

Chapter 6

Migration in the Americas

The nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean (which together make up 'the Americas') have been made and re-made by the migrations of the last half-millennium. Immigration and settlement was a crucial component of the process of colonization that began in the late fifteenth century when Spain, Portugal, England and France fought to gain control over the 'New World'. The fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries were marked by conquest and resource extraction, at first from gold and silver mines and then from sugar, tobacco and other plantations (Galeano, 1973). While the indigenous population decreased due to the diseases, massacres and forced labour brought by colonization, the arrival and settlement of European migrants and African slaves, along with the consequent process of *mestizaje* (mixing of racial groups), produced deep and lasting changes, which helped create the contemporary face of this continent.

The Americas have continued to be strongly affected by changing patterns of migration throughout modern history. Between about 1850 and 1960, millions of Europeans migrated to the 'New World'. They came not only to the USA and Canada, but also to South America, especially to Argentina and Brazil. While more than 23 million Europeans migrated to the United States between 1880 and 1930 (USINS, 1999), 4 million arrived in Brazil during the same period (Amaral and Fusco, 2005). In Latin America this was a time of colonial liberation struggles and the emergence of Creole ruling elites. These elites quickly became linked to the emerging corporations of the USA, which achieved economic dominance throughout the region. Labour emigration from Mexico to the USA and from the Caribbean to Europe and the USA began at this time, albeit on a small scale.

The early post-1945 period was one of a tentative move to democratic governance and economic resurgence in Latin America, with significant growth through local industrialization under policies of import substitution. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, such initiatives were stifled by US-backed military regimes, which generally opened the door to neoliberal approaches based on privatization, deregulation and export orientation. These policies were championed by US economic advisors (see Klein, 2007, on neoliberalism in Latin America) and enforced through the structural adjustment policies of the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. The result was a vast growth in inequality in

the continent (ECLAC, 2010). Together with fast demographic growth and rapid urbanization, leading to the emergence of huge slum areas (Davis, 2006), this provided a strong motivation for South–North migration.

Thus the USA and Canada remained major immigration areas, while the rest of the region experienced substantial emigration. A few Southern countries (such as Venezuela) remained primarily countries of immigration, but others have become countries of transit, emigration or a mixture of all of these. In addition, the Americas experienced the forced displacement of thousands of people who fled civil wars and political prosecution under military regimes during the 1970s and the 1980s. At the same time, increasing political and economic instability has resulted in an upsurge of irregular migration of mostly low-skilled workers. While the best known case is that of Mexican workers in the USA, irregular status is suffered by countless workers migrating from and within the region (Connor and Massey, 2010). Finally, it is important to mention a form of ‘return migration’ that has developed in recent decades. An increasing number of Latin Americans have relocated to their ancestors’ countries of origin in Europe or Asia, often under preferential agreements (IOM, 2005).

New trends are emerging in the Americas. Military regimes have fallen and democratic governments have come to power in many countries. Analyses of the ‘lost decade’ of the 1980s has led to a questioning of the neoliberal economic paradigm (ECLAC, 2010), and nations like Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela are pursuing new development paths. At the same time, US preoccupation with Islam and its military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, together with the economic crisis which started in 2008, led to a decline in capacity for political and economic control in Latin America. During the global economic crisis (GEC), South–North migration declined, while movements between Latin America countries grew.

At present, there are over 57 million international migrants in the Americas. This represents just over a quarter of the world’s migrant population (IOM, 2010). Migrant flows and numbers vary considerably within the region. The Americas can be portrayed as consisting of five principal sub-regions. While a number of countries do not fit neatly into these five areas, the classification serves to underscore how immigration and emigration has differentially affected the area as a whole:

1. The USA and Canada have traditionally had substantial populations of European origin due to large influxes of European migrants, which, however, have decreased since the 1970s. The USA also has a large minority population of African-Americans, who are mostly descendants of slaves. In recent times, both countries have remained major countries of immigration drawing migrants from all regions of the world.
2. Mexico and Central American societies largely comprise persons of *mestizo* and indigenous background. Although in geographical and

political terms Mexico forms part of North America, this country's experience of high levels of emigration to the USA and its position as a country of transit migration, draws it closer to its Central American counterparts. Mexico–US migration is the world's largest migration corridor, and dominates public debates on migration in both countries.

3. Caribbean countries display a mixed population resulting from the impact of colonization, slave trafficking and labour migration. This area has sizable populations of African origin, but there are also many of European and Asian descent. In the period of decolonization after 1945 there were substantial flows to former colonial powers: Jamaica and other islands to the UK, Surinamese to the Netherlands, Guadeloupe to France and so on. In recent years, countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica have all experienced considerable emigration towards the United States.
4. The Andean area in the north and west of South America comprises Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Venezuela and has a population of *mestizo* and indigenous background. Immigration from Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to this area was less significant than to others in the region. In recent decades, the Andean area has been characterized by significant migration flows from Ecuador to Spain, and from Colombia to the United States and to Venezuela.
5. The Southern Cone includes Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. These countries have substantial populations of European origin due to massive immigrant settlement from Europe. There were also inflows from elsewhere: for example, Brazil received African slaves into the nineteenth century and Japanese workers from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s. In recent decades, Brazil, Argentina and Chile have experienced complex migration patterns: emigration to Europe increased up to the GEC, but since 2009 new movements from Europe have been observed, while immigration from other parts of Latin America has grown.

Migration from 1945 to the 1970s

While the scale of European immigration after 1945 was substantially lower than that of previous times, the Americas experienced more significant levels of intra-regional flows with well-defined migration corridors developing between neighbouring countries. Spontaneous or irregular migration was the predominant form of migration in Latin America, and was not viewed as a problem until the late 1960s (Lohrmann, 1987). The later part of this period also witnessed the beginning of significant emigration movements from Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean countries, the Andean region and the Southern Cone to the industrialized countries of North America and Europe.

