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Editors

# Migration Between Mexico and the United States

IMISCOE Regional Reader

 Springer

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# Preface

Recently, around the globe, the political context and the particular politics of migration have been characterized by xenophobia and anti-immigrant and racist discourses. Mexico and the United States are no exception. Furthermore, while in the past hostile discourses could play a political role without actually upsetting lives and uprooting people, this time discourses and actions have moved in unison. Border enforcement has increased, programs supporting incorporation and integration have been weakened, red tape has become almost impossible to manage, political asylum and refugee populations have been in practice blocked at the door, or expelled from the countries where they demand protection. All this translates into fear, uncertainty, unemployment and poverty in everyday life for immigrants, and into a seemingly endless journey for many others trying to reach safe haven. Our binational group of scholars, working together since the mid-1990s, had not undertaken a project such as this at a time as dire as this.

Our perspective, however, is not as pessimistic. This book offers an analysis of the decade when departure and return migration changed: i.e. from 2000 to 2010. It analyzes in detail the events that led to Mexico–U.S.–Mexico migration today. From a binational perspective of the well-being of the Mexican migrant population on both sides of the border, this study includes scholars from both countries. We provide an analysis of the demographic, labor, education, health, violence, and fear and insecurity dimensions, and close with a study of access to social programs in Mexico. Looking closer at this decade and the changes it brought is key for understanding the new dynamics of Mexican migration, for understanding attacks against the Mexican population in the United States, for projecting what could happen to this aging population, and for generating effective policies for reincorporating returnees or integrating their children and families in Mexico.

The authors have decided to come together for three reasons. Firstly, at a time in which dialogue among groups with differing positions, and countries with complex, diverging and converging interests, is increasingly difficult, we hope to have proved that for U.S. and Mexican scholars it is possible to overcome national biases and beliefs in order to define the status of Mexico–U.S.–Mexico migration in a more objective manner. And we have done so for the third time as a Mexico–U.S. group

centered on a dialogue on migration.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, we came together because there is an important story to tell. Abruptly, the financial and housing crisis of 2007–8 triggered, and other factors helped establish, substantial changes in migration that were probably long due.<sup>2</sup> As of this writing, the status quo arising from that Great Recession still stands. The change we analyze here has altered the lives of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., would-be migrants who stayed in Mexico, return migrants, and their families and households. In other words, millions of people. While we can almost certainly say changes in these flows will continue, we also believe it is extremely unlikely that the status quo *ante-2007* will return. The period surrounding this change was probably unique, and this book provides the reader with a rigorous overview of the before and after of this change. Finally, we have come together, once more, to stress the fact that binational dialogue and policies can protect the well-being of this binational population and, by doing so, unleash its ability to further North American prosperity. We don't see migration as a threat, but rather as an opportunity, to provide particular individuals with the tools to contribute much more to society.<sup>3</sup>

In the 2020s, Mexico's position and role in global flows is more complex than ever. We focus on Mexicans moving North, and on Mexicans and Mexican Americans moving South. But of course, Mexico is being traversed today by thousands of migrants, mostly from the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) as well as by persons departing the Caribbean, South America and Africa. Refugee applications in Mexico soared by more than 5000% in 7 years, from 2013 to 2020. Another study needs to focus on the increase in Central American migration; refugees or asylum seekers; President Donald Trump's or President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's reactions and initiatives towards migrants and migration flows; future developments under a Biden administration; recent increases in enforcement at the state and federal levels in both countries; discussions in the U.S. Supreme Court on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and the prospect of it being returned to its 2006 status,

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<sup>1</sup>The founding members of this group were 20 Mexican and U.S. migration scholars officially invited by both governments to arrive at a non-partisan, binational definition of the status of Mexico–U.S. migration, in 1995. The outcome of this project was published in both languages, in both countries, in 1997 and 1998 (Commission on Immigration Reform and Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 1997, and Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform 1998). The group reformed independently in 2004 to do a follow up (Escobar and Martin 2008). Finally, the present study received funding from the MacArthur Foundation and has been approved for publication by El Colegio de México as a coedition with CIESAS (forthcoming) in Spanish. The reader is holding a new version modified to respond to English language reviewers.

<sup>2</sup>One of us wrote, in 2009, that Mexico–U.S. migration had come to a point in which neither the migrants themselves, nor Mexico, derived substantial benefits.

<sup>3</sup>We consider both societies and both governments as relevant interlocutors. Therefore, this book is also being published in Spanish by El Colegio de México and CIESAS, under the title *La década en que cambió la migración. Enfoque binacional del bienestar de los migrantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos y México* (forthcoming).

namely as an initiative in the U.S. Congress. And Mexico should also implement practical actions to protect its 1.5 million poor, indigenous workers migrating every year from South and Southeast Mexico towards the North and Northwest.

This book does not deal with these other complex flows. We analyzed Central American immigrants in Mexico and the U.S. recently in partnership with Central American academics and activists (our briefs in both English and Spanish can be found at [CANAMID.org](http://CANAMID.org)). Nevertheless, change is happening rapidly. Mexico is today at the vortex of global migration flows that will undoubtedly continue to spur new research in the future. We believe there is another substantial story to be analyzed, and factors remaining to be unveiled when it comes to Mexico as a country of transmigration.

As we stress in this book, flows are quite different today to what they were in 2000–2006. As the flows slow down, some subjects gain importance and other recede. What happens to the new generations of Mexican-Americans will be key for future economic, social, and political well-being, to a greater extent than the future of migrant flows. Understanding and questioning the integration process, in Mexico, of Mexican returnees and their families is also of first importance. Moreover, since the Mexican Revolution more than a hundred years ago, and Mexico's religious civil war of 1926–1929, in Mexico we had not studied the role of violence in emigration or return. Starting at the time covered in this study, the interaction of migration and violence becomes crucial. On the one hand, violence and criminal groups motivate the Mexican exodus. On the other hand, in the United States, this population lives in fear of being criminalized unfairly.

As we write this preface, at the turn of 2020, it is still uncertain how migration will evolve in a new world post the COVID-19 pandemic. A good number of scholars included in this volume have already written about migration and inequalities in Mexico and the United States in the face of COVID-19, but the effects are still unclear (see numbers 4 and 5 of the series “*Notas sobre migración y desigualdades*” available in English at [migdep.colmex.mx](http://migdep.colmex.mx)). Mobility was reduced as international borders were closed and non-essential travel was limited during 2020, but still flows travelling south and north continued, and we expect that future economic effects of the pandemic might keep people on the move.

After the period covered here, the specific situation of Mexican migration has continued to be in flux, and became, if anything, far more complex. We do not rule out new flows from Central America to Mexico, nor do we rule out the possibility that Mexicans, in the face of increasing violence and uncertainty, will look Northward again. Similarly, flows traveling south due to return from the United States to Mexico or Central America are expected.

Today, the largest immigrant group in Mexico is formed by U.S.-born immigrants, most of whom were minors brought to Mexico by their returning parents. Similarly, the largest immigrant group in the United States is the Mexican population. The current scholarly effort anticipated its time by conceiving a binational lens for studying different dimensions of the well-being of these populations. Many of us continue to believe that this shared population can and should prosper, integrate into the host society, motivate mutual understanding, and contribute to social

cohesion. Each group of authors provides policy recommendations. This may seem naïve, especially at a time when migration policy dialogues seem to have stopped, whether between opposing political groups, or as a public debate across nations. The actions undertaken by governments these past few years have left millions in the shadows; criminalized documented and undocumented immigrants; detained and expelled many *bona fide* asylum applicants; and placed the lives of many more at the mercy of criminals. This is not an acceptable future for migrants in our North American region. We urge both governments to foster a dialogue centered on the well-being of our diverse migrant populations, one that will arrive at policies and actions that achieve positive results for them and for our two countries. The exercise of a well-thought series of detailed policy recommendations continues to be key for rethinking how to improve migrant well-being. We accept some of our recommendations can themselves be improved. But we stress that it is time we move in the direction of greater recognition of ourselves in others. The time has come, once again, to devise and enact ways to further the well-being of these populations, and thus of our both societies.

