

Guillermo Ibarra Escobar. (2013). *Trabajar en tierras lejanas. Vidas mexicanas en Los Ángeles*. México: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa y Juan Pablos Editor, 396 pp. ISBN 978-607-711-187-0

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The importance of the study of migration becomes relevant in social sciences every day. Mexico's function as a receiving, sending and transit country of migrants has originated multidisciplinary and divergent-in-nature migration studies. Mexican migration studies produced not only important information regarding socio-demographic matters but also economic, social and anthropological information. The important discoveries and information gathered allow the comprehension of migration as a complex, changing and diverse process. The information shows similarities between the large economic and social inequalities on both sides of the borders. It also proves that there is a large incorporation of migrants with different socio-economic profiles increasing and how the places of origin and destination change, disrupting the appearance of migratory regions.

Previous studies regarding migratory matters showed how the dynamics of the migratory process were part of the contradictions in the capitalist production process and how the city of Los Angeles, California, through a portrayal of a global city-region, was full of changes in the economic, social and urban restructuring and its function as a multicultural, polycentric metropolis sustained by a flexible and vulnerable economy in which one could say a migratory flow not only from Latin origin fitted well and functioned as an industrial army reserve. This was possible using different research methods and techniques, improved by a critical theoretical perspective. These studies were carried out by Guillermo Ibarra and they took over 50 years to be finished.

During his field research conducted in 2000 in the south of California, he found how Mexican immigrants adapted to the impoverishment conditions and social exclusion in the United States and one could notice this without knowing the statistical data, thus the importance of telling not only migratory experiences, but also a part of the life of migrants which allows us to see the social and familiar relationships that are part of the migrant worker's biography (Ibarra, 2005).

In this regard, it is interesting to emphasize how the methodological and research positions within migration studies of Mexicans in the United States, always under a diagram of scientific accuracy, produce information that shows the economic and social situation in which the migrant is involved. It is also necessary to see beyond the statistical data, decode the large amount of statistical data. It is important to create and interpret but most of the time this does not allow us to see what are their stories, who is behind that number, who is selected to reinforce a whole conceptual-theoretical framework in an academic research, in other words, who are those people, what do they do, how do they invigorate the migratory process, what do they think, what are their perceptions of life and how do they perceive their own reality. This situation, among other things, due to the same reasoning of a social process, obliges us to make a different and imaginative (but real) analysis about migrants, in other words, propose and carry out methodological strategies which help to optimize and find new interpretations of the social process of migration.

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Jorge Durand (1996) in *El norte es como el mar*, showed the importance of giving migrants a voice to tell their migratory experience and draw our own conclusions about the life of a migrant based on that. This activity which arises from a research project respecting regional development and migration that also proves a collective strengthening concerning migration studies in Sinaloa, can be read in Guillermo Ibarra Escobar's book called: *Trabajar en tierras lejanas. Vidas mexicanas en Los Ángeles*.

The importance of this book lies on the multidisciplinary views of the migratory phenomenon in the United States. One hundred and fifty years ago, migration studies in Sinaloa revealed different discoveries which were added to the richness in terms of information and interpretation of migration. Ibarra Escobar, one of the pioneers in contemporary migration studies in Sinaloa, has provided, through discoveries in his different studies, a critical and multidisciplinary position broaching from essentially economic matters such as global labor markets and economic geography of migration to matters that can be classified as a part of the anthropologic economy.

Trabajar en Tierras lejanas does not have Latin American migration to the United States' analysis under the traditional perspective of presenting qualitative and quantitative data as a main objective. What we find here is the migratory experience as an analysis unit, that is, a part of the migrant's biography is used as a historical context, where the temporary space, place, development and relationships they make are described, and this is what makes the book interesting. To know how the migratory experience indicates consequences and human conditions, personal, familiar, economic and cultural migration matters. This is one of the main objectives in the book in which the author himself proposes justice, gives them a voice and at the same time informs us about the migrant's soul and human condition.