The USA and Canada

Large-scale post-1945 immigration to the USA developed later than in Western Europe due to the restrictive legislation enacted in the 1920s. Intakes averaged 250,000 persons annually in the 1951–60 period, and 330,000 annually during 1961–70: a far cry from the average of 880,000 immigrants per year from 1901 to 1910. The 1970 Census showed that the number of overseas-born people had declined to 9.6 million (only 4.7 per cent of the population) (Briggs, 1984) compared with 13.9 million (13.2 per cent of the population) in 1920. The 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act were seen as part of the civil rights legislation of the period, designed to remove the discriminatory national-origins quota system. They were not expected or intended to lead to large-scale non-European immigration (Borjas, 1990). In fact, the amendments created a system of worldwide immigration, in which the most important criterion for admission was kinship with US citizens or residents. The result was a dramatic upsurge in migration from Asia and Latin America. At the same time, migration potential from Europe was declining due to the increased prosperity of Western Europe and migration prohibitions in the Soviet Bloc.

US employers, particularly in agriculture, also recruited temporary migrant workers, mainly men, in Mexico and the Caribbean. Trade unions were highly critical, arguing that domestic workers would be displaced and wages held down. Government policies varied: at times, systems of temporary labour recruitment, such as the 'Bracero Program' (see below), were introduced. In other periods, recruitment was formally prohibited, but tacitly tolerated, leading to the presence of a large number of irregular workers.

Canada followed policies of mass immigration after 1945. At first only Europeans were admitted. Most entrants were British, but Eastern and Southern Europeans soon played an increasing role. The largest immigrant streams in the 1950s and 1960s were of Germans, Italians and Dutch. The introduction of a non-discriminatory 'points system' for screening potential migrants after the 1966 White Paper opened the door for non-European migrants. The main source countries in the 1970s were Jamaica, India, Portugal, the Philippines, Greece, Italy and Trinidad (Breton *et al.*, 1990). Throughout the period, family entry was encouraged, and immigrants were seen as settlers and future citizens.

Mexico and Central America

Migration flows from Mexico during this period were unidirectional to the USA. In an initial phase of 'dissuasion' in the early years of the twentieth century, the Mexican government aimed at attracting home citizens who remained in the territories lost to the USA during the mid-nineteenth century, as well as dissuading potential emigrants from answering the calls of US labour recruiters to move north for work. Later on, there was a phase

of negotiation after the outbreak of World War II leading to the so called 'Bracero Program' (1942–64) that mobilized 4.5 million young men to work as temporary migrants in US agriculture and railway track maintenance (Alba, 2010; Durand, 2004). Mexico received few immigrants during these years. A significant exception was the more than 20,000 Spanish refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War (Salazar Anaya, 2010).

During this period, Central American countries were characterized by seasonal internal and intra-regional migration. For instance, Guatemalan agricultural workers travelled every year to the south of Mexico to labour on coffee plantations; while Salvadorians went to work in the cotton growing areas of Guatemala and Nicaragua and the banana plantations of Honduras (Castillo, 2006; Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991). Migration flows outside the region, in particular to the USA, only reached significant levels with the outset of military conflicts in the 1960s. Migration to the USA, caused by both economic motivations and the need to seek protection from violence has continued to increase significantly since then (USINS, 1999).

The Caribbean

Intra-regional migration has a long tradition in the Caribbean. For instance, by 1930 there were an estimated 100,000 Haitians and 60,000 Jamaicans in Cuba (Portes and Grosfoguel, 1994). There were also outflows towards former colonizer countries. Britain recruited thousands of men from the Caribbean for military service in both World Wars, with many of these men eventually settling in the UK. The post-1945 period saw a labour shortage in the UK that led to a further influx of labourers from the Caribbean, in particular Jamaica and Barbados (Glennie and Chappell, 2010). During the 1950s and 1960s there were also significant movements of migrants from Dutch overseas provinces and former colonies in the Caribbean towards the Netherlands (Ferrer, 2011).

Caribbean migration to the USA increased significantly in the second part of the twentieth century. The initial upsurge was driven by the movement of Puerto Ricans, yet Cuban migration became very significant in the 1960s following the Cuban revolution (Portes and Grosfoguel, 1994). Cuban immigration remains significant today, with thousands of Cubans being granted asylum and residency status under the 'wet-foot, dry-foot' policy (Migration Dialogue, 2008). This 1995 rule allows any Cuban who manages to enter the USA to stay and to apply for residency after a year, while those apprehended at sea are sent back to Cuba or to a third country.

The Andean area

Migration flows in the Andean area were for the most part intra-regional and on a small scale up to 1970. In the case of Ecuador for instance,

there were small migrant flows to Venezuela and to the USA from the 1940s (Jokisch, 2007). Bolivian migration flows to Argentina started in the mid-1930s and lasted for decades until mechanization reduced labour needs. Most Andean countries did not attract large-scale European immigration. Colombia attempted to implement immigration programs after World War II, but failed due to political instability (Bérubé, 2005). Venezuela was an exception in the region, after the military regime of Pérez Jiménez established a policy of 'open doors', which successfully attracted a large influx of European immigrants between 1949 and 1958. About 332,000 persons, mainly of Italian origin, settled in Venezuela (Álvarez de Flores, 2006–7; Picquet *et al.*, 1986). Venezuela also experienced high levels of intra-regional immigration – particularly from neighbouring Colombia – beginning in the second half of the 1960s. The growth of migration to Venezuela was linked to the economic boom created by the expansion of the oil industry (Álvarez de Flores, 2006–7).

