Uneven Development and the Transnational Involvement of Nicaraguan Immigrant Organizations in South Florida

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Introduction

This paper offers the results of the first comprehensive study on Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in Miami Dade County. It identifies a total of eighty one Nicaraguan immigrant organizations which have been founded in different periods since 1980s and focuses on forty organizations which are currently active. This study resulted in the elaboration of an inventory of the organizations and a description of some of their main characteristics such as the years in which they were formed and goals; whether they are formally registered; major characteristics of the leaders of the organizations and the members related to class, gender, ethnicity, regions of origin, social networking, and individual attributes related to leadership; and the characteristics of their engagement in Miami-Dade County and in localities and communities in Nicaragua.

This paper addresses immigrant organizations as a relevant research subject for the understanding of transnationalism and issues related to development (see Portes et. al. 2007; 2008). I approach the formation of Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida during the last three decades and how they operate in transnational social fields in relation to the migration-development nexus from a historically-grounded global perspective. The globalist and the pluralist approaches to migration share common ground in that they are both preoccupied with processes, institutions, and actors that operate in transnational social fields, and within (nation) states in the conformation of the contexts in which migration unfolds and is perpetuated. The aspects of a historically-ground global perspective on migration employed here (see Cervantes-Rodriguez 2010) which may not have the same priority for a pluralist are: (1) The importance it confers to the issue of historical specificity, understood as how the larger social
structures and forces related to the expansion capitalism, including accumulation regimes, cycles of accumulation, and the cultural, ideological and hegemonic frameworks associated with them, shape migration in relation to other transnational processes and how the migrants’ multiple forms of social agency is shaped by these logics and shape them. Thus, (2) it presupposes a dialectical understanding of “the local” in relation to “the global” and “the historical (specificity).” The local” and “the global” are not seen as opposing dimensions of reality or different “levels of abstraction.” Instead, “the global,” “the local,” and “the historical” are understood as a dialectical unit that reaches concrete expression in the migration process, understood as a synthesis of multiple determinations that are structured at different temporal and spatial scales. (3) “The migrants” are understood as a highly differentiated group of people that engage differently in “the logics” of capitalism. “The migrants” include individuals and groups who have different and often contradictory class locations, interests, identities and expectations. They are individuals who may accumulate wealth or barely survive on minimum wages; they may face destitution and exclusion and/or may act as conveyors themselves of hegemonic discourses and exclusionary practices; they are women and men whose roles and identities in relation to their kinship ties, work experience, and social integration are realized through different paths of exploitation, domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion, (4) The globalist perspective employed here integrates different conceptualizations on transnationalism which prominently address the issue of the transnational engagement of the state in relation to that of the migrants (Cervantes-Rodriguez 2010). This perspective draws from works which do not focus on migration for the most part (e.g. Amin 1974; Cardoso and Falletto 1979; Fernandez-Kelly 1984; Robinson 2003; 2008; Hopkins and Wallerstein (eds.) 1982; Ong, 2006; Harvey 2006) and others that focus on specific aspects of the process (e.g. Portes and Walton 1981; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton
Blanc, 1994; Sassen 1999; Gabaccia 2000; Grosfoguel 2003; Glick-Schiller 2009; Cervantes-Rodriguez 2010).

With a focus on the migrants, transnationalism is understood here as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994, 7). This definition calls for an understanding of the complex roles and locations of the migrants as they operate in transnational social fields. The nexus migration and development is examined in relation to uneven development as a structural feature of capitalism that points not only to the economic processes but also to the mechanism of domination (political, ideological and cultural logics) that recreate inequalities (Amin 1974; 1977; Cardoso and Falletto 1979; Harvey 2006). In this respect development is not examine as national development but as the development problematique (uneven development, “accumulation through destitution” (Harvey 2006), the recreation of a Global South). These issues are examined in light of neoliberalism as the (dominant) regime of accumulation (Harvey, 2006) and the corresponding forms adopted by the state, such as the neoliberal state (Harvey 2006; Robinson 2008) and the reconstitution of class structures and relations within nation states and transnationally (Robinson 2008), regulatory mechanisms that shape citizenship frameworks, to name some of the most important social dynamics that have shaped Nicaraguan migration and transnational forms of agency associated with them in recent years.

Methodologically, the research was based on a transnational fieldwork that included in Miami-Dade County and several departamentos (provinces) in Nicaragua which included Managua, Masaya, Leon, Estelí, and Matagalpa in the Pacific/Central-Pacific regions and Bluefields and Corn Island in the Atlantic region. I conducted semi-structured in-depth
interviews with forty six leaders, administrators or members of boards of the organizations studied, and twenty six interviews in Nicaragua and Miami with respondents who provided their views on the topics of interests as mayors of cities and towns in Nicaragua, experts from the private and the public sectors or as counterparts of the organizations. These interviews also included immigration attorneys and other participants in Miami and conversations with a number of beneficiaries of projects in Nicaragua. The fieldwork also included participation in events organized by some of the organizations studied and onsite observations of their projects.\textsuperscript{2} The organizations were identified through interviews, archival research and Internet search.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section offers an overview of the organizations. The second section includes a detailed presentation of the results of the fieldwork in chronological order which corresponds to major changes in Nicaragua’s articulation to the world economy and U.S.-Nicaragua relations. The paper shows how each stage brings about important changes in the formation and the reconfiguration of Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida (the stages are: 1980 to 1989; 1990 to 2006, and 2007 to the present). The third section offers an in-depth discussion of some of the organizations. And the last one presents a synthesis of major findings in light of theoretical debates and propositions.

**Nicaraguan Immigrant Organizations: An Overview**

Chart 1, shows the names of the organizations currently operating in South Florida, the year in which they were formed, whether they are registered as nonprofit under the Florida statue and whether they are engaged in transnational activities on a regular basis. Of the forty Nicaraguan immigrant organizations currently operating in South Florida, thirty three (83 percent) are formally registered in the state of Florida under the 501 c (3) nonprofit organization
designation and seven (15 percent) have no formal incorporation as nonprofits, and thirty four organizations (85 percent) have developed sustained links with institutions, associations and/or communities in Nicaragua in relation to the organization’s goals. Chart 2 displays the organizations by type; most of the organizations formed since the 1990s (over 40 percent) have been focused on civic-humanitarian goals, follows by organizations with cultural goals (10 percent) and professional or business promotion concerns (20 percent). Chart 3 shows the organizations that were operating during the 1980s and the year in which they were formed. It shows that 50 percent of the organizations formed during the 1980s focused on political goals or had a civic-military focus and the rest were equally divided into organizations that addressed goals related humanitarian aid and civic engagement, culture and sports or they were alumni association which combine different goals. A contrast of Charts 2 and 3 shows that out of the eighty one organizations identified, fifty one were operating at some point in the 1980s, of them only ten survived to the present while some new ones emerged since 1990.