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December 2020

# Introduction: The Decade Migration Changed. A Binational Approach to the Welfare of Migrants in the United States and Mexico

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This book offers a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the changes in migration between Mexico and the United States during the first decade of this century, as well as the living conditions and welfare of migrants. During this period, migration flows from Mexico to the United States, which had grown steadily since the 1960s, fell substantially. Some also changed direction. For over a decade after 2008, migration from Mexico to the United States remained low. On the contrary, in terms of recent flows, Mexico is for the first time in a long time an immigrant country. In other words, the past decade represents a turning point in migration flows. This book explores this change in depth, offering an analysis of the economic and social integration of Mexican migrants in the United States and Mexico. It is necessary to fully comprehend what happened to understand what factors strengthen or undermine the living conditions of the population affected by migration; to seek ways to improve their wellbeing with the best possible tools; and to strengthen their ability to contribute to binational well-being.

While the early years of this century (2000–2006) saw Mexico lose and the United States gain a population of about half-a-million Mexico-born people each year, as of 2007, Mexico gained and the United States lost about 100,000 people annually, among them returning Mexicans and their families and others leaving the United States. This change brought with it many other changes: the total population of those born in Mexico living in the United States peaked in 2007, with 12.8 million people, mostly undocumented. In 2018, the Mexican population of the United States fell by one million. On the other hand, the gradual legalization of this population has made it, for the first time in a long time, mostly regular migrants.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the much lower total flow from Mexico to the United States has meant the vast majority of the flow “fits” within the legal channels provided for it in terms of tourist visas, temporary work visas, residence permits and work permits as per

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<sup>1</sup> See Gonzalez-Barrera, A. (2015). *More Mexicans leaving than coming to the U.S.* <<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/>>; and Passel, J. S. & D.V. Cohn (2018). *U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Total Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, July.

the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Undocumented migration has not ceased to exist, but it is much less than it was up until 2007. The movement of Mexican migration to the U.S. through legal channels is an unprecedented event that has not occurred since the early 1970s. Today, in objective terms, there is no “Mexican immigration problem” in the United States.

Since Mexican undocumented immigration was the largest, the fact that it has fallen so drastically changes the overall outlook for irregular flows. Although Mexicans still constitute the largest national group among all undocumented immigrants, most of the undocumented migration from any country to the United States is explained by the arrival of people by air with tourist or temporary visas who subsequently do not leave the country. In light of this, walls are absolutely useless in practice, though politically they are lethal weapons.

In relative terms, however, the change is more pronounced in Mexico. If we are to only analyze flows, starting in 2007, Mexico went from being an emigration country to being a net immigration and transmigration country. Not only was this a consequence of Mexicans returning but more so because the majority of the flow from the United States to Mexico is the movement of families; families that arrive with children and spouses born in the United States<sup>2</sup>, among other scenarios. Is Mexico prepared for this flow? Is it necessary to “prepare” and have policies in place for this, or is it enough that everyone relies on their own networks and relatives as a means of integrating into Mexican society? What happens to the health concerns of returnees? How do they integrate into the Mexican labor market? Could Mexico create conditions that allow these migrants to develop and live better quality lives while also contributing to a better future for the country? All of these changes are detailed in this book, and the authors from both countries agree that Mexico is obliged to implement practices that facilitate the integration of this population, practices that can, at the same time, enhance the country’s development.

How did we arrive at this new situation? Firstly, flows increased from the United States to Mexico due to the rise in returning migrants, whether due to economic, family or health reasons, being deported, or because the deportation of a family member motivated the return of a whole family. Secondly, emigration from Mexico slowed down that is to say, the decline in flows towards the North. And finally, Mexicans gradually obtaining permanent residence in the United States.

What would the scenario be like if migration had not changed? In 2018 there would have been four million more Mexicans in the United States (that is, around 16 million total), and ten million undocumented Mexicans, instead of six. The impact in Mexico would have been greater: not only would it have meant four million less people, but, since migration rates are higher in rural areas, the shortage of young adults would have prevented the development of agriculture; the annual number of births would be substantially lower (since it is mostly young people of

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<sup>2</sup>Masferrer, C., E. R. Hamilton, & N. Denier (2019). Immigrants in their Parental Homeland: Half a Million US-Born Minors Settle Throughout Mexico. *Demography*, 56(4), 1453–1461.

reproductive age who leave); and rural depopulation would be a significant issue in Mexico.

Although flows have varied substantially, the Mexican diaspora in the United States is still the largest in the world. The Mexico-born population in the country totals almost 12 million people, while the population with Mexican roots within one or two previous generations totals around 40 million. This population also changes and the decrease in movement of Mexicans has an effect on it. The duration of stays in the United State has extended: it is estimated that by 2015 half of the Mexican undocumented population in the United States had lived in the country for almost fifteen years, while in 2007 the median duration of residence among the irregular population was 8.6 years. The average age has also increased; it is getting older because fewer young newcomers are arriving. It is also expected that the number of children born to Mexicans in the United States will decrease gradually as the migrant population ages. If these migration trends continue, it could also be assumed that the schooling of Mexican children, which has been among the lowest in the United States, will increase. Schooling is strongly affected by the immigration status of parents, as explained in the chapter on education. An increasingly regular immigrant population should lead to better school results among their descendants.

Finally, it has been intensely debated since the 1990s what the impact of a large influx of new migrants had on the wages and welfare of the population already established in the country. Although research differs when estimating the impact on the population in general, it is agreed that large flows reduced the salaries of already established Mexicans working in the same industries and positions as newcomers. Therefore, with less Mexican immigration, one might assume the salary of established Mexicans would increase, as long as there are no policies that intensify their *segmented incorporation*,<sup>3</sup> or keep them in poverty and a precarious situation in terms of their rights.

Nevertheless, the recent decrease did not bring about a decrease in the population of Mexican origin during these years. On the contrary, it grew, due to the creation of families, often mixed in terms of place of birth, ethnic origin and legal status, both mixed and irregular. As a result of Mexican migrants forming unions, having children and creating families, the number of Americans born to a Mexican father or mother increased naturally. With the growth of the undocumented Mexican population also came an increase in the volume of families with members who had regular and irregular statuses, including U.S. citizens, Mexicans, and dual citizens. This population of Mexican origin is currently approximately 40 million and will grow over time if members remain in the country.

However, this population is also affected by other measures, and, in particular, by increasing restrictions on access to public goods and social services, as explained in this book. In the United States, this population is less likely to have medical insurance and work benefits, as outlined in Chap. 2, or the basic necessary

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<sup>3</sup>Portes, A. (2007). Migration, Development and Segmented Assimilation: A Conceptual Review of the Evidence. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 610(1), 73–97.

documentation, such as a social security number and driver license. In Mexico, although most seem to have access to social services and programs, there are also barriers to this access (Chap. 7). The Mexican population in the United States, and those who have returned to Mexico with or without children born there, work, live, strive, seek and take advantage of opportunities for their well-being within a restrictive context. To achieve the well-being of this population and their contributions to their families as well as to both countries, it is necessary to resolve these barriers.

The change observed in recent years motivated two types of studies. The first refers to what happens to the migrants themselves and the quality of life in both countries: Have their jobs changed? What about their access to education, health, work, income and social programs? Have their perceptions of security or insecurity changed? The chapters in this book explore these topics. The second is to delve deeper into the factors affecting change. The conditions faced by migrants in the world and how they are received in the destination countries are deteriorating. After introducing the authors and explaining what sense this study makes in terms of binational social sciences, this introduction addresses some of the global discussions about migration, and their potential to explain the change we have observed.