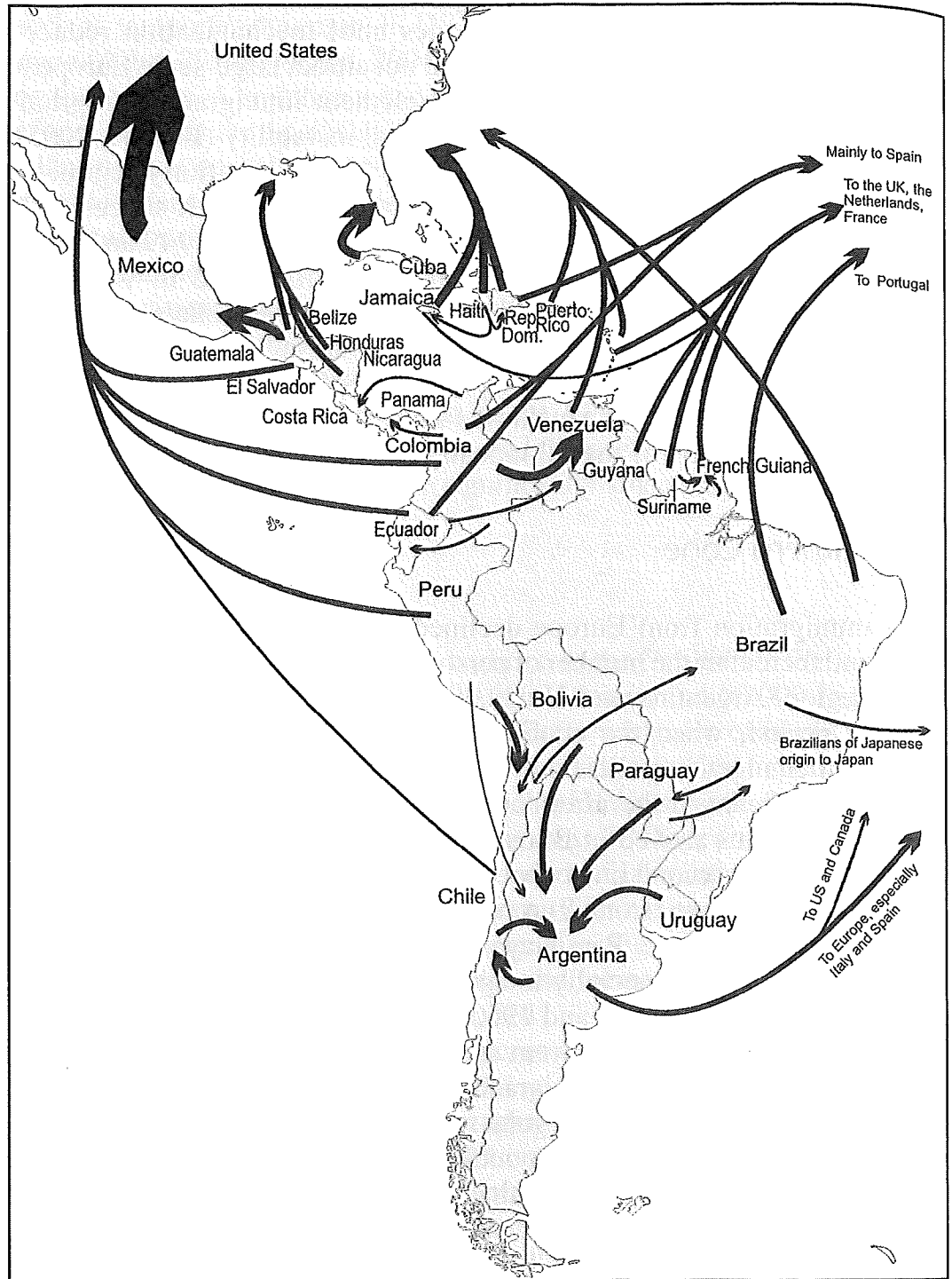
The Southern Cone

Mass immigration from Europe declined sharply by the 1930s (Barlán, 1988) and thereafter the number of persons born in Europe began to decline in the region. Argentina and Uruguay encouraged immigration until the interwar period, when the economic depression of the 1930s brought significant changes in policies. In the case of Brazil, Japanese migration became significant in the aftermaths of World War I and World War II. Japanese migrants arrived in Brazil in two waves: the first, between 1925 and 1936 and the second one between 1955 and 1961 (Amaral and Fusco, 2005). But as inflows from Europe waned, intra-continental migrations developed. For instance, Paraguayan and Chilean labour migrants began to find employment, especially in agriculture, in North-eastern Argentina and Patagonia in the 1950s and 1960s respectively (Jachimowicz, 2006). Foreign workers also spread from agricultural areas to major urban centres. Single – mostly male – migrants were soon joined by their families, creating neighbourhoods of irregular immigrants in some cities. Argentina also witnessed its first significant outflow of emigrants: between 1960 and 1970, an estimated 185,000 Argentines – mostly high skilled – relocated to countries such as the USA, Spain and Mexico (Jachimowicz, 2006).

Migration since the 1970s

This period was dominated by massive northward flows of both regular and irregular migrants from all areas in Latin America towards the industrialized countries of North America and Europe (see Map 8.1). Two main factors were behind the rise in emigration. The first was increasing demand for foreign labour in the USA, Europe and Japan.

Map 6.1 *Contemporary migrations within and from Latin America*



Note: The size of the arrowheads gives an approximate indication of the volume of flows. Exact figures are often unavailable.

The importance of economic restructuring in creating a demand for migrant workers can be seen most clearly in the relationship between the US and Mexican economies: the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 accelerated economic integration between the two countries through the growth of *maquiladoras*

(mainly US-controlled factories in northern Mexico), as well as labour migration, allowing reduction of labour costs and increased profits for US corporations as well as smaller-scale agricultural and service enterprises (this complex process is analysed in Cypher and Delgado Wise, 2011; Delgado Wise and Covarrubias, 2009).

The second factor was the economic woes of Latin America. GDP per capita in Latin America declined sharply in the 1980s, which some called the 'decade lost to debt' (Fregosi, 2002: 443). Democratic renewal and a trend toward liberalization in the early and mid-1990s briefly buoyed Latin American economies before a succession of economic crises ravaged the area again. The number of people living below the poverty line had increased from 136 million in 1980 to 215 million in 1999 (ECLAC, 2011). Increasing levels of social and economic inequality exacerbated the lack of opportunities for significant sectors of the population, fuelling out-migration. These two factors are interconnected, since the economic problems of Latin America were closely connected with US economic dominance and the introduction of neoliberal policies.

The USA and Canada

Migration to the USA grew steadily after 1970. Total immigrant numbers, i.e. the stock of foreigners (called 'aliens' in the USA) granted legal permanent resident status ('Green Cards'), rose from 4.2 million in the ten-year period 1970–9 to 6.2 million in 1980–9, 9.8 million in 1990–9 and 10.3 million in 2000–9. The decline in the growth rate is due to the impact of the GEC as well as trends towards securitization of migration since 9/11 (see Chapter 9), yet the USA remains the world's number one destination for migrants, and over half of them come from Latin America (OAS, 2011: 58). On average, around 1 million people per year obtained Green Cards in the USA in the first decade of the twenty-first century (OAS, 2011: table B.1.1). Mexicans, Central Americans, Chinese, Indians and Filipinos were the largest groups. In 2010, 620,000 people were naturalized, down from the peak of over 1 million in 2008. Mexicans, Indians, Chinese and Filipinos were the most numerous amongst the new US citizens (UNDESA, 2009).

