

SANDOVAL GARCÍA, C., *Migrations in Central America – Policies, Territories and Actors*, (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2016), Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 438 pp.

*Migrations in Central America – Policies, Territories and Actors* is an approach to the current phenomenon of migration in the world's most affected region. Edited by Universidad de Costa Rica Professor Carlos Sandoval García, this book has been written by several authors whose contributions, combining personal testimonies with academic studies, make it unique. The book is divided into seven chapters that focus on migrations from different perspectives and have been summarised as follows.

First, the economic, political and social situation in most Central American countries has led a large number of its population to migrate as a way to survive. For instance, after decades of internal displacements, people from rural areas in Honduras are now migrating to the US. This is the case of young Salvadorians too, who represent a high percentage of irregular immigration to the US, taking part in gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha or Barrio 18 St. When deportation and removal from the US took place, these youngsters transfer gangs to El Salvador.

On irregular migration, it is unknown how many Central American and Mexican migrants choose 'The Death Train' to reach the United

States. On the basis of available data, they generally are 18-to-35-year-old men from poor backgrounds, willing to accept derisory transit conditions. In turn, Spain is also an option for Central American migrants – mostly women, recruited to work on the primary sector, housekeeping and care for dependants (children and elderly). In spite of irregular situations, Spain has facilitated residence authorisation for women of Latin American origin working on such fields.

From 2001, the American continent has boosted US migration policies' priorities (focused in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and irregular migration). This has been translated to progress in national migration regulations in all American countries (for instance, human trafficking is considered to be a criminal offence) as well as to regional cooperation regarding irregular migration. Among migrants of Central American origin, Nicaraguans are the least affected by US deportations, as well as the main beneficiaries by residence authorisations in the US, due to good historical relations between the US Government and upper and middle-class Nicaraguan migrants during the Cold War, fleeing from the Sandinista regime. Yet, the US is not the first destination chosen by Nicaraguan migrants today – it is Costa Rica.

Analysing several common symptoms among migrants, espe-

cially if travelling in precarious, irregular conditions, it is said the majority experience stress, feel hope and the so-called 'migration grief'. In particular, being deported and witnessing deaths of their travelling companions increase the risk of suffering from different traumas. Migrants establish internal 'classes' or 'categories' depending on both ways of reaching the United States and social progress after arrival.

Costa Rica is the most developed country in Central America in terms of institutional stability and welfare estate, which makes it a possible destination for Central American migrants. Yet, Costa Ricans are often reluctant to receive immigrants in their country. For instance, most Costa Ricans subjective perceptions with regards to Nicaraguans (who represent 6.7% of Costa Rican population) use of health services are barely evidence-based. Moreover, migrants have only partial access to a membership in health public system, due to their particular legal conditions.

Popular consciousness regarding migration is analysed from three different perspectives: first, population receiving migrants - in Costa Rica, for example, data shows that the more contact with Nicaraguans, the more level of education and the higher the incomes, the less prejudices against Nicaraguans. Second, migrants or people willing to migrate - while the latter are hopeful and see themselves as future economic suppliers of their families, the former are more realistic and pessimistic. Third, relatives of disappeared migrants - there is a caravan travelling across the most

common routes to reach the US from Mexico, with which relatives of migrants who are disappeared look for them and fight for an improvement in migrants' rights.

Migrants are considered to be a social, transnational actor; yet its definition and political scope is under construction. So far, migrants' contribution to economy and demographic balance has been barely appreciated. However, there has been some social progress since migrants have now a larger media outreach. Migrant women have an increasing role in political activism. There are also some organisations in charge for both help migrants and prevent them from breaking their ties with their country or community of origin. In the case of Guatemalan organisations in the United States, for instance, data shows they are not known enough to reach people in need.

In conclusion, not only this book is special for combining academic studies about migration with several personal testimonies from people who have experienced migration at first hand, but also for its very human approach towards migration, raising awareness among its readers. Moreover, *Migrations in Central America - Policies, Territories and Actors* is original in terms of style, changing the linguistic register from one chapter to the other. Reading this book may be popular with anyone interested in the hot issue that is migration in the region with the greatest number of migration flows

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