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Editorial

Return migration, entrepreneurship and transit migration: Empirical and Policy Implications

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MIGUEL CRUZ VASQUEZ (SPECIAL ISSUE COORDINATORS)**

Return migration has been named as one of the causes behind the change observed since 2008 in the historical pattern of Mexico-US immigration (Passel, Cohn and González-Barrera, 2012). Many academic meetings have been organized trying to understand its implications for theoretical, empirical and policy studies. This special issue contains some of the research presented in meetings organized at Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) in 2017 and 2019. Because the different investigations presented at the two conferences keep a similar focus on migration and its ramifications into return migration, remittances and entrepreneurship, but presented multiple views and methods from the Social Sciences and Humanities, about topics related to regional and sectorial studies, it was decided jointly by the group of specialists that worked in these topics that a collective work should be published in a peer reviewed journal that would allow us to present the work as close as it was planned. Paradigma Económico is the journal that allowed us to present our collective work as close as it was originally presented in the conferences, at the same time that each paper went through a rigorous double blinded process. Because of this, we give special thanks to Leobardo de Jesús Almonte for its encouragement and support to go through all the lengthy process of editing a peer reviewed special number.

The focus of the 2017 meeting was Entrepreneurship and Return Migration, since many opinion studies had found by that time that individuals were returning voluntarily to the country (Passel, Cohn and González-Barrera, 2012). In that meeting, different research projects were presented that attempted to study the importance of entrepreneurship among returnees. The first meeting was financed jointly by Univer-

sidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) and El Colegio de Tlaxcala, A.C.

The focus of the 2019 meeting were the changing characteristics of the migratory flow. The data showed the flow of Mexicans entering the US as stable or not changing, while the flow of Central Americans was rising (Passel, Cohn and González-Barrera, 2012). The meeting also allowed to see the progress of many of the research projects about entrepreneurship and return migration that started in 2017, and that by 2019 were obtaining many interesting results.

This second meeting was financed jointly by Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP), the Centro de Investigación e Inteligencia Económica (CIIE) UPAEP, the Center for International Policy Studies (CIPS) from Fordham University, and the Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS) from the City College, City University of New York (CCNY-CUNY).

Since the occurrence of the two meetings, an important event has taken place. In October 2019, the first Caravana Migrante took place which generated very important changes in Mexico's migratory policy. These very important policy changes conform a new paradigm in the understanding of migration, which is analyzed in the first paper presented in this special issue, called "The sharp turn of Mexican migration policies: an inquisitive assessment", authored by Francisco Alba. The author analyzes the meaning of the sharp change, in mid-2019, of migration policy in Mexico. The purpose of the change was to exert greater control of migrants and borders. The paper starts by contrasting this change to initial positions of President López Obrador administration, positions more attuned to humanitarian and human rights perspectives. Then, it explores short-term effects and potential long-term implications, in terms of opportunities and challenges, of said change and it scouts future directions of Mexican migration policy in the context of a new U.S. administration.

The second paper in this special issue, Miguel Angel Corona Jimenez shows his paper "Return Migration, Labor Reintegration and Expectancies: Guidelines for Development Policies". The author studies the conditions of economic reintegration of the returning migrants from United States applying a survey to returning migrants with the objective to collect information that allow us to identify and determine four types of mobility. The four types of mobility are: sectorial, labor,

income, and job position, considering a before and after the migration experience. The results show the integration has not been easy in the majority of cases. As a matter of fact, most of the households improved their economic situation compared to their condition before migrating. Additionally, most of them still have the expectation to come back to the US or wish their children can study and live there. Therefore, these migrants were not completely pleased with their economic reintegration process. In the end, the author proposes some guidelines for public policy in economic development and economic reintegration.

In the third paper, Alfredo Cuecuecha Mendoza, Patricia Meneses Ortíz, Arturo Vasquez Corona, and Gerardo Suarez Gonzalez present a paper called “Financial Inclusion, Remittances and Entrepreneurship: An Experiment in the State of Tlaxcala, Mexico”. The authors present a Randomized Control Treatment (RCT) that consisted in providing smartphones, training in business skills and financial education to individuals in the State of Tlaxcala, Mexico to study its impact on measures of Financial Inclusion and other household outcomes in the period 2011-14. The results show statistically significant effects in measures of usage and quality, but not in measures of depth or stability of financial services. The results also show positive effects on micro business activities and wealth, but no effects on household income and expenditures. All effects are found to be smaller for households that receive remittances. These results show that, in the presence of low-cost financial services, households prefer to invest their savings in micro business activities or real assets and confirm that households that receive remittances relax their credit constraints.

