SCIENCE AND MIGRATION: BUILDING BRIDGES FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In recent decades, Latin America and the Caribbean have witnessed intense migratory flows. Migration, far from being a merely demographic phenomenon, reflects deep structural inequalities, economic crises, political instability, and more recently, the effects of climate change. However, in this challenging context, science emerges as a bridge capable of connecting communities, preserving identities, and building new opportunities for the region.

The migration of scientific talent is not a new phenomenon. Often, the lack of adequate research conditions, job insecurity, and limited investment in science and technology have forced many researchers to seek opportunities abroad. This "brain drain" has traditionally been seen as an irreparable loss. However, in recent years, the perception of the Latin American scientific diaspora has begun to change: the value of migrant researchers as key actors in strengthening collaboration networks, knowledge transfer, and generating projects with regional impact is increasingly recognized.

Science, by its collaborative and cross-border nature, offers unique tools to turn migration into an opportunity. Migrant scientists not only maintain ties with their countries of origin but also become bridges to global academic communities. Through joint projects, co-authored publications, and participation in international networks, these researchers help highlight regional problems, attract funding, and promote the training of new talent.

However, the transformative potential of science in the migration context is not limited to the scientific diaspora alone. Science can also be a vehicle for integrating migrant populations in host countries. Promoting science literacy programs, community health projects, and outreach activities in receiving communities can help reduce cultural and linguistic barriers and strengthen a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

In this regard, it is essential to rethink public policies to support migrant scientists while also leveraging their contributions to regional development. Strengthening initiatives that promote South-South cooperation, creating temporary return programs, and fostering mentoring networks are strategies that can enhance the transformative power of science.

Likewise, we must not forget the importance of valuing and protecting local and ancestral knowledge. In migratory contexts, these knowledge systems are often displaced or rendered invisible. Science has the ethical responsibility to integrate and respect these forms of knowledge, creating spaces for intercultural dialogue that enrich knowledge production and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Latin America and the Caribbean face common challenges: biodiversity loss, health crises, social inequality, and vulnerability to natural disasters. These problems know no borders and demand joint responses based on scientific and technological cooperation. Regional integration, in this sense, should not be seen merely as a political ideal but as a strategic necessity to ensure the well-being of our communities.

Scientific journals, such as *Interciencia*, play a crucial role in this process. By showcasing research that addresses migration from multidisciplinary perspectives and promoting the publication of work that integrates regional experiences, knowledge, and transnational collaborations, *Interciencia* actively contributes to building a more inclusive, supportive, and socially engaged science in the region.

Finally, it is essential to recognize the courage and resilience of those who migrate. Each migration story carries not only personal challenges but also immense potential for social transformation. Science, in its broadest and most humanitarian sense, can and must be a tool to turn these experiences into opportunities for collective development.

Thus, migration should not be seen solely as a loss for the region but as an opportunity to weave stronger networks, build knowledge bridges, and strengthen Latin American and Caribbean identity. Science has the responsibility to lead this path, showing that when bridges are built and spaces for cooperation are opened, geographic boundaries dissolve, and the possibilities for a shared and sustainable future multiply.

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