Introduction

Steinar A. Sæther¹

In the course of world history approximately eighty million individuals have moved from one continent to another. More than sixty million of these movements occurred in the long century between 1820 and 1940.² Latin America was a prime receptor of international migrants; around fifteen million people from Europe, Asia, and Africa went there between 1820 and 1940.³ The total population of Latin America increased from twenty-one million in 1820 to almost 210 million in 1960, a ten-fold increase in part because of the effects of mass immigration. During the same period, nearly one million Norwegians emigrated. Norway and Ireland were the countries with the highest transatlantic migration rate in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Yet, Norwegians constituted a miniscule share of the total number of migrants who came to Latin America. Indeed, while Latin American states received millions of immigrants, and Norway was one of the major sources of emigrants in relative terms, very few Norwegians ended up in Latin America. Why? That is the central question underlying the studies in this volume. How can we explain that so few Norwegian migrants went to Latin America and even fewer chose to remain?

It may be objected that the articles in this anthology cover too few migrants over a too long period within a too vast territorial space. Does it make sense to study these seemingly disparate and fragmented migratory experiences together? Migration scholars, often with good reason, tend to focus on larger movements more concentrated in time and space. In the case of Latin American immigration history, they have paid particular attention to the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian migrants. But the study of the smaller migrant groups is also important, partly because in sum the smaller groups constituted a large proportion of the immigrants in Latin America. This volume contributes

-
- 1 The author thanks María Bjerg for her generous assistance and input in the writing of the introduction.
 - 2 Pieter Cornelis Emmer, "Intercontinental migration as a world historical process," *European Review* 1, no. 01 (1993): 68.
 - 3 Eduardo José Míguez, "Introduction: Foreign Mass Migration to Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries – An Overview," in *Mass Migration to Latin America*, ed. Samuel L. Baily and Eduardo José Míguez (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), xiv.

to our understanding of migrant experiences by dealing with the variety of options potential migrants seized even though they could not rely on a sizeable ethnic community for social capital. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all migratory streams evolve into large floods. The articles in this anthology all address the question of why there were not more Norwegian migrants in Latin America, an issue that has significance beyond both Latin America and the period 1820–1940.

This book presents the results of the multidisciplinary research project “Desired Immigrants – Frustrated Adventurers? Norwegians in Latin America, 1820–1940” for scholars and students interested in new approaches to migration history.⁴ One of the principal objectives of our research has been to study simultaneously at micro, meso, and macro levels the experiences of the Norwegian men and women who worked, lived, and traveled in Latin America between independence and the outbreak of World War II. Balancing the pursuits of microhistorical depth and macrohistorical overview is a central concern in each of the chapters. The authors have handled this differently: some of the chapters focus on particular individuals or families, using their singular experiences as prisms to explore wider tendencies, while other chapters adopt a more general outlook and treat Norwegians in one particular country or within one particular enterprise. This introduction provides a short overview of the European and Asian immigration to Latin America, outlines some of the general tendencies of Norwegian emigration in the period, and introduces the central questions that will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

Immigration to Latin America

Latin America, especially the areas outside the old colonial centers, was along with the United States and Canada the main receivers in the nineteenth-century transatlantic migration system. Cheaper and faster transportation, especially after the introduction of steam navigation and the early development of railways, facilitated the growth of new exports in grains, tropical fruits, meat, and minerals. The new economic sectors needed large numbers of skilled and unskilled labor. Immigrants to Latin America in general sought the major ports, the areas where fertile land could be bought or claimed, and the mines and oilfields often operated by foreign companies. José C. Moya has eloquently described how the old colonial centers in the Andes and in central

4 The research project “Desired Immigrants – Frustrated Adventurers? Norwegians in Latin America, 1820–1940” was principally funded by the Latin America Program of the Norwegian Research Council from 2011 to 2015.

