	0.005	2.73
40-44	1.00	0.005	2.71
45-49	1.08	0.007	2.95
50 and over	1.04	0.006	2.82
<i>Year</i>			
1994	-0.07	0.005	0.94
1995	-0.08	0.004	0.92
1996	-0.14	0.005	0.87
1997	-0.10	0.004	0.90
1998	-0.55	0.005	0.58
1999	-0.75	0.004	0.47
2000	-0.95	0.004	0.39
2001	-1.26	0.007	0.29
<i>Precedence</i>			
Border	-1.46	0.003	0.23
Periphery	-1.51	0.005	0.22
Center	-0.53	0.003	0.59
Worked in the 30 days prior to migration	-0.51	0.003	0.60
Has relatives of friends in the border	-0.35	0.002	0.70
Constant	0.13	0.005	1.14
-2 log likelihood			17 465

Reference categories: men, 12-19 years of age, year 1993, precedence from the occident of Mexico, has not worked in the 30 days prior to migration and does not have relatives or friends in the border.

Data from EMIF are rather revealing; on the one side, reaffirm the classic profile of the migrant to the United States, as for they are men, that in spite of being married or heads of family, travel alone. The average age, 35, however, is higher than that registered in the surveys that focus on migrants' stocks (see for example, Marcelli and Cornelius, 2001; Mendoza, 2004), since EMIF, let us remember, measures displacement, and mobility increases with age, as our data suggest (table 6). Women, at their highest point, only reach 19 percent of the total flow toward the United States. This datum is interesting because when reflecting on the construction of transnational social spaces too frequently demographic subject is left out. From a territorial perspective, it is not the youths, women or families those who construct these spaces of social interaction, but men in central ages (30 to 50 years of age, model A, table 6), which displace most frequently between Mexico and the United States, as perhaps they are the ones who can displace the most as they obtain their migratory documents in time. The demographic element is in addition determinant, since the flow toward the cities is younger and with less familial obligations. The border space, as destination place, attracts a sort of person with characteristics differenced from the migrant who heads for the United States (table 5).

Separately, as place of transit, Mexican northern border seems to increasingly retain, along 1990's decade a greater percentage of the flow toward the north (here understood as the Mexico - United States border). This fact seems to be directly related with the implementation of controls and even militarization of the border on the United States' side as from 1990's decade (Vila, 2000; Massey *et al.*, 2002). Once in northern Mexico, the probabilities of crossing into the United States are greater for men from occidental Mexico, they increase as age does, and also for those who do not have relatives and friends at the Mexican border (model A, table 6). The fact of having social networks is, as we have seen, crucial when it comes to decide whether a person wants to stay, even temporarily, in the north of Mexico or continue to the United States. The existence of family and friends is, in this sense, basic to understand the permanence in the border cities, as the migrants in transit toward the United States have, all the years, fewer contacts in border cities than those who want to live in the north of the country (graph 1). In the same way, the networks' quality, measured from the sort of help received in the last journey, is worse for those in transit toward the United States than for those who opt for residing in the towns of northern Mexico (tables 1 and 2).

In this article we have tried to open analysis ways which we could call socio-demographic to a topic on which there has been scarce reflection. Firstly, the

article underscores the relevance of social networks to the extent that the flow moves from a place to another, depending on their solidity in these places. Unfortunately, the surveys do not only enquire on the existence of networks in a certain moment, and do not allow an approximation to the changing nature of these social relations that, as Menjívar (2000) demonstrated in an extensive ethnographic work with Salvadorian immigrants in San Francisco, can be destroyed in the destination places in economic scarce situations. Once again, social relations are not alien to the place.

Secondly, the person's life cycle is also a key to understand how migratory spaces are structured. The youngest, in a greater percentage are single and have less probability to find migratory documents, frequently opt for remaining in the border cities. It is surprising that the migration to northern Mexico has only been considered as a matter of markets and salaries leveling, disregarding the role of 'liberator', of 'adventure' these cities can have for some youths from the country. Migration to northern border can be an option for those who want to break the traditional patterns of rural Mexico or small or mid-sized cities in the country, especially in zone with no migratory tradition toward the United States, not confronting the family, without taking the risk of crossing the border, and with the reliable help of relatives and friends.

Thirdly, the spatial issue, the articulation of the border space in the Mexico – United States migration. Besides that the border seems to retain migrants in the second part of the 1990's decade, the fact that the border space is so well integrated in that transnational space of the Mexico - United States migration is remarkable, which even has given the border an identity as such by means of thousands of images (transit cities, cities of migrants, the North). Nonetheless, we should be able to overcome said imaginary, which deep inside always supposes migrations occurs South - North, and as Kearney (1995) expresses it responds to a center-periphery logic and reduces the migratory phenomenon to a bipolar movement; in this case, from a less developed country to another with higher development level. We should overcome those images for EMIF data show a much more complex reality. The stake is, then, to try to integrate those 'intermediate spaces' in a generic reconsideration of the transnational spaces which appear because of the Mexico - United States. Hereby we have reflected based on people's south-to-north displacement, nevertheless, apart from integrating the displacements in other directions and deepen into the sort of migrants to the northern Mexican border (not supposing, for instance, that migrations of a laboring kind). If a territory allows the re-conceptualization of migration beyond the bipolar movement, referred by Kearney, such is that composed by the northern Mexican border cities.

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