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**Irregular Migration: The Poor Side of Globalization?**

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# Irregular Migration: The Poor Side of Globalization?

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## ABSTRACT

DAVID SIERRA AND STEPHANIE PEÑARANDA

The world we live in today experiences the movement and relocation of goods, services, capitals and also humans. When regulations strengthen and coming into a country becomes more difficult, irregular migration practices take place, and the phenomenon floods many spheres of society, but due to the nature of migration processes and countries' selective criteria, at the end, those who undergo on irregular migration are usually low income or poor people. The aim of this research is to evidence, by different means, that although globalization is an international trend that apparently includes everybody, it has left aside the less wealthy ones, which are those who get their visas denied, who are not allowed into countries through customs check points, and similar. This ends up generating a big international social issue that is irregular migration, where people risk many things, up to their lives, in order to pursue a dream, a dream that in many cases, ends up being nothing else than a fairy tale.

## KEYWORDS

Globalization, Human Trafficking, Irregular Migration, Migration, People Smuggling

## 1. INTRODUCTION

International migration is a powerful symbol of global inequality, whether in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, or lifestyles. Millions of workers and their families move each year across borders and across continents seeking to reduce what they see as the gap between their own predicament and that of people in other wealthier places. In turn, there is a growing consensus in the development field that migration represents an important livelihood diversification strategy for many in the poorest nations of the world. This includes not only international migration, but also permanent, temporary and seasonal migrations within countries, a phenomenon of considerable importance across much of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Haas, 2007).

Yet it is also clear that migration and especially international migration, is an activity that involve significant risks and costs. As such, although migration is certainly rooted, at least in part, in income and wealth inequalities between sending and receiving areas, it does not necessarily reduce inequality in the way intended by many migrants. Much depends on the distribution of these costs and benefits, both within and between sending and receiving countries and regions. It is also important, in terms of the aggregate impact of migration on sending societies, the selectivity of migration itself; clearly if most migrants were to come from the poorest sections of society, and they were to achieve net gains from migration, this would act to reduce economic inequality at least, all other things being equal. Nevertheless migrants are not always the poorest, they do not always gain, and other factors are not equal (Haas, 2007).

Introducing migrations, in general, is important for the purpose of this research because it aims to understand better a phenomenon that comes from it; irregular migrations. The authors propose that irregular migrations occur as part of a globalization process where the world shrinks more and more every day, but the same thing happens to some people with regulations; globalization opens doors to many, but as long as they are wealthy or can enrich countries, otherwise people would just not be eligible to enter a country and become an active player in it. Those who are not so wealthy, but feel the need to travel abroad, for whatever reason they have in mind, must look for alternative ways, most of the times not under any constitution's laws, that would actually end up getting them inside the country, and starting a journey of prosecution, poor working and living conditions, evocation of the past, dreams for an uncertain future.

This research would point out some aspects that the authors consider relevant to deduce some general ideas on irregular migrations and help improve the picture about this matter. It is important to point out the many aspects that can blur this

kind of research due to the illegal nature of the topic. Any research on this matter is an extra help to build up the big picture.

The first part of the article presented would show some general aspects on migration and would emphasize on irregular migration. Several definitions and statistics would be presented because the authors believe it is a key element for any approach to this phenomenon. Figures and numbers show the current situation for irregular migrants around the world, and how this is turning into a social issue that must not be left aside.

The second part of the article includes pieces of several interviews that took place with persons that migrated to the United States on an irregular basis. For this research, these interviews represent a very important part, because it consists of first hand information that depicts the experiences these persons had while migrating.

Finally, several conclusions are presented to conclude the article. Here, the authors summarize findings and thoughts generated by the research, and of course, acknowledge if the hypothesis presented on irregular migration as being a phenomenon for the poor, pushed greatly by the globalization trends, is real or just an erroneous supposition.

## 2. IMMIGRATION BACKGROUND

Michael Lipton, currently a Research Professor and Director of the Poverty Research Unit at the University of Sussex since 1994, argued that inequality is not the major cause of rural-urban migration, but that its 'after-effects' (remittances and return migration) tend to increase interpersonal and inter-household inequality within and between villages. Lipton based his observations primarily on rural evidence but not exclusively in India; he included a number of important insights. For example, he argued that inequalities within sending areas were also crucial in generating migration; more unequal villages send more migrants. In turn, the fact that migrants come from the most productive age groups, that unequal power structures within villages go unchallenged as a result, and that migrants from wealthier backgrounds do better, which all conspires to ensure that migration enhances inequality.

Migration is considered one of the defining global issues of the early twenty-first century, as more and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history. According to the International Organization for Migration (2009), there are now about 192 million people living outside their place of birth, which is about three per cent of the world's population. This means that roughly one of every thirty-five persons in the world is a migrant. Impressively, between

1965 and 1990, the number of international migrants increased by 45 millions, which is more or less an annual growth rate of about 2.1 per cent. The current annual growth rate is about 2.9 per cent.