Mexico receded relatively to the “new” cities such as Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Caracas, and São Paulo, while Havana and Rio de Janeiro were the exceptions in this regard, as they continued to be important ports throughout the nineteenth century as they had been during the colonial period. In short, European immigration was both a cause and a consequence of the great economic shift that relocated Latin America’s place with the Atlantic economic system.⁵

When the processes of independence ended, the majority of new Latin American states eased or completely lifted the restrictions on entry that had existed during colonial times, and sought to encourage immigration, particularly by Europeans. Although there existed an incipient migration during the first half of the nineteenth century, stimulated in part by the programs of agricultural colonization like those that attracted the first Swiss and German colonists to southern Brazil, massive migration to Latin America did not really start until the 1880s. The immigration reached new heights and peaked right before the outbreak of World War I. During the war, the immigration rate again receded. It partly recovered in the 1920s but without reaching the level of the prewar years. The economic implosion of the 1930s and the outbreak of World War II led to a drastic reduction of immigration to all Latin American countries, and although there was an upswing again following the war, the general movement of migrants to Latin America lost its vigor in the 1950s. Latin America gradually became a continent of net emigration, probably for the first time in human history.

Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Uruguay were the countries that attracted the greatest numbers of immigrants. Brazil and Argentina each received around four million immigrants between 1881 and 1930, while about 580,000 arrived in Uruguay. Cuba, whose official registration of immigration coincided with the end of Spanish rule in 1898, received 596,000 between 1902 and 1930, a number very close to that of Uruguay.⁶ However, since Cuba’s population was twice that of Uruguay’s, the demographic impact of immigration was much greater in the small South American republic than on the Caribbean island. Argentina and Uruguay received around a hundred thousand annually, though the economic downturn of the 1890s reduced the immigration rate temporarily. In Brazil the expansion of coffee production in the state of São Paulo, the policy of subsidized journeys, and the crisis of the Argentinean and Uruguayan destinations stimulated the immigration of Northern Italians and to a lesser extent of Spanish and Portuguese. In 1891, Brazil reached its peak immigration year with

5 José C. Moya, “A continent of immigrants: Postcolonial shifts in the Western Hemisphere,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2006).

6 Hernán A. Silva, José Sebastião Witter, and Alvaro Brandão Santos, eds., *Inmigración y estadísticas en el Cono Sur de América: Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Uruguay* (México, D.F.: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1990).

220,000 entries. But the fall of the price of coffee in the early 1900s caused a reduction in the number of entries and an increased level of return migration. When the negative cycle was reversed, Brazil again experienced a general migration trend similar to that of Argentina and Uruguay.⁷

There was only a very modest immigration wave to Mexico, despite the ambitious plans elaborated during the long reign of Porfirio Díaz to repopulate and strengthen the northern frontiers and increase the work force in export regions of the coastal south and east. Like their South American counterparts, Mexican authorities sought to attract “honorable and industrious” settlers to populate *tierras baldías*, state-owned vacant lands. Although some European countries were interested in Díaz’s migration policies – Italy and Belgium sent representatives to inspect the quality of the lands in question and the general conditions of the project – the results were meager. According to the statistics of Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz, only 33,980 European colonists arrived in Mexico between 1904 and 1920.⁸ Undoubtedly, political instability and the violence of the Mexican Revolution between 1910 and 1920 discouraged many potential migrants. In sum, between 1911 and 1931 there were 226,000 immigrants from different origins recorded in Mexico, a number above that of Chile, but much smaller in relative terms. Chile was politically much more stable than Mexico but received only 183,000 immigrants between 1881 and 1930.

Like other migrant destinations, Latin American countries received primarily young males who traveled alone and who had low professional qualifications. In later stages of the migration process, these men usually invited their fiancées, sisters, or wives, a mechanism that contributed to the configuration of dense networks and decreased the male domination of migrant populations, which in the initial stages had been three men for every woman, exemplified by the Italians and Spanish in Argentina.⁹ Perhaps the most important exceptions to this rule were on one hand the Italian families who migrated to the Brazilian coffee *fazendas* after the abolition of slavery in 1888, and on the other hand the Jewish immigration to the Argentinean pampas from 1891 onwards under the auspices of the Jewish Colonization Association,

7 Boris Fausto, *Fazer a América: a imigração em massa para a América Latina* (São Paulo/Brasília: Edusp Memorial/Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 1999); Elda E. Gonzalez Martínez, *La inmigración esperada: la política migratoria brasileña desde Joao VI hasta Getulio Vargas* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003).

8 Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz, “La población de América Latina, 1850–1930,” in *Historia de América Latina*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Barcelona: Cambridge University Press/ Editorial Crítica, 1991), 113.