## A Binational Research Community

This book is neither an anthology, nor a compilation of other works. Each chapter was written to help build a demographic, social and economic panorama of this group formed by millions of people, and is the product of binational discussion meetings that took place over several years. Thus, we follow the example of the Binational Study on Mexico – United States Migration (1997 and 1998), which was convened by both governments in 1995. The team, which consisted of 20 researchers and a coordinator for each country, was given the task of reaching agreements for each topic based on different approaches, data and ways of working. Our first encounter commenced with mutual distrust. After two years of discussions and working together, we agreed that we had formed a group with rare and valuable assets: a perspective and a way of working that overcame our initial differences without eliminating them; and a work scheme where we could discuss differences in a constructive manner, in order to agree on the most precise and rigorous binational vision of the facts related to migration. This book continues this tradition.

Perhaps equally valuable to discover at that time was how Mexico and the United States were deeply and intimately imbricated, and that our migrant and non-migrant populations were building a social reality that crosses the border, as Andrew Selee concludes in *Vanishing Frontiers*.<sup>4</sup> We did not agree among ourselves on the benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement. However, the study convinced us

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<sup>4</sup>Selee, A. (2018). *Vanishing Frontiers. The Forces Driving Mexico and the United States Together*. New York: Public Affairs.

there is a real social unity between Mexico and the United States, despite conflicts and differences.

For this reason, though the two subsequent governments did not reconvene the team, a large part of the group decided to start meeting again in 2004 to resume the study, update it, and disseminate it in both countries. *Mexico – U.S. Migration Management. A Binational Approach* or *La gestión de la migración México – Estados Unidos: un enfoque binacional* was published in 2008 in both countries following the logic of the first study: each chapter was created and agreed by a team of scholars, including the best evidence and the best studies available to date in both countries. This book offers a broad binational perspective of the Mexico – United States migration phenomenon. Not having the two governments as instigators and sponsors made it more difficult to carry out and maintain the team’s work throughout the two years. In return, we gained independence from the vision and interests of the governments. We thank the Hewlett Foundation for supporting that effort.

The book introduced here – the third one produced with this methodology and binational spirit – is supported by the MacArthur Mexico Foundation and returns to this topic of migration 20 years after the first study and the launch of NAFTA.

Our small research community has continued to transform. Already in the second study, several young researchers joined; and now in this third edition, we have the contribution of talented, young, previously recognized researchers from both countries. This community has expanded. Most of the authors have continued to work in binational teams, as is natural given the binational phenomenon of migration. Perhaps the most important common feature that unites us is that, despite our differences in training, focus and nationality, it is possible and desirable to build knowledge across borders. Today, there are multiple knowledge communities focused on various binational issues. The population and education chapters of this study are a good example. Both teams have produced multiple, excellent binational or multinational studies on these issues.

## **Factors of Change**

The central fact of this third study is the significant change in migration trends: a substantial reduction in migration from Mexico to the United States, coupled with rapid growth in Mexico of the population of returnees from the U.S. and of children and young people born north of the border with the right to dual citizenship. We decided to carry out this study because it is essential to go deeper, explore in more detail and communicate this fact: that there has been a substantial reduction in Mexican emigration, and an unprecedented growth by modern standards of the returning migrant population and their descendants in Mexico. In fact, irregular Mexican migration ceased to be a problem for United States immigration policy. Today, although a low flow of undocumented migrants from Mexico to the United States continues, the vast majority of the flow passes through institutional channels, which has resulted in the increase of the migrant population in Mexico, not in the

United States. However, neither country has reacted to this substantial change as it should. In the United States, the change should be addressed by much greater attention to other forms of entry (air, which is now the largest source of irregular migrants – those who arrive on a tourist or temporary visa and stay), and other population groups. In Mexico, effective policies should be implemented to reincorporate returning migrants with their families, and to focus on the humanitarian treatment of transmigrants fleeing Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and other countries (the most recent being Venezuela). As a research community that recognizes the importance of agreeing and recognizing facts and trends within the context of reality, we believe that it is time for both governments – or even better, the three governments of North America – to establish the minimum bases for a migration policy that promotes general well-being in this wide region.

In 1998, based on the first study, Martin, Escobar, Donato and López made an optimistic prediction:<sup>5</sup> The North American Free Trade Agreement would promote employment growth in Mexico. This, coupled with lower Mexican population growth derived from the fall in fertility, would lead to less pressure to emigrate. At some point, greater internal job creation and lower labor force growth would lead to less labor emigration. The conclusion related to immigration policy: Mexico and the United States needed a migration agreement to administer a decade, or decade and a half, of high migration, which would fall as employment in Mexico responded to the favorable conditions of the Free Trade Deal. Thus, Carlos Salinas' saying would come true: Mexico would export tomatoes, not tomato pickers. After 2008, Mexican migration to the United States fell, and return increased. However, the conditions in which this happened were very different from what was predicted: there was a great economic and employment crisis in the United States that affected global financial markets and further criminalized immigration. In addition, in Mexico population growth did not fall as much as expected. This section explores some factors related to the change in migration.

### 1. Employment, remittances and family decisions.

At the beginning of the first decade of this century, we noted that migration no longer represented, for Mexico,<sup>6</sup> the mechanism to substantially complement household income that had worked for fifty years. If this was the case, then one of the main engines of such migration was ceasing to operate.

Firstly, although Mexico received substantial remittances, both remittances per migrant and remittances as a proportion of the GDP were low in comparative Latin American terms. Remittances in 2004 amounted to 3.5% of Mexico's GDP. However,

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<sup>5</sup>Escobar, A., P. Martin, G. López & K. Donato (1998). Factors that Influence Migration. In: Binational Study on Migration & Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE). *Migration between Mexico and the United States: Binational Study* (vol. 1, pp. 163–250). Mexico/Washington, D.C.: Commission on Immigration Reform.

<sup>6</sup>Janssen, E. & A. Escobar (2008). Remesas y costo de oportunidad. El caso mexicano. In: A. Escobar (ed.). *Pobreza y migración internacional* (pp. 345–364). Mexico: CIESAS (Publicaciones de la Casa Chata).

in 2003, nine Latin American countries received more remittances per migrant in the United States than their GDP per capita. Mexico, on the other hand, only received 22% of the GDP per capita for each migrant.<sup>7</sup> In other words, for Mexico, international labor migration did not represent the optimal placement of labor resources. However, Mexico as a country does not decide who or how many migrants leave for the United States. According to the classical theory of migration, migrants decide for themselves after comparing their local income with their potential income as migrants. However, this theory has been widely surpassed. According to approaches developed in the 1980s (new economics of labor migration), this decision corresponds to the family or the household. Nevertheless, even in this case, the calculation for families was no longer as favorable as it would have been previously.

The argument is as follows: Domestic survival is the product of the sum of its members' income and jobs. A remittance sent by a migrant in the United States – which is a fraction of the migrant's income – is their contribution to the family's income, while workers who stay in Mexico contribute a much greater proportion of their total income because they share a home and household expenses. Though the amount of money earned in Mexico is less, the non-migrant's domestic contribution can exceed income from the remittance. Between 2000 and 2004, remittances were lower than the salary earned by household members in their municipalities, controlled by sex, age, ethnicity and schooling (the migrant's school level is not reported in the census, so that income was estimated according to the average schooling of household members)<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, on average, labor migration was not a higher source of household income than working in Mexico in the municipality where the household was resident.<sup>9</sup>

This analysis is based on the theoretical approach of the so-called “new economics of labor migration”,<sup>10</sup> according to which labor migration is based on two premises: 1) the household and not only the individual, is the social unit that sets in motion an income strategy, and the survival that is assured is that of the home and family; and 2) the diversification of income offered by migration protects against risk (and insurance) in the communities left by migrants: by diversifying sources of income, security is offered to the domestic unit.

According to this theory, the income from migration (remittances) does not need to be greater than local income, but to compensate for the risks associated with local

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<sup>7</sup>Escobar, A. (2009). Can Migration Foster Development in Mexico? The Case of Poverty and Inequality. *International Migration*, 47(5), 75–113.

<sup>8</sup>In the aforementioned analysis, the cost of the opportunity to migrate was based on the salary the migrant would earn as part of their household in Mexico if they did not migrate. This amount was compared with the remittance reported. The cost of opportunity, or associated income, was estimated for each municipality where migrants were reported in households.

