

**Globalization from Above and Below in the San Quintin Valley,
Oxnard, and Other Strawberry Production Territories**
**Globalización desde arriba y desde abajo en el Valle de San Quintín,
en Oxnard y en otros territorios de producción fresera**

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ABSTRACT

The article will analyze different recruiting methods adopted by local farms located in the San Quintin Valley, in Baja California, and transnational companies that operate in the strawberry sector in both Mexico and the United States. This valley is a fundamental route for migrants from southern Mexico who travel to the north of the country and the U.S. The article draws on the fieldwork carried out during 2016 and 2017, in San Quintin and Oxnard (U.S.), where the presence of the same agri-food corporations allows an analysis of their economic and territorial strategies. The methodology has been based on quantitative and especially qualitative techniques.

Keywords: 1. migrant day laborers, 2. agri-food corporations, 3. strawberry crops, 5. San Quintin Valley-Baja California, 5. Oxnard-California.

RESUMEN

El artículo analizará diferentes métodos de reclutamiento adoptados por empresas locales ubicadas en el Valle de San Quintín, en Baja California, y por compañías transnacionales que operan en el sector fresero en México, así como en EE. UU. Este valle constituye un pasaje fundamental para los migrantes que proceden del sur de México y viajan hacia el norte del país y a EE. UU. El trabajo de campo en el que se basa este artículo se ha desarrollado durante los años 2016 y 2017, en San Quintín, México, y en Oxnard, EE. UU., donde la presencia de las mismas corporaciones agroalimentarias permite un análisis de sus estrategias económicas y territoriales. La metodología se ha basado en técnicas cuantitativas y, especialmente, cualitativas.

Palabras clave: 1. jornaleros migrantes, 2. corporaciones agroalimentarias, 3. cultivo de fresas, 4. Valle de San Quintín-Baja California, 5. Oxnard-California.

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INTRODUCTION

The San Quintin Valley is in the border state of Baja California and is one of the most important agricultural enclaves in the northwestern agro-export region of Mexico, which includes the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California, and Baja California Sur. This rural area specializes in greens and vegetables, mainly tomato, and as of late also strawberry and other berries for export to the nearby U.S. market (Garrapa, 2019). These products require large amounts of capital and much labor force; and so, from the 1980s and 1990s, following along the expansion of agricultural exploitation in the area, a flow of migrations from the south and center of the country, directly recruited in their original communities or coming from other rural states, mainly Sonora and Sinaloa. These migrants would arrive in the San Quintin Valley to work as wage day laborers and, in many instances, with the goal of crossing the border looking for jobs in the wealthy lands of the United States (Velasco, Zlolniski, & Coubés, 2014).

This territory thus represents a strategical vantage point from where to analyze the current tendencies in transnational mobility of capital and work, within the frame of the global agri-food system. On one hand, the San Quintin Valley taps into one of the most traditional and massive migration flows in the world: the one crossing the Mexico-U.S. Border; on the other hand, this agro-export enclave is representative of how transnational agri-food corporations operate, that is, by expanding the California agricultural model. This paper will analyze how these two processes relate to each other, presenting the complex link developed between the mobility strategies of corporate capital and migrant day laborers, and how this link is manifested specifically in the San Quintin Valley and within the frame of much wider territory dynamics, even connecting different areas in Mexico, the U.S., and other continents.

This research was conducted in two areas of strawberry production and throughout different stages of fieldwork carried out from March 2016 to July 2017 in the San Quintin Valley (Baja California, Mexico) and Oxnard (California, U.S.). The same U.S. companies and migration flows of day laborers from the south and central Mexico can be found in both territories. The methodology of research was based on different quantitative and qualitative techniques, including the collection of both secondary data from administrative and statistical sources, as well as of the documents produced by private foundations, research institutes, associations, and syndicates; direct observation and participation in the activities of local associations;² semi-structured interviews (95 total) with agricultural entrepreneurs, workers, representatives of local institutions and various social organizations and syndicates.

² The research was carried out altogether with the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) organization, based in Oxnard, with the *Sindicato Independiente Nacional Democrático de Jornaleros Agrícolas* (SINDJA), and with the civil organizations *Casa de*

When it comes to studying transnational mobility within the framework of globalization, some structuralist theorists (Castles & Miller, 2004; Sassen, 1998) have presented, on the one hand, the contradiction between the free movement of capital, goods, productive activities, and information. While on the other, the closing of borders to the movement of workers and, in general, to populations coming from poorer countries. According to this line of analysis, low-income territories export laborers and are the destination for relocation strategies of transnational companies; meanwhile, the countries of late capitalism resort to importing less protected, low-wage migrant workers.

Contrastingly, transnational, and social networking approaches, considering the increasing diversity of migration flows, have proposed a series of analytical categories that fundamentally demonstrate a trend towards mobility and the repeated crossing of the physical borders between national states, as well as ethnic, cultural, and colonial borders (Stephen, 2007; Tarrus, 2007). Several authors that focused on this study area (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Quesnel, 2010) have inquired into the analysis of transnational social spaces, defined as social fields, migratory fields, and mobility territories, archipelagos, and others, that interrelate the different areas of origin, mobility, and destination. Opposite to the first approach, these contributions substitute and subordinate the study of macrostructural causes to the micro and meso analysis of individuals and of family and community systems. As a matter of fact, Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (2003) chose to prioritize the research of transnationalism from below,³ holding onto the notion that transnational activities of popular origin are not driven by governmental actions or policies, nor by the administrators of large corporations; these activities are rather a reaction of migrants and their families to the poverty caused by governmental policies and by the conditions of dependent capitalism in their place of origin.