9 For instance, between 1880 and 1930 female participation in Galician migration to Argentina increased from 20 to 40 percent.

a philanthropic entity created by the banker Moritz von Hirsch for the relocation of Jewish agriculturalists from Eastern Europe to the Americas.¹⁰

The majority of European migrants who arrived in Latin America came from Southern Europe. In Brazil and Argentina, the Italians were the most numerous. There was a growth of migrants from the Iberian Peninsula to Brazil between 1869 and 1900, and from then on the proportion of Italians fell from 36 percent of migrants to 9 percent during the years of Fascism. Between 1906 and 1920, the proportion of Spanish and Portuguese increased, and by the 1920s both groups outnumbered the Italians. Although the presence of German-speaking settlers in the south of Brazil – in the states of *Río Grande do Sul*, *Santa Catarina*, and *Paraná* – dated from the early nineteenth century, the immigration from Central Europe, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, grew considerably in the aftermath of World War I. The war likewise caused a sizeable emigration from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, especially Syrians and Lebanese from the former Ottoman Empire.¹¹ One of the particularities of Brazil was the presence of the largest Japanese community in Latin America. The Japanese started to arrive in Brazil after 1908 with the subsidized tickets with which the state of *São Paulo* promoted the colonization of the coffee *fazendas* (and that had also benefited the Italian families mentioned above). But the unfavorable working and housing conditions gave the whole project a bad name, and many Japanese families abandoned the *fazendas* and sought work near or in the major cities. When the US Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited the entry of Japanese to the United States, Canada set a quota of just a few hundred Japanese per year, and Brazil gave up on its promotion and subsidizing, the Tokyo government assumed the financing of migration to Brazil, and about seventy thousand families from Japan arrived in Brazil between 1924 and 1930.¹²

- 10 Thomas Holloway, "Immigration and abolition. The transition from Slave to Free Labor in the *São Paulo* Coffee Zone," in *Essays Concerning the Socio-Economic History of Brazil and Portuguese India*, ed. Dauril Alden and Warren Dean (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977); Leonardo Senkman, *La Colonización judía: gente y sociedad*, Historia testimonial argentina (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984).
- 11 On German-speaking immigrants in Brazil, see Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: a comparative history of cultural conflict during World War I* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Adhemar L. da Silva Jr, Cláudia Mauch, and Naira Vasconcellos, *Os Alemães no sul do Brasil: cultura, etnicidade, história*, 1a ed. (Canoas, RS: Editora da ULBRA, 1994). On Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil, see Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey H. Lesser, "Turco immigrants in Latin America," *the Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* 53, no. 1 (1996); Oswaldo Truzzi, *Sírios e libaneses: narrativas de história e cultura*, Série Lazuli Imigrantes no Brasil (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 2005).
- 12 Boris Fausto, "Expansão do Café e Política Cafeeira," in *História geral da civilização brasileira*, ed. Boris Fausto (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1975); Daniela De Carvalho, *Migrants and identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Numerically, the presence of Germans and Japanese was insignificant in Argentina and Uruguay, and also the Portuguese were a minority.¹³ In these two republics, the Italians constituted the largest group of foreigners until the 1910s and 1920s, when the Spanish started to outnumber them.¹⁴ In the aftermath of World War I, there also arrived Eastern Europeans and Arabs to the La Plata regions that complemented other minorities who had arrived earlier in the nineteenth century, such as the French Basques and the British.¹⁵ While the immigration to the Southern Cone republics (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil) was increasingly ethnically heterogeneous, the immigration in Cuba continued to be dominated by the Spanish, who represented 85 percent of the foreigners on the island.¹⁶

Common traits among the migratory flows to Latin America – and elsewhere – were the elevated indices of return migration and its seasonal character. At the start of the twentieth century, Argentina received considerable quantities of laborers who took advantage of the off-season in Southern Europe and came for the harvest in the pampa only to return to their country of origin when the harvest ended, and who in many instances repeated the cycle the following year. Other migrants simply returned to Europe after having stayed for shorter or longer periods in Latin America, or they moved onwards to Brazil or the United States. Return migration ratios varied across regions, economic cycles, and origin countries. In Argentina the return ratios fluctuated between 35 and 40 percent between 1881 and World War I, while in São Paulo only 46 percent of immigrants who arrived between 1892 and 1930 ended up as permanent residents. Of the immigrants there, the Japanese were the most likely to stay: in São Paulo, more than 90 percent of the Japanese became residents, while only 13 percent of the Italians did. In Argentina, the Spanish tended to become residents while the Italians tended to return or move on. The Italians, in general, were more likely to let short-term economic cycles influence migration decisions. Undoubtedly, the distance between the place of origin and destination, the general conditions in which the migration