<sup>9</sup>Janssen, E. & A. Escobar (2008). Remesas y costo de oportunidad. El caso mexicano. In: A. Escobar (ed.). *Pobreza y migración internacional* (pp. 345–364). Mexico: CIESAS (Publicaciones de la Casa Chata).

<sup>10</sup>Stark, O. & D. E. Bloom (1985). The New Economics of Labor Migration. *American Economic Review*, 75(2), 173–178.

income. Therefore, if the net income from migration, the remittance, is less than a local salary, that does not necessarily mean migration doesn't make sense as long as the remittance compensates for variations in local income. However, the economists who developed this approach in Mexico<sup>11</sup> found that labor migration causes local processes of greater inequality, because as some households increase their income through migration, it causes a demonstration effect and an increase in departures from the community. Consequently, several analyses based on this approach expect migration to not only compensate for local risks but to also increase income.

Janssen and Escobar's analysis, however, refers to a single year. It does not establish whether the situation is the result of a decrease in remittances or if, on the contrary, income from remittances had already been, beforehand, at this level. It could be that when analyzing the local or municipal economy as a whole, having a significant percentage of the workforce in other distant labor markets takes pressure off local employment, and therefore migration has an impact on the rise of local income.

It is worth noting that the census does not record how much a household spends to migrate (the journey, payment to the *pollero* or coyote, the time lapse from when the migrant leaves until the household begins to receive remittances). Therefore, in reality, remittances do not represent net household income, at least not while it is paying debts incurred to finance the migration of a family member, which makes the net income of the household per migrant even lower.

In summary, although Mexico received substantial remittances at the beginning of the millennium, these remittances were neither proportional to the number of Mexican workers in the U.S. nor did they, on average, represent higher household incomes than if the worker had remained in their original community. Thus, it could be that migration was not an economic solution for households, even during the years when there was an employment boom in the United States. However, if it was not a solution, why continue with it, particularly during the crisis years after 2008 when remittances per capita decreased further and the living conditions of migrants in their communities in the United States worsened as described in Chap. 5 in this volume? In addition, waged employment grew in Mexico's rural areas, particularly in the West and North. The aforementioned analysis implies that the decision to stop migrating may not have been so difficult for households in those circumstances.

## 2. The crisis and unemployment

As explored in this book, during the years of highest labor migration at the beginning of this century, Mexican workers headed largely towards the construction sector of the United States, which was booming. In these jobs, wages of twenty dollars per hour were common, with additional bonuses for productivity and overtime.

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<sup>11</sup>Taylor, J. E. (1992). Remittances and Inequality Reconsidered: Direct, Indirect and Intertemporal Effects. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 14(2), 187–208; and Yúnez-Naude, A. & A. Meléndez-Martínez (2007). Efectos de los activos familiares en la selección de actividades y en el ingreso de los hogares rurales en México. *Investigación Económica* 66(260), April-June, 49–80.

However, the increased labor force in construction experienced a rapid and drastic setback after 2007. In the United States, unemployment rose more among Hispanic migrants than among any other group. In one year, it rose from 5.1% to 8%, and the employment rate fell from 67.5% to 64.7%. Something similar happened among Hispanics born in the United States, as well as among the African-American population.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the shortage of well-paid jobs caused fewer workers to migrate. However, although our chapter on employment shows that employment recovered slowly, recovery did come, while Mexican migration did not recover. Even when more jobs were generated, Mexicans no longer migrated again in the numbers observed between 2000 and 2006.

A significant precursor of the Great Recession occurred between 2001 and 2002, when employment growth slowed in the United States. During that time, the annual net migration from Mexico to north of the border decreased between 30 and 40%, but resumed its growth as soon as employment recovered.<sup>13</sup> This had always been the nature of Mexican labor migration: it closely followed the United States' employment dynamics. However, that did not happen after 2007.

To sum up, although the crisis undoubtedly represented greater difficulties for finding employment, which could explain the lower levels of migration from 2008 to 2019, labor migration's failure to recover indicates that other factors weighed in following the worst years of the Great Recession. It is also important to point out that other populations, notably from Central America, significantly increased their presence in these labor markets after 2010. Moreover, labor market conditions deteriorated and earnings of return migrants and U.S.-born immigrants suffered important declines in all regions of Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Criminalization in the United States, violence and criminality in Mexico

This factor encompasses two phenomena: on the one hand, migrants are identified, persecuted and punished. They are penalized for being a migrant in general, and for being an undocumented migrant in particular. In most "voluntary departure" orders issued by a U.S. judge, it is warned that recidivism will be punishable by mandatory jail. The vast majority of migrants know this, and are aware of the much greater risk of migrating without documents. It can be said that criminalization operates through fear: not all migrants are necessarily punished in practice, but their life is tinged with anguish, isolation, the stigma of belonging to "illegal" populations and the secret of being undocumented. Furthermore, undocumented migration is a growing business for criminal organizations in both countries, which implies greater risks and costs to migrate. In summary: being a migrant has been

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<sup>12</sup> Passel, J. S. & D. V. Cohn (2009). *Mexican Immigrants: How Many Come? How Many Leave?* Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, July.

<sup>13</sup> Passel, J. S. & D. V. Cohn (2009). *Mexican Immigrants: How Many Come? How Many Leave?* Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, July.

<sup>14</sup> Denier, N. & C. Masferrer (2020). Returning to a New Mexican Labor Market? Regional Variation in the Economic Incorporation of Return Migrants from the U.S. to Mexico. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 39(4), 617–641.

criminalized, while undocumented migration exposes migrants to criminal groups in both countries, to whom ransom payments are frequently paid.

The phenomenon is clearly observable in the growth of the Mexican prison population in the United States. Though this phenomenon is not reflected greatly in federal, state and county prisons, the growth is very clear in the private sector where migrant detention centers are a growing business, facilitated by financing from the United States Congress destined for that purpose. It is related to greater delays in asylum and deportation processes to which migrants are subjected. The longer the processes take, more places are needed in detention centers. The growth of this business coincides with the new strategies implemented for the removal of migrants. While up until approximately 2000 the strategy for the containment of undocumented migration in the United States was based on reinforcing surveillance, apprehension and return of migrants in the border areas, as of 2005, detention and deportation within the interior of the country was substantially increased, including in the workplace, on the streets, in buildings and public offices.

Nestor Rodríguez (Chap. 5 of this study), describes the much greater vulnerability not only among the undocumented population, but among all those visible to the authorities. In part, this is due to having accessed the legal system through institutions that maintain records on the population, which in turn generates greater fear among families in their daily lives.<sup>15</sup> For example, this is the case for the immediate family of young beneficiaries of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), beneficiaries of the program created by the Obama administration. During the application process, these young people provided information about their immediate family residing in the United States. Given this perceived risk related to belonging or not belonging to the system, the Mexican and Latin American population in general experiences changes in their daily practices, and a fear that socially isolates and traumatizes the undocumented individuals and their families. Consequently, information about the vulnerability and quality of life experienced by undocumented relatives in the United States that is communicated within migrant networks could be a significant deterrent.

On the other hand, crime relates to the growing insecurity in Mexico. Liliana Meza (Chap. 6 of this book) asks if Mexican crime drives the population away. Contrary to what might be assumed, she finds the highest homicide rates, municipality by municipality, are related to lower levels of international emigration when considering the country as a whole. However, when addressing the border municipalities (which were, in 2010, among the most violent) separately, she finds a greater propensity to migrate where the homicide rate is higher. Thus, in general, insecurity seems to discourage migration, while when it is relatively easy to migrate – because you live on the border– it happens. Overall, and as paradoxical as it may seem, to date it seems that the criminalization of migrants in the United States has deterred migrants, while crime in Mexico has not encouraged international emigration,

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<sup>15</sup>Asad, A. L. (2017). *Reconsidering Immigrant Illegality: How Immigrants Perceive the Risk of Immigration Law and Enforcement*. Doctoral Dissertation. Cambridge: Department of Sociology, Harvard University.

though there are accounts of an increase in forced internal displacement. In other words, despite what one might normally suppose, criminalization and violence have been factors that have retained the population in Mexico yet expelled them from the United States.

