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Migrant Labor
in Global Chains

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Prologue

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What have workers in the Brazilian Halal meat industry, in California's agriculture, in São Paulo's and Buenos Aires' clothing industry, in common with Uruguayan, Paraguayan and Ecuadorian domestic and care workers, with Chinese entrepreneurs in the markets of globalization from below in Mexico City and São Paulo?

Read this well written and thought-provoking book and you will know it. This is a most welcome addition to the literature on globalization from below. The volume covers a significant number of scenarios involving different international interconnections, agents and agencies. But, as its suggestive title, *Migrant Labor in Global Chains*, anticipates, the examples are illustrative of historical, sociological, economic, and anthropological processes that grant treating them with similar heuristic tools. It is well known that globalization, in its hegemonic or non-hegemonic modes, implies the acceleration (a) of the interconnections/articulations between global fragmented spaces and (b) of the flows of people, commodities, information and capital on a planetary scale.

Almost 40 years ago, Eric Wolf (1982) demonstrated in what is probably the first anthropological book on globalization (see Ribeiro, 2019), *Europe and the People without History*, the historical increase in sizes and complexities of the "ethnic segmentation of the labor market" resulting from the world system's expansion, a process that intensified with the deepening of time-space compression in the 20th century (Harvey, 1989), especially after the end of the Cold War (1989-1991). The currently existing global chains, i.e., global interconnections intimately related to global production and consumption, would not exist without these antecedents. The substratum of all this is labor migration and here is where the contributions of *Migrant Labor in Global Chains*, based in thorough ethnographic research, excel.

Capitalists have always exploited migrant labor. Think, for instance, of the dreadful and shameful traffic between Africa and the Americas and the Caribbean of human beings forced into being slaves. These workers were part and parcel of global chains of highly valued commodities as sugar and

cotton. Indeed, forced international migration fueled by imperialism/colonialism, in the form of slavery and of indentured workers, was central to the formation of the modern world system and to the present configuration of the ethnic segmentation existing in many different countries especially (Wolf 1982). But slavery, in its open or disguised forms, is the extreme form of migrant labor exploitation.

The Industrial Revolution, a qualitative shift in the capitalist world system often paradigmatically seen as occurring first in England, could not have existed without migrant labor. What were the new proletarians but peasants forced to move to swelling cities from a countryside where the commons were disappearing? Proletarianization, in fact, is also a migratory phenomenon, a move from the countryside to expanding urban markets. The classic proletarian figure is a former peasant that has nothing but his labor force to sell in new industrial venues. At that point in time, English industrialization highly benefited from international migration. Suffice to recall the importance of Irish men, women and children in the making of the English working class. Friedrich Engels (1969 [1845]), in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, wrote that

> The rapid extension of English industry could not have taken place if England had not possessed in the numerous and impoverished population of Ireland a reserve at command (…) It has been calculated that more than a million have already immigrated, and not far from fifty thousand still come every year, nearly all of whom enter the industrial districts, especially the great cities, and there form the lowest class of the population (p. 81).[1]

But why did I allude to historical examples of migrant labor exploitation? Because, in tune with the contents of this book, they show that migrants' vulnerability has been a most important source of primitive accumulation for capitalists. However, as many authors in the following chapters show, ethnic segmentations of the labor market are not static, they change overtime for different reasons. Indeed, immigrants may learn how to deal with local culture (especially with local language), agents and agencies. At the same time, if they get organized in associations or unions, they start to defend themselves from the voracity of local entrepreneurs. Finally, new waves of the same ethnic group or of different ones can substitute for them and enter the bottom of the ethnically segmented labor market. Upper social mobility can

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[1] See also another classic, E. P. Thompson's (1991) *The Making of the English Working Class*.

thus be a possibility. Interestingly enough, it is not uncommon to see migrants submit themselves to extraordinarily harsh labor conditions, as Bolivians, Chinese, Ecuadorians and Mexicans, exemplify in some of the chapters below, with the expectation that better days will come and they themselves will become the mirror image of those who currently exploit them.

I also want to highlight the flexibility of this migrant labor force, a point made by several of the book's authors. We see, for instance, how local Chinese entrepreneurs in Mexico City or in São Paulo, are quick to respond to local taste in the markets they operate and how Bolivians involved in the garment industry also rapidly adapt to the ever-changing fashion cycles. This shows how globalization from below relates to hegemonic globalization (by copying the most wanted models, for instance) and, at the same time, keeps its own internal dynamics thanks to the own resources its participants are able to pool.