-
- 13 On Portuguese in Argentina, see Marcelo J. Borges, *Chains of gold: Portuguese migration to Argentina in transatlantic perspective*, Studies in global social history (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009).
 - 14 Fernando Devoto, "A History of Spanish and Italian Migration to the South Atlantic Regions of America," in *Mass Migration to Modern Latin America*, ed. Samuel L. Bailey and Eduardo José Míguez (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).
 - 15 María Bjerg, *Historias de la Inmigración en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2009).
 - 16 José C. Moya, "Spanish Immigration to Cuba and Argentina," in *Mass Migration to Modern Latin America*, ed. Samuel L. Bailey and Eduardo José Míguez (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

took place, and the nature of the ethnic and national networks in other parts of the Americas influenced the decision to stay, move on, or return.

In contrast to the overall spontaneous migration towards the United States, in many Latin American countries the active attraction of workers and specific migratory streams was significant. This is the case for instance of the Argentinean subsidy of transatlantic journeys for Spanish and Northern Europeans between 1888 and 1891 established in order to diversify the immigrant population, which at that time consisted primarily of Italians. Certainly, the creation of juridical systems, the implementation of immigration propaganda through agents in Europe, the subsidy of journeys, and colonization policies all led to increased immigration levels. However, government policies had a limited effect compared to the information that circulated inside the dense migrant networks. Probably, most migrants trusted this type of informal information much more than what emanated from official and agent propaganda.¹⁷

The networks served to organize and structure the migration and the reception of migrants in destination societies. This explains why – despite the modest efforts by several Latin American governments to foster agricultural colonization – much of the migration to Latin America tended to have a decidedly urban character. The massive influx of immigrants prior to World War I caused a dramatic demographic growth in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and parts of Chile. The 1914 Argentina census displayed a very different demographic structure from that which existed only a couple of decades earlier. The population doubled between 1895 and 1914, but even more pronounced was the rate of urbanization. By 1914, 57 percent of the Argentinean population was urban. And the foreigners were even more urban than the Argentinean-born: of the Spanish immigrants, 74 percent lived in cities, while 69 percent of the Italians and 73 percent of the Arabs lived in urban settlements.¹⁸ The expansion of the cities, and especially the ports, made labor markets more dynamic and generated a host of work opportunities in construction, transport, commerce, and the processing of primary materials for export. In the case of Brazil, the urbanization of the migrant population in the state of São Paulo was remarkable. In 1912 more than 60 percent of foreign colonists abandoned the coffee *fazendas* before their contracts ended. Although some of them left Brazil to return to Europe or to migrate onwards to another country, the majority ended up in the larger cities. The industrialization of the city of São Paulo attracted not only the foreigners in the coffee regions, but just as many migrants arriving

17 Fernando Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003).

18 Bjerg, *Historias de la Inmigración en Argentina*, 28.

directly from abroad. In 1920, 34 percent of the population of the city of São Paulo was foreign-born. Urban economic expansion created a demand for labor, but also offered employment and investment opportunities for migrants with a liberal profession or involved in commerce. More than 80 percent of the employers in São Paulo at that time were Italians, while much of the textile business was on Syrian and Lebanese hands.¹⁹

Norwegian Emigration

Relative to its population, Norway was one of the main sending countries in the transatlantic migration system. Approximately one million Norwegians emigrated between 1820 and 1940, the vast majority to the United States. For a country with relatively few inhabitants – in 1801 the population was less than nine hundred thousand, rising to 2.2 million in 1900 and 2.9 million in 1940 – this volume of emigration was extraordinarily large, with only Ireland witnessing a similar emigration rate. Among those Norwegians born between 1850 and 1885, between 26 and 35 percent of the men and 18 to 22 percent of women emigrated before they reached the age of forty.²⁰

Massive immigration contributed to form a new Latin American geography based on the cities, ports, new exports, and industrialization. Yet, this “new” and emerging Latin America was not the primary goal of most Norwegians migrants. Close to 90 percent (or even more according to the official statistics) of Norwegians emigrants went to the United States and Canada. For every Norwegian who migrated to Latin America, more than eighty went to North America.

