

# The Centrality of Migrants in the Study of Cross-Border Human Mobility Processes

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In the context of the development of neoliberalism and as part of the processes of spatial expansion of globalization, international migrations have been one of the expressions of the processes of inequality and social exclusion of contemporary capitalism. Cross-border mobilities of foreign populations through different countries have not only been produced due to a series of macroeconomic dynamics such as the increase in poverty, the deterioration of the productive apparatus at the international level in the countries of origin, the demand for labor force in the global production chains in the global north, the deterioration of material living conditions in the global south. These mobilities are also expressions of the practices and strategies of diverse social subjects and foreign populations to overcome adverse living conditions in their countries of origin.

From the global and regional production of knowledge of some Social Sciences on migration, there are several disciplines that, often using meso/macro approaches (which minimize individual and social agency), have focused on the historical and structural conditions of material cut that expel populations (Economics), the dynamics of cross-border spatial human mobility flows -with their respective socio-spatial characteristics- (Demography and Geography), and the analysis of the role of national States - especially destination States- in the reception of foreign populations (Political Science and International Relations).

However, within these migration studies in different regions of the world (America, Europe, Africa, and Asia), few approaches have focused on migrants as social subjects with different capacities for action and agency (from the use of social networks, practices of migrant support and reciprocity, to strategies of invisibility, collective actions, and forms of temporary organization -the caravans-, dynamics of media visibility for protection purposes). Like the approaches of Abdelmalek Sayad and the autonomy of migrations, there is a need for critical views that distance themselves from the places of neutrality (apolitical) and the ivory tower of much of academia. From the disciplinary theoretical scaffolding, it is necessary to transcend the power relations of knowledge production (and its socio-political use), and to carry out positioning exercises that allow to deepen the approach to migrations.

Within this order of ideas, *Humanizing deportation* is an example of a project that produces collaborative exercises between social subjects (migrants) and academia, with the aim of making these irregularized foreign populations and their precarious conditions of existence visible. This is a binational project (Mexico/USA), bilingual, collaborative, community-based, and whose results are public and freely accessible on the Internet (<http://humanizandoladeportacion.ucdavis.edu/es/> and <http://humanizandoladeportacion.ucdavis.edu/en/> ). The axis of this project is the co-elaboration of narratives from the migrants themselves, according to their own priorities, languages, and desires. It is a digital platform where the focus is on migrants, and particularly on their experiences and their personal, family, and collective motivations.

Among other topics, the migrants themselves address deportation (and its consequences), border violence, family separation, uprooting, adversity, criminalization, migratory control, but also family support dynamics and among migrants, migrant dreams, and longings, among others.

This type of project shows that it is necessary (and possible) to move towards other ways of creating, criticizing, reworking, and disseminating knowledge for social purposes. It is a project with, from and for

the social subjects involved. This within the framework of contributing to processes that contribute to the improvement of migrants' living conditions, as well as to subvert and counteract the socio-political and economic dynamics of exclusion and criminalization that make them invisible, marginalize and violate them.