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THE PERSISTENCE OF NONPERMANENT MIGRATION IN ARGENTINA'S RURAL LIVELIHOODS

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Susana B. Adamo

Carolina Population Center

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

sbadamo@email.unc.edu

Abstract

Despite the profound transformations underwent by the rural areas and populations of Argentina, circulation or nonpermanent migration is still a typical feature of rural livelihoods. The objective of this paper is to illustrate the persistence of this type of population mobility and its current role in the growing diversification of those livelihoods in an irrigated area of the west of Argentina. The data come from interviews with small farm households of Jáchal (province of San Juan) fielded in 2001. The analysis of the interviews shows a diverse picture. Nonpermanent migration has remained as a regular strategy is some of the households while being absent in others, and family migration histories indicated that the situation was similar in the past. At the same time, new destinations and activities have been added to the traditional ones. These additions reflect the changes in the country's national economy.

Nonpermanent migration and rural livelihoods

> *"...To be a temporary migrant is to be two persons at the same time [...] It is to live as being present but to dream as being absent. It is to be and not to be at the same time, leaving when arriving and returning when leaving. It is to be in two places at the same time and not being anywhere, always leaving and never getting there..." (Souza-Martins 1986:183)*[1]

As in other developing countries, migration is part of the livelihoods strategies of Argentina's rural households, especially of small farm households (Benencia 2001; Giarraca et al. 2001; Bendini and Radonich 1999; Craviotto and Soverna 1999). Craviotto and Soverna (1999: 19) distinguish different situations: the definitive migration of the entire family, the definitive migration of some members of the family, and the temporary migration of the entire family or of some its members.

In the last decades and particularly during the 1990s, rural livelihoods in Argentina have undergone a series of transformations in order to adapt to broad changes in their social-economic, political and physical environments or contexts. In this process, a number of livelihood strategies were redefined, some of them were abandoned and new ones were incorporated. The purpose of this article is to explore the permanence or persistence of nonpermanent migration as a livelihood strategy of Argentina's rural livelihoods in an irrigated area of the west of Argentina, and its role in the context of change and growing diversification of those livelihoods[2].

A note about definitions

Migration is difficult to define because it is a potentially repetitive event that has temporal and spatial dimensions. Traditionally, the territorial or spatial mobility of human

[1] This is a free translation from the Spanish version.

[2] This paper stems from my Ph.D. dissertation, which deals with issues of population mobility, vulnerability and land degradation in a rural area of Argentina. The dissertation project was supported by the Mellon Foundation Program on Urbanization and Internal Migration in Developing Countries at the Population Research Center (University of Texas at Austin), and by the Population Council.

populations has been grouped into two broad categories: migration and circulation, also referred as permanent and nonpermanent migration, or displacement and reciprocal flows of people (Zelinsky 1971; Skeldon 1990; Chapman and Prothero 1984). To some extent, circulation or nonpermanent migration appears as a residual category that contains a variety of movements, in terms of duration and distance, which can not be included as a permanent change or long-lasting of residence, the normative definition of migration and the typical difference between the two broad categories (Chapman 1982; Skeldon 1990; Zelinsky 1971; Hugo 1982; Lattes 1984).

This conceptualization of non permanent migration arises several problems. In particular, the inclusion of "long-lasting" introduces ambiguity. How long should a person be gone for a movement to be considered long-lasting, or, inversely, short-term: days, weeks, months, years? Also, the a priori "intention to return" is not the actual return, and it has to be confirmed a posteriori (Standing 1984; Domenach and Picouet 1990). It is possible than some return migrants, for example, had left their place of origin without no intention of returning, but were compelled to do so for unexpected circumstances at the place of destination, for example lack of jobs (Lucas 1997). In the end, the temporal definition or determination of population mobility depends on the "time window" of observation. If the observation do not follow the individuals all their lives, there will be always a probability of return. In this context, a different a-priori assumption could be to considerer that all mobility is nonpermanent. This assumption is close to the "eclectic approach" postulated by Standing (1984), which involves imposing no a priori distinctions, creating instead a whole profile according to intervals since moved and according to time so far in present place of usual residence and in present place of current activity. Under this assumption, circular or

nonpermanent migration would include all movements that end in the initial place of residence, regardless of distance or time (Lucas 1997). This is the general approach followed in this paper.

What is a livelihood?

> Livelihood better express the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions. (Long 2001:54)

As this quote illustrates, livelihood is a complex and integrating concept. It includes what individuals and groups have and do, incorporating the means of leaving and the course of life in a single word. In this sense, a livelihood consists of the capabilities[3], assets or resources, and strategies or activities required to make a living (Chambers and Conway 1991:6; Scoones 1998; Long 2001). Implicit in the concept of livelihoods is the pooling of resources and strategies, and, because of that, the analysis of livelihoods is commonly addressed at the household level (Sneddon 2000; Chambers and Conway 1991).

Strategies as components of livelihoods

Livelihood strategies mobilize or actualize resources or assets in order to secure the household's material and biological reproduction, including economic participation and demographic behavior (González de la Rocha 2000). The concept of strategies focuses on the household or domestic unit as the mediation between individual behavior and macro or structural socio-economic conditions, helping to explain different outcomes when facing a similar environment (Arguello 1981; Schmink 1984; Forni et al. 1991; Hugo 1998). The starting or reference point for the development of household strategies is the aspiration of

[3] Chambers and Conway (1991:4) define capability as "…being able to cope with stress and shocks, and being able to find and make use of livelihoods opportunities…"

achieving and retaining a certain standard of living, which varies from society to society and over time. The implementation of any given strategy may be the response to a crisis (reactive or coping behavior) or just an insurance against possible failure of a source of income (adaptation and proactive behavior). The objective could be to diversify the sources of income, to reduce the number of consumers, or both (Blaikie et al. 1994; Hugo 1998; Ellis 1998; Schmink 1984; Massey et al. 1993; Bilsborrow 1992; Stark 1991; Forni and Neiman 1994).