The general causes of the mass emigration from Norway are well-known. A massive demographic growth combined with little arable land and late industrialization pushed rural families to divide farms into increasingly smaller units, establish farms at higher altitudes, colonize the northern parts of Norway in competition with the indigenous Sami communities, or seek alternative employment in timber, fishing, or shipping. In 1801 85 percent of the population still lived off agriculture, and this percentage was only slowly reduced. In 1875, 60 percent of the population was rural. Internal migration tended towards the coasts and towards Northern Norway. Throughout the nineteenth century,

19 Boris Fausto, *Imigração e política em São Paulo*, Série Imigração, (São Paulo: IDESP/ Editora da UFSCar, 1995).

20 Kåre Bævre, Christian Riis, and Tore Thonstad, “Norwegian Cohort Emigration,” *Journal of Population Economics* 14, no. 3 (2001): 477.

the traditional industries of agriculture, timber, fishing, and shipping prevailed. Compared to other Western European countries, the rural population in Norway continued to be large throughout our period, with more than 46 percent of the Norwegian population still rural in 1920. Rural residence did not necessarily imply agricultural occupation, and many employed in timber, shipping, and fishing lived at least parts of the year on farms or in small hamlets.

Norway's slow and late urbanization and industrialization also affected the nature of emigration. According to Odd Lovoll – one of the leading scholars of Scandinavian immigration in the United States – the Norwegians were more conservative, rural, and agricultural than any other ethnic group in the United States:

Nineteenth-century Norwegian immigration [to the United States] was regularly a rural-to-rural movement. In some ways it might be characterized as a conservative migration, a desire to continue an accustomed way of life, to preserve traditional values associated with a rural existence.²¹

During the large emigration waves from Norway in the 1860s and 1880s, families from rural backgrounds seeking land in North America were actually the norm, while this was no longer true for the immigration to the United States in general.²² But gradually, the social and occupational composition of Norwegian emigrants also changed, and by the turn of the century, migrants from Norway tended to be younger, single males seeking salaried employment rather than land to establish farms. Increasingly they moved several times, and many more returned to Norway than what had been normal previously.

In numeric terms, there were three intense periods of mass emigration from Norway: 1866–73, 1880–93, and 1900–1910. The mean number of overseas migrants from Norway was around 12,500 in the first of these periods, and eighteen thousand during the following two.²³ Outside these periods, annual emigration from Norway fluctuated between five hundred and five thousand. While the general and structural economic and demographic developments created a general “push” towards emigration for a century from the 1840s onwards, crisis

21 Odd Sverre Lovoll, *Norwegians on the prairie: ethnicity and the development of the country town* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006), 31.

22 In addition to *ibid.*, see Jon Gjerde, *From peasants to farmers: the migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Gulbrand Loken, *From fjord to frontier: a history of the Norwegians in Canada, Generations, a history of Canada's peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980).

23 Nils Olav Østrem, *Norsk utvandringshistorie* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2006), 33.

years of high unemployment in Norway caused peaks of emigration in certain years.²⁴ Emigration from Norway stagnated during World War I, partly because of the ensuing disruption of passenger transportation, but also because these were years of unusually high employment rates and earnings for a neutral shipping nation like Norway. But in the 1920s, Norwegian emigration took off again. This new period of migration coincided with a yearly quota of Norwegian immigrants set by the US government that – at least in theory – restricted the number of Norwegian immigrants to 2,377 annually for the remainder of the decade. The last year before the quota was set (1923), approximately sixteen thousand Norwegians entered the United States.²⁵ As will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, this may be one of the reasons why these were the peak years of Norwegian migration to Latin America.

While the Norwegian migration to Latin America in some ways followed trends that were common to the whole Atlantic migration system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it also displays some peculiarities. One of these is the linkage between migration and the Norwegian shipping industry. Hundreds of small Norwegian vessels sailed between different European and Latin American ports and also made up a high percentage of inter-American maritime transport. More than half of the Norwegians who migrated to Latin America traveled or worked on commercial cargo vessels with capacity for twelve passengers or fewer. Every year between the 1860s and 1940 thousands of young Norwegian males worked on these ships, and ports such as Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santos, Havana, Punta Arenas, and Valparaíso received between dozens and hundreds of Norwegian ships every year. The Norwegian shipping industry thus facilitated a type of emigration that was slightly different from the one carried out on the large passenger ocean liners. Sailors defied Norwegian maritime law and jumped ship, and hundreds of young men were “work-your-ways” to, between, and from Latin American ports. This structured the Norwegian migration in particular ways, making mobility easier and less costly than for most migrants. It also implied that most of the Norwegian migration went under the radar of conventional migration registration in both sending and receiving countries; the official statistics on Norwegian emigration to Latin America are thus seriously flawed. The presence of Norwegian crews on ships in Latin American waters and in Latin American ports created loose and fluid networks where rumors and more precise information about employment and housing opportunities, were spread across vast distances.

