

Transgressing Space: Globalization, Mobility, and Bordercrossings

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Salvadoran Transnational Transgressions: Remittances, Rents, and the Struggle over Economic Space

Abstract: The massive and ever-increasing amount of remittances circulating between Central America and the United States gave rise to new patterns of economic activities, and thus to an entire new set of economies. In comparison to economic models of the 20th century, this transnational remittance economy does not necessarily rely on state interventions, bilateral trade agreements, or other forms of management of economies. It is not about developing a national economy, but fostering individual well-being. It is not about formulating larger development strategies, but enhancing further remittances in an intrafamily relation based on moral. First, this chapter argues that remittances are rents and create spaces of rent. These economic spaces are based on political power instead of free markets. Then, the chapter explores how different actors intervene in these spaces of rent and thus manage the course of the economy. Next, the chapter analyzes the institutional setting through which these transnational spaces of rents are hedged and argues that the management of the transnational remittance economy releases social pressure from elite activity. Moreover, the chapter explores how and on which particular scale these remittance-induced spaces of rents are politicized in order to capture a share of the flow of rents.

1 Introduction

El Salvador is located in between North America with its hemispheric hegemon—the United States—and South America. The tiny Central American isthmus links both continental landmasses in geological and geographic terms. The map clearly points out that El Salvador is south of Mexico and therefore it is part of Central America. It is Spanish speaking, has its own national flag and anthem, elects its own president, forms part of the Central American regional initiatives, and of course has its own economy and is known for producing one of the best coffees in the world.

At the same time, however, cultural, political, and economic transnational ties are also highly important for El Salvador. Newspapers maintain a special subsection dedicated to *departamento 15*,¹ the Salvadoran expatriate community.

1 Politically, El Salvador has 14 departments. The *departamento 15* is dedicated to the Salvadoran diaspora in the United States.

Salvadoran-born US citizens can apply for dual citizenship and participate in Salvadoran national elections. At least the current party in government, the *Frente "Farabundo Martí" para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), maintains a party constituency in Northern California. In economic terms, the Salvadoran community living in the United States produces three times the GDP of El Salvador (Hinojosa-Ojeda). Almost every family has a relative in the United States: more than a quarter of the Salvadoran-born population lives in the United States and many of them send money back home to their families.

Both the geopolitical location and the socioeconomic orientation of El Salvador produce a set of questions, which are particularly relevant to understand the process of spatialization in the Americas: Is El Salvador part of Latin America, or is the tiny society in the Central American isthmus an outpost of the United States? What is its 'place' within the Americas?

For many Salvadorans, migration and remittances are part of their livelihood strategies. As an economy, El Salvador specializes in labor exports and the acquisition of remittances rather than in the production and exportation of commodities. With this changing position in the international division of labor and its microdynamics affecting households coping with daily needs, the Salvadoran economic space is redefined. On a macro level, El Salvador grows into the US economy. Domestic economic processes are increasingly dependent on US economic developments. US labor market dynamics as well as tax and foreign trade regulations have direct effects on households in El Salvador. On a micro level, migrants send a part of their earnings and savings to their families in El Salvador. They expand a monetary circuit, which is not necessarily based on the trade of commodities. While these remittances are part of wages and potential savings of the migrants in the United States, they appear as rents in the hands of families at home.

In this chapter, I discuss the impact of remittances on the Salvadoran economic space. I argue that remittances unfold a contradiction: first, as a macro flow of rent, remittances tend to connect formerly national economic territories, just like traditional commodity or other financial flows tend to do. Remittances transgress national economic borders. In contrast to other economic flows, however, remittances entangle labor markets instead of goods markets. Remittances flows are hard to control. Remittances are private monetary transfers that often escape both state monitoring and state control. Second, as a micro flow of rents, remittances tend to increase the economic autonomy of receiving households. Receiving households are enabled to enhance consumption without necessarily participating in the local labor market. They are able to distance themselves from economic conditions. At the same time, these households struggle to maintain

remittances and thus strengthen their relationship with the family members living and working abroad. While the micro *economic* effect of remittances is increasing autonomy, the micro *political* effect is increasing control to stabilize future remittances.

Finally, I argue that this contradiction has an important implication for the current articulation of economic space. I interpret the development of this particular remittance space as a constant struggle of receiving households to maintain the control over remittances in order to secure their livelihoods. This struggle is getting complex as it involves an increasing number of actors apart from the receivers, such as banks, the government, hometown associations (HTAs), development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. The chapter shows that this economic space is essentially contested.

The chapter is divided in four parts. First, it discusses the theoretical linkages between economic space and rents as a particular form of economic surplus. Second, it integrates remittances into these thoughts. Third, it shows the volume and the dynamics of remittances in El Salvador on macro as well as on micro levels and their respective influence in shaping economic space. Finally, the chapter turns to the spatial strategies of actors involved in this economic space and how these actors organize access to rents. The conclusion then elaborates on the contradictory role of remittances in both dissolving and restrengthening economic borders.

2 Rent and Economic Space

Mainstream economics usually treat space as state-based, essentially capitalist, and as internally as well as externally homogenous. Definitions of economic space, although they remain rather implicit, include a strong but unquestioned relation of space, territory, and state. Economics are about supply, demand, and the market, or about production, consumption, and transaction within a given space usually treated as a state-space. The same is true for rents. While focusing on traditional sources of rent, such as oil and other raw materials or agrarian commodities, rent theory usually highlights the state as the most appropriate institutional setting in acquiring rents (Beblawi and Luciani). State economic space and rents thus become unified in a single concept—the rentier state-space—and both conventional neoclassic economics and political economy approaches to rents tend to highlight the state-space as the primary analytical unit.

In contrast to these theoretically rather pretentious conceptions of the triadic state–territory–economy space, I argue that economic spaces are survival spaces. In the first place, economic space provides the physical necessities for

human survival, and through this metabolism, human practice appropriates and produces economic space. In this regard, economic space is material. The organization of economic space depends on the availability of economic surplus. Depending on how economic surplus is socially organized, economic spaces are shaped. Hence, I understand economic space as a synchronized spatial relation between the horizontal and vertical division of labor. In a horizontal dimension, economic spaces are topographies of networks of different economic places or locations. These networks evolve because places of production relate to places of consumption. These networked topographies are time-dependent circuits of labor, goods, and money. In a vertical dimension, the division of labor needs to be ordered, spaced, and stabilized, and economic surplus needs to be redistributed, which in the end involves the use of political power. In a strict sense, thus, economic space is always politico-economic (see, for this concept of economic space, Warnecke-Berger, *Transnational Economic Spaces*).

Economic surplus, the basis of the emergence of economic space, can take the form of rent or profit. In contrast to capitalist profit, economic rents evolve because of market restrictions, monopolies, or political power.² Rent is a surplus earned by “a particular part of a factor of production over and above the minimum earnings necessary to induce it to do its work” (Robinson 102; Elsenhans, “Rente” 439). In contrast to rent, capitalist profit is unique. It depends on additional factors, such as competition among market-dependent entrepreneurs, the predominance of wage labor, and particular wages being paid in economic sectors that do not produce final consumption goods but machinery (Kalecki

2 The concept of rent follows a curious cycle. While it dates back to the Classics—Ricardo, Mill, Smith, and Malthus—and to Marx, it again gained scholarly attention in development studies in the 1960s and 1970s (Khan and Jomo; Schmid). With the demise of development theory and the rise of neoclassical economics, rent theory was mainly understood as rent-seeking (Krueger) and informed theories of the resource curse (see, e.g., Auty). Lately, however, there is a renewed interest in the concept, particularly from geographers (Andreucci et al.; Birch; Elden and Morton; Felli; Haila). However, this renewed interest is predominantly focused on land rent and revolves around the Marxist notion of ground rent. Marx distinguished ground rent, which is a major theoretical pillar of Ricardo’s work, from differential rent I and differential rent II. The new interest in land rent is based on the notion of pseudocommodities, as Marxists increasingly recognize that there are high prices for certain goods which do not embody labour power, and thus do not create value following Marx’ theory of value. Measured in prices, in contrast, land rent is a specific subcase of differential rent, which is not recognized by this new discussion. Refocusing the theory of rent exclusively on land markets eventually reduces its explanatory power.

78–79). In this conception, capitalism and capitalist growth depends on rising mass incomes (Elsenhans, “Rising”) and on repelling the dominance of rents. In contrast to the more or less accidental development of capitalism, rents are rather ubiquitous. They appear when capitalist mechanisms are too weak or even absent and consequently, when politics dominate economies. When rents are present, political and economic spaces overlap, and social groups and collective actors need to rely on political means in order to access and appropriate economic surplus. When capitalist profit is dominant, in contrast, economic space emancipates from political space since elites become exclusively dependent on market transactions for their own social reproduction and do not need to intervene politically (Wood).

This perspective on both profit and rent as different forms of surplus has particular implications for the notion of economic space. In spaces of rent, the political struggle for access to rents is pivotal. Spaces of rent depend on the political means through which powerful actors realize rents. In turn, the availability of rents creates the ability to exert political control in the first place. Within spaces of rent, the vertical division of labor—hierarchy and stratification—is predominant. Rents tend to verticalize social relations and eventually lead to social closure (Warnecke-Berger, *Politics*). If rents are available, economic spaces are necessarily and directly infused by political power.

The current world economy is not only challenged by the increasing role of rents (Elsenhans, *Saving*), but it also experiences a changing composition of its surplus structure. While profits decrease in favor of rents, emerging forms of rent play a more and more important role. Remittances are among these emerging forms of rent (Warnecke-Berger, “La globalisation”). Traditional sources of rent, such as oil or agrarian commodities, are technically based on differential or absolute ground rents. These rents are realized within an institutional structure and usually tend to be appropriated on the national scale. This is one reason why the literature has been overstating the role of the state in approaching rents. In the case of migration and remittances, however, rents are appropriated on other scales than the state. Consequently, “rentier spaces” (Omeje 8) are theoretically disconnected from state-spaces on the national scale. Thus, focusing on remittances as rents in Central America brings about further insights into the economic dynamics of spatialization in the Americas.

3 Remittances-Led Spaces of Rent

Perhaps more than ever, Latin America is today connected to the US labor market through the world’s largest migration corridor (Dickinson). However, it is not

just migration, and hence the physical movement of people, that maintains these entanglements. Money flowing back again, sent by migrants to their families, is not only growing, but it is even increasingly becoming a substantial household income for transnational families in countries of origin. On a global scale, the volume of remittances surpasses official development aid and in some places even foreign direct investment. Remittances today are among the top sources of income for developing economies, especially for the economies in Latin America (World Bank).

