

Internal Forced Displacement in Mexico. A relationship of violence and forced migration.

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Abstract

Mexico does not have data or an official diagnosis on internal forced displacement due to violence. In 2006, ethnographic evidence has documented the armed conflict in the country - the War on Drugs - as the main cause of the internal forced displacement crisis. According to the National Human Rights Commission, between 2012 and 2014, Guerrero, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Chiapas were the states with the highest number of cases of internally displaced persons. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center suggests a causal link between violence and displacement in the affected states and municipalities. This paper analyzes the evidence on homicide rates - as a proxy for violence - and intra state migration rates - as a proxy for internal displacement - for the municipalities in the state of Guerrero through the spatial and temporal analysis of both variables. A strong relationship was found in the period 2000-2015.

Introduction

This work compares the Mexican sources of information that allow linking migration and violence to analyze the relationship between internal forced displacement (IFD) and the context of generalized violence derived from the War on Drugs in Mexico.

First, we proceeded to examine the sources of information to locate possible surveys that reflect internal mobility in Mexico at the level of municipalities, as well as the subjective experience of people around violence. This exploration identified the absence of this type of information in the Mexican survey. Subsequently, censuses and administrative records were examined, from which it is possible to derive a relationship at the municipal level, between insecurity and internal migration. The latter - internal migration - was used as a proxy of IFD; while homicides were used as a measure of violence in order to elaborate a relation between violence and IFD in Mexico.

Context

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, presented to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998 by Francis Deng, define internally displaced persons as:

"persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligatory to flee their home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result or to avoid the effects of an

armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, of human rights violations or natural or man-made disasters, and that have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. "

The Guiding Principles stipulate that internal displacement “may occur as a result of a conflict or, to avoid its effects”.

In Mexico, internal forced displacements begin to be evident as since the 50s (Pérez, 2013) and during the 70s. These displacements were caused by religious intolerance among Catholics and indigenous Protestant minorities, communal conflicts, and disputes over lands and natural resources in some states such as Nayarit, Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas, in which inflows of intrastate internal displacement occurred (Rubio and Pérez, 2016). Until the 2000s internal forced displacement was the result of land disputes, local conflicts, religious intolerance, large-scale construction projects and forced urbanization projects, construction of dams, natural disasters and the Zapatista conflict (Cossío, 2014). IFD in Mexico is one of the types of forced migration with a manifest increase at the moment.

According to the special report on Internal Forced Displacement of the Mexican Commission of Human Rights (CNDH, 2016), official information on the IFD is scarce and there is no diagnosis about the multiple factors that generate it. Despite the methodological difficulties in measuring this phenomenon, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center gave a figure - until 2016 -, of 311,000 people in displacement situation and 23,000 new displacements in that year.

Data and Methods

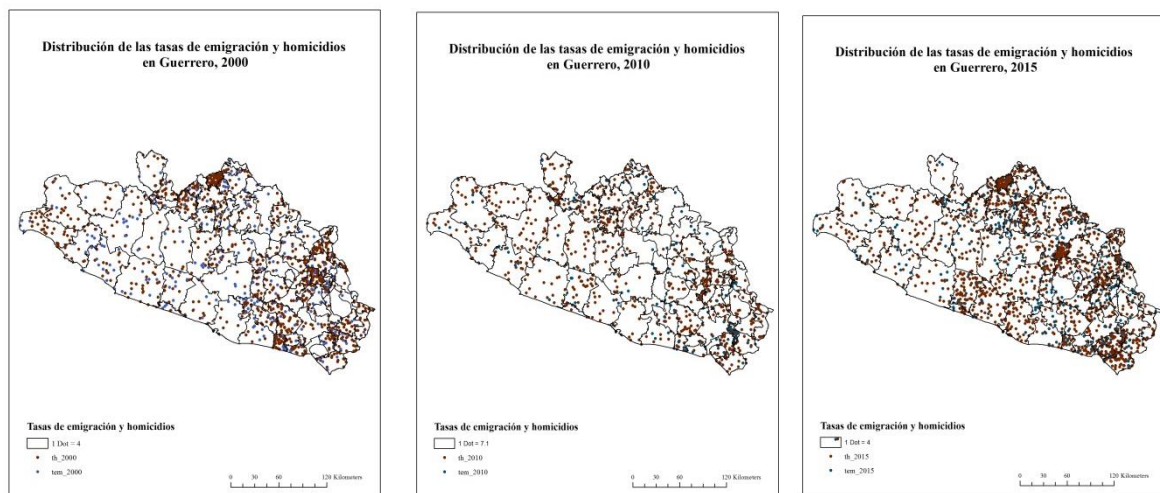
Previous works have made efforts to analyze the relationship between internal migration and violence in other regions of Mexico where the presence and activities of criminal groups are frequent.

