Latin American Societies
Current Challenges in Social Sciences

Enrique Coraza de los Santos
Luis Alfredo Arriola Vega *Editors*

Crises and Migration

Critical Perspectives from Latin America

Springer

Latin American Societies

Current Challenges in Social Sciences

This series aims at presenting to the international community original contributions by scholars working on Latin America. Such contributions will address the challenges that Latin American societies currently face as well as the ways they deal with these challenges. The series will be methodologically agnostic, that is: it welcomes case studies, small-N comparative studies or studies covering the whole region, as well as studies using qualitative or quantitative data (or a mix of both), as long as they are empirically rigorous and based on high-quality research. Besides exploring Latin American challenges, the series attempts to provide concepts, findings and theories that may shed light on other regions. The series will focus on seven axes of challenges:

1) Classes and inequalities

The first set of challenges revolves around the creation and distribution of symbolic and material rewards across social groups and their crystallization in stratification systems. How have social classes changed in Latin America? Which are the causes and consequences of the growth of middle classes with considerable education levels which nonetheless remain vulnerable to falling into poverty due to economic crises? Why has poverty declined but inequality remained persistently high? Moving to other kinds of inequalities, have the gaps in rewards between men and women and between ethnic groups changed, and do they vary across countries? Which are the territorial expressions of inequality, and how do they affect access to housing and the formation of lower-class ghettoes?

2) Crime, security and violence

The second set of challenges stem from the persistence of violence and insecurity among Latin Americans, which consistently rank crime and insecurity at the top of their biggest problems. Crime organizations – from youth gangs to drug cartels – have grown and became more professionalized, displacing state forces in considerable chunks of national territories and, in some cases, penetrating the political class through illegal campaign funding and bribes. To this we should add, in some countries of the region, the persistence of armed insurgents fighting against governmental forces and paramilitaries, therefore creating cross-fires that threaten the lives of civilians. This results in massive human rights violations – most of which remain in impunity – and forced population displacements.

3) Environmental threats

A third challenge is related to the sources and consequences of environmental change – especially human-related change. These consequences threaten not only Latin American's material reproduction (e. g. by threatening water and food sources) but also deeply ingrained cultural practices and lifestyles. How do existing models of economic development affect the natural environment? What are their social consequences? How have governments and communities faced these challenges? Are there viable and desirable alternatives to economic extractivism? What are the environmental prospects of Latin America for the next few decades and which are their social implications?

4) Collective action

A fourth theme has to do with how collective actors – social movements, civil society organizations, and quasi-organized groups – deal with these challenges (and others). How have labor, indigenous, student, or women's movements adapted to environmental, economic and political changes? To what extent have they been able to shape the contours of their issue areas? Have they been successful in fighting inequality, patriarchy, or racism? Have they improved the lives of their constituencies? Why under some circumstances does collective action radicalizes both in tactics and goals? We welcome studies on a wide array of collective actors working on different issues, with different tactics, and diverse ideological stances.

5) Cultural change and resistance

Culture – the understandings, symbols, and rituals that shape our quotidian – has never been static in Latin America, but modernization processes have affected it in complex ways. How has religion, lifestyles and values changed under market reforms and democratization processes? How multicultural are Latin American societies, and how they deal with the potential tensions derived from multiculturalism? Which are the causes and consequences of the decline in influence of the Catholic church, the awakening of new religious identities, and the growing sector of non-religious Latin Americans? How are new digital technologies and global consumption patterns shaping Latin Americans' norms and beliefs about race, gender, and social classes? Are Latin Americans becoming "post-materialist", and if so, why?

6) Migrations

Political, economic, and environmental crises, as well as promises of better opportunities in other lands, have encouraged Latin Americans to migrate within their national borders or beyond them. While during the 1970s Latin Americans often migrated to other regions, nowadays national crises encourage them to seek other destinations in more nearby countries. What causes migration patterns and how do they affect both expelling and receiving communities? How do migrants adapt to their new residence places and coexist with native populations? How does migration contribute to social capital, national identities and gang formation?

7) Political inclusion and representation

Dealing with social and ethnic minorities constitutes one of the most recurrent and unresolved challenges for the Latin American democracies. This topic includes the representation of the minorities, but includes also the study of the socio-political elites. Hence, how women are represented in the Latin American democracies? How are indigenous and blacks included into the socio-political arena? Which policies are being adopted for increasing the inclusion of such minorities? How representative are Latin American political elites?

Both solicited and unsolicited proposals will be considered for publication in the series.

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Editors

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Chapter 1
Introduction: At the Crisis-Migration Crossroads: Scope and Limits

Luis Alfredo Arriola Vega and Enrique Coraza de los Santos

Background and Raison D'être of This Book

Like the use (and abuse) of certain terms in the social sciences and humanities today, such as vulnerability, there is a plethora of debate about the notion of crisis and the "overuse" of the term (Menjívar et al., 2019: 2), a discussion that has evolved over time. The primary aim of this editorial project is to question the notion of crisis instead of assuming that we all understand the concept or give it the same meaning. This involves at least two issues: One refers to breaking down the polysemy that this notion takes on in connection to different areas of life in society (economics, politics, and environmental agendas, for example), numerous disciplinary traditions (history, sociology, political science, international relations, or anthropology, among others) and various spatial and territorial contexts (local, regional, national, global). The other issue involves framing an appropriate perspective as it relates to human mobility because, as we explain below, insightful analysis concerning this nexus is often acritical or lacking (see Arriola Vega's chapter). The former matter can be tackled in different ways. To this effect, we concentrate on scrutinizing the exegesis of the crisis-migration binary from three angles: first, on the discursiveness surrounding the concept of crisis; second, on the agency that subjects deploy under conditions of crisis; and third, on whether specialists conceive of "migration crisis" in terms of a conjunctural phenomenon or rather as a structural condition. In this

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sense, each author or set of authors problematize the notion of crisis by linking it to the particular form of mobility that they examine from their field of knowledge and area of expertise and within a specific temporal-spatial framework.

The most up-to-date literature on the crisis-migration nexus is diverse and contrasting, with approaches that range from the most general (for example, Menjívar et al., 2019) to the highly specific (see Jardón Hernández, 2017 on the dynamics of the international migration of Mexicans), or those which stress the economic angle of crisis and focus predominantly on European conditions (see, among others, Doner et al., 2020; Joensen & Taylor, 2021; Sammadar 2016). This book addresses shared concerns from scholars who decided to work together to "unpack" crisis in connection to processes of human mobility that have recently taken place in Latin America. Academic production on this topic from Latin America is developing slowly, and, as of this writing, it has centered on certain national groups (for the Venezuelan case, see Gedan, 2017; Koechlin & Eguren, 2018; Sereboff, 2020; for Haiti, consult Coello & Luz, 2019; Farris, 2014). To the best of our knowledge, there is no publication that addresses the central and intersecting themes that are included in this volume with a broad vision on the subcontinent. At first glance, the edited compilation *The Migration Crisis in the American Southern Cone: Hate Speech and Its Social Consequences* (Springer 2021) would seem to parallel our work in scope and approach. However, a critical approach to the category of crisis is central in this volume, and, in the aforementioned book, the focus is limited to the political construction of migratory crisis via the analysis of discourses that incite hatred toward migrant populations in four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) (Guizardi, 2021). Our volume includes this discursive perspective, but it also goes beyond it and opens the debate to heterogeneous points of view. We do not intend to introduce a regional perspective or a unifying approach; our volume offers examples of experiences from Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, and, accordingly, it mirrors the array of experiences that characterize conditions within the subcontinent. The contents of each chapter shed light on common and globally observed research problems, but they are seen from a reduced scalar perspective. Contributions do not represent case studies, in a strictly methodological sense of the term. Rather, they are diverse approaches that help to unravel the crisis-migration relationship, either through empirical contributions or from reflections based on secondary sources. Thus, the goal is to illustrate the diversity of phenomena and processes employed to critically confront the notion of crisis without particularizing or assuming that each contribution purports to amount to "national representativeness."

This book is the result of a collective effort involving discussion and ongoing review of the progress made in each chapter. In steering this project, the editors always considered that the plurality of contributions (be it a particular angle, a territory) would enrich the volume's theoretical uniqueness (i.e., the debate on the crisis-migration relationship). To achieve this, participatory seminars were held in which the texts were sent to be read in advance and then later discussed in joint virtual meetings. The debates that took place during these meetings enabled each

author, or set of authors, to discern a position: to understand crisis as a given or challenge this assumption; to consider it as having a conjunctural essence or being structural in nature; to emphasize its discursive dimensions or attribute primacy to the actions deployed by actors when referring to crisis. Thus, this introductory chapter serves as the central theoretical pillar to support the whole volume in two ways: first, through a critical review of different perspectives and approaches to the concept of crisis and, second, in connection to the position that each author or group of authors takes on the relationship between crisis and migration.

Collaborators addressed the book's central theme by discussing problems and/or events, such as the migrant caravans that departed from Central America bound to Mexico and the United States; the recent Nicaraguan exodus caused by the political crisis in the country; the situation in Venezuela that has expelled millions of people; the structural crisis in Haiti, which has taken many of its nationals abroad to and through Latin America, from Patagonia to Tijuana. The COVID-19 pandemic became another phenomenon of global impact that this editorial project, which was originally conceived in 2019, dealt with in terms of debating "crisis." The pandemic has disrupted all dimensions of social, political, economic, and cultural life, creating stress in our everyday existence, the ways we live together and work, even in our attempts to envision the future. Conceivably, and in the medium term, diverse populations of migrants and people in situations of (in)mobility—who, prior to the onset of the pandemic, were already in precarious and vulnerable conditions—will be particularly hard-hit. In the face of potential contagion in Latin America, the health emergency's impact on populations in situations of mobility may increase risk conditions, but this is also the result of the emergency measures and contingencies adopted by authorities, such as efforts to control mobility through border closures and other means. The pandemic exacerbated the prevailing hegemonic system's contradictions and made them more visible, including the inequalities, tensions, and precariousness that migrant populations experience. Indeed, the pandemic calls us to reflect on critical conditions and, undoubtedly, on the meaning of "crisis."

What Do We Understand by Crisis?

The work of Reinhart Koselleck (2012) has played a very influential role in developing the idea of crisis. He conceived a historical-semantic vision of the term as a process, thus suggesting that it is something with an ongoing nature. From Koselleck's viewpoint, crisis is an experience that can be repeated, iteratively, but also one that can be overcome. Friedrich Schiller's notion of crisis resonates with the processual viewpoint Koselleck adheres to; it is not only seen or interpreted by the historian thanks to his intellectual capacity, but history, he adds, also has its own capacity for agency as a subject that, at some point, does justice (Schiller 1967 cited in Koselleck, 2012). According to Schiller, it is anthropological "constants" what explain how different crises in history are enabled or how the economic gloss attributed to crisis is linked to an unremitting nature of progress (which

would imply stagnation or downturn) (cited in Koselleck, 2012). Whether crisis is a guiding concept of progress or whether it implies subsuming the concept of progress to crisis, it still remains open to debate. There are no other options for crisis resolution says Koselleck: history is the only possible way out, and its redemption will occur once it has collapsed (as it has fulfilled its role). Koselleck reaches this conclusion after a thorough study of different revolutionary processes in world history, including those pointed out by Karl Marx. Roitman (2016) then revisits Koselleck's hypothesis to assert that if crisis brings about change then crisis is synonymous with history; it is a historical-philosophical concept: "the means by which history is located, recognized, understood and even posed" (Koselleck, 2012). According to this author, history has been written in terms of crisis; therefore, the use of crisis is aimed at the progress of history (Roitman, 2016). Clarke (2010) warns us about the danger of falling into a linear vision of history by accepting the idea of crisis as a rupture: Things are going well, and, suddenly, they aren't anymore. Currently, the term crisis may encompass a diverse range of meanings; crisis is indicative of something going awry (Lindley, 2014), a fracture and a moment of profound change (Roitman, 2014), an abnormality, a tipping point (Vigh, 2008), danger (McAdam, 2014a), instability and urgency, discontinuity, interruption, disjunction (Clarke, 2010), or an overflow of daily normality (Ramos, 2016). Yet, as Boletsi et al. (2020) make clear, crisis can also be about "choice, decision, the power to distinguish or separate, judgment, critique, or diagnosis; and it can signal a turning point in history or a moment of truth for a society but also a chronic condition without a clear prospect of resolution" (2–3).

People react differently to crisis, whether it is due to personal, social, political, or other reasons. One way to respond is through mobility. Under circumstances of crisis, migrating is not a voluntary choice; leaving is better than staying (McAdam, 2014a). Forced mobility—foreseen or not—can help us better understand how people experience and face crises. (For further theoretical discussion on forced mobility, see Coraza de los Santos & Gatica, 2019). In turn, a crisis can "alter, intensify, or otherwise transform routine migration patterns, practices, and differentiation, and may have changing effects as it unfolds" (Lindley, 2014, 16). In recent times, the critical situation that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic altered all forms of human mobility. For example, because of widespread concern and a lack of information and uncertainty about the health contingency during its early stages, unauthorized migration to the United States slowed during most of 2020, yet the trends observed during the pre-pandemic period resumed later on.

Another idea closely related to that of crisis is that of chaos (see Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014). Politicians, reporters, academics, and others commonly use the two terms interchangeably in their speech. Although each term embodies a particular meaning, as Mountz and Hiemstra (2014) point out, "both hold in common the projection of danger, instability, panic, and dramatic upheaval, and both surface frequently at the nexus of human mobility with state power" (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014, 383). Later, we will see how these ideas are useful for understanding the crisis-migration connection: the construction of migration crises and migration that results from crisis.

Notably, several of the definitions emphasize a break from normality, and hence the prevalence of abnormality over normality. Because criteria about what is considered normal abound (even subjective ones—a point beyond the scope of the current discussion), some questions arise: Crisis compared to what? Crisis in connection to an earlier normality? And, if so, what is that? (Roitman, 2016). Or as Menjívar et al. (2019) say, in a world in which the idea of crisis is assumed as the "new norm" because it exists everywhere, "[. . .] they [that is, crises] need to be examined as a whole to identify what makes them a crisis and what makes them not a crisis" (2). These questions take on particular significance when arguing that crises can result from narrative fabrications.

Echoing Koselleck's ideas, Henrik Vigh (2008) argues that a crisis does not arise from an isolated, one-time event that generates rupture, but rather it is indicative of fragmentation, a state of somatic, social, or existential disjointedness. Vigh proposes that instead of considering crisis as an aberration, a singular event, we should think of it as a condition, an ongoing state of affairs. For people who endure suffering due to poverty, abuse, or violence or who feel threatened, crisis is lived out as a continuous experience (not an isolated event), and it becomes a chronic condition. "The idea of crisis as a 'condition' directs our attention to the concept of chronicity; that is, the experience of crisis as a constant (see Estroff, 1993)" (Vigh, 2008, 10). Thus, chronicity is a plural, built-up phenomenon. Vigh (2008) does not assume crisis as a short-term "explosive situation." It should not be considered within a specific timeframe; it is a persistent situation. Because Vigh asserts that crisis is not a temporary and particularized trauma, he is a proponent of a structural position.

From a different perspective, Janet Roitman (2014, 2016) raises the possibility that a crisis may represent a period of transition, characterized as "unique and immanent," yet she is also open to a potentially broader interpretation: "Crisis is a historical event as much as it is an enduring condition of life and even the grounds for a transcendent human condition" (Roitman, 2014, 2). All of the above pose questions that are explored in this book. What concrete conditions enable us to speak of permanent states of crises (social, political, economic), and under what scenarios can we refer to conjunctural states-of-crisis in the current Latin American context? Is crisis a condition, a situation, or an enduring event (Vigh, 2008)? Or is it an oxymoron to speak of it as something that lasts (Roitman, 2016)? To elucidate possible answers, we draw attention to Anna Lindley's (2014) assertion: Clearly, understanding crisis in a certain context is different from conceiving crisis *as* context.

If we accept Lindley's (2014) premise that crises must be studied as contextualized processes, it would follow that they should happen at a specific space and time and because of particular circumstances. For John Clarke (2010), the idea of conjunctural crisis makes sense when a long-term historical vision is taken into consideration and does not restrict our analysis exclusively to economic-related crises. For this author, a conjuncture is "a point where different temporalities—and more specifically, the tensions, antagonisms and contradictions which they carry—begin to come together" (342). In other words, multiple crises (social, cultural, political) coincide at a conjunctural moment. These ideas resonate with the notion

of state-of-crisis proposed by Greenhouse et al. (2002, cited by Lindley, 2014), namely, the fragmentation of coherence and control as something that is part of the daily lives of many people in the world, as opposed to what a normal existence would be under other circumstances. We take note that this condition, or state, is not to be assumed as long-lasting. In the context of some related migratory-related phenomena, this proposition makes sense. For instance, escaping from everyday violence can be thought of as a spontaneous moment of disjointedness.

Considering Bert Spector's hyphotesis (Spector, 2019b), he might be correct in his assertion that: "All claims of crisis contain both objective descriptions of events and subjective explanations of why they should be understood as a crisis. [...] Observers can and should evaluate the objective element of a claim according to their [sic] accuracy" (Objective and subjective, para. 2). Nevertheless, they should also consider the merits of the subjective element: "Claims of crisis that combine an accurate description with a plausible explanation can be said to be legitimate. Claims that are either inaccurate, implausible, or both are not" (Responding to a 'crisis,' para. 1).[1] We concur with Roitman (2016) in that we are not interested in theorizing or getting to the essence of the idea of crisis. Heterogenous approaches that consider both subjective constructs and objective conditions make up the novel contributions in this volume, leading to pose the existence of "migration crises" or "migrations due to crises."

Humanitarian Emergencies and Humanitarian Crises in Contexts of Human Mobility

When we appeal to the notion of emergency, we are referring to human suffering. In this regard, a humanitarian emergency is unexpected and, as Calhoun (2010) describes it: "[an] unpredictable event emerging against a background of ostensible normalcy, causing suffering or danger and demanding urgent response" (30). Humanitarian emergencies do not necessarily happen overnight. They result from processes that accumulate. As with crises, we often use the term humanitarian emergency in a way that refers to an unexpected event, not the causes that give rise to it. As Calhoun (2010) says, "They feel sudden. But they are less sudden than they feel to those who learn about them only when they finally reach the evening news" (33). Crises do not always and necessarily imply human suffering, but humanitarian emergencies can arise from crises. In this sense, migrating can be a

[1] Deep down, Spector believes that crises are not real. He upholds three ideas: first, we misunderstand the nature of crises and the role of leaders when they claim they exist (2019a, x); second, that urgent situations are "not neutral, scientifically objective readings of the external environment," but that "rather, they are ways of exercising power and assertions of interests on behalf of the claim makers" (2019a, x–xi); and third, although at times there are situations of urgency or crisis, this is not always the case (2019a, xi). He proposes to build a meta-theory around the notion of crisis, in which the core concept is the dynamics of the urgent (Spector, 2019a).

preventive, reactive, or strategic response or action resulting from a humanitarian crisis (Lindley, 2014).

One way that contemporary migratory phenomena have been dealt with, mainly those that occur on a large scale, is by depicting migrants as key protagonists of humanitarian emergencies. In the media, humanitarian emergencies are sometimes unduly associated with refugees and internally displaced persons (Calhoun, 2010). Alexander Betts (2013) coined the term survival migration to refer to these emergencies, which are linked to certain types of crises. Interestingly, Calhoun (2010) adds this point: "Humanitarian action focuses paradigmatically on strangers. Refugees are the prototypical face of the emergency, strangers in their new lands as well as those distant people who may try to send help" (32). These ideas pique interest in the analysis that we will try to build on with particular attention to the so-called Central American caravans (in this volume, see Arriola Vega; also see Coraza de los Santos & Pérez Robledo, 2020; Ruiz-Lagier & Varela-Huerta, 2020; Wurtz, 2020). It can be argued that the caravans gave rise to critical situations that later became humanitarian emergencies rather than a crisis, as claimed by former US President Donald Trump. Basing such an assertion solely on the magnitude of the events is a far cry from a solid argument for a migratory crisis. Many caravan participants seek international protection measures (a humanitarian problem), namely asylum in the United States, which is a right that any person is entitled to by international law and not a threat to US national security, as Mr. Trump has alleged (Montes, 2019).

Some actors consider that humanitarian crises do exist in terms of the migratory phenomenon. For the organization Doctors Without Borders (MSF, by its acronym in Spanish), the fact that there were 50,000 people stranded ("trapped," in their words) on the northern Mexican border in 2019 as a result of the Migration Protection Protocols (MPP, or "Remain in Mexico Policy") represents a humanitarian crisis (MSF, 2020). For many knowledgeable academics in the region, such as Durand and Massey (2019), asylum seekers are part of a humanitarian problem; their presence at the border does not represent a migratory crisis: "[T]he current situation at the border is not an immigration crisis, but a humanitarian crisis, one that ultimately derives from America's military and political intervention in the region" (Massey, 2020, 32).

The Construction of Crisis

The process of socially constructing a crisis uses a particular rhetoric, in contrast to the production of the crisis, that is, the material result of certain processes and relationships, or those that result from a natural event (i.e., a typhon, an earthquake, etc.) (Gamble, 2009 cited in Clarke & Newman, 2010). Thus, crises can be discursive falsehoods with different aims (economic, political, and ideological). Very often, this way of constructing the notion of crisis evokes urgency, tragedy, and "victimhood," with discourses that are based on flimsy, unspecific, and overblown analysis (Holton, 1987 cited in Lindley, 2014). By using the term crisis uncritically

and without a proper historical contextualization to speak about people who are in a situation of mobility and need protection or who are fleeing from chronic poverty, we are at risk of reproducing a way of thinking that further victimizes them.

Current migration restrictions—including discretionary procedures, border closures, and mass deportations—are measures that enable a crisis narrative; one that, in turn, precedes and serves to ensure political and material support in the implementation of emergency security directives (Boletsi et al., 2020; Lindley, 2014). The actions of former President Trump's administration in the context of the coronavirus pandemic are a good example: severe limitations were imposed on legal migration along with stricter requirements for applying for asylum in the United States, all under the excuse of contagion that was attributed to migrants as carriers of the virus (Centers for Disease Control, 2020; Trump, 2020). In Europe, thousands of people who move on foot or cross the sea on fragile boats and those who are rescued and taken to accommodations or camps are made visible due to what Nicholas de Genova (2013) has called a "border spectacle" staged by the media (see also, Bayraktar, 2019; Casas-Cortes et al., 2015), or, more to the point, a "performance" crisis (Spector, 2019a, 19).

A political narrative of crisis can become a construction insofar as it is constituted as a category that is part of the apparatus and a set of organized practices (mental, rational, technical), through which subjects are governed (i.e., governmentality) (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; Lindley, 2014). Politicians can deliberately elaborate a crisis; for example, when they fuel "moral panic" about an event, a person, or group that represents a threat to certain social values and interests with the purpose of justifying or influencing certain agendas (Cohen, 2002; Lindley, 2014). Consider, by way of illustration, the tweets that former President Trump wrote to describe the 2018 caravans as "invasions" (Montes, 2019). As Cantat et al. assert (2020):

> Peoples' perceptions of what constitutes a threat (or a crisis) are then not merely the product of irrationality and ignorance (in which case, anti-immigration feelings could be addressed through the diffusion of sound information). Rather, it must be understood as the byproduct, at the psychological and microsocial level, of broader trends affecting states and societies at large. (10)

The idea of moral panic is useful for seeing the instrumental connection between, as Cantat et al. (2020) articulate, "'feelings' or 'perceptions' and the historical and structural forces shaping societies" (11). Certain politicians thus promote the idea that there is no crisis to hide real threats or to alter social order (Lindley, 2014). In consequence, as Ann Lindley (2014) puts forth, the popular imagination about migrants "may align or conflict with state-political constructions of (non-)crisis. It is often hard to discern to what extent politicians are following or trying to shape public opinion in talking about a crisis, particularly in relation to political references to an 'immigration crisis'"(6). Or, these politicians may create a crisis around certain groups while ignoring others. For example, in 2011, the arrival of Tunisians to Europe was labeled as a crisis, but the emigration of Libyans and others who escaped to neighboring countries after the fall of the Gaddafi regime was not (Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2014). The influx of Central Americans to Mexico in 2018 (see

Arriola Vega's and Coraza de los Santos' chapters in this work) and, at different periods (2014, 2018–2019), to the US-Mexico border has been classified as a crisis (see Fouillioux, 2020; Musalo & Lee, 2018), whereas Cuban migration to the United States (see Menjívar et al., 2019: 1) or Haitian migration to South America (see Coello & Luz, 2019) have not been coined a crisis.

By emphasizing humanitarian emergencies that result from blocking border entry, the role of nation-states in engendering the "problem," purportedly represented by asylum seekers is either concealed or overlooked (Long, 2014, 160). Such policies lead to the extreme actions of denying access to asylum applicants[2] or making the process overly complicated, as Trump did during his administration—a practice that intensified with the arrival of Central Americans to the southern US border. When border closures ensue, migrants find themselves in conditions of immobility upon arriving at the border, thus unleashing a humanitarian emergency. Long (2014) rightly summarizes this point, as follows:

> Border closures, then, are the products of politically manufactured crisis—responses to threats to the national community as perceived by dominant political actors. Yet they can create humanitarian emergencies—placing human lives at risk. [. . .] Crisis-making around borders thus ultimately reinforces the status quo, because responses to these political decisions are characterised as *humanitarian* actions, excising politics, and in doing so tacitly condoning rather than explicitly condemning the original border closure. (170, 177)

Another instance of a manufactured crisis happened when Trump presented his government's report to the nation on January 19, 2019; former President Trump distorted MSF figures to justify the construction of his wall: He said that three out of eight Central American women are sexually assaulted on their journey to reach the United States, and thus it was a "humanitarian" imperative to build the wall (MSF, 2020, February 5). The NGO denounced the perverse use of these figures, which were said with an intention contrary to the group's values and mission, and pointed out that the wall would not solve the underlying problems that fuel migration.

The notion of crisis can be endowed with a particular abstract meaning, whether it is a performance or whether it enables and legitimizes certain discourses while, simultaneously, delegitimizing or excluding others (Boletsi et al., 2020). Something similar happens with "crisis labeling," especially to achieve political acceptance (Edelman, 1977 cited in Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2014).[3] As we have already asserted, certain situations related to migration that are labeled as crises serve to justify the implementation of exceptional or emergency measures (Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2014). It is through the labeling of migratory crises that the diverse range of experiences among migrant groups gets overlooked, which results in attaching predetermined categories to them (e.g., voluntary migrant versus forced

[2] Long takes what happened in Turkey/raq in 1991, Macedonia/Kosovo in 1999, and Kenya/Somalia from 2007 to 2011 as empirical references.

