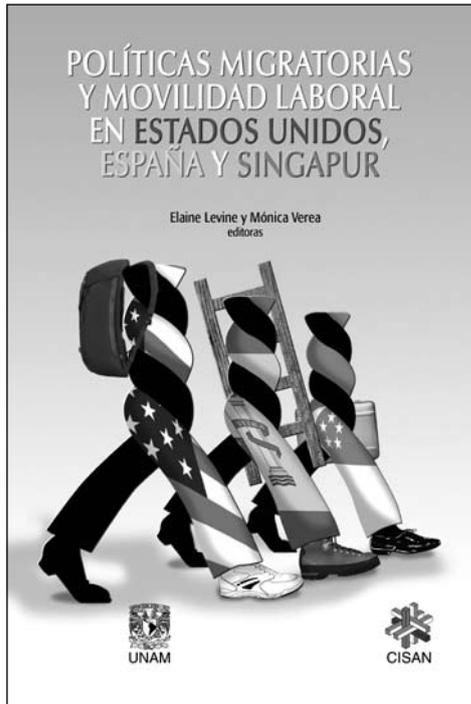


Reviews



Políticas migratorias y movilidad laboral en Estados Unidos, España y Singapur

(Migratory Policies and Labor Mobility in the United States, Spain, and Singapore)

Elaine Levine and Mónica Vereá, eds.

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2010, 304 pp.

The international migration process is frequently analyzed using two fundamental variables: the labor market and migratory policies. This book considers both variables for a more complex analysis centered on three case studies: the United States, Spain, and Singapore as destination countries for large numbers of foreign migrants. While this is a justifiable choice given the statistical significance the book itself argues, describing the three cases shows that if there is one thing that does not exist in today's world, it is a pattern in migratory policy that we can generalize about; what we see are the responses of each state to its own migratory flows in accordance with its interests and projections for the future.

The book is divided into four central sections. The first, by Mónica Vereá, offers a panorama of each country's migratory policy. It presents a detailed contemporary history of each process and its specificities, like the long migratory process of the United States, the recent advent of flows into Spain, or the innovation of public measures for dealing with migration into Singapore. This is particularly useful both for those just starting out in the study of the topic and those who want to update their knowledge.

Four articles then detail the case of each country. In the first, Elaine Levine looks at the U.S., demonstrating the relationship between immigration policies and the labor market. She details foreigners' experience at work, particularly among the undocumented, a group made up in large part by Mexicans, and therefore, much of the data refers to that group. Some of this chapter's important contributions are that the author shows how the demand for labor is an axis for determining U.S. immigration policy, and the reasons for foreigners' relative success or failure in joining and integrating themselves into the workforce, above all because of the explicit market demands for certain kinds of workers who, because of their low educational levels, will be condemned to be marginalized.

Nevertheless, far from being undesirable, this is actually an advantage in strictly economic terms, and therefore becomes a substantial factor in outlining U.S. immigration policy. This leads us to suggest that greater consistency by the U.S. state would be desirable in resolving the contradiction between its openness to the circulation of goods and commodities and its increasingly closed attitude to greater mobility and circulation within the labor market.

The following section analyzes the experience of the European Union based on the Spanish case. In this section's two chapters, Genoveva Roldán and Fernando Osvaldo Esteban offer very revealing arguments for understanding how and why migratory policies are designed. On the one hand, they

analyze the history of the recent mobility in each case (Spain and Portugal), as well as the effect of the whirlwind transformations in their traditional migratory pattern, changing from sending countries to countries receiving large numbers of immigrants. This is why the dilemmas and challenges of the community's policy have focused particularly on generating the conditions to regulate the massive influx of labor into Spain as the result of the large demand that its economic development brought with it. Parallel to this, Spanish emigration, previously one of the largest in the EU, plummeted abruptly in less than 20 years, demonstrating that development policy is the best mechanism for drastically reducing the flow of citizens abroad in search of better working and living conditions. This chapter points out the central problem of inconsistencies in European Union migratory policy. One interesting point is that, despite the supposed public policy to generate unprecedented mobility among EU member countries, what has actually happened is that labor mo-

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bility is very low (only 1.5 percent), and, to the contrary, each country has become dependent on its own domestic market. The paradox is that the greatest challenge to migratory policies is the mobility of non-EU citizens who contribute two kinds of indispensable benefits to the region's labor market: on the one hand, a large quantity of unskilled or low-skilled labor for the service and personal care sector, and, on the other hand, highly skilled labor, particularly welcome in countries clearly competing with the United States, the world's leader in attracting this kind of migrant.

Osvaldo's article develops two central issues for understanding contemporary migratory policies worldwide. On the one hand, labor insertion differentiated by skill levels and ethnic origin—in the Spanish case particularly, he talks about Rumanians, Moroccans, and Ecuadorians—as well as the role of second generations in assimilation as a means of reducing social inequality. This chapter details the prevailing situation of the European labor market, looking at overall

statistics and the different niches for migrant labor, as well as employment rates compared to those of unemployed non-migrant workers. This article is complemented splendidly by Elaine Levine's contribution because their data allows comparisons of the U.S. and EU labor markets for foreigners. One distinctive characteristic is social policy aimed at immigrant communities, from recent arrivals to third generations, as something that defines migratory policies beyond the labor market, a fundamental contribution of this book. If in both cases discrimination and xenophobia are part of what migrants face, the central issue as highlighted here is observing how each state puts forward plans, programs, strategies, and laws to "manage reality" in terms of governability of the interaction among different ethnic and social groups.

The last chapter studies Singapore as a sample of Southeast Asian policy. While any case study is relevant, actually, despite recent high levels of migration to Singapore, choosing this case is not quite as clearly justifiable as those of the two previous countries. The example is still interesting, since Anahí Parra shows how the dynamics of migration have removed old structures and, given the high density of foreigners in the country, migratory policy is not at all divorced from essential issues like an aggressive plan for fostering the return of the Diasporas, particularly highly skilled workers. This runs parallel to a program to attract highly skilled labor as part of a medium-term strategic plan that competes for these workers with other markets like those of the U.S. and the EU.

All the cases analyzed include revealing aspects of the democratic scope of migratory policy. Except in more local cases, workers' human and labor rights are included in general positions, but not in specific programs. This is made more acute by visa requirements. While throughout the book, comparisons can be made between the cases, the book's importance, didactic quality, and first-hand information would make it desirable for it to close with a final chapter presenting conclusions detailing the comparisons that are possible among the cases selected. This work of highlighting what each case offers and, therefore, what finally backs the decision of contrasting migratory policies and labor mobility in different countries is a task that remains pending for a second edition of this work. **VM**

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