However, from the second half of the 1980s, the international arena has been orientated towards exacerbating migration policies, common to all western countries of old and new immigration. They have become stricter from the first years of the 2000s. This phenomenon has intensified in the United States, particularly so after the Twin Towers attack of 2001. Notwithstanding, an apparent countertendency to these restrictive practices, various countries uphold the opportunity of opening their external borders to temporary labor migration under different modes and extents of legality or informality. There is the case of institutional programs that arrange collaborations between organizations in the countries of origin and destination (Sánchez Gómez & Lara Flores, 2015). Also, there are private

La Mujer Indígena and *Alianza de Organizaciones Nacional, Estatal y Municipal por la Justicia Social*, operating in the San Quintin Valley, in Tijuana, and in Mexico City.

³ Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt (2003) propose differentiating the concepts of globalization from above and from below: these two refer to activities carried out, in the first case, by multinational corporations and States, in the second one, by migrants themselves and by their family and community counterparts in their countries of origin.

agencies dedicated to providing a temporary workforce at the transnational level; informal mediation via social networks, managed by foremen and recruiters, and sometimes even undercover as legal work cooperatives. These intermediary organizations can be illegal or officially regulated, they even appear in collective industry contracts (Corrado, De Castro, & Perrotta, 2016). Krissman (2005) stresses the employers' role that, through different means of mediation and altogether with state migration policies, influence how recruiting networks work and are structured. The organization of the latter is based on request from the receiving labor market and of the intermediaries that promote migration flows in response to the business needs.

This paper will follow these latter contributions, specifically exploring the case of those transnational activities carried out from below by migrant day laborers and their families. These migrants react directly to the process of globalization from above, promoted by agri-food corporations and agricultural companies from the United States., which resort to measures established by a state migration policy for the recruitment of temporary foreign workers.

Within the context of local, regional, national, and international migration chains that arise in intensive agriculture areas, the San Quintin Valley stands out due to a couple of specifics. The first, as a crossing territory, in which local populations movements are linked to other regions and new populations arriving to substitute them from different areas in the country (Lara Flores, 2010); the second, being a territory of recent demographic formation, with a quite young territorial identity for almost all its population (Camargo, 2015). Lara Flores (2003) provided evidence for the mobile and precarious dimension of this bordering agricultural enclave, studying in depth the conditions of recruitment, work, and temporary housing of migrant day laborers. Other authors (Velasco et al., 2014) have in their turn enriched this research field by focusing on the process through which the new settlers of the Valley become increasingly sedentary and take root there. In this paper, we will study again the circular, national, and transnational dimension, which involves the San Quintin Valley, particularly the mobility corresponding to the territorial strategies of transnational strawberry production corporations.

By bringing together the theoretical contributions focused on the circulation of capital and labor we wish to point out how is it that the global chains of goods and values (Gereffi, Humphrey, & Sturgeon, 2005), the global networks of production (Dickens, 1998), or the corporate archipelago territories (Ceceña, 2017) are constituted from the different locations of their mining activities, focused both on natural resources and workforce. We will particularly address how is it that several other labor migration archipelagos (Quesnel, 2010) or systems and subsystems (Durand, 2016) correspond to these corporate territorial systems by adapting to the needs of the capital, as well as to the economic strategies of families and communities (Prunier, 2017).

This document will start by profiling the local structure of production and the role of large U.S. marketers within the wider context of the economic competition between different strawberry-producing territories. Then it will analyze the workforce recruiting strategies of the intermediary agencies and the large companies active in the territory, both local and transnational. The migration flows corresponding to the productive archipelagos will be explored going deep into, on the one hand, the financial logic underlying the corporate strategies for workforce mobilization, and, on the other, their social impact and how workers react to the national and global financial forces, to address their own family goals, community interests, and class struggle.

GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE: CORPORATE STRATEGIES AND INTERREGIONAL COMPETITION

Baja California is one of Mexico's largest strawberry-producing states, only second to the state of Michoacán. In 2016 (OEIDRUS, 2016b), the production area in the state was 25% of the entire country's total production area with 6,254 acres harvested and contributed 32% of the country's total production value with 82,608 tons. At the time of this analysis, the San Quintin Valley included the districts of Punta Colonet, Camalú, Vicente Guerrero, and San Quintin.⁴ Particularly, 2,765 acres of strawberry were cultivated in the Vicente Guerrero District, 1,803 acres in San Quintin, 1,559 acres in Camalú, and 123 acres in Colonet (OEIDRUS, 2016a; SAGARPA 2015). In second place follows the raspberry production, yielding 9,152 tons from 1,262 acres; next is the blueberry production with 1,875 tons from 345 acres and then lastly the blackberry production with 536 tons harvested from 126 acres. Over 94,171 tons of berries were so the produce of about 7,988 acres, mostly cultivated in the open air in the coastal region of the state. Approximately 90% of this produce went to international markets, the U.S. mainly, while the other 10% went to regional and domestic markets.