Formation and Evolution of Organizations: The Contexts

Stage I: 1979-1990

There are three stages in recent Nicaraguan history that can be identified in terms of the contexts in which the organizations have been formed and their evolution. The first starts with the revolution of 1979 which placed the leftist Frente Nacional para la Liberacion Nacional (FNLN) in control of the state apparatus which stayed in power until 1989, a period that triggered massive emigration from Nicaragua and the transformation of Greater Miami as the epicenter of Nicaraguan immigration in the United States (see Cervantes-Rodriguez 2006). A Cold War revolution that involved direct confrontation between the Nicaraguan and the United States
governments was the geopolitical context that framed the exodus. Expropriations, escalating opposition and repression, the militarization of Nicaragua including the instauration of the military draft in 1984, a war scenario and a series of erroneous economic policies and institutional biases against key productive agents had a direct impact on vast segments of the population. Under these circumstances, many Nicaraguans left to the United States, Costa Rica, and other countries throughout the 1980s. As they arrived in South Florida, Nicaraguans encountered a complex social formation that has a well-established institutional framework at the core of which is the tradition of formation of associations as a way of social integration through socialization and control through regulation. Different branches of the state apparatus and different Nicaraguan groups used this framework as a mean to reach their respective goals and a significant number of associations are created by Nicaraguans in this early stage of the exodus. A multiplicity of determinations; foreign policy approaches, labor market conditions, societal expectations, the migrants’ own needs, expectations and rationales, among others, left an imprint in the formation of Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida during this period.

During the 1980s, Nicaraguans formed more than 50 organizations in Miami, most of them with a political profile but they also formed important humanitarian, professional, and cultural organizations and alumni associations (Chart 3), some of which will survive to our days. A contrast to Charts 2 and 3 shows historical trends that are worth noticing. First, the vast majority of the political organizations and associations with a military profile did not survive the 1980s. Most were disarticulated after the defeat of the Sandinistas in the election of 1989. Most professional organizations survived to our days as did organizations representing alumni associations, cultural organizations and the most active civic organizations. Some professional
and civic organizations have changed their names, usually as they broadened their scope or modified their immediate goals to adjust to the new realities.

The fact that Nicaraguans were actively involved in forming political organizations in Miami in the 1980s some of which had a military orientation, is directly traceable to the fundamental political affinity that existed between the exiles and the U.S. government overall approach to Nicaragua which found a perfect during the Reagan administration which offered extensive support to Nicaraguan exiles involved in opposition and resistance groups against the FSLN government. The massive arrivals of Cubans to Miami had made the city the epicenter of exiles from left-wing regimes in Latin America and Nicaraguans reinforced this status.

The formation of organizations created the conditions for the orderly integration and adaptation of Nicaraguans through institutional structures that facilitated such ends. Professional organizations formed during the 1980s advanced instrumental goals directly linked to the incorporation of their members in the United States. These goals were associated with social mobility, incorporation into the labor market, business expansion, and professional recognition. The organizations empowered Nicaraguan professionals and facilitated collective bargains before state and federal authorities and facilitated access to powerful Cuban American organizations and the emerging Cuban American lobby. In the process, members of Nicaraguan professional organizations and other organizations underwent a dual movement. They recovered a sense of belonging to certain groups classes and reinforced identities that had been forged in Nicaragua (e.g. professionals, bankers, engineers, doctors), they did so through social immersion into for most of them was a new highly dynamic and complex social environment, a process that implied the adoption of new identities (e.g. exile, Nicaraguan-American) and a sense of belonging based on established constructs, such as being member of “the Nicaraguan
community” or the “Hispanic community.” Immersion in the U.S. society did not necessarily hinder the expansion of transnational networks and the advancement of transnational projects.

The case of the Nicaraguan Bankers Association (NBA) is particularly enlightening about this complex link, although in this case such transnational engagement corresponded to a strategy to reach other markets, particularly Central American markets. Roberto Arguello, president and Founder of the NBA further elaborates on these connections (see Chart 5 for passages from the interview). The bankers association, formed in 1983, reflects their early arrival in exile and the need to emphasize the presence of Nicaraguan bankers in town, promote their business, and facilitate their in-group networks and their networks with other influential groups and government agencies. By supporting causes that were beyond their immediate instrumental goals, such as the issue of the immigration status, the leaders of the association also secured a position of leadership among Nicaraguans and Hispanics in general. Yet, they were also repositioning themselves transnationally. Their survival as a social class in the global conditions of the 1980s required their transnationalization and Miami’s growing financial district offered a suitable platform (Robinson 2003; Cervantes-Rodriguez 2006).

Two major professional organizations at that time were formed by physicians, Asociación Médica Nicaragüense en el Exilio (Nicaraguan Medical Association in Exile), and The Asociación Nicaragüense de Ingenieros y Arquitectos (ANIA) (Nicaraguan Association of Engineers and Architects). The first, focused on accreditation and through intense efforts and a strategic alliance with Cuban American organizations, it was able to get the inclusion of Nicaraguan physicians in a special program that facilitated preparatory training at the University of Miami in lieu of the certification program. This benefit was not extended to all immigrant physicians but like Cuban physicians, Nicaraguan physicians in exile were able to benefit from
it. They received ample support from other organizations, particularly ANIA, which gave up the presidency of the Federation of Nicaraguan Professional Organizations in Exile (FANPE in Spanish) to invest the Nicaraguan medical organization with more leverage for its lobby. ANIA was also involved in issues pertaining accreditation and in assisting its members with their incorporation into the labor market. This effort reached the Department of Transportation of California with which ANIA cooperated by establishing a link with Nicaraguan engineers and architects to meet the department’s demands of Hispanic professionals in these fields in San Francisco.\(^4\) In addition, professionals had been hit hard with problems associated with the immigration status. Like other professional associations, ANIA also got involved in assisting colleagues in getting the immigration status and winning asylum cases. The efforts of ANIA and other professional organizations to assist their professional in their reinsertion into the labor market were important on many levels. Nicaraguan professionals had to face pressing issues associated with their labor market incorporation. The most obvious problem arose when their knowledge of English did not meet the demands of the market for professional jobs. However, there were problems associated also with technological gaps and even gender gaps. Martha Borgen, president of ANIA, refers to these issues (See Chart 5 for passage of the interview).\(^5\)

By the time Nicaraguan professionals were getting organized through professional associations, thousands of Nicaraguans of lower educational attainment and very modest economic means were arriving as well (see Cervantes-Rodriguez 2006). Their individual and social needs and aspirations substantially differed from those of the economic elite and groups usually identified as middle class. Their pressing issues included how to find affordable dwellings and jobs, temporary aid for food, public schools for their children, and programs in which they could learn English and other useful skills. The status issue acquired even a more
dramatic dimension for this group because many of their members had crossed the border and most could not afford good attorneys to assist them. As the armed conflict intensified in Nicaragua many peasants and other persons of modest economic resources who had integrated the Contras or were displaced by the war scenario and their families started to arrive in Miami as refugees. Within this context, the 1980s also witnessed the foundation of humanitarian and civic organizations that assisted Nicaraguans through humanitarian projects, by facilitating access to professional advice on immigration issues, and in general by walking them through the Miami safety net of which these organizations had become an integral part. The Comité de Nicaragüenses Pobres en el Exilio (CONIPOE) (Committee of Poor Nicaraguans in Exile), Fraternidad Nicaragüense, the Centro Asistencial Nicaragüense and Hogar Amor y Esperanza, among other organizations focused on Nicaraguans in need of assistance. The rationale for the foundation of organization focused on Nicaraguans with specific needs given their lack of economic resources is explained by Critóbal Mendoza, resident and founder of CONIPOE (See Chart 5 for passages of the interview). 6