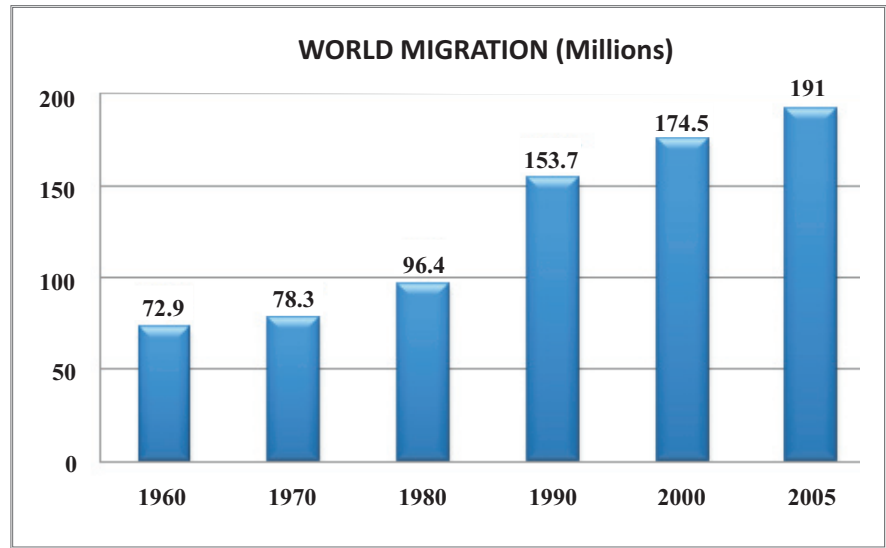
Discourses on immigration involve many perspectives. There is a growing recognition that immigration is an essential and inevitable component of the economic and social life of every State, and that orderly and properly managed immigration can be beneficial for both individuals and societies. It is also known that the trade and investment global climate has sustained the flow of irregular immigrants when offering employers the possibility of hiring irregular immigrant workers, which are not paid social benefits and work for less money, as a part of their cost minimization strategies. Moreover, globalization with its associated forces has increased the mobility of labour across borders, all this has already reinforced the movement of skilled workers. Multinational corporations favor the movement of labour, especially highly skilled labour.

But nowadays, faced with labour shortages, industries of developed countries are evaluating immigration policies and are showing preference for a relatively flexible mechanism. The International Organization for Migration (2009) shows that the American and the European service industries in particular have been pushing for a liberal policy for movement of labour as “service providers”, especially in the hotel, restaurant, software, insurance, and financial industries. On the other hand, we have the fact provided by the World Trade Organization (2009) that the global economy has been experiencing a decline since the beginning of 2001. The International Monetary Fund has projected a global economy growth of 3.2 per cent lower than in previous years. This has produced downward pressure on the movement of labour, especially in the information technology, construction, and manufacturing sectors. However, the actual impact of economic decline, in terms of the return of immigrant labour to countries of origin, remains to be seen. Chris Manning (2008), from the Division of Economics of the Australian National University suggests, based on his experience with the Asian financial crisis of 1999, that most immigrants tend to remain in the country of destination even when conditions worsen. Temporary recession may not always cause a major disruption of migratory flows and will not alter the trends in a major way.

Global population growth differs between developed and developing countries. Statistics of the United Nations Organization (2005) indicate that in developed countries the current annual rate of growth is below 0.3 per cent, while in the rest of the world the population is increasing almost six times as fast. The International Organization for Migration (2009) has studied that demographic changes affect international migration in two ways. Rapid population growth combined with eco-

conomic difficulties push people to move out of their habitat, and a declining and ageing population pressures countries to accept migrants. It makes the conditions for immigrants more difficult. That is why revising economic and political conditions to improve such conditions clearly is a worthy objective.

Figure 1 Number of World Migrants (UN, 2005)



## 2.1 World Statistics

Due to the accelerated increase of migrants in the world for the past few decades which, according to the UN (2005) currently represents around 3% of the population, the interest on gathering figures and numbers on this subject has risen, and many governments are making strong efforts to support research and studies on the topic. The situation is not at all just a matter of a few people coming in some country hunting for a better future but having no effect what so ever on local economy or society. On the contrary, migrants in certain countries have increased so much that day after day they get more involved in every aspect of society, no element of the country remains untouched, and even in some cases like the United States, migrants represent strong political parties, work forces, scholars, researchers, and others. This happens especially because, according to the IOM 2009, 75% of migrants are located in 12% of the world countries, which means that most of the people who migrate end up most likely in a limited number of countries, finding more equals, migrants as well, with whom it is easy to get along and become active members of the community.