Farm households' livelihood strategies may be broadly classified in three groups: (a) agricultural extensification or intensification, (b) diversification, and (c) migration. These strategies are rarely implemented alone, but usually they are combined (Scoones 1998:9). In the case of Argentina rural poor --which include an important amount of the small farm households-- common strategies include combinations of commercial farming and ranching, subsistence cropping and livestock for domestic consumption, seasonal and temporary off-farm and non farm work with or without displacement, and formal government transfers (retirement) (Forni and Neiman 1994; De Dios 1999).

Nonpermanent migration as a livelihood strategy

Labor migration (seasonal, circular, or permanent) of one or several members of a household, is considered as the first, fastest and more versatile demographic response used by individuals and households to face, cope and adapt to stressful situations and deteriorating living conditions (Davis 1963; Bilsborrow 1992; Findley 1994). In the context of rural livelihoods, temporary or nonpermanent migration is an extremely flexible strategy that explores the opportunity structures of other rural and urban settings, putting in contact labor markets from different regions (Guilmoto 1998; de Haan 1999). But it also Nonpermanent

migration implies the spatial separation or "territorial disjunction" of obligations, activities and goods, of place of residence and place of work (Souza-Martins 1986; Chapman 1982).

Nonpermanent migration could respond to a long time adaptation to the local conditions, or it could be a way of coping with unexpected adversities, for example market failure, the death of a family member, or drought. In any case, it is closely related to social networks, which provide information and support in origin and destination. From the point of view of communities or even households, permanent and non permanent migration are not necessarily opposite or competitive strategies. On the contrary, short term and long term migration may complement each other, or there may be a transition or succession from one to the other (Guilmoto 1998). Because it is often an opportunistic strategy, temporary migration is a more unpredictable event, affected by a number of unobserved factors ranking from climatic conditions to family circumstances and individual preferences, and the population involved is more heterogeneous in terms of age or sex than the population associated to long-term migration (Guilmoto 1998:99).

A particular type of nonpermanent migration is seasonal migration, which has been defined as rhythmical population movements that follow the agricultural or growing cycle of certain crops, or other seasonal requirements of labor, due for example to tourism flows (Sabalain and Reboratti 1980; Reboratti 1983; Hugo 1982; Giarraca et al. 2001). Traditionally, seasonal migration implied rural to rural movements, where agricultural labor markets operate as the cyclical articulation between the sending and receiving areas (Aramburú 1984). Currently, it may include rural to urban or even urban to rural movements. Sending areas of seasonal migration circuits show specific characteristics. They are in general economically depressed places, based in agriculture and with a marginal insertion in the

commercialization circuits. Very small plots, farm laborers without land, and underutilization of the household labor force characterize the agrarian structure of these areas. Because alternatives to agriculture are scarce, migration of one or several members of the family to seek complementary sources of income appears as one option (Reboratti and Sabalain 1980; Reboratti 1983).

Transformations in Rural Argentina

The role of migration within farm households' livelihoods has changed over the years (Forni and Neiman 1994; De Dios 1999). Since approximately the mid 1970s, Argentina has experienced deep structural changes, which marked the end of the import substitution industrialization model and the emergence and consolidation of the so-called neo-liberal model. This process of structural change was characterized by external openness, deregulation of markets and privatization of sectors that have been previously in the State's hands (Katz 2000:64; Rofman 1999; Spoor 2000). The new model generated a contradictory situation that became evident during the 1990s (Rofman 1999:108). On one hand, it increased modernization and the implementation of new activities with higher productivity. On the other hand, it provoked the destruction of the social knit and of small scale activities, increasing unemployment, poverty and inequality (Rofman 1999:108; Aparicio et al. 1992). These trends were also verified in agriculture, where those activities linked to international markets or to internal sectors of high socioeconomic status experienced remarkable growth, while the sectors linked to the rest of the internal market, and particularly those specialized in salary-

goods for popular consumption, lost dynamism (Aparicio et al. 2000; Manzanal 1990)[4]. These transformations have created a new context where rural household's livelihoods and its strategies have to be reevaluated. Some of them survived, some were dismissed and others have changed.

In terms of migration, during the 1980s the tendency to rural out-migration continued in a context of rural restructuring characterized by increasing modernization, mechanization and intensification of agriculture coupled with segmentation and polarization, which pushed small and very small farmers out of business. These changes modified the economic base and performance of the different areas of the country, impacting them differently and contributing in this way to the redirection of the internal migration flows (Velázquez and Morina 1996), which combined with the declining importance of rural urban-flows at the national level (although these movements are still important at the local level (Lattes 1974, 1981).[5]

[4] In Argentina, agriculture performance and characteristics are divided into two areas: the Pampeana region, the fertile plains that form the core or central area of the country economic activity and where Buenos Aires is located, and the 'regional economies', the residual subdivision that includes all those local and provincial economies that are not part of the Pampeana Region. As a whole, regional economies are more underdeveloped than the central region, showing at the same time more social and economic marginality (Manzanal 2000). Core and regional economies differ in terms of organization of the production. Regional economies are specialized in industrial crops (sugar cane, rice, yerba mate, tea, cotton, tobacco, viticulture), fruits (pears and apples), and some vegetables (mainly peppers, tomatoes, onions and garlic). In contrast, the Pampeana area specializes in products for exportation, especially cereals (wheat and corn) and oil plants (sunflower and soy) in combination with cattle for meat and dairy. Also, markets for these two areas used to be different: the external market for the Pampeana Region, and the internal market for the regional economies. Because of this, the development and growth of regional economies have been closely related to the country's population growth and distribution, and to the living conditions (including salary levels) of the working population (Rofman 1999; Mayo 1995). This difference in markets blurred during the last decades as more and more regional products switched to the world market due to the persistent decline of consumption in the national market. The process of change of agriculture in regional economies is generally regarded as 'pampeanización', in reference to the adoption of the Pampa model.