#### 4. Decrease in the population reserves for migration.

In Mexico, the population does not decrease homogeneously as a result of migration. The vast majority of migrants leave agricultural and rural regions. In Mexico's rural areas, the migration rate is three times higher than in urban areas.<sup>16</sup> The mass emigration of 1990 – 2007 substantially reduced the reserves of this labor force. Such reduction, coupled with the growth of export agriculture and urban employment in Western Mexico, facilitated employment and improved wages in Mexico. This idea has gained a significant following since the analysis by Taylor, Charlton and Yúnez-Naude in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

Although from 1980 to 1990, urban, southern and southeastern areas in Mexico increased their contribution to the flow of migrants, the region called “traditional” retained its majority as zone of origin. The “concentration” of mass emigration in a region and in rural areas, where less than 21% of the Mexican population lived in 2010, had a substantial impact on the cohorts of rural youths in Mexico. Between 1995 and 2005 (the time of greatest emigration), the cohort between 5 and 9 years old in rural areas across the country decreased by 25% among men and by 21% among women; the 10 to 14-year-old cohort fell by 47% and 37%; and that of 15 to 19-year-olds decreased by 44% and 35%, respectively.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, this decrease was greater in the area of traditional emigration. In other words, the cohorts of young workers in 2005 were substantially lower than those of 1995. It was precisely in the traditional region of origin where export agriculture, which is labor intensive, had been developing since the start of the millennium,<sup>19</sup> along with significant economic and employment growth in urban areas. For these two reasons (the decrease in cohorts and the growth of employment), the population in this region had significant regional opportunities, which thus contributed to the decrease in emigration.

#### 5. Mexican social programs and their impact on migration

The analysis in Chap. 7 of this book shows that, though modestly, the Mexican social programs in force between 2005 and 2018 may have played a role in the fall

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<sup>16</sup>Bermúdez, J., S. C. Meroné & A. Reyes (2017). El impacto demográfico de la migración internacional en las estructuras poblacionales a nivel municipal en México, 1990-2015. In: Consejo Nacional de Población (Conapo). *La situación demográfica de México 2017*. (pp. 203–220) Mexico: Conapo.

<sup>17</sup>Taylor, J.E., D. Charlton & A. Yúnez-Naude. (2012). The End of Farm Labor Abundance. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 34(4), 587–598.

<sup>18</sup>Own calculations based on population counts from 1995 and 2005.

<sup>19</sup>This region mainly includes areas of Querétaro, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Sinaloa and Baja California. Though coincidence with the traditional region of migration is not perfect, it overlaps.

of emigration. In order to benefit from the social programs that we analyzed in this book (Oportunidades – Prospera, Seguro Popular, 70 y Más, the federal program for elderly adults of 2009) the population is required to reside in the area. The most significant program in this regard is Oportunidades – Prospera, which provides more resources, and requires evidence on a bimonthly basis that the family attends school and the health clinic, performs community tasks and attends talks. Penalization for absences is reflected in the money transfers, and ultimately the household is excluded from the program. This program granted significant transfers, and had reached 5 million families by 2006, with an emphasis on rural and marginalized areas. The analysis, which is based on these areas,<sup>20</sup> shows that households affiliated with Oportunidades – Prospera were inclined to emigrate more than others. However, at the same time these homes tend to show more returns. In other words, migrants are inclined to return more frequently to homes that are less vulnerable due to the coverage of this and other programs. The analysis does not show that the other two programs have the same impact.

In summary: although the prediction we made in 1996 was based on premises that were false, given that employment in Mexico grew less than expected, and that the Mexican population grew more than predicted, these factors did, indeed, have an impact (there was a shortage of rural population, and rural employment increased and improved). Together with other factors in Mexico (social programs), alongside those in the United States (recession, criminalization of migrants, less access to goods and services), these factors collaborated to produce a large drop in the numbers of Mexican workers and their families leaving Mexico, and a great movement of those returning.

## Laws, Policies, Public Practices and Migrant Welfare

The book analyzes people and their well-being, which result from a confluence of factors, among which social, economic and political factors stand out in two regards: those referring to the political landscape and how political actors influence it; and the politics, both manifest and implicit, of laws and institutions. In the past, migration policy has been analyzed as if there were consistency between the laws, institutions and practices of government agents. This is not the case.

Unlike our previous studies,<sup>21</sup> what we are presenting now deals exclusively with people and their living and working conditions in both countries, and not with the policies that are applied and discussed in both countries. Nevertheless, the policies

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<sup>20</sup>The Mexican government designated a large number of municipalities for priority attention areas or ZAP, based on their levels of marginalization and poverty. CONEVAL monitored these municipalities through a survey, which is the survey used by the authors of the chapter.

<sup>21</sup> See Loaeza, E., C. Planck, R. Gómez, S. Martín, L. Lowell & D. Meyers (eds.). (1997). *Estudio binacional México-Estados Unidos sobre migración*. Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores; Escobar, A. & S.F. Martin (2008). *Mexico-U.S. Migration Management. A Binational*

have varied substantially. As of 2005 in the United States, undocumented migration is more severely penalized. Until the beginning of the first decade of this century, the effort to limit undocumented migration focused on legal or illegal entry points, and migrants could later enjoy some security in their workplaces and neighborhoods. However, after 2005, arrests and deportations started to take place in the workplace, neighborhoods and homes owing to greater collaboration between local police and immigration authorities; while, on the other hand, the recidivism of undocumented migrants was penalized with jail.

During Barack Obama's presidential term, *federal* policy was deployed on three fronts: deportations from the interior remained at very high levels, so much so that it is estimated that during his presidency three million undocumented migrants were "removed" or deported, mostly Mexican. Secondly, in the opposite direction, an administrative program called DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) was designed and implemented to prevent those who were taken to the United States as minors, and who remain in the education system and do not have criminal records, from being prosecuted and deported. This program began in 2012 and ended on September 5, 2017 when it was revoked by President Donald Trump. However, despite not accepting applications after February 13, 2018, a federal court order issued on January 9th of the same year allowed program beneficiaries to request a renewal of the permit. It is still possible that these young people with impeccable behavior could be prosecuted and deported in light of the program's cancellation. However, such deportations have been suspended by the judiciary.

Thirdly, the Obama administration substantially extended temporary work permits in two programs for low-skilled workers, the H-2a and the H-2b for agricultural and non-agricultural work, respectively. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of H-2a visas issued increased from 64 thousand to 196 thousand, while the number of H-2b was around 90 thousand annually during that period. The TN visas, created by the Free Trade Agreement in 1994 for United States, Canada and Mexico nationals – which in theory allowed nationals to obtain work legally in any country in North America with a simple work letter – had in practice a set of bureaucratic constraints for Mexicans that meant only about 4000 were issued per year at the beginning of the NAFTA. However, this process was expedited and in 2017 almost 25,000 were issued. A greater number of visitor visas were also authorized, and finally the number of permanent resident cards (Green Cards) granted to Mexicans grew modestly. Thus, exclusionary and punitive measures against undocumented migrants continued, but opportunities for regular migration were expanded. Certainly, less undocumented migration combined with easier means of getting temporary visas and residence permits resulted in the regularization of the flows of Mexicans to the United States and the Mexican population in the United States.<sup>22</sup>

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*Approach*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books; and Escobar, A. & S.F. Martin (2008). *La gestión de la migración México-Estados Unidos: un enfoque binacional*. Mexico City: El Equilibrista.

<sup>22</sup>Making visitor visas easier to obtain opens the door to their potential abuse, as happens with nationals of any country in the world who arrive by air with these visas and sometimes stay beyond their validity, or find a job.

Together, these factors mean that undocumented Mexican migration to the United States decreased.