All chapters show that identities and their stereotypes play an important role both from employers and employees' points of view. The Muslim worker who is religiously qualified to produce Halal meat, the "sweet" Ecuadorian care worker, the "docile" Bolivian and Mexican worker and the "tenacious" Chinese participants in the global circuits of the non-hegemonic world system are a proof of what I just wrote. Furthermore, the chapters on the roles of Bolivian, Ecuadorian and Chinese women in these global flows indicate the intersections between ethnic and gender stereotypes.

The book makes clear the several international strategies migrants recur in order to maximize their economic opportunities and welfare. Some are related to the current means of communication available to migrants, but reliance on their social and kinship networks is outstanding. This ends up involving the domestic group as a unit in the migratory process. Relatives back home are not only the main recipient of remittances, they also are a backup when children and older relatives are left behind. Several authors call the attention to the role grandparents and children play in the complex interconnections of the fragmented global spaces migrants cause. Grand parents and children are either an asset or a problem that need to be solved. Emotions and feelings are intertwined and compose a major characteristic of the fragmented qualities of migrants' identities produced by the ambivalence of being persons structured by at least two worlds. Given the increasing numbers of children that participate in international migration by themselves, I find that students of international migration need to devote more attention to this humanitarian catastrophe. This problem is particularly visible in Mexico. The pictures of Central American and Mexican children (many separated

from their parents) jailed in American detention camps have shocked global public opinion.

Migrant Labor in Global Chains is a sophisticated book written by cosmopolitan researchers, several of them also living migratory experiences. The detailed descriptions and interpretations as well as the correct balance between theory and ethnography are a powerful characteristic of this volume that is bound to be a source of inspiration for other researchers and a more than useful support for all those who teach different courses on the wider field of globalization studies.

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Perspectives on Migrant Labor in Global Chains

Ximena Alba Villalever and Bruno Miranda

International migration patterns and human mobility in general have undergone significant changes since the turn of the century. While migration from Latin America to the United States practically doubled during the nineties (Durand, 2019: xxv), the beginning of the new century also gave way, at a global level, to new migration trends that are multifactorial, largely driven by conditions of political, economic and/or social instability in the countries of origin. These are not only mobilities reinforced by the widening social inequalities between countries, which continue to encourage south-north labor migration. They are also south-south mobilities that are intensifying at both intra-regional and international levels. Forced displacements have also intensified as a result of wars and prolonged internal conflicts such as those in Syria, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Jacobs and Kyamusugulwa, 2018; Piguet, 2020), as well as social and state violence in countries such as El Salvador and Honduras in Central America (Castillo and Toussaint, 2015; Rojas Wiesner and Winton, 2019) and political instability such as in Haiti, Venezuela, or Nicaragua. This has been feeding and creating old and new flows of asylum seekers to the global North and South.

However, 9/11 marked the increase of securitization of migration, which has been strengthening over the last two decades. These regimes make use of terrorist events perpetrated in the Northern Hemisphere as a justification for the closing and externalization of its borders (Álvarez Velasco, 2016). These measures are also the result of a global neo-conservative political wave that has been equally powerful and detrimental to the rights of migrants, both those in transit and those already established. In the United States, Brazil, Hungary, Italy, and other states around the world, this neo-conservative wave has put in charge political leaders who promote anti-immigrant discourse that legitimizes xenophobic and violent practices. While borders continue to be closed, the number of migrants who decide or are forced to migrate is rampantly increasing. According to the International Organization for Migration, the number of international migrants increased from 173.6 million in 2000 to 271.6 million in 2019 (IOM, 2020). Although

restrictive policies, walls and barriers, and the externalization of borders have not stopped migration, they have managed to set in motion increasingly risky routes for migrants who find no alternative but to cross these borders by land or sea.

The response to human mobility depends on its characteristics. On the one hand, skilled labor mobility or mobility with investment capabilities is supported by favorable migration policies and is desired in host societies. On the other hand, migrants forced to leave their places of origin due to political, social, and economic factors often find restrictive conditions that put them in a highly vulnerable social position upon arrival. They are constantly confronted with various forms of discrimination and inequalities that are perpetuated by a variety of actors, from the state to civil society, including transnational corporations that benefit from their labor. These often intersect and result in the violation of the most basic rights (Boatča and Roth, 2016).