However, 64 per cent of Green Cards from 2005 to 2009 went to family members of US citizens or permanent residents and 15 per cent to refugees and asylum seekers. Only 15 per cent were employment related, and half of these went to family members of persons admitted as workers. Overall, only 7 per cent of Green Cards went to principal applicants, most of whom were highly skilled workers. This compares poorly with other OECD countries: for example in 2008, 79 per cent of visas issued by Spain, 59 per cent by Germany and 42 per cent by Australia were for work-based immigrants. The US Green Card system is slow and inflexible, with waiting periods of several years, due to numerical and country-of-origin limits (Orrenius and Zavodny, 2010).

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In recent years, the US Government has expanded temporary work-related visa schemes, which now bring in far more skilled workers than the Green Cards, but do not provide long-term security of residence. In 2010, 1.7 million temporary workers were admitted – mainly highly skilled personnel. The intake of seasonal agricultural workers (H2A visas) also increased from 28,000 in 2000 to 139,000 in 2010. The main countries of origin for temporary workers were Canada, Mexico and India (UNDESA, 2009).

Refugee admissions plummeted in the wake of the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 due to more stringent security requirements in processing. Middle Eastern and African refugees were particularly adversely affected. However, numbers have since increased again. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported that 73,000 refugees were admitted in 2010. An additional 21,000 persons were granted asylum. Asians formed the largest origin group of both refugees and asylum seekers (UNDESA, 2009) The USA remains by far the world's top resettlement country for refugees, followed by Canada and Australia.

Irregular migration remains significant. As of 2010, there were 10.8 million irregular migrants living in the United States, down from the peak of 11.8 million in 2007 (Hoefer *et al.*, 2011). Irregular migration results from a combination of high labour demand in the USA and the absence of an adequate mechanism for regular entry of low-skilled workers. Increased US border enforcement in recent years has made it more difficult, dangerous and costly for irregular migrants to enter the country (Cornelius, 2001; Jimenez, 2009). One consequence has been an increase in the number of deaths, as migrants take greater risks to reach the USA. Estimates suggest that over the period 1994–2009, between 4,000 and 6,000 migrants died trying to cross the US–Mexico border (Jimenez, 2009). Successive US administrations have failed to implement an immigration reform to address the situation of millions of irregular migrants. Critics point out that the current system has created a 'massive underground of persons' who have lived with an irregular status for years or even decades (Human Rights Watch, 2011). (See Chapter 13 for discussion of the politics of immigration in the USA.)

Canada remains one of the few countries in the world with an active and expansive permanent immigration policy, which aims to admit the equivalent of 1 per cent of its total population of about 34 million each year. In 2010, there were 7.2 million foreign-born residents in Canada, up from 5.5 million in the year 2000. Foreign-born residents made up 21 per cent of the Canadian population – one of the highest shares in any developed country (CIC, 2011). In contrast to earlier European migrants, who settled all over Canada, new arrivals increasingly concentrate in the largest cities: Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver.

In 2010, Canada recorded 281,000 'landings', to use the Canadian term. Entries from South and East Asia and the Middle East have grown, while entries from Europe have declined. In 2010, the top three countries of origin were the Philippines, India and China. Arrivals from these countries accounted for a third of total arrivals (Challinor, 2011). Two-thirds of

arrivals were economic migrants, the majority of whom were skilled; however the category also includes accompanying dependants. This reflects a trend to emphasize skills, education, and language abilities in immigration selection criteria. Yet, there is growing concern regarding high levels of unemployment and underemployment of immigrants despite their impressive credentials (Basok, 2007; Reitz, 2007a; b). Canada granted permanent residency to 25,000 refugees in 2010 (CIC, 2011).

Like the USA, Canada has steadily increased its admissions of temporary foreign workers: in 2010, 182,000 entered Canada, compared with 116,000 in 2000 and 112,000 in 1990. The main countries of origin were the United States, Mexico and France (CIC, 2011). A significant component of Canada's temporary migration programmes is the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) which, since its inception in 1966, has recruited workers from Mexico and the Caribbean to work in agriculture, particularly in Ontario's tomato industry. While recruitment used to be limited to married men, recently some women have been recruited as well. SAWP is regarded by many as a 'model' for temporary migration programmes due to its high degree of circularity; yet critics point to excessive employer control and workers' restricted mobility and social and political rights (Basok, 2007; Preibisch, 2010).

Increasingly, citizens of Canada and the USA emigrate, often as highly skilled workers but also in search of different lifestyles, especially in retirement. More than 1.1 million Canadians live abroad, primarily in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia (World Bank, 2011b). Similarly, more than 2.4 million US citizens live abroad. Top destination countries for US citizens are Mexico, Canada and Puerto Rico. The magnitude of these diasporas is small in relative terms, however. In the case of the United States, emigrants represent only 0.8 per cent of the total population while immigrants account for 13.5 per cent (World Bank, 2011b).

Mexico and Central America

Millions of Mexicans have left their country of birth in the last four decades. By contrast, immigration to Mexico has been low, with the population share of the foreign born remaining constant at about 0.5 per cent between 1970 and 2000, before reaching 0.9 per cent in 2010 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2011). Most Mexican workers have migrated to the USA in 'one of the largest mass migrations in modern history' (Pew Hispanic Centre, 2011). A third of migrants to the USA are Mexican nationals and approximately one tenth of Mexico's population now resides in the USA (Passel and Cohn, 2009). While migration to the USA traditionally originated in the rural areas of the Central Western region of Mexico, it now comes from nearly every part of the country (Alba, 2010), leading to rural depopulation in some areas (Cypher and Delgado Wise, 2011: 146–7). Over half of all Mexican immigrants to the

Box 6.1 Narco-capitalism and the 'ni-nis'

An increasingly important factor in Mexico and the rest of the region is the growth of 'narco-capitalism'; the domination of large areas of Mexico and especially of the border by violent drug cartels. These vie for control of the smuggling routes that link the Central American production areas with the profitable markets for drugs in the USA. Ironically the USA provides weapons for both sides: for the Mexican government forces through military aid and for the gangs through easy purchases in the southern states of the USA. In fact, drug cartels have been intertwined with elements of the government, the police and the army for many years. The recent increase in violence appears to be a result of the attempts of President Calderón since 2006 to meet US demands by cracking down on the cartels. The cartels have diversified into abduction of migrants for purposes of extortion, as well as forcing them to be drug couriers. Migrants who resist are often tortured or murdered. This situation, combined with the US recession and the anti-immigration laws in Arizona and other states, has made it hard for Mexicans to migrate to the USA (Covarrubias *et al.*, 2011; Tetreault, 2011).