However, simultaneously, in a process that began in 1996 and intensified after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, immigration policy became much more complex: the attacks were used politically to attract votes through a policy directed in general towards restrictions on immigrants, although most of the terrorist attacks and massacres in the United States were committed by natives of Western European extraction. Anti-immigrant discourse, which has always existed, resurfaced with greater force thereafter, preventing the most significant bipartisan initiatives for immigration reform in Congress in 2006 and 2012–13 from even being voted on in the lower house, much less accepted. Nevertheless, at the same time, the most conservative and anti-immigrant initiatives were also discarded. Approved initiatives, such as the requirement that federal contractors be affiliated with workers' identity certification programs, are significant, but on a smaller scale. The result is a legislative paralysis in federal congress, with a general mood that is more hostile to immigration.

The heads of the executive branch, presidents Bush, Obama and Trump, responded to this paralysis with administrative programs and executive orders, which extend or restrict the migration routes provided by law. In the 287(g) initiative, President Bush gave permission, through an agreement, to state or local police forces to cooperate with immigration authorities, thereby expanding the operations of migrant identification and expulsion. Obama's response fitted within the conventions of the federal administration. Owing to the strain on immigration courts, he ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to refrain from persecuting migrants who did not decide to violate immigration laws themselves and who have not violated any other laws. However, those who are not beneficiaries of the DACA program are criminalized even if they have not committed any crime, because the agreements relating to 287(g) remain in force in most cases. Finally, Trump's executive order prohibits people with certain nationalities, mostly Muslim, from traveling to the United States.

There are other responses to this paralysis. There were 3,520 state legislative acts passed between 2007 and 2018 related to migration in the National College of State Legislatures.<sup>23</sup> Although a significant number of acts are understandably local adaptations of federal laws, others dictate their own state measures. Whether restrictive or permissive, they regulate the ability of migrants to obtain certificates and to practice professions, the use of public funds, school attendance, the amount of tuition fees, the prohibition or requirement to collaborate with immigration authorities, etc. The variation between states is diametrical. While in California most immigration legislation facilitates the participation of migrants in social and political life, being permissive in character, opening areas and channels of life for migrants, in Alabama and Arizona the majority are restrictive, excluding immigrants from certain

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<sup>23</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (2018). Immigration Laws and Current State Immigration Legislation, <<http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/immigration-laws-database.aspx>>.

occupations and services, and requiring state employees to collaborate with immigration authorities. Something similar happens, but in even greater numbers, with county council requirements and agreements: from those that prohibit people without a defined immigration status to associate with or join groups, or those that impose impossible requirements to rent housing or acquire licenses, to the so-called “sanctuary cities,” which grant valid IDs or licenses for access to multiple institutions without requiring proof of legal permission to stay.

Finally, the confrontation and contradictions between the powers regarding immigration policy have given rise to the latest element of this complexity: judicialization. Migration policy has ceased to be defined by legislation and applied by executive power, with judiciary intervention on the rise which has brought about the suspension of several “executive orders” made by the president and intervention in the legality of federal and state actions and decisions. There are examples where the courts have halted the execution of executive initiatives either wholly or partially, for both permissive actions such as DACA as well restrictive actions such as the Muslim ban.

In the opinion of the authors gathered here, “proof” of the laws and policies and their conflicting framework can be seen in people’s lives. Proof that we believe can be found in this book. However, the research continues as political changes in both countries continue. The Colegio de México, CIESAS and other institutions work with a broad set of academics, legislators and officials from both countries to define a collaborative agenda for migration. At the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, supported by the Mexican consular network in the United States, CIESAS conducted a survey of Mexicans using the consular services. Among other issues, interviewees (consular officials, users in general, young people in the DACA program) were asked to judge the change in social attitudes towards them and towards migrants in general. Although the results vary by city and state, in general the perception is that their life has become more difficult and their environment more hostile, in such a way that they socialize less, participate less in school and in political, labor and civic activities, and socialize their children with an attitude of distrust towards people outside their immediate circle.<sup>24</sup>

Together, all of the changes in the laws, executive orders and policies result in migrants in general, and especially Mexicans and Central Americans – both regular and irregular – having fewer options in life, and that they live in fear of falling into the private and public networks that have become an industry of immigration repression and of imprisonment and deportation of immigrants for various offenses, including minor ones. But, our study also points to other trends that are already visible or predictable: aging, the growing legalization of the Mexican diaspora in

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<sup>24</sup>The study included a survey as well as focus groups and structured interviews. The issues included in the perception of social change are: being subjected to abuse or “different treatment;” having been arrested; having relatives who have been deported; or that third parties have told them to speak only English. See: Martínez, R. (2020). Nuevas tendencias en la población mexicana en Estados Unidos en tiempos de la administración Trump. In: R. Martínez, M. Baros & G. Rojas (eds.). *Laberintos del sueño americano* (pp. 29–57). Mexico City: Paralelo XXI.

the United States, better educational levels for new generations, better income in the event that migration continues at low levels, and the gradual emergence of groups with Mexican descent becoming increasingly more important. Furthermore, the study indicates that in Mexico, although the policies for receiving returnees are either minimal or they do not apply, or simply do not exist, returnees have been reintegrating into Mexican society, albeit a minority ends up returning to the United States.

In Mexico – unlike the United States or Canadian context where immigration policy has been controlling migrant arrivals for centuries, facilitating family reunification, and providing asylum and shelter –, since 1991, the government’s interest has focused on supporting Mexicans abroad,<sup>25</sup> without, so far, a clear concept of its role as an immigration country. In 1997, the constitution was modified to allow dual citizenship, with the aim of facilitating Mexicans to participate in the United States as citizens while retaining their rights in Mexico. The Institute of Mexicans Abroad was designed in 2003 to support Mexicans in the United States. Even though this stance can be considered right and necessary due to the volume of the Mexican population in the United States – especially those in irregular situations with limited access to social rights –, the current reality makes it necessary to rethink migration policy and the narrative around migration from and to Mexico.

Although the Migration Law of 2011 sought for the first time to define Mexico, within a legal framework, as a country of emigration, return, transit and immigration, its implementation has been slow and uncertain. Despite the regulation of this law being approved in 2012, it became clear that having legal frameworks is not enough if the principles of respect for the rights of migrants, hospitality, non-criminalization and incorporation embodied in the law are not implemented. Even though the Special Migration Program 2014–2018 included a vision of immigrant integration in addition to the control of entry to the country, it has not yet received continuity from the new administration of President López Obrador.

For many years, Mexico was considered a country of emigration. Mexico’s extensive consular network in the United States and the policies and programs that ensure the rights of Mexicans abroad are a notable reflection of this. During the administration of President Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994), the consular identity card was introduced, which is an identity document that recognizes the individual as a Mexican citizen residing abroad. Although it did not certify legal residence in the United States, the document allowed the Mexican population with irregular status to access certain services in the United States, though the card is often not accepted in some procedures following an individual’s return to Mexico. During those same years, the 3X1 Program implemented in 1992 sought to generate local development by providing support for infrastructure, equipment and community

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<sup>25</sup>That year, the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad was founded. As of 1996, a program was established to bring Mexicans into clubs and recognize their leaders as government interlocutors. As of 2003, the Institute of Mexicans Abroad was created, which holds elections among Mexicans in the U.S. and formalizes its relationship with the Mexican State in annual executive and legislative meetings.

services, linking migrants with their communities of origin. With the passage of time, government policies, programs, strategies and actions included different types of support (health, education, employment, productive projects or protection and monitoring), from both a federal and state perspectives.<sup>26</sup>

However, there is still a lot that remains to be defined in the immigration policy given the new scenario described in this book. In particular, that the immigration policy in the future could address not only how the entry of foreigners into Mexico is managed but also how migrants are integrated, taking into consideration both Mexicans who return to the country after a migration experience and their relatives born in the United States as well as the foreign population living in Mexico, regardless of their country of origin. That is to say, contemplating more than just how we define and document the legal status and stays of migrants but also the policies that facilitate their entry into the institutional life of the country and Mexican society in general. In other words, the bi-national approach of this book highlights the still primarily binational character of migration in Mexico, with the creation of a population with strong family, social, economic, political and cultural ties on both sides of the border. The movement and settlement of Central Americans and other migrants should also be progressively added to this approach.