The productive structure of the strawberry sector in the San Quintin Valley is essentially characterized by the presence of many small producers and large Mexican, foreign, and public-private agribusiness companies (fieldwork). The transnational corporations active in the sector are producers and marketers from the United States, Driscoll's, and Andrew & Williamson Fresh Produce (A&W) and stand out as the most important ones among those operating in the Valley. Besides cultivating themselves in both own and rented land, these latter companies also buy additional produce by hiring small and large local producers, according to various economic agreements and types of corporations. The increasing intervention of these transnational companies impacts the productive structure and the

⁴ These districts belong to the eight districts of the San Quintin municipality, created in February of 2020.

organization of agricultural labor, nurturing the process of economic centralization at the local level, driven by the very own characteristics of strawberry production.

As a matter of fact, the impoverishment of the soil and the overexploitation of water resources, altogether with the expansion of strawberry cultivation, which is sensitive to water salinity and the sandy composition of the soil, have played their part in leaving out many small producers that lack the investment power to search for groundwater or to buy desalination machines. Added to this are the territorial expansion strategies of transnational strawberry producers, intended to monopolize the winter season production of the Valley, entering into agreements with local producers and creating Mexican production companies derived from the same marketers.

Driscoll's, the largest and most renowned U.S. marketer in the San Quintin Valley and world-leading company in the market of fresh berry produce, will serve as an example. It was first established as a family enterprise in the late 1800s and has grown exponentially ever since. It is now a transnational corporation marketing fruit produce harvested in different territories in the United States, Mexico, Europe, and Africa (Driscoll's, 2018), also exporting to different countries over the world through the largest supermarket chains such as Walmart, Costco, and Tesco.

This transnational corporation has gained a great competitive edge by essentially developing ownership biotechnology and pursuing different territorial expansion strategies. While other companies mainly use a variety of plants selected by the universities of California and Florida, Driscoll's Berry has privately invested in a genetic research department. This department (owned by the company) develops plant varieties that better endure diseases and adapt to climate changes, with aesthetic and organoleptic characteristics preferred by the market, that reach exceptionally long harvesting seasons, with higher yields, and thus higher profit margins. In addition, the company manages huge production flows through a series of agreements and contracts with a broad base of independent or collective producers, and thanks to those farms that harvest exclusively for this company and yet maintain an autonomous legal status, as is the case of those associated with the Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC).

After World War II, the family-owned companies Reiter and Driscoll, strawberry producers from California since the beginning of the 20th century, began marketing strawberries under the label Driscoll Strawberry Associates along with another family and associated suppliers. The Reiter company is the founding and still leading firm of the RAC produce society, which produces for its sole client, the marketers Driscoll's. The Reiter family holds the presidency of Driscoll's and continues to manage both companies (Bloomberg, 2018), and so Driscoll's and RAC are both as a matter-of-fact part of the same Californian capital currently managed by the Reiter family, simply divided between the business focused on marketing the product and the one that supplies the produce. Currently,

the production of the companies affiliated to Reiter is distributed among several U.S. territories in California (Oxnard, Santa María, Watsonville, and Salinas), Oregon, and Florida. But it has also expanded internationally, each company strategically positioned to meet the continuous demand for berries. RAC has been operating in Baja California and central Mexico through BerryMex since 1991; in Portugal with Maravilha Farms since 2006; thanks to the business relationships of Driscoll's with producers in southern Spain, it has reached as far as Marruecos in 2011, producing with Atlas Berry Farms (RAC, 2018).

There is also the U.S. company A&W, not a leading figure in the sector as Driscoll's is, marketing tomato as well as strawberry. Even if it also is a company that started as a family business, which during the last three decades has managed to become a producing and marketing association of transnational reach, it still holds lesser financial capacity than Driscoll's, and territorial scope of exclusively regional nature (Mexico and the U.S.). The Andrew and Williamson families, founders of the company back in 1986, began by growing winter tomatoes and strawberries in Baja California (Andrew & Williamson, 2018). Throughout the first half of the 2000s, the company expanded in different rural areas of Mexico (to the west, center, and Baja California Sur), and in 2005 it merged with Sundance Berry Farms, a leading company in strawberry production in California, thus managing to market the fruit throughout the year.

Generally speaking, strawberry production seasons follow each other in the different rural districts of Baja California and California, achieving a certain yearly continuity, but they also overlap during some months, in which the fruit supply accumulates in the end market, lowering the price of the product. The harvest season begins at once in Oxnard and San Quintin, happening so in the months of winter and spring in both territories, a peak of production generally occurring from March to May. Then it follows in other territories in California, first Santa María, wherein the production begins in about March and then continues throughout the summer, in turn, is followed by the Watsonville area until late fall, and then the cycle starts over. The seasonal production of central Mexico, which roughly matches that of Oxnard and San Quintin, starting a little later and ending somewhat earlier, is still not competing with the Californian enclaves, as its production is intended for the export market of the U.S. East Coast, where it is confronted by the Florida season.

