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Dossier: International, transcontinental and intrarregional human mobilities: biopower, migrant strategies, and representations (19th to 21st centuries)

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This dossier emerges as an initiative of its coordinators and editors –Lai Sai Acón Chan and Ronald Soto-Quiros– who are interested in international migrations and collaborate jointly on a project to recover the historical memory of Chinese migrations in Costa Rica (PREMEHCHI for its acronym in Spanish). This project is led by an international multidisciplinary team of researchers from the University of Costa Rica, the UNED (Costa Rica), the multidisciplinary team on Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula of the Université Bordeaux Montaigne (Bordeaux, France) and the University of Minnesota Morris. PREMEHCHI is based at the University of Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica)¹.

The dossier of this issue of *Diálogos*, a journal of the Department of History and the Graduate Program in History of the State University of Maringá (UEM) is a first effort to publish bilingual versions of the same article (English and Spanish or Portuguese) in order to achieve greater internationalization and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge. In this particular case, the dossier focuses on the phenomenon of international migration –or international human mobility – addressed from the perspective of scholars specializing in a wide array of disciplines (history, sociology, political science, cultural studies, cinema, and others), from different geographical

¹ For more information about this PREMEHCHI project, check <http://premehchi.ucr.ac.cr/>

locations (Costa Rica, Honduras, United States, France and Spain) and in a wide chronological span (XIX-XXI centuries).

In the dossier title the use of the concept of human mobility has been privileged over the term migration. The use of this term is becoming increasingly frequent nowadays². The notion of human mobility has already begun to be used in different disciplines since the 1960s³. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), human mobility is a generic term that covers all the different forms of movement of people and implies a wider range of these movements than the term migration (IOM, 2019, p. 91-92).

Similarly, IOM (CEAR, n.d.) defines “human mobility” as the “mobilization of people from one place to another while exerting their right to free movement” and it is a

complex and motivated process for various reasons (voluntary or involuntary), which is carried out with the intention of staying at the destination for short or long periods, or even to develop a circular mobility. This process involves crossing the boundaries of a geographical or political division, within a country or abroad. (my translation).

Meanwhile, in her work that analyzes interculturality, Aleida Alavez Ruiz (2014, p. 22) explains that “human mobility” is a

recent concept that allows including under the same umbrella various forms of movement of people such as refuge, asylum, international migration, internal displacement, mobility forced by transnational crimes (human trafficking), and mobility within the framework of integration systems, among others, and is informed by a series of political, cultural, economic and environmental factors, among others, that do not have similar characteristics in all cases [...] There are many characteristics of human mobility, both as a human process, the expression of a human right which is motivated by various causes, sometimes with an intention such as taking up residence, as well as a process that involves crossing internal or external geopolitical borders. (my translation).

Alavez Ruiz believes that the typology of human mobility can be determined by territory, the causes of mobility, intended destination, the time of permanence, the legal framework that regulates territorial dimension; the willingness of people to move, and the status of their travel documents (ALAVEZ RUIZ, 2014, p. 22-24). Whatever the categories, the same author points out that:

Human mobility is a concept that is linked to the historical process in which individuals or groups decide to move from one place to another based on their interest to settle or reside in

² To learn more about the change from the concept of migration to mobility as a general category, see, for example: (PELLERIN, 2011). To learn more about the interest of changing the word from “migrations” to “mobility” and the interest of the formulation of the “mobility turn” –the change of perspective that invites us to be less interested in fixed entities than to dynamic processes and to study social changes for themselves, rather than seeing them as transient states between an exit point and an arrival point–, see: (CHAVEL, 2014).

³ Regarding the evolution of the concept of human mobility already used since the 1960s and 1970s until today, see: “Chapter 1. Human Mobility: An Issue of Multidisciplinary Research.” (MONTANARI; STANISCIÀ, 2016 p. 1-24).

a different place from their hometown, informed by various reasons that can range from economic to political, to social, to cultural or to environmental reasons, sometimes voluntarily, other times induced or compelled by circumstances.

The history of humanity is characterized by the social nature of movements from one place to another in the search for better living conditions, although humans have also done so as a way of exercising dominion over other communities under the logic of imperialism or hegemonic control of other territories (ALAVEZ, 2014, p. 1, my translation).