The fourth paper authored by Miguel Cruz Vasquez and Renato Alfaro, is called “The role of financial, human and social capital on the entrepreneurial decision of returned migrants in municipalities of the state of Mexico, Mexico”, and investigates the importance of the financial, human and social capital of the returned migrants on the entrepreneurship decision of these returnees. For this end, they use data from a survey applied to returned migrants who live in urban and rural municipalities of the state of Mexico, Mexico, which were analyzed through descriptive statistics and the estimation of a nonlinear regression model. The results show that the main determinant of the entrepreneurship of these returnees is the investment in the construction of houses. Another important determinant is the gender of these returnees.

The fifth paper, authored by Erik Tapia Mejia, Iris Escarlet Betanzos Medina and Beatriz Pico Gonzalez, is called “Implications of the Theory of Planned Behavior in the Returned Migrant’s Entrepreneurial Intention”, and analyzes the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the Entrepreneurial Intention of the return migrant applying a Systematic Literature Review. The results identified a lack of research focused on the application of the TPB for knowledge of the entrepreneurial intention in the returnee migrant. Finally, no empirical evidence was found related to the application of TPB and Entrepreneurial Intention in returning migrants, so it is recommended that future research be carried out applying TPB in returning migrants, considering that this segment of people reveals highly entrepreneurial characteristics.

In the sixth paper, Renato Salas Alfaro presents a study called “International Return Migration and Poverty in the Estado de Mexico”. The paper presents a qualitative analysis based on in depth interviews with return migrants living in the Estado de Mexico. The results show that migrants accumulated assets and productive capacities, and that nine out of ten perceive they live better after the return, however, only one in five have certainty that they managed to build a stable long-term livelihood. The conclusions point out that at least among the migrants interviewed, migration plays an important role so that most migrant can live better on return, but it also contributes to build long-term stable livelihoods, although this last effect is much smaller.

In the seventh paper, “Are Migrants and Their Families Happier After Migration?” authored by Martijn Hendriks, a comparison between migrants to matched potential migrants and other stayers in the country of origin using Gallup World Poll data is carried out. Migrants are estimated to globally evaluate the quality of their lives on average 9% higher following migration. They also experience approximately 5% more positive affect and 7% less negative affect due to migration. Most of these happiness gains are experienced within the first five years after migration. Families left behind generally evaluate their lives more positively but frequently experience more negative affect.

Finally, the eighth paper shows that return migration and entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the paper shows that one of the iconic figures of the Mexican movie industry of the twentieth century was a successful returnee. The paper is called “Dolores Del Río: return migration and successful entrepreneurship in Mexico, 1904-

1983”, and the author is Raul Bringas Nosti. Bringas Nosti argues that Dolores Del Río was the first Mexican woman to succeed in the United States and that her condition as returned migrant has received only marginal attention. In the 1940s, she applied some of the most valuable skills of the American film industry, such as innovation, knowledge of the market and a powerful work ethic. Her life experience reveals how return migration can nurture successful entrepreneurship in Mexico. The author concludes that her success shows that personal features, and not macrosocial conditions, are the central factor behind successful return migration.

The migratory flows that transit from Mexico to the United States have been historically complex. Examples of returnees that came back with knowledge, experience and financial capital exist at least since the last century. Different studies show that returnees experience less acute credit constraints and that they improve their welfare, as compared to their previous situation. They achieve this by building their houses, and some become entrepreneurs. However, some of them wish that their children would have the same opportunity to migrate to the US, to study and live there.

Recent changes in migration flows have also prompted sharp changes in the migratory policy of Mexico, going from a very relaxed look at Central American flows to a sharper application of the migratory rules.

The recent Covid 19 pandemic is, once more, changing the rules of the game, with very recent migratory flows from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala rising to levels not seen since 2007. These changes make clear the need to keep dynamic research on the area in order to inform policy makers over better ways to achieve an orderly and secure movement of people in the Northern Triangle area.

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