The implementation of the free trade provisions of NAFTA after 1994 had already led to the decline of rural employment opportunities in many regions, such as the state of Zacatecas (García Zamora, 2009; García Zamora and Contreras Díaz, 2012). Emigration to the USA became a safety-valve, providing a perspective for young Mexicans who could not find work in agriculture at home. Now this option has been all but closed off by the violence at the border. According to Mexican social scientists, a generation of 'ni-nis' (*ni escuela, ni trabajo* – neither school nor work) has emerged: young people with no prospect of education or long-term employment. Many of them choose the lucrative – but often short – life of the drug-cartel soldier as preferable to a longer life of poverty. By providing a ready source of recruits for the gangs, the presence of the 'ni-nis' helps perpetuate a vicious circle of dependence, poverty, violence and underdevelopment.

Note: in addition to the sources cited, Box 6.1 is based on research by Malena Arias and Stephen Castles in the State of Zacatecas and on analyses by Mexican colleagues.

USA are considered to be irregular (Terrazas, 2010). In 2010, there were estimated to be 6.6 million irregular migrants from Mexico, constituting 62 per cent of the USA's total irregular population (Hoefler *et al.*, 2011).

Mexico has also served as a transit country for migrants seeking to reach the USA and to a lesser extent as a destination for mostly Central American migrants and refugees. While seasonal labour migration from Central America has a long history, Mexico's role as a country of transit and destination increased significantly in the 1980s following the civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala which saw thousands of people fleeing to Mexico or travelling through to the country in order to claim asylum in the USA (Ángel Castillo, 2006). The Mexican government has been under constant US pressure to control its southern border

in order to reduce transit migration. In 2010, more than 65,000 irregular migrants were deported by Mexican authorities, most of whom were from Central America (Instituto Nacional de Migración, 2010). The risks to migrants trying to reach the USA via its southern neighbour are extreme: kidnapping, extortion and murder are frequent (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 2011).

Several Central American countries have experienced high levels of emigration since the 1970s. Political instability, natural disasters and economic insecurity have contributed to the departure of millions of people (Smith, 2006). The civil wars that devastated many Central American countries from the 1970s to the early 1990s caused many people to flee. Conservative estimates suggest that up a million Central Americans sought refuge in the USA during the 1980s, yet the US administration denied refuge to many for political reasons associated with the Cold War (Gzesh, 2006). As Mahler and Ugrina (2006) argue 'warfare not only killed thousands and displaced millions, it also institutionalized a migration pattern that heretofore had been very minor: emigration to *El Norte*'. Gang violence has become a problem in Central America too. Violent criminal organizations such as the *Mara Salvatrucha*, which were formed in the USA, have been 'exported' to Central America as hundreds of gang members have been deported due to criminal convictions (Migration Dialogue, 2007; Portes, 2010).

The USA is the top destination country for Central Americans, while other destinations include Canada, Mexico and Spain. There are also significant levels of intra-regional migration, with relatively wealthy Costa Rica and Belize attracting migrants from neighbouring countries (Mahler and Ugrina, 2006). The top emigration countries in the region are El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. The significance of emigration for the region is demonstrated by three important facts (World Bank, 2011a). First, emigrants represent a large percentage of the population of many Central American countries. Second, the emigration rate of the tertiary-educated population is 66 per cent for Belize, 31 per cent for El Salvador, 30 per cent for Nicaragua, and 24 per cent for Honduras and Guatemala. Finally, remittances play an important role for the economies of this area. For Honduras and El Salvador for instance, remittances are equivalent to, respectively, 19 and 16 per cent of GDP. However, the experience of Panama and Costa Rica diverges from the rest of Central America. Whether it is due to the absence of armed conflicts or the existence of relative economic and social security, both countries have not experienced nearly as much out-migration as other countries.

The Caribbean

Since the 1970s, the USA and Canada have been the top destination countries for Caribbean migrants, particularly from Anglophone countries (Ferrer, 2011). The number of Caribbean immigrants in the USA

grew from 194,000 in 1960 to 3.5 million in 2009. Half of all Caribbean immigrants in the USA came from Cuba and the Dominican Republic (McCabe, 2011). In Canada there were over half a million people of Caribbean origin in 2001, with the largest group coming from Jamaica (Lindsay, 2001).

Several Caribbean countries experience both significant emigration and immigration (Ferrer, 2011; World Bank, 2011a: 59). High two-way mobility reflects lack of economic opportunities at home, return migration of former emigrants and lifestyle migration of middle-class people from rich countries. Haiti experienced a considerable exodus of migrants in the aftermath of the severe earthquake of 2010. An estimated 500,000 Haitians moved to the neighbouring Dominican Republic. Yet many of those fleeing to the Dominican Republic have been victims of discrimination and deportations (Migration Dialogue, 2011).

The experience of Caribbean countries is rather similar to that of Central America: migration is characterized by its magnitude, selectivity, and economic significance. While the absolute number of emigrants coming from Caribbean countries is fairly small, the migrant stock as a percentage of the population is very high. Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda, and Barbados are all among the world top-ten emigration countries in terms of percentage of population (Ferrer, 2011; World Bank, 2011a: 4). Caribbean migration is further defined by its selectivity, with much higher average skill levels than for Latin American emigrants. Eight out of the world's top-ten emigration countries of tertiary-educated people are Caribbean countries, and Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Haiti have the highest levels of skilled emigration in the world (Ferrer, 2011; World Bank, 2011a: 9). This massive loss of skilled workers has created a situation in which many countries have seen their capacity to provide social services curtailed and have become increasingly reliant on remittances.