[3] Crisis-labeling is based on three premises: (a) The event or process that is being labeled differs from normal events. (b) The event originated for reasons that are beyond the control of the political leadership. (c) The event requires sacrifices to overcome the "crisis" (Edelman, 1977).

migrant), when, in fact, their situation may be more nuanced (Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2014). On this matter, we agree with Lindley (2014) when she poses that migration studies tend to privilege certain normative or public policy categories (temporary worker, internally displaced person, refugee) as preestablished assumptions and hence prove inadequate. If, by default, we formulate that a person is a refugee, then, from the outset of our research, we constrain and delimit the questions and the type of analysis we choose to carry out, when, in fact, an individual's circumstances may be more complex (Lindley relies on Bakewell, 2008 to develop this point). This issue turns even more problematic when some academics and international organizations mix up mobility categories and use them undiscerningly, without carefully establishing their similarities and differences (Coraza de los Santos, 2020).[4]

According to Lindley (2014) (after Bankoff, 2001; Duffield, 2007), there is a tendency among high-income countries to label poor countries as those riddled with endemic crises "without appreciating either the high level of people's resilience and adaptation to adverse conditions or the global structural sources of the threats that they face" (6). Certain Latin American nations do not escape this form of categorization. Perhaps the most representative case is Haiti. Numerous problems, whether political (notably the dictatorships of Francois and Jean-Claude Duvalier, from 1957 to 1986, coups d'état, continuous instability, i.e., the assassination of president Jovenel Moïse in July 2021), socio-economic (high unemployment rates, serious lack of access to health and education services for the neediest sectors of society, structural violence), health (cholera epidemic in 2010), and catastrophes (earthquakes—the most devastating taking place as recently as 2021, hurricanes such as Matthew in 2017), have been prompting thousands of Haitians to emigrate for several decades now. It is the sum of these factors that induce certain authors to classify this country as a collapsed state that is in chaos (Feldmann & Montes, 2008).

Oftentimes it appears as though we have reached a point at which crises are normalized or naturalized because of the way they are conceived. We agree with Vigh (2008) when he states:

> Though we may talk about the normalisation of crisis we should not confuse normalisation and routinisation with indifference: crisis, when it is chronic, may become normal in the sense that it is what there is most, but it does not become normal in the sense that this is how things should be. (11)

Crises cannot be normalized as inevitable; rather, it is necessary to think of them as resulting from social and political processes (Carastathis & Tsilimpounidi, 2018). Faced with the discursive construction of the so-called "European refugee crisis," critiques have arisen among certain quarters in Europe to challenge this viewpoint.

[4] We present this point because it has generated much debate and controversy. A common mistake lies in the lack of clarity in explaining the viewpoint of particular authors (i.e., legal, subjective, political): Each perspective may convey a different meaning. For example, the analytical gloss of a given concept may not necessarily coincide with the way people (subjectively) define themselves; or let us consider the uses that migrant-advocacy groups or politicians ascribe to certain terms.

The most progressive proposal in this line of thought deems it necessary to decolonize the notion of crisis through a denaturalization of the episodes that are manufactured as crises, to eradicate borders via the non-criminalization of migration, and to dispose of the idea of crisis as intellectual "merchandise" (16). These proposals echo a position that questions the model of migration due to crisis, i.e., "migration as crisis" (Cantat et al., 2020), which is something we will return to later. In any case, the critique of a biased use of the notion of crisis should not be interpreted merely as an exercise that ignores the materiality of crises. Undoubtedly, and after having experienced situations of vulnerability or precariousness, some migrants carry sequelae for the rest of their lives resulting from real conditions of crisis, whether they take place at the beginning of their journeys, while in transit, at their destination, and/or when they return.

Approaches to Studying Crisis

This section briefly reviews several approaches to understanding and studying the notion of crisis. Lindley (2014) offers us a good synthesis in this regard. From a Marxist perspective, crises are part of capitalism's accumulation cycles, something that is part of its creative and destructive inner workings. From a functionalist viewpoint, crises disrupt the balance of harmonious and self-regulating social systems. From a neoliberal economic viewpoint, crises are considered necessary to induce changes in favor of privatization, deregulation, and reduction of the state; shock therapies are neoliberalism's response to crises, emergencies, or conflict situations. As a result of neoliberal reforms, certain sectors of society benefit, but many others are badly stricken; among affected populations, those that experience greater precarity and vulnerability, in many instances, end up migrating (forcibly) to survive.

A few approaches to evaluating crises can also be identified. For example, Lindley (2014) calls one of them the "triggers and exceptionality model," in which causes are sought and crisis variables are measured on a macro scale. A structural approach calls attention to the process and dynamics surrounding a crisis. Finally, the lived experiences model promotes a bottom-up approach to people's perception of crisis: A natural disaster does not automatically turn into a personal crisis; to a large extent, it depends on each person's ability to cope with the situation. The notion of crisis can vary from one actor to another, depending on the individual's circumstances and the effects of the crisis on that individual. Erica Sarmiento's chapter echoes the structural approach as she conceives crisis as systemic in Brazil. The contributions of Catalina Benavides and María A. Amador's chapter resonate with the lived experiences model because they focus on the ways Nicaraguan migrants live through circumstances of crisis in Costa Rica.

In the chapters that make up this book, we have found several perspectives to examine crisis in Latin America. Without excluding the possibility that there could be many more, here, we make note of three:

1. Crisis as an emergency. The focus is on threats to human life, particularly through events with impacts on health (physical, mental, and emotional), on food security, on the safeguarding of human rights. The dimension of events' effects creates humanitarian emergencies that give rise to crisis conditions. (For examples, see chapters by Gatica and Blanco and by García.)
2. Political crisis. This approach centers on how the interests of certain sectors in society exert a varying impact or influence on others. Crisis conditions may stem from ideological reasons or the type of regime in power (democracy, authoritarianism, populism, dictatorship), yet they do not necessarily lead to humanitarian emergencies. This line of inquiry is outlined in the work of Coraza de los Santos; Sarmiento; Gómez and González; and Benavides and Amador.
3. Crisis as a narrative construction. This is a discursive conceptualization of "crisis" in the sense explained above and illustrated by the contributions of Aliaga, Flórez, and Villa; Arriola Vega; and Uriarte and Fossatti.

Shades of Gray in the Use of Migration Crisis and Crisis-Induced Migration

A first step toward disentangling the crisis-migration nexus is to explore public perception among certain sectors of society (anti-immigrant groups and certain politicians and government officials) that find particular similarities between the two terms: (a) Both are deemed exceptional. (Crisis is the antithesis of normal; hence, migration is something that happens outside the borders of an established order.) (b) Both are considered threats. (Crisis puts human well-being at risk; thus, from a state-centric perspective, international migration puts borders and national security in jeopardy.) (c) Both encapsulate conditions in today's world (namely, prevailing narratives about experiencing an age of migration, about an era of crisis) (Lindley, 2014).

Another aspect to consider is that not everyone understands or experiences crisis in the same way. Meaning and experience vary from person to person and change over time, both of which are important for understanding the concept of migratory crisis (see below). If we consider how certain societies normalize violence when it is associated with war, drug trafficking, organized crime, the state, a natural disaster, political or religious persecution, or multiple threats which their populations may be subjected to, it appears, from the outside, as if they would be experiencing a crisis. We do not ignore the fact that there are people who live under extreme situations because of these circumstances. Rather, we imply that the way people face "crisis" and the attitudes and behaviors they adopt to confront adversity may differ considerably (McAdam, 2014b).

In the specialized literature, we find several perspectives with a certain level of theoretical development aimed at the analytical understanding of the link between migration and crisis. One perspective, which we define as *mobility caused by or due to one (or several) crises* (MCC), shares particular elements, including these three: (a) crises that bring about human mobility have structural roots, often long-standing

(i.e., that stretch over time); (b) there is an assortment of crisis contexts that give rise to mobility, from a disaster to an armed conflict, or the long-term effects of climate change (such as desertification); and (c) types of mobility due to crises result from the multifactorial accumulation of critical conditions and key triggering factors. The MCC perspective encompasses what Betts (2013) has called survival migration as a type of migration linked to certain crises, be they environmental, political (failed states), or economic (the collapse of livelihoods) situations that threaten people's lives. Finally, McAdam (2014b) asserts, "'Crisis migration' is therefore best understood as a response to a complex combination of social, political, economic, and environmental factors, which may be triggered by an extreme event but not caused by it" (10). Under such circumstances, and in general, McAdam (2014a) says there is no alternative because migration happens due to an exceptional situation. Migrants who seek some measure of protection, whether national or international, (notably refugees and asylees) commonly fall under the MCC approach.

The second perspective that addresses the crisis-migration equation is called the *migratory crisis* or *crisis of migration* (MC) approach, which the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2012) defines in this way:

> [T]he complex and often large-scale migration flows and mobility patterns caused by a crisis typically involve significant vulnerabilities for individuals and affected communities and generate acute and longer-term migration management challenges. A migration crisis may be sudden or slow in onset, can have natural or man-made causes, and can take place internally or across borders. (1–2)

The following are the constituent elements of MC:

(a) Although one or more immediate triggers bring about mobility, its underlying primary causes may have been active for some time. The MC approach does not refer to common situations in which people find it necessary to migrate, for example, an environmental disaster or an armed conflict. MC broadens the lens on what gives rise to the phenomenon (Lindley, 2014).
(b) To a large extent, mobility linked to a crisis is an exceptional, abnormal, and anomalous event (see Lindley, 2014; Vigh, 2008), yet subjective or critical elements can also play a role in it (see Boletsi et al., 2020 for a full-length development of this argument). Subjective assessments of migration crisis, particularly when espoused by anti-migrant actors, including national states, indicate that meaning-making is important for MC proponents.
(c) MC supporters argue that anti-migrant and/or ultra-nationalist groups fabricate crises to divert attention from the root causes that give rise to those conditions of crisis. Instead, it is more appropriate to speak of humanitarian emergencies in connection to migration.

In the introduction to a handbook on migration crises, Menjívar et al. (2019) start the discussion of migration crises by stating: "An upsurge in migration often is both a result of and initiator of crises" (1). This is all seen from a perspective of global transformations, in a position more akin to MC, because of the authors' explicit intention to reveal why some situations are manufactured as crises while others are not. Menjívar and her colleagues acknowledge the multifactorial and heterogeneous

causality of human mobility, where structural changes, sudden events, prolonged conflicts, political actions, and unforeseen triggers are all interrelated in such a way that the lines between the structural elements and the anthropogenic factors that generate mobility—which, in turn, can be linked to crises—are blurred (2019: 4).

The notion of migratory crisis calls for a "power" discourse that represents and responds to migration. In connection to the current European context, Cantat et al. (2020) state: "Constructing migration as crisis is [. . .] both a speech act and a form of migration governance" (6). Or, it could be seen as the "symbolic and political power that words and images" convey to present migration as a crisis (Menjívar et al., 2019: 4). This reasoning has been used selectively and strategically to make certain changes to official regulations (Cantat et al., 2020). It is by using this rhetoric that, as Mountz and Hiemstra (2014) articulate, "particular kinds of bodies are repeatedly recast as security threats and associated with chaos"[5] (384). Consequently, this enables the criminalization, restriction, and securitization of these bodies, mainly in contexts of border control and reinforcement. For instance, news stories about the massive arrival of migrants requesting asylum in the United States generate rhetoric of chaos (which becomes synonymous with crisis) and of alleged threats to its borders (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014), resulting in measures such as MPP. Thus, at border crossings, certain states use the discourse of crisis and chaos to expand their power and sovereign claims. When the link between migration and crisis appears, it often takes on a negative connotation:

> Many crises are associated with significant out-migration and displacement, and in-migration is often associated with tensions or conflict at destination. Moreover, there is a deep well of sedentarist thinking, which in some sense frames migration as crisis, and staying put as the natural and desirable human condition. (Lindley, 2014, 1)[6]

The rhetorical construction of crisis to limit mobility is not a new phenomenon confined to anti-immigrant and/or ultra-nationalist actors, including some current leaders.[7] Even UN agencies have been questioned for the way they promote certain

[5] In connection to migration, not all terms imply or refer to national security; sometimes they refer to public safety or individual security.

[6] The imagery of sedentarism has its own historicity. According to Cresswell (2006), history shows population movement as part of daily life; sedentary lifestyles evolved as an element of modernization. Starting in the seventeenth century, migration began to develop as a process of discipline and control that shifted public sentiments about migration. Human mobility was associated with stigma, danger, suspicion, threat, and groups of migrants who broke away from the prevailing social and political order. This way of thinking further legitimized premises upon which hegemonic power rested, such as statism, residence, legality, fixation on the territory (material, symbolic and affective); in short, it allowed for an ordered space.

[7] This type of narrative can be documented throughout Latin American history, even dating back to the period of conquest and colonization launched by the Kingdom of Castile in the Americas. Notably, one of the functions of the *Casa de Contratación*, an institution that oversaw commerce between Spain's American colonies and the metropolis, was to regulate those who could travel to the "new world" (something forbidden for women, Jews, Romani, and the inhabitants of other kingdoms, such as Aragon). During the 1930s, the so-called "undesirables laws" were implemented in South America to check and prevent the entry of certain groups of people (Jews, Romani, communists, anarchists, socialists, and even liberal professionals).

narratives: Instead of addressing the causes that spark migration in contexts of crisis and solving the needs and consequences that these crises produce, the humanitarian aid discourse invoked by these agencies diverts attention from whom is to blame for the crisis (Lindley, 2014). Again, the chapter by Uriarte and Fossatti is illustrative in this regard. Finally, we are aware that both MCC and MC have other possible dimensions of study, whether from a public policy perspective, from an environmental dimension, or from viewpoints related to armed or political conflicts. Some of the contributions in the book touch upon these dimensions to varying degrees.

Questions This Volume Addresses

What empirical evidence exists to support either temporary migration crises (as Clarke, 2010 does) or, rather, structural migratory crises? As a first step, this involves establishing a dialogue between those who reject the idea that there are conjunctural crises (Lindley, 2014) and those who argue the opposite (Vigh, 2008). In this publication, there is an array of viewpoints, ranging from systemic-structural approaches (Sarmiento; García), to intermediary positions (Arriola Vega; Gómez and González, Gatica and Blanco; Aliaga, Flórez and Villa), to those of a contextual-conjunctural type (Benavides and Amador; Coraza de los Santos; Uriarte and Fossatti).

Do we normalize the discourse of migration crises? To better frame the question, consider this assertion: "'Darfur' is as much the name of an emergency as the name of a place" (Calhoun, 2010, 33). What are the limits, if any, of systemic migration crises? Think of the case of the displaced Palestinians who have lived in a "protracted" emergency (that is, under critical conditions) for more than sixty years, or the circumstances surrounding internally displaced Colombians due to a decades-long armed conflict between guerrilla groups and the government. Further salient questions arise. As aberrant as it may seem, have we reached a point where these conditions are normalized as part of a perpetual crisis? How do we avoid taking the notion of migratory crisis for granted?

To what extent do public figures, notably heads of states, try to shape discourses in terms of (questionable) migratory crisis? Donald Trump (2016–2020), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil 2019–present), and Mauricio Macri (Argentina 2015–2019) epitomize such people because they endorse the idea that unauthorized immigration in their countries amounts to an invasion, a breach on national security, a threat to state sovereignty, or all of the above. Terms such as "migration crisis" are manipulated to convey specific messages. Along these lines, Aliaga, Flórez, and Villa's chapter deconstructs the humanitarian crisis narrative that is built around Venezuelan migrants as depicted in the Colombian news.

Which cases in Latin America offer evidence of a human rights crisis, or state crisis, or failed migration regimes (in crisis) and prompt migration along the lines of the MCC approach? Why is it important to talk about it? The Venezuelan exodus abroad, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has thus been considered a crisis.

Are we talking about a state crisis in Venezuela that impels people to migrate? Or is it a crisis of something else? Gómez Johnson and González Gil's chapter sheds light on some of these questions.

What is at stake when caravans are considered the source of a migration crisis at the US-Mexico border (Montes, 2019)? What has been the impact of something that has been perceived as a "crisis" on Mexican, Central American, or US and Canadian governments and society? Do migrants themselves view certain events that took place as the caravans unfolded as a humanitarian emergency or, rather, as a crisis? We could argue that the passage of the caravans gave rise to critical situations but not to a crisis. Although Mexico was not the migrants' intended destination, the attention given to their presence in the country provoked nationalist sentiments and xenophobic reactions within certain sectors of the Mexican population. These sectors link the presence of migrants to false ideas that are recast over and over again: an increase in crime rates, the occupation of public spaces, and the fear of diseases imported from other countries. (For examples of how these ideas play out in Tapachula, Chiapas, see Coraza de los Santos & Pérez Robledo, 2020). Offering a first response to these concerns, Arriola Vega explores the construction of a discourse on crisis by reviewing academic articles that examine the Central American caravans that took place in late 2018.

What lessons about the crisis-migration nexus does the COVID-19 pandemic teach us to better understand this relationship? The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 has presented a unique opportunity to study the human mobility that is linked to pandemics. This volume questions the crisis-migration relationship beyond a conjunctural reading of events such as the current health emergency contingency. Instead, we advocate furthering the analysis of the structural and anthropogenic factors that come together in the generation of crises; the pandemic offers the opportunity to scrutinize how human mobility has been transformed by an abnormal situation (the health emergency as a "crisis") on a global level. The discursive construction of the pandemic in terms of crisis fosters feelings of anxiety and uncertainty due to the alarming number of infections and the death toll the coronavirus has exerted on society, as well as the amount of misinformation, including fake news, that is built around it. (See Hut et al., n.d.) This offers elements to form a critical reading of the phenomenon. Significant transformations in human mobility patterns due to the impact of the disease translate, mainly but not exclusively, into the disruption of migration trajectories. For example, the pandemic caused the partial suspension of procedures to claim international protection measures around the world (see Guadagno, 2020), and Latin America was no exception. The pandemic has increased the possibility that millions of people, in certain places, endure even more precarious living circumstances than those they already suffered before the onset of the emergency (Hut et al., n.d.), especially when they experience conditions of immobility. (See Arriola Vega and Coraza de los Santos, 2020 for a reading of the conditions international migrants faced at the beginning of the pandemic in an area near the Mexico-Guatemala border.) This volume offers specific discussions on what the pandemic has meant in terms of crisis for migrant populations in the context of Argentina (Gatica and Blanco), Costa Rica (Benavides and Amador), and Uruguay (Uriarte and Fossatti).

Contributions and Structure of the Book

The experiences of mobility presented in this book offer a fresh look at the way we conceive, represent, and think about the relationship between crisis and human mobility, a problem that is common in other regions of the Global South. Although this volume does not aim to carry out a comparative analysis of the cases it presents, because similar processes exist in other regional contexts, we believe it is important to highlight how our approach opens possibilities to clarify both the specificity and complexity of migratory crisis or, alternatively, migration due to crisis in different places and from different points of view. Thus, the book's chapters enrich the discussion on what its contributors have emphasized: an MC perspective or an MCC approach. For MC, there is greater attention on the narrative construction of crisis, generally a critique of how the term crisis is spoken of in relation to human mobility. From an MCC angle, the main focus is on specific actors, or driving forces, that provoke conditions of crisis. To a greater or lesser extent, the texts in this volume align with one of these two perspectives, but we have identified two trends that respond to the uniqueness of the cases in particular contexts. The first group of contributions (sections one and two) directs their attention to the subjects in the crisis-migration nexus without losing sight of the broader framework. The second group (section three) deals with the temporality connected to the crisis phenomenon, be it transitory or ongoing in nature.

In the first section of the book, we draw attention to the oft-called discursive subjects. Although the rhetoric used when speaking of crisis comes from explicit subjects, the chapters demonstrate that this narrative can gain more relevance than the "narrators" themselves due to its role in influencing public opinion, the construction of academic knowledge, or the development of state policies. Aliaga, Flórez, and Villa's chapter begins by focusing on Colombian media as the subject of analysis, insofar as they elaborate on specific narratives used to represent Venezuelan migrants in Colombia in terms of a discursive apparatus of a humanitarian crisis. In the next chapter, Arriola Vega analyzes the discursive dimension of crisis in the academic literature that refers to the caravans of Central American migrants passing through Mexico, arguing that this narrative is highly variable, uneven, and often uncritical, as opposed to taking on a more conscientious use of the notion of migratory crisis. Then, Uriarte and Fossatti propose to examine how state and non-state actors have deployed a discourse that partially corresponds to a more complex reality, albeit one that has been employed to operate immigration control in Uruguay.

The second section includes actors, either individual or collective, who display a capacity for agency in the context of crises, varying greatly in how they engage in forms of resistance or deploy strategies of resilience. Hence, migrants' agentive capacity is the subject of interest and the main object of analysis. In their chapter, Gatica and Blanco argue that temporary immobility derived from the COVID-19 pandemic is the backdrop for the crisis that affects migrants who work seasonally in the agricultural and fishing industries of Chubut, Argentina. García's chapter intends

to establish the role agency plays in confronting critical situations in migrants' mobility projects in Rosario, Argentina. Finally, Coraza de los Santos offers an analysis based on crisis as something experienced and internalized by people who are forced to move. To that end, Coraza de los Santos examines the case of what he perceives as a historical accrual of crises in Nicaragua revealed through testimonies of migrants who arrived in Mexico between 2018 and 2019, where multiple perceptions, meanings, and dimensions emerge "to make sense of the crisis."

The final section of the book zooms in on the extended or restricted temporality of crises. In the first chapter, Sarmiento argues that both crises and migrations in Brazil are part of processes that are systemically anchored in long-standing social transformations. Indirectly, she also criticizes the discourse that appeals to the defense of migrants' human rights in Brazil, while actual practices, implemented from a securitization viewpoint, contradict this humanitarian narrative. In their chapter, Benavides and Amador argue that the Nicaraguan crisis is the context of recent Nicaraguans' exodus to Costa Rica. Their research question is based on the notion of "experience-based crisis"; the authors' aim is to analyze crisis with two contrasting, and concomitant, approaches: crisis as a context in Nicaragua and crisis as a breakdown of normality in Costa Rica. In the following chapter, Gómez Johnson and González Gil set up a comparative framework based on the idea that ongoing critical conditions in contexts of protracted violence create the driving force of long-standing mobility from Venezuela, Colombia, and the northern region of Central America while at the same time questioning the idea that a global migratory crisis ends up hiding the specific causations of different types of mobility in national and local contexts.

Finally, in order to discuss the crisis-migration nexus in Latin America, it is important to mention several pending issues. The way human mobility is understood and acted upon is a pressing challenge for academics, civil society, and authorities. Some of the current discourses that certain sectors of society use or others that are fostered as part of public policies to address either migratory crises or migration due to crisis tend to reinforce language that bolsters stereotypes, prejudices, biases, and images that are only partially true of migrants' more complex reality. The (erroneous) belief of the migrant-Other as a disease carrier is a concrete example of how this narrative and way of thinking gets revealed. As the volume's contributions show, a critical examination of the notion of crisis is a first step toward offering a more comprehensive understanding of migrants, i.e., one that is inclusive of human rights and social justice viewpoints.

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Part I
Discursive Arenas of the Crisis-Migration Nexus

Chapter 2
Venezuelan Migration and Crime in Colombia: Migrant Stigmatization in the Media and Its Connection to a Crisis of (Failed) Integration of Said Migrants

Felipe Aliaga Sáez, Angelo Flórez de Andrade, and Nicolás Villa Moya

Introduction

Venezuela faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in the West due to the volume of migrants and refugees who have left their country (Universidad del Rosario & Konrad Adenauer, 2019; Vargas, 2018). This phenomenon has been characterized by the Colombian government as the largest migration crisis in the continent in recent history (Presidency of Colombia, 2020). This crisis constitutes an unprecedented phenomenon for Colombia (Gissi et al., 2020). According to the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform (2021), as of March 2021, 5,577,077[1] refugees and migrants have left the country. Colombia, as a neighboring country, has been one of the largest recipients of the migrant population.

According to official data from the Colombian government, the number of people from Venezuela entering Colombia has been substantially increasing from 2014 to 2019 as shown in Table 2.1.

The causes of Venezuelan migration respond to the deep crisis that the country is facing, "caused by the instability of the State and its institutions, and its inability to provide its citizens with confidence nor protection, all of that resulting in poverty, social inequality and the destruction of the national economy combined with a rupture of the social fabric" (Vargas, 2018, p. 116). In this regard, the Colombian public policy document for the response to the Venezuelan migration CONPES 3950 from the National Planning Department (2018) indicates that migratory flows from

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Table 2.1 Annual change in the number of Venezuelans entering Colombia: 2014–2020

Year	Number of individuals coming from Venezuela entering Colombia	Annual percentage change
2014	23,573	–
2015	31,471	+34%
2016	53,747	+71%
2017	403,702	+651%
2018	1,174,743	+191%
2019	1,771,237	+51%
2020	1,729,573	−2.3%

Source: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2020. Note: The table describes the evident increase in Venezuelan migration to Colombia, with a gradual growth, which is clear mainly in 2017–2018, a stabilization in 2019 and a slight reduction in 2020, which may be related to the pandemic

Venezuela began in 2012 following the oil crisis, but since 2015, with the closing of borders, the situation began to be critical, and from 2016 to 2017 the migratory flow considerably increased due to the lack of food and medicines, hyperinflation, and the currency devaluation. Venezuelan migration, according to Mazuera-Arias (2019), would be related to the search for better living conditions and access to fundamental Human Rights.

Migration from Venezuela resulted in different groups of people being forced to leave the country, most of them, as we have seen, in need of international protection due to the crisis, hence it is defined as mixed migratory movement, which may include, according to the International Organization for Migration (2019) "asylum seekers, refugees, victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied or separated minors, and migrants in irregular situations" (p. 145). Faced with this scenario, Colombia has determined multiple actions, both from the government sector, which "has demanded an emergency response from the Colombian State with an obligation to review its migration strategies and to chart a path towards a comprehensive public policy" (Gissi et al., 2020, p. 221), and from the humanitarian aid and international cooperation organizations, and the United Nations system, who have promoted multiple cooperation actions and coordination mechanisms such as the Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM).

Thus, this migratory phenomenon attracts the interest of various actors, such as the Colombian government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the *academia*, business people, and the media. In this chapter, we focus on how Colombian press links Venezuelan migration with crime, and we observe the resulting stigmatizing processes, to understand how the process of migrant integration can enter into a crisis.

