

Migration and Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Lexicon

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Abstract: *This introduction presents the Lexicon on Migration and Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean as a bilingual and collaborative inquiry into the political, institutional, and epistemic work performed by migration vocabularies. It approaches naming as a situated process through which mobility is rendered legible, classifications acquire material form, and unequal possibilities for movement, protection, and belonging are organised. Drawing on critical migration, refugee, border, and mobility studies, it examines how these processes are embedded in longer histories of racialisation, coloniality, and state formation. The Lexicon approaches Latin America and the Caribbean not merely as empirical settings for established concepts, but as sites of conceptual production where migration vocabularies are generated, contested, translated, and reworked. Translation itself is approached as part of this epistemic politics, shaped by unequal geographies of scholarly circulation.*

Keywords: migration vocabularies; categorisation; mobility regimes; coloniality; knowledge production; Latin America; migration

The *Lexicon on Migration and Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean* grew out of discussions held during the international symposium New Perspectives on Migration in Latin America, convened in May 2024 at the Department of Geography, Durham University, with support from the Politics-State-Space cluster (UK), the French Collaborative Institute on Migration, and the Triangle Research Centre (France). Starting from a shared assessment of the relative scarcity of spaces devoted to critical scholarship on Latin American migration in Europe, we gradually expanded the project beyond the symposium itself, inviting contributions from

scholars working in and on the region. After almost two years of sustained work, and now hosted by *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science*, this open-ended bilingual initiative brings together a collaborative, critical, and self-curated compendium of keywords on migration and mobility, grounded in interdisciplinary research conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Why a Lexicon? Scholarly Vocabularies and the Politics of Migration Knowledge

A *lexicon* offers a particularly useful tool to approach migration and mobility studies in Latin America and the Caribbean because the field is structured by terms whose meanings are produced at the intersection of research, management, public debate, and the everyday lives of people on the move. Naming people, trajectories, or places is therefore never a neutral operation: it shapes what can be studied, what becomes a public problem, and what kinds of institutional action or contestation become possible. Critical migration and refugee scholarship has long examined these processes. It has shown how bureaucracies produce labels, how researchers may reproduce policy categories, how bounded groups become fetishised, and how some concepts acquire authority within unequal geopolitical structures of knowledge production (Zetter 1991, 2007; Malkki 1995, 1996; Bakewell 2008; Chimni 1998, 2009; Crawley and Skleparis 2018). Building on collective keyword projects in migration and border studies, we approach migration and mobility vocabularies as sites at which knowledge, governance, and lived experience are brought into relation (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; De Genova and Tazzioli 2016; Aradau et al. 2022). The wager of the Lexicon is therefore not to regionalise an established conceptual vocabulary, but to examine how Latin American and Caribbean histories, institutions, and political struggles unsettle, rework, and generate the terms through which migration is understood.

A lexicon also provides a way of attending closely to words as their meanings shift through use, conflict, and translation. Following Raymond Williams' approach to keywords as socially and historically charged terms, we treat each entry as a point of condensation at which academic usage encounters administrative records, activist vocabularies, public debate, and vernacular speech (Williams 1976). Across the contributions gathered here, our aim is to trace words in use, examining the social worlds through which they circulate and the effects they produce. Bringing migration and mobility into a common analytical frame also places the dossier in conversation with the *mobilities turn* in the social sciences, which treats movement as constitutive of social life and as unevenly distributed across infrastructures,

bodies, and regimes of value (Sheller and Urry 2006). Some terms classify statuses and organise access to protection. Others name routes, border practices, moral idioms, racialised memories, or forms of practical knowledge forged along the way. Taken together, these entries invite us to ask who can move, under what designation, and with what consequences.

These questions acquire particular density in Latin America and the Caribbean. Throughout this introduction, “Latin America” is approached as a historically contingent and contested regional category rather than as a homogeneous socio-geographical entity (Mignolo 2005; Jiménez Zunino and Trpin 2021). The explicit inclusion of the Caribbean likewise reflects our intention to recognise the plurality of migration histories, political traditions, and situated forms of knowledge that constitute the region.