The rising number of returns observed in the last decade is a wake-up call for the implementation of effective integration initiatives. This might seem unnecessary since one million of those who have arrived to Mexico are Mexicans by birth, and another 750,000 are descendants of Mexicans and therefore Mexicans by descent. A great error. Many of the Mexicans returning after long periods of time are not able to access social programs, official IDs or formal jobs due to lack of documents. There is progress, such as the simplification of certification and the revalidation of studies abroad, due to the reforms made to annex 286 of the General Education Law of 2017. But even this relatively modest reform is far from being applied by all the country's higher education institutions. Despite successfully simplifying the process to access the Mexican education system for those arriving from abroad, the system lacks protocols to serve populations with limited knowledge of Spanish, or Mexican history and geography. While it is true that this is not exclusive to the children of returnees from the United States, it reflects the absence of a comprehensive vision that takes into consideration the incorporation of children born abroad who have diverse ethnic and linguistic origins.

Since the first decade of this century, the National Migration Institute has been operating a program to offer transport to Mexican migrants who were returned to the northern border, financing tickets to their states or their communities. On the other hand, the government and other national and international actors, including religious organizations, financed houses and shelters for these migrants and for the Central Americans who were heading north. President Peña Nieto launched a

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<sup>26</sup>Giorguli, S., A. Angoa & R. Villaseñor (2014). Los retos ante el nuevo escenario migratorio entre México y Estados Unidos: patrones regionales y políticas locales. In: Silvia, Giorguli, S. & Vicente. Ugalde (eds.). *Gobierno territorio y población: las políticas públicas en la mira*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México.

program in 2014 called *Somos mexicanos* [We are Mexicans] which sought to unite these and other efforts from various federal government agencies to meet the needs of Mexicans returning to Mexico. However, it didn't receive much support and was poorly coordinated, and it is not known if they succeeded or not beyond what had already been achieved up until then.

Consequently, Mexico has changed the way it thinks about itself in terms of migration as seen in its laws and regulations, some of which formalize our desire to be a hospitable and humanitarian country. But the State is still far from converting that change into new and effective practices that integrate migrants and make it easier for them to contribute to the general well-being of the country. The slaughter of Central American migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas in 2010 was a jolt to Mexican society, causing it to seek arrangements with Central America and the United States for action, without much success. Violation of the rights of transit migrants continues. The two huge factors that weigh heavily on this contradiction cannot be ignored: on the one hand, the emergence of organized crime as an actor that controls large portions of the territory and communication channels, while on the other, the new geopolitical role of Mexico with regard to global migration to the United States. For criminal organizations, flows of people are a source of resources and labor that they will not give up without further violence. For the United States, Mexico plays the same role as Morocco, Turkey, Iran and Libya do for Europe. It is a second level actor that has to absorb or return people from other countries so they do not become a burden for the United States. While the authors consider it is possible to make substantial progress in a policy that effectively integrates migrants, we also consider that these two factors, which weigh more heavily than ever, will require years of work and effort within Mexico and the United States. Several intermediary countries such as those mentioned above have secured benefits in exchange for playing the role of a migratory brake. For decades, the United States government has used Mexican immigration control for its own purposes. But now, for the first time it has made this *quid pro quo* explicit.

## **Content of the Book**

Firstly, the book describes the changes in the Mexican population in the United States, as well as in the population returning to Mexico and those who were born in the United States who live in Mexico, followed by an exploration of the crucial elements that contribute to well-being and quality of life. In the first chapter Masferrer, Pederzini, Passel and Livingston provide a review of the population dynamics of migration on both sides of the border. Following a brief overview of recent Mexican migration, they put into context the changes in emigration and return flows as well as changes in the stocks of Mexican migrants in both countries. Regarding flows, they analyze the estimates of both unauthorized Mexican migrants and temporary migrants arriving with permission to the United States. In terms of Mexico, the notion of return is extended to include flows of Mexicans and Americans who arrive

in Mexico after a stay, or after having been born north of the border. Subsequently, they describe both the sociodemographic and family characteristics, as well as the geographical patterns of settlement, and identify patterns of selectivity within the Mexican population in Mexico and the United States. The family dimension is crucial to our understanding of several of these changes: unlike the old migratory patterns, Mexican migrants are not isolated individuals who leave children, parents or spouses behind in their home community; with the passage of time, today they belong to families with roots in the United States, while some return to Mexico as a family, bringing with them children who were born in the United States.

The second chapter focuses on the topic of work and addresses the labor dynamics behind the decrease in the flows described above. Arroyo, Berumen, Martin and Orrenius analyze the implications of the changes that occurred in 2000 and 2010 in the labor market in both Mexico and in the United States. It elaborates on the economic effects of the great global crisis of 2007–2009 and how unemployment and recession led to changes in participation and unemployment, wages, and the composition of Mexican migrants participating in these labor markets in both countries. It is well known that the Mexican migrant population in the United States is a group that has traditionally carried out low-skilled jobs. Although the average level of education has increased over the years, the Mexican population has lower levels of education compared to Native Americans and other immigrants. This characteristic, coupled with the type of occupations and industries where Mexican's find work, has repercussions on the income and working life of Mexican migrants. However, the authors' analysis reveals differences in both countries geographically and over time. The increase in Mexicans returning and the concentration of returnees being of working age, implies that the creation of employment in the Mexican labor market is essential for the well-being of the migrant population. The heterogeneity of returnees, and the differences in working conditions according to their destination of return, demonstrate the challenges for labor reintegration, especially in poor areas.

Giorguli, Jensen, Brown, Sawyer and Zúñiga present a comprehensive, wide-reaching and integrated diagnosis of the “educational well-being” of children of Mexican migrants on both sides of the border. The authors address the educational well-being of children and young people of Mexican origin who have been affected – either directly or indirectly – by international migration. The analysis distinguishes four groups of young people on both sides of the border: those who remain in Mexico while family members work and reside in the United States; immigrants returning to Mexico; first-generation immigrants in the United States; children and grandchildren of Mexican immigrants in the United States (including second, third and subsequent generations). Their concept of well-being considers the duration and quality of schooling that children of Mexican immigrants receive in both the United States and Mexico. In addition, they discuss, as far as possible, the conditions found within families, schools and communities in relation to the reported welfare indexes in order to provide recommendations for policies and programs that support Mexican-born students affected by migration between the two countries, while also considering the specificities of the local contexts in which the students are integrated.

The fourth section of this book is based on a systematic review of the literature documenting the health status of migrants and their *de jure* and *de facto* access to health services, which are two key considerations for understanding the social vulnerability faced by these populations. In addition, it presents an evaluation of health insurance coverage and health conditions in both countries based on census data. Nelly Salgado, Fernando Riosmena, Miguel Ángel González-Block and Rebeca Wong make it clear that, though migrants are not a vulnerable group in and of itself, the conditions of social inequality in which migration occurs and the circumstances in the place of origin, transit, destination and return are a significant source of vulnerability. Thus, the authors demonstrate how migrants have limited access to health services at all stages of the migration process, which is worrying since the first part of the study also shows that the state of health before migration, in transit, in the United States and in Mexico in the event of return, is usually poor. Faced with this challenge, the chapter analyzes programs and policies to reverse this vulnerability.

Another source of vulnerability, which is an increasing risk characterizing the period under investigation, is the rise of control and violence that is generating a climate of insecurity and fear among the migrant population in Mexico and in the United States. In Chap. 5, Nestor Rodríguez discusses how this adverse climate has implications for psychological well-being, and how it is ever more evident in both communities of origin and possible return, in the Mexican border areas and in the destination communities in the United States. This adverse climate is characterized by an increase in border control, deportations and local migration and surveillance policies in the United States, as well as a socio-political context in Mexico marked by the violence and insecurity that followed the war against drug trafficking and an economy with limitations that threaten the population. Based on a methodology using data from surveys carried out in the Texas cities of Houston and Galveston, and in the Mexican cities of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas and Guadalajara, Jalisco, the author discusses the different dimensions of stress and fear; the dangers in border cities following deportation; and the great uncertainty experienced upon return.