Narrowly, remittances can be defined as migrants' cross-border monetary transactions to their families who live in the migrant's country of origin.³ In a broader sense, remittances are the transnational moral claim of families living apart from the migrant on a part of the migrant's income. This moral claim affects the migrant's propensity to remit. The moral claim generates remittances in the first place. As such, remittances do not appear because of pure altruism, an implicit contract, or competition (which the new economics of labor migration highlights, see, e.g., Stark and Bloom; Stark and Lucas). In contrast, remittances evolve because of individual and often moral, but still political interventions. From the perspective of the sender, remittances are savings. From the perspective of the receiver, however, remittances are rents. Therefore, the impact of remittances on economic space differs from other economic and transnational flows, such as foreign direct investments. It is peculiar in some regard: On the one hand, the appropriation of remittances is tied to particular places where the family and the migrants are still able to impose their ability to control this flow of money. On the other hand, the appropriation of remittances depends on a certain positionality and thus relies on different scales.

First, remittances evolve out of migrations. The root cause for transnational remittances is global nominal wage gaps. These gaps depend on differences in productivity as well as differences in exchange rates. While remittances occur because there are global imbalances, sufficient migrations would in contrast lead to diminishing these imbalances (Radu and Straubhaar). Individually, remittances originate from the income that a migrant worker earns. Without getting indebted, the migrant worker is able to send the actual amount of income minus the subsistence wage at the place where the migrant lives. Remittances thus are potential savings in the host economy which are transferred to other

3 There is an ongoing discussion if remittances invariably need to be monetary transfers. Authors such as Levitt argue for a broader understanding and include other than monetary transfers, such as transfers in kind, as well as immaterial transfers, such as culture and ideas.

economies where the families live and where these families spend this money. Remittances expand monetary circuits beyond national borders, without necessarily being followed by compensatory commodity flows. In this regard, remittances are transnational debts; they are the moral claim of families in home countries on the migrant's propensity to remit in host countries.

Remittances topographically link the place of production including value generation and the place of the wage bill "here" with the places of consumption and remittance spending "there." Since physical distance separates the migrant and their home family, the situation of earning, saving, and sending money is spatially disconnected from the spending of money. The migrant is not able to fully decide on the spending of remittances, and the home family is not able to entirely determine the amount of money remitted by the migrant.

Both nodes form a translocal moral economy, in which the sending as well as the spending of remittances is negotiated (see, e.g., Paerregaard; and on the concept, e.g., Booth). This translocal moral economy connects particular places where migrants send money from with places to where the migrants send this money (Warnecke-Berger, *Transnational Economic Spaces*). The enforcement of the family's claim on the migrant's propensity to remit thus depends on weak sanctions and ultimately on communication beyond and across political borders. Technology such as international communications technology intervenes in these translocal moral economies (Hunter; Horst), as it alternates the bargaining position of both the household and the migrant.

However, these moral claims on the migrant's propensity to remit not only depend on the family's capabilities to enforce their claims within the translocal moral economy. They likewise depend on the social situation of the migrant. Since migrants often integrate themselves in social contexts in host countries—perhaps finding better jobs, founding new families, living alternative lives—the propensity to remit usually declines as settlement continues (Waldinger; Schunck). From the point of view of remittance receiver, this potential future loss of income due to declining remittances needs to be compensated by accelerating migration. Maintaining remittances flows then in turn requires increasing migration. In this regard, remittances further stabilize already established migration systems.

While stabilizing and maintaining circuits of human mobility and migration, remittances subdue the borders and boundaries of formerly 'national' economies. At this point, remittances become transnational in its very sense. In contrast to intrafamily financial transfers, such as the financial support for children, remittances are transnational in the sense that they cross already established economic territories and their borders. Nevertheless, remittances are not

entirely detached from these boundaries since the appropriation of remittances “takes place” at particular locations and within specific spaces. Quite often, these locations are related to the family’s living and housing spaces that are the “micro-territory” (Bruneau 49) of family life. At these places, remittances are appropriated and redistributed in the first place. In addition to the family, other actors, organizations, and institutions than the sender and receivers of remittances themselves claim to control remittances.

Second, the appropriation of remittances is dependent on the appropriating actor’s position related to particular scales. Usually, the family at home captures and appropriates remittances. The economic production and the appropriation of remittances are thus geographically disconnected, but remain within the same scale of translocal families beyond national borders. In this case, the production and the appropriation of remittances are interlinked through translocal moral economies, the most basic node of translocal economic entanglement. However, there are additional forms of appropriating remittances. These forms reach from accessing the place of the home family toward approaching the entire space in which remittances appear. Fig. 7 illustrates the possibilities to appropriate remittances depending on the scale, the location, and the transfer channel.

The figure distinguishes the home country, where the migrant’s family lives, from the host country, where the migrant lives (the gray pyramids). Initially, remittances interlink the migrant with the migrant’s family. However, as soon as remittances are perceived as an important and beneficial form of income, they are likely to attract the attention of further actors who aim to control these monetary flows. These actors are situated on different scales ranging from the individual to the international, and theoretically dispose of the following spatial forms of approaching remittances indirectly:

- **Influencing the propensity to remit:** This form is not directed toward appropriating actual remittances, but appropriating potential future remittances and therefore a share of the migrant worker’s future income. It depends on either approaching the location where the migrant lives, or, approaching the migrant’s family location. A typical example is the NGO’s competition for migrant donations or the idea of approaching migrants’ philanthropy in the case of diaspora bonds (Ketkar and Ratha).
- **Influencing transaction costs:** Depending on the market structure among remittance operators including commercial banks, these actors are able to impose fees and therefore to gain access and to appropriate a part of the remittance flow. On average, remittance operators were able to impose 8 percent

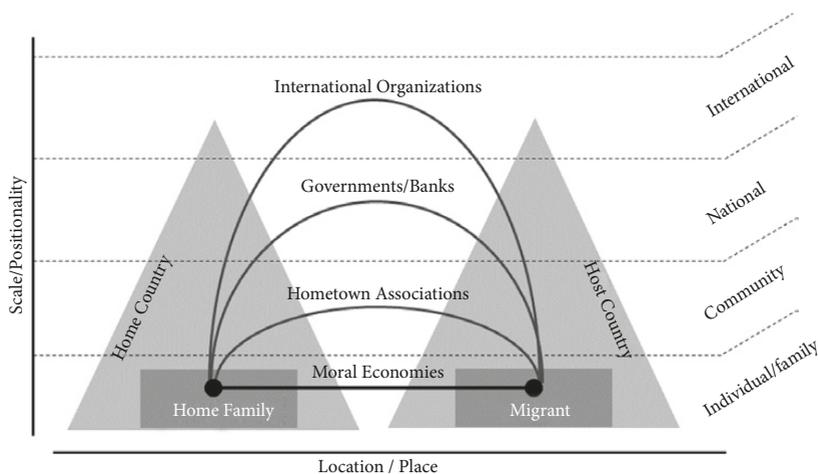


Fig. 7: The Transnational Remittances Economy. Source: Own elaboration

fees on the volume of world remittances in 2016. The income from such fees accounted for more than \$48 billion (World Bank iv).

- **Influencing the propensity to spend:** A final form consists in approaching the destination of remittances and channeling remittances into 'productive' purposes. Changing the spending behavior of remittance-receiving households, involves financial literacy and financial inclusion programs (Anzoategui et al.) or micro credits (Mader), HTAs (Lacroix; Orozco, *Migrant*; Waldinger et al.) and political programs mainly focus on approaching the migrant's family's place. Furthermore, states can impose indirect taxes, such as value-added tax, which do not affect remittances directly, but the domestic demand structure that arises out of remittances.

Each of these forms is inscribed in different spatial settings depending on scale/positionality and place/location as shown in Fig. 7. While these different modes have in common that they need to rely on the support of the migrant and/or the migrant's family and thus are bound to the place where the migrant and/or the migrant's family lives, the articulation of scale is highly different.

As a space of rent, the remittance space is characterized by the constant and ongoing struggle about who, where, and how to appropriate remittances. Each actor's strategy can be situated on particular scales that sometimes contradict each other in the case of conflicting strategies, or sometimes complement each other in the case of coordination. It is a veritable global remittance agenda in

the making (Cross; Hudson). This agenda constructs an institutionalized spatial setting, a global economic remittance space, in order to control and to challenge the remittance flow.

Thus, as it was already argued regarding rents in general, the remittance rent space is highly interwoven with political power. Power intervenes in economic issues in order to appropriate and to control the flow of rents. However, power is situated on different scales and inscribed in different spatial settings. In the case of the migrant–family nexus, power relates to enforcing the moral claim on the propensity to remit and thus to shape the translocal moral economy. In the case of HTAs, power relates to the capability to convince migrants and their families of the developmental impact of their philanthropic projects. In the case of governments, power to appropriate remittances is inscribed in the institutional setting of the state.

The specifics of the remittance rent space, however, lie in the fact that remittances are hard to control within a fixed institutional setting. While in the case of classic sources of rent, such as mineral or agrarian commodities, the control of territories is pivotal, in the case of remittances, the control of economic behavior is crucial. Because of already existing migration channels as a precondition for remittances, the political means to control remittances are likely to remain weak and soft. This reflects the often described pro-poor nature of remittances as a new development mantra (Kapur).

Seen from this political economy perspective on remittance-led rent spaces, remittances are able to transgress formerly national economic spaces. Remittances are hard to control in a fixed institutional setting and therefore tend to escape from being appropriated directly by the state. However, in the following, the case of El Salvador shows that remittances indeed are controlled and that these modes of control are contested. Receiving families and households in El Salvador are able to emancipate from local economic conditions, but in doing so, they become increasingly dependent on US economic dynamics. Furthermore, a constant struggle has arisen in recent years over the control and the appropriation of these migration dollars.

4 From Coffee to Remittances: El Salvador's Economic Transgressions

The Salvadoran economic space has always been dominated by rents. However, remarkable shifts took place concerning the composition of rent. El Salvador changed from an agrarian commodity producer, and thus from the appropriation of differential rents, to an exporter of labor. At the end of the 19th century,

El Salvador came to be known for its delicious coffee. Within several decades, it exclusively specialized in the production and the exportation of coffee, and the crop became the sole social, economic, and political engine of the country for much of the first half of the 20th century (Bulmer-Thomas; Dunkerley). Coffee came to be seen as the national wealth of the country, and a tiny oligarchy appropriated much of this wealth (Suter). Since the social situation increasingly sharpened due to oligarchic extravagance paralleled by the deprivation of the masses, and since socioeconomic exclusion, landlessness, and urban squatting became endemic, finally, a political conflict emerged. Beginning in early 1981, the FMLN openly challenged the oligarchy's power and entered the civil war. As common to every Marxist guerrilla organization, the FMLN intended to redistribute the national fruits of the economy. This conflict led to a 12-year civil war that cost the lives of some 75,000 Salvadorans. The civil war devastated the country, and forced thousands to abandon their homes. Eventually, the war ended in 1992 when the warring parties signed peace agreements.