1. According to the glossary on the report of the UN (2005), an international migrant is "a person born in a country other than that in which he/she lives".

Table 1 Number of Migrants per Continent (UN, 2005)

REGION	MIGRANTS (millions)
Europe	64
Asia	53
North America	44
Africa	17
Latin America and the Caribbean	7
Oceania	5

Figure 1 (UN, 2005) shows how migration in the world has evolved during the past decades. It is important to point out how, over a 40 year period, the number of migrants more than doubled, reflecting the constant urge of some to move around the globe, evidencing new opportunities that may arise when markets stay opened and globalization takes part in the every day life of countries. Nowadays, nobody is excluded from receiving a job offer abroad and leaving for some period of time in pursue of better opportunities. That is a common practice at present, and globalization has just made it easier for all those who want to engage in traveling and relocating. To be more specific on migration trends, it is useful to show migration from continent to continent (Table 1). It is important to observe that whilst population as a whole strongly tends towards the Asian continent, the differences in migrations are not as proportional for example in North America, allowing one to understand that the latter is one of the top destinations for migrants who still, at this time of life, pursue the American Dream, a dream that for some has been lost in imaginaries long ago, a dream that for some was just a dream and never actually existed, as it can be deduced from the current economic crisis of the country that has made it more difficult to achieve this dream.

In Table 1, Europe stands as the number one migration continent, but taking into account that migration involves actually crossing a border, and since the European Union allows free movement of people through member countries, more regular migration happens there than in any other continent, because none has such a developed regional integration policy. This aspect must be considered for analyzing numbers for Europe.

The top 10 migration countries (Table 2) can reinforce, in a way, what was previously stated about North America and specifically migration to the United States. United Nations (2005) released this report on migration and it comes useful for showing how things are happening country by country with numbers and percentages. One can use this information for a better understanding on some geopolitical aspects such as having Ukraine so high in the world in migration terms, when

apparently it is not such a big power compared to the nations that surround it. It is all a matter of geopolitics, in this case a country that is a crossing route from Europe to Asia and the corridor for Russian gas exports to different destinations. These numbers are quite easy to gather by governmental entities because they are the regular migration numbers, those that come up when people stamp passports, register an ID at a check point, or just cross a border according to the law. But that is not the whole picture of migrations at all. There is a huge part of those who move which according to legislation, should not actually cross a border, but following their own will, are up to do it in pursue of a better life (Lupini, 2006). They account for somewhere between 15 and 20% of global migration (Migration Information Source, 2005) which means that about 30 to 40 million people live in a country different than the one of birth.

Table 2

COUNTRY	Million Migrants	Percentage
USA	38.4	20.2
Russia	12.1	6.4
Germany	10.1	5.3
Ukraine	6.8	3.6
France	6.5	3.4
Saudi Arabia	6.4	3.3
Canada	6.1	3.2
India	5.7	3.0
United Kingdom	5.4	2.8
Spain	4.8	2.5

When relating to irregular migrants the situation becomes even more complicated, because while regular migrants still pay taxes and all their duties, irregular ones do not, which makes them a burden for the government of the country they live in, because they are not supporting, in any way, that institution and the system.

Irregular migrations, the core of this research, will be discussed in depth in the following section. Up to this point the authors wanted to create a general picture of some important aspects about migration that follows certain regulations and happens hand in hand with the law, in order to provide a broader overview of movement of people around the world.

### 3. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Throughout time, the history of migration has evolved constantly in response to better established governments and the growing need to defend nations from



any form of attack or threat coming from abroad. Military actions, invasions, conquests, and all these sort of events, are just a few of the many reasons why states watch out for their borders today, and one of the many tools for watching the borders is controlling the flow of people entering or leaving the country; in other words, crossing the border line through land, air or sea (Michalowsky, 2007). But, as previously stated, the movement of people around the globe has occurred since prehistoric times, and although laws and regulations pretend to control this, reality is that in some cases, people's will is stronger than legal limitation, and this is when irregular migration appears. The United States National Intelligence Council (NIC, 2000) clearly states in the publication entitled *Global Trends for 2015* that "States will continue to be the dominant players on the world stage, but governments will have less and less control over flows of information, technology, diseases, migrants, arms, and financial transactions, whether licit or illicit, across their borders." By acknowledging this, it is made clear that migration will continue to happen despite governments intentions on blocking it, and just as globalization keeps gaining strength, irregular migrations will as well because as Jordan & Düvell (2002) put it, "Transnationalism of (irregular) migrants is a rational response of individuals to globalization", at the end if there appears to be better opportunities in a different country than their own, probably some nationals would much rather venture into the unknown and pursue a better future. Globalization offers, on a constant basis, all sorts of information from every corner of the earth, so today no one is excluded from knowing how Chinese, Americans, Africans, Germans, or any person lives. This opens many questions, and since international traveling is so regulated today, not everyone is granted a visa to travel. In a simplistic way of thinking, what would a person who would kill to live in United States do after getting a visa denial? The question is not very hard to answer; look for an alternative way to get in, that simple, no matter what the law says, no matter what would be legal or illegal, it is just the self imposed right of a person to inhabit this planet, as was stated by a Colombian immigrant living New York while being interviewed for the Colombian media on a 20<sup>th</sup> of July independence celebration; "the land does not belong to the owner but to those who live on it".