Although this book focuses on labor-specific migration, where admission to the host country is often regular, it is important to note that these are highly precarious international labor markets. In fact, for the migrants who are the main subject of this volume, vulnerability and precariousness appear as essential features in various labor arrangements, whether in the hiring of temporary workers, in subcontracted work, at home or in self-employment (Benencia, Herrera Lima and Levine, 2012). As a result, migrants are inserted in the weakest links of certain global chains, particularly global commodity chains (Gereffi, Korzeniewicz and Korzeniewicz, 1994; Bair, 2009; Gereffi, 2018). This can be the case of either "producer-driven commodity chains"—whose production networks are vertical—or "buyer-driven commodity chains"—whose networks claim to be "trade-based horizontal" (Gereffi, 1999, 2018). In general, the former are led by transnational companies that obtain a significant profit margin, since the subcontracting circuits that exist between one end of the chain and the other obscure and evade labor and fiscal responsibilities toward migrants. Nevertheless, these companies dictate the pace of production and the quality and date of supply of goods, even when they do not carry out productive activities. But large oligopolies also often make use of horizontal global chains to take greater advantage of lower scale production systems already set in motion, particularly in developing countries (Gereffi, 1999). This is precisely the case of the textile industry. Again, the most vulnerable hands benefit least from the goods they produce.

This book focuses precisely on the people who produce these commodities and global consumer goods. By working within the last echelon of this global production mechanism, they are exposed to a system of exploitation

and vulnerability characteristic of capitalism. We refer particularly to migrant groups and families whose labor provides certain services, goods, and food not only for consumption by the host populations, but also for global circulation. These are basic commodities that range from clothing, school supplies, household appliances, cell phones, and electronic devices, to fruits and vegetables, as well as meat and other animal products for global consumption, as we will see in the texts of Bressan and Garrapa. Depending on their quality and origins, these goods can be distributed both in supermarkets and shopping centers, as well as in popular markets beyond the reach of large business conglomerates. Thus, they reach hands of more disadvantaged populations, as they do at the La Salada market in Argentina, mentioned in Bahnsen's work; the Feirinha da Madrugada, mentioned by Miranda and Freire; or Tepito, which figures in Alba's chapter. This leaves a huge gap between populations with significant economic capital, who are recipients of the benefits conferred by migrant labor, and migrants, who are generally prevented from accessing the global goods made possible by their work (Fraser, 2003; Sassen, 2006; Ribeiro, 2006; Besserer and Nieto, 2015; Glockner, 2015). As we will see in Rojas's and Moré's texts, this also includes care work.

In this book we make visible and problematize the various forms of inequality that arise from, and at the same time nourish, a model that proclaims consumption within everyone's reach. We inquire into the participation of labor migration in the development and expansion of these global buyer-driven chains of production, distribution, commercialization, and consumption determined by decentralized networks. We seek to understand, through specific cases, how they are intertwined with migration and migrant labor. In this sense, we seek to make visible the experiences of the very migrants who are responsible for producing these commodities, who generally remain invisible in their production processes. In particular, we are interested in how certain labor niches have strengthened and given a new dimension to long-standing migration processes. We refer, for example, to the case of Mexican agricultural workers in the United States, formerly "braceros" (Durand, 2007), now flexible laborers; or to the immense migratory corridor that has connected Bolivia with Argentina since colonial times and that for decades has fed Buenos Aires and the surrounding area with garment workers and bricklayers, as well as agricultural workers (Benencia, 2008, 2009). Moreover, we highlight new mobilities, such as those inaugurated by the commercialization of Chinese products imported by immigrants of the same origin in the markets of Mexico City and São Paulo. Despite the fact that Chinese migration to Latin America is not new, the extension of global chains of Chinese products has been encouraged by, and at the same time has fostered

new migration patterns between the Asian country and Latin American countries.

The link between labor migration and global chains denotes asymmetrical power relations, often practiced from standards of differentiation that are fostered by the racialization of individuals (Boatča and Roth, 2016) and migrant groups and families (Portes, Haller and Guarnizo, 2002; Grimson, 2005), as well as their class conditions and gender identities (Sassen, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 2003; Parreñas, 2015). In particular, we are drawn to the constant racialization of labor markets, which is evident in the overrepresentation of certain ethnic-national groups in specific labor niches. There seems to be a paradox between a structural racism that reserves specific sectors of work for migrants—even if these are national migrants, as Rojas mentions in this volume—and the collective imaginary that holds them responsible for some of the unresolved structural issues of our societies, such as unemployment and insecurity. We deem it necessary to deconstruct this paradox built upon a sort of "nativism" (De Genova, 2005) that historically lacks meaning, especially taking into account the contribution of migrants to the formation and urbanization of the Latin American capitals to which we allude in this volume, such as Buenos Aires and São Paulo (Carneiro, 2009; Lvovich, 2009).

