



Thinking migrations in capitalism: From the structural production of expulsion contexts to migrants' agencies

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Contemporary capitalism, in its global and neoliberal version, has been characterized by accentuated processes of wealth accumulation, increasing poverty and inequality, and by generating a global climate crisis derived from the deterioration of the environment due to the incessant production of goods; it is a drastic scenario of generalized precariousness of life for most of the planet's population. In this context, forced international migrations, which have been a constituent part of the modern world for centuries, have increased dramatically and have spread to different regions of the world, diversifying the populations involved and affected.

Forced migration processes are determined, among other causes, by dynamics of unequal development between nation-states with asymmetrical socioeconomic conditions of material existence, as well as by dynamics of territorial distribution of population (especially relocation and mobility of workers), which involve the crossing of several international borders. However, forced migrations are also, without a doubt, practices and actions of certain populations who, in situations of clear precariousness, migrate to improve their living conditions.

Considering the multiple socioeconomic and political dynamics that produce migrations and the different institutions and social subjects that shape them, it is necessary to formulate critical conceptual scaffolds in the approach to migrations.

The exercise of this critique involves three related dynamics: diagnosis, positioning and readings/actions towards intervention.

The first step is the elaboration of diagnoses on the socio-historical frameworks of the populations and institutions that make up migrations, and of the processes and asymmetrical power relations that produce the contexts of migratory expulsion, and the subsequent dynamics of transit and destination.

Subsequently, the construction of a historical-political positioning is required that not only deeply addresses the structural causes of these cross-border mobility processes, but also criticizes the processes of marginalization, exclusion and violence that characterize forced migrations.

Finally, the previous steps make it possible to generate a reading that makes it viable to glimpse the actions and practices to confront the political, socioeconomic and violent dynamics that produce the contexts of expulsion of contemporary forced migrations.

In the context of the above, a conceptual framework that considers three axes is required:

1) Structural dimension of expulsion contexts

Based on the framework of the political economy of migration and the debates on the relationship between migration and development, it is essential to start with the consideration of macro-structural conditions (with local, national, regional and global dimensions), which produce very adverse expulsion contexts. These contexts of expulsion allude to basic (and essential) needs such as fair and sufficient salaries, well-paid jobs, living conditions free of violence and with social rights (such as education, social security, health, etc.).

And, in a complementary way, to consider the development processes of neoliberal capitalism. It is necessary to trace the genealogy of the political, social and economic dynamics that force migrants to leave their places of origin against their will and in a forced manner. These are processes such as the increase in inequality, pauperization, the presence of violence and insecurity, and the impacts of environmental processes in localities in conditions of vulnerability and exclusion; in a general sense, it is the generalized and structural precariousness of the material conditions of life.

2) Migrant populations as socio-political subjects, and their position in migrations

An important turning point is the centrality of migrants as relevant actors that define and shape cross-border mobilities. In this sense, it is key to see what the readings and interpretations that forced migrants themselves make of the contexts of expulsion. It is essential to understand the values and ideas based on which people choose to migrate, as well as their perceptions of the causes.

For this reason and based on the proposal of the autonomy of migrations, it is necessary to develop a conceptual framework on migrant groups that transcends the conception of migrants as passive and unprotected populations. Although migrants are constrained by macroeconomic dynamics and determined by specific life contexts, they are also populations with diverse agencies that, deploying their capacity for action and using different resources and knowledge, choose the option of migrating to improve their living conditions and overcome very adverse situations of existence.

3) The political dimensions of the approach to migration processes

Forced migration processes have several stages (origin, transit and destination), and are often characterized by dynamics of intense material precariousness and violence in the different countries involved. In this sense, and following the reflections of the autonomy of migrations, analytical exercises are required to criticize, make visible and denounce migration and border policies that criminalize migrants, and “represent” them - without evidence and unfoundedly - as “criminals” and clear and deliberate “lawbreakers”. It is urgent to question and disarticulate the state discourses that stigmatize migrants. Nor should migration control exercises and strategies in the national states of transit and destination be based on “national security” perspectives, which constantly and structurally violate the human rights of irregularized foreign populations.

Finally, it is necessary to dismantle and confront the political, xenophobic and uninformed use of forced migration processes by certain governments. The state dynamics of exclusion and stigmatization of migrants are unjust and lacking in evidence; dynamics used to produce advantages and gains in political and electoral matters (as Trump and the Republicans have been systematically doing in the U.S. political arena for years). Forced migration control policies should not be subordinated (or held hostage) to other international processes and geopolitical dimensions. An example of this are the countries of Central and North America that align with and follow the regional anti-immigration policies imposed by the U.S. governments, and that, with this, seek to evade economic sanctions and/or obtain political benefits from recent U.S. administrations (Trump, Biden, etc.).

Finally, the political dimension of migration must be recognized, the structural causes that produce them must be assumed, and migrants must be made visible and valued as populations with agency and possession of diverse rights. Migration policies of criminalization cannot be an excuse to transgress human rights and violate foreign populations.

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<https://rebellion.org/pensar-las-migraciones-en-el-capitalismo-de-la-produccion-estructural-de-contextos-de-expulsion-a-las-agencias-de-los-migrantes/>.