Across this heterogeneous space, *migration vocabularies* circulate between international organisations, regional legal frameworks, state bureaucracies, border economies, migrant collectives, and critical scholarly traditions. Recent scholarship has helped clarify what is at stake in this circulation. Domenech’s work on “control with a human face” shows how the languages of rights, order, and management have been reconfigured within regional migration governance (Domenech 2013). Acosta and Freier situate policies of protection, regularisation, and naturalisation within a reflexive turn that takes the Global South seriously as a site of theoretical production (2023). Rivera Sánchez, Herrera, and Domenech bring mobilities, border control, and migrant struggles into a regional critical field, while Gutiérrez Rodríguez shows how the colonality of migration structures racialised hierarchies of visibility and value (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Rivera Sánchez, Herrera and Domenech 2023). In dialogue with these debates, we approach the region as a space in which concepts are themselves produced and reproduced, contested, and resignified through complex political, legal, and social configurations (Jiménez Zunino and Trpin 2021). This perspective shifts the analytical relationship between region and concept: rather than treating Latin America and the Caribbean merely as sites in which concepts are applied or translated, it approaches the region as a source of conceptual production capable of reshaping wider debates on migration and mobility.

Since the mid-2010s, the reconfiguration of migration vocabularies has become increasingly difficult to ignore as Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced a marked increase in the scale, diversity, and political visibility of regional and extra-regional mobilities. Venezuelan displacement, Haitian and other Caribbean mobilities, Andean and Central American border crossings, and the changing role of the Darién corridor, among many other processes, have reshaped the terms through which movement is governed,

debated, and lived across the region. Governments have used visa requirements and regularisation programmes to redraw the thresholds of lawful presence, often narrowing access to recognition and rights while retaining the languages of order and protection. Humanitarian organisations, for their part, have contributed to consolidating new categories of vulnerability and assistance. At the same time, the growing use of data infrastructures and technologies has provided state bureaucracies and international actors with an increasingly technical and ostensibly neutral language through which to track movement and sort cases according to specific legal and political technologies, while administrative arrangements frequently extend periods of waiting and uncertainty for people on the move. Through this collective project, we seek to contribute to this moment of epistemic reconfiguration from a perspective grounded in Latin America and the Caribbean. We ask how vocabularies register and are transformed by political change, how they subsequently help organise social worlds, and how the political dimensions of categories presented as merely technical or self-evident can be brought back into view (Álvarez Velasco 2020; Herrera and Gómez 2022; Domenech, Basualdo and Pereira 2023; Gandini 2026).

Analytical Questions

Read together, the entries in this Lexicon reveal a series of recurring analytical questions that cut across concepts, disciplinary traditions, and empirical objects. By bringing these questions into conversation, this introduction proposes a lens through which to read the *Lexicon* and to situate its contributions within broader debates on migration and mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean. Four questions in particular structure this reading: what naming does; where its effects acquire material form; how classification distributes possibilities for mobility; and how colonial histories give these processes their force. These questions are analytically distinct but mutually constitutive: naming acquires force as classifications become embedded in material arrangements, these arrangements distribute unequal possibilities for movement and protection, and the hierarchies they produce draw upon longer histories of racialisation, state formation, and colonial rule.

Moreover, the act of naming places people within institutional orders. Designating someone as a refugee, a regular migrant, or a “protected” subject constitutes an act of institution in Bourdieu’s sense: it confers a status, authorises expectations, and shapes the horizon of possible action (Bourdieu 1991). Hacking’s (2007) notion of looping effects further shows how classifications can reshape conduct, self-understanding, and claims through the interactions they generate. Migration scholarship has explored this constitutive

force through studies of immigration control, policy categories, and bureaucratic labelling, while reflexive critiques have examined the circulation of administrative classifications within academic research itself (Anderson 2013; Bakewell 2008; Dahinden 2016; Zetter 1991, 2007). Across Latin America and the Caribbean, these operations acquire a distinctive texture as the languages of rights, humanitarian protection, and “control with a human face” become woven into the routine practices through which states and other institutions recognise, distinguish, and govern populations on the move (Domenech 2013).