Due to the bloodshed and economic deprivation, outmigration began in larger quantities during these years of conflict and crisis. Particularly within the war-torn departments of Morazán and Chalatenango, families escaped the civil war and emigrated to the United States (Montes). With changing political realities and the approaching peace, the rationale shifted from flight to economics (Funkhouser). It was at this point that remittances began to accelerate. Today, around one-fifth of the national population lives in the United States. Almost every Salvadoran family has an absentee migrant in the United States, and more than 20 percent of Salvadoran households receive remittances on a regular basis (DIGESTYC).

4.1 Stability of Remittances on the Macro Level

From the period when the civil war began in the early 1980s until recently, El Salvador entirely shifted its development model. While it had become initially integrated into the world economy as a commodity producer, it now serves as a labor reservoir for the US labor market. While coffee had been dominating the economy as the number one export item, coffee is almost insignificant today. The structure of foreign exchange earnings shows that contemporary El Salvador is more than ever dependent on remittances.

Fig. 8 shows the structure of export earnings in 1978 and 2015. El Salvador was still specialized in traditional agrarian exports in 1978, which then accounted for more than 73 percent of foreign exchange earnings. By 2015, however, traditional agrarian exports had slumped to little more than 5 percent. In the meantime,

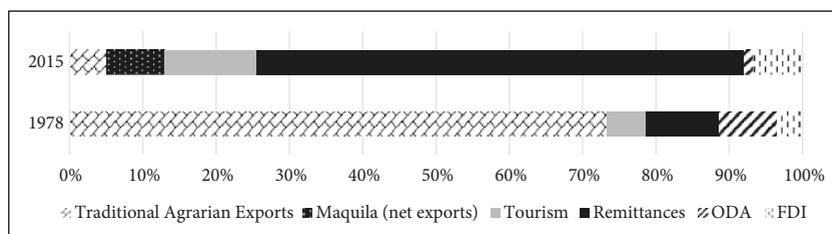


Fig. 8: Structure of Foreign Exchange Earnings in El Salvador, 1978 and 2015.

Sources: IMF Balance of Payments Statistics, various years; BCR; OECD Stat; UNCTAD Stat

remittances appeared as the leading income category. In 1978, remittances accounted for only 9.9 percent. In 2015, remittances reached more than 66 percent, followed by tourism and maquila exports. El Salvador thus specializes in the export of labor and the recruitment of remittances (Gammage). Without remittances, the Salvadoran economy would simply implode.

Fig. 9 shows the volume and the share of remittances in relation to GDP entering El Salvador. Apart from the short break during the world financial crisis in 2008, remittances prove to be continuously growing. According to the World Bank (World Bank), El Salvador is today among those societies with highest remittance inflows, in terms of both share of GDP and per capita. Remittances excel multiple times official development aid, foreign direct investment, and are even higher than commodity and service exports. In 2016, remittances accounted for more than 4.5 billion US dollars, which formed 17 percent of GDP (BCR). Because of their huge impact on the domestic economy in terms of comparative trade advantages, El Salvador has become dependent on remittance inflows.

Remittances thus connect Salvadoran migrants in the United States with their families back in El Salvador. They link the reproduction of the labor force in El Salvador with the production sites in the United States, from where remittances originate. Salvadorans in the United States send an average of 37.7 percent of their earnings back home to El Salvador (Yang 133). This is a considerable share of the earnings, particularly when taking into consideration that about half of Salvadoran migrants in the United States are undocumented and are thus exposed to precarious job conditions and lower earnings than documented workers (Casillas). Nevertheless, remittances remain stable and even increase on the macro level, and with remittances, the Salvadoran economy grows into the US economy.

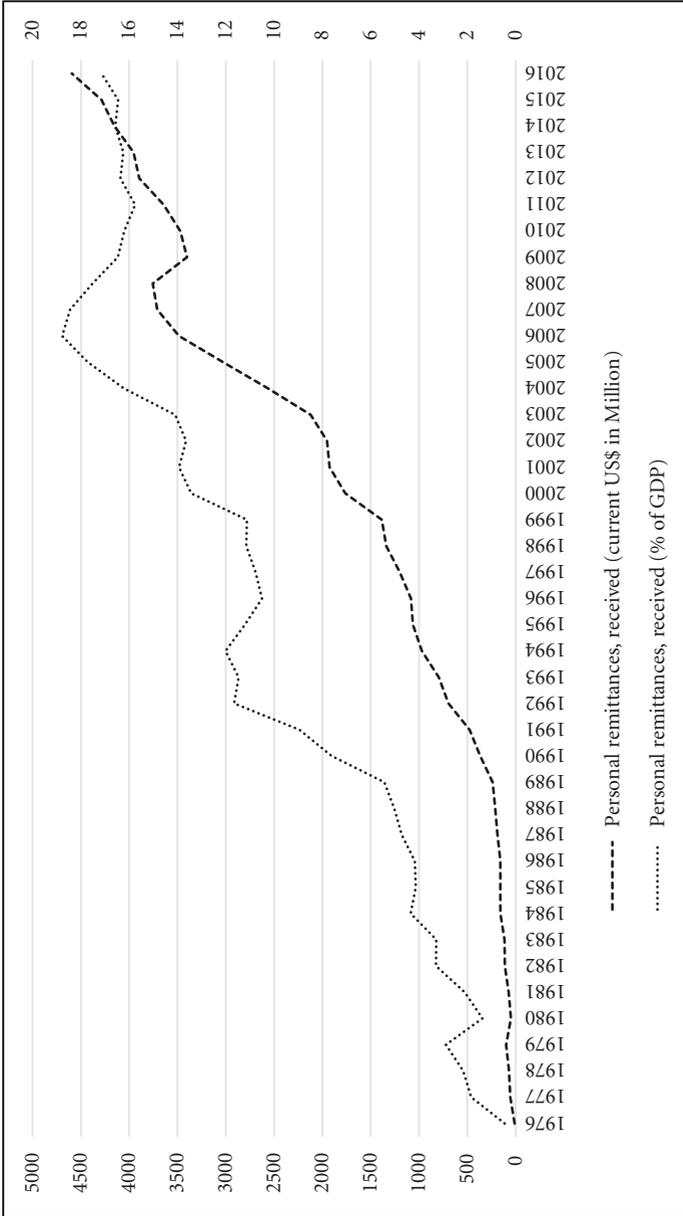


Fig. 9: Remittances to El Salvador, 1976–2016. Source: World Development Indicators

Tab. 1: Distribution of National Income and Remittances in El Salvador, 2015.
Source: Author's calculation based on DIGESTYC

	National Income (%)	Households Receiving Remittances (%)	Total Remittances (%)	Mean (\$)
Q1: (poorest)	4.1	34.3	40.1	221.9
Q2	9.4	18.8	16.5	173.0
Q3	14.7	17.1	14.0	162.7
Q4	22.4	15.3	14.8	188.3
Q5: (richest)	49.4	15.5	14.6	189.7

4.2 Pro-Poor Distribution of Remittances

Following the latest statistical surveys, more than 20 percent of the total population received remittances in 2014 (DIGESTYC). The average remittance-receiving household obtained more than \$195 per month, which represents around 50 percent of the average household income. The vast majority, over 90 percent of all recipient households, report that they use remittances to cover their daily expenditures (Keller and Rouse).

Tab. 1 shows the distribution of remittances in El Salvador. The table demonstrates that even though income is highly unequal, and the richest quintile receives almost 50 percent of national income, remittances are pro-poor. The poorest quintile receives more than 40 percent of total remittances. Within this poorest income quintile, more than 34 percent of households receive remittances, while within the richest quintile, only a little more than 15 percent of households receive remittances. Likewise, the poor receive on average more remittances than the richer quintiles. Thus, the poor benefit from remittances disproportionately. At the same time, the poor need remittances predominantly to cover their livelihoods (Keller and Rouse) and are unable to afford saving or investment. But even in the case of higher income quintiles, remittances are mainly directed toward final consumption. Remittances thus make receiving households more independent of local economic conditions. These households are able to increase consumption, invest in education and health, and even reduce labor market participation (Acosta). However, this makes them even more dependent on future remittance inflows to cover daily expenditures. Particularly this dependence is relevant for the articulation of economic space, as this distinguishes remittances from the dependence on commodity exports, which are based on particular production sites. Remittances, in contrast, are the result of translocal intrafamily negotiations about the moral claim on the propensity to remit.

4.3 Volatility of Remittances on the Micro Level

The effect of this translocal moral economy is best seen in the fact that remittance flows to El Salvador are countercyclical. In times of economic hardship or natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes, remittances to El Salvador tend to increase (Mohapatra et al.). Remittances thus mitigate local economic shocks and enable receiving families to insure against economic downturns. However, recent estimations elaborated by the Salvadoran central bank show that increasing competition in the remittance transaction market not only leads to lower transactions fees, which can be interpreted as favorable for migrants and receiving households. However, the same effect of lowering fees led migrants to increase the frequency of transactions. The share of migrants who remitted every month decreased from 59 percent in 2012 to less than 50 percent in 2014. During the same period, migrants who remitted their money every two weeks increased from 15 percent in 2012 to 27 percent in 2014 (Palacios and Hurtado de García, *Perfil*). While the macro flow of remittances is steadily increasing, on the micro level, remittances appear as highly volatile. Even though the macro flow of remittances ever increases, the volume of transactions increases even faster. The effect of this divergence is that the amount per transaction decreases, while the frequency of transactions increases.

This trend has tremendous effects on receiving households: Those households who depend on remittances in order to cover daily needs now need to readjust their economic activities to their main income category. This eventually translates into shorter planning horizons for their economic activities. Households who can avail themselves of a regular, stable, and continuous income structure are able to project their economic activity for longer time periods. Households with a fluctuating income structure, in contrast, need to readjust their livelihood strategies to ever shorter periods. Thus, not only the volume and the individual amount of remittances received are crucial to understand, but the frequency and the dynamics of transactions also affect the economic behavior of receiving households. In El Salvador, the increasing frequency of remittances leads to the unpredictability of future remittances, particularly for those who are in need of receiving remittances.

5 Political Interventions across Borders: Appropriating Remittances

Apart from the dynamics of remittance flows on both macro and micro levels, the question of who controls and who allocates remittances thus is crucial to understand the formation of economic space in El Salvador. Illuminating the

political strategies of rent channeling further highlights that this remittance-led space of rent is highly interwoven with political power. This becomes particularly evident in strategies of politicizing remittances within the United States. In 2004, for instance, when Salvadoran presidential elections approached, US congressional representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO) stated that

[u]nder an FMLN Presidency, the United States government would not have a reliable counterpart to satisfy legitimate national security concerns. Therefore, if the FMLN takes control of the government in El Salvador, it may be necessary for the United States authorities to examine closely and possibly apply special controls to the flow of 2 billion dollars in remittances from the United States to El Salvador. (Congressional Record 2004, E389, qtd. in Coutin 94)

In a general sense, however, attempts to control economic space in El Salvador have individualized over the last decades. Commodity exports, particularly in the case of coffee, involve fixed capital, land, labor, and commercial as well as merchant facilities in order to extract surplus and realize rents in monetary terms. In the case of remittances, as it was already discussed above, the extraction of surplus remains within transnational families and bounds to communication and weak sanctions, hence to a translocal moral economy.