The competition between different rural territories is not only played out based on the overlapping times of harvest, but also depending on the presence or absence of several of factors that can represent a competitive edge for transnational corporations: the availability and low cost of the labor, the weather conditions, and the low cost of exploiting available natural resources such as soil and water, the flexibility of environmental regulations, and the proximity of the end market. The comparative analysis of the social, economic, and environmental characteristics of Oxnard and San Quintin is presented here as an example, carried out by a BerryMex producer and representative:

There's a lot of pressure in the U.S., in every way: economic, environmental. In Oxnard, for example, the city is eating the space for agriculture and the land for cultivation is being reduced a lot, there are many restrictions in terms of agrochemicals, the soil and water are five times more expensive than here [San Quintin]. The cost of labor is also at least eight times more expensive [than in Mexico] and the minimum wage in California will go up, and that will drive them out of the market. So, we are looking at Mexico as the substitute for the California production. The profit margins they [the producers] are achieving in the U.S. are very low and over here they are much wider (BerryMex producer and representative, personal communication, April 15, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

As made evident by this communication and others collected at both territories, the strawberry production area in Oxnard is being progressively displaced and is to be potentially substituted by that of the San Quintin Valley within the frame of corporate territorial logic. Despite being more expensive than others, its production will remain in the yearly supply program of transnational companies, such as Driscoll's, until the region allows for the accomplishment of the strategy implemented to minimize overall risks and so cover possible production shortages due to unforeseen and destructive climatic or phytological events in other territories with similar seasonal dynamics. The problem persists for those producers located in one single territory, in which case they can fail or even be expelled from the market. Thus, the economic survival of local agribusinesses is increasingly dependent on their membership to the large networks of commercial corporations, unless they do not have sufficient capital to develop the same territorial expansion strategies as those corporations, wide enough, diversified, and preferably of transnational reach.

Among the various aspects that constitute the vantage or disadvantage points at the territorial level, we can underline the relevance of cheap labor availability and the manageability of its social, economic, and political characteristics according to corporate strategies. As a matter of fact, the practices deployed by large local corporations and those of the two transnationals operating in the San Quintin Valley are quite different when it comes to labor.

Driscoll's and A&W sell their fruit to the fresh export market, which provides high profits in the industry. Therefore, the two corporations buy and harvest through their producer companies incorporated under Mexican law until the demand of the U.S. fresh market reaches them and the varieties they harvest to achieve high enough quality. Once the fresh produce harvest intended for the retail U.S. supermarket chains is depleted, these corporations put in the market the fruit from other territories that are still producing under the corporate seasonal cycle.

On the contrary, large local agribusinesses, independent or suppliers for A&W,⁵ either continue to sell second-quality fresh fruit at a lower price to the national market or harvest it for the frozen and processed fruit market in the United States. They do so in wait for the summer season produce (tomato or cucumber) while still receiving a small income and providing employment for day laborers at their main plants. They also turn to these secondary market solutions in periods of great labor shortage. In fact, according to the interviewees in the Valley, the lack of labor has become greater in recent years, and employers are particularly impacted by the emigration of experienced workers to the U.S., particularly during the spring and summer seasons, as pointed out by the owner of large local agribusinesses,

It is not so much a lack of people, but rather a lack of quality people. Because they are taking away from Mexico many skilled people with the H-2A. So, they are taking away people who can fill 80 boxes a day and instead I get people who can fill 20 boxes. New people come from the south, and we must train them. Or we are left with old ladies only, the grandparents, and they fill 15 boxes a day and so my harvest yield goes down. I have to take in new workers every year, partially. There are also people who have been with use for a long time, but more of the best ones are leaving to the U.S. with the passing time. And those who we take in, when they reach a certain level of experience and speed, they also want to leave (large local producer, personal communication, March 20, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

It is interesting to highlight the role of territory-bridge of the San Quintin Valley, which, as we will analyze further below, is used by both workers and employers, as a border rural training area, specifically for the harvesting of berries, culminating in the temporary recruitment of workers in U.S. fields. In summary, and contrastingly to Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (2003), there are four main types of business actors and labor intermediaries involved in promoting the seasonal mobility of day laborers to and from the Valley: large local agribusinesses, transnational corporations, different types of informal contractors and temporary labor agencies. Migration mobility is articulated in two main large flows: day laborers coming from the south and central Mexico who are mobilized to compensate for the lack of labor during production peaks in the San Quintin Valley; and the settlers of the Valley, recruited for season labor in different areas of California with the temporary H-2A visa.

Labor Mobility

As for the first type of migration flow, the large agribusinesses in the Valley are the ones contributing the most to the mobility of day laborers coming from other territories in the

⁵ In the standard contract developed by Driscoll's, agribusinesses receive ownership varieties exclusively, which they must destroy once the required amount is produced by the marketer company is reached.

country. The latter is brought in by recruiters who search for labor hands mainly in rural and indigenous communities from central and southern Mexico, promising well-paid jobs, and free accommodation in the corporate camps for day laborers. Once the buses arrive at the San Quintin Valley, agribusinesses pay the recruiters according to the number of day laborers who stay to work in their fields for at least a given minimum number of days, as explained by the head of social services for the laborers of large local agribusinesses.

Right now, there are many contractors, people coming all the way from Oaxaca, Veracruz, Sonora. They call the companies and say, "I have forty" or "I'll bring two buses." And they charge per bus, it's about 40,000 MXN what they charge per bus, plus a commission for the people. But the year before the last one we hired three buses, and when they passed by Ensenada people would leave the bus, and only half bus ended up here. Or sometimes they only get to the district and then leave. They cross, they use this place as a bridge. So, sometimes the company tells recruiters "alright, once they work here for three days, once we know people will actually stay here and work, then we'll pay you" (business manager, personal communication, July 7, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

There are still migration flows to the United States from the Valley and other bordering territories, aiming at crossing the border without papers. However, since the 2000s, Mexico's northern border has become more dangerous and harder to cross. The current U.S. antimigration policies have been interrupting the mobilization trend (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Tarrus, 2007) among Mexican day laborers who lacked papers and crossed the border to visit their relatives in their lands of origin and then would return to the United States to continue working. The drastic decrease of opportunities to cross the border contributes to the progressive dissolution of links and multiple exchanges between the various regions of origin, transit, and destination that make up the archipelagos of still-undocumented migrants. With the strengthening of the bordering controls, the price to pay for clandestinely crossing through the Tijuana mountainside is increasingly higher, as is the risk of being robbed by armed gangs or arrested by border patrol agents. This being the case, those day laborers currently leaving the Valley to work in the United States try to make the most of the H-2A temporary visa, which is the most recent version of the old Braceros program, only managed privately by U.S. employers now.