For this analysis, the study by Bahar et al. (2020) is important as it confirms that Venezuelan immigrants commit fewer crimes than the local population, "which indicates that public perceptions about an increase in crime caused by immigrants are wrong" (p. 1). This report indicates that in 2019 in Colombia only 2.3% of arrests for violent crimes involved immigrants from Venezuela, and for minor crimes it reached only 5.4%, the majority of them reported in border regions. According to their study, the presence of immigrants did not generate a systematic increase in

crime in the country, which would partly dismantle the foundations of the negative perception of immigrants.

According to the report "Public Safety and Venezuelan Migration" (Castillo et al., 2019), based on news content analysis in Colombia from 2007 to the first quarter of 2018, media coverage around migration responded to three perceptions: a positive one in relation to job creation and skilled labor; a second negative one, emphasizing crimes perpetrated by Venezuelans (drug trafficking, theft, smuggling, homicide, and petty crimes), and a third one, that since 2018 sees Venezuelans as victims due to specific vulnerabilities they encounter (human trafficking, labor exploitation, and stigmatization). The report indicates that between May 2018 and April 2019 these perceptions persisted. In 2019, topics such as humanitarian aid, assistance for migrants, and the arrival of some Venezuelan military (as migrants in Colombia who deserted the army) emerge among others.

Esguerra (2019) in her study about the journalistic representation of migration argues:

> ...many news articles reinforce the idea of migrants as a threat, by either declaring them prone to criminal behavior or representing them as a risk in terms of health or unemployment. (p. 32)

The author observes a series of news articles highlighting the nationality related to the alleged commission of crimes, an issue that is also present in digital media; representations that contribute to state and public security discourses that see migration as a problem and a threat. According to Esguerra, this is intensified by the creation of an atmosphere of fear where the media can contribute to the propagation of discourses that promote xenophobia. Aliaga et al. (2018) agree, stating that this may also have repercussions on the exclusion of migrant populations.

These representations can generate "distancing, estrangement, and dehumanization, and therefore an absence of empathy and sense of human responsibility towards people who migrate, seen as a radical other, as an incomprehensible opposite distant stranger" (Esguerra, 2019, p. 34). According to Granados and Granados (2013), the migratory phenomenon has been mainly reported by the media, whose knowledge runs parallel to the formation of nation states, where terms such as migrant, emigrant, or immigrant have been used in relation to the notion of citizenship. As the author notes:

> The common and everyday use of these terms, their dissemination and popularization are probably due to the media that has been loading their use with connotations linked to poverty, exclusion, marginalization and delinquency of the images they represent, namely that of the 'immigrant'. (p. 22)

Moreover, as Noel (2021) asserts, immigrants can become stigmatized due to the *hypervisibilization* of phenomena that are statistically insignificant. Despite the statistical insignificance of these events, both academic and non-academic actors can contract or expand the chronologies of migration-related representations. Said process of contraction or expansion is usually framed in a repertoire articulated from the *native theory of neoliberalism* (built from the discourses of closure, purity,

uniqueness). This theory carries stigmatizing repertoires about migrants and migrations.

Similarly, Alsina and Medina (2013) indicate that "the media adapt informative material to their audience's cultural patterns" (p. 49), approaching a hegemonic understanding that establishes limits between "us" and "them," where the informative perspective can shape beliefs and affects about reality. In a framework of identity and otherness, where journalists can replicate stereotypes "in a more or less explicit way, on many occasions 'the other' is constructed as an incomplete being. Somehow, the one characterized as different is presented to us as deficient" (p. 50).

Thus, the media construct reality by shaping a social imaginary of migrants as deviants from "normality," since they are linked to problematic sources for the social order. Becker (2012) indicates that deviance is created by society, insofar as:

> *Social groups create deviance by establishing social norms whose violation constitutes a deviance* and by applying those norms to specific people and labeling them as marginal to society. From this point of view, deviance is not a characteristic of the act committed by the person who commits it, but a consequence of the application of rules and sanctions on the "offender" by third parties. A deviant is one who has been successfully labeled as such, and deviant behavior is the behavior that people label as such. (p. 28)

The construction of the idea of deviance is amplified by some politicians or by the media. According to Quinteros et al. (2021), "through the discursive link between immigration, illegality and criminality, they seek to exploit collective feelings of hostility and rejection." (p. 73).

Venezuelan migrants can be labeled by the press, and that, following Goffman's approach (2006) of establishing a categorization of people according to their attributes, implies creating an identity or social status based on normative expectations or assumptions about individuals. Thus, there is an assessment carried out retrospectively, as termed by the author, a "virtual social identity," and the proven attributes are the "real social identity," and a "stranger" can possess an attribute that makes him different from the others,

> [. . .] turning them into someone less desirable —in extreme cases, someone entirely evil, dangerous or weak. Consequently, we stop seeing them as complete and ordinary people and we reduce them to diseased and derided stereotypes. An attribute of this nature is a stigma, especially when it produces in others a wide discredit; sometimes also called a defect, failure, or handicap. (p. 12)

Thus, the ascription of identities to migrants may be loaded with virtual or generalizing elements connected to a matrix of meanings originated by the media and that have an impact on the social imaginary through the shaping of stigmas, thus altering the construction of migrants' identity, as the social imaginary may become loaded with undesirable or discrediting attributes.

In this regard, the author establishes the difference between a person who faces a discrediting situation, insofar as their quality of being different is already known or is evident; and a discreditable person whose quality of being different is neither known to those around them nor immediately perceptible to them, although a stigmatized

individual might face both conditions. Hence, the media can shape the idea of a social imaginary of the migrants as discredited and/or discreditable.

There would be three types of stigmas: the abominations of the body; blemishes of the individual's personality "that are perceived as the lack of will, tyrannical or unnatural passions, rigid and false beliefs, dishonesty" (Goffman, 2006, p. 14). There are also the tribal stigmas of race, nation, and religion. The difference between those considered "normal" and those stigmatized—who are not considered fully human—emerges and it contributes to constructing the logics of discrimination and inferiority.

We may argue that the media influences with forms of recognition that could contribute to degraded representations of migrants, depending on the type of social imaginary constructed by stigma processes. According to Pintos' definition (2015), imaginaries "are socially constructed schemes, they guide our perception, make our interpretations possible and make our responses possible to what might be considered reality in other social systems" (p. 156). By using this definition, we would like to highlight how imaginaries can influence social action, as, according to the author, the imaginary guides and changes the direction of observation, and perception focuses on some aspects and not others, focusing the attention in one direction. In our case of discussion, media coverage where specific aspects that show migrants as stigmatized and place their process of integration in crisis are evidenced, and the crisis is contemplated as a point of inflection (Vigh, 2008) or interruption (Clarke, 2010), thereby hindering the construction of a favorable imaginary around immigrants and their place in society.

We do not depart from the premise of assimilation, where the immigrants´ initial identity is expected to disappear or dissolve into the national identity of the country of destination (Hieronymi, 2005), but from the idea of integration, which, according to Sayad (2010), distances itself from assimilation, implying "a person's integrity immersed but not dissolved in the group" (p. 310). The term *integration* questions the whole journey of the immigrant, starting from emigration, exemplified at first by integration into a wage-earning market, and thereafter an immigrant's entire existence becomes a place for integration, with profound and enduring changes.

According to Sayad (2010), integration's main feature is that it "cannot be accomplished except as a side effect of the actions undertaken for other purposes" (p. 312). It should also be understood not only as a form of social promotion, since "it cannot be the direct result of what is said and done with that intention" (p. 313), as it is never total, regardless of the discourse that it is drawn from.

We can conceive the integration as a process, which can lead into an immigrant integrated into society even if he is poor, marginal, or delinquent, as Sayad points out. However, we could say that it will depend on where the integration discourse is constructed, together with the actions that will help immigrants become fully "integrated" citizens, from our perspective in the effective exercise of rights, and how to attain the imaginary of the integrated migrant subject, for which the perception around him—created by discursive representations in the media—, can put this type of integration into crisis as a direct effect of the *criminalizing* or *victimizing*

messages that the press spreads. We all know that this is a mechanism that fosters public opinion and through this same process it can also stigmatize.

The way in which the immigrant's position is stated will influence what Sayad (2010) proposes as the "legitimacy of immigration" (p. 121). Namely, the significance given to the migratory process, which is in constant struggle in terms of the costs or benefits that this process and the migrants themselves entail, can determine the possibilities for migrants´ integration within a framework of human rights.

We consider that an analysis of the migratory phenomenon of Venezuelans in Colombia based on migration discourse analysis and the actors that shape it will shed light and clarity to further understand the phenomenon, both from the theory's point of view and that from the actors who are shaping it.

Method

The selected methodology draws on the assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a type of hypothesis-building research (Van Dijk, 2009) that seeks to understand the role of language and its use in the reproduction of dominant hegemonies and inequality. CDA, accordingly, demonstrates how dominant groups employ various discursive strategies and structures to maintain or expand their power (Pardo, 2013).

Critical discourse analysts maintain that discourses have political content, thus they are politically non-neutral (Fairclough, 1989). Understanding discourses as political acts leads one to contemplate the media as non-neutral in their discourses and as a mean of ideological reproduction (Van Dijk, 2000), whereupon the media can shape collective imaginaries and beliefs (Olmos, 2012).

In terms of the media and migration, Villalobos (2004) points out that discourses issued by the media can shape the image of immigrants and immigration. For these reasons, CDA comprises a methodological tool whose purpose fits perfectly with the fundamental purpose of this work: to analyze the discourse around Venezuelan migration and its relationship with crime in Colombia, as a means to identify stigmatization processes.

When selecting the newspapers used for the analysis, two criteria were considered: (1) national circulation and (2) greater circulation in the country. The newspapers *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* met both criteria (European Journalism Center, 2021). These two traditional national newspapers are chosen to compare the relationship between Venezuelan migration and crime in Colombia. Specifically, it will be analyzed how these two newspapers represent that relationship.

El Tiempo and El Espectador have a common ideological origin, they were founded by members of the Colombian Liberal Party (*El Tiempo*, 2011; Restrepo, 2001). The Liberal Party is one of the two traditional political parties in Colombia, and although it is currently part of the Socialist International, historically it has defended ideas linked to centrism and liberalism (León, 2016). Currently, two of the richest individuals in the country are the main shareholders in both newspapers

(European Journalism Center, 2021). Whereas *El Tiempo* has as its main shareholder the businessman Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo (Revista Semana, 2012), *El Espectador* is mainly controlled by the Valorem group, headed by the businessman Alejandro Santo Domingo (European Journalism Center, 2021). During the Colombian presidential runoff in 2018, *El Tiempo* (June 09, 2018d) supported the right-wing candidate Iván Duque through an editorial, while *El Espectador* (May 7, 2018) did not take a public position.

The material was collected by consulting the online databases of both newspapers. The documentary sample considered the years of 2018 and 2020, as these dates match a period of high growth of the Venezuelan migration to Colombia (Gissi et al., 2020). The following key search terms were used for both newspapers' databases: "crime" + "Venezuelan migrants," and "crime" + "Venezuelans."

The search yielded a total of 59 sources in the discursive relationships established in the analysis: 29 from *El Tiempo* and 30 from *El Espectador*. Although the search originally only included news articles from the selected Colombian newspapers that mentioned crimes committed by Venezuelans in Colombia, the search was expanded to encompass news items of Venezuelans allegedly committing crimes in other countries, particularly in Ecuador and Peru, or of Venezuelan citizens as victims of crime in Colombia.

The analysis was compiled in a technical datasheet developed by the research team. News identification data included publication date, website link, heading, headline, subheading, and summary of the news story (Pardo, 2013). The comparison between heading, headline, subtitle, subheading, and news story content allowed the analysis of the pragmatic value of the headline.

The technical datasheet also included the following analytical categories: actions, actors, and forms of naming. These categories were extracted from the work of Pardo (2013). In the "actors" category, we included the main actors who interact with Venezuelan citizens in news coverage; in the "actions" category, we identified the main actions carried out by or by others affecting Venezuelan citizens. According to Pardo (2013), "naming is the resource through which linguistic properties are applied to identify objects and earthly beings" (p. 110); thus, the technical datasheet included how Venezuelans are identified in Colombia. In order to systematically describe the collected data, qualitative content analysis was carried out (Schreirer, 2014) through coding and recoding of the actors, actions, and means of designation.

Results and Discussion

Trends in Representations of Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia by El Espectador

According to *El Espectador*, Venezuelan migrants who arrive in Colombia "flee" *en masse*, mainly due to a regime incapable of protecting its citizens from crime. "One day Johnny decided to flee out of fear ... In just one week I was mugged twice. I felt the threat of insecurity and violence ..." (Sarmiento, & Velasco, November 2019). Upon the analysis of news story content, Venezuela is associated with words such as

"violence," "fear," and "murder" as shown as follows: "A new act of violence occurred on the border with Venezuela, near Cúcuta. According to information provided by the authorities, eight people were murdered." (Legal Drafting Office, August 3, 2020b).

In the analyzed material, the Venezuelan regime is portrayed with characteristics of cruelty, authoritarianism, and corruption, as shown in the following example: "Franklin, 24, said that he fled to Colombia after he was detained and abused in Venezuela amid protests. While he was in detention, he said, the police shaved his head and tried to rape him twice" (Ebus, July 31, 2019). Another example of such portrayal is as follows: "During the last two decades, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans—some estimate that the number reaches two million—have emigrated; the trend has accelerated in recent years during the administration of Nicolás Maduro, who has been described by several as autocratic" (Semple, January 10, 2018).

According to the news story content analyzed, migrants frequently associate Venezuelan armed forces with adjectives such as "corrupt" and with nouns such as "corruption," as shown as follows: "corrupt Venezuelan military officers control a multimillion-dollar cross-border business" (Ebus, July 31, 2019). The Bolivarian National Guard is presented as an organization that allows and collaborates both with Colombian and Venezuelan criminal groups, as illustrated in the following: "The Rastrojos have a base of operations in Boca de Grita since 2018 coordinating gasoline smuggling operations in collaboration with . . .the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB)" (Redacción Judicial, March 08, 2020b).

According to the analyzed material, another cause of the "flight" of Venezuelans to Colombia has to do with the country's humanitarian crisis. In none of the analyzed discourses were the Venezuelan citizens represented as middle class or wealthy. Accordingly, Venezuelans arriving to Colombia are all represented as vulnerable, illustrated as follows: "The organization drew attention to the risks faced by vulnerable populations, such as young people, merchants, social leaders, displaced people and Venezuelans" (Redacción Bogotá, July 3, 2019).

According to the analyzed material, this vulnerability is mainly caused by poverty, illustrated in the following: "Venezuelan citizens who cannot afford the cost of living in Bogotá are arriving in Soacha" (Osorio, May 05, 2019). They are portrayed as people who survive by joining the informal economy, as shown in the following example: "There are kiosks where migrants can sell their hair to make wigs, hoping to buy a bus ticket" (Ebus, July 31, 2019). Venezuelans' life in Colombia is associated with verbs related to survival such as "bearing" or "fighting," exemplified in the following: "Johnny Tales, theater actor and rock vocalist, emigrated four years ago from the city of Barquisimeto, and in portraying the 'Joker'[2] he found a way to make a life outside Venezuela" (Sarmiento & Velasco, November 1, 2019).

[2] According to this news item, the Venezuelan actor Johnny Tales, now a resident of Colombia, makes a living playing the Batman villain "The Joker" in the streets of Bogotá.

Our discourse analysis results concur with Grimson's finding (2011) of an incorrectly assumed equivalence between migration and poverty commonly found in news coverage related to global migration. According to Taboada (2018), such discursive approach may promote the stigmatization of migrants, building on Goffman's treatise on stigma (2006), and might be connecting such stigma to migrants´ perceived inability to face the fate of their own country. Namely, beyond being vulnerable they are affected by the social imaginary of being blamed for their plight, as discredited or discreditable subjects.

Venezuelans and their Link to El Espectador's *News Coverage Related to the Commitment of Crimes*

The analysis of the pragmatic value of the headlines indicates that during the study period there is consistency between the headline and the news story content. We identified two different periods, during and after 2018, that show a difference in the way the headlines of the *El Espectador* articles referred to the Venezuelan citizens who allegedly committed a crime.

During 2018, we found three instances of headlines describing Venezuelan citizens as perpetrators of crimes, as follows: Venezuelans were involved in an attack in Barranquilla: Prosecutor's Office" (Redacción Judicial, January 30, 2018); "Crimes perpetrated by Venezuelans increase border tension" (Casañas, February 18, 2018) and "Tension with Venezuelans in Cundinamarca" (Redacción Bogotá, May 21, 2018). In these headlines there is a clear generalization, dealing with Venezuelans as a homogeneous crime-prone group (Van Dijk, 2005). The news story content of these three news items affirms that the arrival of Venezuelans in Colombia generates "tension" and "concern" among Colombians. Using Goffman's (2006) concept of stigma, Venezuelans would be stigmatized by way of *El Espectador* 2018 headlines with characterizations such as "strange," "evil," and "dangerous."

As of 2019, such references to the nationality of the alleged criminal in headlines disappeared. Our discourse analysis results coincide with those presented by Castillo et al. (2019), wherein perception of Venezuelan immigrants linked with crime as depicted by the media decreased.

Beginning in 2019, when headlines link both the words "Venezuelans" and "crime" it is to represent them as victims of violence, "Since 2016, homicides of Venezuelan migrants in the border region have increased" (Redacción Judicial, August 3, 2020a), to deny their responsibility for crime in Colombia: "Venezuelan emigration does not increase crime in Latin America" (Agencia, September 14, 2020), and to depict them as victims of forced recruitment by illegal armed groups. The terms used to identify migrants in news items vary depending on whether migrants are depicted as victims of violence, to deny their responsibility for crimes, or portrayed as victims of forced recruitment. Such approaches can

revictimize and promote the idea of an incomplete person (Alsina & Medina, 2013), portraying immigrants as passive subjects affected by misfortune.

As victims of violence, in the body of the articles, the Venezuelan migrants are murdered, extorted, or robbed due to their vulnerability and weakness: "In reality, the four people killed were garbage collectors who lived in a 'cambuche'[3] on the sidewalk. Three of them were Venezuelans and one was Colombian" (Redacción Judicial, August 26, 2019). Venezuelans, in addition to being victims of organized crime, are portrayed both in headlines and news items as victims of xenophobia and rejection by certain sectors of the Colombian population: "According to an investigation, in the cities closer to border crossings, migrant homicides soared since the opening of the border with that country. Xenophobia is the main cause of such aggressions." (Redacción Judicial, August 03, 2020a).

According to the newspaper, Colombian illegal armed groups would take advantage of the vulnerability of the Venezuelan migrants. Organizations such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), the *Autodefensas Gaitanista de Colombia* (AGC), neo-paramilitary groups, dissidents from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), gold traffickers, and other illegal armed groups. Thus, from 2019 to 2020, *El Espectador* would no longer stigmatize Venezuelan migrants as "evil" or "dangerous," but rather as "weak" (Goffman, 2006, p. 12) or in any case as undervalued subjects. This shows a change in the news agenda, in terms of editorial policy; however, the motives behind those editorial decisions remain uncertain.[4]

As confirmed by the analyzed material, the Colombian-Venezuelan border is key to the forced recruitment of Venezuelan citizens, the acquisition of weapons, the sale of narcotics, gold trafficking, and crime in general. According to *El Espectador*, "it is a border abandoned to criminality" (Redacción Judicial, August 03, 2020a). The analyzed material confirms passivity as the Colombian government's main attitude toward the problems experienced on the Colombian-Venezuelan border: "In the second half of the year, *El Espectador* was able to note how the armed groups have become stronger thanks to both states' neglect" (Redacción Judicial, August 03, 2020a).

According to *El Espectador*, the attitude of Venezuelan authorities toward all these activities on the border ranges from passivity to control of multiple illicit activities, such as in the following headline: "corrupt Venezuelan military officers control a multimillion-dollar cross-border business" (Ebus, July 31, 2019). Thus,

[3] Precarious housing built with rustic or discarded materials, most without access to public services such as electricity, water, and sewage.

[4] This issue might be related to a difference in reporting with other newspapers or to a reformulation of the editorial focus. One theory that could explain this phenomenon is the favorability of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia shown by candidates in the 2018 presidential elections, Iván Duque, Gustavo Petro, Sergio Fajardo and Germán Vargas Lleras; as it would be the last year where *El Espectador* portrayed Venezuelan migrants as "dangerous" (La Opinion, May 19, 2018). The political climate could have suggested to *El Espectador* that a considerable section of the Colombian public opinion had a favorable view on the integration of Venezuelans in Colombia within a human rights framework. The change in discourse within this period warrants further study.

migrants would stop being stigmatized as criminals to become victims of multiple external actors; however, the concept of immigrants' limited capacity of agency is maintained, news that reinforce a negative attitude toward Venezuelan migrants in Colombian society.

Venezuelans and the Link to News Events Related to the Commitment of Crimes as Reported by El Tiempo

It is evident that the manner in which *El Tiempo* reports the relationship between crime and Venezuelans will contribute to shaping specific narratives in public opinion and social imaginaries about Venezuelan immigrants extending beyond national borders. It is widely known by mass media researchers that the media obeys interests not necessarily aligned with public interest, due to the permeable border between information and manipulation. Several issues come to light that, at the very least, indicate a clear lack of accuracy, and in the worst of cases outright lies to readers. In terms of the pragmatic value of the headline, how many times must there be a relationship between the heading, the headline, the subheading, and the content of a news item for a media to be classified as honest or dishonest?

With regard to *El Tiempo*, we found no relationship between these elements in each of the three observed time periods (2018–2020). For example, Murrillo Mojica's article from July 28, 2019, with the heading "Dismembered, mystery terrifies Soacha and worries Bogotá" is followed by the descriptive subheading "Authorities say three out of four dismembered bodies found in the city were Venezuelans." In the body of the news story, it is revealed not as a standalone crime, but rather one of many crimes that have occurred over several months, and that the nationality of the victims and perpetrators has not been determined by forensics. It raises the question, what official information does the article refer to? The presumed nationality is based on "testimonies of people who knew the victims and stated their nationality." Furthermore, the article informs: "'Los Paisas' [Colombian criminal gang's] reaction is violent and in light of monitoring by authorities, they attempt to divert attention by sending dismembered bodies to different points of Bogotá."

Only a day before that, another news item (*El Tiempo*, July 27, 2019b) about the same event highlighted the biased nature of its heading: "Drug lords behind dismembered bodies in Bogotá" and the subheading: "Gang from Soacha confronts 'ex-sayayines'[5] who recruit Venezuelans." Readers are then informed that: "General Hoover Penilla disclosed to *El Tiempo* at least three of the dismembered bodies are drug users and would have been murdered in isolated and random events." Thus,

[5] "Sayayines" is a denomination attributed to people with long criminal records, most dedicated to drug trafficking and illegal businesses. They were part of groups that were established in two areas of the city of Bogotá (called El Cartucho and El Bronx) that were controlled by criminal gangs.

Venezuelans are victims rather than perpetrators in a gang war contrary to what the subheading indicates.

The lack of coherence exposes open deceit when we compare both news stories. The first news story about the dismembered bodies strives to establish that 75% of the dismembered bodies "found in the city" involve Venezuelans. But what city exactly? Bogotá or Soacha? The previous day's news published by *El Tiempo* reports that "in the previous nine months eight dismembered bodies have been found in Bogotá and in some neighboring municipalities" (*El Tiempo*, June 27, 2019a), without clarifying how many were Venezuelans.

Likewise, another news story by *El Tiempo* (January 7, 2020a) reports in the heading: "Two apprehended foreigners implicated in crime in Nariño." The body of the news item reveals that, although only two were apprehended, those who committed the crime were "two Venezuelans, one Peruvian and three Colombians." Clearly, there is an attempt to focus attention on Venezuelans, which could have an influence in creating a state of alarm (Esguerra, 2019).

It is also important to mention the following subtitle: "Maikel Mares was disabled, he stayed behind in the mob going after presumed 'Venezuelan childsnatchers'" (*El Tiempo*, November 6, 2018a). The body of the news story informs that "stayed behind" means he was lynched to death; Mares was Colombian and had nothing to do with the case ... and there never really was a case of child snatching. Why does the subheading repeat the term "Venezuelan childsnatchers"?

Additionally, the way Venezuelan citizens are called out denotes clear exaggeration of particular traits such as the following: "he was in charge of recruiting foreign citizens, mainly Venezuelans for the residual structure 'Gentil Duarte.'[6] He allegedly ordered the people he recruited to carry out several murders" (*El Tiempo*, July 7, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). In international news, "a court in Lima (Perú), sentenced a Venezuelan to life imprisonment for the femicide of his ex-partner" (*El Tiempo*, October 11, 2019a). A similar pattern is observed in the note headlined "Femicide in Ecuador generates xenophobia and control for Venezuelans" (*El Tiempo*, January 21, 2019a). Beyond our own search filter (crime), it is apparent that there is an exaggeration of criminal and sexist traits attributed to Venezuelan men in countries of the region.

It should also be noted that there is a marked focus on poverty and criminality. A high percentage of the news stories analyzed underline Venezuelans' situation of poverty, marginality, and/or vulnerability. As shown in the following example: "there are large 'pulpos' [tentacles] that are managing the 'pelaos'[7] and taking advantage of displaced youth, or of those [migrants] arriving from Venezuela" (*El Tiempo*, October 27, 2018a). According to *El Tiempo*, their condition of

[6]This structure refers to a Residual Organized Armed Group (GAOR), which emerged as dissidence to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), a guerrilla group demobilized in 2016.

[7]Colloquial way of calling young people in Colombia.

vulnerability places them close to crime. As recounted in an article: "Venezuelan gangs lead micro-trafficking and prostitution in Bogotá" (*El Tiempo*, July 05, 2020a).

Accordingly, there is a legitimation of a specific world perspective which establishes a narrative where the presence of Venezuelan citizens entails criminality, machismo, and brutality. Not surprisingly, news stories abound about Venezuelans hired as laborers who allegedly betray their employers to kill them by unusual methods, as recounted by the headline: "Young man murdered and buried under cement in his own house. The victim had hired three foreigners to build his home" (*El Tiempo*, March 11, 2020a). Another example is as follows: "Ongoing investigation of who is behind the murder of a couple in Viotá.[8] Authorities investigating whether Venezuelan citizens are involved in the homicide" (*El Tiempo*, September 25, 2018a).

Other headlines highlight or hint at the similar traits in their narratives. For example, in the news item headlined "Child found alongside victims of triple homicide in Sonsón (Antioquia)" (*El Tiempo*, September 14, 2019a), the following was reported: "We received information that the deceased adult had difficulties with some of his employees, apparently Venezuelan citizens." In another case (*El Tiempo*, September 17, 2019a) the newspaper reports that the doctors cannot feel safe, due to the presence of Venezuelans in the city of Valledupar: "'Please, don't kill me!', the doctor shouted, arguing with two people inside his home. However, his attackers had no mercy."