In this regard, it is no surprise that the vast majority of remittances accrue in the hands of the receiving families. Virtually, this is the very nature of remittances. By remitting money back home, migrants show love. Regular money flows as well as gifts or treats for children are similar attentions (Kent 94). However, both remitting and spending of remittances are contested and both processes take place at different places. The migrant is able to decide on the propensity to remit, but not on the propensity to spend. The contrary is the case for the receiving household. Larger differences emerged between the migrant and the family concerning the allocation and spending of remittances. While migrants tend to prefer savings and investment, families in El Salvador spend remittances for consumption (Inchauste and Stein 56). While migrants often state that they feel like “golden cows being milked” by their Salvadoran families at home, as a Salvadoran migrant stated in an interview in San Francisco, the home families often accuse their migrants of being “parsimonious” or “selfish” (Focus Group Discussion). The arrangement of this translocal moral economy thus affects the “horizontal” redistribution of remittances between the migrant and the family in El Salvador. However, the translocal moral economy essentially remains on the same scale. Even though they influence this “horizontal” redistribution of remittances, migrants as well as households in El Salvador struggle against “vertical” incentives of actors situated on other scales.

Many migrants have collectively organized in order to finance small development projects in their hometowns. These migrant philanthropic organizations and HTAs have developed in line with a highly vibrant Salvadoran diaspora network in the United States since the 1980s (Menjívar). In general, HTAs exist isolated from each other and distant to the Salvadoran government and its dependencies in the United States (Baker-Cristales). They are mainly focused on isolated development projects to support their communities. Many of these HTAs are able to raise considerable amounts of money in times of crisis or natural disasters in El Salvador, but find it problematic to maintain an organizational structure on an everyday basis, as a former HTA leader explained in an interview (Leiva). In this regard, HTAs resemble common small-scale development NGOs (Elsenhans and Warnecke-Berger). Although situated on a higher scale, HTAs reinforce the rent character of remittances, as they direct their funds not only to economic development and efficiency, but also to increase the personal prestige, as a successful San Francisco-based HTA leader explained in an interview:

Quando tu trabajas en una organización algunas veces haces el trabajo porque te pagan, y aquí en esto tú haces y dedicas tu tiempo realmente, trabajas quizás más que cualquiera que trabaja en una organización de esas porque estas tan metido, ahora hay una recompensa, no todos lo vemos así, a mí no me interesa mucho pero es válido: es que al fin y al cabo en las comunidades tuyas tenés un reconocimiento de la comunidad. Antes vos llegabas y “¡Aahh! ¡Salud! Ahí va Martín”, hoy llegas “¡Oh! Hola que tal, como está, mire venga siente...”. Te dio un prestigio, imagínate en un cantón, esta persona que empezó a hacer algo, buscar cómo llevar agua al cantón, cuando llega: “ahí viene don Fulano”, ya es conocido, ya “venga un cafecito”. Y eso es estatus pues, y a lo mejor eso es lo que inconscientemente buscamos, de sentir que estamos haciendo algo loable. (Martínez)

In 2000, migrants sent up to 30 percent of remittances through informal channels. By 2014, almost 95 percent of remittances flowed through the formal banking system (Palacios and Hurtado de García, *Remitentes*). Within the same period, fees were reduced dramatically to less than 4 percent. Thus, the share of money that the banking system was able to capture was increasingly reduced. Official banks as well as international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) or the World Bank recognized that the direct canalization of remittances almost immediately affects the translocal moral economy, and migrants tend to use more informal channels to withdraw their money from being controlled by other actors than the family. In an interview, Maria Luisa Hyman, an IADB official concerned with the development and implementation of development projects acknowledged that many former projects intended to reallocate remittances directly into development, but eventually failed because migrants and households ceased to cooperate. Instead, the IADB

llegó a la conclusión que, y además como uno de nuestros objetivos principales es el tema de inclusión financiera, se llegó a la conclusión que una oportunidad era poder ofrecerles a las personas que reciben remesas educación financiera, trabajar con instituciones financieras para que les pudieran ofrecer productos de ahorro que después les sirvan para pagar gastos o inversión, como lo quieras ver, en educación, en salud. (Hyman)

The financial system thus reacted with two innovations. Instead of tackling remittances directly, banks as well as development projects accessed the micro spaces where remittances appeared. Both diaspora bonds and financial inclusion programs were developed to address the specific needs of either migrants or receiving households. First, diaspora bonds are bonds issued by home governments or commercial banks in order to attract migrant savings and to receive higher credit ratings for receiving cheaper loans on global financial markets (Ketkar and Ratha). In El Salvador, Banco Cuscatlán has been particularly active in offering diaspora bonds until the owner of the bank, former president Alfredo Cristiani, sold the enterprise to CityBank (Orozco, “De los lazos”). Second, financial inclusion has become a major tool not only to get access to remittances, but to include poor segments of the population into the financial system. Today, banks earn less money with remittance transactions than with offering credit lines to remittance receivers, as the CEO of Banco ProCrédit acknowledged in an interview (Proescher), and remittance receivers are able or in the need to balance remittance fluctuations with buying credits and eventually getting indebted (Inchauste and Stein 162). Thus, both strategies are not related to getting direct access to remittances, but to use remittances as an entry ticket to offer further services.

Finally, the Salvadoran government increasingly institutionalized a migration policy to foster migrant–home family relations, as Vice Minister for Salvadorans Living Abroad (*Viceministra para los Salvadoreños en el Exterior*) Liduvina Magarín (Magarín) expressed in an interview. This includes the right to not only vote for Salvadoran expatriates, but likewise engage in cultural life in foreign countries. However, this policy still remains modest, and even high-ranking government officials, such as the former Salvadoran vice minister of commerce and industry, José Francisco Lazo Marín (Lazo Marín), stated in an interview that an integral political strategy in channeling remittances is and has always been absent. The Salvadoran government still struggles to establish formal links to its diaspora and mainly provides migration assistance. However, since remittances have become dominant in El Salvador, the tax structure of the Salvadoran state has changed. Value-added taxes have risen to over 50 percent of tax income (Schneider). Instead of taxing labor and capital, thus, the state opted for taxing consumption, which is mainly financed through remittances.

Thus, depending on the scale and the positionality of each actor who intervenes in this transnational economic remittance space, different strategies evolve. While families struggle to resist political interventions from superior scales, they need to calibrate the horizontal distribution of remittances. HTAs, banks as well as governments are then secondary actors within the remittance space. These actors recognized that remittances are hard to access directly. Insofar, these actors have developed means to indirectly capture remittances.

In doing so, they need to localize political access and influence the micro spaces where remittances appear in order to capture a share of the rent. As soon as this access becomes too strong, however, migrants and receiving households tend to resist these interventions. Thus, while on a macro level, remittances tend to entangle the Salvadoran and the US economy and thus create a transnational remittance economy, they tend to atomize the relations between actors on the micro level. Both the transnationalization and the (forced) atomized localization of economic space then goes hand in hand.

6 The Struggle over Transnational Economic Space: A Conclusion

Remittances are a clear signifier of “transnationalism from below” (Smith and Guarnizo) and a mode of “transnational living” (Guarnizo). In economic terms, remittances are an alternative form of financial flows such as foreign direct investments and official development aid. Remittances occur as savings in the countries from which they are sent since they arise out of “normal” labor income. In societies to which remittances are sent, in contrast, they appear as rents. This remittance-led space of rent is highly interwoven with political power, and political interventions in order to safeguard, maintain, and even increase future remittances flows are commonplace.

This nature of being both “normal” labor income and rent makes remittances peculiar. They connect established capitalist spaces in the Global North with rentier spaces of today’s Global South. They need to be continuously mobilized within a translocal moral economy arrangement that entangles the migrant and the receiving family. In ‘practicing’ remittances, the family expresses a moral claim on the migrant’s propensity to remit, and the migrant expresses a moral claim on the family’s propensity to spend this money. Both claims can converge and thus foster translocal moral economies on a horizontal scalar level. However, they can at the same time diverge and thus generate social conflicts.

Both, migrants and home families need to defend their influences against actors at superior scales in order to control and appropriate remittances. This

makes the entire transnational remittance space conflict-ridden and interwoven with political power.

Seen from this perspective, remittances rather produce transnational spaces of rent and thus reproduce global inequalities that already existed prior to the “lock-in” into this development model. While Salvadoran remittances are generated in the United States, they are spent in El Salvador. However, being able to finance Salvadoran consumption, Salvador has to forego the cost of reproduction of labor power. When the transfers of migrants in the United States back to El Salvador are less than the cost of reproduction of labor in only take off remittances merely describe a new form of debt. It is foremost individual debt, but which is used to finance the reproduction of entire societies. Thus, borders and boundaries change due to these economic processes, but it remains doubtful whether these changes are really in favor of the poor.

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The Post–World War II Resettlement of European Refugees in Venezuela: A Twofold Translation of Migration

Abstract: After World War II, approximately 18 million people were uprooted all over Europe. Many of them refused to be repatriated, mainly because they did not want to return to the communist Eastern Bloc. Thus, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was created within the framework of the just-established United Nations. Between 1947 and January 1952, the IRO resettled more than 1 million refugees and displaced persons (DPs) all over the world. About 17,000 of them were resettled in Venezuela. Although the country was involved neither in World War II nor in the upcoming Cold War, it became one of the most important receiving countries of the resettlement in the Global South. While the IRO's resettlement program has been mainly discussed from the perspective of European History, the chapter first argues to add the perspective of Venezuelan migration politics and history to the analysis of the program to understand the program as a spatialization process within global migration. Second, the chapter emphasizes the need to analyze the agency of refugees and DPs as well as the IRO field officers in the process of the resettlement. How did the involved actors translate the political idea of the resettlement into a solution for their personal needs and political convictions?

1 Introduction

The end of World War II and the Allied victory over national-socialist Germany resulted in the second modern global refugee “challenge” after what had happened in the context of World War I (Ther 76). Approximately 18 million people were uprooted all over Europe (Gatrell 85). A great number of those people were wrested from their original homes by the National Socialists as forced laborers, prisoners of war, or as inmates in the concentration camps and victims of the Shoah. In addition to those displaced persons (DPs), hundreds of thousands of East European postwar refugees who escaped the Red Army and the Eastern Bloc and thousands of Spanish refugees who escaped Franco Spain scattered all over Western Europe.