In contrast to the Bracero Program, which resulted from an agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments, the H-2 visas derive from a unilateral initiative adopted by the U.S. government, which has assigned the management of the procedure to agribusinessman, the latter turning to intermediary organizations and recruiters of different kinds (Trigueros Lagarreta, 2015). The H-2A program for temporary field laborers was established in 1986 through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to address the labor shortage in the U.S. fields (Trigueros Lagarreta, 2015; Palerm, 2014).

The IRCA allowed the legalization of about three million undocumented foreigners, counting those who resided in the United States uninterruptedly and out of the law since

1982, and those who had been working in U.S. fields for at least 90 days the year before (1985) under the Special Agriculture Workers (SAW) program. It divided the temporary H-2 visa (1952) for the import of unskilled labor in H-2A for field labor and H-2B for non-field labor (Trigueros Lagarreta, 2015). Over time, the temporary workers' program has become institutionalized as a way of constant recruitment of labor hands to complement the locals, yet not providing in exchange the option of obtaining permanent residence (Izcara Palacios, 2015). The mobility of day laborers settled in the San Quintin Valley and recruited through the H-2A temporary visa is the second type of migration flow analyzed in this research. It is anyway necessary to point out that despite the lack of up-to-date quantitative data, undocumented migrant laborers are still an essential part of the total amount of workers in the U.S. agricultural sector, particularly in California (Palerm, 2014).

The current growth in the flow of temporarily documented day laborers from the San Quintin Valley to territories in the United States has contributed to creating three different types of official labor intermediaries. The first one is represented by Fresh Harvest, a service provider company that supplies temporary labor hands to different employers in the United States for berries and greens plantations in Arizona and mainly in California (Fresh Harvest, 2018). The second case is Sierra-Cascade Nursery, a U.S. company that specializes in the production and selection of plants, recruiting day laborers in the Valley for temporary employment in its nurseries in Susanville or Tulelake, among the many located in Oregon, Nevada, and especially California (Sierra-Cascade Nursery, 2018). Lastly, there are the transnational companies A&W and Driscoll's, which manage various labor flows, according to the production peaks of the regions involved in their corporate network. Driscoll's mobilizes workers through the recruiting agency BerryMex.

All of these labor intermediaries operate formally mobilizing day laborers from the Valley by means of the H-2A visa. They select and recruit the workforce deemed ideal, and through their network, they help workers with their paperwork for obtaining visas before the Tijuana consulate, from where they are in turn directly taken to the camps of the companies that are to employ them. Once a fair time of the work contract has been completed, workers can anticipate the costs of the entire procedure, which will be reimbursed, along with the transportation costs to the border. Up to 50% is reimbursed in the case of Sierra-Cascade Nursery. If the visa is denied to the workers, all expenses will remain on them.

It is interesting to analyze the main points of this binational agreement, among its many financial and legal details. First, the role of the bridge territory that falls on the San Quintin Valley is understood by the very recruiters as a rural area for the training and specialization of laborers, brought in succession to the fields in the United States. As a matter of fact, certain specific characteristics are required from interested laborers: age between 18 to 38 years, certification of good health, letter of employment or recommendation signed or sealed by an employer, payment stubs or receipts to prove their experience in renowned local companies. The website of one recruiting company clearly states:

If you want to work during our harvest season, you must have at least three months of experience working in strawberry plantations in the last two years. You have to prove this experience with a letter of employment or payment stubs. [...] Unfortunately, we cannot hire solicitors who lack the necessary experience. If you are really motivated, we suggest that you look for a job locally in strawberry fields so you can acquire the necessary experience and apply with us in the future (Sierra-Cascade Nursery, 2018).

In this sense, Fresh Harvest has developed a practical testing device to confirm that the experience, specialization, and productivity of the worker is real, as they must simulate the harvesting operations using prototypes of plastic fruit and tools made available for that purpose in the facilities of the agency.

In recent years, the tensions between the intermediary agencies and the agribusiness have intensified: on the one hand, the agencies have been impacted by several veracity reflected in the paperwork of a number of workers who, already in the United States, failed to perform as expected; on the other hand, local and transnational employers have declined to provide letters of employment to those laborers who want to leave, feeling confronted by this in light of the shortage of labor hands resulting from the intense recruiting activity of the agencies.

As expected, the recruiting agencies of transnational corporations do not need this type of verifications, since they manage their workforce and keep tight control of all personal, productivity, behavioral, and even political affiliation data of those laborers selected for temporary employment in other California farms of the same corporation, as explained to us by the local head of recruiting operations for BerryMex.