The migrants' stories reading does not only make us understand and think about the Latin American reality in the United States, but also give us many interpretations regarding the migrant's biography, establishing and readapting new meanings respecting their daily lives. We could say that during the reading we ask ourselves what does migration mean; to leave one's family and homeland, how is the work life, what feelings (sometimes mixed feelings) do they share with fellow countrymen or other migrants and natives. In such manner, telling someone else's life story encourages us to question and redefine hypothetical positions in research studies which will redefine constantly and this will be possible even more when these are described through moral values, peculiarities and personal perspectives. The latter helps Ibarra's book gain relevance, in which the benefits of research and qualitative techniques through personal development and migratory experiences can be found. Thus, we can understand a personal meaning of social phenomena, migration, labor inclusion and daily social harmony in a multicultural region through migrants' testimonies.

The manner in which testimonies are presented reminds us of what the American sociologist Charles Right Mills, who recommends organizing a set of notes and a considerable amount of information to file a research and thereon detect the marginal ideas which indicate new forms of analysis where new topics could arise or the current topic can be extended, that is, if we begin with *sociological imagination* in which the ability to distinguish, develop and make an own and intelligent opinion regarding society and its components, we find something new.

In a similar manner, in Guillermo Ibarra's book we find what Ariza (2009) thinks respecting the relation between migration and female labor market in which the methodological approach is based in a micro-social consideration despite presenting and

describing migrants' life and work career, that is, the stories are considered in a sociostructural and socio-symbolic dimension that leads to migrants' labor and personal thoughts and expectations. Their life story is used as a reference which provides meaning to migratory experiences; therefore, Ibarra's book confronted a challenge in the interpretation of information obtained from migrants' testimonies and classified them (with analytical accuracy) into multidisciplinary categories such as sociology, economy and anthropology to confirm or dismiss hypothesis that arose during school.

If we search a pattern in the presented migrants' lives, we find vulnerability, sadness, discrimination and risk, the constant thought about losing something that has been earned, the sacrifice of not being with the family, abandoned children, friends or family in Mexico and Central America. Migrants' testimonies in *Trabajar en tierras lejanas* talk about this situation:

Dorangélica: My life has been harsh. I dedicated all my time to work here. I had to work at night and take care of my daughters during the day. I am planning on retiring by the Union, they are going to give me 800 or 900 dollars a month for the thirty years I have worked. If I want social insurance, I have to reach sixty two years and a half and I think it's too much, it's too hard and I don't have the strength I had before, but I can't quit because I would lose everything I've earned.

María Luisa: Have I progressed? I don't think I have made good progress to this date. I have no house and no assets... Things are not as easy as they seem, making money isn't easy and living here is not as good as many say, we suffer, we really do.

Gilberto: I didn't want to come (to the United States), there's more freedom in Mexico. If I won the lottery, I would surely go back. Out of all the places in which I have lived, Mexico is the one I have liked the most; there's no place like home.

Pedro: On one occasion I was asked if I liked living here, and I said I didn't, and the person asking the question told me he did like it.

-How can that be possible? Apartments are horrible

-Yes, but they can't be compared to the house I was living in when I was in Mexico. That house was made of metal sheets and we didn't have a bathroom, besides, we would all get wet when it rained.

Benito: American, Chinese and Korean people have a poor concept of us, even though we came to work and make money for them. We came to do what they don't want to do.

This book is a great contribution to the migration studies in Mexico, in addition, it complies with the warning and recommendation expressed by the author from a decade ago, which, despite the fact that there are an increasing number of studies related with migration to the United States, the research agenda, with new methods and techniques and lectures on the migration phenomenon, improves in light of the need of new forms of seeing migration. Therefore this social process analytical coverage increases, thus generating a perception of new realities derived from new empirical evidence and mixed and alternative methodological approaches and, as mandated by social science, all new realities and problems derived from social dialectics cannot be understood and interpreted by the traditional conceptual and referential frameworks, therefore a theoretical and methodological interpretation is needed on a multidisciplinary basis.

Consequently, the lives and daily nature of migrants must be analyzed in a comprehensive and rigorous manner, also from a micro-social level.

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