The Allies' initial plan after victory was to repatriate the refugees and DPs within a few years (Cohen, *In War's* 27). It soon became apparent, however, that many of them either refused to be repatriated or could not return to their prewar places of origin for several reasons such as traumas, prior loss of their

livelihood through destruction or the confiscation of land and property, lack of prospects to be able to establish new livelihoods, or personal fear of either the Red Army and communist Eastern European state institutions or fascist Franco Spain (for the Soviet Union, see Goeken-Haidl). The Western Allies therefore developed another plan: the global resettlement of the nonrepatriated refugees and DPs. The Soviet Union opposed the resettlement idea for comprehensible reasons and still insisted on the plan of forcible repatriation if necessary (Marrus 313–24). It was already known that many refugees and DPs refused to return to the Eastern Bloc, while labor force was low in the Eastern European states as a result of massive human loss during the war. As the Western Allies implemented the plan anyway by founding the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947 within the United Nations framework, the resettlement program is thus also considered one of the first conflicts of the upcoming Cold War (Cohen, *In War's*; Gatrell 90; Ther 225–35).

Venezuela became a very important player in the resettlement program. With over 17,000 received refugees and DPs via the IRO resettlement program between 1947 and 1951, it was, first, the tenth largest receiving country of the IRO's resettlement program on a global scale and even the third largest in terms of accepted DPs in relation to its own population (IRO 1951: 35; Holborn 433). Second, other than, for example, the United States, France, or the United Kingdom, as a Latin American "peripheral" state it did not have the same moral, historical, or political obligations to participate in the program. Third, it was not yet involved in the upcoming Cold War (like in most Latin American countries this did not become an issue till the United States began its counterinsurgency operations against the socialist Arbenz' government in Guatemala after 1952) and therefore did not have any political reason to help to stabilize Western Europe. Fourth, on the other hand, Venezuela also became one of the most active participants in the program. Other than the larger Latin American receiving political countries Argentina and Brazil, it had become a member of the IRO's General Council (IRO 1951: III) and it was the only Latin American country in the IRO's Executive Committee (Cohen, *In War's* 201n73). Fifth, measured by population density, Venezuela finally even received more refugees and DPs than Argentina and Brazil.¹

While the IRO and certain countries such as the United States and Great Britain are considered as active protagonists in research about the resettlement

1 IRO resettled 32,712 people in Argentina, 28,848 in Brazil, and 17,277 in Venezuela (Holborn 433).

project, neither “peripheral” receiving countries nor the refugees and DPs themselves gain much attention as subjects with agency rather than objects in this process. The resettlement program is an important example of the post–World War II awareness that nation-states were “no longer the most effective frame for social action” (Middell and Naumann 150). However, its history has basically been written as either a history of the internationalizing Global North or an institutional history of the IRO and other agencies instead of a global history.

In much of international research about the resettlement program, the question why, how, and under which conditions countries such as Venezuela did participate is poorly investigated. There was a lack of manpower and population in the country during the 1940s, but this alone does not explain Venezuela’s active role and policies. European and US-American research about the resettlement in the Global South ignores dynamics in these receiving countries (and vice versa), but a glance at the Venezuelan research about immigration helps to open a new historical perspective to the resettlement program. Thus, the first aim of this chapter is to discuss Venezuela’s perspective regarding the resettlement program. We argue that putting emphasis on the simultaneousness and entanglement of two totally different visions of spatial order or spatial frameworks (Middell and Naumann 155, 158), and on the reciprocal translation of the political “portal of globalization” (Middell and Naumann 162; Baumann et al.) that the resettlement program had opened, offers a way to understand the resettlement to Venezuela as a country that was involved neither in World War II nor in the early stages of the Cold War. With the analytical category of “portal of globalization,” we refer to the fact that it is important to analyze how actors manage global entanglements and thus add a micro-perspective to the very macro-concept of globalization. The category of “translation” thereby acknowledges the fact that the resettlement program was initiated within the framework of the establishing United Nations and against the background of the postwar situation in Europe, but also the fact that Venezuela had to translate this program into its own national political discourse. We thus argue that it is important to write the history of resettlement as global history both to incorporate its margins and to put its center into perspective.

The second aim of this chapter is to argue for a focus on the refugees and DPs themselves as actors who used the resettlement program as a social “portal of globalization” to actively solve their personal crises as well as on the IRO officers on the ground, who translated the resettlement program into a political practice together with the refugees and DPs. Regarding those actors’ agency, we introduce the analytical value of historical sources about the practice of negotiating resettlement. Research on the resettlement often neglects the refugees and DPs and the IRO officers as protagonists of the resettlement, who had to translate an

idea and a set of rules into a practice. The IRO's history is written as the history of either an organization or a political plan, but the DPs and refugees themselves are rather treated as the policy's objects (instead of individuals with agency) and the IRO officers on the ground are vastly underrepresented, too.² The IRO's care-and-maintenance documents reveal a lot of information about how the refugees and DPs acted (according to their needs and expectations) within the social space³ that the resettlement program provided. The documents disclose how they translated the resettlement program according to their needs.⁴

To emphasize the active role of both Venezuela as a receiving country and the refugees and DPs, we borrow the concept of translation from translation studies' academic debate about cultural translation, the postmodern and postcolonial understanding of translation, and the notion of overcoming the idea of the "proper translation" (Bachmann-Medick 6; see also Buden and Nowotny). First, following Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*, postcolonial studies emphasized the importance of analyzing the translation of meanings in intercultural settings and to overcome Eurocentrism in this regard (Bachmann-Medick 10). This perspective helps to rethink the resettlement program. Western politicians created a certain set of rules for the resettlement program as a potential solution for what they perceived as the problem or task. This does not mean that certain receiving countries understood the program the same way. If we want to understand the history of the resettlement program from the perspective of migration history, we also need to focus on the translation of the idea by actors (in this case Venezuela) who spoke a different political language and had thus translated the project according to their own political agenda. Second, following a poststructural meaning of translation as proposed by Hall, for example, it is important to note that a certain

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- 2 This observation thereby regards research about the resettlement program, not about the DPs themselves. Their living conditions and their agency in the DP camps has been researched, for example.
 - 3 Social space of the resettlement in this case means that the program provided a space of rules and opportunities in which all participating actors (the DPs and refugees as well as the IRO officers and the representatives of the receiving countries) were able to move according to their economic, social, and cultural capital, in terms of Bourdieu. Some DPs and refugees were able to use economic capital to be resettled or to be able to choose a certain destination, some were able to mobilize social capital in form of relations, and some were able to mobilize cultural capital as they were able to better "sell" themselves or to explain their cases better to the IRO than other DPs and to insist on the processing of their cases in long correspondences.
 - 4 At this point, the personnel files of IRO eligibility officers have not yet been located in the National Archives of France that preserve the remaining IRO files.

idea is not stable in a positivist sense, but constantly retranslated (Bachmann-Medick 13). The resettlement plan, its constitution, or the intention of its authors thus does not reveal how and in what political practice it was translated by the two actors involved on the ground: the IRO officers, on the one hand, and the refugees and DPs, on the other. This approach is also linked to the idea of analyzing the migration politics—as resettlement—based on the concept of *migration regimes*, understood as a complex cluster of actors in asymmetric relations negotiating frameworks for migration and/or integration (Rass and Wolff). We thus aim to test the conceptual potential of *translation* as a cultural process to better understand what happens in this negotiation.

Thus, the chapter aims to discuss two classes of actors besides the IRO and the Western community. They had developed the IRO's resettlement program as an idea, but without the receiving countries' ability or willingness to translate this project into their own spatial and population planning agenda. Thus, the program could not be implemented the way it was. Furthermore, the idea to move 1 million people following a labor-market-orientated-supply-and-demand logic does not yet reveal how the postwar refugees and DPs (and also its practitioners, the IRO's officers on the ground) acted within those spatial orders and within the social space that the resettlement program had created.

2 The Birth of an International Spatial Order of Migration after World War II

The IRO was created in 1947 (after the development of the idea in 1946, by the UN General Assembly as a temporary international organization for the resettlement of the European refugees and DPs (IRO 1951; Marrus 340; Yundt 31–32). Between 1947 and 1951 or January 1952 respectively. The IRO resettled above 1 million refugees and DPs.⁵ Some of them were resettled in Europe, but the IRO also organized the resettlement of approximately 700,000 refugees and

5 The IRO's constitution defined refugees as "(a) victims of the Nazi or fascist regimes or of regimes which took part on their side in the second world war, or of the quisling or similar regimes which assisted them against the United Nations, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not; (b) Spanish Republicans and other victims of the Falangist regime in Spain, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not; (c) persons who were considered refugees before the outbreak of the second world war, for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion." Displaced Persons were defined as follows: "The term 'displaced person' applies to a person who, as a result of the actions of the authorities of the regimes mentioned in Part I, section

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DPs outside Europe. Over 300,000 of them migrated to the United States, over 180,000 were resettled in Australia, followed by Canada and Israel (Holborn 433). Roughly about 100,000 of the refugees and DPs were resettled in Latin America (Caestecker 533; Holleuffer 131).

The IRO's resettlement program has predominantly been written as either European history or as a history of the internationalizing North. Early academic and political writing about the resettlement program not only highlighted the humanistic approach of the Western Allies but also referred to the space and population planning aspect. Donald Kingsley, director general to the General Council of the IRO from 1949 till 1952, described it in 1951 as follows:

The objective of the governments joining together in the IRO was purely humanitarian. The nature of the problem, however, combined with the techniques developed to solve it, has resulted in the accumulation of practical experience which is applicable to the even larger problem of European over-population. [...] We know also that the millions of "surplus" men, women and children who now burden the relief rolls and lengthen the queues of unemployed across the face of Europe, could and would contribute enormously to the wealth, the strength and progress of the free world if means could be found to transplant them to those broad areas where their talents and skills are in great demand. (IRO 1951: V)

Kingsley's 1951 statement reveals an important contradiction. While praising the "purely humanitarian" approach, what he elaborates is the idea of bringing order into the post-World War II space—or the "free world" in Kingsley's terms—with a great space and population planning policy to distribute population and workforce by establishing an international migration regime.⁶

Academic work focusing on the resettlement program from a perspective of European studies, international diplomacy studies, or international organization studies first picked up the humanitarian aspect. In her pioneering study, Holborn interpreted the resettlement program as an expression of the humanitarian values of the Western community of states. Later however, studies emphasized the importance of the upcoming Cold War to understand the resettlement program (Marrus 340–45; Salomon). Besides the space and population order

A, paragraph 1 (a) of this Annex has been deported from or has been obliged to leave his country of nationality or of former habitual residence, such as persons who were compelled to undertake forced labour or who were deported for racial, religious or political reasons (Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, Annex 1: Definitions—General Principles, Section A: Definition of Refugees and Section B—Definition of Displaced Persons).

6 For our understanding of migration regime, see Rass and Wolff.

policy another space-related aspect becomes important here: “At the end of the 1940s it was the aim of Western allied policy to build a stable political order [and space] in front of the Iron Curtain” (Holleuffer 129).⁷

3 The Translation of the European Refugee “Crisis” into a Motor for Venezuelan Nation Building

The international literature about the IRO’s resettlement program’s path between humanism and the Cold War basically neglects countries such as Venezuela as active players in the resettlement project. Immigration, however, was already debated as an important motor for development in Venezuela since the early 19th century, independently from European and US-American policies and ideas.⁸ With the successful development and immigration policies of the United States, Argentina, and Brazil in mind, populating the country and especially the countryside became one of the main ideas of a Venezuelan spatial planning policy of national development (Berglund and Calimán 19; Pellegrino 7).