There have been strong unifiers across organizations, such as the exile condition and the immigration status issue. However, the rationales leading to the formation of organizations, the membership of the organizations, and the interaction among organizations (or lack of) were a reflection of profound class divides among Nicaraguans. Furthermore, the organizations recreated such divides to some extent through the recreation of symbols of status and patterns of communication (or lack of) between organizations. As it will be seen later, these aspects would persist beyond the 1980s. Thus, elements indicating unity and lack of unity, harmony and tensions reflected in the formation of Nicaraguan associations in exile in the 1980s. A glance at the names of the organizations that were formed in the 1980s (Chart 2) suffices to capture their
heterogeneity. A complex and well-oiled machinery of institutional structures that were made up of professional organizations, social agencies, including those specialized in providing immigration services, support to refugees in the relocation process, access to education and health care resources, and political committees and parties existed and the new immigrants were expected to become ingrained in those structures as collective actors through organizations.

Stage II: 1990-2006

Nicaraguan society underwent important transformations after the inauguration of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro as president of Nicaragua in 1990 following a successful coalition of political forces, Unión Opositora Nicaragüense (UNO) that defeated the Sandinistas. Under her government, Nicaragua underwent a gradual implementation of neoliberal reforms in social and economic affairs and a democratization process that was truncated by some pitfalls in domestic politics as the very antidemocratic nature of some of the reforms. Many Nicaraguans started to return to Nicaragua in the early 1990s, some as a response to programs designed by the government to attract members of the diaspora, mainly investors and highly qualified professionals. Some former exiles were hired in administration positions and others made strategic investments in finance, real estate and other increasingly profitable activities (Cervantes-Rodriguez 2006). A legal framework was created to address the issue of compensation for the expropriations and the return of real estate property and other assets to exiles and other Nicaraguans who had been affected during the 1980s. The fluidity of the flows of people, goods and ideas between the United States and Nicaragua resumed and acquired greater intensity, a process at the core of which was the unprecedented involvement of Nicaraguan migrants in transnational activities and projects (Cervantes-Rodriguez 2006). The successive governments of Anorldo Alemán and Enrique Bolaños gave continuity to general
trends concerning economic policies and the insertion of Nicaragua in markets and political affairs under the United States sphere of influence. This path would be at least partially interrupted in the year 2007 when the FSLN regained the control of the Nicaraguan state after the general elections of November 2006.

The transition from 1990 to 2006 reflected on the Nicaraguan organizations in South Florida through certain characteristics some of which can be observed in Charts 1 and 2. Several professional, civic, and humanitarian associations that had been formed in the 1980s survived to the 1990s and beyond. The organizations that have been established since 1990 are predominantly humanitarian, cultural, and civic. Most of the organizations and hometown associations formed between 1990 and 2006 focus on humanitarian issues, either just humanitarian issues or in combination with other goals (e.g. religious, pro-development, etc.), followed by civic non-political, and cultural organizations and most of them have some type of transnational engagement with respect to Nicaragua and a few are not register an operate as small hometown associations. The new context impacted the organizations in ways that were captured in the interviews. For example, some professional organizations saw their membership shrink either nominally or in terms of their effectiveness in the organization as a result of the return of a number of professionals and entrepreneurs to Nicaragua in the 1990s and beyond, their relocation to other states or retirement. Some leaders of organizations returned as well or developed transnational life styles that limited their capacity to continue leading the organizations. Thus in some cases there was a transition not only in membership but leadership as well related to these trends. Thus, some organizations went into an impasse at different moments after the 1980s although they were kept active and others that had emerged at some point, such as the Nicaraguan associations involving teachers, dentists and accountants were
either dismantled or became marginal due to lack of membership or activism. During the late 1990s the major of Managua came to Miami to discuss the master plan of the city of Managua before potential investors. The calls for full integration to the U.S. society and a new sense of belonging merged with the calls for the confirmation of a deep-seated sense of belonging to a nation. The conditions were created and the transnational social fields that already linked South Florida and Nicaragua expanded as never before.

**NACARA**

Escalating deportations framed by an anti-immigration wave that had lasted several years, led to a nation-wide social movement aimed at halting deportation through a blanket adjustment of status for thousands of deportable Central American immigrants. The social movement around the status issue brought Nicaraguans together as never before. From civic organizations such as Nicaraguan Fraternity, the Nicaraguan Committee of Poor Nicaraguans in exile, and the Nicaraguan Civic Taskforce, to professional organizations, and members of hometown associations and humanitarian organizations became widely involved in the status issue. They lobbied local and national politicians, participated in demonstrations and meetings that were taking place from Sweetwater to little Havana, and donated time, energy and material resources to the cause. Many organizations were empowered and saw a new sense of being. Others emerged out of the fervor of the moment. All these organizations and others created a common front through strategic alliances in Miami, to advance the cause of halting deportations. This was done, as emphasized by a community activist, “following the rules of the game” as a leader of a Nicaraguan organization explains (See Chart 5 for passages of the interview).8

The ways in which Nicaraguan immigrant organizations handled their integration into the social movement that led to the passage of the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American
Relief Act (NACARA) illustrates issues of integration through the advancement of collective goals through organizations within a framework of social stability, the role of organizations in empowering immigrants in critical times, and the formation of strategic alliances among organizations and with more powerful immigrant groups and lobbies in Washington. The most visible impact of the signature of the Nicaraguan and Central American Refugee Act was the adjudication of a permanent status to over 70,000 Nicaraguans but how the path to NACARA. Given the transition that Nicaragua was experiencing at the time NACARA passed in 1997, the status allowed many Nicaraguans to travel to Nicaragua at a time in which expectations concerning reuniting with family members and “trying their luck” there was a dream of many Nicaraguans. The civic engagement of Nicaraguans during the nation-wide intense period of social activism that led to the passage of NARACA, reinforced the three aspects that have been identified as the main dimension of civic engagement; “literacy” or “knowledge of community affairs and political issues”, “skills” which refers to “competency in achieving group goals” and “civic attachment” or “a feeling or belief that individual matters in community affairs” (Stepick and Stepick 2001, 3). Yet, as noticed by many leaders of the organizations and other participants in the study NACARA did not translate into significant political power for Nicaraguans while the issue of deportation was far from being resolved and the aftermath of NACARA brought about an end to the issue of cohesion across organizations and groups. This issue was carefully elaborated by a Nicaraguan professional. In addition NACARA was anteceded by a strong anti-immigration movement in the United States that culminated in the passage of the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996 and POWORA (welfare reform), which working in tandem created significant barriers for immigrants to access social services while immigrants, specially Latin American immigrants were increasingly criminalized.
Thus, the post-NACARA context brought new challenges for many Nicaraguans who faced deportation and an unprecedented yet silent wave of family separation. Chart 5 illustrate this trend; between 1999 and 2008, the percentage of Nicaraguans removed over Nicaraguans admitted went from 3.3% to 62.26% and there was an actual increase in the absolute number of removals, which went from slightly over 400 in 1999 to 2,250 in 2008. American Fraternity (an organization known as Nicaraguan Fraternity until the passage of NARACA) is following up very closely on cases of deportations, including families whose children are left behind or about to be left behind because both parents have been deported or at least one of them. Nora Sandigo the founder and president of the organization explains that the organization focuses on promoting immigration reform, in stopping deportation and in assisting children whose close relatives have been deported or are in detention centers.¹¹