This narrative represents the Venezuelan as an *Other*. From the perspective of otherness, heinous crimes, macabre, and unjust betrayals for Colombians who choose to interact with Venezuelans as can be expected, rather than viewing them as people simply looking for an honest job. Thus, Venezuelans not only constitute an *other* belonging to a criminal underworld, per *El Tiempo* at least, but also implying they belong to a criminally inhumane social class (or non-human?). This is how the narrative of "deviant" otherness functions, generating feelings of hostility and rejection (Quinteros et al., 2021) and consequently impacting or interrupting integration and the effective exercise of migrants´ rights, either as a "secondary effect" through immigration's loss of legitimacy (Sayad, 2010) triggering rejection and processes of social exclusion (Aliaga et al., 2018).

It should be noted that the representation of Venezuelan migrants as victims after 2018, as mentioned by Castillo et al. (2019), is not the case for *El Tiempo*. In this newspaper, the discourse remains homogeneous with a clear message: Venezuelan migration is closely linked to crime, reinforcing stigma toward migrants and the separation between them and us (Alsina & Medina, 2013).

[8] Municipality of Colombia, Department of Cundinamarca

Conclusions

We can conclude that, from our first analyses of coverage by *El Espectador* in 2018, the alleged relationship between Venezuelans and crime appears concurrently with the social and economic instability present in Venezuela, which has forced people to migrate in problematic and dangerous contexts of humanitarian crisis. In terms of reporting on the commission of crimes in *El Espectador*, we note a marked change during and after 2018; from the beginning of the year Venezuelans are portrayed as perpetrators of crimes and by 2019 Venezuelans are represented as victims of violence and xenophobia, where stigma toward migrants is configured around the notion of migrants´ vulnerability.

In our analysis of reporting on Venezuelan migrants by *El Tiempo*, we found inconsistencies in the production of news and biased reporting that emphasizes a negative construction based on criminality, where the discourse remains homogeneous throughout the study periods.

Despite the cultural proximity between Colombians and Venezuelans, the conflictual imaginary of an Other associated with deviant characteristics stigmatizes migrants and it could be a significant factor putting their integration in the country in crisis, thus delegitimizing immigration itself through negative or biased news, as these can promote sentiments of rejection, by depicting migrants as contemptible, rule-breaking, evil, or dangerous people.

Venezuela's humanitarian crisis represents a historically recorded high human displacement, albeit one characterized by criminogenic elements by the mainstream press. As described by Goffman (2006), such media portrayals may be more connected to virtual identities attached to persons than to real identities. A distorted public perception of criminality, which does not correspond with the actual crime rate, has the potential to inflict the stigma of victimization and criminalization and to contribute to a social imaginary of migrants as threats, incomplete or infected beings, hindering their integration. The migrant is situated in and between crime, as the *cause* of migration, and crime *committed* by them and against them in their country of destination. Further study is warranted on the effect of crime news reporting on migrants´ integration, covering both negative and positive discourses that either interrupt or facilitate the process of social integration and contribute to deconstruct stigma.

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Chapter 3
"Migration Crisis" and Migrant Caravans (October 2018–January 2019) in Mexico: An Analysis from Contemporary Academic Publications

Luis Alfredo Arriola Vega

Introduction

An abundance of crises seem to characterize the last 15 years (2006–2021). We have witnessed financial crises (e.g., the debacle of 2007–2008), health crises (e.g., pandemics caused by influenza virus A subtype H1N1 in 2009, and SARS-CoV-2 -2019 to the present) and, arguably, "migration crises" (in the Mediterranean Sea during 2015; at the US-Mexico Border during the summer of 2014). "Crisis production" is not only the result of political, health, or economic, circumstances; we must nowadays deal with a stakeholder whose ability to influence the public opinion cannot be eluded when it comes to building narratives of "crisis": the cyberspace and its digital communication platforms and applications. Then, how do we unravel and discuss migration crises from a critical standpoint? How is the notion of crisis (re) produced, with or without its respective problematization in academia as it pertains the issue of migrant caravans (henceforth caravans)? This text scrutinizes the (re) production of migratory crises' lexicons, which, as Menjívar et al. (2019) rightly assert, abound and are often taken for granted with little or no specific underlying analysis to examine them.

The chapter begins with a section where a general conceptual framework and three ways of discussing migration crises are proposed. In the second section the methodological path underpinning the research is laid out. The third section presents the backdrop in which caravans took place, including actions taken by Mexican authorities, attitudes demonstrated by local inhabitants at Mexico's southern border, and positions expressed in some local newspapers regarding caravans. Next, a review about the way human mobility scholars have approached the caravan-

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migration crisis nexus in their writings is discussed. The conclusions highlight how a complex term such as migration crisis has been superficially debated, an issue of scant critical deliberation in academia, resulting in the rudimentary theoretical and conceptual development of such notion.

Questioning the Notion of Crisis

The first ideas that may come to mind when enunciating crisis are related to rupture, breakdown, abnormality, and even chaos (see Arriola Vega y Coraza de los Santos' chapter in this volume for a broad discussion about this subject). Yet, we must bear in mind that the genesis of a turning point called crisis may be the result of processes that have evolved or accumulated over time (Calhoun, 2010), whether political or social (Carastathis & Tsilimpounidi, 2018), they need to be contextualized (Lindley, 2014) and are rarely isolated or sudden, but rather long-term (McAdam, 2014). Just like Roitman (2016), I am not interested in either theorizing or getting to the essence of crisis or its true or correct meaning; instead, I offer some insights on its use when referring to the migration-crisis nexus.

According to Spector (2019), any statement of crisis must be made up of objective elements and subjective explanations for it to be considered a legitimate assertion. Rojas and Winton (2019) argue that crisis is a political category, not an empirical one; however, they sustain that the marginality imposed upon migrants by the *establishment* must be understood as a crisis.[1] Economic marginality, in particular, is tangible, rather than abstract. Hereunder, I will present three different approaches that bring together, to a greater or lesser extent, the objective and subjective elements of *crisis* and the political dimension to discuss *migration crisis*, approaches that inform the literature on caravans, my main object of analysis.

The first point of view refers to raising the notion of *state-of-crisis*, which can occur at certain junctures and critical times (without necessarily existing a priori or being omnipresent in the system) with causes rooted in long-term developments in the life course of migrants. State-of-crisis is not tantamount to the idea of chronic crisis (chronicity), or persistent condition, as discussed by Vigh (2008); bringing us closer to an oxymoron, as argued by Roitman (2016). Armed conflicts generally represent state-of-crisis conditions that lead to, almost without exception, forced displacement; examples in Latin America include conflicts experienced by Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala in the context of the cold war (1980–1990); internal

[1] Rojas and Winton imply, without openly and fully developing the argument, that crisis is the sum of precariousness, instability, uncertainty, and insecurity faced by people within the political system. They explore

> [. . .] the notion of crisis in relation to mobility and particularly displacement, not in terms of how a 'crisis' is discursively constructed and materially enacted as migration and border policy, but rather looking at the complex experiences of those caught up in this damaging geopolitical game (mobility is both a political and personal problem when it is associated with marginality)" (Rojas & Winton, 2019, pp. 9–10).

unrest in Colombia that has lasted for several decades; and more recently, this country's problems with Venezuela. In general, I position caravans within the migration approach due to crisis (See Arriola Vega & Coraza de los Santos, 2022, in this volume). That is, large-scale migrations occur due to critical, *concrete* conditions in countries of origin, namely, social, economic, political exclusion, chronic, systemic problems (corruption, inefficiency, lack of public security, deterioration of institutions, etc.), and different types of violence (structural, symbolic, criminal, and everyday violence).

A second approach could be called the discursive fabrication of crisis. In other words, there is a narrative built with a particular objective (e.g., political, ideological), appealing to certain emotions or sensitivities regardless of whether they are truthful or not.[2] An example of the migration crisis as a discursive construct is found in former President Donald Trump's xenophobic narrative regarding migrant caravans and the consequences of said rhetoric. Ever since Mr. Trump described the caravans as an invasion to his country in October 2018,[3] hardline immigration restriction measures accelerated, beginning with the deployment of a larger number of National Guard's (GN) members to the southern border,[4] the launching of the Title 42 ordinance (US Federal Register, 2020),[5] a substantial reduction in the capped number of refugees admitted to the United States, which the Trump administration brought to an all-time low of 18,000 in 2019 (American Immigration Council, 2020), and the implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols

[2] There is a vast debate on the concept of narrative - among others in hermeneutical philosophy, in literary criticism, in cultural studies - which is impossible to discuss here due to the lack of space and because it is not part of the central purpose of this work. I instrumentally adopt two complementary ideas regarding this term: narrative is a "consciousness mode" that shapes and informs what we know about ourselves (Rankin, 2002), who adopts Mikhail Bakhtin's premises (Rankin, 2002). For Bruner (1991, p. 13): "[. . .] narrative 'truth' is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability [. . .]", which Brunner calls "referentiality". According to Brunner, other features come into play in the process of creating reality through narrative, among them intentionality, cultural legitimacy of narrative, its adherence to specific norms or the context in which the narrative is produced (Bruner, 1991, pp. 7, 15, 16–17). Purportedly, narrative "[. . .] rather than referring to 'reality' may in fact create it or constitute it [. . .]" (Bruner, 1991, p. 13) It is in this latter sense I refer to crisis as manufactured from (narrated) "discursiveness".

[3] Mr. Trump's tweet containing said statement is as follows: "Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. Please go back, you will not be admitted into the United States unless you go through the legal process. This is an invasion of our Country, and our Military is waiting for you! (Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) October 29, 2018). Access to the former president's account was suspended later, but numerous secondary sources highlighted the statement (See Reuters, 2018).

[4] Donald Trump sent about 2000 National Guard enlistees to support CBP in April 2018 (Operation Guard Support); six months later, he increased the number of military personnel to 7000 troops. Initially, this maneuver was known as Operation Faithful Patriot, but that name was discarded. (US Department of Defense News, April 7, 2018 & US Deparment of Defense News, October 26, 2018; US Army North, 2018)

[5] Policy in which "certain" people that can allegedly introduce a communicable disease and represent a threat to US public health are expelled from a port of entry at the border with Mexico, or Canada.

(MPPs) (US Department of Homeland Security, 2018). MPPs' enactment made Mexico a de facto safe third country to stem the rising number of US asylum applications.[6]

The discursive fabrication of "migration crisis" is linked to a decontextualized use of certain migration phenomena. This stands out particularly when applied to people in need of protective measures; in this manner, there is a risk of enabling a way of thinking and a narrative that victimizes migrants when a one-sided view prevails, more to the point, when state-centered interests drive such directives (i.e., the alleged negative effects on national security), on one side, and in contrast to the understanding of the historical roots behind human displacement for safety is neglected, on the other. Oftentimes, this uncritical vision feeds a restrictive nationalistic approach that can be described as xenophobic and anti-immigrant. Such approach upholds imaginaries about the weakening or loss of border control (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014), where migrants represent an affront to national sovereignty, or governmental failure to deal with migration, specifically unauthorized migrants, something that amounts to, arguably, crisis (Lindley, 2014). Hence, the crisis-migration nexus becomes politicized (Lindley, 2014) enabling a particular crisis rhetoric that precedes and generally works to ensure political and material support to undertake actions that limit human mobility: restrictions to migration, border closures, mass deportations, discretionary directives, and even humanitarian work (Lindley, 2014; see also Heyman et al., 2018). Thus, both the US and the Mexican governments found in the caravans a justification to discursively dismiss those events as instances of crisis.[7]

A third approach to address the migration-crisis binary refers to the notions of humanitarian emergency and humanitarian crisis. For the purposes of this text, the difference between both is that humanitarian emergency refers to how people's lives

[6] Mexican authorities never officially accepted to agree on this policy. A safe third country is a "state that has ratified the Geneva Convention of 1951, in which there are sufficient guarantees for human rights and the principle of non-refoulement and where the asylum seeker has been before arriving to the host country" (Comisión de Ayuda a Refugiados en Euskadi, n.d.). The MPPs, announced in December 2018, came into effect in January 2019. This policy established that asylum seekers arriving at a port of entry in the US-Mexico border would be returned to Mexico and wait until they be called before an immigration judge for their request to be heard. Between 60 and 80 thousand people (depending on the source) were stranded in border cities such as Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Matamoros due to this directive. The government of President Joe Biden repealed the MPPs in February 2021.

[7] I have already mentioned several actions implemented by Mr. Trump to deter caravans from reaching the US-Mexico border. In a parallel development, the Mexican government has sent troops to the border with Guatemala at various times, with the explicit intention of halting caravans. For example, in June 2019 and January 2020 the Mexican National Guard was deployed at a port of entry on the Mexico-Guatemala border in the state of Chiapas. On the first occasion, the GN dispatch resulted from the threat made by the Trump administration to its Mexican counterpart concerning the announcement of an increase in tariffs on Mexican products if the caravans were not stopped. On the second occasion, the GN staged confrontations with the migrants. Migrants continued to arrive to the border with the United States, which casts doubts on the success of the restrictive and containment measures (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

are put at risk. Calhoun (2010) describes emergency thus: "[...] a sudden, unpredictable event emerging against a background of ostensible normalcy, causing suffering or danger and demanding urgent response." (p. 30); humanitarian crisis is a direct threat to life (Long, 2014) and exceeds people's ability of to face an emergency without external help (Lindley, 2014). Some experts (Martin et al., 2014) argue that an instance of migration crisis derives from the context in which humanitarian crises occur, particularly under extreme or exceptional circumstances (McAdam, 2014). The label of humanitarian crisis seems to use a language that off centers the migration side of the issue, one in which migration carries negative connotations, and entirely focuses on individuals as human beings. This is a viewpoint on humanitarian crisis that certain stakeholders, such as NGOs, subscribe to (see Doctors Without Borders, 2019, February 5th; Doctors Without Borders, 2020). Academics also advance that perspective; a renowned specialist refers to the situation of people subjected to MPPs on the US-Mexico border as follows: "[...] the current situation at the border is not an immigration crisis, but a humanitarian crisis [...]" (Massey, 2020, p. 32). Lastly, it is important to point out the existence of a whole new counter-narrative to the language and philosophy of humanitarian crisis, since it is considered a rhetoric through which international organizations rationalize their actions ("interventions") and prolong critical conditions among certain groups (such as the protracted "encampment" of refugee populations), rather than questioning the origins of those circumstances, therefore contributing to their perpetuation.

Methods

The core of this work is vested in a critical reading of selected academic writings on the caravans in connection to the notion of migration crisis. The abundant and growing number of specialized publications on the caravans required a specific selection of material to review; I chose sources that discussed the caravans and their—strong or weak, direct or indirect, central or marginal—connections with the term migration crisis (See footnote no. 14). Rather than imposing a rigid or limited criterion in selecting a single field of knowledge, I sought a wide diversity of disciplinary perspectives; the review examines eight articles from specialized journals in the social sciences and the humanities, among them history, political science, sociology, and communication. The analysis covers texts written by specialists from Latin America and from others outside the subcontinent to consider points of view beyond the region where the caravans took center stage.

Between November 2018 and January 2019, I carried out five interviews in the town of Ciudad Hidalgo and the city of Tapachula Chiapas, both near the Mexico-Guatemala border, to explore reactions from different local people to the emergence and passing through of caravans, and to elicit opinions on the question of whether a

migration crisis ensued. In Ciudad Hidalgo I spoke with Roque and Octavio.[8] The former worked at the municipal headquarters' unit for migrants' assistance, while the latter was employed in a Federal government's Ministry of Health clinic. A third interviewee, Claudio, also from the same town, was an activist in an organization that serves migrants. In Tapachula, Leo works for an international organization that assists the refugee population, and Manolo is a psychologist who has done freelance work with migrant populations; these collaborators witnessed first hand the passing of the caravans. Interviewees' insights exemplify discourses generated from outside academic circles. Additionally, headline news and articles from two local newspapers constituted additional sources where distinctive narratives about the caravans emerged. Neither the interviewees' testimonies, nor the contents of the newspapers are the main object of analysis, the academic production of social scientists and humanists is. Namely, these two types of sources are not part of the discussion that critically engages academic discourses. Rather, such supplementary sources show two things. First, they illustrate denizens' narratives about the caravans and the changing perceptions among members of the local society from late 2018 to early 2019. Secondly, and foremost, they introduce two opposing stances: one position assumes the existence of migration crises as a given, while the other challenges the innateness of such notion.

The discussion focuses on events surrounding the caravans that originated on October 12, 2018, and January 14, 2019, respectively. These two caravans held in common at least three characteristics: they congregated a large number of people moving together (loosely speaking, above 300), they were collectively organized (with socio-digital media playing an important role), and they originated in Honduras. One can argue that there were small-size, spin-off caravans between October 2018 and January 2019 and others at later dates.[9] I didn't consider caravans after January–February 2019, since attempts to enter Mexico at later dates and mass movements that originated in Honduras were neutralized (June 2019) or minimized (January 2020 and thereafter).[10] My interest lies on relatively successful caravans, meaning that caravan members fulfilled the objective of reaching the US-Mexico border. It is important to point out the fluidity of the phenomenon, that is, migrants

[8] I use pseudonyms to preserve participants' anonymity.

[9] Continuous mobilizations took place at different moments over several weeks and within relatively short spans of time. The term mini-caravans resembles what Coraza and Pérez (2020) call caravan blocks. These authors describe two blocks during the period October 2018–January 2019: The first one from October to November 2018 and another one between January and February 2019 (Coraza & Pérez, 2020); they also offer a description of caravans that developed between January 2019 and the first months of 2020, including their similarities and differences.

[10] The point of departure is an important criterion in caravan-related research since earlier versions of these events took place since 2011, at least (Vargas, 2018), within Mexico; so called Central-American caravans took place as of 2018, yet at a later date other events originated in Tapachula in 2019, that included a more diversified population (see Coraza & Pérez, 2020).

from other Central American countries and other regions joined in the two large caravans of interest, and small subgroups with separate dynamics split from the larger group at some point along the route. For example, approximately 80 members of the LGBTI community got ahead of the 2018 “alpha” caravan and arrived in Tijuana before the rest.

The Context in Which the Caravans Happened

On October 2018, thousands of Hondurans, later joined by many Salvadoreans and a small group of Guatemalans, mobilized on foot to reach the Mexico-US border by crossing Guatemala and Mexico. The caravans followed the main historic route used for several decades by Central American migrants headed to the United States. On this route, Ciudad Hidalgo (total population in 2020: 17,485) (Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística], n.d.) constitutes the gateway to Mexico as it is adjacent to Guatemala; 37 km away is Tapachula (total population in 2020: 217,550) (Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística, n.d.), an important city in the migrant trajectory due to the possibility of finding temporary work, advocate groups, international organizations, shelters, and some government agencies that provide support and assistance to migrants initiating procedures to obtain protection in Mexico (i.e., claims for refugee status or a humanitarian permit).

As part of the first caravan, people of various ages traveled, most of them without the proper documentation to enter Mexico legally. This type of mass mobilization proved a most effective strategy because caravans anonymized individuals and families. In a context where migrants have faced, over the years, increasing immigration control measures imposed by the Mexican government, as well as predation of migrants traveling alone or in small groups by criminal groups, the first caravans facilitated transit through the country, minimizing potential arrest by authorities and shielding them from delinquents.

According to media coverage, six caravans might have been formed between October 2018 and January 2020 (see teleSURtv.net, 2020), including “spin off-caravans” or blocks of caravans. It is impossible to determine how many people makes up each caravan. News sources disagree on this. For example, Telesur, a Venezuelan television company, pointed out that in the first caravan (October 12, 2018) around 160 people left San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and many more joined them along the way (teleSURtv.net, 2020). According to a Salvadoran news agency, which relied on Honduran sources, there could have been almost a thousand people (Martínez, 2018). The person in charge of the largest migrant Catholic shelter in Guatemala City reported to the same news medium that between October 16 and 17, 2018, some 5000 people went through the shelter as part of the first caravan (Martínez, 2018). Estimates vary in terms of the cluster that entered Mexico, ranging

between 4000 and 7000 people, but it remains only an estimate.[11] The novelty of the event, misinformation about figures and other adverse developments progressively fueled hostile feelings toward migrants, instilling fear, and uncertainty among local residents. The caravans gave rise to nationalistic views and xenophobic sentiments among certain sectors of the population. These segments included media and business sectors that associated the presence of migrants with an increase in crime rates, fear of extraneous disease transmission, and occupation of public spaces (e.g., parks) (Coraza & Pérez, 2020); that is "[. . .] A negative social imaginary about Central Americans [. . .] spread on socio-digital media" (Claudio, personal communication, January 2, 2020). Based on subjective explanations (Spector, 2019), such as prejudices, a discourse coded in "crisis" unfolded. While Tapachula's denizens considered migrants to be victims before October 2018, the perception had changed one year later; hate messaging that circulated on the internet had turn caravans into invading groups (Manolo, personal communication, February 24, 2020). Local inhabitants blamed migrants for undermining national sovereignty (Manolo, personal communication, February 24, 2020; Leo, personal communication, March 19, 2020) as a way of venting their discontent over pre-existing social problems (unemployment, crime, among others), i.e., prior to the arrival of the caravans (Leo, personal communication, March 19, 2020). Thus, the feeding of a crisis narrative as a political construction appeals, in turn, to a rhetoric of "moral panic" (Cohen, 2002), in which a person, a group, or an event incarnate an affront to certain social values and interests.[12]

A discursive construction of crisis with negative and racist overtones was not fed solely through socio-digital media (e.g., https://www.facebook.com/SuchiateEnLinea/) but also in some newspapers in an openly xenophobic manner (see the headlines of El Orbe, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, among others) or in a biased way (El Orbe, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a; Torres, 2019, among others). Similarly, a language about humanitarian crisis was occasionally present in Tapachula's media (Zacarías, 2018; Zúñiga, 2019), too. Across several mass media outlets that reach out

[11] For example, Schaffhauser & Inocente (2021), citing estimates from Ciudad Hidalgo's authorities, state that on October 19 more than 5000 people gathered at Tecún Umán (Guatemala)-Ciudad Hidalgo border entry. By October 21, according to the same source, the number of Central Americans who entered Mexico approximated 7000 (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021). A Honduran newspaper claimed that as part of the January 2019 caravan some 2800 people entered Mexico in the 17th and 18th of January (Mejía, 2019). It is important to consider that during the passage of all caravans, some of its members abandoned them, others voluntarily left Mexico, others broke off from the main caravan to continue in smaller groups and others decided to temporarily settle at different points along the route. As the number of caravan members always fluctuated it is impossible to determine exact figures.

[12] Donald Trump appealed to moral panic when he branded Central American caravans as an invasion to the United States. A high percentage of the US population supported this vision at the time because: "Popular cultural perceptions may align or conflict with state-political constructions of (non-) crisis. It is often hard to discern to what extent politicians are following or trying to shape public opinion in talking about crisis, particularly concerning political references to an 'immigration crisis'." (Lindley, 2014, p. 6).

to national audiences, news contributed to the construction of negative rhetoric about the caravans; Contreras et al. (2019) used discourse analysis to debunk aforesaid media coverage.

Changing attitudes in socio-digital media coincided with the increasingly drastic position taken by Mexican authorities, evolving from fully willing to welcome migrants even without any preparation to do so (October and November 2018), to conditionally accepting caravans (February 2019), and, eventually, to their (almost) full restriction (from June 2019 onwards). From the point of view of the Mexican government, the crisis rested on the inability to control border entry of so many people; losing control of the border amounted to havoc. The images of the massive arrival of migrants crossing a border (in this case the caravans) produce narratives of chaos, crisis, and an (alleged) threat to the sovereignty of the State (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014). For sure, certain moments of tension made government forces lose control. In October 2018, a violent confrontation happened between Mexican authorities and caravan members when the latter requested quick and unrestricted access to Mexican territory (Roque, personal communication, November 25, 2019), a petition that was rejected. In January 2019, caravan members not only faced that their entry was contingent upon compulsory registration with the authorities,[13] but once they were in Mexican territory, migrants contended with problems of overcrowding, hygiene (no access to shower facilities) and inadequate food in the makeshift camps built to accommodate them (Octavio, personal communication, November 25, 2019). Although Ciudad Hidalgo’s municipal government bore no direct responsibility in taking care of migrants, it played an active role in supporting federal authorities’ efforts. Nonetheless, the municipal administration found itself overwhelmed due to the lack of economic resources to provide caravan members with essential services (Roque, personal communication, November 25, 2019). All the above correspond to the objective basis of crisis Spector refers to (2019), and closer to the notion of humanitarian emergency. Claudio pointed out that one cannot speak of a migration crisis exclusively from a State-centric perspective as the problem involves other factors:

> For me [the caravan] is not a migration crisis, but a crisis of a different kind, related to violence [present] in both the origin and the recipient states. Because I’m under the impression that when we talk about “migration crisis” we speak of damages to the State, [and] people gets blamed for that [...] the “migration crisis” has to do with [two things:] US-exerted pressure [on Mexico] and the territorial control [that arises] from the [conventional] idea of the "State" [...] I believe it is extremely reductionist to solely sustain this [limited] perception of things (personal communication, January 2, 2020).

[13] According to results in a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), a monitoring instrument by the International Organization for Migration, in late January an estimate of about 5000 members of the caravan had reached the Mexico-Guatemala border (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Migrants were allowed to enter Mexico at this time only, in a lawful manner, when the government issued them visitor cards for humanitarian reasons. Therefore, overcrowding problems developed.

The above said state-centered position, Claudio claims, amounts to blame the victims for their own misfortune when the responsibility lies elsewhere. Fleeing "from a bad government" as stated by migrants with whom Roque spoke in October 2018 (personal communication, November 25, 2019), or from untenable livelihoods and dehumanizing living conditions, or the complicity or direct responsibility of authorities in the lack of public security, corruption, malfeasance, etc. is an expression of problems in a system in which the state is part of. While some scholars allude to the state's responsibility in producing migration crises (see, for example, Varela & McLean, 2019; Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021), deeper and discerning reflections on the state-migration crisis nexus is a pending task, as will be described in the next section.