The Andean area

An increasing number of Andeans have migrated outside the area since the 1970s, traditionally to the USA and more recently to Spain. Yet Venezuela remains a significant country of destination. A number of factors lie behind the increase in migration rates in this area. In Colombia for instance, political, economic and social problems led to an increase in the number of emigrants. Estimates suggest that one in ten Colombians is currently living abroad, the majority of them residing in either the USA or Venezuela (Bérubé, 2005). A significant issue in Colombia is internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of the long-term conflict between government forces, left-wing guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug cartels. By mid-2010, approximately 3.4 million people were officially registered as IDPs (UNHCR, 2011a).

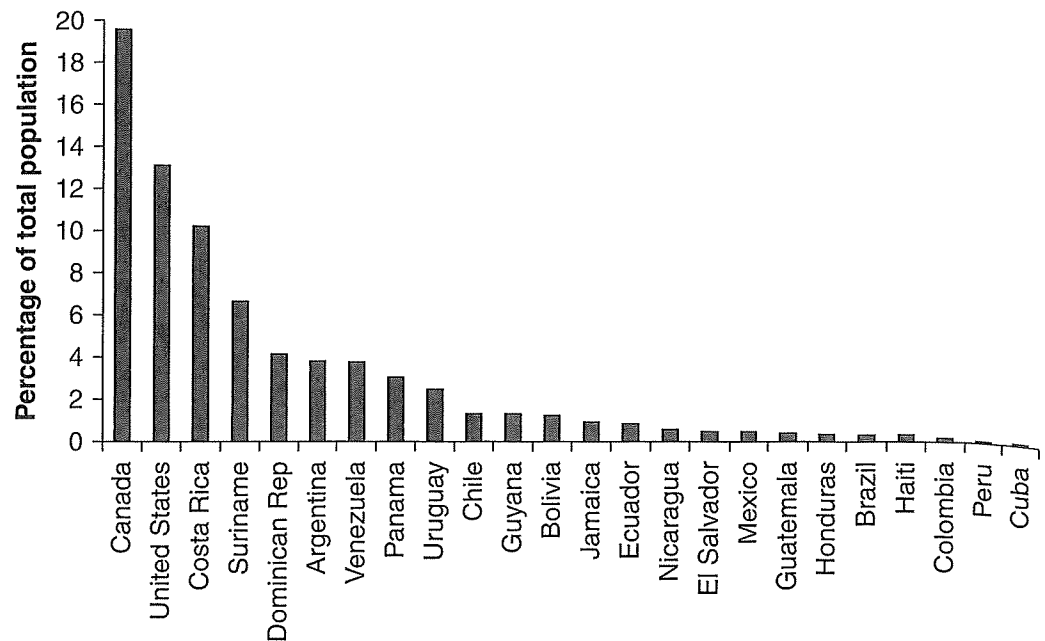
Economic instability in Ecuador in the 1980s and the 1990s generated two emigration movements. Most participants in the first movement travelled to the USA, with the population of the Ecuadorian-born increasing from 8,000 in 1960 to 143,000 by 1990 (Gibson and Lennon, 1999). In contrast, most of the second migratory movement went to Spain, which had less restrictive entry requirements and offered jobs for low-skilled workers in the informal economy (Jokisch, 2007). Spain became one of the main destinations for Andean migrants up to the GEC, although many have returned home since (Vono de Vilhena, 2011). At the same time Ecuador has experienced an increase in Colombian and Peruvian immigration since 2001 (Jokisch, 2007).

Since the 1990s, Peru, has experienced an increase in migration to Spain and neighbouring countries. In addition, descendants of earlier Japanese immigrants, or *Nikkeijin*, migrated to Japan as workers, following reforms that allowed second- and third-generation persons of Japanese descent easier access to a legal residential status (Kashiwazaki and Akaha, 2006). While the most significant flow of *Nikkeijin* was of Brazilians, many Peruvians also moved (see Chapter 7 for figures).

The experience of Venezuela has been different from that of other Andean countries, with a significant inflow of regional migrants since the 1970s. The reduction of immigration from Europe and oil-related economic growth after 1958 resulted in large-scale immigration from other Latin American countries. In 1979, the Andean Pact was signed, obliging member states to legalize irregular resident nationals from other member states (Picquet *et al.*, 1986). However, despite estimates ranging from 1.2 to 3.5 million irregular residents out of a total Venezuelan population of around 13.5 million, only some 280,000 to 350,000 irregular residents were legalized in 1980 (Meissner *et al.*, 1987). The early twenty-first century was characterized by continued political and economic instability. The unrest encouraged emigration from Venezuela, particularly to the USA (IOM, 2005). Spain also became a major destination country for Venezuelan immigrants, mainly from rural areas. However, Venezuela continued to receive significant migration flows from neighbouring countries (O'Neil *et al.*, 2005: 4).

The Southern Cone

The political and economic transformations of recent decades have resulted in changing migratory patterns. From the late 1960s until the 1980s the rule of military dictatorships forced thousands of people to flee from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay (Pellegrino, 2000). Many found refuge in countries such as Australia, Sweden and Mexico. The coming to power of military regimes also signified a transition to more restrictive immigration policies and fewer entries. Economic woes, particularly during the 1980s, further encouraged emigration from the Southern Cone.

Figure 6.1 *Foreign-born populations in selected American countries*

Source: World Development Indicators database, based on United Nations Population Division data, 2005 estimates.

Brazilians migrated to Paraguay in the late 1980s, where they worked in agriculture, while emigration to the USA also increased. By 2000, there were over 1.8 million Brazilians living abroad. Of these, 442,000 lived in Paraguay, 225,000 in Japan and 799,000 in the USA (Amaral and Fusco, 2005). Similarly, hyperinflation in 1989 and economic crises during the late 1990s and early 2000s encouraged emigration from Argentina. Estimates suggest that while in 1960 there were 95,000 Argentinean emigrants, this figure had increased to 603,000 by 2000 and to 806,000 by 2005 (Courtis, 2011).