The effects of naming acquire institutional durability through documents and devices. Classificatory distinctions circulate through paperwork, databases, visas, registration systems, checkpoints, humanitarian procedures, and everyday encounters between officials and travellers. As Bowker and Star (1999) demonstrate, classification and infrastructure develop together as institutions embed classificatory schemes within the material organisation of administrative life. Vocabularies of protection and regularity therefore intersect with documentation, logistics, externalisation, and border infrastructures. Altogether, these semantic and material arrangements reveal the practical organisation of migration governance: categories matter not only because of what they mean, but because they become embedded in procedures, technologies, and institutional routines.

These classificatory practices, in turn, organise differentiated possibilities for mobility. Within what Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) describe as regimes of mobility, access to movement is structured through unequal, conditional, and revocable arrangements. Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) conceptualise such configurations through differential inclusion, drawing attention to the proliferation of intermediate legal positions, liminal legalities, and calibrated forms of tolerated il/legality (Menjívar 2006; De Genova 2002). These arrangements shape trajectories of circulation, settlement, waiting, return, and protection, while generating practical repertoires through which people negotiate and navigate institutional environments. Vernacular expressions such as *trochero*, *ir en junta*, *pedir cola*, and *mulear*, explored by Bonilla Mena and by Garlin and Sarrut in this issue, illuminate these everyday forms of navigation. They show how mobility is continuously interpreted, negotiated, and enacted alongside the institutional arrangements that govern it.

The contemporary effects of these operations are inseparable from longer historical trajectories. Processes of racialisation, nation-building, colonial rule, humanitarian intervention, and state formation continue to structure who is recognised as a legitimate subject of mobility, who is exposed to suspicion, and whose movement acquires political recognition. Quijano’s concept of the colonality of power provides a powerful framework

for understanding the durability of these hierarchies (Quijano 2000; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Herrera Rosales this issue). A perspective centred on coloniality therefore historicises the entanglement of naming, sorting, mobility, and governing, reconnecting contemporary migration vocabularies with the longer trajectories through which political orders and differentiated forms of belonging have been produced.

Read through these four questions, Latin America and the Caribbean emerge as a space in which global transformations in migration governance are refracted through specific histories of protection, regional rights, racialisation, solidarity, and state formation. From this perspective, migration vocabularies do more than describe changing forms of movement: they provide an empirical and analytical entry point into the processes through which mobility, protection, political membership, and public action are continuously differentiated and remade.

Architecture of the Issue

The *Lexicon* is organised around four axes that trace a progression from acts of naming to the infrastructures of mobility governance, and from situated practices of passage to the longer histories through which mobility becomes racialised, moralised, and governable. Rather than reproducing disciplinary boundaries, this architecture brings legal analysis, geography, history, anthropology, linguistics, and political sociology into dialogue around a shared question: how do migration vocabularies organise relations between movement, authority, and lived experience?

The first axis examines the vocabularies through which mobility is authorised, valued, and rendered administratively recognisable. The entries *Cartagena*, *Regularisation*, *Migration Categorisation*, and *Generosity* approach this question through different kinds of terms: a regional legal instrument, sequences of legal status, classificatory practices, and a moral idiom of reception. Analysing the 1984 regional refugee declaration, Blouin reads *Cartagena* both as an expanded refugee definition and as a South–South framework of protection, while showing how states may also mobilise its language as a discursive façade for containment, deterrence, and selective inclusion. The CAMINAR Collective approaches *regularisation* as a contested process that moves people through unstable legal sequences across spaces of origin, transit, and destination, producing rights while simultaneously stratifying migrant presence. Laplace analyses *migration categorisation* as a polycentric political technology through which states, international organisations, expert communities, civil society actors, and migrants produce and contest the labels that render mobility legible. Palma-Gutiérrez

approaches *generosity* as a moral language that legitimises state reception and performs institutional virtue, but which may also be reworked by migrants and local actors as a resource for collective political action.