24 Ingrid Semmingsen, *Norway to America: a history of the migration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978).

25 Ibid., 157.

The largely oral communication between sailors and others involved in the maritime sector played a role similar to the travelogues and letters mentioned below in creating more or less precise images of Latin American places as migrant destinations. To migrate in the wake of Norwegian ships and sailors, without fixed networks and with little and imprecise information, was a common experience for many of the Norwegians who traveled to and within Latin America, especially before World War I.

Like migrations elsewhere and in other periods, Norwegians in Latin America were attracted to and sought niches and economic activities where skills acquired at home could come to use. Unlike their Swedish and Danish cousins, Norwegians rarely formed separate agricultural colonies or rural communities in Latin America, and those that existed were short-lived. But although Norwegian migration was fluid, mobile, and individual, it was not random. Migrant clusters were formed in certain localities and around approximately ten economic niches or types of enterprises: shipping (where Norwegians worked as sailors, captains, agents, and nautical engineers), whaling, mining, railroad construction, meteorological surveys, hydrological surveys, agricultural day-laboring, the bacalao trade, the coffee trade, and the cobblestone trade. The percentage of women was low (below 20 percent), but Norwegian women were private teachers and pioneered in the early Pentecostal congregations and dominated the first Salvation Army of Buenos Aires.

Questions and Methods

In this book we try to explain the absence of a migratory take-off by discussing the role of religion, language, government policies (in both sending and receiving countries), employment opportunities, salaries, and the information that was available to potential and actual migrants. Following Thomas Faist, we are especially interested in the social ties involved in migration networks and the information about migration opportunities that circulated within them.

From a methodological viewpoint, the relatively minor Norwegian emigration to Latin America allows the sources to be used more intensively than what is feasible for the studies of major migration waves. The exploration of particular individuals and the analysis of their close relationships (a group of families, a team of workers or professionals, a small group of individuals, etc.) suggest new, general themes to be studied and allow macroanalytical hypotheses on migration phenomena to be rethought. In this volume we seek to combine the depth of microhistory with a quest for understanding the general, overall patterns of this particular migration stream in the context of the Atlantic mass

migration system. With this purpose in mind, we have constructed a database of migratory events involving Norwegians in Latin America from nearly forty different sources located in Norwegian and Latin American archives, and collected a series of letters, memoirs, travelogues, and diaries written by Norwegian migrants. A sample of these texts has been scanned and registered so that information about persons and places may be cross-checked with the database.²⁶ Combining the events involving named migrants from the database with migrants' narratives allows us to capture parts of the specific migrant experience *and* aspects of the social, political, and economic structures within which these experiences were articulated. The capacity of agency as well as the pre- and post-migration networks analyzed in light of structural factors, such as massive population movement and the circulation of capital, goods, and services, all reveal the dynamic connections between the global, the regional, and the local.

The personal narratives constitute the principal source of information in several chapters of this book. This reliance on narratives is in part due to the objective of treating the Norwegian migration from a small-scale approach, but it is also due to the abundance of these kinds of sources given the high literacy rates of the Norwegian migrants compared to other migrants in Latin America at the same time. As is well known, the fascination with travel assumed a renewed potency in the 1870s and was followed by the necessity of producing texts that described strange and exotic regions of the world. As the number of migrants and journeys expanded exponentially during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, the stories and images of distant places multiplied. Whether published in books, newspapers, or magazines, such travelogues – with their social representations of regional and cultural differences in a world that was continuously becoming more connected – sometimes awakened the interest of potential migrants and stimulated migration. At other times, especially when the travelogues focused on the negative aspects of the receptor countries, the texts worked in the opposite direction, encouraging potential migrants to stay put or to consider alternative destinations. For their part, many of those who actually decided to migrate, attracted by promises of prosperity or adventure, wrote of their migratory experiences, whether from a sense of expectation or because they wanted to communicate with relatives or friends who remained on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

In the letters, memoirs, diaries, and travelogues, the Norwegians produced their own textual representations combining the slightly monotonous description of everyday vicissitudes (work routine, salaries, housing, food, economic

26 The HULA database may be accessed at <https://app.uio.no/hf/ilos/hula/hula.php>.

opportunities, etc.) with an ethnographic glance that underlined the exoticism of Latin America in regard to social practices, religious creeds, racial stereotypes, economic difficulties, or political upheaval. In general, it may be argued that the texts that accompanied massive migration served themselves as an instrument that increased migration both through the interchange of information and through the construction of dense, ethnicity-based migrant networks. However, this does not seem to have been the case for Norwegians in Latin America. From the migratory experiences analyzed in this book, it is possible to argue the exact opposite, namely, that the textual material produced by migrants tended to discourage further migration of Norwegians to Latin America.