[5]Rural-urban migration has been the leading force behind Argentina's present population distribution since around 1860 (Balán 1992; Mazzeo 1996; Vitoria de Holubica 1988). Four periods are commonly distinguished. The first of them covered from around 1860 until the economic crisis of 1930, and was characterized by positive net migration into rural areas due to the inflow of international migration in the Pampas and other rural regions of the country. A second period went from 1930 to 1945, and its distinctive mark was the beginning of the rural exodus, first in the Pampas and then in the rest of the country, mainly due to the acute economic crisis in the first decade of the period. A third phase started around 1945, and was characterized by negative population growth

In the new scenario, short or nonpermanent migration remained as one of the typical features of Argentina's rural livelihoods but not without changes. Among other things, these changes responded to the transformation of opportunities in old destinations, the emergence of new destinations --product of the changing map of the distribution of economic activity in Argentina, including agriculture— as well as improvements in transportation (Vapñarsky and Gorojosky 1990). Temporary migration increased as employment conditions in the country deteriorated into more precarious jobs, temporary work proliferated and more people engaged in agricultural activities resided in urban areas (Bertoncello 1995:89; Rofman 1999). At the same time, new economic activities appeared in rural areas, creating a context where farm, off-farm and non-farm employment co-exited. Within farming, pluriactivity became more common[6]. The growth of public employment –particularly in education and health related services-- in rural and non-metro areas diversified and expanded the rural labor markets, and altered the traditional relationship link between agriculture and rural life as more people lived in rural areas but hold 'urban' jobs. Activities related to rural tourism–like transportation, lodging and meals–added to the picture. The development of communications and transportation, together with road improvements, have cut isolation and increased the ties of rural places to urban and metropolitan areas (Vapñarsky and Gorojovsky 1990). Rural areas began to show a more 'urbanized' life style.[7]

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rates in rural areas and explosive population growth in the Great Buenos Aires area. The rural depopulation that affected the Pampas since the prior period became common to the rest of the rural areas of the country, and during the 1960s the intensity of rural-urban migration was particularly intense. The forth period began in 1970, when negative rural population growth rates started to decline as the magnitude of the rural-urban movements weakened.

[6]The term "pluriactivity' describes a situation in which farm households' members engaged in other activities in addition to farming (Fuller 1990:367). These activities may include off-farm and non-farm employment as well as subsistence farming and other non-farm activities within the farm, for example weaving (Giarraca et al. 2001).

[7]In Argentina, localities with 2,000 or more inhabitants are considered urban and those below the limit are considered rural.

The research setting: the Department of Jáchal

Background

The Department of Jáchal is a non-metropolitan and agricultural area located in the north of the province of San Juan, in the west of Argentina (Map 1)[8]. Its area reaches 14,749 square kilometers (5,590 square miles) with a total population of 20,898 persons in 2001. Despite important ecological constraints[9], irrigated agriculture and livestock (mostly goats but also cattle and sheep) have been the most important economic activity in this department since mid 19th century, to the extent that the natural vegetation cover -a combination of sparse open woods, shrub steppes and wide patches of bare soil- has been extensively modified and degraded by human activities in and around the settlement areas (Pannochia 1979). Since approximately the early 1940s, onions have been the main commercial crop in the department, and most of the economic life of Jáchal evolves around it. There are cyclical crisis of overproduction, and farmers operate in mostly informal markets due to production volume and their marginal location with respect to the principal consumer centers. Being an annual crop and following market oscillations, onions acreage fluctuates widely from one season to the next, affecting the entire economy of the department due to the links between this crop and the local labor market. Forage crops (alfalfa and cereals such as barley and oats, also annual crops) also present wide inter-annual variations in acreage, in this case following cattle prices. A remarkable change in the last years has been the increase in olive tress

[8] In Argentina, "department" refers to political and administrative units similar to counties in US.
[9] Ecological limiting factors in Jáchal are related to water availability: annual precipitation is below 100 mm, permanent rivers are scarce, soil quality is not optimal due to the climatic constraints, and agriculture is not possible without irrigation.

acreage, a perennial crop, which responds to government incentives for diversification of agriculture in the area.[10]

Even though a substantial amount of this population lived in urban areas, the proportion of rural population in 2001 was still 48%, remarkably higher that the national percentage (11%). The only urban center is San José de Jáchal, founded in 1751, which was a small city of 10,901 inhabitants in 2001. The rest of the population is distributed in small rural towns and villages in the main and secondary irrigation areas. Very few people live dispersed in the countryside, along the main roads and in the "puestos" areas (temporary settlements in the mountain's natural pastures). The location of the population centers and puestos is displayed in map 2.

Regarding living conditions, Jáchal has been classified as an economically depressed area. The proportion of the population below the structural poverty line was 18.3% in 2001 (INDEC 2002), while the incidence of poverty in 2000 as measured by poverty line was much higher, reaching 67% (Casas 2001). In addition to farming and ranching, retail commerce and government are important sources of employment in Jáchal. In 2000, the unemployment rate for the department was calculated in 24%, and it was higher in rural areas (30%) than in urban areas (18%). Underemployment was calculated in 39% (Casas 2001).

Extreme poverty (indigence) was concentrated in the rural areas, and the particular characteristics of the local agrarian structure played a role in this. This structure has traditionally shown elevated land concentration, with 50% of the farmers owning less than

[10] During the 1990s, the provincial government implemented a regime of tax deferments in San Juan. The declared objective of these tax incentives was to diversify economic activity, especially agriculture. In Jáchal, the approved projects (called diferimientos) focused mostly on olives, and a large amount of land changed from annual to perennial crops. A clear example is the small oasis of Huaco, where about 50% of the farmers sold their land to just two diferimientos (allegedly of the same owner).

10% of the land, and a high proportion of tenants (Torrontegui 1969; Panocchia 1979; Allub and Guzmán 2000). Very small and small farmers (owners or renters) were the dominant group, and their poverty levels did not differ significantly from those of farm workers, traditionally considered as the most disadvantage group.

During the last decades, population dynamics has been characterized by low growth rates and higher out migration (Table 1). Annual population growth rate during the 1990s (1991-2001) was 4.6 per thousand --which is quite low compared with the province rate of 16.3 per thousand and the national rate of 10.5 per thousand— and growth rates have been consistently higher for the urban population . This low population growth is closely related to out-migration to the extent that Jáchal has been characterized as a 'push' area (Rechini de Lattes and Lattes 1969; Caminos 1991). The net migration rate was -19.55 per thousand during the 1970s and -10.79 per thousand in the 1980s. Although data for 1991-2001 is still not available, it is likely that net migration rate in the 1990s has been not only negative but also higher than in the 1980s.

