

## *Homo sapiens sapiens*, A MIGRANT SPECIES

Migration is a natural phenomenon motorized by the need for survival and the satisfaction of elementary necessities as nourishment and reproduction. Such are the forces that propel the displacement of immense swarms of butterflies, schools of fish or flocks of birds, in search of food, protection and survival. Man, on the other hand, seems to have been a frequent migrant, a trait that took him, in the early times, from Africa to Asia and Europe.

The contemporary man continues to migrate. He does so in search of nourishment, of better living conditions and, above all, of liberty. So as telluric forces move mountains and rivers, social forces displace multitudes. Where there is famine and where there is ideologic harassment, forces are generated that compel the population to search for other horizons. Totalitarian regimes are accompanied by dissidence and persecution, and often also by very severe economic crises.

In our region such regimes are common, and very few countries have been exempted from one or another form of totalitarianism, be it of left or right, in the last decades. The case of Venezuela is outstanding, for being a country with great natural resources that has been converted in a short time into a pariah state, with a nonviable economy and a population subjected to poverty conditions, with nonoperative health, education and protection services.

One consequence of this situation is a massive migration of the population, never before seen in the country, toward neighboring countries, as well as distant ones. From poor workers to prosperous practitioners integrate the migratory masses. A sector that is particularly affected is that of professionals and technicians, whose training allow a more effective and rapid placement in their new destinations. Among the latter are those dedicated to scientific research.

The Research Department of the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) started, in mid 2019, a project oriented to study the impacts of migration in Latin América and the Caribbean. Within the framework of this project, studies have been carried out about the educational, social and economic aspects of migration in the region. The article by Diez *et al.* published in the current issue of *Interciencia* is an extract of the material published by the authors as a result of the IDB project. In this case, the publication concerns migration in

the community of researchers from Venezuela.

In a country where official statistics are scarce and untrustworthy it becomes particularly important to have access to relevant information about the processes subjected to analysis. It is thanks to the existence of a private data base that the mentioned article succeeds in evaluating both the demographic aspects of the emigration that has replaced an immigratory process that lasted for almost a century, and the scientific productivity of those who migrate and the reasons that have motivated them to do so.

In the personal realm, emigration is a phenomenon with aspects of separation and exile that are exacerbated by the current pandemic, but its reach in the panorama of scientific activity of a country is hard to pinpoint. The emigration of staff members of higher education institutions and research centers has and will have highly negative consequences on the training of future generations of professionals and on the possibilities to regenerate the lost capacities for development and generation of wellbeing.

In the Venezuelan case there are additional elements to the staff emigration. The lack of maintenance, renovation and updating of the existing installations, aggravated by vandalism and hundreds of criminal actions perpetrated by political herds in laboratories of universities and scientific institutions, foretell serious difficulties.

Although it is difficult to nail down the damages derived from the emigration of researchers and fully foresee its consequences, there are benefits as well. The need and importance of the design of adequate public policies to recover the lost capacities should be emphasized, as the authors of the article state.

History should be a critical compilation of facts and data. But, more than that, it is an accumulation of constructs and reconstructions, of interpretations and reinterpretations of such facts. Its truthfulness and its consequences fluctuate. The article of Diez *et al.* is an attempt to extract real data about current facts.

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