The second axis examines the spatial and material arrangements through which mobility is channelled across and beyond territorial borders. The entries *Logistics*, *Externalisation*, *Checkpoints*, and *Transit Fetishism* analyse the infrastructures, data practices, mobile controls, and political economies that organise movement across these spaces. Ceja examines *logistics* as a rationality that presents itself as technical expertise while turning migration into a field for value extraction, the militarisation of routes, and the corporatisation of crisis management. Campos-Delgado analyses *externalisation* as a negotiated and multi-scalar extension of border control, produced through asymmetries of power and shifting judgements about desirability, worthiness, acceptance, and rejection. Fernández de la Reguera approaches *checkpoints* as mobile dispositifs that combine enforcement and care, exposing migrant and non-migrant populations alike to racialised and gendered forms of control. Trabalón's critique of *transit fetishism* shows how the language of transit can make structural violence appear as individual choice, displacing responsibility for illegalised journeys onto the people who endure them. These entries situate the border within wider regional and geopolitical configurations in which people are redirected, delayed, immobilised, or compelled to remain in motion.

The third axis moves closer to the social worlds of passage. The entries *Ir en junta*, *Pedir cola*, *Mulear*, and *Trocheros* give analytical weight to forms of practical knowledge produced along routes and in borderlands. Bonilla Mena centres the collective travel practices of Venezuelan migrants, gendered road literacies, and improvised forms of care, showing how travelling together, asking for rides, or boarding cargo trucks clandestinely can become both survival strategies and forms of political knowledge. Garlin and Sarrut examine *trocheros* through the vernacular world of the *trocha*: improvised border paths along which people and goods move through negotiations with residents, armed actors, and security forces. The *trochero* — someone who makes a living through and along the *trocha* — appears here less as a fixed identity than as a situated role, sometimes temporary and sometimes consolidated into a livelihood, shaped by economic collapse, uneven border enforcement, and state abandonment. These entries approach mobility as an embodied and relational experience, made possible through fragile arrangements, practical skills, and everyday negotiations, while remaining attentive to the forms of exposure and dependence that shape movement under conditions of constraint.

The final axis situates these vocabularies within longer histories of racialisation, coloniality, and national imagination. The entries *The Coloniality of Migration* and *Turcos* show how the words used to name mobility carry older hierarchies into the present, including those attached to origin, religion, class, and belonging. Herrera Rosales develops the *coloniality of migration* as a framework for analysing how categories, border regimes, and social hierarchies reproduce colonial structures, while also demonstrating the active participation of states in the region in these processes. Devis-Amaya examines *turcos* as a derogatory misnomer applied to diverse communities originating in the Middle East and their diasporas, a label that condensed processes of orientalisation, commercial exclusion, political instrumentalisation, and later forms of appropriation. These entries return attention to the *Lexicon*'s central proposition: categories, infrastructures, practices, and subjectivities acquire meaning within histories that continue to organise the politics of mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Translation and Circulation

The contributions gathered here sustain the *Lexicon* as a shared form of collective inquiry, thought, and reflection, written in both Spanish and English and grounded in regional theoretical and conceptual debates. Translation is therefore central to this collective practice. Concepts travel across unequal academic geographies, carrying with them the histories, disputes, and social worlds from which they emerge. Translation, in this sense, is not merely a means of widening circulation: it is itself a site at which conceptual equivalences are negotiated, distinctions are displaced, and the situated histories carried by terms become visible. Scholarly circulation is shaped by the same asymmetries: concepts gain authority more readily when they pass through dominant languages, journals, and institutional locations (Alatas 2003; Beigel 2013). Publishing the dossier in open access format and making every entry available in both English and Spanish responds to these asymmetries. It affirms Latin American and Caribbean debates as a source of conceptual innovation while creating conditions for dialogue in international migration studies and other critical traditions developed across different Southern contexts. Making each entry available in both languages also broadens the range of conversations in which these concepts can circulate, within research, teaching, public debate, and professional practice.

We hope that the *Lexicon* will provide a starting point for wider exchanges around collective and situated ways of understanding migration and mobility. Making concepts developed in and from Latin America and the Caribbean more readily accessible to

international audiences for discussion, translation, and critical engagement is one step in that direction. We also conceive of this dossier as the beginning of a longer conversation. We hope it will encourage new contributions, new keywords, and new collaborations, extending this collective endeavour across languages and disciplines, within Latin America and the Caribbean and beyond the region.