Discussion

The emergence of caravans has resulted in a prolific discussion among academics about their meaning and impact (among others, see: Coraza & Pérez, 2020; Frank-Vitale & Nuñez Chaim, 2020; García, 2020; Garibo García & Call, 2020; Montes, 2019; Pradilla, 2019; Salazar, 2019; Torre & Mariscal, 2020). In the so-called gray literature, one can also find situational reports and assessments from both international and humanitarian organizations that provide valuable and detailed information, albeit descriptive, on specific events and time periods (see, for example, Hernández Hernández, 2019; OXFAM, 2018; International Organization for Migration, 2019, 2020; The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2019, 2020, 2021). My partial, and hence arguably biased review, for reasons already stated,[14] concerning the academic production at the time of writing revealed two dominant approaches to the notion of crisis linked to caravans. One trend comprises works that range from uncritical neutrality to a moderately discerning stance. The other embodies an analytical and proactive trend, as such publications offer alternative understandings about the migration crisis-caravans link. A caveat is necessary at this point: four texts focus on migration-related events that took place in October 2018 (Iannacone, 2021; Kuderyárova, 2019; León & Contreras, 2020; Varela & McLean, 2019), two publications examine the October 2018–January 2019 period (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021; Sosa, 2019), and two articles discuss the October 2018-all of 2019 period (Chan-Pech, 2019; Gramajo, 2020). Given that each "block" of caravans was different, the analytical framework and the conclusions regarding these last two writings turned out to be problematic. In other words, such scholars may consider all caravans as homogenous, similar, events in terms of their goals and their (relative) success, or failure for that matter, when in

[14] It is not my intention to cover a growing field of literature, a reflection of an ongoing social process; I am simply pointing out aspects that draw attention to a portion of literature concerning the notion, explicit or implicit, of migration crisis, whether it is defined as such or not.

fact, they evolved as part of a more nuanced situation; I pose that one is to factor in that the first caravans achieved their objective, but the subsequent ones (i.e., those that took place after January 2019) did not.

Chan-Pech's (2019) article embodies the first example of an uncritical reading into the crisis-caravan nexus; he analyzes news stories about the October 2018 caravan published on local newspapers in Chiapas. Chan-Pech argues that the immobility conditions Central American caravan members faced after entering Mexico, and subsequently African migrants too, is what gave rise to a humanitarian crisis. Without further evidence to support why the caravan should be considered a humanitarian crisis, Chan-Pech prompts readers to take such notion as implicitly granted. Similarly, Sosa (2019) writes about the development of several crises in Honduras fueled by critical socio-political conditions. Sosa, who discusses at length political crises and not much else, speaks of the first migrant caravans as tantamount to migration crisis, but without offering any arguments to justify such claim. Likewise, Kuderyárova (2019) refers to the emergence of crisis as a sudden event that materializes in caravans, which are in turn a product of an implicit "crisis of the regional system" that regulates migration; however, whatever entails the idea of regional crisis remains at a descriptive level. Although Kudeyárova deprecates the way former President Trump (mis)used the issue of caravans, the author does not question the foundations of such rhetoric; criticism is limited to Trump's treatment of the caravans for electoral purposes. In contrast, Gramajo (2020) takes the first step toward a (more or less) critical stance. Although Gramajo calls into question the so-called "humanitarian crisis" of mid-2014 (i.e., the arrival of thousands of children and mothers to the US-Mexico border; see Musalo & Lee, 2017), the surge in migrant caravans as of 2018 is dubbed a migratory crisis, without explaining why they should be considered as such.

As part of the second set of works under review, León and Contreras (2020) plainly reject the socially constructed rhetoric that describes migrants as a danger or as enemies; that is, these authors rebut a state-centered framework that enables "border closures, xenophobic discourses, exclusionary nationalism, deterritorialization of borders and externalization of migration policies" (León & Contreras, 2020). These researchers make a remarkable statement, yet one that remains merely a declaration, without much significance:

> Although the term *migration crisis* has been widely incorporated into the specialized literature on migration and asylum to refer to the large number of people who move from different parts of the world at specific junctures, the authors of this document distance themselves from a non-problematization position of said term and take a critical stance on a narrative that tends to, pointedly, blame and hold migrants, refugees, and asylum applicants accountable of such condition...(León & Contreras, 2020, p. 155, my own translation)

This passage formulates a standpoint in direct opposition to the prevailing discourse among certain circles regarding the caravans; however, nowhere else in the article is the concern of the authors widely examined, followed through; the treatment of caravans is reduced to half a page (León & Contreras, 2020), without expanding on the stated problematization. The article launches a challenge, but neither delves into what has already been established in the introduction to this chapter, nor proposes something different. Varela and McLean (2019) do take a

critical stance because these scholars reject the thought of caravans in terms of humanitarian crises; their understanding is more radical as they propose that caravans represent "[...] the tip of the iceberg of what we propose is a crisis of civilization [...]" (Varela & McLean, 2019, p.164, after Roux, 2012, my own translation) in terms of a system breakdown linked to the global impact of neoliberalism and the violence emanating from the (neoliberal) State. The objective of Varela & McLean's writing is to denounce the prevailing hegemonic system, to make a political statement, rather than put forward an analytical understanding about the notion of humanitarian crisis linked to migration.

Unlike the first cluster of works reviewed, León and Contreras (2020) and Varela and McLean (2019) begin to formulate more explicitly an issue that Iannacone (2021) clearly brings up: the need to question the perception that certain global humanitarian issues, notably migration, are labeled as inherent crises. Unlike all the authors already cited, Iannacone goes beyond stating the issue; she takes a purposeful approach, conceptually, in line with the second block of academic writings under cross-examination. To dismantle the notion of crisis as a given, Iannacone (2021) performs an analysis of the 2018 caravan using rhetorical arena theory. In this theory, the centrality of analysis lies in the notion of crisis communication, an approach that examines the participation of different voices, and diverse power hierarchies. Through the perusal of articles that appeared in the news media and socio-digital platforms, specifically Twitter, Iannacone explores "the rhetoric on the world stage" regarding the October 2018 caravan; she acknowledges such endeavor is an ambitious exercise because it is impossible to have access to all voices at a world-level. Iannacone establishes the difference between interlocutors of a dominant pro-crisis discourse and those opposed to said rhetoric. The voices of pro-crisis stakeholders correspond to Trump's followers, and the opposing voices are represented by the NGO *Pueblos Sin Fronteras* (which is credited with having contributed to the organizing of the first caravan), and other similar groups. According to Iannacone (2021), another (invested) party is the Mexican government which attributed the crisis to the "disorderly" and unauthorized entry of the caravan. Among the assortment of stakeholders and their viewpoints (voices), many will try to claim an event coding it as crisis while others will advocate for the opposing rhetoric, showing differences in their discursive abilities (of power) (Iannacone, 2021). This gives rise to different approaches to "negotiate" the interpretation of crisis.

In the same set of analytical proposals, Schaffhauser & Inocente (2021) advance a three-pronged blueprint to study the caravans. The three modalities, as the authors call them, come from the way caravan members are perceived among the "autochthonous" Mexican population: those who show empathy concerning migrants, those who reject them (the "reactionaries"), and those who assume a thoughtful stance. The first segment appeals to "[. . .] the experiences of sympathy, *diapatía*,[15] and

[15] In their original manuscript, the authors insert a note to quote Michel Balat; *diapatia* can be defined as a conflicting emotion between desire to be surrounded by loved ones while at the same time the desire to be alone.

(affective) empathy towards migrants [...]," based on a moral economy, say Schaffhauser & Inocente (2021, p. 264); it represents an altruistic, humanitarian, emotional attitude (Ibid.). Schaffhauser & Inocente appeal to do what is morally right, to what is fair, i.e., to help fellow beings, in this case to aid the Other/migrant. From a political economy (Marxist) theoretical framework, where an unequal (class) relationship prevails between those who provide aid and those who receive that aid, these authors interpret the purposefulness of this modality as follows:

> It does not seem excessive to think that, on certain occasions, the intersubjective dimension of altruism is a libidinal source that feeds the narcissism of those who devoutly dedicate their life to helping others. The other, that is, the vulnerable one [i.e., the migrant], becomes the moral and objective cause to acknowledge [the deeds of] a Good Samaritan[16]. Hence, altruism is not an unselfish act from the viewpoint of the person who champions for it. (p. 265, my own translation)

The second stance is the one belonging to the native who sees the migrant as someone who brings in problems: "This (dark) lens views the caravan and its members with scrutiny and suspicion. One should not get carried away and be misled by what may amount to appearances" (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021, p. 266, my own translation). Namely, migrants' sufferings are considered an excuse to obtain "safe passage." Those who share this point of view feed on attitudes such as xenophobia, hence blaming migrants for certain social ills and other problems (e.g., crime, diseases). Thus, caravans are the product of manipulation by specific stakeholders. Finally, the third segment of the population takes a reflective approach, one these authors call a "sociological" approach. This stance "[...] seeks to break away from the sentimentalism that characterizes the previous positions and oscillates between acceptance and rejection of the foreigner, embodied as the 'migrant'[...]" (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021, p. 267, my own translation). Unfortunately, the arguments these authors advance to support their so-called reflexive modality prove inadequate. In the end, a proclaimed sociological dimension essentially comes down to the idea of considering migrants as surplus labor force expelled from their countries by the prevailing neoliberal model; rather boldly, it is argued that the caravans "[...] seem to inaugurate a new phase of capital[ism]" (p. 267, my own translation). Although Schaffhauser & Inocente hint at a provocative analytical strategy, they fail to deliver; the proposal is set forth in reductionist, simplistic terms, one that is limited to a critical reading of the prevailing order without further elaboration.[17]

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[16] Schaffhauser & Inocente quote Helena Bejár's *El mal samaritano. El altruismo en tiempos del escepticismo*, Anagrama (2001) in the original manuscript.

[17] For a discussion that presents yet another perspective on the migration crisis considering the "border crisis" as a starting point, see Heyman et al. (2018). In summary, Heyman and his colleagues argue that the term crisis is differentiated according to the social stakeholder who uses such term. For some sectors, the crisis resides in the need to help migrant children and families as an act of solidarity, while for other sectors, the crisis stems from the alleged presence of gang members and people carrying diseases arriving at the US-Mexican border. It is a speech that feeds a vicious circle: "The 'border as crisis' discourse was reinforced by the U.S. public awareness (in a displaced and confused way) of governmental and criminal violence in Mexico. Overall, contention promotes attention, thus promoting a crisis discourse, and in turn, a crisis discourse raises the level of excitement and engagement in contention" (Heyman et al., 2018, p. 774).

From this brief review, we can conclude that studies on the phenomenon of caravans glossed as crisis shows a line of inquiry lacking major theoretical development; analyses are partial up to now, something that even Schaffhauser & Inocente (2021) acknowledged regarding their own article. Part of this academic production takes as a given that caravans are synonymous with or embody migration crises (Chan-Pech, 2019; Gramajo, 2020; Kuderyárova, 2019; Sosa, 2019), while another set of discussions are limited in scope and, at best, they remain at an early stage of analysis (León & Contreras, 2020; Varela & McLean, 2019; Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021). Among the works under scrutiny, some appeal to the humanitarian crisis perspective (Chan-Pech, 2019), others adopt a specific political position (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021; Varela & McLean, 2019). From the field of communication, Iannacone (2021) frames the migration crisis discussion through the voices of specific social stakeholders, situated along a hierarchy in which each one possesses greater or lesser discursive power. Iannacone's work shows the most theoretical development within the appraised literature. To summarize, current discussions in academic discourses are rather limiting to scrutinize what the concept of migration crisis entails.

Conclusions

Regardless of its constituent elements (objective and subjective), the political intention that sustains it, the communicative power held by specific stakeholders, or its humanitarian interpretation, every narrative, discourse, rhetoric, and representation of or about migration crisis must be the object of permanent critical examination. This becomes relevant when said notion is linked to large-scale mobility phenomena with a wide social impact, whether such phenomena are occasional or permanent events. The outbreak of the caravans in the Central America-Mexico-US migration framework has triggered a broad discussion about their effects, as shown in some of the works reviewed here, from the (debatable) conception that caravans embody a new stage of migration to the United States from northern Central America (Gramajo, 2020), to the equally arguable suggestion that they mark the onset of a new stage of capitalism (Schaffhauser & Inocente, 2021). However, the issue has not provoked—at least not at the same level or interest—careful reflection on the meanings of caravans in the idiom of migration crisis.

If we assume that a sense of crisis is ultimately socially constructed, for example, through a particular rhetoric, or else due to an event in nature (Clarke & Newman, 2010), such reflecting—in need of further development—becomes an intricate task. McAdam (2014) aptly observes that not all of us understand and experience crisis in the same way; it varies from person to person and changes over time. If a migration crisis reveals itself according to eye of the beholder, it opens the possibility for heterogenous discourses. Different narratives about caravans in diverse social circles—from government authorities to ordinary citizens and the media—reveal discrepancies and contrasts in perspectives. The latter argument resonates, in part,

with Iannacone's observation about variation in the discursive power among different stakeholders. Academics are not exempt from such dissents since debate is fundamental to the construction of knowledge. But when people uncritically (re)-produce "loaded" terms, such as migration crisis, the potential contributions toward advancing a more productive intellectual outcome are null, or feeble at best. As Oddermath (2021) rightly points out when referring to the use of solidarity, one may end up similarly employing crisis as "[...] an empty signifier [...] a *plastic word* [...] due to its loss of actual meaning through inflationary use" (p. 14).

We must not lose sight of tangible elements to discuss a state-of-crisis (for example, when people migrate to save their lives), as well as narrative elements that are used to manufacture migrant crises; both should be taken into consideration, and in multiple modes of analysis, approaches that may be at odds. The latter can be considered a methodological challenge pending future resolution. The works reviewed here do not delve into the criteria that make their authors justify or explain why they label a caravan matter-of-fact as migration crisis; the bases and claims to do so should be made explicit. Rather, they assume that said conditions are understood by any reader. Naturally, there are some points I agree with and consider fundamental contributions to this discussion: there are no inherent crises and regardless of the meaning ascribed to said term, it becomes something negotiated at a discursive level (Iannacone); debating migration crisis can become a matter of perception and position (Schaffhauser & Inocente), which leads to a question with no easy solution: How do we confront real critical conditions vis-à-vis engaging in an exercise of highly subjective positioning to unravel the (complex) migration crisis category? Likewise, we would have to ask ourselves whether the subjects we are referring to (i.e., caravan members) conceive the event in the lexicon of migration crisis, whether it is objective, discursive, or otherwise—something worthy of further exploration; such issue is a void in the research carried out to date, including my own, and it must be addressed to advance our theoretical enquiries about the migration-crisis nexus.

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Chapter 4
Emerging from Crisis: Transformations in Uruguayan Migration Management of Venezuelan Migration

Pilar Uriarte and Leonardo Fossatti

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the transformations produced in migration management approaches in Uruguay from the notion of social, political, and economic *crisis* in Venezuela to the migration of Venezuelans to different countries in the region. We work from the emergence of the concept of *humanitarian crisis* and *migration crisis* to describe Venezuela's situation as a particularly serious phenomenon, discernable from other mobility processes in the continent; the consequences of this distinction for the Uruguayan context are analyzed.

The worsening of political, economic, and social problems in Venezuela generated a massive population outflow with varied responses from the countries of the region (Gandini et al., 2019) that in many cases translated into rejection by political and social actors. In comparison with neighboring countries, the increase of Venezuelan migration was less intense but notable in the Southern Cone. In Uruguay, the Venezuelan population increased steadily and in 2018 the number of residency applications for Venezuelans exceeded that of Argentines, who are historically the population with greatest presence (Montiel, 2019).

Venezuelan migration in Uruguay shows specificities in terms of the regulatory framework that welcomes this population, conditions of departure from place of origin, sociodemographic characteristics, a higher educational level than the larger migrant population, and the country's population average (Prieto & Montiel, 2020). Nonetheless, people arriving from Venezuela face situations similar to those faced by migrants arriving from other South American and Caribbean countries in terms of precarious insertion conditions in Uruguay. The definition of *crisis* applied to the Venezuelan context at a regional level and the development of specific assistance

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programs at the local level set a milestone in the framework of the country's migration management policies, within a broader context where challenges exceeded national criteria and circumstances.

This chapter intends to contribute to the ongoing discussion from three approaches. First, it provides further understanding of regional mobility processes in Latin America, based on the analysis of a case with specific characteristics, namely Venezuelan migration in Uruguay. Unlike other national contexts, the Venezuelan population did not represent for Uruguay a population with particular assistance requirements in terms of regularization of status or situations of vulnerability compared to migrants from other countries. Second, civil society organizations' recent involvement in international programs transformed migration policies in Uruguay. By addressing this issue, the first proposed step into further progress is a more exhaustive analysis of the shifting processes of migration management models where actors with different positions and unequal resources participate. Finally, the purpose of this work is to enhance the possibility of thinking about the notion of *crisis* as a discursive form, currently applied successfully to construct guidelines and sustain migration policies aimed at specific populations.

A *crisis* is defined as a turning point, where the action is a human and moral imperative. This imperative validates and legitimizes exceptional actions that in other contexts are deemed unacceptable (Redfield, 2010). In the case under analysis, the discursive construction of a crisis generates specific actions and prioritizes people by country of origin over situations of vulnerability.

Through the implementation of direct assistance programs for population in a situation of mobility, civil society organizations allocate technical and economic resources, define goals, identify target populations, and establish priorities based on nationality criteria. These measures, formulated in global intervention logics distant from previous management procedures, built new work dynamics and modeled principles to guide mobility-related action. Following Fassin and Pandolfi (2010), we propose that the intervention of international organizations is embedded in a common logic that sustains the legitimacy of their actions by positing the exceptionality of a situation in which moral and political values merge.

The chapter seeks to describe the process of instituting the concept of *crisis* for Venezuelan migration in the period between 2015 and 2020. We intend to delineate the way in which these transformations impacted locally and on the work of state and civil society. We propose that this constitutes a precedent for the development of certain human mobility-related public policies linked to the idea of exceptionality and security rather than a perspective of rights and citizenship.

The results here presented stem from a six-year (2014–2020) process of joint work between civil society and academia, within a framework of comprehensiveness (Tommasino & Rodríguez, 2010) that endeavors to articulate teaching, research, and outreach activities between university actors and other social actors. This paper brought specifically together the research on migration policy at the national level with the implementation of different assistance programs for migrant populations within the framework of the *Asociación Idas y Vueltas*, one of the leading migrant rights civil society organizations.

From 2016 to 2020, funded fieldwork (Gómez Caraballo et al., 2019) included the utilization of classic ethnographic research techniques: participant observation in spaces serving the migrant population, academic thematic forums and seminars, and official activities; in-depth interviews with members of civil society and state officials; and the review of official government and international organization documents. The special nature of collaborative work enabled to create bonds of confidence that set up in-depth knowledge of the strategies deployed by civil society to care for migrant population, as well as accessing to dialogue with state actors. The reflections here expressed were shared and discussed at different task forces with the members of the organization.

In the first section of the chapter, a brief historical overview is given on existing human mobility dynamics in the territory, highlighting how positive narratives and permanence or stability narratives of immigration are constructed, and how crisis or exceptionality narratives in contexts marked by emigration of nationals are constructed. In the second section, contemporary migratory flows are described, their characteristics, the inclusion/exclusion mechanisms found in the host society, and the precarious contexts in which a high percentage of the migrant population lives. In the third section, up-to-date migration management practices are analyzed in a context of non-conflict free dialogue between state and civil society. In the fourth section, Venezuelan migratory flow characteristics, the context where the concept of crisis emerged, how it is applied, and the transformations it arises are described. Lastly, we conclude with some considerations regarding the notion of crises present and future impacts on human mobility management in the country.

Migration and Crisis: A Constant Notion

It is common to hear that Uruguay is a country that was shaped by human mobility. The discourse of a nation built by immigrants brought from elsewhere (Ribeiro, 1972) is reflected in its demographic composition as well as its cultural and identity aspects (Vidart & Pi, 1969). According to the 1869 Census, 30 years after the declaration of independence, the country had 223,000 inhabitants, a third of them were foreigners. This percentage was even higher in the capital city, Montevideo (Arocena, 2009). This positively valued migration bonds the national narrative with the subsequent demographic context characterized by the expulsion of the population.

As proposed by Merenson (2021), incorporating the idea of crisis and migration in the Southern Cone implies going beyond contemporary events and milestones constructed from events and theorizations originated in the global North, as well as reassuming social, economic, and political processes that have had their development in the region since the nineteenth century. To understand the context of human mobility in Uruguay in terms of the notion of crisis refers directly to address the peaks of departures of the national population, linked to political, financial, or economic crises. These are introduced in an expulsive demographic dynamic of a

broader structural nature that characterized the second half of the twentieth century (Wonsewer & Teja, 1983) through to the first decade of the twenty-first century. Combining low birth and death rates with emigration, this demographic configuration has been defined as a "demographic bomb" (Taks, 2010, p. 153) just within the population's replacement rate. However, despite their structural characteristics, critical junctures that generate peaks in population emigration are systematically characterized as crisis situations.

> [...] in the 1960s, a persistent economic crisis settled along with a political crisis and great social and economic deterioration. The intensification of the crisis generated a climate of violence and repression that led to the coup d'état in June 1973 and the subsequent instigation of a military dictatorship which would last more than eleven years. The economic situation, together with the consolidation of an authoritarian government, caused a migration flow that reached very important levels [. . .] During the years of acute economic crisis, Uruguayan society responded with significant increases in emigration levels, becoming a common practice among Uruguayans; the hastening of 2002 crisis evinced the population's rapid reaction, a part of which resorted to emigration to contend with its consequences (Macadar & Pellegrino, 2007, pp. 3–4).

Between 1963 and 1975, around 8% of the country's population left the country. Between 1974 and 1975, 50% of these departures took place (Wonsewer & Teja, 1983). According to estimates of the National Institute of Statistics of Uruguay, between 1963 and 1996 the total balance of emigrants was almost 480,000 people. For the period 2000–2006, the estimate is of 40,000 people leaving the country, described by demographic research as a predominantly male, young population with an educational level higher than the population average (Macadar & Pellegrino, 2007). Emigration is proposed simultaneously as a response to successive crises, but also as an element of crisis itself, generating—as it was previously mentioned—a "critical" situation in relation to the country's "viability" not only in economic terms, but also about the possibility for the future existence of Uruguay.

In this context of concern for the country's emigration rate, deemed as an economically active population with high educational levels, the update of the normative system regarding human mobility in the country came into existence. The approval process of Migration Law No. 18.250 is part of a broader context that began in 2005 and lasted until 2019, a period with three consecutive leftist[1] governments. With different nuances, these governments undertook the country's productive and social development as a central axis of their political project. When addressing demographic issues in general, this project timidly incorporated the concerns about the migratory propensity of young nationals and the linkage with Uruguayans abroad (Taks, 2010).

In 2007, the Refugee Law No. 18.076[2] "*Derecho al Refugio y a los Refugiados*" ("Rights to refuge and relating to refugees") was approved, incorporating definitions

[1] The 2005/2009 and 2015/2019 periods were led by Tabaré Vázquez and the 2010/2014 period was led by José Mujica, both candidates for the Frente Amplio party.

[2] https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/18076-2006

of international law. In 2008, the "Migration Law" No. 18.250[3] was adopted, which integrates the country into the regional legal transformation process of human mobility, moving from a legislation built within the security paradigm to a rights perspective (Novick, 2011). Although the law aims to guarantee rights to foreigners residing in national territory, potentially the process that led to changing these norms was related to concerns of avoiding new peaks of Uruguayan nationals' emigration, rather than managing migration. The creation of mechanisms for linking with nationals abroad, such as the creation of the Department 20 Office for Uruguayan citizens abroad[4] and the Consultative Councils,[5] which had the expressed purpose of providing representation and linking with Uruguay, as well as return processes, reinforce this idea (Merenson, 2015; Moraes, 2012; Sosa, 2009). In this regard, we note that Uruguayan migration policy has a strong regulation of incoming migration flows, settled in Uruguay's path as an expelling country. The "bidirectionality" of mobility dynamics across the territory is inextricable from understanding the state actions toward the regulation of migratory flows (Merenson, 2021).

Recurrent preoccupation about emigration continues until late in the second decade of the twenty-first century. In 2016, the Migration Policy Framework Document for Uruguay promoted by the National Migration Board[6] was approved. This document, proposed as a tool for migration management in Uruguay, highlights nationals abroad and the means of linking with Uruguay, return and retention migration policies. Only three pages refer to populations arriving in the country, evincing the prevailing nationalist character in the conception of migration management (España, 2016). This draws attention to the consolidation of the migration trend amid the slow pace of the law's drafting and approval (Ministry of Social Development [MIDES], 2017; Uriarte, 2020). However, this situation does not differ from most administrative and population management measures taken by the executive branch, aimed mainly at strengthening ties between nationals residing in the territory and abroad (Taks, 2010).

Hence, migration management is characterized by the inclusion of human mobility issues into the rights agenda. "Emigration," "return and linking migration policies," and "immigration" emerge undifferentiated, guided by an axis of social and economic development. Provisions facilitating citizenship for grandchildren of Uruguayan citizens, the arrival of legal citizens (children and grandchildren of natural citizens born overseas), actions aimed at enabling the return of families abroad, disparate programs for symbolic and material reengagement with Uruguayan society, programs aimed at registering returnees born in border regions, and mechanisms to residency access for citizens' family ties comprise the basis of what would later be programs serving migrant populations (Uriarte, 2020). On a larger scale, the

[3] https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/18250-2008/76

[4] http://archivo.presidencia.gub.uy/_web/noticias/2008/06/2008062406.htm

[5] https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/18250-2008/26

[6] https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/URY/INT_CERD_ADR_URY_41721_S.pdf

inclusion of specific displacement issues within broader social vulnerability frameworks defined the standardizing character of the social policy of the period.

A similar path is followed by organized civil society; various associations changed their objective from assisting Uruguayan returnees and strengthening support networks for Uruguayans abroad, as well as for their families, to assisting foreign arrivals with legally recognized migrant and refugee status. Beyond common concerns, demands for specific situations, or complaints at critical points of migrant assistance (generally linked to immigration documentation), during the entire period of human mobility discourse did not become bonded to the concept of crisis. Among both officials and members of civil society, arising concerns put a strain on the creation of assistance agencies for population enduring mobility situations and the defense of universalist, homogenizing, and egalitarian models that propose integration of migrants into existing assistance programs.

Regional Migrations in Uruguay: Inclusion/Exclusion Processes

As of 2011, characteristics of human mobility in the Uruguayan territory began to change and intensify, initially with return migration and, later, with the arrival of Latin Americans from non-border countries. Until then, Argentina and Brazil had been the main places of origin and destination. Nonetheless, the centrality of European immigration, as foundational migration, and Northern Europe and North American immigration, considered as skilled migration, have taken center stage in shaping national imaginaries about migration. The presence of regional migrants from non-border countries challenged these imaginaries.