3.1 Venezuela in the 1940s and 1950s

In the first decades of the 20th century, the oil boom became the boon and bane of Venezuelan development and nation and state building. The country became the world’s number two producer of oil (after the United States) and this brought a lot of money into the coffers of both the state and the private oil industry. At the same time, following the logics of a Dutch disease, national agricultural production eroded as prices for agricultural imports dropped and local farmers could not compete any longer.⁹ As the oil industry offered lucrative direct and indirect employment possibilities, a rural exodus was the consequence (Boeckh;

7 For the geostrategical aspect of the resettlement program against the background of the Cold War, see also Jacobmeyer; Marrus 340–45; Gatrell; Cohen, “Between”; Cohen, *In War’s*; Salomon. Both interpretations of the resettlement program—humanism and politically calculated decisions—are thereby not necessarily mutually exclusive at the end. The less-humanistic pre-resettlement idea of repatriation could have had the same geostrategical outcome of stabilizing social and political conditions on the Western side of the Iron Curtain.

8 Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores de Venezuela (1831): “Memoria y Cuenta,” qtd. in Berglund and Calimán 19; translated from Spanish by the authors.

9 For a definition of Dutch disease and its importance in the case of Venezuela, see Burchardt.

Burchardt).¹⁰ In 1936, according to the *Censo General de Población y Vivienda*, the population of Venezuela—a country twice as large as France—comprised about 3.4 million inhabitants (Pellegrino 371). While immigration had been discussed as a population and space planning policy since independence, according to Vernant, between 1832 and 1932 only 100,000 immigrants had come to Venezuela (693). Underpopulation thus became a twofold problem for nation and state building: on the one hand, manpower was short in agriculture and other sectors and on the other hand, population was generally short in the country's rural peripheries and border regions with Colombia and Brazil. Increasing the population therefore more and more became part of the development agenda.

On the political level, Venezuela started a process of state and nation building after dictator Juan Vicente Gómez' death in 1935. His successors Eleazar López Contreras (1935–1941) and Isaías Medina Angarita (1941–1945) initiated this process of social, economic, and political modernization not least by building a modern bureaucracy and formulating national development ideas (Banko 65; Zeuske, *Von Bolívar*). Under López Contreras, a new constitution was written, and the country's first elections were prepared. In October 1945, the military forces overthrew the government. They were a younger generation of well-educated soldiers of the *Unión Patriótica Militar*. They established a short-dated military junta—the *Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno*—but called for general elections in December 1947. The social-democratic candidate Rómulo Gallegos of the *Acción Democrática* won those first free elections in Venezuela but was again overthrown by the likewise social-democratic-oriented *Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno* in November 1948. In the following 10 years, Venezuela was governed by a nondemocratic but development-oriented military junta (Zeuske, *Von Bolívar* 389–403). State and nation building was fostered by the plan to strengthen and to modernize national agriculture and to colonize the peripheral areas of the country.

So while Western Europe, the United States, and other countries, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union, on the other, established the international spatial order of the Cold War, Venezuela established a very distinctive national spatial order of a nation-state. The resettlement of European refugees and DPs in Venezuela became the result of a political translation of one spatial order into the other, and playing an active role in the IRO as an international organization

10 The oil industry itself offered employment possibilities, but Anzoátegui, Zulia, and Monagas, the main oil-producing Venezuelan states, also became centers of population, commerce, and suppliers to the oil industry (Pellegrino 184).

may also have been beneficiary for Venezuela for showing presence in global diplomacy.

3.2 Translating the Political “Portal of Globalization”

Director General to the General Council of the IRO Donald Kingsley’s institutional memoirs (IRO 1951) as well as two of the earliest academic works about the IRO and the resettlement of the European refugees and DPs are the main references for the measurement of the IRO’s resettlement till the present. In 1953, the French sociologist Jacques Vernant published the first postwar survey of refugees and global resettlement, *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (Vernant). Three years later, in 1956, the German-born political scientist Louise Holborn, who had emigrated to the United States in 1934 and later became a professor at the Connecticut College for Women in New London, published *The International Refugee Organization* (Holborn). The most recent works about refugee resettlement during the early postwar years still refer to these three groundbreaking books, even if we cannot be sure that Kingsley, Vernant, and Holborn were able to access and overview all sources already in the early 1950s and if their cited statistics are accurate in all details.¹¹ The few internationally published academic works mentioning resettlement in Venezuela also almost exclusively rely on those three sources regarding the statistical evaluation of the resettlement. Keith Yundt’s book about *Latin American States and Political Refugees*, published in 1988 is one example, and Henriette von Holleuffer’s article about the resettlement of European DPs in Latin America another one. Both texts are excellent historical works about the resettlement, but the history of the resettlement has so far mostly been told through the lens of the IRO. From this perspective, Venezuelan immigration policy reads like a reaction to the post–World War II European refugee situation.

From the Venezuelan academic perspective however, the resettlement program just blended into a long history of and political discourse about immigration. Underpopulation, the oil boom, and a strong sense of nation and state building and economic and social modernization resulted in an active immigration

11 We do not intend to diminish the authors’ achievements by any means. The three books were and still are groundbreaking and Kingsley’s, Holborn’s, and Vernant’s effort recorded the then-knowledge about the IRO and the resettlement and transferred it to the present. Given that the IRO’s mission was planned short-term and that its bureaucracy was quite improvised, a lot of knowledge about the project would be lost today without Kingsley’s, Holborn’s, and Vernant’s works.

policy since 1935/36, the moment when Venezuelan politics overcame postindependence *caudillismo* and started developing a nation-state. Venezuela already actively supported European immigration before the establishment of IRO mission in 1947 (Berglund and Calimán; Veracochea; Pellegrino).

The 1936 *Ley de Inmigración y Colonización* and the 1937 *Ley de Extranjeros* allowed for the immigration of not only European agriculturists, stockbreeders but also domestic workers, craftsmen, and engineers. Most immigrants in the late 1930s and the early 1940s came from Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Immigration from Spain was to be especially supported for reasons of language and assimilation, the immigration of nonwhite people was to be prevented as far as possible,¹² and the immigration of Jews was to be limited but not prevented (Berglund and Calimán 43–44).¹³ In 1938, the *Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización* (ITIC) was founded to actively advance and organize immigration. The Medina Angarita government (1941–1945) was also already aware of the European situation and tried to translate it into a solution for Venezuela's lack of manpower. They established the *Comisión Nacional de Inmigración* with the aim to study how Venezuela could benefit from the expected European exodus (Berglund and Calimán 43–44). The plan to attract European immigration did fail at this moment mainly due to expensive and insufficient transport across the Atlantic Ocean (Berglund and Calimán 43–44; Banko 65). Right after the end of World War II, Venezuela became aware that the moment had come; the “portal of globalization” had opened. In Venezuelan historiography, the end of the war was a sidenote and the fact that the expected moment had come, in which thousands or tens of thousands were uprooted and could be selected as immigrants, was the main storyline. The Venezuelan government did send three missions to Europe after 1945—one to France, one to Italy, and one to Germany—to start

12 Regarding the discussion and the partly racist intellectual ideas about immigration after President Gómez' death, see also Salas (133–35).

13 The cases of the steamboats Königstein and Caribia gained a certain prominence concerning Venezuela's role in granting asylum to Jewish European refugees during the National-Socialist regime. Both ships carried Jewish refugees to the Americas in 1939, hoping for acceptance of the refugees in the British colonies of Trinidad and British Guiana. When the British however denied asylum to the refugees for bureaucratic reasons, Venezuela allowed the Jewish refugees to disembark and granted them asylum (Caestecker and Moore 278). Vernant names the “typical” professions of Jewish European refugees and DPs as the reason for their low number among the immigrants in Venezuela rather than anti-Semitic reasons (687). Most of them weren't farm workers and therefore not among those migrants preferred by the Venezuelan government and missions.

Tab. 2: Refugees and DPs Resettled in Venezuela 1947–1951. *Sources: Holborn 442, Vernant 686.*

Year ^a	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Total
Refugees and DPs leaving Europe for Venezuela according to Holborn	2,798	8,980	1,498	2,719	1,282	17,277
Refugees and DPs arriving in Venezuela from Europe according to Vernant	4,250	8,193	922	2,653	1,535	17,553

^a In the case of 1947 the table shows the resettlement between July 1 and December 31. For 1948 to 1951, the reference period is January 1 till December 31. The number Vernant refers for 1951 also includes the January of 1952.

recruiting migrants with adequate training, especially agriculturists, domestic workers, mechanics, shoemakers, cooks, and carpenters (Berglund and Calimán 44). Thus, from the Venezuelan perspective, the resettlement did not start with the Western Allies' resettlement plan and not with the establishment of the IRO. Venezuelans had been in Europe already to attract migrants according to their specific national demands.

The Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, on the other side, did establish two resettlement reception missions in Latin America in 1946 to investigate options for resettlement operations, one in Venezuela and one in Brazil (Yundt 31). In December 1946, the UN General Assembly approved the IRO constitution. Unsurprisingly, Venezuela voted in favor (32). In 1947, Venezuela signed an agreement with the IRO and did send another recruitment mission to Germany (38). According to Banko, the agreement said that 40 percent of the refugees and DPs to be resettled in Venezuela should be agriculturists, the rest mainly craftsmen and professionals of different sectors (66).

The arrival camps for refugees and DPs were the *Hotel de Inmigrantes* in El Guarataro, with a capacity to accommodate 450 persons, the *Centro de Recepción* in Sarría, able to harbor 340 immigrants, and the reception center “*El Trompillo*” in Güigüe, an old farm turned into a camp that could accommodate 2,500 refugees and DPs (Banko 66). According to Holborn and Vernant, between July 1947 and January 1952 approximately 17,000 to 17,500 European refugees and DPs were resettled in Venezuela through the IRO (see Tab. 2).¹⁴

14 Banko names June 27, 1947, as the date of arrival of the first ship with 850 refugees and DPs coming from Bremen (probably Bremerhaven) in the harbor of La Guaira (67).

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Without discussing the accurateness of the numbers given, the table shows that the transition from the *trienio* period of democratic opening between October 1945 and November 1948 to the military dictatorship after the November 1948 coup d'état significantly lowered the IRO resettlement for European refugees and DPs in Venezuela, but it did not end the program that was negotiated during the short democratic period. Until the present, it has not been sufficiently investigated why the volume of the resettlement to Venezuela lowered that much directly after the military's takeover of government. One reason may have been the new Venezuelan government itself. The military dictatorship valued the ongoing immigration differently than the former democratic government and established new policies of immigration. After the November 1948 coup d'état, the ITIC was replaced by the *Instituto Agrario Nacional* (IAN) that also became responsible for the immigration (Pellegrino 199). One very important change in the context of Venezuela's involvement in the resettlement was that the new government and the IAN began to focus on German immigrants as an "attractive" group of immigrants parallel to the ongoing resettlement (Veracoechea 266–67). Thus, only one and a half years after the IRO's establishment, Venezuela developed a parallel immigration program independently from and contradictory to the resettlement program. Veracoechea also mentions the arrival of a German commission in Venezuela in 1950 that discussed the import of German industry and industrial know-how through the recruitment of German skilled workers as well as negotiations with the German priest Kurt Benach who travelled to Venezuela to discuss the immigration of 30 German families of farm workers.