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A Lexicon / Un Léxico

CARTAGENA

A legal and political device that refers both to an expanded definition of refugee and a South-South framework of refugee governance cooperation. By scrutinizing the recent Cartagena +40 process it questions the articulation of Cartagena into the global management of mobilities from a critical perspective of the refugee/migrant dichotomy. This contribution invites to reflect on how Cartagena functions as a discursive facade that obscures states' simultaneous deployment of containment, deterrence, and selective inclusion measures to control mobilities.

CARTAGENA

Un instrumento jurídico y político que alude tanto a una definición ampliada de refugiado como a un marco de cooperación Sur-Sur para la gobernanza de las personas refugiadas. Mediante el análisis del reciente proceso de Cartagena +40, se cuestiona la articulación de Cartagena en la gestión global de las movilidades desde una mirada crítica a la dicotomía persona refugiada/persona migrante. La contribución invita a reflexionar sobre la fachada discursiva de Cartagena que oculta el despliegue simultáneo de medidas de contención, disuasión e inclusión selectiva por parte de los Estados para controlar las movilidades.

CHECKPOINTS

A mobile dispositif of social control that regulates the mobility of migrant and non-migrant populations along migration routes, border areas, highways, and urban entry points. Operating through an entanglement of militarised logics and humanitarian rationales, checkpoints function simultaneously as instruments of enforcement and care, exposing people on the move to racialised and gendered forms of violence and human rights violations. Their flexibility and logistical feasibility make them key mechanisms in the internalisation, individualisation, and spatial expansion of border control.

RETÉN

Dispositivo móvil de control social que regula la movilidad de poblaciones migrantes y no migrantes a lo largo de rutas migratorias, zonas fronterizas, carreteras y espacios urbanos. Como resultado de prácticas militarizadas de control fronterizo articuladas con lógicas humanitarias, los retenes funcionan simultáneamente como instrumentos de vigilancia y protección exponiendo a las personas en movilidad a formas racializadas y generizadas de violencia y a violaciones de derechos humanos. Su flexibilidad y viabilidad logística los convierten en mecanismos clave para la internalización, individualización y expansión espacial del control fronterizo.

COLONIALITY OF MIGRATION

A critical analytical framework developed by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez that examines global migration governance through a colonial lens. Drawing on Aníbal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power, it argues that migration categories, border regimes, and social hierarchies reproduce colonial structures of race, gender, and class. In the context of Latin America, the concept traces continuities from sixteenth-century racial capitalism through contemporary border externalisation, revealing how so-called “peripheral states”—far from passive recipients of global migration governance—actively perpetuate colonial logics of inclusion and exclusion over racialised migrant bodies.

COLONIALIDAD DE LA MIGRACIÓN

Marco analítico crítico desarrollado por Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez que examina la gobernanza global de la migración desde una perspectiva colonial. A partir del concepto de colonialidad del poder de Aníbal Quijano, sostiene que las categorías migratorias, los regímenes fronterizos y las jerarquías sociales reproducen estructuras coloniales de raza, género y clase. En el contexto de América Latina, el concepto traza las continuidades desde el capitalismo racial del siglo XVI hasta la externalización de fronteras contemporánea, revelando cómo los Estados supuestamente “periféricos”—lejos de ser receptores pasivos de la gobernanza global de la migración—perpetúan activamente lógicas coloniales de inclusión y exclusión sobre los cuerpos de los migrantes racializados.

EXTERNALISATION

A set of strategies through which states extend the spatial reach of migration control beyond their territorial borders, managing and restricting human movement before it reaches their frontiers. Externalisation encompasses, and is underpinned by, the institutionalisation of (un)desirability and the management of worthiness. It is a co-produced, multi-scalar, and negotiated process.

