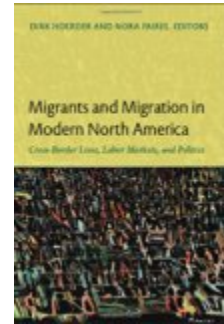


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Dirk Hoerder, Nora Faires, eds. *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America: Cross-Border Lives, Labor Markets, and Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. Maps. 456 pp. \$89.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-5034-7; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-5051-4.

Reviewed by Dominique Brégent-Heald
Published on H-Borderlands (January, 2013)
Commissioned by Benjamin H. Johnson



Continental Movements, Cross-Border Connections

Recent scholarship on borderlands has illuminated the ways in which the migration of diverse groups of peoples have both been influenced by and shaped economic, political, societal, and cultural patterns across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. In *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America*, coeditors Dirk Hoerder and the late Nora Faires have compiled a collection of essays that move beyond the boundaries of nation-states, offering a broader framework within which to understand translocal and transregional population movements. Hoerder and Faires clarify that the volume's outlook is "continental, not continentalist"; the contributors, most of whom are historians, do not advocate for closer ties between nation-states but rather provide "an integrated history of North American [including the Caribbean] migration" from various disciplinary angles (p. xiii).

Hoerder's introduction offers a masterfully synoptic account of voluntary and involuntary demographic shifts into and within North America over the past two centuries. The inclusion of maps (thirteen!) helps with understanding the spatial dynamics of the regions under consideration. Borders transformed from the shifting, cultural, and economic-ecological regions of contact of the First Nations to fixed, surveyed, and regulated borderlines. Hoerder also provides a historiographic overview of migration scholarship. He concludes by explaining the volume's "transcultural societal studies" approach to migration, which combines macro- and micro-levels of analysis to "capture the diversity of hu-

man lives" (p. 39).

The subsequent nineteen original essays are grouped into four thematic sections. "Intersocietal Migrations" examines the cross-border movement of people within North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jaime R. Aguila and Brian Gratton add to the extensive scholarship on Mexican immigration and settlement into the United States by analyzing this northward flow from the perspective of shifts in Mexican and U.S. public policy. Meanwhile, transborder migration from Canada into the United States, as Bruno Ramirez demonstrates, is best understood from a regional standpoint. Finally, Lara Putnam teases out the complex migratory configurations and collective identities within the "circum-Caribbean migratory sphere" through the lens of sex and race.

The essays in part 2, "Connecting Borderlands, Littorals, and Regions," provide a closer assessment of the themes introduced in the previous section. Faires argues that the cross-directional movement of individuals and diverse groups of peoples across the U.S.-Canadian border has been central to the bilateral relationship between Canada and the United States. In a very personal essay, Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez (with Hoerder) posits that the "Greater Southwest North America" offers a "cultural space" of mingling and integration, which the imposition of borders and sociocultural hierarchies could not destroy (p. 150). According to Melanie Shell-Weiss, modern policymakers similarly imposed restrictions to

curb the freedom of movement of Caribbean migrants to North America, yet migration remains fundamental to the Caribbean diaspora. Delia González de Reufels and Hoerder turn our attention to Mexico's unique migration history by considering the movements of people into and within Mexico. The ways in which statutory exclusions and state-based regulation of immigration created a border *around* North America—a “continental perimeter”—is the topic of Angelika E. Sauer's contribution. Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez discusses the creation of the U.S.-Mexican border and the challenges faced by both federal governments to control this shared boundary line.

“Complicating Narratives” narrows the focus even further, as the essayists emphasize the multifaceted nature of mobility on a localized level. The three-hundred-year-old migration story of the Odawa family offers Susan E. Gray a window into the interconnected nature of Native patterns of migration and conceptions of space in the Upper Great Lakes. According to Dan Killoren, indigenous peoples tangled in a web of changing colonial boundaries in the Gila River Valley during the mid-nineteenth century adapted to the novel market circumstances resulting from the influx of Euro-American migrants. Moving away from the period of colonization, James N. Gregory reflects on the 1930s to the 1970s, which he dubs a “golden age of migration research” because of an increased scholarly and public fascination with “moving Americans” (p. 277). Sarah-Jane (Saje) Matthieu presents a historical overview of the experiences of black migrants from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States in Canada since European contact, tracing the ambivalent stances of white Canadians toward their presence in Canadian life. The experiences of Asian-origin migrants who traveled across the Pacific then traversed northward and southward across North America's inland boundaries during the Exclusion Era (1880s-1930s), Yukari Takai argues, shaped con-

cepts of national borders more broadly. John Mason Hart shows how migratory networks fueled by trade and commerce helped to define the U.S.-Mexican border region as one rife with inequalities between Mexican laborers and elites, and between U.S. capitalists and the Mexican economy.

Part 4, “Contemporary and Applied Perspectives,” addresses current debates concerning migration and migration policies. María Cristina García looks at how non-governmental actors affected the policies of Mexico, the United States, and Canada during the refugee crisis of 1975-96, when millions of displaced Central Americans fled this tumultuous region. For Rodolfo Casillas-R., Central American transmigratory patterns reveal the pros and cons of Mexico's porous southern border. Kerry Preibisch interrogates Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to shed light on contemporary restrictive immigration policies, labor shortages, and the treatment of guest workers from lower-income countries by the wealthier host state. The final chapter supplies useful suggestions for instructors on how to incorporate a continental framework to the undergraduate curriculum, particularly in American history surveys.

Certainly, most of the chapters apply this broadened perspective to examine elements of continuity/change and cross-currents of convergence/divergence in North American history while remaining complex and rich in detail. This integrationist approach serves as an exemplar for teaching and research in both migration and borderlands studies. *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America* presents a kaleidoscopic picture of human mobility by analyzing migration patterns from precontact to the present, from the “top down” and from the “bottom-up,” and by considering a range of movement among local borderlands communities to sweeping diasporic experiences of First Peoples, Mexicans, Canadians, Americans, Asians, and Caribbean migrants.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-borderlands>

Citation: Dominique Brégent-Heald. Review of Hoerder, Dirk; Faires, Nora, eds., *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America: Cross-Border Lives, Labor Markets, and Politics*. H-Borderlands, H-Net Reviews. January, 2013.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=35799>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.