Peña and Ausín indicate that human mobility is, at the same time, a value and a right, both from the point of view of individuals and from that of populations (PEÑA, AUSÍN, 2015, p. 9-45). Alavez reaffirms the idea of human mobility as a right:

In modernity, mobility is limited to the exercise of the human right of every person to migrate, which includes positive transformations that reduce inequalities, inequities and discrimination, for which no human being should be identified or recognized as illegal because of their migratory condition (ALAVEZ RUIZ, 2014, p. 21, my translation)

Understanding human mobility a process, a value and a right, and as such in this dossier we have been concerned with correlating it especially with another well-known concept: the term biopolitics –understood here as power practices for the control of life and bodies⁴. As Zandra Pedraza (2012, p. 95-96) rightly indicates:

I attribute the widespread use of the notion of biopolitics [. . .] to the links that this category has contributed to tend between the practice of governing, the body as a historical and political entity, life conceived as a state responsibility and the sense of the exercise of power when it is directed to “make live”. [. . .] The elements involved in this exercise - the practice of governing, the body as a historical and political entity, the life assimilated to state responsibility and the sense of the exercise of power - did not usually relate so closely before the notion of biopolitics that Michel Foucault revitalized in the seventies came into circulation. (my translation)

This notion of biopolitics is linked to another concept inevitably conceived by the same French philosopher, that of governmentality: a term to understand a specific way of exercising power or, the rationality proper to a government of the people. It is a form of political rationality that came into being in the 17th century and took a definite shape in the 18th century. This rationality is based on two fundamental elements: a series of specific government apparatuses and a set of knowledges, more precisely of knowledge systems (LASCOUTES, 2004; BOTTICELLI, 2015). As Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (2003) point out in their interpretation of Foucault:

Biopower, we suggest, entails one or more truth discourses about the ‘vital’ character of living human beings; an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health.

⁴ We must remember the various uses of the term biopolitics (KECK, 2008).

In this way, by stating all those elements –authoritarian voices that elaborate upon discursive lines, devices based on those discourses and modes of subjectification– we can conceive of human mobilities as spaces for the exercise of biopower. Thus, human mobilities can also be interpreted in the light of biopower's own purposes. In this regard, Valera Barrios (2014, p. 18, my translation) explains: “Since the eighteenth-century governance and biopolitics have been moving towards the differentiation, homogenization and functional articulation of human corporeality.”

The link between biopolitics and migration –and in a broader sense “human mobility”–is thus very suggestive⁵, as pointed out by French researcher Solange Chavel (2015, p. 30-31):

the concept of biopower defined by Foucault as a key element in the study of migration, specifically at two different levels: the concept invites to unveil the “biological” hypotheses (related to what is considered “normal” to life and health) or biopoliticies that justify, to some extent, the emergence of migration policies and control measures. It displays the plethoric organic metaphors that adorn the discourse on the regulation of migration and interrogate its foundations. Besides, in a more radical move, the concept allows one to question in a self-reflexive way the use of the term migration to qualify a certain type of human mobility. Describing some displacements on the earth's surface as mere migrations represents a normative positioning that is not in any way bland. It implies accepting as natural a certain number of institutional arrangements that could well be discussed. In other words, the concept of biopower can help us identify certain blind spots of both scientific and political discourses about the migration phenomenon. (my translation)

In this sense, our dossier is organized in four main axes. The first axis is concerned about historical cases of human mobilities considered as international transcontinental diasporas, their relationship with biopower devices, the different strategies of individuals in receiving countries and the representations that were generated around migrant individuals or populations. A second part analyzes human mobilities and their incidence and relationship in the generation of identity, national and homogenizing narratives and the possible institutional biopolitical control tools that are generated. A third section of the dossier specifically addresses the issue of continental intraregional human mobility with historical interpretation, but highlighting very contemporary cases, thus official speeches, biopower mechanisms and subjectivities involved are re-analyzed. Finally, the last section focuses on representations in the visual arts (film and television) of different types of human mobility and in very diverse geographical and chronological spaces.

In the first section of the dossier, the first two articles focus on migrant groups arriving in Costa Rica (Central America) between the end of the 19th century and until 1950: a study by historian Ricardo Martínez Esquivel and another one by Professor Lai Sai Acón Chan, both from University of Costa Rica. Martínez Esquivel carries out a prosopographic and social network analysis on the Syrian-Lebanese emigration processes to Costa Rica at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century; the mechanisms of social insertion used by this migrant group; and the relations

⁵ Some examples of authors who have addressed the issue of biopolitics and migration are (PARRINI, 2015 and SOUZA LIMA FARIA, 2017).

between the Syrian-Lebanese and the Masonic sociability networks during the first half of the twentieth century. It concludes with an analysis of the active participation of Syrian-Lebanese immigrants in a process of readjustment of the social relations of the State and their contribution to forging new cultural representations of nationhood in the country.

For her part, Professor Acón Chan performs an innovative exercise on the degree of kinship that existed between several families of Chinese origin who settled in Nicoya (North Pacific of Costa Rica) and analyzes how it influenced their contributions to the socio-economic development of the city and the immigrants mobility patterns throughout the Costa Rican Pacific from the end of the 19th century until mid-20th century. The participants of the study were descendants of immigrants who took root in Nicoya between 1880 and 1950 and had two peculiarities: they belonged to the same family clans despite the different surnames with which they were registered or came from the same geographical area and sometimes even from the same village, which developed affinity ties as strong as consanguineous ties. This allowed them to support each other to achieve the collective development of the Chinese immigrant group in Nicoya.