The department of Jáchal is included within the region of Cuyo, traditionally identified with large scale vineyards and irrigated farming in general[11], but it occupies a marginal position. In effect, large scale vineyards were established in the oasis of San Juan after 1890 (Balán 1978), but this expansion did not reach Jáchal. Since the beginning of the 20th century, these vineyards became the typical destinations for Jáchal's seasonal migrants[12]. Nonpermanent migration has proven to be an enduring and extremely flexible strategy in the

[11] The original definition of the region of Cuyo included the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan and San Luis.
[12] According to Reboratti's classification (1983), Jáchal is included within the west-central circuit of seasonal migration in Argentina. The destination areas of this circuit are the vineyards of the provinces of Mendoza and San Juan, still the largest wine producers in the country

rural livelihoods of small farmer households in Jáchal (Allub and Guzmán 2000; Retamar 2000).

The interviews

This paper is mainly based in qualitative data from a single-round demographic survey and in-depth interviews to small farmers' households, fielded in 2001 in three localities of the department of Jáchal --Jáchal Central, Huaco and Mogna (map 2)[13]. The interview sites are located in three different oases or irrigated areas, covering the spectrum of settled places of the department[14]. Jáchal Central is in the area of concentration of rural villages and agriculture activity[15]. It is also the closest to the urban center, San José de Jáchal. Located on which used to be a cattle road, the oasis of Huaco experienced very intense out-migration during the 1960s, coupled with acute environmental problems derived from the construction of an irrigation dam. This was the only village that showed an absolute decline in population between 1991 and 2001. Finally, people in the tiny village of Mogna present some unique characteristics. In addition to being regarded as one of the poorest and more isolated places in the department, the area has been under a process of waterlogging for the last ten years which has rendered useless most of the crop fields. According to the key informants (documentation about Mogna is scarcer than about the other areas of the department), few people actually

[13]Small farmers may be defined in a variety of ways. I followed Forni and Neiman's (1994) characterization. According to these authors, small farms should not be identified only by acreage, but by taking also in account other criteria such as the type of labor (they are based in (unpaid) family work and almost never hire workers) and the low production scale and technological level.

[14]The selection of the sites responded to the objective of covering as much diversity as possible The department of Jáchal comprises an array of different social, economic and physical environments, which are reflected in a diversity of activities that are not mutually exclusive, from commercial irrigated farming to quasi subsistence goat ranching. The selection of the interview sites also responded to reasons of accessibility. Although not without difficulties, especially in the case of Mogna, the three places are accessible by car. The driving distance from San José de Jáchal (assuming good weather) was 30 minutes to Jáchal Central, one hour to Huaco, and 2.5 to 3.0 hours to Mogna.

[15] About 32% of the population of Jáchal lived there in 1991, distributed in five villages. According to the 1988 Agricultural Census, this area also included almost 50% of the farms, about 35% of the irrigable acreage and almost all the onions acreage of the department.

farmed there by 2001, and most of the population lived from three basis income sources: goat manure, seasonal migration to San Juan, and revenues from the Santa Barbara Festivities.

In terms of agriculture, Jáchal Central is closer to commercial irrigated farming, while Mogna is a good representative of goat ranching and subsistence cropping. Huaco is somewhere on the margins of Jáchal, and at the same time it shares some of the characteristics of Mogna. This oasis showed an important change in land use during the 1990s, when around 50% of the irrigated acreage was converted from annual crops (onions, alfalfa, corn, vegetables) to olive trees. The most striking feature of Huaco, however, is the high proportion of farmers who are also public employees.

This is an exploratory study and the selection of the 21 households was not designed to be representative but purposive. "Snowball" sampling was used to contact the respondents. The unit of information was the household, with the couple (the household heads and their spouses) as respondents. The interview guide identified the characteristics of the productive unit, the household's demographic structure and composition, the socio-demographic characteristics of the members (including the migrants), the labor force status of the members, the household's sources of income, and reports of environmental hardship. In addition to this, the interview drew an abbreviate family migration tree for each household, completing the family migratory history with information about the mobility of the couple's parents and siblings, inquiring about place of birth, past residences, current place of residence, occupation, date and age of moving, and motivations[16].

[16]This indirect technique –asking respondents about the residence of their siblings and parents- follows the same rationale as indirect approaches to estimating mortality, and is an attempt to solve some of the problems associated with studying population mobility. A clear limitation is that only those migrants with siblings still in the department were reported (Zaba 1986). Bilsborrow et al. (1984:147) also warn that retrospective information

Livelihoods strategies and nonpermanent migration in Jáchal: diversification, continuities and changes

> "It was better to work outside [of Jáchal], how were we supposed to survive other way?"
> *(Household head in his seventies, Mogna)*

Population mobility in the family migration histories

It is clear from the family migration histories that population mobility is a common part of Jachalleros' lives. It includes permanent and nonpermanent mobility, both within and outside of the department. The typical patterns are: (a) the movements from isolated zones, like puestos and very small villas to larger rural villages; (b) the movements from these villages to the city of San José de Jáchal or other urban or rural destinations in the province of San Juan; and (c) the movements from San José de Jáchal to San Juan or other provinces like Buenos Aires. These findings agree with previous research describing migration trends in the department (Casas 2001; Retamar 2000).

These movements are not mutually exclusive but may be and have been combined over the years, consecutively along an individual's life or concurrently as a household livelihood strategy. In addition to this, while pattern (a) is generally permanent, patterns (b) and (c) could be permanent or nonpermanent. Both those who left the department permanently and those who are still living there have experienced nonpermanent or temporary migration, and two variations were reported: non-seasonal and seasonal.