In 2013, Dominican, Venezuelan, and Cuban migrations became visible in urban spaces, noted by administrative records and media coverage (Fossatti, 2017). Between 2013 and 2018, the number of people born abroad with less than 5 years of permanence in the country increased by 84% (from 13,457 to 24,717 people). Among recent migrants, Latin Americans from non-neighboring countries went from being one in three foreigners to two out of three in that same period. In 2017, arrivals from Venezuela represent 55% (around 19,000 people) of the total of recent migrants, surpassing Cuba with 16.5% and the Dominican Republic with 7.5%. In 2018, Venezuela contributed half of new migrants, followed by Cuban, Dominican Republic, and Peru. Meanwhile, the total population of the country, which amounts to 3,349,549, grew by 3% (Prieto & Márquez, 2019).

After half a century of emigration dominating demographic shifts, the most widespread social response to this phenomenon was of both surprise and novelty. Much more than the presence of foreigners in a country whose inhabitants consider themselves descendants of (European) immigrants, what defined the perception of "novelty" (not necessarily positive) was the national origin, gender composition, and the racial attributes of this population. The recent migrant population was younger

and less feminized, with a higher percentage of people of African descent and an underrepresentation settling in urban spaces in Uruguay (Prieto & Márquez, 2019).

The notion of a new stage in human mobility was reinforced by government-level initiatives for the resettlement of refugees in the country, through two official programs for Syrian refugee families in Lebanon and the transfer of six people detained in Guantánamo. Through dialogue with UNHCR and amid a great media hype, these initiatives brought less than 50 people to the country, but during 2014, 2015, and 2016, they received more than 75% of the press coverage on migration and refugees nationwide (Olivera & Uriarte, 2021).

Despite its "sudden" emergence on the public agenda with the motto "We are once again a country of immigrants," human mobility analysis in Uruguay and in Latin America evinces the arrival of regional immigrants as one more phenomenon in the complex scheme of arrival, exit, and transit dynamics at the regional and global levels. Historical dynamics of immigration in Uruguay does not encourage to understand the presence of migrant population residing in the country as a new phenomenon, but rather as the intensification of existing mobility dynamics that are indicative of Uruguay integration to representative South American regional circuits of mobility (Falero, 2002; Taks, 2006). One of their characteristics is that many countries simultaneously perform the role of sending and receiving migrant entities at different scales and numbers (Bengochea, 2018). In the case of Uruguay, the second decade of the twenty-first century can be described as the intensification of its role as receiving country, from a previous low intensity role with domestic reduced visibility.

Currently, regional migration is a matter issue of concern on the public agenda in Uruguay. On one hand, such issue is evident in commonly made speeches containing accusations leveled toward foreigners in terms of competition for job sources, use of social programs, and possible threats to security. These types of expressions were frequently associated with the failure of official refugee resettlement initiatives and were directly correlated to the 2019 electoral process (Uriarte, 2020). On the other hand, concern over migration is reflected in both progress and setbacks of migration policies aimed to strengthen control mechanisms and migration management measures.

In reviewing the country's press, between 2014 and 2018 we found statements that link historical migrations (described as successful based on migrants' efforts) with the "new" migratory flows, noting similarities and differences between both processes (Olivera & Uriarte, 2021). In many cases, media coverage of human mobility adopts an alarmist tone when managing emergency situations, which refer to challenges restraining migration and the imminent danger that the host society faces with migration. Despite the documentation of the precariousness of migrants' living conditions such as housing and official documentation, mainly in Montevideo, press coverage has focused on raising awareness on different forms of material and symbolic violence toward migrants such as abusive charges, scams, harassment, and different forms of ethnic-racial and gender discrimination.

Research indicates migrants' living conditions are highly precarious and they experience greater difficulties in accessing basic rights: non-discrimination, decent

housing, education, family and community life, work under equal conditions as the nationals, and regularization of their migratory situation. An ongoing household survey indicates through quantitative analysis that there are important gaps in access to the labor market, social security coverage, between educational paths and labor insertion, in salary differences, all elements that are exacerbated for female migrants. It is possible to confirm the existence of systemic inequality in the labor market for migrants in relation to non-migrants (Prieto & Márquez, 2019).[7]

Ethnographic research does not allow for comparisons between the local and migrant population, but they are clear in pointing out the various daily dimensions in which material precarity and symbolic violence affect, specifically, migrant population. This is a complex of intersectional inequality where national origin is interwoven using the "immigrant" label, reflective of racial discrimination based on racial attributes or a minority geographical space; in addition, migrant women have been morally judged for participating in commercial sex work as a main source of income. Migrant women's role as workers combined with family projects and expectations of both country of origin and destination imply different forms of violence against them and their children (Uriarte & Urruzola, 2018).

Migration Management: State and Civil Society

As mentioned, Migration Law No. 18.250 represents a turning point for safeguarding migrants' rights. However, its approval does not become into the implementation of a migration policy. Besides the framework law, there are no other texts, strategy plans, or guidelines where a state explicitly and coordinately proposes a type of approach, plan, or objective regarding human mobility. Actual access to the granted rights is subject to the state's ability for providing o resources to guarantee their full exercise. An evaluation of the government's implemented actions demonstrates the scarce effort the Uruguayan state has made to ensure compliance with both regulations (España, 2016). It is difficult to identify lines or guiding principles of concrete work aside from the defense of the right to migrate and access to the identity document as its guarantee through the systematization of actions at the different levels of government and areas of education, housing, health, and documentation, among others (Uriarte, 2020).

[7] It is important to note that data from the Continuous Household Survey (ECH) represents a sector of the population that lives in individual dwellings and does not include population (both national and migrant) residing in group homes and pensions, which are among the main housing alternatives for recent migrant population (Fossatti & Uriarte, 2018). Various quantitative investigations indicate the poor living conditions in this type of housing, and which have an impact on various dimensions: food, sanitary conditions, access and permanence in the labor market, conditions for educational development, among others. We assume that gaps in conditions reported by ECH increase when group housing survey data is included.

Between 2012 and 2019, regularization of immigration status has been the central axis of the national migration policy, developed in line with the principles of the intergovernmental Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration which was prepared under the auspices of the United Nations.[8] Access to an identity document was the main measure in the development of a national migration policy within the framework of the aforementioned three principles. Uruguay has made significant progress in the digitization of administrative systems and simplifying required documentation to the identity card for all administrative procedures. Namely, affording documentation and the possibility to legally remain in the country while it is being processed implies the advancement of migrants' rights. The exclusion measures or delays in the possibility of obtaining said document entails the exclusion to practically all possibilities of interaction with the state, barring repressive or punitive measures.

The notion of documentation as key to equalizing rights between migrants and nationals is representative of the country's social policy design, which has historically opted for universalist actions to the detriment of targeted policies (Guigou, 2010). Besides the specific functions of registering arriving migrants, as its quantification, emphasis placed on documentation strengthens the hypothesis of migration policies directed at migrants who are interested in residing permanently in Uruguay, indicative of roots in classic migration models. Despite being a low-cost, equitable, rapid access system to documentation, in practice it has not been without issues.[9]

With a state devoid of concrete guidelines to act on the various problems faced by the migrant population, lacking assistance centers, material resources and trained personnel, civil society organizations adopted an important role. Building from strategic partnerships, they established simultaneous dialogues with different levels of government, technical experts, and academics. At first, civil society work was focused on providing direct assistance to people in situations of mobility, served as an information hub on migrants' rights, assisted in documentation processes, prepared, and adapted educational curricula to migrants' needs, facilitated access to job opportunities and fostered spaces for exchange and socialization. Later, they

[8] https://www.un.org/es/conf/migration/global-compact-for-safe-orderly-regular-migration.shtml

[9] There are two types of procedures to obtain residency. For citizens of Mercosur member countries and relatives of Uruguayan nationals, they are conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, which is shorter and has fewer requirements; and for citizens of the rest of the countries (among which are Cuba and the Dominican Republic) they are conducted by the Ministry of the Interior. The rapid response in both ministries could have delays, up to 10 or 12 months before the health emergency, depending on "system overloads" (España, 2016; Uriarte, 2020; Montiel, 2019). The national administration also provides for differentiated treatment to states requesting the processing of consular visas to citizens of most countries in Africa and Asia, as well as for the Dominican Republic and Cuba (two of the main countries of origin of migrants arriving to Uruguay). In these cases, we see that the principle of reciprocity of the visa requirement is not fully met. Difficulties in the regularization of the migration situation also have an impact on processes of family reunification, undermining the children and adolescents' right to family and community life. Visa application with difficult access requirements increases violence in displacement, by adding intermediaries, increasing costs, and abuses of people who wish to migrate.

expanded their scope to knowledge management, formulating an agenda and promoting visibility migration in Uruguay. Civil society organizations have hold to this day, an important role in the establishing of recommendations and guidelines for action, as well as personnel training and awareness-raising of key actors on human mobility issues.

One of the characteristics of civil society's efforts was that they were aimed at taking advantage of state resources already invested in programs for different situations of vulnerability, staffed by volunteers. As the number of migrants and their demands increased, programs designed for nationals were both reworked and driven by civil society and in some cases reformulated by the state[10] to adapt to the needs and specificities of situations of vulnerability in contexts of human displacement.

During that same period, tension between the different actors centered on issues related to documentation: the working function of the residence ID card appointment system or delays in ID card processing, the need or inconvenience of applying for visas as a migration control measure and migrant protection measure from human smuggling and trafficking.[11] Tension also arose from the need to redesign existing social programs to address specific needs of people in situations of human mobility and raise awareness about the resources and benefits in welcoming migrants from other countries.

Regarding documentation issues, the demand was for efficiency, speed, and sensitivity in state's responses to migrant's demands. As to the demand for social programs specifically tailored to meet migrants' needs, civil society embraced cross-cultural approaches to social services, by culturally adapting the state's responses to migrants' needs, instead of creating specific spaces.

Coming from different perspectives on concrete actions, the period's migration concerns summed up in tensions between poles of integration/segregation were common among official and civil society actors. In accordance with migration guidelines, scant state financial resources were allocated to civil society organizations dedicated to managing assistance programs serving migrants. Beyond specific disagreements, it was also a period of work guided by a common goal between the State and Civil Society: guaranteeing migration as a human right and access to equal rights for all displaced people. Nonetheless, with the increase in arrivals and the deepening of precarious situations, the capacity of hastily conceived migration management operations was overstretched. In its beginnings, a work logic that

[10] A very representative example of this dynamic is the Identity Department of the Ministry of Social Development, which in 2017 was renamed as Migrants Department, in response to exemption requests for document processing costs for population in situations of vulnerability.

[11] The visa implementation for the Dominican Republic in August 2014 is justified by the government as a response to situations of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Dominican women. In fact, this measure is linked to the imposition of visas in Argentina and Brazil, which resulted in an increase of the migration flow to Uruguay. In practice, the visa was a response to social concern about a population frequently associated with crime and prostitution.

responded to a little dimension of migration needs ended up exceeding its response capacity.

The formulation of a migration policy based on access to documentation and a case-by-case approach to situations of vulnerability explains the feeling of being overwhelmed reported by both members of civil society and government social program managers and personnel. However, these problems were linked to the 2015 increase in populations of Venezuelan origin, and not to the features of the migration management model. By 2017, people arriving from Venezuela represented 55% (around 19,000 people) of the total number of recent migrants (with less than 5 years in the country), surpassing Cuba with 16.5% and the Dominican Republic with 7.5% (Prieto & Márquez, 2019).

Unlike other Latin American countries, Uruguay did not take exceptional measures to register the Venezuelan migrant population. Document regularization was processed through the application of legal or permanent residence entitled to citizens of Mercosur and associated countries. Even after Venezuela's suspension from the bloc, the legal residence process for Venezuela was not affected (Prieto & Montiel, 2020).[12]

Venezuelan population also presents some particular sociodemographic characteristics. Quantitative research indicates Venezuelan migrant population possesses some distinctive characteristics in relation to other Latin American origins: fewer boys and girls and higher qualification levels (Montiel, 2019). Despite better indicators in relation to other Latin American groups and even the national population, currently this is the only population with policies specifically designed during a national cutback in spending. This situation can be understood within a broader framework of Venezuelan migration as an emerging *crisis* at the continental level.

The "Largest Exodus in the Recent History of Latin America" from a Local Perspective[13]

Regional mobility dynamics are distinctive of Latin America (Pellegrino, 2000). The exodus of Venezuelans, first to neighboring countries and then scattered throughout the continent, is exceptional due to its magnitude and its political context, so can also be framed within regional migration dynamics. The number of people who left Venezuela increased from about 700,000 in 2015 to more than four million by

[12] Although this residency regime was implemented as a way of speeding up procedures for a priority population, in practice, delays in requesting an appointment and difficulties in obtaining the required documentation meant that, in many cases, temporary residency applications (a regime used for citizens from outside Mercosur) and refugee applications were used to obtain foreign identity documents. Subsequently, with the closure of consular offices and the restriction in appointments due to the sanitary emergency, refugee applications became the only mechanism available for entering the territory and requesting identity documents.

[13] https://eacnur.org/es/labor/emergencias/venezuela-crisis-de-refugiados-y-migrantes

2019 (ACNUR, 2019) and by 2020 by 4,800,000 (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela [R4V], 2021). Colombia, the main host country for Venezuelan migrants today, was in previous decades the source of migratory flows to Venezuela. At a different rate, Venezuelan migration has risen in Uruguay, which currently receives migrants from a country that was previously a destination for migration and exile.

Although the number of people who have fled Venezuela is historically unprecedented, it is important to consider that emigration has been "a response to crises" in different periods and for different social sectors. The ways in which human mobility is described in Venezuela shows some similarities with narratives constructed in Uruguay, which are commonly found in many Latin American countries. At first, European and Latin American immigration are presented as evidence of a successful nation-state: a source of attraction for inhabitants of other countries that can integrate them economically and socially. This is followed by a period of consecutive political and economic crises that generated emigration in various stages, with different expectations and destinations. Vargas Ribas (2018) locates between 2016 and 2017 the emergence of a new type of migration "out of necessity" linked to a deepening of crisis and a need to search for "minimum living conditions" (p. 111). Consequently, even if all periods of emigration are shaped as responses to crisis, these situations as a whole reached such magnitude that they are presented as a national "tragedy" which was spread through the entire continent due to migration (López Maya, 2018).

In Uruguay, as in other Latin American countries, Venezuelan migration played an important role on the public agenda combined with diverse and conflicting opinions on Venezuela's political, economic, and social conditions (Fossatti, 2017). Political confrontations and questioning Venezuela's institutions, food and medication supply shortage and the increase in violence have been elements used to characterize this situation. Thus, the "crisis of migrants and refugees" emerges with wider reaching effects that can be described as an interruption of the democratic system. Given the disruption of democratic institutional function, rule of law, and its impact on the maintenance of security, economic stability, health, public peace, and welfare systems, the crisis continues to worsen, and serious human rights violations have been reported (ACNUR, 2019).

As proposed by Bertino Moreira and Oliveira Marques (2021), the notion of migration crisis is a term systematically disseminated through political and media discourse, which promotes a notion that mobility processes derive in problems for recipient countries. These problems, related to the need to manage large contingents of people in their territory, imply risks or threats to the extent that immigrants could bring along social, cultural, or economic characteristics that are not convenient to countries welcoming them. In tune with the authors' arguments, it is worth asking what a migration crisis implies: Is it a problem that migrants take with them wherever they go, or is it a problem that is ingrained within the state's border controls to manage, control, or contain people's mobility? Should we be discussing a migration management crisis rather than a migration crisis?

In 2018, IOM and UNHCR jointly launched the Emergency Plan for Refugees and Emigrants from Venezuela (R4V, 2021), with the aim of combining and reinforcing actions by means of dialogue with social organizations assisting the refugees and migrants' pressing needs. The plan includes at least 95 organizations in 16 Latin American countries, deploying their work in areas such as health, education, food security, protection, accommodation, humanitarian transport, water, hygiene, and sanitation.

This plan also begins to be implemented in Uruguay as of 2019, generating a change in the type of participation that these international organizations had in the country. UNHCR, with its integration into the Refugee Commission (created by Law No. 18.076), and IOM, with a key role as advisor to the National Migration Board (created by Law 18.250), remained until that moment as in a supporting role or point of reference for the implementation of policies at the national level, but not directly serving the migrant population. From that year on, new government migration operations were established based on developing strategies to direct intervention in dialogue with civil society, with direct allocation of funds and technical resource support.

This also implied a change in the operation of civil society, that until that moment adapted national response and support mechanisms to the migrant population, by developing a course of action based on critical dimensions of the inclusion process: housing, childhood and family wellbeing, and work, among others. This work was previously guided by a broad definition of migration, which included diverse mobility situations, such as forced mobility, economic migration, family reunification, return migration, and student mobility, without considering national criteria and minimizing legal criteria such as refugees and migrants notions. By the end of 2019 and mainly in 2020, civil society's course of action was defined according to the Emergency Plan to deal with the situation of Venezuelans in Uruguay, addressing them as a collective with specific protection needs. At the same time, the government's work with applicants for refugee status is reinforced in partnership with UNHCR in terms of monitoring and relieving work addressing specific protection needs of the refugee population and at border checkpoints. Simultaneously, IOM begins to work in the border territory consolidating in March 2021 with the opening of its office in the city of Chuy, which concentrates a significant percentage of the migrant population that enters by land and undertaking documentation processes in the country. It is important to note that in 2019 both agencies begun implementing lines of action to address the Venezuelan migration crisis, but efforts were concentrated in Montevideo. With the closure of borders decreed in March 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies' efforts to respond to migrants' demands were divided as migration in Uruguay moved to the border regions.

Lines of action and special attention to migration, Venezuelan migration as main axis, includes participation of other international organizations that have entered the arena, such as UNICEF and the Red Cross. Likewise, other social organizations strengthened and expanded their participation, while consolidating their lines of

action. At present, helplines and assistance implemented by civil society are defined according to the mandates of these international organizations.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter we sought to show the transformations in human mobility management based on the ways in which a population's arrival or departure is conceptualized as dynamics inherent to a social and economic structure, or as moments of inflection of these dynamics being understood as "crisis." Human mobility cannot be conceived from the national context without integrating regional dynamics. Although migration and refuge are defined in terms of crossing political borders, the configuration of those dynamics transcend such limits. Uruguay has defined itself as a country with a specific national discourse on migration: the reception of arriving populations as an essential characteristic of its identity and the emigration as a crisis for the country across political, economic, social, and educational dimensions, among others. The current context of an arriving population, beyond the positive and negative evaluations of migrants, was incorporated into that national discourse and explained within the historic framework of previous migrations.

The humanitarian crisis and migration crisis in Venezuela are based on national criteria. Venezuela as a country is spotlighted in the context of crisis, built on its internal characteristics, without acknowledging the complex role that the Venezuelan political process plays in the regional context. The migration crisis can be traced back to the presence of Venezuelans in other national territories, considering these state's difficulties responding to situations of vulnerability that the magnitude of displacement provokes. The interpretation of all these phenomena in a national context allows for the building of response programs directed at Venezuelan migrants in a regional migration context where people in situations of mobility from different countries are subjected to all types of violence based on not belonging to the host national community rather than to a specific country of origin. In Uruguay, violence linked to xenophobia, racism, and sexism, as well as different forms of labor abuse, are variables that intersect nationality conceived according to racial, gender and class hierarchies. However, besides the diagnoses, the continued increase in migration and situations of human rights violations experienced by migrants, the notion of crisis does not appear in research, academic papers, civil society approaches, or press coverage, until the incorporation of international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM in the implementation of assistance programs for migrants of Venezuelan origin.

Up until that moment, beyond ambivalent administrative provisions and a delay in the adaptation of institutional responses to the increase in demand, there was no initiative toward the development of a coordinated migration policy directed at the insertion within the host society, guaranteeing access to rights, or managing "regular," "safe" and "orderly" migration. Inclusion of human rights rhetoric into the

migrant law was accompanied by great inertia in terms of concrete actions. Civil society assumed aiding migrants, which lacked sufficient economic resources and demanded autonomous training of technical and professional staff, along with activists training. Far from the discursiveness of crisis, civil society demanded from the state a certain "normalization" of migration and not to be driven to its identification as an exceptional situation.

The insertion of international organizations in programs of direct assistance to migrant populations, through initiatives built outside the local context, led to strong transformations in the modes of operation of civil society organizations. One of the characteristics of these responses was the allocation of economic resources for the implementation of assistance programs in various areas: food security, health, housing, documentation, access to the labor market, and border monitoring. Relatively few civil society organizations were then demanded for the implementation of these programs, having to adapt their former operations to formally execute allocated resources. An important element was the need to cut "target populations" in relation to the demands of said programs: *Venezuelans, refugees*, people living in authorized shelters, families with children, and those that did not necessarily orient previous work or coincided with each organization's strategic lines of action. These transformations implied more than just readjusting work dynamics, providing technical training, and reordering work objectives for most people and organizations involved in the various initiatives and programs assisting migrants. They also symbolized a profound transformation of the principles on which strategies and objectives of these actions were based on from local perspectives of historical migration; it entailed adapting to a regional and global vision of migration management, grounded on giving response to emerging problems.

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Part II
Migration, Crisis, Agency: Intersections

Chapter 5
The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Crisis: Immobility of Workers in Chubut, Patagonia, Argentina

Monica Gatica and Pablo Blanco

Introduction

Our reflection on the circumstances and consequences of the pandemic for workers is part of a long-term articulated Research Project with results validated by various accreditation and evaluation bodies. The project, carried over successive research periods over the past 20 years, is supported by the Institute of Historical and Social Research of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the National University of Patagonia.[1]

We work with a Social History perspective, seeking to elucidate how the working class was shaped over time, and how they articulated their experiences. We are interested in understanding these experiences, revealing subsumed subjectivities from the bottom up, unveiling strategies that in urban and rural settings involve paths shaped by a logic of factory and industrial work, new forms of self-managed work that are becoming increasingly prominent, and everything in between.

[1] From the Institute of Historical and Social Research, authors of this manuscript make part of the Study Group on Mobility, Immobility, and Territories – GEMIT together with researchers from other universities in Latin America, Additionally, Dr. Mónica Gatica is Director of the research project: History and Memories of the Working Class in the Northeast of Chubut, Part VI, based at the Institute of Historical and Social Research of the FHCS, Trelew campus of the University Nacional de la Patagonia, Argentina. The institute has a history of 30 years addressing struggles of the working class in the region and is a full member of networks and associations linked to the analysis of problems in recent history. The institute is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Oral History Association of the Argentine Republic – AHORA. Pablo Blanco conducted his undergraduate and graduate research exploring universes in which he has referenced recent history of human mobility and immobility.

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We recognize the influence of provincial, national, and international rural-urban mobilities, which have modified and nurtured identity constructions in the territory, to contribute to a historiography from the bottom up, accounting for specificities of articulation at the regional scale, but also bearing in mind national and international scenarios. The processes that concerned our study intervene and transform the territory not only in material ways but also at symbolic levels: how invisible "others" are seen in a small street of a rural semi-public space; and even affectively, as in the case of the policy requesting pharyngeal swabs from women who work in prostitution, due to their alleged links with migrant fishing workers.[2]

We pay attention to the alliances and divisions caused by the state at the national, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as to the interactions of the employers' associations and social and union organizations. The political-academic objective of the work is to give visibility to subjects who make history and who are recurrently made invisible. To that end, we use memories to help follow the movement of society within the different codes and forms of subjectivation that intervene, creating public spheres for real memory, counteracting the politics of regimes that promote oblivion and reconciliation, denying and imposing a repressive silencing, which in the long term configures the "other." These are necessary and intricate relationships in which the dialectic breaks the mold of the timeline, and then the stories become fragmented and can be questioned.

Regional histories make it possible to check the validity of postulates stated for a national history discourse, or for the comparative history of Latin America, contributing new problems to a discipline that must discuss its categories and put its frameworks of analysis to the test. Our objective is to contribute to the formulation of holistic explanations of the social process, which in the case of our country—Argentina—, questions the centralist matrix built around Buenos Aires, which is part of "common sense" and permeates a large portion of academic production.

Our proposed view allows integrating different fields and positions of analysis: the position of the conformation of identities and collective memories—social and cultural history—, the diverse ideological and political projects that were articulated, the responses they generated, the interaction of the different social classes, and the economic and social transformations operated from the articulation of the Nation-State, to the imposition of the hegemony of financial capital, and the oxymoron of extractivist development, which is the framework in which we inscribe the effects of the pandemic.

Following this line of thought we define neoliberalism as the enormous transference of resources from the poorest sectors to the richest, and from peripheral countries to the central ones. Alluding to globalization is just a euphemism to speak of capitalism, as pointed out by the great Latin Americanist Alberto Pla: "The problem with the word globalization is that nowadays we attribute a conceptual

[2] Although we do not ignore the importance of the theory of alterity/otherness and the vast anthropological and sociological production that exists in this regard, we consider that, for reasons of extension, it is impossible to review and position it here.

content to it, that of a scientific analytical category, when in reality it is just a characteristic of capital—and a very antiquated one at that" (1997, p. 11).

The Latin American model of substitution of imports by manufacturing goods has been dismantled with enormous recessive consequences for regional spaces, which entailed increasing unemployment, regressive tax structures, corruption, and expansion of criminal organizations that occupy the void left by the reconfiguration of States and the decline of national and regional markets. Political regimes have abandoned economic intervention to secure the Welfare State, appealing to reduce their intervention to guarantee social and political rights, focusing their efforts on securing the control and coercion caused by the privatization of securitization. Sure enough, this ideological hegemony is expressed in a neo-conservatism of unprecedented intensity in Latin America. As insurgent Subcomandante Marcos (1997) has denounced, Neoliberalism in the Third World involves universalization of exploitation of workers; a modernization in which productivity increases and employment is not created but destroyed. The phenomenon of mobility, associated with the precarization of living conditions, gives rise to nationalist narratives about migrants as the enemy of workers, displacing the identification of the employer as their natural class opponent. This context, which has been around since the 1970s, has put workers' rights in crisis; and moreover the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has further upset this condition, as well as that of people who move across the planet. It is from this argument that we define crisis as a permanent state of affairs (Vigh, 2008), a context of violence and chronic and structural threats, which condition those who receive these threats and forms of violence to migrate in an attempt to improve their situation.

Migration crises are part of political, social, or economic imbalances that are made evident and projected at all scales. We propose to address some repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in Chubut, going through various aspects of our daily lives. Specifically, we will refer to the experiences of immobility experienced by Paraguayan migrant workers harvesting rosehip in the Andean region and fishing workers on the Chubut coast. These subjects, in the context of a pandemic, have mobilized in very unfavorable conditions, alongside the increased propagation of migrant stereotypes as threats to the established order; in this manner, migrant bodies are the target of criminalizing actions and discourses (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014).