To better understand the effect of growing insecurity in Mexico, Liliana Meza studied the impact of violence, measured by deaths related to organized crime, on the intensity of international migration at municipal level. The results based on municipal-level regression analysis indicate that migratory networks determine the proportion of households that receive remittances and send migrants to the United States; nevertheless, violence has a small but significant influence, behind remittances and migratory movements, at least in the northern border states. The findings also reveal that violence prevents circularity: i.e., Mexican migrants returning to their communities of origin, despite the adverse context in the United States in 2010. That is, everything points to increased emigration from unsafe municipalities and disruption to circularity due to violence. We know today that the insecurity and violence caused by the war on drug trafficking that began formally in 2007 increased dramatically in the years after 2010, and that it expanded to different areas within the Mexican territory. The results of this chapter also suggest changes in the profiles of migrants to the United States, which should be analyzed within the context of the Mexican migration phenomenon and its transformation.

Finally, in the last chapter, Israel Banegas, Graciela Teruel and Agustín Escobar focus on the goods and services provided to households in Mexico through social programs, in a context where social policy transformations in Mexico have endeavored to extend the social protection safety net. The authors use data from a survey of households in poor and marginalized regions in Mexico and supplement it with an ethnographic investigation in eight municipalities and twelve communities where the survey was applied in order to understand the access to social programs among returning migrants as well as their incorporation into health and educational services. In general, the results point to the need to strengthen institutions in places of extreme poverty as they are not prepared to meet the needs associated with an increase in populations with migratory experiences in the United States, both returning migrants and their American children. Without such reinforcement, returning Mexicans and their families will be denied access to social rights and programs that would facilitate their well-being.

## Conclusions

For 20 years, our group has insisted that migration cooperation is key to arriving at a satisfactory outcome. On this point, three statements can be made: (1) mass irregular migration has drastically decreased and a satisfactory situation has been reached, at least in terms of flows meeting the basic legal requirements, although the volume of the undocumented Mexican diaspora without access to rights is still high. (2) Arriving at this objective situation did not stop the political manipulation of the immigration situation for electoral purposes. The reality of the situation was denied to successfully obtain a political advantage. (3) Cooperation has occurred, but instead of promoting the welfare of migrants and their political and social integration, it increases their vulnerability. It is worth explaining each of these points.

Since 2008, the flows from the United States to Mexico have been greater than the reverse. The majority of the population originating in migration have legal immigration status. These flows pass through authorized crossings. In other words, after 2007, Mexican migratory flows have not been an objective source of problems for either migrants or governments. However, the legality and control of migratory movements has not meant that migrants' lives have developed optimally. Firstly, this is because there is still a large undocumented population of just over five million people. Secondly, because a set of xenophobic attitudes and actions has deteriorated the living conditions of immigrants and their families.

Adequate migration management requires a better bilateral relationship and internal political contexts in which migrants are not subject to attack, and their social incorporation is fostered. For this reason, we propose that this period, during which time it was necessary for irregular migration to be managed, makes way for another where legal flows and access to rights prevail. However, despite the decline of irregular migration, this positive situation has been negated to keep migration as a profitable source of anti-immigration votes. The insistence and expansion of

anti-immigrant discourse creates adverse conditions for all types of immigrants, but particularly for Mexicans and Central Americans.

Finally, there are multiple instances where the two government have cooperated on migration issues. Most of them have been positive, both to ensure regular flows as well as to safe-guard the well-being of migrants and to coordinate efforts against human traffickers. Nevertheless, on the one hand, the United States government underestimates the importance of this collaboration, which it does not officially recognize. On the other hand, at least two aspects of the collaboration are contrary to the rights and well-being of migrants: firstly, the insistence since 2014<sup>27</sup> that Mexico stops migrants who try to cross the country without documents, and, if possible, repatriates them. This procedure goes against the Mexican law of 2008, nor the law of 2011 in particular.

Secondly, after the arrival of migrant caravans to Mexico in 2018, it was confirmed that Mexico had signed an agreement with the United States whereby those applying for asylum in the United States can remain in Mexico for the duration of their process. Asylum seekers are not undocumented. They arrive at the border posts and present themselves to immigration officers with proof of identity and the dangers they face in their country. Remaining outside the country where they are applying for asylum is a practical obstacle to processing their application promptly and can reduce their chances of success. Moreover, the low proportion of applications approved to Central Americans means that for practical purposes almost everyone will become Mexican residents in the future. The government that receives the request is normally responsible for providing conditions for the applicant to survive during the process, whether they are given authorization to work, receive subsidies to live or are arrested. However, in Mexico, applicants do not have access to such support. Mexico will give them a humanitarian visa with the right to work, but with a job in Mexico they will not be able to prove that they are able to support themselves in the U.S., which is one of the criteria for receiving refugee status.

We have also argued that the cooperation between the United States and Mexico is essential so that public policies in Mexico are developed to retain the population through better working and living conditions, while in the United States, security for migrants is achieved through legal access to jobs, payment of taxes and their corresponding rights to social benefits, and the possibility to save for retirement, unite retirement funds from both countries, and receiving tax rebates where appropriate.

Both proposals are compatible with the sovereign right of each country to apply measures that reduce or prevent irregular migration, and are, therefore, compatible with secure borders and measures to control identity in the workplace. However, they are not compatible with policies that discriminate or criminalize people who

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<sup>27</sup> Since the beginning of this century, it was rumored that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the U.S.A was pressing the Mexican government to stop as many migrants from Central America as possible, so they would not reach the U.S.A. As of 2014, this request was made explicit and motivated systematic meetings between the DHS, the Interior Ministry and the National Migration Institute in Mexico.

have worked in legal jobs, or with policies that limit access to public and social services, or that extend punishments to family members and descendants of migrants. However, until recently, it was not this way; there were strict border control measures, but once workers entered the United States, the control measures stopped. At the same time, it is not right to apply unilateral punitive measures: As of 2006, fines had been imposed on less than ten companies for employing irregular migrants, while hundreds of thousands of workers had been removed and deported from the country.

We believe the change that has occurred in these migratory flows opens up two different scenarios, both for migrants and for North America. The “inertial” path of persisting with anti-immigrant actions and policies in the United States is not going to prevent the growth of the population of Mexican origin – ever more converting into “Latina” – since its growth is increasingly the result of births that occur in the United States and less the result of migration; albeit a North American population whose incorporation is segmented, with fewer or denied rights, and with precarious life prospects (added to which, many will continue to be weighed down further by the risk of expulsion). And, of course, their ability to contribute to the future of North America would also be precarious.

On the contrary, we urge the governments of both countries to coordinate on far-reaching and effective public policy measures that allow this population to enjoy their rights and contribute to North American society. North America is the only other continental region in the world, in addition to the Asian region centered in China, where there is healthy, although moderate, demographic growth, with a positive employment dynamic and welfare in general. While demographic and employment growth in Europe is clearly decreasing, and large regions of the world lack the possibility to offer full employment in the near future, as a region, North America has what it takes to achieve a dominant position in the world with widespread prosperity for its citizens. Americans of Mexican origin, who are becoming increasingly more integrated into the United States and regional economies, can contribute substantially to ensuring that this economic and demographic conjunction consolidates North America as a region that is globally integrated but with shared democratic and welfare regimes. We believe that national isolation does not contribute to the general well-being of a country or its inhabitants. The prosperity of Mexico, unlike that of Asia, contributes to the well-being in the United States and Canada, and vice versa. We believe that the modest achievements of the first NAFTA could be much improved if an adequate regional migration regime is implemented, together with better policies for the social incorporation of immigrants in all three North American countries.

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