Stage III: 2007-present

This stage starts with the elections of 2007 in Nicaragua in which the orthodox faction of the Sandinistas (FLSN) took control of the Nicaraguan state. Instead of being based on revolutionary transformations, this new stage of Sandinista control of the state is characterized by important continuities with respect to the previous one (1990-2006) yet with important specificities as well. One important characteristic is that there is an accentuated gap between the Sandinistas and its populist rhetoric, on the one hand, and their engagement in accumulation as a ruling elite and their pragmatic engagement with the IFIs, on the other. However, the Sandinista-style populism, which is rooted in an anti-imperialist discourse and strategic power alliances with the ALBA group and the Roman Catholic Church, and what are widely perceived as corrupt legislative moves to remain in control of the state, have triggered dissent and a wide range of
opposition movements. Those who project uneasiness with the FSLN ruling group prominently include organized business groups, different political parties, and feminist groups. The resonance of political mistrust and discomfort has reached Nicaraguans in South Florida, many of whom are exiles and refugees from the 1980s.

This new context has brought about elements of continuity and discontinuity in the configuration of Nicaraguan immigrant organizations. One the one hand, new context allows for stability and continuity in the transnational involvement of organizations and most of them continue to focus on pressing issues concerning living conditions of communities and population groups in Nicaragua. On the other hand, there is a new trend that points to the formation of civic organizations that have been actively involved in denouncing corruption, the anti-democratic nature of the Sandinista government and other issues through which they have been connected to organizations with similar goals in Nicaragua. Even since the threshold of the elections of 2006 mounting uneasiness of exiles with the FSLN’s possible return to power, a civic/political organization (see Chart 2).

**Impact of the Organizations in Nicaragua**

**The American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF)**

The ANF is the best known and the most complex of all the organizations studied. It is also the one with the greatest impact on Nicaragua. The ANF was founded by the Pellas family, one of the wealthiest families of Nicaragua and Central America. The family has a history of emigration to the United States related to the revolution of 1979 and the ANF is linked to that history. It has its strategic development and financial planning headquarters in Downtown Miami and Washington and the headquarters for field operations in Nicaragua. The yearly fund rising event, from which significant share of the funds are gathered, is done in Miami also. The warehouses
and main field office are in Managua. The director is Alvaro Pereira and the Managua staff includes seasoned as well as young engineers and other supporting staff. It is run by a team that includes Ariel López, the general manager and Neida Pereira (not related to Alvaro Pereira), the director of projects. The Managua team assesses the needs of the communities, the potential of specific project in different areas of Nicaragua, recommends and lobby potential partners there, and supervises the work in the fields. The office is located in the periphery of Managua and it has organization has three large warehouses adjacent to it. Their capacity to raise funds and target several projects simultaneously has grown since the foundation of the organization. Alvaro Pereira, president and founder of ANF abounds on the goals and main strategic approach of the ANF to the organization’s goals of reaching as many Nicaraguans as possible in Nicaragua.  

Food for the Poor stands as a major global partner in most projects of the INF centered on development. The organization has a well-oiled mechanism to access funds through venues available for this type of philanthropic organization and it also receives support from The Pellas Group, ESTESA, Nicaraguan Sugar Estates, the Wallace H. Center Foundation and the CiSa/Mercon Coffee Group which have have been among the main corporate donors. Until recently, the organization focused mainly on humanitarian projects. They have systematically distributed educational materials and basic medicines to hundreds of clinics and other medical facilities since their inauguration. Food assistance to schools has also been a top priority. ANF representatives document that they reach out to more than 300,000 low-income and poor individuals in Nicaragua. Until recently it focused on humanitarian projects but it has moved toward the integration of pro-development projects in their goals:

The ANF is involved in community development projects that include housing projects the most sophisticated of which have schools, a community center, and even a medical facility
within the community. They facilitate the training of several families in agricultural production, and indirectly in issues concerning civic involvement for community development. They work in water purification projects and the construction of rural toilets for thousands of families in rural areas. And they are increasingly targeting sustainable development projects. During my fieldwork trips to Nicaragua, I visited 5 pro-development projects of the INF: The housing and community project of the ANF in the municipality of Pueblo Nuevo in Estelí, the ANF-Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) Agricultural Project in Leon, the ANF-ICDF Agricultural Training and Production Project in Tipitapa, a housing and community project in the locality El Hular, a rural area in the mountains of Matagalpa, and a water purification project in the community La Mona in a rural area of Leon. What follows is a summary of the main observations and interviews onsite interviews. For lack of space, I cannot address the experience but there is a blog in which information and pictures of the organized can be seen (http://nicaraguanssouthflorida.wordpress.com/)

All the ANF community projects visited operate through a similar system of partnership of private and government agencies. Usually, the ANF defines which partners would be better for each project and works to attract them. In other cases the projects had already started but for some reason did not move forward and the ANF is incorporated at some point and starts as general coordinator and moves them forward. It usually coordinates the efforts of all the actors involved, in addition to the specific contribution it makes in terms of goods and services. It also identifies a “project radar” within each project. “The radar” is the person from the community hired from the ANF to make sure the project runs smoothly and to be in permanent contact with ANF headquarters to report any anomaly (see Annex 1 for a description of projects).
In the year 2005, a group formed by Nicaraguan women from wealthy families of the Pacific, created the Miami committee in support of the Instituto Técnico Especializado Juan Pablo Segundo. The Institute is a prestigious institution in Managua that offers technical education to young Nicaraguans from predominantly poor families. The technical programs prepare the students for the job market by training them in several specialties; carpentry, culinary training, the confections of cloths, and computer training, among other specialties. The Miami committee was formally incorporated in 2005. It is led by the artist Rosario Ortiz de Chamorro and it is constituted by several women whose initiatives are supported by their husbands and in some cases other members of their families. The members provide funds to cover year-round scholarships (which are about 375 U.S. dollars per student) and some of the Institute regular expenses. In addition it has contributed funds for the improvement and expansion of the institute as well as technical expertise for remodeling projects. Between 2005 and 2008 the committee contributed more than 100,000 US dollars. Specific projects have included the construction of a kitchen and a bakery which will allow to offer training as bakers to students from all over the country, the building of a center for the design and the making of clothes which is meant to produce high quality cloth for commercial purposes in the future to assist with the finances of the institute, the reparation and remodeling of the building, and the construction of a computer lab.