The locations studied here make up migration systems (Simon, 2008) that may be regional, such as the one involving Mexico and the United States for over a century (Ariza and Portes, 2010; Durand, 2016), or the one encouraging the constant circulation of Bolivian migrants between Argentina and Brazil over the last few decades (Grimson, 2005; Baeninger, 2012; Miranda, 2019). Or they may be of a wider reach, such as the migratory flows that link Ecuador to Spain, Senegal to Brazil—as Moré and Bressan show, in this volume—or Brazil and Mexico to China (Alba Villalever, 2020). Our concern about the mobility of Latin American individuals and families within and outside the region, as well as the attraction of people and goods to Latin America, is not fortuitous. It has to do with our standpoint as Latin American researchers concerned with the social problems arising from the intertwining of global chains and labor migrations that affect or are related to the populations of the region. We consider that not enough attention has been given to the fundamental part played by migrants in the (re)production of global chains—a part that highly favors international markets.

These migration patterns generate transnational spaces in which there are long-lasting commercial and family bonds; often it is these same migrations that (re)structure specific labor niches, such as the care sector and popular commerce. In any case, the texts intended to answer the questions posed in

this book result from ethnographies and field work carried out side by side with the migrants at the center of this research, through participant observation across farmlands, underprivileged neighborhoods, and popular markets, as well as in production plants and in sweatshops. Therefore, the authors have made an explicit commitment to discuss field research material in order to understand, analyze, and systematize the structuring of transnational labor circuits.

For this volume, we have selected four different labor niches in which we believe it is important to identify the nexus between migrant labor and the various constellations that make up global commodity chains. These are: agroindustry, popular commerce, garment industry, and care chains. In each section, the authors illustrate how migratory circulation between neighboring countries or between continents revitalizes certain industrial and commercial sectors that are entwined with the vulnerabilities inherent to the migrant condition. We believe this is our main contribution. In each chapter we focus on groups of migrants of different origins who have settled in different locations and engaged in diverse economic activities that include them in the formation and consolidation of local, regional, and global processes of production and consumption.

Agroindustry

The food supply industry fosters regular and irregularized international migration in several migration systems and corridors comparable to those of Latin America, such as the one between North Africa and European Mediterranean countries (Décosse, 2015). In Latin America, there is a wide range of studies conducted in green belts and mechanized agricultural fields that cover the region from south to north, from the cultivation of vegetables by Bolivian migrants in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires (Benencia, 2008), to the harvesting of berries by indigenous Mexican migrants in the agricultural corridor between the San Quintin Valley in the Mexican state of Baja California and Oxnard, California. In this volume, Anna Mary Garrapa analyzes the transnational organization of the Californian agricultural model and the inequalities that arise at different levels.

Garrapa explains how mobilities are activated by transnational agribusiness companies on a temporary and seasonal basis, in search of flexible and non-conflictual labor. Her text reveals how the development of the Californian agroproductive model has promoted a special visa regime in the United States that allows labor circulation between the US and Mexico. Garrapa

shows the ways in which the middlemen in charge of hiring Mexican agricultural workers make the subcontracting chain more complex. At one end of the strawberry distribution chain, large transnational groups such as Walmart, Carrefour, and Driscoll's, disengage from labor responsibilities, which then facilitates labor deregulation through extended working hours, accelerated tasks, and lower wages.

In this section dedicated to agroindustry, Laís Bressan takes us to the world of meat processing and situates us in southern Brazil, where a labor niche for African and Asian asylum seekers operates. She describes the production practices of halal meat, that is, meat that due to the characteristics of its production is suitable for consumption by Islamic populations throughout the world. Bressan examines the labor insertion of Idrissa, a Muslim worker from Bangladesh, made possible by the nexus of three universal regimes: the market rationale, religious morality, and humanitarianism. Both Garrapa and Bressan agree on the convenience and arbitrariness of the State in the application of special visas and international conventions to give free rein to the hiring of migrant workers in thriving food chains.

Popular commerce

In a case almost opposite to that of agricultural production, because of the apparent resistance or ineffectiveness of the State in exercising control over this type of economic activity, we find popular commerce, which is intimately linked to precariousness. Generally, this activity responds to the failures of the State to offer decent working conditions to its citizens and its reluctance to offer them to its foreign residents. It is also a living image of the pressing structural inequalities in Latin American, Asian, and African societies. Interestingly, popular trade in Latin America has also been a response to the lack of opportunities available to migrant populations. In some ways, we find that popular trade represents an attractive alternative as it allows people to be part of a circuit of production, distribution, and consumption of global commodities such as electronics and clothing.