To engage into the irregular migration discourse it is important to differentiate and point out three major forms of irregular migration to avoid falling into the general mistake of believing that irregular migration is limited to those persons illegally crossing a border like running through the Mexican – American border, a boat fully packed of people in the Mediterranean, everlasting walks on the Saharan desert and so on. This form of migration is just one of the group; Friederich Heckmann (2003) identifies three ways of irregular migration in order to establish a broader picture of the issue:

- Border crossing (previously mentioned)
- The use of fake documents or documents that are real but the bearer is not allowed to use them, or using document with illegal purposes, for instance working while on a tourist visa.
- “Overstayers”, which are those who after arriving legally in the country, stay for a period longer than the one granted by the immigration officer.

That being pointed out, the frame of irregular migrants embraces a broader number of persons, including people from all different backgrounds, which can lead one to believe that irregular migration can happen at any stage of society. Among many authors, Heckmann also exposes that Irregular Migrations is a multifaceted phenomenon where many factors play important roles on creating the general picture. Again, after understanding the three forms of irregular migration many more migrants result as illegal for different motives; private decisions, economic, political, social forces are just some of the factors that would motivate a person to become an illegal migrant (Newcombe, 2005).

Mike Samers, from Nottingham University (Newcombe, 2005) explains that there is not a single picture or body of credible statistics to determine the size of the population of irregular migrants or the conditions they are subjected to, so any efforts on depicting numbers and figures must be studied with caution and shall allow extra room for mistakes or numbers that most of the time would be much bigger than the ones presented. To cite only one case of crossed information, in the study of Raymond Michalowsky (2007) in the Mexican – American border, he found out that for the year 2000, the United States would have presented a death toll of people trying to cross the border of 140 for the whole year, whilst the Secretary of Foreign Relations from Mexico would have presented 497 cases, that is a difference of 300% for two countries that have been working hand in hand for a long time in many aspects. Once again, caution is required to address these matters.

But blurred figures and statistics on irregular migration are not much of a surprise because what is dealt with here is something that happens underground, where no paperwork is filled out, contracts are just several conversations, warranties are few or nonexistent, and in brief, it is a practice that, in order to be successful, happens behind the states, where no one can know... Not trying to defend this practice, but just proposing the very nature of it, the most successful organizations for smuggling people are, of course, still unknown. Only time will, in the future, let the community know what used to happen, that is, if irregular migration ever comes to an end, which could be the subject for another research. One of the most important aspects that countries, and especially developed ones must deal with regarding migration matters is trying to count the irregulars that

have successfully made it in. Truth is that no accurate numbers can be obtained, only approximations by using different methods like taking pictures over and over in pass-by cities for migrants like Tijuana and comparing the population through time or by making amnesties (Heckmann, 2003).

“Immigration Counters” (2009), a website that keeps current information gathered from different sources on numbers of irregular migrants in the United States and around the world, says that at the moment, about 15 to 20% of the total number of migrants in the planet would be irregular, that is an approximate number of 30 to 40 million people who are settled in a different country than their own with no legal permit. This number is also in constant rise and according to the Migration Policy Institute (2009), it is by far, the fastest rising single form of migration during the past ten years. Immigration counters also say that the United States is the country with the largest amount of irregular migrants with about 20'106,234 of them (Immigration Counters, 2009).

According to the IOM (Newcombe, 2005) probably a third or half of the migrants in developed countries are illegal; this estimation by the year 2005 was 20% higher than in the previous ten years, which denotes that irregular migration is rapidly growing and is far from being stopped. Actually, as governments try to reinforce their borders safety by militarizing and investing huge amounts of money on technology, organizations dedicated to illegal migration seem to be always one step ahead, as numbers keep rising and rising. Truth be told, the efforts “against” irregular immigrants are quite out of focus because in many cases they are creating scenarios where irregulars are putting their lives in danger in order to pursue their dream. Many organizations, NGOs, volunteer groups and others are making great efforts to defend and promote certain rights for illegal migrants. These organizations even have members walking the borders and places of transit offering assistance to the ones left behind, because due to the high militarization and regulations applied, many crossers are left behind at their will, by groups of irregular migrants, and in many cases those end up dead. In the United States for example, when the government established the “Operation Gatekeeper” in 1994 to guard the border with Mexico, the death toll in the area rose by 600% in the first 4 years of operation (Michalowsky, 2007). This is not a humanistic paper, but it is important to note that this issue is a social one. It is humans what it deals with. The approach to work out this matter must be a different one, as long as there appears to be better opportunities on the other side, migrants will continue to risk their lives to get across. Jordan & Düvell (2002) do present what the solution could be. They say that through a basic global income the issue can be reduced or even eliminated. This makes total sense, but turns, as the authors also clarify, into

