International migration and segregation in the Brazilian Amazon

Alberto Augusto Eichman Jakob

Extended abstract

Brazil today is starting to face a challenge that other more developed countries have been facing for years or decades, the problem with the undocumented migrants who cross the land borders coming from neighbor countries. It is well known in the most important cities of south and southeast of the country, but it is new for the Amazonia and the north region of the country.

Our country is highlighted by the media mainly because of the economic crisis of Europe and United States – which brings back the Brazilian international migrants more and more and attracts migrants from other nations to Brazil – and also for the huge sport events happening here nowadays, like the Pan-American Games, Confederation Cup (soccer), World Cup Games (soccer), and the Olympic Games, which boosts the labor market in terms of needs of people to work in the construction and hotel management areas.

But another fact has growing importance. Brazil, as a leader of the United Nations Peace Corp in Haiti, after the great earthquake there, has attracted a large number of Haitians who left their country in the quest for an economic improvement for their lives. Thousands of them have already entered in Brazil through the Amazonia from 2010 until now, crossing mainly via twin cities and paying hundreds of dollars to “coyotes” to “facilitate” the travel and their entrance in Brazil.

Almost 30 twin cities were mapped in Brazil, and 9 of them in Amazonia. In 7 of these Amazon twin cities, the border is the river (just in 2 of these there is a bridge), and the other 2 have terrestrial borders. The transit of people and goods is heavy, in “catraias” (small boats), cars and taxis. There are many lines of taxis transporting people to/from the borders every day.

The Amazon occupies the most part of Brazil in terms of territorial area. The population mobility at international borders is very expressive mainly because practically there is any control over people who cross the borders and the vegetation (rainforest) is also other factor.

The growing importance of this issue is confirmed by numbers. In the 1995-2000 period of time, almost 4.5 thousand of international migrants came to Brazilian Amazon directly from their countries. They came mainly from Bolívia, Peru and

---

1 Twin cities is the term used here to describe two cities very close to the international border, one in Brazil and another in other neighbor country.
Colômbia. But in 2005-2010 the first numbers show 7.1 thousand. If we consider returning Brazilians from other countries also, this last number rises to 22 thousand, especially from United States (4 thousand) and Japan (2,8 thousand), the countries that historically has received migrants from Brazil until now.

The migratory flows were, until 2000, becoming from long to short distances, from transcontinental to regional, and these flows have different characteristics, and many times the regional ones are extensions of internal migratory processes, like the case of Brazilian working on agricultural areas of Paraguai, traffic of Brazilian women to sexual exploration on Uruguai, Argentina and Suriname, and the irregular presence of Brazilian miners in countries of the north border of the Amazon, as Colômbia, Suriname and French Guiana (Póvoa Neto, 2006).

Aragón (2005) brings that there are few studies that deal with population migration inside the Amazon region. Most of them are from early 1990s, with data of 1970s and 1980s. There is a lack of demographic data in that area.

After this broad background, the aim of this paper is to describe the main flows to the Amazon, in terms of characteristics of the individuals from Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, as well as municipalities of destination and the place of residence inside the municipality, in terms of census tracts, in a proxy of spatial segregation. The place of origin will also be considered, with the migrants that came directly from their countries or had more migratory experience inside Brazil before arrive at the municipality (internal migration), and the time of residence. The idea is to analyze better the recent migration, especially those who arrived in the 2005-2010 period, comparing with the non migrants in order to estimate also the impact of migration in the destination areas. Some questions would be analyzed, always comparing to the Brazilians/non migrants:

- What are the characteristics of the international migrants? How many?
- Is it possible to estimate how many Brazilians are returning from other countries?
- Are they segregated in certain areas or cities after the crossing?
- What are the characteristics of these areas of crossing and segregated areas?
- Why they are living in these places? Are there social networks acting?
- Is possible to study the history of migration of the internal migrants? They came from where and through where?
- Why some migrants stay in border areas and some go straight to main cities in southeast of Brazil?
- Understand better the relation among migratory flows and commuting.

In order to obtain the answers to these questions, data from Brazilian demographic census of 2010 will be analyzed, as well as some information of 2000.
The segregation is understood here as a high concentration of people in certain place(s) with some common characteristic, higher than the regional mean. The idea is to use techniques of spatial statistics, geostatistics, spatial indexes, like Moran’s I in order to better understand or visualize the segregation.

Continuing with the segregation issue, it is possible to know not just the chosen municipality in the Amazon area, but also which census tracts of these municipalities have the most import values of international migrants. In 2007 a national survey was made in Brazil, at census tracts level, brings this information, the number of non-Brazilian people.

**Figure 1:** Localization of international migrants inside Tabatinga in 2007
Figure 1 shows the localization of international migrants by census tracts of Tabatinga, a municipality located on the “triple international border” (Brazil, Peru and Colômbia). As we can see, the urban area is just a small part of this small municipality. And even inside the urban census tracts, the international migrants tend to concentrate themselves in some parts. It can be understood as a proxy of segregation. Then, the idea is to better analyze the tracts that concentrate more migrants, trying to determine why this happens, why they attract more people than the others.

The cities in the Amazon region usually are very small, with public services attending few people. And with the pressure of the growing immigration, specific public policies are fundamental. My idea is also to contribute for the creation of these policies.

References