Another reason could also be the IRO and its position toward the fundamental change in Venezuelan politics. It needs to be further investigated whether the IRO or certain IRO executives criticized the return to dictatorship in Venezuela and did send or recommend fewer refugees and DPs without ending resettlement in Venezuela totally, given that the IRO's main goal still was to dispose the refugees and DPs from Europe and the time to fulfill this task ran out already. Finally, it is of course also plausible that fewer refugees and DPs wanted to be shipped to Venezuela after the country's retransition to a military dictatorship. Having survived the National-Socialist regime in Europe or escaped the authoritarian regime in the Soviet Union or the fascist regime in Spain, the perspective to be resettled to a dictatorship may have been a very bad one. The case of the Hungarian refugee Charles Abaffy may serve as an example to illustrate this point. When Abaffy applied for IRO assistance together with his wife and son in August 1946, he had to answer several questions of the IRO's so-called care-and-maintenance form. He wrote that he did not want to remain in Germany. Asked where he wanted to migrate to, he named Canada as his first preference,

English-speaking countries such as South Africa or Australia as his second choice, and “South-American democratic States” as the third preference.¹⁵ This easily overlooked remark points out the agency of refugees and DPs in translating the resettlement as a solution for their problems.

It can be summarized that the resettlement regime created to administer the migration of European refugees and DPs to Venezuela cannot be fully explained through the IRO perspective. A broader understanding needs to consider the translation of two totally different but simultaneous spatial orders into that migration regime. The post-*caudillismo* spatial order of nation building through immigration in Venezuela met the post-World War II spatial order of stabilizing Western Europe as the border region to the Iron Curtain. Both spatial orders followed different logics but both actors—the Venezuelan governments and the Western international community—were able to reciprocally translate those spatial orders into their own ones. Neither humanism nor the Cold War played a role for Venezuela to participate in the resettlement project. The Cold War did not become a political priority in Venezuela till 1953, when president Pérez Jiménez declared the fight against communism a centerpiece of Venezuelan politics (Zeuske, *Kleine* 157).

4 The Translation of the Resettlement as a Social Space of Migration

Until today, research about the European postwar resettlement in general, and therefore also in Venezuela, is based on intelligent guesses in certain facets. The refugees and DPs themselves as protagonists in the resettlement program have barely been investigated so far. Historians and social scientists wrote about the question who those migrants were who came to Venezuela with the help of the IRO, but nobody has yet researched this question in depth. Pellegrino assumes that while the ITIC and the IAN tried to foster the immigration of agriculturists, many refugees and DPs probably claimed to be farmers just to be able to leave Europe (186). Holborn follows this line of reasoning (147). Certain indicators make this assumption indeed very probable. Census data show for example that most immigrants lived either in the Capital district or larger cities and thus suggest that most immigrants did not permanently settle in the agricultural periphery of the country but in the cities (Veracoechea 286). Veracoechea however shows at the same time that the ITIC did establish new agricultural

15 IRO Application for Assistance, Charles Abaffy, 23.8.1946, 3.2.1.1/78861775/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

colonies in 1947 and 1948 with Venezuelan farmers and European refugees and DPs (263–64). She names at least twelve such colonies.

There are historical sources however that help to reveal both the actual time–space development of the resettlement within Venezuela and the social profiles of the refugees and DPs that were resettled to Venezuela as well as their desires and strategies of migration. First, many of the IRO's embarkation lists are archived in the collection of the archive of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen. The same archive holds thousands of IRO records, such as the care-and-maintenance documents—the so-called CM-1 files of the IRO. Refugees and DPs had to fill in those forms to apply for assistance by the IRO. Those files reveal information about who the refugees and DPs were, about their aspired destinations and strategies of migration, as well as about how the IRO's officials on the ground did translate resettlement from idea into practice. Finally, the ITS's archive contains the ITS's tracing-and-documentation files. In case someone requested information about refugees and DPs at the ITS long after the ending of the resettlement program, the archive documented all available paperwork on those persons in these files.

Those historical sources have generally not been systematically looked at, not only for the Venezuelan case. We are currently preparing to investigate those sources with regard to the interaction between the IRO and its staff on the ground, various governments and nongovernmental organizations, and the DPs themselves. While it is not yet possible to draw on the results of this investigation here, the analytical value of those sources as well as the outline of future research can be discussed.

4.1 The Development of the Resettlement through Space and Time

The example of one single embarkation list may demonstrate the analytical value of those sources. On December 12, 1949, the US-American troopship *USAT General S.D. Sturgis* left Bremerhaven in Germany toward Chile and Venezuela. The transport was one of the many IRO mass resettlement passages. On board were 598 European refugees and DPs: 421 of them were on their way to be resettled in Chile, 177 had embarked on a voyage to Venezuela. Among the refugees and DPs heading for Venezuela, 71 were male adults, 59 female adults, 38 children aged between 2 and 10 years while 11 children aboard were under the age of 2. The transport basically consisted of families.¹⁶ Among the female refugees and

16 Embarkation Nominal Roll for IRO Group Resettlement from Bremerhaven to Chile and Venezuela, 12.12.1949, 3.1.3.2/81665719/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

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DPs most were declared as housewives in the Embarkation Nominal Roll handed over in Bremerhaven, two of them were declared as nurses, and one as a dress-maker.¹⁷ The declared occupations of the male passengers were very diverse. Only three of them were declared farmers, seven were listed as mechanics, five as electricians, four as shoemakers and four as workers, three as carpenters, three as tailors, three as blacksmiths, two as gardeners, two as locksmiths, two as masons, two as turners, two as draftsmen, two as watchmakers, and the rest of the male passengers had six other declared occupations.¹⁸ All travelers of the passage were either catholic or protestant. Most adults were listed as born in Eastern Europe—Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, the USSR, the CZE, Estonia, and Latvia—except for some accompanying wives who were listed as born in Germany. Many of the children were born in Germany, too. The oldest passenger was the farmer Alexander Ignatenko, aged 53, who travelled with his wife Xenia and their 17-year-old son Konstantin.¹⁹ This random list of people already indicates that a systematical analysis of the mass resettlement to Venezuela will add a lot of information about who those migrants actually were.

The IRO's resettlement program is mainly narrated through either aggregated statistics or very individual stories. Most often statistical references mirror the whole IRO project's existence; thus, we broadly know how many people were resettled between 1947 and 1951 or 1952 altogether, and by the same token numbers can be broken down to single years.²⁰ The systematical analysis of the shipping lists instead promises information about the "real-time" development of the resettlement project across time and space (Bondzio et al. 38). On this basis, the development of the program itself can be appropriately contextualized within the poles of the IRO's mission and the destination countries' political development, and with a focus on those people on the move (Bondzio et al.). Second, those documents will help to answer the key question, who finally migrated

17 It is important to note that some refugees and DPs may either have misrepresented themselves before the IRO according to what they did know about preferred occupations in the destination countries of the resettlement or that maybe even IRO employees passed refugees and DPs off as specialists in certain fields. Nevertheless, the declared occupations on the Embarkment Rolls are the "official" occupations the DPs and refugees were resettled with.

18 Embarkation Nominal Roll for IRO Group Resettlement from Bremerhaven to Chile and Venezuela, 12.12.1949, 3.1.3.2/81665719/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

19 Ibid.

20 Those data are most often cited from either Vernant's book published in 1953 or Holborn's book published in 1956.

within the project when and where to, independently from what we know about whom the destination countries wanted to attract. Third, the documents will help to answer the question, how different places of origin and destination were linked through the migration patterns caused by the resettlement scheme. And fourth, by knowing the migrants' personal information from the rolls, we can finally even start to investigate who they were and what happened to them after the IRO lost track through their documentation. Did they remain in Venezuela, for example, or did they migrate again, somewhere else in the Americas or back to Europe? Did they relocate to cities or did they remain in the rural periphery as initially intended by the Venezuelan government? Did they manage to establish new lives? Did they integrate into the societies of the destination countries?

What did those refugees and DPs thus experience, who were these people who got uprooted during World War II or its aftermath and now found themselves celebrating Christmas 1949 together on the *General S.D. Sturgis* on their way to the newly established military dictatorship in Venezuela, how did they get access to the IRO resettlement program, what had determined their path, and how did their lives go on after arrival?

4.2 Analyzing the Social “Portal of Globalization”

Tracing the IRO and ITS records of some of the passengers of the cited Embarkation Roll helps to reconstruct parts of the refugees' and DPs' stories, to interpret the resettlement rather as migration history instead of institutional or diplomatic history.²¹ We cannot reconstruct passengers' stories in every detail here, but exemplarily illustrate how the CM-1 files help to understand how refugees and DPs translated the spatial order(s) and the social space of the resettlement into a solution for their personal “crisis,” how they “identified themselves to a bureaucracy” (Afoumado 218), and how they translated the resettlement as a “portal of globalization.” Likewise, the documents help to answer a question nobody has raised so far: how did the IRO officers act within the institutional framework of the resettlement program when processing and deciding their cases?

The CM-1 files as well as other IRO records may first serve to empirically prove the assumption that Venezuela (or Latin American countries in general)

21 Not all passengers' CM-1 files are preserved in the ITS archive or they have never been digitalized respectively. Nevertheless, the ITS Digital Archive contains information about several refugees and DPs who were passengers of the *General Sturgis* and left Bremerhaven on December 12, 1949, toward Venezuela.

was not the refugees' and DPs' first choice for resettlement. Holborn calls this the "second choice" phenomenon (137). Interviews with DPs from all over the world are one suitable source to answer questions on the DPs own agency to move within the physical and social space of the resettlement program. The documents of the ITS archive however can provide a much larger empirical basis to analyze the agency of the DPs to get access to resettlement in general and to then have the choice to be resettled in their desired destination.