The Southern Cone has, however, experienced a period of increased political and economic stability in recent years. Argentina and Chile have increasingly attracted intra-regional migrants. Over 65 per cent of the foreign-born population of Argentina are from other South American countries, notably from Paraguay, Bolivia and Chile (Jachimowicz, 2006). Chile has also become a pole of attraction for immigrants from Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. While Chile's 2002 Census reported 38,000 Peruvian immigrants, estimates suggest that by 2009 there were 131,000 – a four-fold increase (Altamirano Rúa, 2010; Courtis, 2011). An increasing proportion of Peruvian migrants are women, many of whom are employed as domestic workers by middle-class Chilean families (Doña and Levinson, 2004). Yet immigrants remains a low percentage of the total population of the countries in the Southern Cone (World Bank, 2011a).

Regional trends and policy developments

The global economic crisis (GEC)

The GEC that started in 2008 had important consequences for Latin America, particularly because the two main destination countries for migrants from the region, the USA and Spain were severely affected by the recession (see also Chapter 11). Spain has one of Europe's highest unemployment rates. (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2011a). The crisis has also led to pressure to further tighten immigration controls. As a result of the GEC, remittances to Latin America fell by 12 per cent in 2009 and remained almost flat in 2010. While remittances flows grew in 2011, this growth was lower than expected (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2011a).

Many migrants in the USA have opted for moving away from depressed sectors and geographical areas in order to increase their employment chances (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2011a). The decline in migration from Mexico to the USA is strongly linked to the US recession, which particularly hit sectors that employ many migrants, such as construction and manufacturing (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2009). While already established migrants are not returning home, prospective migrants are more hesitant to move in a climate of recession (IOM, 2010).

Feminization of migration

Migration flows in the Americas have become increasingly *feminized*. This follows a general pattern of change in the gender composition of international migration flows in recent decades, with the most significant rise being that in women moving as labour migrants rather than as family members. In the case of Latin America, women are now as likely as men to migrate both regionally and intercontinentally: the share of female migrants as percentage of all international migrants has grown from 44.2 per cent in 1960 to 50.1 in 2010 (IOM, 2010). Women make up 50 per cent of all immigrants in the USA and 52 per cent in Canada (UNDESA, 2009). This trend is accentuated in the Southern Cone and the Andean area where women represent a majority of the migrant population. The same applies to Latin American migrants in Spain (Rico, 2006). Domestic work is the predominant occupation for Latin American migrant women. This is a precarious form of employment, as domestic workers are often denied basic guarantees such as minimum wages, safe working conditions and employee benefits. At the same time, the employment of migrant domestic helpers allows middle-class women in destination countries to enter the labour market, often at high-skill levels (Orrenius and Zavodny, 2010, 10). Other sectors which employ significant numbers of migrant women include services and healthcare (Escobar Latapí *et al.*, 2010).

Trafficking and forced labour

Countries in Latin America often serve as origin or transit points for trafficking, mainly to the USA and Canada and, with increasing frequency, to Europe. The Dominican Republic is a major source and transit point of trafficked women for the sex trade. Trafficking also exists within various sub-regions. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bolivian and Paraguayan victims of trafficking have been identified in Argentina, while Central American victims have been identified in Mexico (UNODC, 2009). Migrants – particularly those with an irregular status – have at times been subjected to conditions of forced labour. Migrants employed in small clothing firms or agriculture are among those most at risk. According to the ILO (2009) the most common form of forced labour in the region is debt bondage, which occurs both within and across national borders. A well-documented case is that of Bolivian migrants who are forced to work in the garment industry in Argentina. This issue came to public attention following a fire in a factory in 2006 in which several Bolivians died. In the USA and Canada, both regular and irregular migrants have been found in debt bondage (ILO, 2009).

Policy initiatives

By the end of 2011, only 17 out of the 35 states that make up the Americas had ratified the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Neither the USA nor Canada, two of the world's top destination countries, have ratified the Convention (UN Treaty Collection, 2011). However, most countries in the region, with the exception of a number of Caribbean states, are signatories to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2011).

The post-Cold War period in Latin America and the Caribbean has been marked by efforts to reinvigorate and expand the many regional integration organizations such as MERCOSUR (the Southern Common Market) (Derisbourg, 2002). MERCOSUR includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela and encompasses a total population of over 250 million. MERCOSUR has introduced a series of immigration reforms in the Southern Cone designed to bring about free movement of people as part of broader sub-regional integration strategies (Perez Vichich, 2005). In the Caribbean, policies regarding migration in the area fall mostly under the responsibility of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which seeks to advance the integration of Caribbean nations and allows for the free movement of certain – mostly skilled – migrants (Ferrer, 2011). Other regional bodies have taken similar initiatives, but coordination and implementation has been generally poor.

Countries in the region have also adopted more informal modes of cooperation with each other and with international organizations in migration-related matters. The Puebla Process, which began in 1996, is a multilateral regional forum on international migration. It is one of 11 regional consultative processes (RCPs) monitored by the IOM. RCPs seek to bring together representatives of states and international organizations to foster informal dialogue and the exchange of information on issues of common interest. The catalyst for the Puebla Process was a growing concern over irregular migration affecting North and Central America (Regional Conference on Migration, 2011).

Irregular migration

Much policy attention has been given to the issue of irregular migration. However, bilateral and regional cooperation remains problematic. Memoranda of understanding (MoU) have been signed between North and Central American countries to enhance border control and reduce irregular migration. In 2004 Mexico signed a MoU with the USA facilitating the deportation of an annual average of 570,000 Mexicans from the USA. In 2006 Mexico signed a similar MoU with Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. This scheme has seen an annual average of 59,000 Central American irregular migrants deported from Mexico since 2007 (GMFD, 2010). However, such schemes have done little to curtail irregular migration, nor to reduce stocks of irregular residents in destination countries.