We provide inputs and reflections for a diachronic analysis, to help understand the path that has led us to this present, interacting with the community in which we work and, in some sense, paying forward the support they give through their work for the existence of the public university. We have objectives related to academic research, but it is central for the team to work not toward economic but rather human development, which is often part of a culture of resistance, even expressed through silence.

Thinking of our research participants, we think it is important to consider that human mobility constitutes a class phenomenon, "in terms of population transfer from peripheries to centers at different times: rural-urban migration in the incipient gestation of capitalism, as in the current transnational capital markets and the circulation of workforce" (Herrera Lima, 2005; Jiménez Zunino & Trpin, 2021, p. 44). We agree with E. P. Thompson's assertion that consciousness and memory,

which allow us to observe that class is formed and developed historically, not depending solely on economic determination,

> [. . .] happen when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs (Thompson, 2012, p. 27).

How each subject assimilates the experience of the material conditions in which they live is made explicit through values and practices, which cannot be explained exclusively in economic terms; it is the socio-cultural keys that build the self-identification of its members, and this has been very clear in the process of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Isolation (hereinafter ASPO),[3] lived through the pandemic.

Under the exacerbated conditions brought by the pandemic, the forced immobility of the workers in this study was a constant in the face of the implementation of security measures originated from criminalizing discourses about migrants: ranging from increased restrains to movement to the closing of borders, these produced a diversity of additional displacements in the subjects even without moving.

Mobility and Immobility in the Context of a Pandemic by COVID-19

Thinking about mobility and immobility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic involves considering the drastic changes that came up in the work sphere, as well as the consequences on the functioning of production and/or extraction sites, at least in the first moments of the ASPO, and its consequent reorganization often resulting in the upswing in many cases of the levels of exploitation by transferring to workers the "responsibility" for maintaining the production and operation of the system. As it has been mentioned, one of the actions that most affected the mobility of workers in general in our country was the division between essential and non-essential labor; precautions to minimize infection exposure had to be increased in relation to the conditions of displacement, safety and health among those who were able to mobilize. In addition, they suffered the consequences of an increase in the number of hours in the job, due to the reduction of personnel in various areas (Basualdo & Peláez, 2020).

[3] The Mandatory Preventive Social Isolation was issued by Decree 297/2020. This allowed the Executive Power to enact the sanitary measures to be carried out to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina. The restrictions were applied beginning on March 20, 2020, varying their scope according to the situation of each provincial state and even each city, considering the different impacts on the dynamics of virus transmission, as well as the geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics of each place. In addition, a new decree was issued, Decree 494/2021 to support epidemiological activities extending to October 1, 2021.

Despite the resulting social crisis, in such particular context, the business sector did not use this chance to improve its image in the society by offering donations, or by providing supplies to public hospitals, appealing to the sensitivity of society, and showing their commitment to the community. Contrastingly, it sought to maintain and increase its profits at all times, transferring the responsibility of health and safety actions to the workers if they wanted to keep their jobs, avoid being suspended, and receive their wages to procure their livelihood and the continuing of daily life.

An example of the transfer of responsibilities, or to be more precise, of the neglect and abuse to which the workers were subjected is evidenced by the intervention of the state in the Fyrsa fishing plant at Trelew, where workers were abandoned by the employers since late February, before the ASPO. The local press reports that a municipal official explained that:

> The fishing workers have been in the Industrial Park for the past 2 days asking the company for the two months of salary they have not received. The lack of income forced them to live without electricity and gas, not having enough to eat. This is why we were working to locate the person responsible (Diario Jornada, 2020c).

Significantly, municipal mediation did not involve assistance, but rather a response to the claim was coordinated at a province level; we must emphasize that the official himself acknowledged that the problem was structural. We clearly saw that the pandemic crisis contributed to put the very precarious employment conditions of these workers under the spotlight, while this situation is not surprising. Though by no means exhaustive, it can be illustrative of the links between the municipal and provincial states to acknowledge how workers very lucidly demanded the expropriation and removal of the fishing permits from those responsible for the abuse. Referring to the businessmen, the trade union leader of this sector stated that

> [. . .] it has not been possible to advance "in absolutely anything with none of the companies, neither with Fyrsa nor with Agropez, the two businessmen are missing" [. . .] He explained that in the case of Fyrsa "they sent a representative who had no decision power, and regarding Agropez, they ignore the Government request to sit in mandatory conciliation talks; Álvarez Castellano is completely absent and does not take charge of the workers situation". (Jornada Diary, 2020d)

Likewise, the workers' petition is mentioned, one that focuses on denouncing the aforementioned employers (directly linked to the Spanish investment capital), the same union leader indicates that

> Last summer, these two firms "worked quite well the shrimp harvest, so if they have had any mismanagement everything is a consequence of their actions. These two companies have to take care of their obligations towards the workers, as appropriate, and not throw them adrift as they are doing." Let us remember that there are 264 Fyrsa workers and that Agropez, in Rawson, has 64 employees. In addition, they fear that this company will close its operation in Puerto Madryn, which brings about additional conflict with 200 more workers (Diario Jornada, 2020d).

The pandemic experienced since March 2020, "is offering capitalism a weighty excuse to increase the control systems of daily life" (Romero Wimer, 2020, p. 25), which has meant that police violence has increased, as well as border controls

(external and internal), and criminalization of the most marginalized sectors; schools were closed, as well as shops, companies, factories, and hotels; the transport stopped operating, causing losses, and significantly increasing impoverishment, which fostered immobility.

Thus, for various actors, among whom we include the impoverished rosehip harvest workers of the Andes region, the pandemic became synonymous with paralysis, suspension of action, in addition to implying "a deepening in the control of bodies with the justification of health prevention; (. . .) and the state regulation of individuality and self-care in the face of the possible threat of contagion by the other" (Sánchez Osorio & Garza Zepeda, 2020, p. 115).

The exploitation in the Andean Region concentrates a production niche for the domestic and international market conducive to industrial enterprises; hundreds of migrant workers have been mobilized between November and April, on a large capitalist scale. As a consequence,

> [. . .] the municipalities of El Bolsón, El Hoyo, Lago Puelo, El Maitén, and Epuyén are carrying out sanitary protocols within the framework of the global coronavirus pandemic in preparation to receiving day laborers. The protocols include transportation, accommodation, harvest, and post-harvest practices, use of alcohol and facemasks, social distancing, and quarantine upon arrival. (Diario Jornada, n.d.)

Organized independent workers and merchants from Chubut and El Bolsón joined in demanding "the relaxation of the controls on the 42nd parallel – Northern limit of Chubut – to be able to cross to work," criticizing the decision of the Minister of Security Federico Missoni to keep *the hot border*[4] closed (Diario Jornada, 2020b). In these spaces, migrant and working-class bodies are condemned to be seen as a problem, as a risk to security (public, citizen, private), thus justifying increased controls and reinforcements at the border (Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014.)

The statement above could represent a grave distortion if read under paradigms of what mobility is in other spaces, but we risk saying this would anticipate a scenario that the journalist surely has incorporated as part of his view. It is a territory in which the provincial peculiarities are diluted, and the cross-border phenomenon is present. These suggestions are never accidental and the possibility of "cutting Route 40" creating "shortage of supplies in several towns, whose suppliers come mainly from El Bolsón and San Carlos de Bariloche", gives an account of economic and political articulation upsetting larger interests, and perhaps putting the security of the territory at risk.

> We come with the support of hundreds of workers from all over the Andean Region. Most of us are construction workers, also gardeners, barbers, painters, and other day-laborers. Many of us have jobs in El Bolsón and we cannot go there. We cannot bring food to our children, mentioned Freddy Sepúlveda, spokesman for Lago Puelo. (Jornada Newspaper, 2020b).

In summary, workers demanded mayors to assert their autonomy. It is important to note that their highway rally, controlled by police from both provinces, was

[4]The italics are ours.

peaceful and didn't obstruct intense traffic of large Chilean and Argentine trucks traveling along the route. It is worth mentioning that the Andean Region[5] communities of Lago Puelo, El Bolsón, El Hoyo, El Manso, Cholila, Epuyén, and El Maitén constitute an economic, social, cultural, and family-integrated territory, on the border with the Republic of Chile. There is a long-lasting memory, associated with the 1978 threat of war with Chile and of the 1982 Malvinas War, that remains in collective memory generating a sense of within and without of the regional territory. The proposed creation of a "buffer zone" linking up the localities of El Manso to the north and Leleque to the south, under the guardianship of the National Gendarmerie and the provincial police, alludes to a specific sense of belonging.

Further understanding of the path of seasonal workers[6] allowed us to pinpoint the tension between (im)mobility and control, which has been one of the most prominent characteristics of migration in our continent. In the context of COVID-19, this tension acquired more violent and unequal traits impacting "the lives of the most vulnerable populations, always racialized, particularly those under mobility conditions" (Álvarez Velasco, 2020, p. 12; Leyva-Trinidad et al., 2020). These bodies were exposed to contagion and death when passing through territories unknown to them, or when they were immobilized, becoming captive by the "reinforcement of migration and border controls, especially for the legitimization of punitive actions and of expansion of the use of surveillance technologies" (Domenech, 2020, p. 19). Many migrant workers exposed to the virus were confined and retained in detention spaces, enforcing measures that deepened divisions of racial and national hierarchies that already existed in mobilities. The States, of countries both expelling and receiving workers, as well as those in transit,

> [. . .] have recreated pathways articulating external and internal borders, producing innumerable effects on the daily lives of migrants. The "solutions" presented have endorsed, [. . .] the inherent relationship between migratory order and national order. On a global scale, different actions and institutional arrangements dealing with the pandemic have once again shown the validity of an international system markedly divided by national states, magnifying the distinction between national and non-national (Domenech, 2020, p. 21).

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts were used as a tool of legitimization of oppression toward certain sectors, making invisible the consequences it had on families and communities of workers who were delayed en route or transiting in

[5]The Andean regions of parallel 42 are made up of the municipalities of El Bolsón, El Foyel, and Ñorquinco in Río Negro; Lago Puelo, El Hoyo, Epuyén, Cholila, Leleque, and El Maitén in Chubut. This valley has an approximate length of 120 kilometers and is about 50 kilometers wide, making up a territory where close bonding and daily influences are established, beyond the interprovincial limits of the region, http://sipan.inta.gov.ar/productos/ssd/vc/comarca/ig/informacion_general.htm

[6]There has not been a comprehensive conceptualization around the category of "golondrinas," "zafreros," and "seasonal" workers in the scientific formulation of the Sociology of Work, of the history of the class, and even in Argentinean anthropology. We understand that even with a descriptive matrix, naming it as "seasonal" implies a lower valorization than that of the notion of "golondrinas." We apply the term by appealing to the cyclical mobility of agricultural work or fishing, whose seasonal cycles are associated with the preservation of the resource.

highly controlled circumstances. In recent years the Lower Valley of the Chubut River, in the vicinity of the city of Trelew, has undergone a transformation of its production system, including important investments and subventions from the state to help develop cherry production particularly destined to the international market. Given the impending harvest season, the Municipality of Trelew presented a protocol for the cherry companies to plan their activity, considering that the harvest was at risk and that the epidemiological situation in Trelew was very favorable due to the efforts of the neighbors. The arrival of 300 workers was expected, who would stay for about 2 months. Risk of epidemic propagation was again seen as an imminent consequence of their arrival.

The central characteristic of migrant workers is that they move seasonally from harvest to harvest, their mobility being "regulated" by a precarious labor system and marked by the violation of basic rights. Nonetheless, migrants in irregular situations are essential for the reproduction of daily life in contemporary societies (Sarmiento & Araujo, 2020).

Migrants working in agriculture share bedrooms, dining rooms, and bathrooms. Under these conditions, could social distancing be guaranteed? Is the use of recommended protective facemasks widespread in these spaces? Companies and the State must guarantee work under safe conditions, or safe return to their homes, beyond the current provision of a few social protection measures for migrant workers and their families. The problem is that

> [. . .] adjusting the activities to comply with COVID 19 infection prevention protocols must overcome obstacles related with poor living and working conditions that characterize agricultural occupations, and especially those carried out by migrant workers. These workers face critical situations in transportation and accommodation due to their status as migrants (Blanco et al., 2020, p. 15).

There are thousands of workers who cyclically migrate between different provinces to work in the fruit harvest, and many remained confined by the closing of borders. The hurdles that they had to overcome on their return following long journeys under very precarious conditions, besides quarantine stays in makeshift accommodations were covered by the national press, even the most conservative outlets, and in the best of cases also liberal outlets such as the newspaper *La Nation*, to which we refer below.

From the testimony of Axel Olmos, a 19-year-old worker from Tucumán[7] who moves to Patagonia every year, we can learn about the conditions: under normal circumstances the season goes from November to April. This was obviously interrupted in March in 2020, as transportation had already stopped working normally and the provincial borders were closed. Axel described how his living conditions with peers from Tucumán and Entre Ríos changed, staying in the town of Cervantes, in the Northwest of Río Negro, where they were lodged in a single

[7] Tucumán is a provincial state in the Argentine Northwest, experiencing the dynamics resulting from the participation of foreign migrant workers employed in agricultural production who come mostly from border States (Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile).

room with only a small bathroom, without furniture or a kitchen. The desperation of seeing how their meager salaries were exhausted after weeks of being isolated led them to actions of empowerment and gained agency, deciding to make their situation public: "We made a video and uploaded it to social networks. Right after that they gave us permission to go home" said Axel. They traveled in a bus without any control measures which was full. The fear of contagion made them use protective measures "From the time we went up in the bus until I got to my house, I used the mask. I used alcohol gel and did not get up to a talk to anyone." From Cervantes to Tucumán there are 1700 km, it was a long non-stop journey, and no province allowed them to come in.[8] Upon entering Tucumán, they were given the first medical check-up, noting the abandonment and lack of protection for these precarious workers.

Even with scarcity of resources, prevention has been in the hands of the workers. Despite the stigmatization they suffered, there were no policies implemented to actually protect them or the communities to which they returned. Even the quarantine they were imposed was completed while working in a lemon farm harvesting. This account gives testimony of the restart of a new seasonal work cycle, while its ending gets them back to unemployment and a new return to the South.[9]

We selected these testimonies of personal mobility experiences to unveil the experiences of thousands of migrant growers who move to Patagonia and Cuyo pursuing work in the vineyards, fruit tree plantations, and as pickers of nuts, olives, or onions. Estimates from the Federation of Fruit Producers of Río Negro and Neuquén for the year 2021 indicated that just for the harvest of pears and apples, between 15,000 and 20,000 workers from other provinces are employed. "Ninety percent of them are from Tucumán," said Sebastián Hernández, president of the Federation: "They also come from Santiago de Estero, Formosa, Jujuy, Salta, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Misiones, Buenos Aires and San Juan." Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the employers had to provide the logistics necessary to safely mobilize the workers, in coordination with the provincial governments.

These examples illustrate how violence is exercised, as well as the criminalization of the most unprotected sectors: In Salta, for example, on April 27, Governor Gustavo Sáenz once again prohibited the entry of long-distance buses after a worker returning from Río Negro tested positive for COVID-19. Sáenz described a worker and a colleague as "criminals" because they had traveled without a record on the passenger list (Guadagno, 2020).

The transit permit requirement and its poorly developed management at online platforms added to bureaucratic times and was a limit to many workers. Another example outlined in the same article comes from the experience of Edgar Rodas and

[8] As explained above, the ASPO measures implemented by the Argentinean State have adapted their scope according to the situation of each provincial state, and even each city, considering the different impacts on the dynamics of virus transmission, along with geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic diversity.

[9] There was an abusive transfer of safety and health protection responsibilities to workers that was exacerbated by the alienation of the foreign.

Enzo Frías, a couple of bricklayers who, while in Allen, Río Negro, tried to go back to Oran on foot over 2191 km. While on the road, the Union of Rural Workers (UATRE) offered to shelter them in the town of General Roca until they were allowed to return. The drama was similar to the one experienced by 25 members of a toba community in Tartagal, who were stranded in Florencio Varela, in the southern suburbs of Buenos Aires, where they had traveled intending to work in floriculture.

Even during the mandatory lockdown, the Mendoza bus terminal was a site crowded with those who were trying to return. One of them, Gabriel Barrientos, 27, who had arrived from Calilegua, in Jujuy, was interviewed explaining that as he did not have a job, he could not stay without money to pay rent and food. He said:

> Where I worked, they paid between 25 and 30 pesos for a bucket of grapes. I made about 30 buckets a day, "(. . .) From what I worked, I sent money to my family to pay bills that I owed. The rest, I saved it to buy food and have something to eat during the week," he explained. "They tell you: 'stay at home', but they don't put themselves in the place of the *golondrina* (migrant) workers, as they call us. If I don't work, I can't stay. Because it's a lie that they won't charge you for power, water, or rent. They charge you for everything. (. . .) They call us *golondrina* workers, but for us that is an act of discrimination. We are workers. We are not in hiding. We contribute to the State, we pay rent, taxes, we buy in the supermarket. They should have more consideration because we do something important. If not, who would pick all the harvest for which they pay us? (Gabriel Barrientos, personal communication to Guadagno, 2020 May 5).

It is noteworthy to mention how this narrative of inclusion of the worker in the social arena is not argued from the perspective of citizenship or political rights, but from the value appraisal of their contribution to the economic process and incorporation into the market: they work, pay taxes, buy. We pondered, what happens to workers who were stranded in a certain place or to those who are stigmatized as being a "disease-transmitting agent"? What social representations are present when addressing these specific events such as the global pandemic situation? (Da Costa et al., 2020). What temporalities and spatialities intersect? The truth is that, in the case of the workers we analyzed, these representations increased the difference between "we" and "them," a sustained and appreciable difference according to gender, social class, and race, to which we will refer while analyzing the behaviors at work. Thus, situations of immobility are traversed by indeterminacy, by waiting and by the convergence of different temporalities among the subjects who are part of these processes, marked by the specificities of the pandemic context (González Zepeda & Eguiluz, 2021; Harney, 2014).

Normally the transit between different provinces is done in minibuses; sometimes the worker is not even sure to have their own seat; for this reason they also ride in the boxes of vans or trucks, where social distancing is almost impossible. Other workers have been left in a situation of immobility in the bus terminals, so they rearrange their work in other crops until they can return. Not only the borders between countries were closed, but the controls were increased within the Argentine territory, transforming travel from one province to another in a true odyssey. At the same time, such immobility, and the uncertainty during the transit made migrant workers to be

perceived as contagion risks for the residents. Domenech (2020) refers to a "new hygiene," tightening the link between border control (external and internal) and health protection, leading in some cases to gather lists of "undesirables." The migration management and security strategies were stiffening as migrants were deemed "potential (. . .) agents of contagion of Covid-19" (Varela Huerta, 2020, p. 41).

There are thousands of workers moving seasonally between different provinces to work in the fruit harvest, and many were isolated by the closing of borders. The hurdles they had to overcome to be able to get back home after long trips in very precarious conditions, and the quarantines in makeshift accommodation multiplied, as we have already mentioned. National, regional, and local government officials exercised powers that directly affected migrant lives, carrying out a series of measures for the health and protection of the inhabitants who are under their jurisdiction. These "border and immigration policies (. . .), with an exclusive securitization approach ended up institutionalizing racism and discrimination even against their own compatriots" (Castro Neira, 2020, p. 58), imposing an unproven notion of safety, when what was put into place was the rejection of migrant workers.

Embarkment

In the case of fishing workers, their work was recognized as essential, allowing it to continue during the ASPO phase. "The extraction and processing of raw materials continued to be carried out. In this extraordinary environment, business owners tried to take additional advantage of the workers by lowering their wages, arguing that the price of shrimp exports had suffered significant drops as a result of the pandemic" (Schulze & Pérez Álvarez, 2021, p. 2–3). It is worth noting that the argument used to support that fishing work be considered as essential was that food production depends on it, while the truth is that more than 90% of the extracted resources are exported (Navarro et al., 2014, as cited in Schulze & Pérez Álvarez, 2021).

The precarious work conditions of migrant fishermen did not prevent that they were defined as essential. In the press, we repeatedly found news revealing how their social relationships and community environments were surveilled and recorded in the different ports of our territory: Comodoro Rivadavia, Rawson, and Puerto Madryn. The rigorous enforcement of health security protocols was used as an argument by the Port Administration of Puerto Madryn. A clear example was the mooring of the Santiago I fishing vessel: the ship had 29 crew members on board having last stopped at Mar del Plata. The ship had not complied with the required crew's swab tests, nor had 14 days passed since it set sail. The employer decided to run COVID-19 tests of all personnel on board, where the whole crew tested positive.

Although fishing is an essential activity, workers have had to constantly adapt to work protocols that have been modified repeatedly, or they have had to return to work in unsafe health conditions. Thus, workers "came to be regarded as being a 'danger' for the communities they were in contact with" (Schulze & Pérez Álvarez,

2021, p. 5). This is illustrated by the experience of the crew of fishing boats in the province of Chubut, especially in Puerto Madryn and Comodoro Rivadavia, who risked their lives working in precarious conditions during the pandemic, not only because of the health security scenario in which they carried out their work, but also because of the deplorable conditions of Argentina's fishing fleet (Schulze & Pérez Álvarez, 2021). Fishermen maintained the profits of the employers while contributing to the economy of the national state, while their employers were concentrating their action on lowering their wages.

The protocols and certifications required by municipal and province authorities multiplied. Under this new atmosphere a kind of otherness was constructed around those who did not belong in the capital city, limiting their mobility. In addition to the checkpoints instrumented by the Prefecture, Gendarmerie, and the Chubut Police, restricted spaces of circulation were added at the sea. Thus, "the ships that come from abroad (Mar del Plata) are not entering Puerto Rawson; all deep-sea fishing vessels are to enter throughout Camarones and Puerto Madryn" (Diario Jornada, 2020g), declared the Undersecretary of Security and Citizen Participation of the province, Rubén Santillán. The increase COVID-19 fishermen infections observed during October 2020 did not attract so much state attention, nor were there any

> [. . .] categorical actions against the obvious breaches of basic health security protocols for the crews of fishing boats. At this time, the state's interest seemed to focus on the profits rather than on health and more on obtaining foreign currencies than on caring for workers". (Schulze & Pérez Álvarez, 2021, p. 19)

Other measures implemented meant that the COVID diagnostic swabs[10] were carried out directly by the companies when they reached entrance to the province of Chubut, quarantining the infected for 2 weeks. And during the fishing journeys,

> [. . .] although they travel without having contact with other than crew members, we do not want them to get off at the service stations and make contact with anyone. Therefore, we appeal to the individual responsibility of each sailor not to come into contact with people upon landing. (Diario Jornada, 2020f).

It is evident that the fishermen, for the journalist and the officers, are not part of the group of people that require protection. Perhaps one of the most controversial interventions was carried out by a Comodoro Rivadavia councilor who proposed performing swabs to prostitutes to find out if they had COVID-19.

> The councilor considered that the fishermen visit them even before returning to their homes, *although no one would recognize that in front of their families*[11] (this comment was made about the infected fishermen on the Santorini boat.) Sometimes it is hard to say things as they are, nobody can tell me about it because I spent many years dealing with ships, said the councilor in an interview with FM La Petrolera, reproduced by the ADNSUR portal." (La Jornada Newspaper, 2020e).

[10] A nasal swab is used to collect infective pathogens in the respiratory tract. The specimen's genetic material is later identified using the Polymerase Chain Reaction method (PCR).

[11] The italics are ours.

Although we could elaborate on specific aspects of his bizarre discourse, what underlies this prejudiced rant is the stigmatization not only of sex workers but also of the fishermen collective. The problem can be approached from multiple angles, but the construction of the other is explicitly negative. The reference to the family, as a normalizing institution, crowns the interpretation. The mayor of the oil city also had COVID-19, and no one proposed to swab a particular group of people.

Isolated and Segregated Workers, Constant Carriers of Evil: Between COVID-19 and Hanta Virus

We first heard the news through the press with a story about the hospitalization of a young harvester, in the rural town of Epuyén, with around 3000 inhabitants, located more than 600 km from the city of Trelew. In this little locality, rosehips are harvested during the fall; this seasonal activity is an important resource for the local economy. Rosehip pulp is processed in a dryer located in Cerro Radal; it is a difficult task carried out in precarious conditions. The pulp is a basic material for the production of food and for the cosmetic and medicine industries. Harvest is a seasonal task carried out only during March and April; in the words of José Torres, one of the harvesters locally known as *mosqueteros*, "the term *mosquetero* does not exist for the Chubut government authorities and they also don't take us into account" (Diario Jornada, 2020a). He organized to protest together with almost a hundred self-employed workers (mostly builders, craftsmen, hairdressers, and carpenters), who were worried "because they won't let us work and earn a living" as part of the COVID-19 crisis mandatory lockdown. He explained that he works together with his wife: "We have been doing this seasonal work for seven years. We always earn our *mango* (living) by the sweat of our brow, and we do not want to be a burden for the municipality" (Jornada Newspaper, 2020a).

We closely looked at what happened in this community, where in 2019 a Hantavirus outbreak took place, paralyzing tourist activity. The outbreak damaged the community's finances, and moreover, in 2021, a large forest fire severely affected community life. We also learned about a young Paraguayan farmer infected with Hanta who was transferred to the hospital in Esquel and placed in a respirator with a reserved prognosis status. Six other persons who were in contact with him were isolated. The young man was picking rosehips when he came into contact with the feces of a long-tailed mouse, a Hantavirus transmitter. This scourge punished Epuyén in January 2019 with 11 deaths and more cases of infection, with a notable average isolation time for infected persons of 45 days.

We contacted community members who assisted the young infected worker; the experience described by them was very illustrative, and almost a perfect metaphor of the control excerpted over workers' bodies: the young man was stripped of all his belongings at the time of hospitalization and at the time of his discharge, he did not

receive any of his few belongings, having to accept clothing donations to be able to leave the hospital and join his co-workers.

It is worth pointing out that, although there is a regular presence of pickers during each harvest season, the community does not identify with them, and even fears them, since they picture them in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, wandering through peripheral spaces, and thus becoming a potentially dangerous "other" to them. Finally, we were able to contact the young man over the phone, but he chose to remain silent on the matter, perhaps in hopes of returning to work in the area, as he mentioned before his departure, which would explain the low profile he adopted after leaving the hospital. He received individual solidarity but there wasn't any acknowledgment of his disease being work-related, nor did he receive assistance from government or corporate agents.

