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Ana Elizabeth Jardón Hernández

International Migration and Crisis

Transition Toward a New Migratory Phase

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Contents

1 Introduction 1
- 1.1 Study Community 4
- 1.2 Methodology 5
- 1.3 Organization of the Text 6

2 Continuity and Change: From the Boom to the Slowing Down of International Migration from Mexico to the U.S. 7
- 2.1 Explaining the Continuity and Change of International Migration 7
- 2.2 Economic Crisis and New Perspectives on Migratory Policy 10
- 2.3 From High Tide to Reflux: Transition to a New Phase? 13
  - 2.3.1 Slowing Down of Migratory Flows Toward the U.S. 14
  - 2.3.2 Return Migration 17
  - 2.3.3 Monetary Remittances: From Continuous Growth to a Slow Down 24
  - 2.3.4 Redefining the Index of Migratory Intensity 26
  - 2.3.5 Apprehensions at the Border and Deportations from the U.S. 29
  - 2.3.6 Mexican Migrants in the U.S. 30

3 Changes and Continuities in the International Migratory Dynamics of Las Vueltas: Transition Toward a New Migratory Phase? 31
- 3.1 Stages of Mexico-U.S. Migration 31
- 3.2 Dynamics of *Vuelteños*' Migrations Toward the United States 34
  - 3.2.1 Flow of Emigrants 34
  - 3.2.2 Detentions at the Border 38
  - 3.2.3 Migratory Decisions in a Context of Crisis in the Recipient Society 41
  - 3.2.4 Return Migration 43

3.3 The Impact of Reduction in the Volume of Family Remittances 47
3.3.1 Family Remittances in the Household Economy 48
3.3.2 The Heterogeneous Impacts of Reduced Remittances 50
3.3.3 Some Examples of Heterogeneity 53
3.4 Situations of Vulnerability Among *Vuelteños* in the U.S. Economy and Unemployment 57
3.4.1 The García Family 59
3.4.2 Polo and His Family 60
3.4.3 Rosa and Her Children 61
3.4.4 Soledad 62
3.5 Vulnerability and the Anti-immigrant Movement 63
3.5.1 Despite Everything They Stay in the U.S. 66
3.6 Final Comments 67

4 Transformation Processes in International Migration as a Strategy of Family Life and Community Organization 71
4.1 Notions on the Strategies of Family Life 71
4.2 Local Subsistence Pattern and Regional Economic Insertion 74
4.3 International Migration as a Strategy of Family Life: Symptoms of Change or Weakening? 77
4.3.1 The López Family 78
4.3.2 The Beltrán Family 79
4.4 The Migrants of Crisis: How You Suffer When There's Nothing to Give the Kids 82
4.5 Family Strategies and Diversification for Survival: From Escape Valve to Overflowing the Local Labor Market 84
4.6 What Are *Vuelteños's* Life Strategies? 86
4.6.1 The Local Labor Market 88
4.6.2 Other National Work Markets 91
4.6.3 Underselling Harvests 92
4.6.4 Internal Resources 94
4.6.5 Raising and Selling Animals 95
4.6.6 Limiting Expenses 95
4.6.7 Help from Relatives 96
4.6.8 Other Strategies 97
4.7 Community Dynamics and Celebrations 100
4.7.1 Family Festivities 100
4.7.2 Implications for the Internal Economy: The Functioning of Small-Scale Commerce 102
4.7.3 The Functioning of Social Networks 104
4.8 Final Comments 105

5 Conclusions 107

Bibliography 113
The Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (UAEMex) 119
About the Author 121
About this Book 123

Chapter 1
Introduction

> *Just this past year fifteen young men from town went, but only two of them got across, all the others came back; yeah, it's really tough (...) it used to be we'd all cross together, wandering around like I told you, but we got across, and there was work back then... Sweet Mother of Mary, now you can't even get across. A compadre who came in those days told me there were all kinds of work, but now they say there isn't that much, not even on the big farms, so now with all these difficulties people think twice 'cause there's no work, not like before; when I was in Chicago there was work all over, in Woodstock, nearby, there were farms where there was work, and lots of factories, but now if you go wetback they won't give you a job* (Arcadio, 78 years old).

Over the past three decades migratory processes between Mexico and the U.S. have undergone significant changes in their dynamics and modalities, as well as in the sociodemographic characteristics of migrants (Tuirán 1997). Mexico's economic crisis, economic restructuring in the U.S., the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), and the maturation of transnational networks of migrants all contributed to the enormous expansion of international migration from Mexico; i.e., the accelerated increase of migrant flows—documented and undocumented—the weakening of circular migration, the growing presence of Mexicans in the U.S. and the explosive increase of monetary remittances (Lozano et al. 2010; Zúñiga et al. 2004; Leite et al. 2003; Leite/Acevedo 2006; Cornelius 1992).

In terms of public policy, the massive scale of migratory processes and their historicity led the Mexican government to choose a model of development based on migration, monetary remittances and the export of cheap labor force to the U.S. (Delgado et al. 2006). The promotion of this strategy meant that many communities in Mexico found in international migration an escape valve as they strove to resolve problems such as unemployment, labor precariousness and the poverty that plagued many households, especially in rural areas.

As a work strategy, international migration from rural regions has been reinforced by the deep and diverse demographic, economic and institutional transformations that the Mexican countryside has experienced and which have introduced, as corollaries, the redefinition, adaption and diversification of life and survival strategies among rural families. This conceptualization that Arias (2009: 10) argues has meant nothing but a resignification of the rural household itself, the author

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About this Book

This book provides an analysis of the various transformation processes that have occurred in the international migratory dynamic of Mexicans as a consequence of the 2008 international economic crisis and the implementation of an increasingly hardened American migration policy. From a methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative tools, the main findings of this book show that the international migration of Mexicans is moving to a new migratory phase, here called the period of "contraction and disengagement" that is characterized by the configuration of multiple changes with repercussions on the functioning of international migration as a socio-economic strategy at the levels of the family and migrant communities.

This book

- assesses the recent changes in the international migration dynamic of Mexicans
- offers empirical evidence on the transition to a new migration phase
- focuses on the voices and perspectives of those people that were studied in Mexico.

Contents

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