Barrios (2014) documents the association of the variables of emigration with unemployment and number of homicides that occurred in Ciudad Juárez. In her work shows, based on the indicators of quality of adjustment that homicides contribute to the IFD. Gurrola (2016) estimates net migration for another region in Mexico – *The Golden Triangle*, a region known for their poppy production - and the corresponding homicide rates for the period. Her work allowed detecting the state and municipal destinations to which people were mobilized in order to flee homicidal violence.

The sources of information that were used to estimate the number of people who changed their residence within the state of Guerrero were the 2000 and 2010 Mexican Censuses and the 2015 Intercensus Survey organized by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). For the homicide rates, the administrative records on deaths were also used for the years 2000, 2010 and 2015. In 2005, a Population Count was carried out, but this does not allow for making estimates on internal migration at the municipal level, so it is not taken into account here.

The proposal presented here is to make use of intra-state emigration rates in Guerrero and homicides occurred in the municipalities. To obtain emigration rates, matrices of origin and destination were constructed between the 81 municipalities of Guerrero for the years 2000, 2010 and 2015. The homicide rates were calculated from the death records for the same years. Subsequently, a spatial analysis was performed to know the distribution of both variables in the state of Guerrero (see Map 1) and the Getis-Ord G_i^* statistics of each variable – intra-state migration and homicides - were calculated to perform the hot spots analysis. The results showed a statistical and significant (p -value < 0.001) concentration of high values for intra-state migration and homicides in the regions of the state most affected by the presence and behavior of criminal organizations - *Tierra Caliente, La Montaña and La Costa* - relationships being significant for the three years considered.

Map 1. Distribution of intra-state migration and homicide rates in Guerrero, 2000, 2010 and 2015



Source: Own elaboration based on deaths records; 2000, 2010 Censuses, and 2015 Intercensus Survey 2015, INEGI.

Discussion

Despite the limitations of estimating intra-state migration through censuses, the analysis carried out with a spatial approach presented here gives us an approximation to the association between displacement and the context of violence in the state of Guerrero. The regions with the highest homicide rates are also the regions with the highest rates of intra-state migration.

Especially since 2006, journalistic and ethnographic evidence has documented the context of widespread conflict - the War on Drugs - as the main cause of the internal forced displacement crisis (Albuja, 2014). According to the National Human Rights Commission, between 2012 and 2014, Guerrero, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Chiapas were the states with the highest number of cases of internally displaced persons (CNDH, 2016).

Taking as a case study the state of Guerrero, in southeastern Mexico, Gómez-Johnson (2015), mentions that since 2013 there have been several episodes of mass forced displacement as result of 1) the increased control of organized crime that co-opted to the authorities and, 2) the lack of protection of civil society. Between 2013 and 2014 there were 4,000 people internally displaced in Guerrero, specifically from the areas of *Tierra Caliente* - an area where poppy is grown - and *La Montaña* - a zone where marijuana is grown. In addition to this, Guerrero has been one of the states where the effects of the War on Drugs are translated into a large number of homicides and forced disappearances.

Including the variable of violence only in relation to homicides leaves out other important causes of forced displacement in Mexico - poverty and lack of employment - however, it is assumed that the phenomenon, being multidimensional as shown in the works referred to, brings us closer of homicidal violence as a cause of internal forced displacement in Guerrero. Finally, recognizing the lack of sources that account for internal forced displacement in Mexico, it is necessary to continue exploring the relationship between these variables with different methodologies with the potential to elucidate the causal relationship between violence and forced displacement.

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