Livelihood strategies and nonpermanent migration today

The analysis of the 2001 interviews showed that farm households utilize a number of different strategies, among them nonpermanent migration. These strategies are usually

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about motivations may be difficult to collect from a proxy informant. However, this technique still could provide some clue whether the move was due to economic, family or other reasons.

combined in some fashion, depending of the household's characteristics (stage of the life cycle, composition by age and sex, and structure) and also place of interview, which could be considered as a 'proxy' for the local opportunity structure. For example, the combination of farming with public employment was very characteristic of Huaco households, while farming associated to seasonal farm jobs appeared mostly among Mogna and Jáchal Central households.

A summary list of these reproductive and productive strategies is displayed in table 1. *Reproductive activities* include the domestic tasks, from childrearing to cooking, cleaning and laundry to take care of the chickens and prepare preserves. Largely women's responsibility (not only wives, but also daughters and other female family members), they are essential for the household survival, despite the label of non-productive work.

Subsistence farming (locally called 'chacra') could also be considered as a survival strategy contributing to reproduction. In general, the entire household is involved in taken care of the 'chacra' at some time or another, and it was not exclusively mentioned as part of housewives' tasks. This subsistence farming was present in all the households, clearly differentiated from commercial farming (namely onions, tomato and forage crops like alfalfa and barley), and involving different crops and farm animals. As one of the respondents from Jáchal Central explained to me, "…Onions are all the opposite of chacra, chacra is corn…" It usually consisted of corn, vegetables like green collards and squash, and farm animals such as chickens and hogs. It was not cropped on rented land, used whatever water was available for domestic consumption or leftovers of irrigation after the main crop had been watered, and the produce was consumed within the household. Some respondents praised this practice as a key

element in protecting and even securing the household's reproduction. A wife in her later fifties commented,

> "I help to make ends meet[17] with my little vegetable garden, lima beans, carrots, green collards, some chicken… well, that's how we are going through" *(Jáchal Central)*

Productive strategies include farm and non-farm activities. On-farm activities are those related to the household's own farm, off-farm strategies are those developed by household's members in other farms or ranches, and non-farm strategies refer to activities outside agriculture (Reardon, Berdegué and Escobar 2001).

Although farming was present in all the households, they did not all farm in the same way, as indicated by the different crops and types of livestock. Mogna households did not plant onions or tomatoes, the typical commercial crops, but mostly forage crops (barley, oats and alfalfa) for the livestock. These forage crops were also present in the other two sites, in ranching operations or in productive units that combined farming and ranching. Regarding onions, and despite its prevalence as part of the crop patterns en Jáchal Central and Huaco, all the respondents agreed on the widespread problems associated with the crop, particularly the low prices and the abuses from the buyers[18]. In Huaco and Mogna, the association of pasture and ranching in the same operation was regarded as a way of overriding the decrease in crop yields resulting from salinization, which is widespread in both places, and the use of barley, oats, alfalfa and even wheat as standing green forage was more profitable than harvesting them. Goats appeared as a source of income collateral to ranching, that of manure, but this

[17] This is a very approximate translation. The local expression for "to make ends meet" is 'darse vuelta', which translate literally as 'to turn around'.
[18] According to the 2001 interviews, the last time onions were profitable was around 1995, and still farmers persisted with the crop year after year, probably because when the price was right profits were high.

was reported almost exclusively for Mogna farmers and other informants. After being collected and stored during the entire year, goat manure is sold to vineyards in San Juan.

All the households in the sample combined farming or ranching with off-farm or non-farm occupations or activities, or even with both, and it is within some of these strategies (marked with an asterisk in table 1) where the opportunity for nonpermanent migration appears.

Beginning with off-farm activities, one of the traditional strategies of Jáchal has been working as farm laborers, be it temporarily or irregularly ("changas" or casual work), or seasonally. This could or could not involve short-term migration out of the department or mobility to another part of the department, and may occupy the entire family or just some of the members. Seasonal work presented different cycles in the year, depending on the specific crops and the tasks associated with them.

For Jáchal's workers, the most important crops in determining seasonal work in agriculture are onions and grapes. In Jáchal Central, where the largest onions farms (more than 10 hectares) were located and where most of the economic activity related to agriculture takes place, there are more opportunities for on-site off-farm jobs. The work of small farmers in largest onion farms has been pointed out as a common practice in the area (Allub and Guzman 2000)[19]. This is reflected in the interviews: six out of seven households included on-site off-farm work among their strategies. Work in the onions field, however, was not what it used to be, in terms of both the number of days worked and salary. In that sense, it has become a less reliable strategy, and more similar to casual work in construction. A household head in his fifties, talking about harvesting and packing onions in Jáchal Central, commented

[19] This fact was also mentioned by key informants in Jáchal, interviewed in 2001.

> "Nowadays, maybe you work a week and the next don't, you work a day or two, finish the load of the truck, and is gone. Today is not as it use to be, before you started in an onions field and you knew you had a job for at least 15 or 20 days"

The typical seasonal migration in Jáchal corresponds to the grapes harvest. According to Reboratti's (1983) classification of seasonal migration in Argentina, the department of Jáchal is included in the west-central circuit, whose destination areas are the vineyards of the provinces of Mendoza and San Juan, the largest wine producers in the country. The harvesting period for the grapes is relatively short –end of the summer and beginning of the fall, mainly March and April-- and consequently the demand is extremely concentrated in just those months (Reboratti 1983). Harvesters from Jáchal, which has never been a vineyard area, generally migrate to work in the oasis of San Juan, and the most common destinations are the departments of Albardón, Chimbas or Angaco, very close to the capital city.

As in 2001, seasonal mobility to the vineyards in the San Juan oasis appeared to be confined to Mogna households (although that was not the case in the past as will be shown later). In addition to the interviews, several key informants mentioned that farm households in this locality have been engaged in seasonal migration for the grape harvest for generations,[20] ("Ir a las uvas", literally to go to the grapes, is the distinctive expression for this particular seasonal migration). Households engaged in this strategy depend significantly on this seasonal work to obtain enough income to buy "mercadería" (all that is not produce in the household, like clothes, shoes, sugar, tea, yerba mate, species, etc.) for the entire year, and this dependency put them in a vulnerable situation. Mogna respondents pointed out that seasonal farm workers were paid far less than expected in the last grape harvest season before the interviews (December 2000- May 2001) because it was not a good year for the vineyards.