The growing participation of international migrants into popular economies—often referred to as informal labor—reveals that this has become a critical labor niche for current global migration processes. The insertion of migrants into informal labor no longer refers mostly to the result of south-north migration flows; instead, we increasingly observe the movement of people from south to south who seek to take advantage of global production chains to move forward. They take advantage of the "flexibility" of the popu-

lar economy, a product of relationships with the government that feature clientelism, corruption, and the struggle for survival (Alba Vega, 2012). In this sense, we find it particularly relevant to analyze how the circulation of global goods in popular markets goes hand-in-hand with new migratory flows: this is the case of migration from China to Latin America and the insertion of migrants in street sales or popular markets of products "Made in China."

Carlos Freire da Silva and Ximena Alba discuss the trade routes that connect China to the two largest Latin American metropolises. The authors agree that although the migratory process that binds the Asian country to Latin America is not new, in recent decades there have been patterns that differ from those traditional ones that defined the Chinese "diaspora" (Hu-DeHart, 2007). This migration, and specifically the fact that it is so deeply entangled with global commodity chains, is the result of China's gradual opening after Deng Xiaoping's reforms of 1979, particularly the country's consistent integration into global market dynamics.

Alba analyzes how global commodity chains are directly informed and transformed by local encounters and dynamics, such as those promoted by Chinese migration in the emblematic market of Tepito, in Mexico City. She investigates the role of transnational families that became protagonists in the commercial transformation of the Mexican popular market by building bridges between China and Mexico, particularly after the end of the *fayuca* networks from the United States and their replacement with the import of Chinese products. Through the presentation of specific migration experiences, such as those of Song and Fei, Alba shows the means by which these groups arrive in Mexico, the ways that new migration networks are created, and the diversity of those who participate in these networks. In addition, Alba finds that the presence of Chinese women in these labor niches has grown, and shows how their role within the popular economy has been fundamental to the deployment of new forms of economic organization of transnational family networks.

At the same time, Freire da Silva focuses on the development of a socioeconomic dynamic between Brazil and China, especially since the economic opening in the 1970s. Thus, in recent decades, a vigorous trade route has been established between the cities of São Paulo on the one hand, and Yiwu and Guangzhou on the other. His text analyzes the transcontinental trade route from two points of view: first, the insertion of Chinese migrants into popular commerce of central São Paulo, including the transformation and renovation of *Rua 25 de Março* and the Brás district; second, the history of the migration cycles from China to Brazil. In his work, Freire da Silva emphasizes the impact of Chinese business associations in the circulation of

people and goods. He also focuses on the change of the axis of the national popular trade that until the 1990s revolved around Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, and then moved to the Chinese cities of Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces.

Garment industry

The garment industry has also historically been a niche for international migrants. However, as has been revealed by the multi-referenced studies carried out in the United States and in Paris (Waldinger and Lapp, 1992; Green, 1997; Bonacich and Appelbaum, 2000), it is especially under neoliberal capitalism that the condition of being a "migrant," combined with the flexibility that follows structural reforms, leads to longer and more intensive working days in front of the sewing machines. A closer look at the global South suggests similar dynamics. Impacted by the accelerated obsolescence of clothing (known as *fast fashion*), the Argentine and Brazilian clothing industries have accelerated their production cycle.

In these latitudes, those who carry out these sewing tasks come from neighboring countries, namely from the Bolivian Highlands. In this way, the metropolitan areas of La Paz, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo are linked by the mobilities of families and individuals coming from Andean areas and moving toward sweatshops that also turn out to be their residences. This is revealed in the two texts of the section dedicated to the garment industry, authored by Bruno Miranda and Karlotta Bahnsen. The productive circuits of the two greatest metropolises of the Southern Cone share many features in terms of labor relationships between employees and employers: the length of the work day, the provision of shelter and food by employers, and payment by piecework. In addition, as part of the regional migration system, sweatshops with Bolivian migrants are subcontracted by entrepreneurs in large popular markets, such as La Salada in Buenos Aires and Feirinha da Madrugada in central São Paulo. In such a universe, the actors who structure and operate it are multi-scalar: from enterprising Bolivian families, to business groups of Korean descent, to big brands (Zara, GAP, and C&A) and large retail buyers (Walmart).

While Miranda describes and dissects the internal circuits of São Paulo's garment industry and the many ways in which migrants from different origins, especially Bolivians, have engaged in sewing labor and occupied different layers within it, Bahnsen focuses on similar processes within the Buenos Aires-based garment industry. Miranda's text gives special attention to

garment production in China (and Asia in general) and its progressive par-
ticipation in the international market. He does this while directing the reader
to the interior of two sweatshops with Bolivian migrants, managed by the
couples Juan and Catarina, Roberto and Marta. According to the author, sub-
contracting migrant labor offers the local industry a shield against the mis-
named "Chinese invasion." Bahnsen, for her part, examines the ways in
which gender relations are structuring relations of labor exploitation. She
analyzes the experiences of two Bolivian garment workers, Laura and Bea-
trix, to shed light on the working conditions of women among a migrant
population that is seen as homogeneous. Among her findings, the author re-
ports on the impact of the fusion between workplace and residence for wom-
en with children—called "*trabajo con cama*" (literally, "work with bed")—
since it allows them to reconcile sewing and childcare.