quite an idealistic almost utopist solution. For now, it is relevant to bring figures out, gather all sources available, carry out and in-depth research face to face with the issue, to understand where it comes from, how it happens, what the history is, what can be foreseen in the future, and finally, propend for a more realistic and accurate future when approaching this kind of situations.

### 3.1 Migration Terminology

It is important to differentiate some terms used in speeches on irregular migration. At a first glance, it is important to distinguish people smuggling from trafficking. Both of these involve taking humans from one country to another but their implications are deeply different;

### 3.2 Trafficking Vs. Smuggling

In simple words, Human Trafficking is a modern form of slavery. The real, complex definition of trafficking, according to article three of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (UNODC, 2004), is “the recruitment, transportation, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving, receiving or payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

The same Protocol defines the smuggling of migrants as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”. In order to comply with the Migrants Protocol, Article six of the Protocol requires States to criminalize both migrants smuggling and people who remain in a country illegally, as well as aggravating circumstances that endanger lives or safety, or entail inhuman or degrading treatment of migrants. Virtually every country in the world is affected by this crime, whether as an origin, transit or destination country for smuggled migrants by profit-seeking criminals. Smuggled migrants are vulnerable to life-threatening risks and exploitation; thousands of people have suffocated in containers, perished in deserts or dehydrated at sea. Generating huge profits for the criminals involved, migrant smuggling fuels corruption and empowers organized crime.

Human trafficking can be confused with migrant smuggling, but according to Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio speech at the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on

Population and Development in 2004, there are noteworthy differences between these two phenomena. Migrant smuggling is often performed in dangerous or degrading conditions but it involves migrants who have consented to the smuggling. Smuggling usually ends once the migrants arrive at their final destinations. Alternatively, trafficking implies that victims either never consented or, if they initially consented, the consent was done under coercive, deceptive or abusive actions of the traffickers. In addition, trafficking involves the ongoing exploitation of the victims in some manner that generates profit to the traffickers.

For irregular migrants, this is a delicate issue taking into account that they find themselves in a situation where smuggling may increase the risk of trafficking, meaning that, as they have contracted a debt with the smugglers, they can turn from irregular migrants to victims of trafficking, as a consequence of their strong desire for a better life and better opportunities. The same that globalization is supposed to bring to all nations, but instead of that, it has ended up in social and economic disparities that, combined with the the current global situation, rises unemployment rates and disrupts traditional livelihoods. We should also take into account the eruption of natural disasters and armed conflicts that have pushed people to look for better opportunities abroad.

As the Report on the human rights of migrants notes (2003), when these factors are combined with restrictive policies with regard to immigration or asylum in the countries of destination, migrants can fall into alternative migration methods, including trafficking, with serious implications for the human rights situations of affected persons.