[20] Interviews with Alfredo Estévez (AER INTA-Jáchal), Mónica Knopoff (PSA, San Juan) and Liliana Ovalle (Municipality of Jáchal at Mogna).

Although the vineyards in San Juan were still the dominant circuit, histories from respondents in Jáchal Central indicated that other seasonal or temporary circuits could be in formation. Examples of these new circuits were the relatively new onion fields in the south of the province of Buenos Aires, and some vegetable crops in the San Juan oasis (for example) that have sporadically attracted harvesters from Jáchal.[21]

> "Twelve years ago (1989), I began to work in the onion fields in Bahía Blanca. One of our bosses in San Juan took us to work there. We worked there three months, we came back for the holidays, and then we went to Bahía Blanca again, until September. I was doing this until 1997" *(Jáchal Central)*

> "He [my brother] went to Bahía Blanca to work temporarily, for three years, to the onion fields. He worked as regador" *(Jáchal Central)*[22]

> "Now [October] in Pocito is the working season, the garlic harvest, until January […] They [largest farmers] take people from here, by truck, to the fields to cut garlic" *(Jáchal Central)*

Regarding non-farm strategies, over the years they have extended to include not only construction work and domestic service --two of the largest non-farm employment sectors in and outside the department for men and women respectively-- but also public employment, small retail, retirement and pensions, and domestic craftsmanship as weaving and fruit preserves. Overall, households where at least one member had a non-farm salary job or that received retirement payments used to be better off than those households depending on farming and eventual or casual off-farm jobs and seasonal work.

Public employment salaries and retirement payments, even small ones, were highly praised by the respondents. Public sector employment[23] was regarded as the most important

[21] Onion fields in Buenos Aires are part of the irrigated area of the departments of Patagones and Villarino, in the SW of the province of Buenos Aires. This relatively new onion area has extended rapidly in the last years and, ironically, has appropriated a large portion of Jáchal's former commercialization markets (Interview to Alfredo Estévez, director of the Rural Extension Agency (AER INTA), 2001)

[22] "Regador" is one of the tasks related to the distribution and control of water in an irrigation system. In both Jáchal and Bahía Blanca, onion is an irrigated crop.

for at least two reasons. First, the working hours of many of these positions left amply time for other occupations, including farming. Second, although salaries are quite low, public employment offers stability and benefits, among them access to retirement (retirement income and pensions may also derive from long time relations between old farm laborers and tenants, and land owners).

Small grocery and retail stores –in some cases very small-- were other common options for diversifying strategies. In general, wives were in charge or helped to run the store while the husbands were occupied in something else. Some of the Huaco households combined cattle ranching with a grocery store where they put their meat up for sale. This may be considered as a kind of local vertical integration of the farming enterprise, from the pasture to the consumer, which allowed these households a certain independence from buyers. However, they were also more dependent on local conditions.

In Mogna, the religious festivities of Santa Barbara held in May and December attract thousands of visitors to the small village. The maintenance of the facilities along the year and the provision of lodging and meals for the multitude (calculated in about 10,000 persons) during the festivities have become new and unusual sources of income during the last decade.

It is interesting to note that for households with access to off-farm or non-farm incomes, farming eventually become a subsistence activity --whose only objective is to provide for domestic needs-- or a sporadic activity to complement other sources of income. That was the case of one of the Huaco households, whose head worked as an ambulance driver in the local hospital and kept a small chacra for domestic needs. He also used to grow

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[23] Public employment includes national, provincial and municipal positions in the areas of health, education, agriculture extension services, irrigation management, roads maintenance and public security, in different job categories.

onions, but stopped this activity some years ago because of the very low prices. However, he did not dismiss farming totally but was just waiting for better times. He also used to work in casual non-farm jobs in and outside Jáchal, but this stopped when he entered the hospital job.

Non-seasonal migration linked to non-farm strategies generally involves moving out of the department to several and changing destinations, returning home after a certain and variable period of time, taking advantage of work opportunities in other areas. The migration of young women to domestic service jobs in the nearby city of San Juan may be included here, since a number of this women returned to Jáchal after a while. The improvement of transportation made it possible to work in the city during the week and to be in the department over the weekend.

Households have resorted to nonpermanent or temporary migration as a coping strategy in times of necessity or sudden stress, for example economic crisis and illness. This is facilitated by the extended networks of relatives and neighbors in Jáchal and in the typical destinations. These networks, built in sending and receiving areas by many generations of migrants, are a key element to understand migration behavior in times of crises. During the fieldwork in 2001, which was a very difficult time in Argentina, several respondents mentioned that they were considering starting to work in the vineyards again, or commented about their siblings traveling to San Juan "…to try to find something…".

Livelihoods Strategies and nonpermanent migration over time

Change in the household's livelihoods strategies over time may be linked to the members' life course and the family life cycle, which influence the availability of labor resources within the household. In this sense, a growing diversification of livelihoods could be indicating the 'aging' of the households, as they advance along the family life cycle. This

is apparent in seasonal migration, which may entail the migration of the whole family until the children are old enough to travel alone (or the parents too old to work in the vineyards), becoming then a children's occupation. According to the respondents, many of those currently engaged in seasonal migration were sons and sometimes daughters in their late-teens and young adult years, still living at home. The pattern was similar in the past.