EXTERNALIZACIÓN

Conjunto de estrategias de gestión y restricción del movimiento de personas mediante las cuales los estados extienden el alcance espacial de su control migratorio más allá de sus fronteras territoriales. La externalización abarca, y está sustentada por, la institucionalización de la (in)deseabilidad y la gestión del merecimiento. Es un proceso coproducido, multiescalar y negociado.

GENEROSITY

A polyfunctional and contested idea operating across three overlapping dimensions in Latin American migration governance. As a nominal device, it invokes moral virtue to legitimise reception policies that exceed minimum expectations while masking their selective and self-interested

GENEROSIDAD

Idea polifuncional y en disputa que opera en tres dimensiones superpuestas dentro de la gobernanza migratoria en América Latina. Como dispositivo nominal, invoca la virtud moral para legitimar políticas de recepción que superan expectativas mínimas de acción, aunque su naturaleza se mantenga

character. As a performative act, it shapes political identities of governments and institutions *vis-à-vis* migrants and the international community. As a transformative force, it empowers migrants and local actors to contest dominant governance schemes from below. Generosity thus sits at the unstable intersection of solidarity, self-interest, and political contestation—never neutral, always appropriated.

selectiva e interesada. Como acto performativo, moldea las identidades políticas de gobiernos e instituciones frente a los migrantes y la comunidad internacional. Como fuerza transformadora, impulsa a migrantes y actores locales para impugnar desde abajo los esquemas dominantes de gobernanza. La generosidad se sitúa así en la inestable intersección entre solidaridad, interés propio y contestación política: nunca neutral, siempre apropiada.

IR EN JUNTA, PEDIR COLA, MULEAR

Three emic concepts drawn from Venezuelan migrant experience along the Andean–Southern Cone corridors. *Ir en junta* (going together) denotes the collective organisation of travel, particularly among women and families, as a situated practice of mutual care and protection against the violence of transit. *Pedir cola* (hitchhiking) names the gendered, embodied knowledge through which migrants negotiate transportation without resources, reading the codes of the road as political and survival strategies. *Mulear* (secretly hitching rides on cargo trucks) captures clandestine mobility sustained by shared migrant knowledge and solidarity. Together, these practices and strategies constitute a vernacular epistemology: forms of resistance and care that reclaim migrants as political subjects.

IR EN JUNTA, PEDIR COLA, MULEAR

Tres conceptos emic derivados de la experiencia migrante venezolana que han transitado por el corredor migratorio sur-sur en el contexto sudamericano. *Ir en junta* denota la organización colectiva del desplazamiento, particularmente entre mujeres y familias, como una práctica situada de cuidado mutuo y protección frente a las violencias del tránsito. *Pedir cola* nombra un saber encarnado y generizado mediante el cual las personas migrantes solicitan transporte a conductores particulares o de carga como un medio para avanzar sin contar con recursos económicos, conociendo los códigos del camino como estrategia política y de supervivencia. *Mulear* consiste en subirse a escondidas a la plataforma de un tráiler, y captura una forma de movilidad clandestina sostenida por el conocimiento migrante compartido y la solidaridad. En conjunto, estas prácticas y estrategias constituyen una epistemología vernácula: formas de resistencia y cuidado que reivindican a las personas migrantes como sujetos políticos.

LOGISTICS

A dominant rationality of power in contemporary migration governance that presents itself as neutral technical expertise in the “efficient” administration of resources, data, infrastructures, and migrants. Far from being a mere operational category, logistics is a producer of value: it legitimizes the extraction of capital from migration through legal and institutional channels and enables the militarization and corporatization of borders in “crisis” management. Rooted in European colonial expansion and the trafficking of enslaved peoples, logistical rationality has continuously reorganised populations, territories, and mobilities in service of capital accumulation—from nineteenth-century whitening projects to contemporary border externalisation, deportation infrastructures, and digital surveillance platforms across Latin America, designing geographies that connect disparate territories.