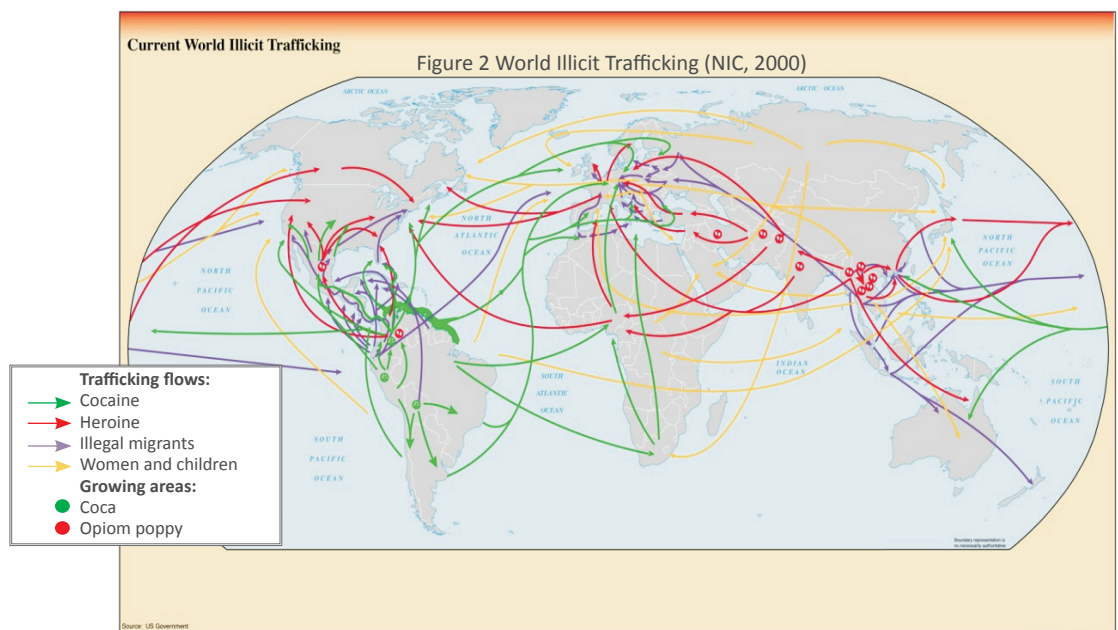


Figure 2 depicts several illegal routes and destinations for different illegal products and also for groups of people. The purple lines represent irregular migrants traveling in the direction the arrows point to. Top receivers are North America, Western Europe and Oceania to a lesser extent. This is probably not quite a surprise as movies and the media have described day after day all the different situations migrants go through in these places. Also important to point out, Central America apparently receives lots of irregular migrants all over, but the truth is that these numbers acquaint to a greater extent those peoples trying to reach the United States, but that must engage in a 15 day to a month journey all across the continent to reach their dreamed land (NIC, 2000).

The yellow lines also shows the movement of people but focuses on trafficking of women and children for prostitution, child pornography, and other forms of human exploitation. That topic deserves a very large research and analysis; this particular research does not cover the subject whilst anything said is short for all there is about it.

#### 4. IRREGULAR MIGRATION IMPACT

It is important to analyze the impact migrants cause in both the sending and the receiving country, because it is the very first element to take into account when deciding how to deal with the irregular migration matters. In general terms, and according to many authors who have written about the topic, migrants contribute to the development of society, enriching the cultural and social fabric (Arabia 2000, 2007).

Garcia (2007) described the migration process as one that generates co-development, which is basically the improvement of the economies for both the sending and receiving countries. By stating that, the author agrees with the common belief, shared by many academics, that migration, far from being counter producing for receiving countries, actually improves many aspects of the society and might increase the quality of life for both locals and foreigners living within (Arabia 2000, 2006).

The generalized public perception demonizes migrants and points them as the cause for several social issues like lowering wages, taking jobs or exploiting the social services. But this belief is far from reality and is not based on any kind of deep and formal research on the matter. Actually migrants usually compete between themselves for low skilled jobs, which locals most likely do not want to apply for, so they are not a hazard for jobs availability. On the other hand, irregular migrants usually avoid using social services because they are afraid of being caught and deported or penalized. And many more examples exist that in the end show that

the public perception is completely wrong (Arabia 2000, 2006). The same publication on the Arabia 2000 newspaper (2006) relates that studies have shown that migrants have no direct impact on wage lowering, which supports the thesis previously stated, and to broaden the good picture for migrants, it was released that United States employers paid, from 1990 to 1998 over 20 billion dollars on social security services that were collected from irregular migrants. So in the long term and although they may be illegal, these migrants end up helping their receiving country by paying not only their social security money taken from paychecks, but actually the regular taxes and payments every citizen must pay.

Another positive impact that irregular migrants generate in their destinations is that many of them arrive to live in declining neighborhoods, and whilst this might not be really good for the migrant himself, it is good for the country because this way they get to reactivate areas and even entire cities, as it has happened with some central United States towns (García, 2007) with a declining population and economy. Migrants came to live there and are now bringing these cities up to better conditions through many entrepreneurship projects that migrants see themselves forced to get into but which actually account for a very positive impact on the society and the country as a whole.

And the good news is not only for the receiving countries since sending countries also get some benefits by the migrants abroad, mainly through remittances. It has been proved that families with members abroad spend more on education and healthcare at home (Annan, 2006), meaning that their life quality is improved by having a relative abroad that has access to better paying jobs and can make enough money to send some back home.

Of course the irregular migration phenomenon cannot be an overall positive impact. It is also important to understand that migrations can withhold some bad impacts on societies as for example there is always tension between locals and migrants due to the numerous different backgrounds they come from and have lived in (Annan, 2006).

But the worst effects of migration actually come along with the countries trying to control migration itself. With such strong efforts, they push irregular migrants to become vulnerable to smugglers, traffickers and other forms of exploitation, which in the end attempts to the very fundamental principles of human rights to live, to respect freedom and good will, for instance (Annan, 2006).

Finally, for sending countries, the major concern is that due to migration, many smart people are lost, brains, artists, sportsmen, and other outstanding citizens find in migration, regular or irregular, the opportunity to take better advantage of their talent and make a better living abroad. Therefore, sending countries con-

stantly lose very important people for the development of the country (Annan, 2006), and that is how for these countries, a very important concern is to keep in touch with their emigrants abroad, throughout organizations that connect migrants with their home country.