We select people who has already worked the season, who are very well behaved, who have received no complaints or has followed all the rules... that is one good worker for the company. We prefer those who have worked in strawberry plantations, then blackberry and blueberry [...] We go and talk to people, and those who want to participate visit our offices and bring the paperwork. The first filter is that they have a passport and all paperwork in rule. The second filter is checking that they do not complain in their background on the fields, any note left by any former steward. The third one is that we ask for the criminal record and medical certificate. In terms of productivity, the rule is that they have a good average of four or five boxes per hour (manager at BerryMax, personal communication, July 2, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

According to various producers and officers in charge of the agriculture industry interviewed in Oxnard and Ventura (California), H-2A visas are insufficient in covering the demand for seasonal workers. The testimonials are particularly clear in noting certain difficulties found in the program: on the one hand, the costs of transportation and living, moreover of housing, of the workers are perceived as too high; on the other hand, the complexity and slow pace of the bureaucratic procedures is a negative contrast to the fast flow of agricultural operations. The laborers employed by agribusinesses are for the most part undocumented workers already in Californian territory. However, the hardening of border control measures and paperwork veracity verifications have made employers

increasingly turn to legal ways of recruiting the migrant workforce (Trigueros Lagarreta, 2015). This phenomenon has been particularly noticeable in the state of California, which traditionally required very few H-2A workers, having already a great supply of undocumented workers still widely available in the territory: in 1999, there were only 514 certified visa procedures registered, representing 1.2% of the federal total; in 2013, visa procedures reached a total of 2,815 (U.S. Department of Labor, quoted by Trigueros Lagarreta, 2015).

In the specific case of the transnational companies, the coordination among the territories of the corporate network allows managing the mobile temporality of laborers efficiently enough, even of those who move with H-2A visas. Selecting laborers under productivity criteria allows U.S. agriculture companies to reach increasing levels of return on their investment in the hiring and keeping of foreign labor hands. Also, the selection of workers based on their characteristics and behavior is reinforced by the frequent spatial distance of their housing from local populations, and by the rules under which the temporary visa program operates, as the residency permit is exclusively granted to the employing company. This last contractual condition guarantees a strict control not only of the entering of laborers into the country and of their leave when the work is done but also of their benefits and their behavior during their work stay. If for any reason the worker decides to terminate the contract early, or if he fails to meet the expectations of productivity and good behavior, he will have to leave the country immediately and cover all return expenses; the worker will also have a negative record and will be unable to access this opportunity in the coming years. The migrant laborer then finds himself under constant threat of being deported if the company decides to fire him or if he decides not to continue the working relationship.

It should also be noted that laborers, despite being granted a social security number and having the right to receive medical assistance in case of accident or illness, are as a matter of fact unable to access social or labor benefits in the United States, same that are available to the local workforce. As summarily informed by Trigueros Lagarreta (2015), those workers counting with H-2A visas, on top of being bound to their employer even if he does not meet his contractual obligations, are also not covered by the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, which regulates the working standards and conditions in agriculture. They are also not covered under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act, which established the unemployment benefits, nor under the National Labor Relations Act, which grants the right to collective negotiation. Besides this, the very unilateral nature of the U.S. program makes it so that Mexican laborers are also not covered under the Federal Labor Law of their country, and the Mexican government will only intervene in instances of human and labor rights violations via the limited action field of some Mexican consuls. Generally speaking, temporary migrants are ignorant of their rights and do not know where to turn in case of problems or in terms of the recruitment process carried out by the intermediary organizations or during their stay in the United States; they are kept well beyond the reach of social and

syndicate organizations active on U.S. soil. In any case, workers will rather keep good relationships with their employers, so that they keep hiring them in coming years, which will allow them to save money and contribute to their family economy, thus improving their living conditions in their land of origin or new place of settlement.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice how the political and behavioral filter described in the case of H-2A visas, as it also applies to those workers recruited in the south and central Mexico for their employment in the Valley plantations, and how these selection criteria also extend to the entire community of origin. As a matter of fact, the companies and recruiters deploy strategies for the substitution and recruitment of temporary laborers of different origins as a response to possible activist movements, as they look negatively upon the specific cultural and geographical associations of those community leaders and workers perceived as particularly troublesome. This section closes with the testimony of the same recruitment manager at BerryMex who oversees a part of the migration flows the company uses internally in the territories of its transnational production network. Backed up by legal devices such as the H-2A visas and equipped by governmental migration policies, the company drives the temporary and spatial mobility of its employees from above to better manage the availability of labor according to the different peaks of production of the corporate archipelago.

Reiter in the U.S. bring people from Guadalajara, Michoacán, and Baja California. [...] The ones leaving early for the U.S. are those from Michoacán, in March or April. Right from BerryMex to Reiter. When we are a little behind here, they let us borrow people from over there and they work the strawberry here, supporting us for two or three weeks. They leave back for the U.S. when they need them there. Most people are coming to the U.S. from Michoacán, then they activate our reserve, and they leave for Watsonville, or wherever they are needed. Because in March, April, May, we also are in season and it's when we need them and we struggle for workforce, and the competition for workers is huge here. By mid-May we are no longer concerned, and we begin to make a list of all the people who want to go to the U.S. (local manager at *BerryMex*, personal communication, July 2, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

We will now explore the point of view of the workers, not as mere factors in production anymore, but also taking into account the way in which they react to the national and global economic forces that drive the process of globalization from above hereby described. We will particularly analyze two trends that arise in the same context of poverty and exploitation, in turn determining two different dynamics of globalization from below: on the one hand, the personal motivations underlying the migration movements towards the fields in the United States, with the socioeconomic challenges and consequences that this mobilization bring into the basic family unit; on the other hand, the organizational tension of the activist movement of settled laborers towards a national and transnational dimension.