Ernest Chrenovsky, born in Czechoslovakia in 1928, named the United States or Canada as countries of first preference when he was interviewed by an IRO eligibility officer to prove his entitlement to IRO assistance.²² His CM-1 file does not contain information about why—contrary to his own hopes—he ended up on the ship to Venezuela on December 12, 1949, but he did. Alois Markech, born in Czechoslovakia in 1929, boarded the same ship after putting on record that he desired to be resettled to Australia.²³ Their fellow traveler Sandor Varga likewise had claimed Australia as his desired destination.²⁴ When Jan Sulyan, born in Czechoslovakia in 1911, applied for IRO assistance to be resettled for political reasons in August 1949 together with his wife and their two children, they stated that they did not yet know where they would like to be resettled to.²⁵ He told the IRO office that he had to flee from Czechoslovakia in 1948 for political reasons and the officer classified him as eligible for resettlement. Less than 4 months later the family were passengers on the "General Sturgis" to be resettled in Venezuela. Some corresponding files to the "General Sturgis" embarkation roll however indicate that there were people who desired to be resettled in Venezuela explicitly. For example, Lajos Rigo, born in Hungary in 1920, named Venezuela as his desired destination, when he was registered as a DP in February 1949.²⁶ Only 10 months later he was resettled while hundreds of thousands of refugees and DPs—with many of them having applied for assistance earlier than Rigo—were

22 IRO Application for Assistance, Ernest Chrenovsky, 13.5.1949, 3.2.1.1/78997055/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

23 AEF DP Registration Record. Supplementary Record—Face Sheet, Alois Markech, 25.8.1949, 6.3.2.1/84377622/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

24 IRO Application for Assistance, Sandor Varga, 7.7.1949, 3.2.1.1/79799522/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

25 IRO Application for Assistance, Jan Sulyan, 24.8.1949, 3.2.1.1/79878141/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

26 AEF DP Registration Record, Lajos Rigo, 28.2.1949, 3.1.1.1/68793384/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

still waiting for their passage. The document does not reveal, however, if he knew of the coup d'état that happened in Venezuela 4 months earlier.

Another important question concerns the declared occupations of the refugees and DPs. While Chrenovsky was listed as a presser on the cited Embarkation Nominal Roll from December 1949, for example, his Refugee/Displaced Person Statistical Card, filled out in Fallingbostel, Germany, in June 1949 says that he was a waiter.²⁷ It is very unlikely, that he was trained in a new profession within a few months. His fellow traveler Harald Lindner was identified as a photographer and business man on his IRO Statistical Card from April 1948.²⁸ The cited Embarkation Nominal Roll of the General Sturgis from December 1949 listed him as a mechanic. It is possible that he was trained as a mechanic during the 18-month period between April 1948 and December 1949. It is however also possible that he was able to act in the social space of resettlement by changing his own biography to be able to pass the “portal of globalization.” This is another topic that needs to be analyzed more empirically: the question, if and to what extent the refugees and DPs themselves were able to reinvent their own biographies to increase their chances to be resettled or if the IRO officers did.

The IRO files also reveal a lot of information about how the IRO officers translated the IRO's institutional task on the ground into practices and therewith co-created the social space of resettlement. The documents thereby prove among other things that the officers acted within a wide scope and were able to leave their marks on the social space of resettlement.

Alois Markech, for example, born in Czechoslovakia in 1929, escaped from Ostrava in the Czech Republic in April 1949, crossed the German border (illegally), and applied for IRO assistance in Amberg, Germany, during the same month. He claimed to have risked being sent to a labor camp for having refused to join the Communist Party, wherefore he decided to escape to Germany. The IRO's Child Care Officer in Amberg approved his application on August 25, 1949, noting that Markech was a “normal, young health [sic!] sound boy,” who “seems to be honest” and “would like to emigrate to Australia.”²⁹ The cited ITS file does not tell the story why the 20-year-old Markech ended up being a passenger of the “General Sturgis” leaving Bremerhaven for Venezuela in December 1949. The

27 Refugee/Displaced Person Statistical Card, Ernest Chrenovsky, 29.7.1949, 3.1.1.1/66791406/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

28 IRO Statistical Card, Austria, Harald Lindner, 30.4.1948, 3.1.1.1/68061267/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

29 AEF DP Registration Record. Supplementary Record—Face Sheet, Alois Markech, 25.8.1949, 6.3.2.1/84377622/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

example tells us, however, how subjectively decisions in the resettlement process may have been drawn and that this decision-making did not totally or always stay within the IRO's mandate. According to the IRO's constitution, Markech did not really qualify as a DP as he was no victim of displacement during World War II nor a victim of the National Socialists' crimes.³⁰ He translated the social space of resettlement into his chance to escape the Communist Eastern Bloc in 1949 and the IRO officer translated the same social space into an area of action according to his subjective impression of the applicant and his own ideology.³¹

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we argued that the history of the IRO and the resettlement program has basically been written from a Eurocentric perspective and second with a strong focus on postwar politics and the IRO as an organization while the actors who actually translated the idea of resettlement into a practice largely remain in the dark. The resettlement project was based on a vision on how to solve a "refugee crisis" which was perceived in a specific way by the just-emerging United Nations who wrote the IRO's constitution and agreed to finance the resettlement scheme. This does, however, neither explain how certain destination countries translated the program according to their history and politics nor does it shed any light on the actual people involved who translated the program into a personal, social "portal of globalization," namely the IRO's eligibility officers as well as the migrants themselves.

From the perspective of Venezuelan immigration history, the resettlement of European refugees and DPs was one of many episodes, but not even a highlight or a critical juncture (Middell and Naumann). In the Venezuelan historiography of immigration, neither the end of World War II nor the beginning of a new phase of the Cold War is perceived as turning points, but rather changing spatial and political orders in Venezuelan history itself, namely the postindependence and pre-1936 *caudillismo* with no concept of a nation-state, the post-1936 development of a spatial concept of a nation-state and internal agricultural colonialization, and finally the November 1948 coup d'état. It is not wrong when

30 Constitution of the International Refugee Organization 1946.

31 The ITS file also reveals, by the way, that somebody asked the IRO (or maybe the ITS) for help to find Markech in 1949 already. The Child Care Division closed the tracing case in April 1951, confirming that Markech had left Germany toward Venezuela in December 1949. IRO Closed Case Record, Alois Markech, 27.4.1951, 6.3.2.1/84377633/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

Holleuffer concludes that Venezuela—like all other Latin American countries—“took part in the joint venture of global resettlement work” (Holleuffer 154), but the reason was less the “willingness to accept responsibility within the network of the newly established United Nations” (154) or the result of a “global system of humanitarian-based population transfer” (133), but rather the result of a translation of whatever was considered as the European humanitarian crisis by other actors into their own concept of spatial order and politics.

From analyzing the not yet systematically investigated IRO documents—namely the embarkment rolls and the care-and-maintenance documents of those refugees and DPs on the embarkment rolls—in the future, we expect empirically validated answers to important open questions about the resettlement program. Who were those refugees and DPs that were resettled in Venezuela between 1947 and 1952, what was their story, why did they end up in Venezuela, and to what extent were they able to influence the processes that brought them there? The CM-1 files thereby also relate the untold story of the IRO officer’s actions and agency. As the flip side of the coin, they negotiated resettlement with the refugees and DPs by interpreting the IRO’s mission and the refugees’ and DPs’ histories, narrations, and desires.

To avoid reconstructing the resettlement to Venezuela only as a history of emigration from Europe, but as migration history including the immigration to Venezuela and the further life of the refugees and DPs, we finally also intend to trace their stories in Venezuela. How did they build new lives overseas? How did they integrate into Venezuelan society? How and why did some of them transmigrate? Where did they go, when, and why? How did they cope with the changing and probably unexpected political reality in Venezuela and did they finally even establish a transnational social space of migration (Faist, “Transnational”; Faist, *The Transnational*)?

The twofold translation of the resettlement as a “portal of globalization” created a specific transnational physical and social space of migration. On the political level, Venezuela translated the program into a part of its own state and nation building project. On the bureaucratic level, the IRO’s officers on the ground translated the program into a policy. And from the perspective of migration history, the refugees and DPs translated the program into the chance to start new lives and to even partly reinvent themselves. The sketched goal of our future research is to overcome both the eurocentrism of the history of the IRO and the resettlement project by including Venezuelan immigration history and politics into the picture and overcoming either the eurocentrism of analyzing the refugees’ and DPs’ stories in Europe or the methodological nationalism to study their stories only in Venezuela.

The documents of the ITS archive may allow reconstructing the life and migration histories of many of those alleged 17,000 refugees and DPs who were resettled in Venezuela between 1947 and 1952. This is however only the history of an emigration within the social space of the resettlement between Europe and Venezuela. From the perspective of migration history, the question remains open: what happened to the refugees and DPs after the IRO lost their tracks in the so-called European embarkment centers? The IRO's files lose track of the migrants after their embarkation in Europe. The IRO's embarkation lists are the link within the reconstruction of the refugees' and DPs' stories from the perspective of migration history. Some of the ITS's tracing-and-documentation files may serve as sources to answer the question what happened to those refugees and DPs after their voyage to Venezuela. An inevitable step however is to continue the investigation in Venezuela to approximate the question of how people moved and acted within the specific social and physical space that the resettlement program had opened. Tracing the legacy of the refugees and DPs in Venezuela and searching for signs of a transnational social space of migration are therefore the final steps of our intended investigation.

Catalina Banko's recently published article about immigrants from Eastern Europe in Venezuela reveals opportunities to access this part of the story: the question what happened to the refugees and DPs in Venezuela within the spectrum of assimilation, ethnic pluralism, and transnational social spaces (Faist, "Transnational" 214). According to Banko, the different national refugee and DP groups first linked themselves to earlier migrants with similar national backgrounds. They met established communities and thus were often not pioneers. They also soon started organizing themselves in social networks such as associations and cultural and social clubs to help each other, on the one hand, and to preserve cultural heritage and traditions, on the other (Banko 68). The Hungarian refugees and DPs founded the Casa Húngara as a social and cultural club and meeting place for social events. In 1975, the Casa Húngara opened its own kindergarten for the children of the former Hungarian refugees and DPs (69). This fact alone tells a lot about the specific transnational social space of migration. Roughly 25 years after the resettlement, social and cultural ties between the former refugees and DPs seem to have persisted, many of them seem to have stayed in Venezuela and established new lives with children, etc. The Croatian refugees and DPs founded *Caritas Croatia* already in 1948, later the *Asociación Croata de Venezuela*, the *Comité Croata de Venezuela*, and in 1962 social club *Hogar Croata* that exists until today (71). Also Slovenian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian refugees and DPs founded social clubs and networks, although their number was much smaller (71–73).

The former Hungarian refugees and DPs finally also organized manifestations and political campaigns during the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and organized the immigration of about 1,000 Hungarians to Venezuela in 1957 (Banko 70). Thus, the refugees and DPs did not lose sight of their former home countries and countrymen, a sign for the establishment of a transnational social space of migration (Faist, "Transnational"; Faist, *The Transnational*). Banko concludes that the European refugees and DPs were integrated into the Venezuelan society over the decades; many of them became members of the middle class, but at the same time they preserved their transnational social spaces of resettlement. Her research demonstrates the possibility to continue the story of the post-World War II refugees and DPs that left Europe for Venezuela between 1947 and 1951/1952 to view it not only as a history of European emigration and international diplomacy but also as a transnational migration history of people on the move.

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