## 5. TESTIMONIALS

In order to gather some primary data on migration, three irregular migrants were interviewed and they shared some of the experiences they went through to migrate to the United States on an irregular basis. Parts of the conversations with three of them are shown here to help understand better the phenomenon and the particular situation of each. Names and specific identification data are reserved in order to respect each person's privacy and for safety reasons since some remain under an irregular status in the United States.

### 5.1 James\*

Young male from Bogotá, traveled to the United States in December 2005.

"The trip was not as tough as I thought it would be. Not saying that it was easy. I flew from Bogotá to Argentina, there I was given the identification card and passport from a random guy from Uruguay and was taken by boat to this country. From Montevideo I flew again but this time into Mexico, using this guy's identity. Once in Mexico I was taken to a little city close to the border and there I met the "Coyote" the guy that would be taking us across the border into the U.S.A. We were a group of 23, all ages, all nationalities from Latin America. Although Colombians are like top priority, we were treated the best of the group, we were like the elite. We paid the most as well (12,000 United States dollars, paid in advance). So, we were hiding in a shelter a few meters from the border, waited there for 2 days and on the second night this guy came and said "ok it is time to go, gather your stuff" (which was actually nothing but an extra set of clothes and the documents) and the walk began. It was probably four or five days walking through the desert, climbing dunes, running or falling down catching cactuses to stop the fall, hiding in small trenches for long hours waiting for the police to pass by. We actually had several coyotes; a few would be walking several meters in front of us "opening the trail" and making sure it was safe to walk or run, the two others would be with the group at all times.

Finally we made it to a road where an old van picked us up and took us to another city where the group started splitting. I was supposed to go all the way to New



York as well as 4 other Mexicans. We took a car and I drove all of us up. The ride was both relaxing and stressing. Relaxing because we had passed the worst part and were already in the United States; stressing because we were clearly illegal and many police check points would have to be passed. I asked a girl from the group to join me on the front of the car, that way it would appear more random. Two days driving got us into New York, only one quick police check that wasn't problematic at all.

I started as many others by looking for jobs doing whatever was available, didn't really care what it was as long as I was getting paid for it. After a couple of months I was nicely settled, had bought some Puerto Rican guy identity and I was set to go. Today I live in the States as a local, this is home for me here, there's no other place I would rather be."

## 5.2 Maria\*

Migrated about 20 years ago from Medellin to Miami.

"I got fired from my job in Medellin as a secretary, I didn't have much saved and opportunities seemed scarce. My cousin had traveled to Miami 6 months before and he would tell me all this awesome stories that set my mind to fly and I started falling in love with the United States, not really knowing much about it. A friend of mine ended up knowing the "friend of a friend of a friend" who helped people smuggle into the United States without major difficulty, it was actually very simple and the price was considerable but for me it was affordable, actually it was all my savings but I knew I would make a living in Miami. Besides, I had my cousin's assistance. Back then I paid USD 8,500.

The trip was quite simple; I would take a plane from Medellin to Miami, once in Miami's airport, and before getting to the passport check point, I was to go into the rest rooms and look in the trash cans for a set of clothing from the airport's cleaning and maintenance crew. I would just put it on, grab a bucket and mop and walk easily out of the airport by the maintenance doors. It did happen like that, I couldn't believe it. You feel like you're touching the sky with your hands, passing all these doors, seeing the airport gates closer and closer on each step you take, wow, hehehe (laughing) it felt wonderful, I really thank those guys who had everything set for me, they did an awesome job, I didn't get to meet most of them, but their work was impeccable. My cousin was waiting for me in a restaurant nearby, I just had to take the employee shuttle and get off over there. Man, what a party that was, I just got to hug him for hours, tears dropped, smiles... a bit nervous of course about all that was beginning there, but happy after all.

My cousin had me a job at a restaurant he worked for, so it was easy for me. Worked

there for like three years or so until there was an amnesty I applied and got my papers, that was another unique day... finally being legal, walking close to police and not being scared... that is a relief. I believe that's the very sin of an illegal, he never gets away from that feeling of fear, of being haunted, until one knows he is legal. Now I work at a restaurant in Bayside, Downtown Miami. Make good money to pay for a nice place, have a car, and from time to time travel to Colombia to visit my family."

### 5.3 Mario\*

Traveled from Mexico to Miami in 2007.

"The thing for us is very different than migrants from the rest of Latin America. We know so many ways of getting into this country, like I know of people that come and go almost every month with no major difficulties. And the thing for us is that we see the United States as a bank, so for example my plan is to stay here in Miami for about 3 years, make some good money to send home, buy me a house over there and start a business. My wife and kid stayed there in Mexico, we speak every other day and keep in touch real tight.