Globalization from Below: Motivations, Challenges, and Organization of Day Laborers

The hard living and working conditions that caused the uprising of day laborers in the San Quintin Valley in March of 2015 (Jaloma, 2016; Aragón, 2015) are still currently in place in a large portion of the Valley. The average yearly salary offers no solution to the poverty level of the workers, to which is added the lack of actual access to social benefits, health care among them. All of this is part of the main reasons for the discontent and emigration of many laborers settled in the Valley.

Indeed, the quality of life of a laborer family is still quite poor despite the considerable daily physical effort they make to improve third living conditions. On the one hand, the cost of living is somewhat high due to the lack of basic services, which forces laborers to obtain those services from private providers: such is the case of drinking water in several neighborhoods in the Valley. Then in the other hand, the average daily salary registered in 2017 for fieldwork ranged between 160 and 180 Mexican pesos, excluding the few weeks when the strawberry harvest is paid on a piece-rate basis, which is the short period that usually allows laborers to obtain higher profits, all depending on their physical performance. And so, those day laborers who manage to meet the information, paperwork, and conditions required by some of the intermediary agencies or transnational corporations in the territory, leave for the United States to work for several seasons, which may amount to several months a year. Next, we include an excerpt of an interview with a day laborer of Mixtec origin who arrived at the Valley when she was 13 years old; this excerpt allows for us to understand to a greater extent the reasons for the temporary mobilization that tenants partake in, being already settled day laborers.

Thing is, the money you make here is not enough and over there it lasts a little longer. Let's say, 100 dollars a day, over there you make 700, 800 dollars a week, and how much you make here!?! The strawberry labor is six months, but the good part is only one month, that's when you make the most. There is a week or two when you make 3,500 or 4,000 pesos... if you know how! Because it depends on how many boxes you can fill. Then you make about 1,800 pesos, maybe 2,000 a week, and then month by month it goes down, and so you go to work at the tomato fields or somewhere else. So, when you are making the most is when you go and buy shoes and pants to dress well, you buy things for the school and clothes for the kids. Because after that they pay you by day and its 180, 200 pesos. That's why people here can't build a house, because they only make enough to eat in the months when there is no strawberry. [...] This little plot, we bought it with only a small wooden house here, and my husband had everything built because he would go and work in the U.S., we would have nothing otherwise. He started to go there and it was five years coming and going. He stayed there eight or nine months, ten months sometimes, almost the entire year. It was like that until the kids didn't want him to leave anymore. Now both of us have to work just to make a living. The latrine is over there in the back, so here inside the house we still need to have a bathroom completed, we still need the floor, electricity, the toilet,

everything (Day laborer, personal communication, April 20, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

As shown in this testimony and others we gathered, the main goal of this emigration is supporting the family economy, not only in its daily sustenance but also so that a better housing unit can be built, to achieve employment opportunities apart from the fields, and above all to provide the children a good education. This is further confirmed by another laborer also from Oaxaca and raised in the Valley, who shared with us his direct experience as an emigrant in the U.S. fields.

Well, you make an effort to have something going here, you see. With what you make from working there you make it here, but if you stay there, you won't make it. The best way to go with this is to send over here everything you make, because if you stay there, so much you make, so much you spend. [...] I was there, me and my brother went there and we started saving to build and then he opened a store, and I opened an Internet café little by little, because I realized how hard it is to make your life in the fields, there is people who are already in their old age and still in the fields, and that's very hard (Day laborer, personal communication, March 30, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

The excerpts of these interviews with laborers shared here display for us a transnational strategy developed from below, negotiated and deployed from the basic family unit, predicting more or less extended absences of one of the family members, with the aim of overall improving the economy and the life path of all family members (Prunier, 2017). These days, the rural territories in the United States are instrumental spaces for exclusively temporal efforts, and for the accumulation of resources intended for investing in greater life and work expectations in the settlement, without such representing any long-term rooting in that new location.

Despite the family-collective logic underlying this mobilization, the actual choice is still not deeply autonomous but rather driven by economic necessity and the chance of freeing themselves from the conditions of poverty, both currently and for future generations. The social and affective cost that all family members must pay is quite steep and does not always yield a good return, as the union of the couple is never guaranteed to stand the hardships of distance. As a matter of fact, romantic and parent-child relationships are deeply and sometimes irreversibly affected by this. In terms of this reality, next follows the testimony of a couple who has lived the experience of being apart for many years, presenting to us the different points of view in play at the family level when it comes to the dynamics of the repeated and extended absences of some of them.

Wife: He left with great sacrifice from everyone here, because I stayed with the kids and would go to the fields every day. I had to be there from five in the morning until late in the afternoon, and the kids would stay alone. They went to school and the older girl would take care of the others, she had to change their clothes, give them meals, and when I got home, I would wash the clothes, all by hand, and then I had to cook,

make sure they did their homework, and get them to do it if they didn't. Thing is, it was not only working in the field but also taking care of the house, and many times I had to attend a meeting at my son's school right after working in the field, with my work bandana... It was all very hard. But I decided to be brave and make a living for my kids, and he would also call them over the phone, giving them advise, because then they also are in their rebellious stage...