LOGÍSTICA

Racionalidad dominante de poder en la gobernanza migratoria contemporánea que se presenta como expertise técnico neutral en la administración “eficiente” de recursos, datos, infraestructuras y migrantes. Lejos de ser una mera categoría operativa, la logística es productora de valor: legitima la extracción de capital de la migración a través de canales legales e institucionales y habilita la militarización y corporativización de las fronteras en la administración de la “crisis”. Arraigada en la expansión colonial europea y en la trata de personas esclavizadas, la racionalidad logística ha reorganizado continuamente poblaciones, territorios y movibilidades al servicio de la acumulación de capital—desde los proyectos de blanqueamiento del siglo XIX hasta la externalización de fronteras, las infraestructuras de deportación y las plataformas de vigilancia digital contemporáneas en América Latina, diseñando geografías que conectan territorios dispares.

MIGRATION CATEGORISATION

A historically and politically situated process through which states, international organisations, expert communities, civil society actors, and migrants produce, circulate, stabilise and contest labels that render mobility legible and governable. Within a polycentric and unequal field, categorisation works across institutional, experiential and epistemic registers, stratifying access to rights and recognition, distributing visibility and invisibility, and authorising some forms of knowledge while marginalising others. It operates at once as a political technology and as a terrain of struggle, constituting differentiated legal, social and political subjectivities. Dominant

CATEGORIZACIÓN MIGRATORIA

Proceso histórica y políticamente situado mediante el cual Estados, organizaciones internacionales, comunidades expertas, actores de la sociedad civil y personas migrantes producen, hacen circular, estabilizan y disputan etiquetas que vuelven la movilidad legible y governable. En un campo policéntrico y desigual, la categorización opera a través de registros institucionales, experienciales y epistémicos, estratificando el acceso a derechos y reconocimiento, distribuyendo visibilidad e invisibilidad y autorizando determinadas formas de conocimiento mientras margina otras. Funciona simultáneamente como una tecnología política y como un terreno de

classifications are enforced, negotiated, reappropriated and challenged in situated ways, exposing their instability even where such contestation rarely displaces the hierarchies they sustain.

disputa, constituyendo subjetividades jurídicas, sociales y políticas diferenciadas. Las clasificaciones dominantes se imponen, negocian, reapproprian y cuestionan de manera situada, poniendo de manifiesto su inestabilidad incluso cuando estas formas de contestación rara vez desplazan las jerarquías que sostienen.

REGULARISATION

A non-linear, complex, and contested process through which a state authorises non-nationals to reside lawfully within its territory, either temporarily or permanently. Encompassing migration policies, refugee status determination (RSD), and naturalisation, regularisation generates sequences of legal statuses that alternate between regularity and irregularity across countries of origin, transit, and destination. As a socio-political process, it produces migrant categories that carry specific social meanings and hierarchies that determine access to rights. Shaped by an asymmetric tension between state control and migrant agency, regularisation constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for social inclusion.

REGULARIZACIÓN

Proceso no lineal, complejo y disputado mediante el cual un Estado autoriza a la población no nacional a residir legalmente en su territorio, ya sea de forma temporal o permanente. La regularización comprende las políticas migratorias, la determinación del estatuto de refugiado (DER) y la naturalización, y genera estatus jurídicos y trayectorias en las que se alternan situaciones de regularidad e irregularidad a lo largo de los países de origen, tránsito y destino. En tanto proceso sociopolítico, produce categorías migratorias dotadas de significados sociales específicos y jerarquías que determinan el acceso diferencial a derechos. Configurada por una tensión asimétrica entre el control estatal y la agencia migrante, la regularización constituye una condición necesaria, pero insuficiente, para la inclusión social.

TRANSIT FETISHISM

A critical concept that exposes the reification of “transit migration” as a mechanism of legitimization within migration governance. By foregrounding the migrant as an individual subject who “chooses transit,” fetishism renders invisible the (geo)political, corporate, moral, and financial architectures that illegalize migratory journeys in border regimes of the Americas. Taking “south-north”