Care chains

Another case closely linked to female migration is that of care chains, which
represent an important labor niche for the insertion of a low-income migrant
population into wage labor activities. At the same time, providing labor for
the reproduction of the household or for the care of children and the elderly,
allows the incorporation of those who employ such labor into higher—and
better paid—spheres. In this sense, through their work these migrants also
contribute to the production and maintenance of financial flows and global
chains (Sassen, 2000). In turn, those who enter this labor market also often
employ other people to perform in their own households work for which they
themselves receive a living wage, particularly to care for children and the
elderly.

   In this book we focus on the strategies that migrants who are inserted into
this labor niche develop in order to move forward. These are sometimes vis-
ible fights, as is the case with the creation of unions and civil organizations
that seek better working and living conditions. But sometimes they are also
invisible struggles, as is the case of women who are forced to leave their
children or parents in the care of others for long periods of time, who live in
a constant battle against the difficulties involved in carrying out a transna-
tional life. The two final texts in this book are the contributions of Raquel
Rojas and Paloma Moré. Rojas discusses how internal and international mi-
grants face barriers based not only on their places of origin but also on their
gender, which affects their labor rights as domestic workers in Uruguay and
Paraguay. Her text provides the reader with data on the struggle of domestic

workers for their rights and highlights the paradox of this devalued labor, without which the better-positioned economic sectors in Uruguay could not fully develop.

Moré's text, which closes our book, deals with the importance of Ecuadorian migration to Spain at the turn of the century, with special attention to migrant women who work as caregivers for the elderly. She explores the experiences of migrant women in the sector and the transnational family arrangements required to guarantee the well-being of their own parents, who are also elderly, in their places of origin in Ecuador. By doing so, she deconstructs the discourse according to which female migration produces a care deficit, since economic remittances enable other women in Ecuador (sisters or domestic workers) to take care of their parents. Finally, she reveals the process of commodification of social reproduction within transnational families.

Contemporary approaches to migration and mobilities

The texts that make up this work share migration, labor, and globalization as common analytical axes. Each author was given the freedom to use the theoretical approach they consider most relevant to the study of their specific case. However, since this is a set of texts constructed from different disciplines, we deem it necessary to make some clarifications regarding contemporary approaches to the study of transnational migration and the mobilities that permeate the various works in this volume.

At the end of the last century, particularly since the 1990s, critical social research on migration increasingly questioned methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) and advocated for the analysis of human mobility in all its complexity. The effort arose particularly from the need to move away from nation-states as fixed and immovable containers that somehow absorb individuals arriving from the outside, thereby cutting-off any ties they may still have with the "outside." The main purpose of transnational studies at that time was precisely to emphasize that these ties are not broken; sometimes they are made even stronger because of the distance. When this happens, the places of insertion and origin of migrants are also transformed and integrate into their dynamics new elements. In addition, it is increasingly evident that the migration experiences of each individual will be different depending on their gender identity, racialization, class, and age, as well as the routes they have taken and the reasons and meanings for leaving one

place for another. The migration of men and women, for example, has different implications for their personal experiences and because of the diverse economic, social, political, and cultural effects they may unleash. The migration conditions of a single mother who leaves her children in the care of someone else (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 2003; Madianou and Miller, 2011) will be different from those of a migrant man without children, just as the migration of people with desired skills and substantial capital will find more possibilities and open doors than that of unskilled migrants or whose qualifications cannot be revalidated, for example, because of their legal status.[1]

Other research has brought to light the non-economic reasons for migration, which can be as varied as family reunification, return for nostalgia or health issues (Hirai, 2013; Rivera Sánchez, 2019) as well as the full range of motivations that drive forced migration (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Loescher, Long and Sigona, 2014). The preliminary lesson from these studies is that migration is not always economically motivated, at least not initially.

All the research mentioned above reinforces the thesis of diversification of flows and migration patterns, which blurs the image of migration as a rigid container with pre-defined directionalities (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). There was a shift away from classic analysis of migration, which for decades considered the points of origin and destination as unwavering containers that determined and structured human mobility. Among these perspectives were, for instance, assimilation trends (Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller, 2006) and conceptions of social integration (Favell, 2001) that considered migration as an actual rupture between origin and establishment localities.