Here I just look to do whatever pays good money, like right now I work on construction during the day, in the afternoon and night I work at a flowers warehouse where I spend about 6 hours inside a refrigerated building receiving and dispatching loads and loads of flowers that come from Latin America and are sent out to flower shops all around Florida. During the weekends I work cleaning the beaches and on Saturday night I usually go out with my friends and have a beer, watch some football or whatever is up and that's it. That's my life and hopefully will be so for two more years."

### 5.4 Interview Discussion

The purpose of these conversations was to identify some similarities among those who travel irregularly to a country, and to experience how this people feel about what they did, what they found, how they are right now, and most importantly, if they still think it is worth it to risk so many things, up to their own lives, to reach, in this case, the American Dream.

We could see that all of them had a mind image of the United States as a place of opportunities, a place where they would be able to exploit their capabilities to their best and where they would find, for certain, a better life than what they had before in their home countries.

After these conversations, one can note that migration is a complex process, even if you arrive having many things set like a job, the cultural shock and the change

itself plays many tricks on each person's mind. Migrants have doubts all the time, they ask themselves 'what if' questions for a long period of time after they finally arrive, and it is only until the time you become legal that many of these thoughts leave your mind and you actually find peace. It is the moment when migrants lose their prosecution deliria, which follows them everywhere, and when they actually touch the sky with their hands.

Migrants understand migration as a process that would take around 3 or 4 years, maybe longer, before you actually feel that you fit in the society you are living in, but at the end, they all agree on the fact that money, efforts, spent time and all aspects of their journey were totally worth it. They all miss home and remind their past with watery eyes, but they do not change their current status; the ones from Colombia do not feel it as home anymore, home is the United States.

Finally, all of the interviewees had something in common; they would do it again, they know it was hard at the beginning, they know the risks better than anyone else, but they also know what they got to achieve after doing their process, so they all think it is worth the risk.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Migrations are a current phenomenon that is intimately related to globalization because this trend requires the movement of people all around. In a world that turns smaller as time passes by, going and coming from one place to another is just a day to day practice that is totally common for some people . What many ignore is that migrations, on a regular basis, are most of the time aimed or experienced by those on the mid high socioeconomic levels of society, but the lower levels are quite neglected from being part of the global village, at least on legal grounds. Just think for a moment of any international airport you have been to... can you recall many low class travelers? Or is most of the population mid or high class? Observation itself can give a hint on the regular migrants around the world, but reality is somehow different due to the fact that low class people, who do not crowd the airports, does not retain from migrating. Actually, they migrate as well, and right now they are the fastest form of migration, only these are irregular migrations, apparently "inexistent" for the system but totally realistic for the 30 or 40 millions that right now have engaged in this form of living and/or working in a country where the person is not allowed to do either one or both.

These irregular migrations have been happening for a long time, at same time when governments started to make it more difficult for people to come inside a country. The real social issue that they try to prevent by specifically selecting who enters and who does not, ends up generating a bigger social issue on the border

lines due to the desperate need of some to cross and pursue a better future. All sorts of illegal actions take place in order to have a person finally reaching his/her dream; people smuggling, illegal documentation, overstaying, are just a few of the illegal figures that come up to the irregular migration picture and are tried to be avoided by governments, most of the times without any success. An increasing number of irregular migrants die each year trying to reach the other side of the border, controls on this social issue are not being correctly implemented, as efforts must rely on other aspects of the community to try to discourage this phenomenon. Several proposals have been made to fight this matter like wages parity, but this and many other propositions are, as of today, a utopia due to the very nature of capitalism.

Capitalism is also responsible for having each country trying to be more competitive both inland and internationally. When engaging on this race, countries try to have the very best of the best within their territory, and that is how they refuse entry permits to many persons, because they know that if someone with scarce resources makes it into the country, most likely that person is going to take advantage of the state owned resources like public health, education, social care and others. Therefore making the country lose money with someone not giving back enough, and not having the natural right to be a citizen but actually being there for just paperwork. That is why governments do not want to have poor people coming inside, because they know that it is better to have investment, brains, world class figures, but poor people are simply not welcome, and that just shows how the theory of the authors might be certain. Globalization is a trend in which people of low economic class are not allowed to participate. But as it has been said several times before, research on these matters are quite difficult and very ambiguous, so it is not possible to have a last word on this topic. It is possible, however, to observe a few aspects of society that have changed due to migrations, and it is important to differentiate the public concept towards migrants and the real, academic one. Most scholars state that migrations have more positive than negative impacts on societies, both sending and receiving, so it is important to start changing so many misbeliefs about this phenomenon and stop demonizing irregular migrants; in the end, they are only trying to seek a better life, as any human being is entitled to.

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