

Esteban, Fernando Osvaldo. *El sueño de los perdedores. Cuatro décadas de migraciones de argentinos a España. (1970-2010)*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Teseo, 2015. 338 pp.

*El sueño de los perdedores* (The Dream of the Losers) is a sociological investigation about Argentine emigration to Spain between 1970 and 2010. This period includes a migratory cycle that began with political exile in the seventies, and ended with the recent return of emigrants during the economic crisis of 2001. In general terms, the work focuses on three crucial aspects of migration studies: the demographic characteristics of the migrants, the motivation behind the move, and economic integration upon arrival.

The appealing title of the book makes reference to what will be one of the main conclusions of the work. The author argues that the motivation behind the observed migration was different forms of loss in Argentina (material, symbolic, emotional...). Later, in Spain, they could not be compensated in any way for these losses, but rather, in many cases, their problems were reproduced (poverty, unemployment, family breakdowns, frustration...). On the other hand, it was also found that movement was motivated by dreams of progress and that, while this often conflicted with reality, migration was opportunity for many Argentines to materialize long-standing desires, or create new expectations. The author highlights the light and shadow of a complex process, one that is difficult to explain using only broad strokes and black and white, or even shortcuts prescribed by methodological nationalism, commonly used by researchers.

From a methodological point of view, the research was based on the exploitation of statistical sources and primary data from interviews and observations. The methodological triangulation was timely, not only because the object of the study is particularly complex, but, above all, because previous studies were scarce. However, it should be noted that the data has been somewhat out of date in relation to the change in migratory cycle that has occurred in both Argentina and Spain in recent years, although it is true that the time perspective has contributed to a more holistic view of the phenomenon.

The author structured the book in two parts. The first is dedicated to various demographic aspects of migration. Here, we look to answer how many people emigrated, when they did so, which demographic characteristics they had, how and with whom they moved, and why they chose to do so. The second part investigates how and to what extent Argentine migrants integrated themselves into, and progressed in, the Spanish labour market. The

topics covered allow for the observation that this group presents unique particularities in comparison to other groups of foreign immigrants in Spain, specifically those from Latin America.

The most significant findings of the work can be grouped into five key observations. The first is the identification of the flow of migration from Argentina to Spain from the post-war period until today. From the available data, the author paints a picture of the most salient of the sociodemographic characteristics, organizing them chronologically.

The second significant contribution of the work derives from the analysis of the migratory trajectories of the migrant population. The author concludes that while most Argentine immigrants moved directly from Argentina, there was a minority who had previous international migration experience and, in some cases, multiple migration experiences. This reveals the existence of different migration systems that link Argentina with several destination countries, most notably the United States and Italy and, to a lesser extent, Germany and the UK in Europe, and Brazil and Chile in Latin America. Another interesting finding concerning migratory paths is that there prevailed two types of migration according to the familial responsibilities of the migrants: the displacement of entire households, and that of single people. As a result, we can say that there were few families divided by migration, which is a unique case in the context of migration of Latin Americans to Spain.

The third contribution is derived from the analysis of the sociodemographic composition of the population born in Argentina, residing in Spain. The results include, in the first place, parity between the quantity of men and women, representing a notable difference from other, strongly feminized, groups of Latin American immigrants. Secondly, the age structure of the Argentines in Spain reflects the demographic footprint of immigration in which a large proportion of the working population predominates. However, we nonetheless encounter older generations amongst the migrant collective, due to the age of the colony in Spain, but also due to the fact that emigration also occurred at older age. Thirdly, the author demonstrates that Argentines had a better educational background than the total resident population, in Argentina and in Spain, especially among women.

An additional finding of the work that brings new elements to light is the identification of four migration projects. Two are associated with economic grounds, although the author distinguishes between migrants who fled impoverishment, and those who left Argentina *in fear* of impoverishment. The other two

projects however, have a tangential relation to historical context. On the one hand, people who migrated as companions and, on the other, young people looking for new experiences. The analysis of the destination choice (Madrid, Spain) draws attention to a little studied subject area, but one that is extremely important in order to later understand the social and economic integration of migrants: the social representations of Spain that have been established in Argentina since the 1980s.

A cultural aspect to the study of migration is the professional integration of immigrants in destination societies. The fifth and final contribution of the book is related to this issue, and is a comprehensive description of the employment of immigrants in three key episodes of the labour and migration path: before leaving Argentina, the first job in Spain, and the last. This exercise demonstrates that the balance of transnational social mobility underwent somewhat of a degradation process, with many seeing themselves “declassed” as it were, above all in large segments of the middle classes. Argentine immigrants arrived in Spain dreaming of a better life, but often they encountered the same misery that they had left behind. For this reason, emigration was a dream of losers.

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