The Institute is supported also by Nicaraguan immigrants who have settled in San Francisco and Virginia. The same group of women supports other activities in Nicaragua related to cultural activities and makes important contributions to the Leon Home (Asilo de Ancianos de Leon). In addition to their support for institutions in Nicaragua that assist the poor and promote
development through technical education, members of these organizations belong to families that have developed a transnational lifestyle that includes frequent trips to Nicaragua in relation to investments, to promote cultural activities, and they tend to have second-homes there. Both the Comité de Apoyo al Asilo de Anciano de Leon and the ANF have supported the institution in question systematically. Members of these committees and the ANF also tend to participate in their respective fund raising activities. The committees are also linked to one of the cultural organizations through family ties; one of the women of the committees is the wife of the president of the Instituto Cultural Rubén Darío, an organization whose activities and projects, including a recently conceptualized project for the construction of a library in Managua, they also support.

**The Nicaraguan American Nurses Association (NANA) and the Women's Group from the Community Presbyterian Church**

The Nicaraguan American Nurses Association was founded in 1996 with the intention of supporting the professional efforts of Nicaraguan nurses in Miami and to formalize their assistance to communities in Nicaragua. Most members of this organization are immigrant nurses from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The history of NANA is intertwined with a strong tradition of nursing services related to the missionaries efforts to bring health services into the communities of the Atlantic Coast in earlier centuries. The efforts were particularly intense in the Honduran-Nicaraguan corridor. In Nicaragua the missionaries were very active in the locality of Bilwaskarma which is separated from Honduras by a river (rio Coco) and the most populated areas of Puerto Cabazas and Bluefields. A turning point came about with the establishment of The Moravian School of Nursing in Puerto Cabezas in the 1930s. The first president of NANA and some other members are originally from Bilwaskarma. Most members of the organization
have been in the United States for more than a decade and they have been working as registered nurses in South Florida for many years. The Nicaraguan American Nurses Association works in close partnership with the Women's Group from the Community Presbyterian Church. The leader of the women’s group is the sister of Alice Blandford, the current president of NANA. Like in the case of previous organizations even though these two are run primarily by women, their husbands and other family members contribute to them and actively involved in coordination efforts. These two organizations tend to focus on marginal neighborhoods and rural areas of the Managua-Masaya-Granada corridor, although many of them have sustained personal links in the Atlantic Coast and assist with remittances and through other family transfers. The logistics for their projects in Nicaragua are coordinated mainly with the support of the Volunteer Order of Las Vicentinas. The focus on the Pacific through the Vicentinas, originated in a personal connection. The daughter of Erlinda Brown, the coordinator of the Church’s women’s group, married a son of one of the Vicentinas and found out about their humanitarian projects they had in Nicaragua and encouraged their relatives in Miami to assist. They eventually created an extensive networking through family ties, friendship, professional connections and a religious community which has led to sustained projects in Nicaragua. The participants in their projects are for the most part Nicaraguans but they also include several Americans, some of whom are related to them through inter-marriage and friendship or professional connections and have joined their medical missions as physicians and nurses or have provided medicines and other goods.

According to Martina Bolaños, Vice President of the International Association of Charities, the Voluntarias Vicentinas is a Laic association founded 1617 by San Vicente de Paul in France which currently has more than 150 thousand voluntaries in 21 countries. There are 22
volunteers in Managua. When asked about the impact of the associations in Miami, the representatives of the Vicenntinas who were interviewed mentioned their role (See Chart 5 for passages of the interview). They mentioned that the communities they work with are so poor that it is hard to even raise 100 U.S.$ locally, more so now that the local government support they used to receive is not coming anymore. For them the 500 US dollars sent from Miami by the Women’s Group punctually every six month makes a difference (See Chart 5 for passages of the interview). They also mentioned how the people from the poorest communities from the rural communities where they work are not used to migrate to work abroad and receive remittances.

The coordinator of the Women's Group from the Community Presbyterian Church sees their support to Nicaraguan families also in light o issues that transcend direct institutional support through the clinics projects: “Our work is important also for the children. People are very poor there and the many Nicaraguan children are not even registered; they don’t have birth certificates. The women’s group goes once a year and the nurses go at least twice every year and we assist the families in gaining awareness about the importance of having the children registered to have greater access to social services and things like that. We also take as many things as possible when we go, from basic medicines and sanitary products to sugar bowls and we help provide school meals.”

Other Organizations of Immigrants from the Atlantic Coast

Awareness of the problems associated with extreme poverty and others related to underdevelopment in the Atlantic region even with respect to other areas that are still considered poor by international standards have made Nicaraguan organizations and hometown associations of immigrants from the Atlantic Coast emphasize on projects that could lead to development. These include from projects with a focus on the expansion of the tourist infrastructure to projects
encouraging investments in various areas. The name of an organization developed by prominent community activists, entrepreneurs and professionals from the Atlantic Coast in 1998; Costeños Unidos pro-Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica (CUPROC) (People from the Atlantic Coastal Area United for the Development of the Atlantic Coast) captures the essence of what most groups from the Atlantic Coast united in hometown associations and more structured organizations would like to see in their region. With no significant impact in terms of development and lacking consensus concerning priorities, CUPROC was eventually disarticulated. However, some of their members have continued their transnational efforts (some of which anteceded the formation of CUPROC) through small groups of hometown associations or by articulating their efforts through more established organizations like the Lions’ Club. Currently there are five organizations of immigrants from the Atlantic Coast formally registered as nonprofit in South Florida. They are the Nicaraguan Nurses Association, Friends in Action for RAAN (Región Autónoma de la Costa Norte in Spanish), the Alumni Association of El Colegio Moravo, the Alumni Association of El Colegio Critóbal Colón the Bluefields Caribbean Lions Club and a number of hometown associations, such as helping Hand, the Bluefields hometown association and the Corn Island hometown associations whose leaders were interviewed as part of this study.

Having its traditional economy virtually disarticulated by a combination of global accumulation trends, natural disasters, and related emigration patterns, the Atlantic Coast faces great obstacles in their efforts to develop their communities and the region. Some areas of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, from main cities such as Bluefields to small indigenous towns have become heavily dependent on remittances and other forms of support from the migrants. The mayor of Corn Island explains the basics of the transformations in the islands (see Chart 5 for passages of the interview). In addition to money migrants also help in other ways, for example we are
working with a group of costeños who live in Miami to revitalize tourist sites, including sites of
great historical interest. We want to begin with the water spring that comes from the hills into the
ocean. The families used to bring their cloth to wash and cook using that water and they used to
spend days socializing here. We would like to restore that on more modern grounds. We want to
build a large plaza by the airport area. We want to restore the rocking chair. It is a chair where
the pirates used to seat and we want to restore it. We want to get some archeological sites and we
would like to our ancestors, clay black people, tools… we are trying to get together to see it.22

The economic disarticulation has led to social problems. Corn Island and other areas of the
Atlantic Coast have gradually become crossing points and trafficking hubs for the vessels
moving drugs from South America to the United States. It comes as no surprise that a major
focus of the above-mentioned associations is how to stop loosing young costeños to these new
negative trends by improving their access to education, civic participation through church and
community clubs, and other initiatives. Developing a drug rehabilitation center in Corn Island is
also in the plans of some of the leaders of associations.