Finally in this first section, Costa Rican historian David Ignacio Ibarra Arana, also from the University of Costa Rica, analyzes the representations of overseas Chinese. However, what is particular about it is that the study of these representations is done from the perspective of the country of origin. In the context of the Cold War, reports of conferences related to the Huaqiao, or overseas Chinese, analyzed between 1951 and 1953 are addressed. This was an initial period of divided policies towards Chinese communities abroad, by the government of the People's Republic from China and the Guomindang, in Taiwan. More than supporting Chinese populations abroad, who faced dynamics of exclusion and discrimination in the countries where they resided, these Chinese governments found in the overseas compatriots a scenario to fight for their loyalties through political speeches and strategies.

A second batch of our contributions addresses human mobility, its relationship with identity configuration, and biopolitics. The component of homogeneity and the homogenization characteristic of biopolitics is evident in the contributions of Professor Mimi Yang of Carthage College (Kenosha, Wisconsin, United States) and American scholar Bradley Safarik of Science Po Bordeaux (Bordeaux, France). Yang proposes an interesting reflection that criticizes the monoculturalist American identity and postulates a multicultural and multiracial identity, shaped by the history of immigration. The author dissects the American Dream under the lens of both WASPs - White Anglo-Saxon Protestant - and non-WASPs immigrants, particularly in the mid-19th century. By correlating cultural duality and double consciousness through the lens of WASPs, later immigrants, nativists, and African-American culturalists, the document proposes the existence of a malleable and evolving American cultural identity, constantly (re) configured by successive waves

of immigrants.

Following the case of the United States as well, but with a comparative perspective, Safarik relies in particular on the study of authorities that produce narratives on human mobility. In this way, the author considers that the president of the United States, Donald Trump, and the president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, use political speeches and anti-immigration policy as a political tool to attract and strengthen their constituencies. In both cases, the campaign's speech was transmitted to the administration. The implications of this strategy for the public perception of immigrants are examined based on Michel Foucault's theories on biopower and biopolitics and their mobilization through political discourse and public policies.

Regarding the causes, characteristics, devices, strategies and subjectivities related to human mobility, a third section of our dossier focuses on the study of the continental-intraregional displacements of Central Americans towards the United States. First, the Honduran researcher Vladimir López Recinos provides a study with a historical perspective that analyzes the link between immigration and emigration to explain the particular case of migratory movements from Honduras to the United States of America (USA). With the analysis of figures, testimonies, and historical information collected and systematized, the environment of the first migratory practices is reconstructed to then locate the breaking point and / or transformation of a migration of a meager nature to a more compulsive one that is currently being developed in a context of migratory anarchy.

On the other hand, the Costa Rican sociologist Guillermo Acuña González of the National University of Costa Rica deals with the relationship between recent Central American regional mobility processes, the features of subjectivities that respond and the control actions to deter migratory processes. In this vision of human mobility in the light of governmentality, the researcher addresses some angles of the approach to the autonomy of migration and provides specific examples in which these relationships are present.

Finally, in the interest of exemplifying the transmission and dissemination of narratives about human mobility, the fourth and final axis of our dossier deals with representations in television and cinema. First, the historian Oscar Álvarez Gila of the University of the Basque Country-Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/ EHU) analyzes the phenomenon of Spanish exile. During the Spanish Civil War, the Basque regional government proceeded to evacuate the child population to other European countries. The memory of this childhood exile began to be recovered during the 1960s, both in Spain and abroad. This article establishes a comparison between the two earliest representations of Basque child exile on the screen. On the one hand, the novel (and later film, from 1969) *The other Guernica tree*, which reflects the discourse generated on this particular exile in Franco's Spain, is analyzed. On the other hand, a 1963 chapter of the *Route 66* American

television series whose protagonists were Basque exiled children is analyzed. In the comparison between both representations the similarities and differences are identified, as well as the different political context in which they fit.

Secondly, and finally, Andrea Cabezas Vargas, a researcher and professor at the Université d'Angers (France) and a specialist in Latin American cinema, explains how cinema, as well as television, the press and other media contribute to forging social and cultural imaginaries as Bourdieu demonstrated it extensively in *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (2001) and Chomsky in *La Fabrication du consentement* (2008). However, by portraying social phenomena, the cinema not only builds an imaginary but also contributes to the creation of film archives with which constructs as well as reconstructs a part of the story. That is the position of the author who, making Ferro's (1993, 1977), Kracauer (1969, 1973), and Billard's (1982) postulates her own and with the philosophy of history, intends to analyze to what extent contemporary Central American cinema can be considered as a form of construction or reconstruction of the memory and history of Central American migrations in the first two decades of the 21st century.

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