> "My brothers and I worked in the harvest in Albardón every year, and I myself stop going a few years ago. But it was a custom, a tradition of the people of Mogna to go. It was not only Albardón, the grape harvest is going in "cuadrilla" [group of farm laborers and a foreman] all around San Juan, in Chimbas, Albardón, Zonda, Ullúm" *(Household head in his late fifties, Mogna)*

> "My sons[24] work in the vineyards and contribute to the household. The boys go to Albardón, they go there to the house of one of my married sons. Seasons are always good for them because they travel early, for the apricot season, and then the grapes follow, so more or less they maintain themselves and bring things for the house […] they are gone by the first days in November, you see? And they are not back until February, March, sometimes May, they are still there working, until the grape harvest finishes, they are coming home around May" *(Wife in her early sixties, Mogna)*

Marriage also marks a threshold for seasonal migration. After marriage, women and to least extend men stop going to the vineyards (at least the entire new family is involve). On the other hand, respondents commented that some of their unmarried brothers still used to work in the vineyards during the summer, due to the lack of better work opportunities at home. One of the female respondents in Mogna remembered:

> "When I was single, I also used to work in the vineyard season. And then, when the grape harvest was over, I remained [in San Juan] to work in the raisins […] Until I got married, and then I never came back. *(Mogna)*

Changes over time may respond to the fact that households used to do thing differently in the past. Based in respondents' parents and siblings occupations it is possible to reconstruct the past household strategies of respondents' households. It is apparent from these partial

[24] The sons were in their early twenties at the moment of the interview.

family histories that farm households utilized very similar strategies. Coming back to the list in table 1, there are few differences. One of them is the absence of teaching among past non-farm strategies. None of the parents was a teacher, and in fact teaching --a typical women's occupation-- appears only in respondents up to 45 years old[25]. Another difference is the incorporation of the practice of giving away children among past reproductive strategies, a clear example of the use of migration as a strategy to reduce household consumption. In the oldest households, this practice involved to give away one or several children to well-off families, where they were raised to eventually became employees as farm or ranch laborers (the boys) or domestic servants (the girls). Younger respondents remembered that some of their siblings left to be with relatives outside Jáchal, in these cases generally in response to some traumatic situation as the sudden death of a parent. Few of these children returned to Jáchal.

The combination of several strategies that is normal in most of the households nowadays seems to have been less common in the past. An important proportion of the respondents' fathers were farmers and some of them combined farming with other activities, while others were public employees at the post office, the local police, or the municipality or local government that later became farmers. A possible interpretation is that the households developed a sequence of activities instead of being engaged in several activities at the same time. For example, instead of the combination public employee and farmer, so common in Huaco in 2001, there was a sequence from farmer to public employee or from public employee to farmer, in a context where agriculture was profitable. Most of the respondents

25 During the 1940s, there was an important extension of public and social services and infrastructure in Jáchal, which was reflected in the increase of public employment on provincial and national offices. The expansion of educational and health services during the 1940s and the 1950s included board schools in rural areas for the sparse population and sanitary posts (Davire and Malberti 1999).

regarded their mother as housewives, and very few of them worked outside the house. However, a number of them weaved to help to make ends meet, a practice that is not so common today.

As children grow and finished school around age 14, they started to work in or outside the farm. There was and still there is a clear difference by gender. The oldest daughter was usually sent to work in domestic service in the nearby city of San Juan, generally through a relative, with the basic objective of helping the family to make ends meet. Later, she facilitated the transitions for the other daughters. This is still a usual practice today, although the started age is higher, around ages 17 or 18, due to the generalization of high school education. The oldest son, instead, was supposed to work in the family farm and the rest of the sons were sent to work in nearby farms with relatives or farms that were better-off.

Respondents in Jáchal Central and in Huaco mentioned seasonal migration to the vineyards as something from the past. One possible explanation for this is the coincidence in time of grape and onion harvests (Allub and Guzmán 2000), although there was no mention of this fact in the interviews. Another possible explanation is a change in the conditions of the sending area, namely the availability of public employment.[26] Public employment and seasonal migration are alternative activities, not complementary. This is particularly clear in the case of Huaco, where an older respondent, currently a public employee, commented:

> "We used to go to San Juan to work in the vineyards. I used to work with a firm that had vineyards in Las Chimbas. I went several seasons, for three or four months each time, just the harvest. And then we came back here, to work… You know? There was no work around here, so yes or yes you had to go out to work, you see? In those years a lot of people went to the harvests, for a season, and then we came back to farm the land here".

[26] Reboratti (1983:4) affirms that "… the more typical characteristic of seasonal migrations is to be a system in instable equilibrium: the change or modification of any of the conditions that make the event possible affects the migration flow directly…"

Instead, migration to the vineyards in Mogna was very similar in the past. One of the respondents, a wife in their late thirties, commented:

> "My father always traveled to San Juan for the grape season my father. My mother used to go with my father, and sometimes she traveled with us too"

Being an opportunistic strategy, trends in temporarily non-seasonal migration related to non-farm jobs change constantly, and the following quotes illustrate this point. In them, the respondents mention job opportunities related to the expansion of the road system and to the national policy of tax exemption for industrial firms that established factories in the provinces of San Juan, San Luis, La Rioja and Tierra del Fuego (sanctioned during the 1980s). These opportunities are currently very scarce.

> "I have worked everywhere… I have been in La Rioja, Mendoza, San Juan… What happens is that I used to work in road construction, you see, making asphalt. And then I worked in the vineyards, cutting grapes… And now no, not anymore, now I am here [in Huaco]. *(Household head in his forties, Huaco)*

> "I have been in Río Cuarto, I have been in Villa Mercedes, because those factories came to Villa Mercedes [San Luis], I was there because there was not work here… In 1980, yes… Because the work in the irrigation ditches ended in 1980, and then I had to leave, first to work in the Industrial Park in Las Chimbas, and from there I went to Córdoba, to Río Cuarto, and then I came back [to Mogna] We were in Huaco, Punta del Agua, we went to La Rioja, then we went to Mendoza, you see? I was like a year in that, and then I went to Córdoba and worked there for four months. *(Housheold head in his seventies, Mogna)*

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, I explored the persistence of nonpermanent migration as part of the livelihoods strategies of farm households in Jáchal, in a context of changing economic opportunities at the local and national levels. The analysis of the household interviews shows a diverse picture. Nonpermanent migration has remained as a regular strategy is some of the

households while being absent in others, and family migration histories indicated that the situation was similar in the past. At the same time, new destinations and activities have been added to the traditional ones, in response to changes in the country's national economy

The basic rural livelihoods strategies mentioned in the literature (Scoones 1998; Forni and Neiman 1994; Craviotto and Soverna 1999) have been part of the small farm household's strategies in Jáchal at one moment or other. As in other rural settings in developing countries, the livelihoods strategies of small farm households in Jáchal are more diversified today that they used to be in the past. Pluriactivity has increased as more household members (particularly women) are engaged in productive activities, farming has become a part time job for most of the farmers, and public employment and commerce have become important income sources. Overall, this diversity is considered as a positive trend, but it is necessary to consider what kind of activities are included in the diversification since it has not prevented the department's rural population from showing a high poverty level. The family life cycle is also related to the diversification of strategies.