This shift has allowed us to account for the different migratory processes that have developed over the years and that continue to emerge today, as well as to observe the different patterns that develop within these processes. These patterns are carried out by individuals with different characteristics,

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[1] We also highlight that a wide range of experiences and difficulties experienced by migrants depends on their personal conditions. Although we will not cover all these topics in this volume due to lack of space, we feel it is important to mention some of these contexts: for example, the obstacles that trans* people frequently confront. In many cases, due to the discrimination they suffer in the localities they arrive at and transit through, their only form of labor insertion is sex work (Vartabedian, 2014). Other examples include male migrants who are forced to escape from their country of origin to avoid being recruited by criminal gangs (Castillo Ramírez, 2020), or children traveling alone across one or more borders to seek better opportunities or reunification with part of their family (CNDH, 2018).

diverse objectives, and different opportunities or limitations. We understand the distinction between migratory processes and patterns as Durand (2016) points out: while a migratory process entails a historicity that is framed between two or more countries through human mobility, migratory patterns have specificities related to their temporality and to the local characteristics of all the localities crossed or reached by migrants.

In this volume we are interested in seeing different levels of migration—international, regional or internal—and we also consider other aspects of human mobility that provide us with elements to more comprehensively understand the characteristics of the processes observed. Here we refer to the itineraries, as well as the resources used and the interactions had during transit; mobility thus becomes a field of study of social interactions, since it engenders processes of otherness. Mobilities studies are concerned with internal and international migrations and have a wide range of disciplinary contributions, from geography to demography and anthropology. Researchers committed to this paradigm are concerned with answering who moves, what motivates the movement, and which social markers of difference enable higher or lower mobility.

With the idea that "all the world seems to be on the move," Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) begin the text "The New Mobilities Paradigm" and inaugurate a new school of studies on mobilities (Salazar and Glick-Schiller, 2013; Freire-Medeiros, Da Silva Telles and Allis, 2018). Its novelty lies in the fact that mobility, in sociology, will no longer be taken in its hegemonic meaning (social mobility), but in the spatial sense, related to movement flows. The spectrum of what moves is equally wide: the mobility of bodies is taken into account, but also that of materials, images, and information. This approach pays attention to the territorialities produced and signified by the subjects that are in transit. Alain Tarrius' (2010) anthropology of movement had a similar approach, in which the relationship between sedentariness and migratory circulations are taken into account in the formation of what he calls "circulatory territories." In both cases, it is an epistemic commitment to interactions in mobile contexts.

The "mobile turn" is an epistemic wake-up call that starts from different disciplines and has various theoretical and methodological implications. It focuses on social theory in general and on the pivotal role traditionally given to subjects and objects of study, rooted in specific places. This problematizes the fact of taking certain categories of analysis for granted, such as citizenship or nationality, which implies the tendency to relate social groups to non-movement. As Urry and Sheller point out, "sedentarism treats as normal stability, meaning, and place, and treats as abnormal distance, change, and

placelessness" (2006: 207). In fact, when we imagine a territory, we almost immediately think of a space within and endorsed by the modern state.

The mobilities paradigm does not overlook the limiting power of borders, nor state policies or sovereignties. Rather, it constitutes a look into social processes in terms of the movements that permeate, affect, or generate them. In many ways, this view has the same origin as the criticism of methodological nationalism. If we sharpen our gaze, this would in fact be more of a "paradigm of (in)mobilities" (Cresswell, 2006; Salazar and Glick-Schiller, 2013) because there is no real dissociation between spatial transit and the control or impossibility of moving. The two extremes go hand-in-hand: bodies and things that move in many circumstances do so because others remain immobile. Thus mobility, rather than presupposing immobility, is made concrete through it: these are two antagonistic but mutually related realms.

Both the transnational approach and that of migratory circulation privilege collective units (families; groups; communities in their different conception, whether as communities of origin or of a diasporic nature) and sociabilities forged beyond the societies of departure and establishment. For Geneviève Cortes, "whether from the perspective of transnationalism or from that of migratory circulation, we are witnessing a densification of the migratory space within globalization and, therefore, its structuring into a durable system of ties between places" (2009: 41). Both perspectives give an account of how collectives and groups bypass borders through different mechanisms. Moreover, transnationalism and the mobilities paradigm conceive borders in different senses, beyond the administrative or geopolitical aspect.