Husband: I was always there, I would call them every day and would always give them advise and attention, and that's how we managed to make it. But they also had to suffer and maybe they will blame me for that. Because I'm sure they would make fun of them at school, hit them and that kind of thing, right? But my son would not tell me at the time and that could be one reason for them to hook him on drugs. That is why I know the kid made an effort so he could have a good upbringing himself. Because when you can only call them over the phone is not the same anymore. [...] And even if I worked every day, I was also barely making ends meet. It was a sacrifice from everyone, from me, from her, from my kids too, as they spent many years without a dad.

(Day laborer husband and wife, personal communication, July 8, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

This transnationalism from below centered around the San Quintin Valley is not only expressed through the mobilization flows regulated and driven by the conditions of necessity described above, but also through a process of syndicate organization of interterritorial nature, and political action tentatively directed towards a transnational dimension. A part of the laborers' movement still active and gathered under the *Alianza de Organizaciones* and the SINDJA made a caravan from the San Quintin Valley to Tijuana in March 2016, and then another to that reached Mexico City in March 2017, to continue their activism for the betterment of the living and working conditions in the fields, conditions that unfortunately have not changed much since the uprising of 2015. One of the key moments in the so-called March of the Two Californias took place upon the meeting of laborers and solidary activists from Mexico and the United States at the Tijuana border. Besides this, several collectives and civil organizations brought to life a series of boycott initiatives against the berry production of Driscoll's, taking place at different supermarkets in different locations on both sides of the border, particularly in the U.S., responding to repeated calls for the Global Action Day for San Quintin! launched by Valley organizations at different points in time (Ké Huelga Radio, 2016, 2017). The following are the cities wherein the boycott actions took place: New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Houston, Dallas, El Paso, Los Angeles, San Diego, and thirteen other cities in California, Alaska, Australia, and Mexico. Also, the second caravan of March 2017 (*Caravana por un salario justo y una vida digna*-Caravan for Fair Salaries and Dignified Living) reached as far as Mexico City, bringing about a series of public initiatives in different states of this country, particularly in Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán, Querétaro, and the State of Mexico. The goal of the caravan was both creating and consolidating new sections for the mentioned syndicate, thus managing to incorporate laborers from different rural regions of Mexico into the new process

of organization. This section is thus concluded with the testimony of a syndicate representative, clearly confirming these political and syndicate intents and actions of an international and transnational nature.

We are already experiencing the results of the boycott, and the working conditions of the laborers are improving, and all of this is thanks to the different collectives and organizations that have aided us with this work in different supermarkets. We have been doing this in Mexico City, and we are about to work in Michoacán, Guanajuato, Jalisco, where Driscoll's also can be found, and in the U.S., of course, where base committees have been created and they visit the stores and take brochures with them to raise awareness among consumers about the conditions that workers live under. So, we will not stop until there really is a collective agreement that may truly guarantee the labor rights of the workers, until they have dignified salaries and their benefits are respected (syndicate representative, personal communication, July 12, 2017, San Quintin Valley).

CLOSING REMARKS

This paper has brought into question the analysis by Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (2003), which proposed a distinction between transnationalism from below and from above, prioritizing the research on the first type of mobility. Conversely, we have considered how both processes articulate themselves, analyzing the existing relationship between the mobilization strategies of the U.S. corporate capital and those of Mexican migrant day laborers. We have observed how this interaction manifests in the San Quintin Valley, yet also considering the wider territorial context that involves different agricultural areas in both Mexico and the United States.

Regarding transnationalism from above, the impact of the actions undertaken by U.S. agribusinesses on the local structure of production has been explored in depth. The territorial organization of these agribusinesses has been explored, with particular focus on the strategies of workforce recruitment and spatiotemporal mobilization between different regions of Mexico, as well as on the transnational level, through the temporary H-2A visa. We have taken notice of how these labor rotations managed from above essentially serves to cover the demand for cheap labor hands throughout the seasonal cycle of the different production territories part of the corporate network.

Considering the wide variety of social groups that meet in this territorial intersection, we have researched both the mobilization dynamics of the new laborer flows employed in the Valley and coming from central and south Mexico, as well as that of those laborers already settled as tenants and recruited to work per seasons in the U.S. fields, particularly in California.

And so, it is possible to conclude that in the case studied, labor mobility in the San Quintin Valley and other agrarian regions in Mexico and the United States is directly driven by the

activities of Mexican and Californian agribusinesses. These latter ones directly or indirectly manage the mobility of the workers through informal recruiters and official intermediary agencies, which are in turn enabled by the migration policies of the U.S. government. The strategy for mobilizing temporary laborers at the national and transnational levels responds to the needs of agri-food capital for cheap, flexible, and supposedly non-conflictive labor hands during the seasons of peak production in the different rural areas of its corporate network of supply.

On the other hand, two different types of transnationalism from above have been noticed. This paper has deepened into how migrant laborers move individually to improve the living conditions of their families in the Mexican territories where they may have recently settled. But they also mobilize collectively, promoting and carrying out national and international political and syndicate initiatives. The interterritorial tension pursued by laborers in both cases is also a reaction to globalization from above and to the poverty levels caused by economic forces, as they aim at goals of family well-being, community interests, and class struggle.

As a closing remark, we can see how the San Quintin Valley constitutes an intersection territory in which globalization from above and from below coalesce. The transnational continuity between the agricultural corridor of the Mexican northwest and the U.S. southwest provides territorial support for the articulation of a complex relationship between the social reproduction strategies and the political organization of laborers and their families on the one hand, and the organizational dynamics of the global agri-food sector, particularly of U.S. strawberry companies, on the other.

Translation: Fernando Llanas

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