FETICHISMO DEL TRÁNSITO

Un concepto crítico que expone la reificación de la “migración de tránsito” como mecanismo de legitimación de la gobernanza migratoria. Al destacar al migrante como un sujeto individual que “elige el tránsito”, el fetichismo invisibiliza las arquitecturas (geo)políticas, corporativas, morales y financieras que ilegalizan los viajes migratorios en los regímenes fronterizos de las Américas. Al tomar como ejemplo

migrations as an example, the category highlights the devices of guilt and punishment that hold migrants responsible for the precariousness they experience on the move. The “subjective” dimension of migration emerges only as a neoliberal strategic necessity and has nothing to do with its autonomous character. Depoliticising migration by displacing structural responsibility onto individual “choice,” these devices contribute to naturalising the language and practice of border externalisation, hierarchisation of (im)mobility, and, in general, capitalist power relations that deny freedom of movement.

las migraciones “sur-norte,” la categoría resalta los dispositivos de culpa y castigo que responsabilizan a las propias personas de la precariedad que experimentan por ponerse en movimiento. La dimensión “subjetiva” de la migración sólo emerge como necesidad estratégica neoliberal y nada tiene que ver con su carácter autónomo. Al despolitizar la migración, estos dispositivos contribuyen a naturalizar el lenguaje y la práctica de la externalización fronteriza, de la jerarquización de la (in)movilidad y, en general, de las relaciones de poder capitalistas que niegan la libertad de movimiento.

TROCHEROS

Individuals who guide or carry goods for others across *trochas*, the informal, unregulated paths used to bypass official crossings along borders, most notably between Venezuela and Colombia. The role is situational rather than fixed: people take it up temporarily or recurrently in response to economic collapse, food shortages, and inconsistent border enforcement, and it may or may not become a stable livelihood. Analytically distinct from “smuggler,” the term denotes actors embedded in local moral and relational economies rather than criminal networks. Trocheros sustain cross-border survival economies, enable humanitarian flows, and expose the selective, situational nature of state authority—tolerated, taxed, or repressed depending on shifting political conditions.

TROCHEROS

Individuos que transportan mercancías o guían personas a través de las trochas y los caminos informales, esquivando los cruces oficiales a lo largo de fronteras, sobre todo entre Venezuela y Colombia. Se trata de un rol situacional más que fijo: los trocheros asumen esta práctica de manera temporal o recurrente como respuesta al colapso económico, la escasez de alimentos y la inconsistencia de los controles fronterizos, convirtiéndola en un medio de vida. El trochero se diferencia de la figura del “contrabandista” desde un punto de vista analítico, ya que el término se refiere a actores que hacen parte de economías morales y relacionales locales, más que en redes criminales. Los trocheros se mantienen en economías de supervivencia transfronterizas, facilitando los flujos humanitarios y poniendo de manifiesto el carácter selectivo y aleatorio de la autoridad estatal, que puede tolerarlos o reprimirlos según las condiciones políticas del momento.

TURCOS

A derogatory misnomer applied to Arab, Armenian, Jewish, and other Middle Eastern immigrants arriving in Latin America from the 1880s onward, whose Ottoman travel documents led host societies to conflate vastly different ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds under a single racialising label. Far from a mere linguistic error, *turco* encodes a history of orientalisation, commercial exclusion, and political weaponisation directed at diasporic communities across the region. Its meanings have never been fixed: simultaneously an insult, a term of endearment, a political slur, and a marker of diasporic identity, *turco* illuminates how mislabelling functions as a form of social differentiation—and how racialised communities negotiate, appropriate, and contest imposed identities across generations.

TURCOS

Gentilicio despectivo y erróneo aplicado a inmigrantes árabes, armenios, judíos y de otros orígenes de Oriente Medio que llegaron a América Latina desde la década de 1880, cuyos documentos de viaje otomanos llevaron a las sociedades de acogida a confundir orígenes étnicos, religiosos y nacionales muy diversos bajo una única etiqueta racializante. Lejos de ser un simple error lingüístico, *turco* codifica una historia de orientalización, exclusión comercial y explotación política dirigida contra las comunidades diaspóricas de la región. Sus significados nunca han sido fijos: insulto, apelativo cariñoso, arma política e indicador de identidad diaspórica a la vez, *turco* ilumina cómo el etiquetado erróneo funciona como tecnología de diferenciación social—y cómo las comunidades racializadas negocian, se apropian de y disputan las identidades impuestas a lo largo de generaciones.