By contrast, regularization programmes have been conducted in the Southern Cone. Argentina implemented a large regularization programme between 2006 and 2010 aimed at migrant workers from the MERCOSUR residing irregularly in the country. As of 2010, the *Patria Grande* programme had benefited an estimated 222,000 migrants by granting them legal residence in Argentina, while there were more than 400,000 pending applications (GMFD, 2010). A similar, though smaller programme was conducted in Chile in 2007–8, attracting 49,000 applications, primarily from Peruvian migrants (OAS, 2011). A further significant development was the promulgation of a new Migration Law in Mexico in 2011. This law formally recognizes the rights of migrants – irrespective of their legal status – to basic services such as health, education and access to justice (Honorable Congreso de la Unión, 2011). However, critics point out that the law by itself may not ensure an end to the violation of migrant rights in practice (Sin Fronteras, 2011).

Remittances and development

Money sent home by migrants continues to play an important role in many of the region's economies. The World Bank estimates that Latin America received US\$58.1 billion in remittances in 2010, up from

US\$20.2 billion in 2000. Mexico received US\$22.6 billion in remittances, the highest amount in the region. Brazil and Guatemala – the second and third recipient – received an estimated US\$4.3 billion each (World Bank, 2011a). While the magnitude of flows may not be as large as for Mexico, remittances represent a very significant proportion of the GDP of many Central American and Caribbean countries. Most remittances came from the USA, but there were also significant inflows from Spain, Canada, and Italy (World Bank, 2011a), (See Chapter 3 above on the relationship between remittances and development.)

Growth of social movements concerned with migration

The move towards democratic – and in some cases left-of-centre – governments in Latin America has helped to open the political space for mobilization of migrant association and human rights groups calling for better conditions and rights for migrants. Such social movements have been particularly important in the Americas, and attempts at coordination have been linked to the World Social Forum and the Civil Society Days of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GMFD), but also to religious groupings like the Catholic Scalabrini Order. One of the most important mobilizations was the mass demonstrations all over the USA in 2006, when Mexican and other migrants in the USA protested against proposed laws, which would have criminalized irregular migrants. On 10 April, millions of people demonstrated in 102 cities, with the largest single gathering of around half a million in Los Angeles (Gelatt, 2006). Further huge protests followed on 1 May (Newman, 2006). The National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC) emerged as an important coordination body, which continued to organize protests, for instance against the anti-immigrant legislation of March 2010 in Arizona (NALACC, 2010).

An important international coalition of migrant and human rights organizations is the People's Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights (PGA). The PGA seeks – as its name indicates – to add human rights to the debates on migration and development pursued by the GMFD. The PGA's meeting in Mexico City in 2010 took the initiative to call for a new system of statistical indicators that would reflect all aspects of the costs and benefits of migration for all the parties involved (Castles, 2011; Puentes *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusions

While the USA remains the world's number one international migration destination, the growth of its migrant stock has slipped back in recent years. The USA's economic dominance of the Americas appears to be in decline,

and new democratic governments have emerged which are unwilling to toe the neoliberal line. Although South–North movements remain the main feature of migration for the region, their relative importance is waning, as both the USA and Europe face a prolonged economic crisis, while migrations within Latin America to poles of economic growth like Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Venezuela are on the increase. In an unexpected reversal of long-term trends, young and mainly highly educated Europeans are now seeking to escape growing unemployment in Spain, Portugal and Italy by moving to Latin America.

A key question is whether such shifts are just temporary effects of the GEC or instead are indicative of long-term structural changes in the regional political, demographic and economic patterns which shape migration. Clearly, it is too early to answer this question at present. In any case, it must be stressed that the Americas remains a region with high levels of migration driven primarily by stark inequality. The need to migrate to make a decent living is a daily reality for millions of people, even though the risks involved are often very severe. Governments in both the South and North of the continent continue to struggle to improve legal frameworks and policies relating to migration. Often narrowly understood national interests are put above long-term collaborative approaches, which have made little progress, despite efforts by international organizations. No wonder then the issue of migration has become increasingly politicized, especially in immigration countries like the USA, where exclusionary approaches appear as sure vote-getters to many politicians.

The growth of national and international debates on migration has opened the political space for the growth of migrant associations and coalitions of these with human rights groups. One important trend of recent years is that critical voices have grown louder, and people seen hitherto as powerless – like irregular migrants and migrant women – have been willing to make sacrifices and take risks to claim their human rights. The active involvement of migrant organizations in struggles for migration in conditions of safety, dignity and legality may prove a major factor for change in the future. This is a global trend, but may prove especially significant in the Americas, where governments of major immigration countries publicly endorse principles of human rights, while ever-more emigration countries are undergoing democratization.

To what extent do the patterns examined in this chapter on the Americas reflect the various theoretical positions on international migration and its meaning for both origin and destination societies discussed in Chapters 2 and 3? The accounts given here do illustrate how international migration is very much part of the contemporary processes of development and social transformation that are taking place. The Americas includes some of the richest countries of the world as well as some of the poorest and some that are making the breakthrough to economic growth and middle-income status. Human mobility is driven both by inequality and by perceptions of opportunities for improvement elsewhere. The underdevelopment of much

of the Americas helps provide labour for the richer parts, confirming key ideas of historical–structural approaches. Yet for those who have the necessary resources and agency, mobility can be a key aspect of individual freedom and of human development. A key question for the future remains whether migration will perpetuate underdevelopment and inequality by shifting human resources to rich areas, or whether it can help provide the capital and skills needed for development and convergence.

Guide to further reading

Good studies of migration to the USA include Borjas (2001); Portes and Rumbaut (2006); and Zolberg (2006). Information on Mexico–US migration can be found in the 2011 Report of Amnesty International (2011) and in Massey *et al.* (2002). The works on the political economy of migration edited by Munck *et al.* (2011) and Phillips (2011b) include studies on the Americas. The website of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) <http://www.cepal.org/default.asp?idioma=IN> is a valuable source for information on the political economy of Latin America.

A detailed overview of migration concerning the Americas is provided by the *First Report of the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas* (Organisation of American States, 2011). For a recent analysis of emergent patterns at sub-regional levels see Martínez Pizarro (2011).

The *International Migration Outlook* of the OECD is an invaluable source for a number of countries in the region, as is the *World Migration Report* of the IOM. *Migration News*, the *Migration Information Source* and the International Network on Migration and Development are good online sources on migration-related issues for the region (see list of websites and URLs at the beginning of the book). The Pew Research Centre provides up-to-date information on a number of migration-related issues in the USA.

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