While the various notions described by transnational studies (Bauböck and Faist, 2010; Besserer, 2019) are concerned with defining the dynamics that are built on and take place across the borders between the societies of departure and arrival, mobilities studies open the range of territorial references. These can be multiple—encompassing two or more nation-states—because they are not constrained or guided by the origin/destination dichotomy. On the other hand, a methodological advantage from the transnational point of view is the inclusion of individuals, groups, and families that do not migrate, but are directly affected by the values, ideas, and symbols of the localities with which they interact through their relatives or close friends.

Territorialities and the ways in which they are analyzed are another point of disagreement. Transnational studies do not always take into consideration the social ties generated along the migrants' journeys. An example is the concept of the transmigrant (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1995), according to which migrants experience different spaces beyond national

borders, but whose territories are usually blurred. It would seem to be a confrontation between a position that proposes socio-cultural ties that are in dialogue among nation-states (the transnational), and another that highlights the agency of migrants in the different territorial configurations that they elaborate.

Just as the authors were free to adopt the approach to migration that they felt was most appropriate for their study, a fundamental element in the construction of this volume was the desire to understand the participation of these migrants within globalization. Today, it would be a mistake to speak of labor—and particularly precarious labor—without referring to the global commodity chains that, from diverse latitudes and in different proportions, are manufactured, distributed, and consumed around the world, or to the global care chains that enable production systems. Globalization—or world-system (Wallerstein, 1972)—is defined and understood depending on the context from which it is analyzed. Wallerstein, for instance, considered that the modern world-system began in the sixteenth century. The colonial context had as a distinctive point the rupture between economic and political institutions, which took place because of, and at the same time allowed, the creation of capitalist forms of production. These first traces of globalization were also accompanied and propelled by a regional division of specialized production roles, making distinct areas dependent on each other, and creating a so-called "world-system." This process was extended and strengthened throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It gave way to major processes of exploitation and unequal distribution of wealth that substantially benefited already wealthy nations and world powers. This, in turn, led to a major transformation in the use of labor: first slavery and then the coolie system. In broad terms, exploitation was (and still is) justified by the growth of the profit margin, thus increasingly pronounced inequalities (Wallerstein, [1976] 2011). The end of the Cold War and its consequences signaled the beginning of a third stage of globalization, which will be the one that concerns us most closely. Indispensable elements of this newer stage of globalization are the development of new transportation and communication technologies, as well as large financial flows and global production and consumption markets (Gereffi et al., 1994; Sassen, 2000; Ribeiro, 2006).

Under this broad reference of globalization, whose conceptualization is based on the existence of a capitalist system that reinforces inequalities, authors have argued about the need to make visible other levels of this globalized network that involves actors and localities whose contributions are generally not considered under the framework of such global flows. This led to the development of conceptualizations such as *globalization from below*

(Mathews, Ribeiro and Alba Vega, 2012), *transnationalism from below* (Smith, 2001; Besserer and Nieto, 2015), alternative or *non-hegemonic globalization* (Ribeiro, 2006, 2007), or the *counter-geographies of globalization* (Sassen, 2000). This volume is inserted within this more recent discussion, but it does so in a novel way: it analyzes the participation of actors who, while participating through their labor within the most visible and far-reaching global circuits, have still been made invisible. These are actors who are often in very vulnerable conditions, but at the same time also have access to certain elements provided by globalization, such as multicultural contacts that allow individuals to know other realities and therefore seek changes for their own conditions (Sassen, 2000, 2006). They are themselves builders of global circuits; they contribute with their labor to a form of consumption that is representative of our time.

Supported by contemporary migration studies, in this volume we seek to exemplify the ways in which globalization and migration are mutually informing and transforming processes, and to explore them by delving into the specific experiences of the migrants themselves. From transnationalism, we can explain the formation of families between Ecuador and Spain or between China and Mexico, articulated and activated by migrant and non-migrant women, either through care chains in the localities of origin and settlement, in the first case, or through remittances and the formation of family businesses divided by the ocean, in the second. From the point of view of migratory circularity, we are aware of the labor mobility of agricultural day laborers between southern and northern Mexico, and from there to California, or of internal and intraregional migrations in South America, such as those of Paraguayan and Uruguayan domestic workers, as well as Bolivian garment workers between the Andes and the Southern Cone. Finally, globalization from below helps us understand how Chinese migration to Latin America is intertwined with the boom of commodities "Made in China." This migration disrupts traditional routes by inserting itself into a new pattern of global production and distribution of these goods. There is also evidence of this linkage of globalization and migration in the case of African Muslim migrants who, without any preparation or knowledge of halal meat processing, become the producers of a global food system with specific requirements of cultural "purity."

We hope this compilation of texts will help to underpin the need for new qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies in the study of migration and human mobility. We wish you a pleasant and fruitful reading.