Book Outline

The chapters of this book follow a chronological order. The first one, "Making Sense of a Minor Migrant Stream" presents the overall theoretical framework for the book and the three principal phases of the Norwegian migratory process in Latin America between 1820 and 1940. Using a model developed by Thomas Faist on migratory processes, it first discusses the extent to which Norwegian migration to Latin America fits the model. It then provides a general overview of the Norwegian presence in Latin America in the long pioneering phase from 1820 to World War I and in the volatile years between 1920 and 1940. Several of the key questions concerning migrants' networks and the information about Latin American destinations available to potential and actual migrants are introduced, along with the central question of why Norwegian migration to Latin America was so limited in numerical terms.

The second chapter, by Ellen Fensterseifer Woortmann, treats a group of Norwegian settlers who rather accidentally became some of the first colonists of Colônia Dona Francisca, later to become the city of Joinville in Brazil. Their experiences in Brazil in the 1850s and beyond are seen in the context of the Brazilian empire's immigration policies, the Norwegians' relationships and adaptations to the Swiss and German groups who made up the majority of the colony, and the motives and mentalities that guided their decisions to stay or to leave. Although untypical in the sense that most Norwegian migrants in Latin America did not belong to larger settler colonies, they faced certain issues that also characterized the experiences of other Norwegian migrants in Latin America. Woortmann's chapter covers the early phase of Norwegian presence in Latin America, while most of the other chapters are concerned with the decades when immigration to Latin America occurred on a massive scale and

where the official documentation on both individual migrants and migration statistics is more abundant.

In the third chapter Cecilia Alvstad analyzes the extraordinary textual corpus produced by twelve Norwegian skiers and workers who were recruited in 1890 to maintain communication between the Argentinean and Chilean bases during the completion of the Transandine Railway. Most of the skiers only worked near the Uspallata Pass for about a year, as the work was postponed partly in response to political upheavals in both Chile and Argentina. For such a small group, the size of the textual testimony they produced and that has survived is surprising and offers a rare opportunity to scrutinize ordinary migrants' perspectives with a view to how different genres reflect different realities. One of the participants wrote a book that was published in Norwegian in Chicago in 1893, another wrote several reports for the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, while a third wrote a series of letters to his relatives in Norway. Applying narrative analysis and comparing how each of the testimonies used the same information to construe different stories, Alvstad highlights why so few Norwegians decided to stay and particularly how the experiences of these twelve Norwegians intertwined with political and economic instability in Chile and Argentina in the early 1890s.

Much of the Norwegian presence in Latin America must be seen as an appendix to larger foreign attempts at economic and political exploitation in the region. But after the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union in 1905, Norway in its own right attempted to assert its economic and political presence across the globe, especially in relation to endeavors connected to shipping, polar exploration, whaling, and fishing. Mieke Neyens in chapter 4 explores shipowner Gottfred Mauritz Bryde's establishment of the Mexico-Gulf Line, a shipping line that connected Norway with Havana, Veracruz, and Galveston and that was secured with annual subsidies from the Norwegian government. Bryde commissioned author Peter Lykke-Seest to write a series of reports for Norwegian newspapers and then a book in English about the line and the ports and countries it called at. Neyens pays particular attention to the type of migration the author – and presumably the sponsor – envisions this line could foster. Again, the type of information produced by Norwegians in Latin America is central for a better understanding of the actual dynamics of the migratory stream between Norway and Latin America, and as this chapter shows, governments on both sides of the Atlantic tried to regulate this information. Norwegian authorities, the new consular service set up in the aftermath of the breakup with Sweden, and the powerful shipping interests were not particularly interested in promoting large-scale emigration from Norway to Latin America.