In sum, the permanence of nonpermanent migration is related to adaptation, tradition, cumulative causation and extended networks in origin and destination built by generations of Jachallareros. It persistence also derives of its versatility for dealing or coping with unexpected stressful situations, helping to reduce households' vulnerability.

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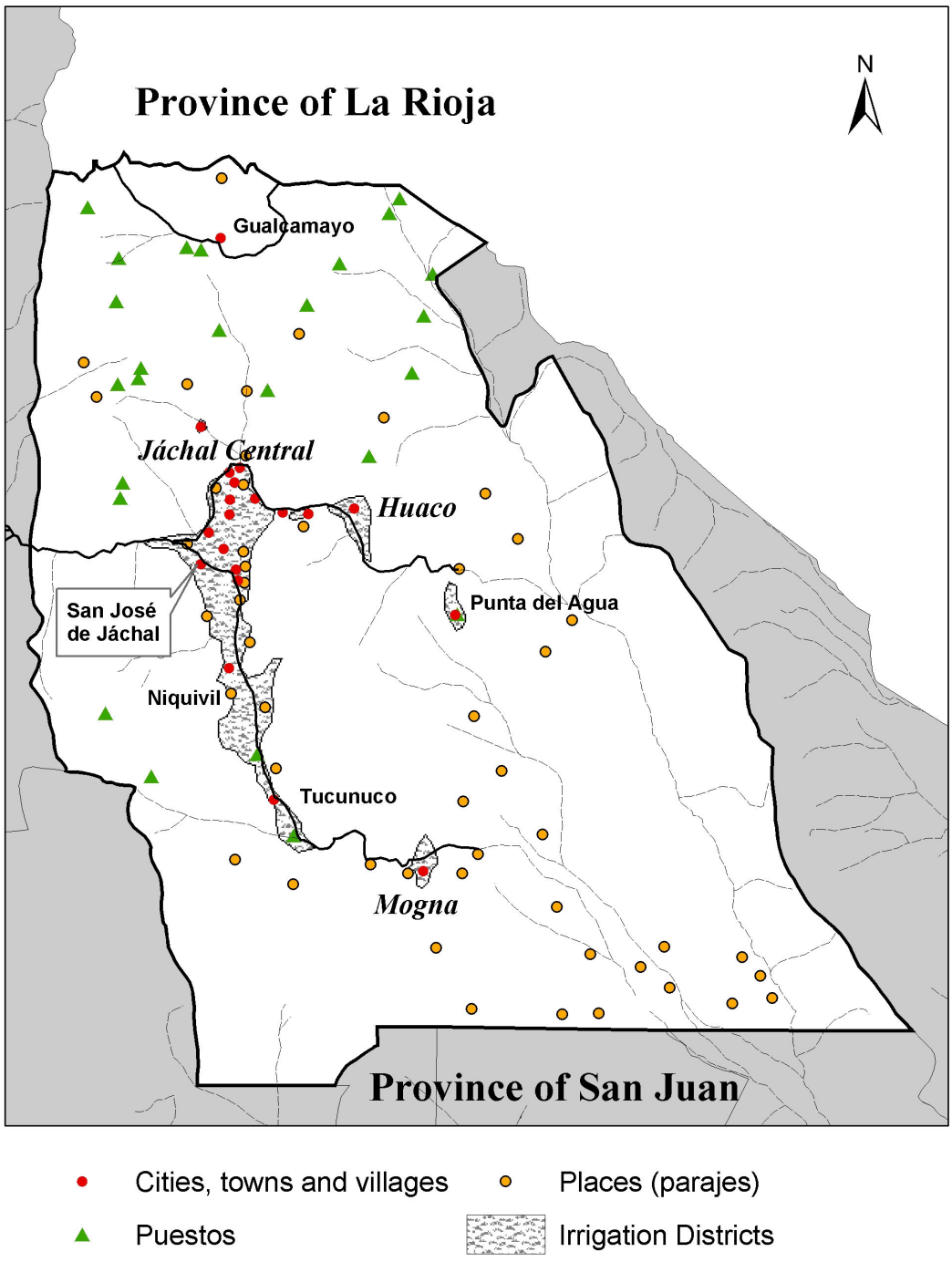
Map 1: Location of the Department of Jáchal

Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/argentina_pol96.jpg

Map 2: Department of Jáchal and interview sites



Source: Own elaboration based in Lizana 2001.

Table 1: Population Growth and Migration Rates

Period	Net Migration Rate	Annual Population Growth Rate (%0)**				
		Jáchal			San Juan	Argentina
		T	U	R		
1970-80	-19.65	1.9	26.4	-15.7	19.3	18.0
1980-91	-10.79	5.3	8.3	2.1	12.0	14.7
1991-2001*	N/A	4.6	11.4	-2.3	16.3	10.5

*Preliminary results
** The annual growth rate was calculated as exponential growth (Hinde 1998:154-56).
Source: Argentina. Censuses of Population; Caminos 1991

Table 2: Summary of Current Livelihoods Strategies

Reproduction	**Production**		
	Farm		**Non-Farm**
	On-Farm	**Off-farm**	
Domestic work	Farming	Farm/ranch worker*	Public employment*
Subsistence farming and ranching	Ranching		Teaching
	Paid and unpaid family farm worker		Small retail (employee)
			Small retail (owner)
			Retirement
			Construction work*
			Domestic Service*
			Weaving/Other crafts
			Other temporary and casual work*

Source: Compiled from the Interviews in the Department of Jáchal, 2001
* May or may not include long or short term migration.