Other organizations include The Lions’ Clubs, EXPONICA and the Nicaraguan
American Chamber of Commerce, Instituto Cultural Rubén Darío, Fundación Internacional
Rubén Darío, and Círculo de Escritores y Poetas Iberoamericanos. The specific characteristics
of these organizations and their transnational involvement are described in Appendix 1.

A Theoretically-Grounded Synthesis of the Main Findings

The formation of organizations: overall logics and institutional viability - The formation and
evolution of Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida have been framed by
changing geopolitical contexts and regimes of accumulation, foreign policy approaches,
regulatory frameworks concerning immigration and emigration, labor market conditions, social
hierarchies shaped by a transnational class structure and class relations, differential power within
the immigrant population of the area, and institutional frameworks and discourses that to a large
extent promote the formation of organizations as a legitimate and legitimizing mechanism to
advance the demands of specific groups without undermining social stability. Immigrants in the
United States have been at the forefront in development of voluntary associations for centuries
which is in sync with the use of immigrant organizations as mechanism of adaptation and
integration through socialization and the overall use of immigrant organizations as a “technique
of governance.” As it has been noticed (Pyykkönen 2007) the formal registration of immigrant
associations has advantages for both the government and the immigrants. While they facilitate
contacts and the formation and expansion of networks, such networks and contacts tend to
involve government officials from many agencies that provide guidance, services and funding
(ibid.). As the organizations become part of “the administrative discourse,” they have greater
access to financial and other resources derived from their immersion in “knowledge and
communication networks” (Pyykkönen, 2007). In turn, these links also facilitate socialization
and the disciplining of the immigrants by teaching them “rules, norms and obedience” which
creates conditions for social stability (Pyykkönen, 2007). Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in
Miami have been no exception to this pattern. The empowerment of the Nicaraguan immigrants
through the formation of organizations that enhance their recognitions, civic consciousness and
access to resources has worked in a framework of socialization and stability. This has been true
even in times of dramatic confrontation with state authorities, specifically immigration
authorities in the late 1990s.
Uneven transnational involvement – The Nicaraguan immigrant organizations have a high propensity to be engaged in transnational projects that connect them to other organizations, communities, institutions, communities and localities in Nicaragua yet important differences exist in their transnational engagement, some of which are associated with differential access to resources and in terms of their capacity and propensity to reach specific populations and even regions. The organizations’ uneven transnational involvement is a major feature identified in this case. Important differences exist across organizations in terms of access to resources—material, such as funds, and non-material such as status, knowledge, etc.— and their capacity to reach out to individuals, groups, communities, and institutions in Nicaragua and deliver resources to them. A sharp pattern of class differentiation (within a transnational class structure) which is further reinforced by some expectations and practices surfaced as a major factor shaping uneven transnational involvement. Other factors such as the characteristics of the leaders in relation to leadership, and the social networking of the leaders and members are also important for the understanding of differential access to resources and capacity to reach out to groups and communities.

Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida include the American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF) which is typified in this work as having a highly sophisticated structure that can be summarized as an immigrant-nonprofit-philanthropic corporate structure. The ANF has been ranked by Forbes Magazine (2010) to be among the 200 largest nonprofit organizations in the United States (it is probably the only organization of Latin American immigrants to occupy that rank if not the only one led by an immigrant and rooted in migration). And it also includes a set of organizations that have significantly less access to material and human resources yet are
highly differentiated in this respect also and in terms of their capacity to access and mobilize resources transnationally.

The specification of the complexity of the migration population in terms of class differentiation is critical also for the understanding of how the organizations are formed and how they interact (or not) among themselves. The identification of specific class constellation (such as “peasants” or “middle class”) with national origin (e.g. Sassen-Koob 1979; Portes et al. 2007; Portes et al. 2008), hinders the understanding of major rationales leading to the creation of immigrant organizations and some of their main characteristics. Another factor to take into consideration is that even if Nicaragua is among the poorest countries of Latin America, Nicaraguans in South Florida have a relatively high concentration of transnational capitalists and other wealthy immigrants.

The uneven transnational involvement of the organizations also relates to regional differences in terms of transnational engagement which correspond with pervasive social and economic gaps between the Atlantic and the Pacific regions and attitudes and narratives that rather than diminishing the recreation of such gaps tend to reinforce them. In essence, the uneven transnational engagement of the organizations relates to pervasive socioeconomic gaps and power asymmetries that operate at different scales and are frequently associated with uneven development.

Other aspects of the nexus migration-development as mediated by the organizations—The vast literature on development from different traditions tend to converge in the understanding that issues of development and underdevelopment find concrete expression in specific population groups (such as women, racialized groups, peasants, workers in the informal economy, waged laborers), countries, and regions, to mention just some of the possible loci of research. From a
national development perspective, it has been argued (see Portes and Kindaid, 1989) that despite the overall “one size fits all” deployed by supranational institutions in the form of structural adjustments, policy interventions on socio economic issues are filtered through the state which shaped them in specific ways. This holds true for the case of Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan state has established priorities and strategic alliances with different segments of society and transnationally (e.g. the ALBA integrationist effort) based on political interests and other considerations of the ruling political elite, to launch strategies and policies that affect vast segments of the population. Laws governing reproductive health or policies that recreate regional gaps are designed domestically and more often than not they follow domestic political logics. The approach of the state to expatriates’ projects is also relevant in terms of securing the viability of their projects which seems to be noticeable in some cases like community development projects. The study of some of the projects of the ANF shows that the collaboration of several governmental entities, such as the Low-Income Program of the Institute of Urban Development, the Water and Drainage Ministry, and the Health and Education Departments, as well as the willingness and incentives of local government officials such as mayors, have been instrumental in the implementation of programs even if they are financed for the most part from global non-governmental organizations such as Food for the Poor or La Colmena. Although this issue is not examined here in great detail, the observations from the fieldwork point to the interaction of large philanthropic organizations with local government officials who have very limited resources and potential beneficiaries as a promising research site of foremost relevance for the analysis of how priorities are established and resources are distributed. The role of the state in either promoting or hindering exclusion is particularly relevant with respect to the issue of citizenship rights. The discourses about the Nicaraguan migrants usually emphasize fear of
deportation in relation to lack of immigration status in the United States as major barrier for many Nicaraguan migrants and families to overcome. However, it remains largely unnoticed that the citizenship rights of many Nicaraguan migrants are being affected also by regulations of the Nicaraguan state. Nicaragua passed the *Ley de Identidad Ciudadana* (the Citizens Identity Law) in 1993. The law allowed Nicaragua to adopt a universal standard identity card for identification purposes.\(^{23}\) Since then, Nicaraguans need to present the standard ID for any type of official transaction; from acquiring a passport to acquiring property rights, to vote in the elections, among other issues. Since the enactment of the law, tens of thousands of Nicaraguans living abroad or commuting in the South-South or South-to-North corridor still do not have the ID. While in theory they have the right to have it and the duty of carrying it for major official transactions before Nicaraguan authorities, the bureaucratic barriers to the adequate implementation of the law have left many of them in legal limbo. Lacking the resources (money, time, knowledge) that are necessary to get the ID many Nicaraguans are in a position of disadvantage with respect to their co-nationals who can afford to go to Nicaragua and spend the time and money necessary to get the ID there. And the consequences of not having the ID are beyond the civil disparities this situation generates. For example, an increase of the number of Nicaraguans lacking appropriate documentation in other countries makes it their integration more difficult and makes them more vulnerable to situations of abuse and exploitation.\(^{24}\) Some leaders of organizations emphasize that bureaucratic barriers in this case correspond to lack of political willingness. Although there is growing awareness among leaders of civic organizations in Managua and Miami about this pressing issue, the fact is that it has not been targeted effectively yet. Under this circumstance thousands of Nicaraguan migrants face barriers that hinder their full inclusion as citizens not only in the countries where they go in search of better
opportunities but in Nicaragua as well which dramatically affect material and non-material aspects of their lives.