Synnøve Ones Rosales's detailed chapter on Norwegians in Guatemala between 1900 and 1930 offers more insights into the social makeup of the Norwegian migrant networks. The group of Norwegian coffee plantation owners cannot be seen as an autonomous ethnic community in its own right. Some of them had very strong links to the British community in Guatemala, others to the populous German colony. Less concerned with the Norwegian government policies than shipowners such as Bryde, the planters in Guatemala were nevertheless skeptical about encouraging the immigration of poor Norwegian workers. Again, issues concerning weak and strong social ties and the dispersion of information about destination countries, employment, and – in this case – investment opportunities help us better understand the nature of the smaller migration streams.

Argentina, Uruguay, and parts of Brazil differed from other Latin American countries such as Guatemala with respect to the opportunities for rural labor. In chapter 6 María Bjerg discusses the diaries and letters written by two young Norwegian men who were among the many that virtually without economic capital sought their luck in Argentina in the 1920s. This chapter is important because it explores the experiences and representations of the majority of the migrants who sought employment and decent salaries wherever they could be found. Although we know little about these two migrants' original intentions and motivations for choosing Argentina, Bjerg is able to tease out important lessons on their relationships with both other migrants and the native population, lessons that in turn are useful for understanding the limits of the Norwegian migratory stream to Latin America. The chapter also takes up the issue of return migration. The reduced scale allows a sharp focus on the motives and strategies of the return, while at the same reflecting on the common notion in Norwegian historiography that associates migration to United States with workers and farmers, whereas migrants to Latin America were adventurers. Also in Bjerg's text we note the strong presence of transnational capital and business (railways, coffee, and oil) that, like a fine-meshed net, connected the globe and controlled the markets of production and labor in which the Norwegians inserted themselves more or less successfully as workers, professionals, and producers. They were often able to form privileged contact spaces with other Europeans and with local and native inhabitants. These environs of modern technology could exist side by side with old, colonial-type labor systems, and as such they replicated on a micro scale the tensions of global interconnectedness.

The Norwegians in Mexico studied in chapter 7 by Ricardo Pérez Montfort were atypical by almost any criteria. However, we should not forget that several Latin American countries attracted migrants also for political and ideological reasons. The Mexican Revolution and the violence it entailed not only forced many foreigners to leave the country, it also attracted many others, especially

those interested in revolution, nationalism, and socialism. Politically, the migrants Per Imerslund and Halvdan Jebe belonged to opposite extremes, but they nevertheless shared a remarkable fascination for Mexico *profundo*, anti-imperialism, and the quest for radical solutions to improve the conditions of mankind. Imerslund's books and Jebe's music are not easily interpreted and cannot simply be seen as migration testimonies. Nevertheless, Imerslund and Jebe – in addition to being intellectuals with an international audience – were also migrants, and they produced “texts” that affected the view of Mexico and Latin America in Norway and among potential migrants. Again, the way these migrants' personal histories must be seen in a larger geographical context not limited to Norway and Latin America resonates with themes in the other chapters.

Even more explicit in that regard is Chapter 9, which concerns a family of merchants and entrepreneurs following a migrant dynamic of its own, eventually establishing bridgeheads in Brazil, Spain, and Norway. María Álvarez-Solar not only explains the motivations of the first family members who moved to Brazil, but pays particular attention to the links between this branch of the family with the family members in Spain and Norway. This is the chapter that most closely, perhaps along with the one by Ones Rosales, involves the transnational circuits mentioned by Faist.

In sum, juggling between different scales and levels of analysis, the book illuminates both the particularities of Norwegian migration to Latin America, as well as the traits it shares with other transoceanic migratory movements in a context of global connections. Different themes and lines of interpretation converge in this work, which shows Norwegians articulating migratory strategies based on disperse, imprecise information that in general circulated in networks of weak ties. Compared to other migratory waves that have been studied in depth, the Norwegians did not predominate in one single economic niche, nor did they form lasting ethnic communities in Latin America, possibly because most of the migration from Norway to Latin America was temporary. However, it would be erroneous to conclude that this implies a lack of economic motive and a predominance of wanderlust among the Norwegian migrants in Latin America. The reasons for this particular aspect of the Norwegian migratory stream to Latin America may be sought within factors such as the sensibility to short-term economic fluctuations, the political instability of the receptor countries, the alternative opportunities for work that Norwegian migrants had outside Latin America, and the relative ease with which they could move to Latin America, benefitting from the presence of Norwegian ships and Norwegian captains in almost any Latin American port.