**Human Development** - Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. When compared to most countries of these regions, Nicaragua exhibits important gaps with respect to literacy rate (76.68% and 91% respectively), percentage of population classified as poor (61.9% and 33%), and the percentage classified as urban (58.33 and 79.36) (see Chart 4). When compared with Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras, most socioeconomic indicators show that Nicaragua is one of the least developed countries if not the least developed one in Central America. With a population of 5.83 million inhabitants, it has the lowest GDP per capita (995.11 in current U.S. dollars), the lowest literacy rate of the population aged 15 and above (less than 80%) and the highest infant mortality rate (29 per 1000). Its population is classified as the second poorest in Central America after the Honduran, and Nicaragua also has the most unequal society after the Honduran. More than 40% of the population does not live in urban areas, and almost 65% of the labor force works in the informal economy (see Chart 6).

Within this context, Nicaraguan immigrants have first-hand experience and widespread consciousness of the socioeconomic conditions of their country of origin. When explicating their engagement in humanitarian or pro-development projects in Nicaragua, leaders and members of the organization refer to problems associated with underdevelopment; chronic poverty and malnutrition among vast segments of the population in Nicaragua; their lack of access to basic medicines and vaccines let alone sophisticated medical equipment in cases in which they are needed; lack of access to educational services or the precarious conditions of the services in many localities; the difficulties that poor families face in acquiring school materials and toys for their children; housing problems; and lack of infrastructure to provide basic training to young
Nicaraguans in advanced technologies related to the use of computers, among others. Some of the leaders of organizations also expressed concerns about the fact that many Nicaraguans participate productive activities that do not guarantee stable livelihoods for the producers and their families and lack of basic productive infrastructure, such as wells, water pumps, fertilizers, seeds, etc., for agricultural production and emphasized their involvement in assisting with projects that focused on some of these issues. Most of the organizations that have been formed starting in 1990, have placed at the core of their goals the advancement of humanitarian projects related to health and education, in addition to engulfing those goals, the ANF has also embraced the improvement of productive infrastructure, housing projects and community development. In this respect, the narratives of the leaders of the associations concerning their main goals, distinguish between humanitarian projects and pro-development projects tend to be intertwined. Pro-development organizations can be distinguished by two characteristics: first the leaders are concerned not only with providing humanitarian assistance but with the provision of material and non-material forms of assistance that are expected to have a direct impact on socioeconomic processes. Thus, there is a distinction between an organization that has a track record in distributing school materials to assist poor families, and an organization with a systematic support to an educational institution that trains Nicaraguan technicians. They are both humanitarian organizations but the second one can also be classified as pro-development in the intention to create the conditions for a number of individuals to overcome constrains that have led to poor living conditions. These distinctions, which are emphasized by some leaders should be examined in light of current discourses and policy interventions that rely on the concept of “human development.” The approaches of the organizations toward development in Nicaragua are not rooted in discourses about national development but in the human development
framework. “Human development” (e.g. Goulet 2000; Klugman et al. 2011), “food security,” “human security,” “deliberative development,” and others that are part of a constellation of concepts that guide policy interventions and the aimed of the organizations. “Human development” understood as “a process of enlarging people’s choices.” (UNDP, 1999, 10 cited in Klugman et al. 2011, 3) The definition by the UNDP notes that “[i]n principle, these choices can be infinitive and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, may other opportunities remain inaccessible” (ibid). The humanist connotation of the human development approach notwithstanding, a major limitation is its lack of historical grounding in the analysis of causal relations that recreate the conditions of poverty. The entanglement of the efforts at enlarging people’s choices matches the neoliberal ideology of competitiveness, and issues of exploitation, and related ones are obliterated in the human development approach. Thus, a Nicaraguan woman may be granted access to a source of income through a rural project, but whether she is being underpaid and working long hours, exposed to pesticides, etc., tends to pass unnoticed, nor is it questioned whether her labor power is being articulated with a commodity chain that recreates the conditions of underdevelopment for the population of her region, including her own family. Under conditions of extreme poverty like the one faced by many Nicaraguans, either actually or imminently, the existing consensus decrees that the urgencies of deprivation take precedence over the issue of exploitation. Such consensus is reflected in the approach of Nicaraguan immigrant associations to issues of development and underdevelopment.
“The global criminal economy,” development and migration - The raise of “the global criminal economy” (Castells 2000), has touched the lives of thousands of Nicaraguans. Raising levels of violence and crime in Nicaragua, which reach a more dramatic expression in marginal areas of Managua and other cities and particularly in some areas of the Atlantic Coast, given its systematic entanglement with drug trafficking. The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is paradigmatic on the issue of the articulation of escalating violence, crime, and the migration-development nexus. The economic disarticulation of vast communities as a result of combined forces such as the war, emigration and the subsequent implementation of neoliberal reforms, the expansion of drug trafficking and the geographical location of the islands and Costas areas, have turned some areas into crossing points and trafficking hubs for the vessels moving drugs from South America to the United States, and the economic residuals of trafficking as a major source of income for many inhabitants of those areas. It comes as no surprise that a major focus of the associations formed by immigrants from the Atlantic Coast is how “to stop loosing young costeños” to these negative trends by improving their access to education, and civic participation and socialization through church and community clubs, among other initiatives. Some organizations that focus on Managua have also targeted this issue.

Transnational involvement and incorporation into the U.S.: A zero-sum-game? The findings of this work do not support the argument that transnational involvement and incorporation to U.S. society operate in a zero-sum-game fashion (the idea that emphasizes, among other issues, that greater transnational involvement points to less immersion into the U.S. society); for an alternative critique see (Portes et al 2007; Portes et al 2002; Guarnizo el al 2003). The presentation of transnational immigrant involvement in opposition to U.S. national interest concerning cohesion and stability within the U.S. tends to neglect that in the 1980s, the state,
represented by several branches of the U.S. government, supported and even incited the transnational involvement of the certain exiles organizations to support specific geopolitical designs associated with national security and stability at home and instability in Nicaragua. It also neglects the fact that knowledge of and immersion in U.S. institutional frameworks increases the possibility of accessing resources to launch enduring transnational projects. Ultimately, the fundamental problem with the zero-sum game premise from a global perspective is not that it lacks supporting evidence but that the search for supporting evidence is bounded to the premise of methodological nationalism and hence it deviates our attention from social structures and forces that are more readily observable as they work in transnational social fields.

**Overall impact of the organizations** - There are a number of Nicaraguan organizations and hometown associations in South Florida that have systematically supported the creation of productive and commercial infrastructure or the improvement of existing ones, and the training of actual or potential producers in Nicaragua or are involved in projects to promote tourism, investments etc. It should be noticed that most of the organizations, including civic and cultural organizations, have been involved one way or the other in material transfers of all sorts (school materials, cloths, medicines, etc) either to support educational programs or as relief efforts in times of natural disasters or sporadically based on the personal connections of their members even though these transnational activities is not what define their core goals. Through their disparate efforts and using the resources at their hand, Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in South Florida have assisted tens of thousands of individuals, thousands of families, and many marginal communities in Nicaragua through formal immigrant organizations and hometown associations throughout the years. The question is the extent to which their impact can be
understood as an impact on development conceptualized either as national development or by focusing on specific groups and communities. The fact is that Nicaraguan organizations in Miami can cease to exist tomorrow and that event, which would be dramatic on many accounts, would not find a reflection in macroeconomic and social indicators related to economic output, productivity, literacy rate, and percent of the population classified as poor and other indicators usually employed to rank countries in terms of development. The flip side of the coin is that tens of thousands of individuals, many communities, localities, and humanitarian, social services and religious institutions throughout Nicaragua would be affected without the assistance and support that they receive from these organizations. Even some local governments would be affected as well. There is great social awareness across groups from different regions of origin, ethnicity and classes on the pressing issues of underdevelopment in Nicaragua. The strengthening of these organizations through the dissemination of information about what they are doing and their experiences, cooperation and sustained partnerships among themselves and with funding institutions and local governments should improve their reach and the quality of their projects including their intended contributions to improving the productive infrastructure, eco-friendly projects, access to basic services, among other pressing issues in Nicaragua. The question is whether Nicaraguans, currently burdened themselves with the Great Recession will opt for focusing their energies and scarce resources on the building of philanthropic organizations, or would they use them as means to access scarce resources, or would they simply quit, with the repercussions that this could bring transnationally.

Endnotes
1 A preliminary version of this paper was delivered in May 2009 as a research report to the center for Migration and Development, Princeton University, where the umbrella project on immigrant organizations and development leading to this study is hosted. The study of Nicaraguans was financed by the MacArthur Foundation through the umbrella project. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Alejandro Portes for his interest in the Nicaraguan case and for inviting me to address it. My appreciation also goes to Nancy Doolan from the CMS, and Bruce Bagley from the Department of International Studies at the University of Miami, for the support received in terms of logistics, and to my research assistant, Ph.D. candidate Ali Adolfo Bustamante. My deepest gratitude is also extended to the leaders of the organizations who were most generous with their time, answering every question patiently and inviting me to onsite observations of their projects. The precious time of other participants who were interviewed is greatly appreciated as well.

2 A questionnaire of 25 questions was sent to a subsample of 12 organizations as a supplement to the in-depth interviews and has been used basically for the characterization of the organizations. The most relevant information was captured through in-depth interviews and included other aspects of interest.

3 Interview with Roberto Arguello. Founded and former president of the Nicaraguan Bankers Association, Miami, July 16, 2008.
4 Email communication with Martha Borgen, current president of the Association of Nicaraguan Engineers and Architects (formerly known as ANIA), Miami, April 15, 2009.
5 Interview with Martha Borgen, current president of the Association of Nicaraguan Engineers and Architects (formerly known as ANIA), Miami, April 5, 2009.
6 Interview with Cristobal Mendoza, president of CONIPOE, Miami. February 15, 2009.
7 Although some people have benefited from this approach, the mechanisms to address these issues and the political and economic aspects of the process have made it extremely difficult and Nicaraguans are still struggling with the issue of compensation and the return of properties.
8 Interview with Cristobal Mendoza, president of CONIPOE, Miami. February 15, 2009.

9 It should be noted that this social movement was national and had been antecedent by a strong anti-immigration movement in the United States that culminated in the passage of the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996 and POWORA (welfare reform), which working in tandem created significant barriers for immigrants to access social services while immigrants, specially Latin American immigrants were increasingly criminalized. Ira Kurzban, a prominent immigration attorney, he characterized such changes in the following terms: “This law dramatically changed immigration law. It would be as if the government decided to write the entire tax code of the United States.” (Interview with Ira Kurzban, Miami, May 22, 2009). He abounded that the law in question has made it very hard for many people who were in the path to acquire permanent residency to actually get the status as it has facilitated the removal process by depriving the local judges of discretionary powers and by empowering the immigration officers whose accountability for the decisions they make as officers has been significantly reduced, and it has made much more difficult for families to bring relatives into the U.S. territory via family reunification. In addition, immigration attorney Ira Kruzban explains, IRRIRA expended the actions that fall under “aggravated felonies” so that thousands of migrants who would have never been subjected to deportation for minor crimes, are currently being deported (Interview with Ira Kurzban, Miami, May 22, 2009).
10 Interview with Mario Lovo, Miami, June 17, 2009.
11 Recorded Interview with Nora Sandigo, Miami, June 22, 2009.
Interview with Rosario Ortiz de Chamorro and other members of the organization (see Annex 1) and data from the 2005-2009 report provided to the author by the coordinator of the group.

Interview with Alice Blandford, president of NANA. Miami, February 21, 2009.

Interview with Areleene Bloomsfield, first president of NANA. Interview conducted in Miami, May 15, 2009. See also the newsletter *Moravian Missions*, November 2003, Vol. XXII, No. 10.

Interview with Martina Bolaños Vice President Asociación Internacional de Caridades and Mercedes Bolaños Martínez Nacional President of Voluntaria Vicentinas in Nicaragua, Managua, March 10, 2009.

Interview with Martina Bolaños Vice President Asociación Internacional de Caridades and Mercedes Bolaños Martínez Nacional President of Voluntaria Vicentinas in Nicaragua, Managua, March 10, 2009.

Interview with Martina Bolaños Vice President Asociación Internacional de Caridades and Mercedes Bolaños Martínez Nacional President of Voluntaria Vicentinas in Nicaragua, Managua, March 10, 2009.

Interview with Erlinda Brown, coordinator of Women’s Group on the Community Presbyterian Church, Miami, February 12, 2009.

My conversations with several former members of the organization including Leonardo Green, Yolanda Bacon Green and Theo Downs, shed light on the reasons leading to the fragmentation and final disarticulation of CUPROC.

Interview with Cleveland Webster, major of Corn Island. Corn island, March 6, 2009.

Interview with Cleveland Webster, major of Corn Island. Corn island, March 6, 2009.

Before, they could use documents from different entities, including driver’s licenses for official requirements.

Interview with Heidy Gonzalez, co-coordinator of the Red Nicaragua de la Sociedad Civil par las Migraciones, Managua, March 10, 2009.