In the specific case of the Chubut workers called *golondrinas*, the isolation situation became more complex, and it was very difficult to endure immobility, due to their need to work in order to have resources to survive and send money to their families, and also have the money to be able to purchase travel tickets to return to their places of residence. Those who were stranded were permanently criminalized:

> Institutional violence is marked by the arbitrariness of measures imposing additional restrictions of lockdowns and quarantine facilitated abuses by the security forces. All this impeded obtaining food or medicine, as well as being able to provide assistance to other people, even when it comes to exceptional situations, as expressly contemplated in article 6 of the Public Health decree known as DNU 297/2020, which exempt from compliance with social isolation and the prohibition of driving under special circumstances (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights [APDH], 2020, p. 3).

Conclusions

Our findings illustrate how the confinement and other measures imposed to control the global pandemic that began in February 2020 made the inequalities and criminalization of certain groups of persons more palpable and profound, illuminating the conditions of "global apartheid" that we inhabit (Castro Neira, 2020). In this sense,

> the call to stay at home was impossible for many workers, day-laborers, and communities who need to go out to work for their daily income, while other workers perform essential public services and therefore could not remain at home (Sánchez Osorio & Garza Zepeda, 2020, p. 120).

The dimensions of race, class, and gender, among others, order the hierarchies and power relations affecting (in) mobilities deepened in the context of the pandemic (Herrera, 2020). Is mobility increasingly difficult in these contexts of violence and control? Human mobility will continue to exist if precarization in their places of origin remains. Castro Neira (2020) suggests a conception of human security focused on the specific needs of those who undertake migration journeys.

The workers who were in a situation of (in) mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed to a large institutional vacuum and rampant violence, were the most affected, particularly those in extreme poverty, as well as migrants, who as De Sousa Santos (2020) has suggested, were exposed to either infections or starvation due to the virus.

A timely contribution to address these immobilities should focus on

> "considering both social trajectories (such as objective positions, i.e., class) and migratory journeys (the subjective dimension) which sustain mobility as a process. Behind the set of familiar decisions, actions, practices, and experiences that converge in migrations are expectations of social mobility linked to transformations in the socio-historical context of the places involved" (Trpin & Jimenez Zunino, 2021, p. 246).

The responses or solutions promoted from the central State, implemented by the national government, did not favor or were within reach of informal workers who could not meet the requirements by, for example, not being registered as monthly taxpayers. Invisibility to state regulations was enhanced by the isolation and inability to access the resources to carry out the paperwork and procedures to receive the government's $ 10,000 subsidy.

Both the workers picking rosehips and the migrant fishermen we contacted for interviews were mostly silent, perhaps because of "the shame added to all other hurdles they experienced. From this it follows that the expected understanding must also be judgment, judgment in the act, judgment without mediation, absolute censorship" (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 230).

In the specific case of harvest and fishing workers, we concluded that, although their wages far exceed the minimum wage, the conditions under which they carry out their tasks are characterized by precariousness and high exposure to contagion due to structural conditions. By adhering to a conceptual framework that understands that class membership is shaped from identity influences, we pose that the normalization of structural precariousness is deepened in the context of the pandemic crisis, but by no means originated with the pandemic. In both instances, these are work opportunities that truly impact their lives. In the face of these contentions, we do not address their experiences only from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Lindley (2014, p. 5), we think about the situation of harvest and fishing workers, with the crisis as context, as "terrain of action and meaning rather than as an aberration (. . .) a starting point for a detailed focus on agency and how people search for new prospects even under very limited circumstances."

While working on the final draft of this chapter, we learned the news of the forceful complaints of unionized workers in the fishing industries, who broke on a strike in support of and demanding respect for the essential rights of those embarked on the Fishing Vessel "Mishima Maru N ° 8" MN 02175, moored in the Port of the City of Comodoro Rivadavia, who were going through an outbreak of COVID-19. We emphasize that the captain of the ship, defying the port authorities, relied on maritime law to protect the life of his crew. The scandal caused by the complaint and the pressure of unionized workers finally got them to receive medical attention and shelter from the Municipality of Comodoro Rivadavia. The hypotheses formulated throughout the chapter corroborate the violence exerted over the workers.

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Chapter 6
Parting and Keep on Existing: Crisis and Reproduction of the Existence of Migrants and Their Collectives in the City of Rosario

Mariana García

Introduction

Latin America's wars of independence involved crises, exiles, and international and internal displacement, thus shaping the political configuration of the countries in this continent, their migratory patterns, and those of other continents. The crisis of the late nineteenth century in Europe, characterized by overproduction, lack of distribution, and overpopulation, forced millions of people to leave, to reproduce their existence somewhere else. They transformed domestic and international markets, demographics, political maps, ideas, and institutions. Colonialism, slavery, genocides, the fall of great empires, and world wars linked both crisis and mobility in the long term having an impact beyond all borders.

Crisis and migration are associated; both belong to the course of history. Their association is not an exception. Migration responds to a human drive as strong as the need to live in groups, but crises are not necessarily the result of human mobility, nor do they all lead to migrations. What makes this complex relationship so particular is its borderless and structural impact on the population's composition, on the economic and political structures, on ideational frameworks, and in history. This impact may have effects on the countries of departure, transit, and destination at a transnational level. Migration involves a group of human beings moving between differentiated spaces; this affects all geographies because people are agents of transformation. This constitutes the spatial dimension of the relationship between crisis and mobility.

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The crisis-migration binomial has had a long-lasting influence on history. This historical dimension transcends the moment when they occur, marks history, and leaves a sediment. A period of crisis is a vertiginous, intense time (Bagú, 1970); such intensity gives an infrequent succession of events within a narrow timeframe. Crisis events appear as moments when historical forces converge, coming from different conditions and structures, and changes take place or situations crystallize. Crisis and migration share elements of long duration, which seem incongruous to the idea of a hinge moment, a significant event where past and present collide, because their effects surpass time, especially if we consider the human factor, its ancestry and progeny, and its chronological dimension: history and knowledge accumulation. Crises linked to migration constitute events with effects at a global, social, and individual level, and as such, they allow us to discern structural elements from the past sifting to the present (Julliard, 1979). These events are contained in history and entail a fragmented political chain of impacts, which either arise from the intensity of their time, at critical moments where everything explodes, or are born from research and analysis, revealing their various meanings linked with the past, present, and future. Crises linked to migrations show the permanence of the elements from the past, shelled within new events, as conjunctural and structural cycles; this is what Bagú called genotype (Bagú, 1970). Transatlantic migrations to the American continent, Latin American mass exiles, and many other processes leave personal, social, and historical impressions of the relationship between human mobility and crisis.

Migrations linked to crises become a matrix because their singularity hides specific elements of an entire structure, seen in the long term from the perspective of temporality and permanence (Julliard, 1979). They change the course of history, bifurcate its path, or become a turning point. Even if structural modifications are not immediately materialized, they linger at the individual and social levels. This infinite duration or genetic load (Bagú, 1970) waits to emerge at distant conjunctures in unknown ways; even for future generations,[1] it intersects their spatial dimension. Such a confluence offers a complex field of investigation.

The positivist idea of crises as an opportunity, followed by a time of blooming improvements and optimistic ideas, is opposed to historical evidence. Crises can be the guiding concept of progress, or may be just part of it (Koselleck, 2012, p. 138), but in fact, they constitute a process of accumulation. The ongoing processes in Latin America may evolve toward a more dangerous and socially unjust situation. Migration crises shape public opinion, ideologies that favor human rights violation (Cantat et al., 2019; Menjívar et al., 2019).[2]

[1] To name few examples: the Argentine exile of the 1970s, international activism during trials of the Juntas, and the Memory, Truth, and Justice process influenced international opinion and lead to changes of the Human Rights system (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Sikkink, 2008). Examples of the international influence of diasporas in the medium or long terms are the response to the Armenian massacres, the Jewish community stance on the holocaust, the vote of Spaniards abroad, among many others.

[2] Although this debate is not encouraged here, during the cholera epidemic of the 1990s in Argentina there were expressions of xenophobia against border migrants. Also, at the beginning of the pandemic, Chinese citizens were stigmatized by the media as carriers of the COVID virus.

Crises and migrations are part of historical processes of accumulation and social construction that in certain situations are socially learned and historiographically analyzed. They have a spatial dimension and long historical duration, exhibit the past and leave sediments for the future. Migrations constitute the everyday reproduction of temporary or permanent existence (Mármora, 2002) in differentiated spaces that embody the crossing of political borders. Confinement is a restriction of the human right of mobility that questions ideas and strategies among migrants and their collectives. Confinement, illness, job insecurity, and discrimination accumulate in structural crises providing a space of political opportunity for activism, integration, visibility, and the realization of basic rights.

We aim to understand the ideas and strategies used by migrants and their collectives in the face of crises while residing in Rosario following their arrival from Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. We focus our analysis on the personal dimension in its interrelation with the social sphere. The selection of study themes and participants was influenced by the rising of new human migration waves originating in the Americas, moving from countries shaken by crisis and by the phenomena of migrants who quickly join in diverse collectives. This paper explores themes such as migration expulsion crisis, crisis of the migration process, crises in the receiving countries, and pandemic crises.

Theoretical Methodological Toolkit

The analysis of the individual plane in its intersection with the social sphere was necessary to achieve the understanding of a process that involves several types of crises. We acknowledge that in the analysis of migration, the territorial distance shows differentiated dimensions: places of origin, transit routes, choice of destinations, as well as simultaneous and intermittent transnational spaces across and beyond borders. The trajectories of the migrants participating in this study had an impact in the migrant collectives they joined; which in turn gave shape to the persons and the settlement areas, in this case Rosario. Similarly, migrant trajectories have effects on their places of origin, transit, and across country boundaries. To learn about the migrant trajectories of our study participants, we utilized the life course perspective—as theory and as a technique—referenced as an interdisciplinary set of research methods suitable to investigate the roles of time and context influencing the individual development process (Balán et al., 1977; Bertaux, 2005; Elder, 1985; Jelín, 1976; Kholi, 2007; Mayer, 2004). In this study, we consider the intersection between biographic and historical time, individual cycles, and social transformations (Jelín, 1976). We intend to combine the social analysis of personal trajectories, their collectives' dynamics, and the interplay and influence all these forces have in the migration processes in Rosario, Argentina, to uncover historical breakpoints in the crisis processes, and identify the relationship of historical events and their impact.

A holistic strategy in the selection of techniques and methodologies was necessary to achieve our objectives. Interviews, participant observation, and ethnographic

methods[3] were the tools used to map meanings; and for the interpretation and analysis of the context, we created new methods and paths for international studies.[4] Situating the person as the central actor of the historical narrative, even in the analysis of a process, contributes to an interpretive and historical account, and a unique temporal dimension (Klotz & Prakash, 2008). Recognizing migrants' agency when forming their own life narrative was a theoretical-methodological decision contributing to our working hypotheses (Velasco & Gianturco, 2012). In the application of the principle of *agency* or free will from the perspective of the life course, we reclaim the capacity of the individual to make decisions and take actions within the conditions and limits imposed by the system (Elder, 2001). Migrants have political subjectivity (Mezzadra, 2005, 2012), are subjects of their struggle, cognizant of their realities, and both fighters and victims (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Rosenau, 1990). Migration is observed from its political dimension (Calderón Chelius & Martínez Saldaña, 2002), and exiles are seen as singular unique experiences beyond the structural causes of migration and the causes of the crises in the countries of origin, each one a migration laboratory.

Exiles are interpreted as the departure of people who, when confronted with a significant reduction of life opportunities, try to face this desperate situation by leaving their place of residence or their country to continue reproducing their daily existence. Emigration has been a subjective and socio-political response to the accumulation of crises (human rights violations, colonialism, wars, interventionism, natural disasters, etc.). The migration experience is an imperfect immediate political option (Bagú, 1970) that is imposed to continue living (Bagú, 1970; Riaño & Villa, 2008), exercised as an expression of agency and political subjectivity (Mezzadra, 2005, 2012; Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Our objective was to analyze the strategies used by migrants to reproduce their existence by gathering a collection of biographies and exploring them in their relationships with migrant collectives, framed within the overall context of their mobility project and as a particular response to critical situations. Gender parity and protocols for working with migrants who may have suffered human rights violations were followed to avoid revictimization (Jelín, 2002, 2014; Memoria Abierta, 2011; Velasco & Gianturco, 2012).

The space of analysis was the Pampean plains and the coastline of the mighty Paraná River where the city of Rosario, in Santa Fe province, is located. It is one of the largest cities in the Argentine Republic, a regional node of MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), the largest agricultural export port of the world[5] and

[3] We attended parties, meetings, demonstrations, public offices, among others, where information on the chosen groups could be collected.

[4] The fieldwork was carried out between 2019 and 2021, gathering more than 20 interviews observing gender parity. The people who consented to participate in the study are referred to using their real names, aliases, or nicknames regarding their preference; otherwise, a made-up name was chosen for them. The bibliographic search was focused on migration studies.

[5] "El Gran Rosario es el nodo portuario agroexportador más importante del mundo". Retrieved in November 2020 at: <https://www.bcr.com.ar/es/mercados/investigacion-y-desarrollo/informativo-

the point of arrival of internal and international migrants.[6] With an economy based on agriculture, livestock, metalwork, and textiles among others, it is also the home of several public and private universities and academic institutions. We introduce this report with a brief sociodemographic characterization of the city, to then focus on a description of the different migrant collectives, their problems and needs, in relation to their specific journeys.

The working hypotheses were based on the following assumptions: (1) human mobility tends to generate devices in migrant subjects that operate to confront the various critical circumstances of all stages in the migration process; (2) the migrant origin of the city of Rosario, its political culture, civil society, migrant associationism, and its epic celebration created a social fabric that favors the management of the challenges connected to migration, mediating in conflicts, and nurturing an intercultural dialogue.

A Sociodemographic Characterization of the City of Rosario

The city of Rosario, with less than two centuries of existence, has a great dynamism clearly seen in its human mobility, with a population of 948,312 inhabitants, according to data from the 2010 Census.[7] It welcomes internal and international migration, having a total of 24,962 foreign residents, at the time of the census.[8] Argentina, as a country of intra- and extra-regional immigration, of emigration and exile, as well as Rosario, show in the twenty-first century a migration profile aligned with the global transformations that the census data cannot reflect: country origins as diverse as Haiti, Colombia, and Venezuela, several countries of the African Continent and Asia, and a diversity of typologies such as refugees, students, precarious merchants, and exiles, among others.

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semanal/noticias-informativo-semanal/el-gran-0#:~:text=importante%20del%20mundo.-,El%20Gran%20Rosario%20es%20el%20nodo%20portuario%20agroexportador%20 m%C3%A1s%20importante,m%C3%A1s%20importante%20a%20nivel%20mundial>.

[6] CENSUS 2010, Migrations according to the National Population Census 2010. Province of Santa Fe. Retrieved in November 2020, at: <https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/Estructura-de-Gobierno/Ministerios/Economia/Secretaria-de-Planificacion-y-Politica-Economica/Direccion-Provincial-del-Instituto-Provincial-de-Estadistica-y-Censos-de-la-Provincia-de-Santa-Fe/ESTADISTICAS/Censos/Poblacion/Censo-Nacional-de-Poblacion-y-Vivienda-2010/Estadisticas-por-Dpto.-y-Pcia/Poblacion/Migraciones-segun-Censo-Nacional-de-Poblacion-2010.-Provincia-de-Santa-Fe>.

[7] INDEC. National Population, Household and Housing Census 2010. Accessed in March 2021 at: https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Nivel4-CensoProvincia-999-999-82-084-2010. Table P5-D. Santa Fe Province, Rosario department. Total population by country of birth, gender, and age group. 2010.

[8] Among them, 16,105 came from Latin American countries. 5979 were Paraguayans, 3595 Peruvians, 1109 Bolivians, and 770 Brazilians.

According to the National Directorate of Migration,[9] the province of Santa Fe processed 18,420 residence filings granted between 2011 and 2015.[10] During this period, the presence of migrants from non-neighboring countries, who did not traditionally reach Argentina,[11] began to be noticed. The city of Rosario is representative of this new regional mobility that makes up the new migration profile. Data from the Permanent Household Survey (EPH, INDEC) of 2017 indicates that 7.7% of those employed in the urban areas of the country are South American immigrants, and 1.2% of them are residents of the Gran Rosario area.[12]

Overall, migrants of Paraguayan origin were the majority residing in Argentina, followed by Bolivians, Peruvians, and Brazilians and, in smaller numbers, the new wave of arrivals comprised of Colombian and Venezuelan migrants, mainly young people. Permanent residency applicants are from MERCOSUR countries[13] and have integrated into the local economy in the following industries: Paraguayans work in the construction sector, Bolivians are employed in small farms called "quintas",[14] and the rest of the migrant population work in the services industry, gastronomy, and manufacturing. Many migrants come to study at the local universities. Migrants of Haitian origin are part of the new wave of arrivals; they are students, professionals, service workers, and entrepreneurs.[15] Most of the migrants from Venezuela and Colombia processed their entry into the country as students or as *Mercosureños* (citizens of MERCOSUR countries), obtaining temporary and permanent residence status in accordance with Article No. 23 of the Migration Law No. 25.871/2004. These new visas are the result of the regional integration process of South American

[9] Accessed in December 2020, at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/migraciones

[10] Among the temporary residences, the main group are Paraguayans, with 3610 visas granted, followed by Peruvians 1411, Colombians 1132, Bolivians 1097, Haitians 320, and Venezuelans 152. There were slight differences in terms of nationality among those obtaining permanent residence: Paraguayans, 3775, Brazilians 1352, Peruvians 1222, Bolivians 977, Colombians 518, Venezuelans 83, and Haitians 66.

[11] Santa Fe ranked fourth in the country in 2016, with more than 4000 residence authorizations granted that year, and more than 4600 in 2017. That means that in those 2 years, an average of 400 to 500 foreigners per month settled in this province. It only was surpassed by the province of Buenos Aires, the city of Buenos Aires, and Córdoba in the number of granted residence authorizations.

[12] Source: General Directorate of Laboral Macroeconomics and Statistical Studies (DGEMyEL, in Spanish)—Ministry of Production and Work (MPyT, in Spanish), based on data from the Permanent Household Survey (EPH, in Spanish) and the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC, in Spanish). "Hermanos Latinoamericanos: Su inserción laboral en los aglomerados con mayor presencia migratoria". Accessed in November 2020, at: http://www.trabajo.gob.ar/downloads/estadisticas/insercion_laboral_trabajadores_migrantes.pDf

[13] Countries affiliated to MERCOSUR. Accessed in August 2021, at: https://www.mercosur.int/quienes-somos/paises-del-mercosur

[14] 'Quintas' is the name given in Argentina to plots of land that are not very extensive, close to large cities and dedicated to the production of fruits, vegetables, poultry, etc., for family consumption or sale. They use migrant labor from different historical migration currents and origins.

[15] Accessed in November 2020, at: https://www.unosantafe.com.ar/santa-fe/crece-la-inmigracion-la-provincia-y-aumentan-los-controles-n2003744.html

countries affiliated to MERCOSUR, which includes a common migration regulations framework signed under the Free Residence Agreement (2002).[16]

Migrant collectives[17] are of very recent formation, institutionalized, or in the process of organization; and they carry out altruistic, political, and cultural activities and have enough influence to insert their issues on municipal, provincial and national public agendas, in alliance with other civil society agents. Discrimination and xenophobia are some of the issues they oppose,[18] abundantly documented by the 2020 Migrant National Survey, ENMA (Debandi et al., 2021).[19]

Not all major cities have consular representations, this is the case of Rosario that lacks consular offices for countries with increasing numbers of migrants such as Haiti, Venezuela, or Colombia; therefore, regularization of migrants and other foreigners in the country is substantially lagging, also increased due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemics. Excessive delay and lack of information to obtain residences, the National Identity Document (DNI), and documentation from their countries of origin are frequent issues. Rejections at the border, failure in granting of visas, and the impossibility of family reunification were other complications that were added to the suspension of street vending, the restrictions to work for those employed in services companies and those who owned small businesses, and the economic difficulties faced by migrant students. Other communities, the Red Cross, and government agencies with the support of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) collaborated to provide food, financial assistance, and immigration advisory services, as well as psychological support.

Two specific national public offices for migrants and refugees are based in Rosario: the Rosario Delegation of the National Directorate of Migration (DNM, in Spanish), and the Advisory Center for Migrants and Refugees.[20] The latter doesn't have noticeable activities or published information. Rosario has a robust social and political network of migrant communities and relationships with other states that might contribute to a political logistics able to mediate in conflicts linked to crises

[16] Accessed in October 2020, at: https://www.mercosur.int/documento/acuerdo-residencia-nacionales-estados-partes-mercosur-bolivia-chile/

[17] In general, the associations of the collectivities included in this study do not have updated or complete records of the number of migrants by nationality, as not all migrants are affiliated; nevertheless, these associations can provide rough estimates of their communities.

[18] Cases of administrative obstruction and mistreatment in the offices of documentation and residency have been denounced, mostly attributed to ignorance, racism, fear, and rejection, as recorded during interviews and reported on the media. Accessed in December 2020 at: https://www.lacapital.com.ar/la-ciudad/una-clienta-irascible-ataco-e-insulto-una-joven-haitiana-un-quiosco-centrico-n2647134.html; https://www.rosario3.com/informaciongeneral/Discriminacion-en-Rosario-integrantes-de-la-Asociacion-Civil-Haitiana-realizaron-una-protesta-antirracista-20210330-0075.html; https://www.rosario3.com/informaciongeneral/Estudiantes-haitianos-y-brasilenos-amenazados-Negros-no-deberian-estar-vivos-20210114-0044.html

[19] A 65% of the total migrants have experienced discrimination, a 71% of the migrant women interviewed, and a 59% of the interviewed men.

[20] This institution brings together the DNM, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Human Rights Secretariat of the National Government, it was created in 2019.

and migration. The National Celebration of Collectivities (FNC),[21] an epic celebration of the city promoted by the Government, Culture, Tourism, and International Relations areas of the Municipality and by the Association of Communities of Rosario, has become part of the identity of the city since the 1980s.[22] This celebration has become the most important migration public policy of the city of Rosario, interacting with the rest of the public and private initiatives for more than three decades. There are two other important collective action institutions: the Forum of Collectivities of the Deliberative Council and the Association of Communities of Rosario. The infrastructure of the FNC and its migrant organizations has functioned as a catalyst for critical milestones linked to human mobility, facilitating organization, dialogue, and dissemination of community association agendas. The Migration Program of the Secretariat for Human Rights and Gender is a recently created municipal entity with some clear policy actions, including the issuing of the Guide for Migrants and Refugees.[23]

Public health policies that impact migrant groups are of particular importance under these circumstances and seem to be one of the strengths of the city. They have a broad scope that includes mental health, childhood care, elderly care, gender issues, sexuality, complex care, and emergencies; as well as assurance of the right to universal health for migrants. They undoubtedly constitute a key factor for integration in the city and a reason for positive identification compared to other cities in the country.[24]

At the cultural level, other actions show a certain universal inclusion of the migrant population in the educational spaces of art and culture.[25] Although the migration policies in the city reflect a concern and a minimal design, they are not enough to respond to the needs of that population. The offices that provide real assistance to migrants, especially during situations of urgency and crisis, such as the

[21] National Celebration of Collectivities. Accessed in November 2020 at: https://www.rosario.gob.ar/web/ciudad/cultura/festivales/colectividades

[22] Held for the first time in 2020 in virtual format with dance and song performances and gastronomy demonstrations, it kept its headquarters open, and communities made performances and offered food for delivery and take away.

[23] Accessed in December 2020, at: https://www.rosario.gob.ar/web/sites/default/files/guia_migrantes.pdf

[24] They have the capacity to promote innovations, a drug laboratory, and interact with other public and private areas.

[25] The film, music, theater, and dance schools at the provincial and municipal levels in the city are open for migrant participation, documented with references and registries. For instance, the Municipal School of Urban and Circus Arts constitutes a training space permanently receiving migrants, it is the only free performing arts institution in the region. Many of its graduates establish themselves in Rosario and raise their families there, as it is the case for several Colombians. Rosario's Culture of the Province of Santa Fe funds migrant art projects. The Youth area of the Municipality of Rosario has also welcomed migrants in its workshops and other activities since its early years (interviews with a professor from the Municipal School of Urban Arts (EMAU, in Spanish), members of the Colombia Collective in Rosario, and the Director of the Center for Contemporary Expressions during 2020 and 2021).

ASPO decree (Social, Preventive and Obligatory Isolation) during the COVID-19 pandemics, were the Social Development and Government of the Municipality offices, which solved their problems in collaboration with organizations such as the Red Cross, the IOM, and community associations. There are fewer specific policies addressing problems related to human mobility, those that have been implemented are insufficient, but there is a social democratic universalist criterion in the design of municipal, provincial, and national public policies.[26]

Migration and Crisis: Strategies of Migrants and Collectives

Haitian Collective in Rosario

The Haitian collective in Rosario was created with the first Haitian students who arrived to enroll at the National University of Rosario, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Emigration of Haitians is a structural phenomenon resulting from the colonial remnants of the country's political, economic, and social crisis that have plagued the country since its independence. Previous waves of emigration had the United States, France, Canada, and the Dominican Republic as traditional destinations. The environmental disaster caused by the 2010 earthquake led to a humanitarian crisis, which, added to previous crises, further exposed the structural nature of the country's collapse. Migration to the Dominican Republic and North America increased, adding migration paths to the biggest cities of Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. As border controls in many of these countries are less effective, they seem to be more feasible destinations for migrants (Pacecca and Liguori, 2019). Geographically distant, vulnerable due to the recurring crises of the country, the Haitian migration could be explained as the search for a better place that guarantees the daily reproduction of existence. Argentina offered few immigration barriers due to judicial provisions securing the rights of migrants,[27] public education is universal, free, and of good quality, and it also had a government administration focused on political integration and regional transnational cooperation.

The port city of Rosario became one of the most frequent destinations for Haitian migration to Argentina. During this period, Rosario started a solidarity movement supporting Haiti, organized by Argentinian and Haitian students from the National University of Rosario. This support is thought to have contributed to make Rosario the Argentinean city with the largest Haitian settlement. Demographically, migrants

[26] They have problems such as the rejection of migrant subsidies for those lacking a National Identity Document (DIN) or who cannot prove more than 2 years of residence. Unfortunately, persons lacking the DNI are not given vaccinations. The later was recently been solved thanks to an agreement signed between the DNM and the collectives.

[27] Migration Law No. 25.871/04, known as the Migration and Human Rights Law because it established the human right to migrate.

from Haiti are middle-class youngsters who were not able to study at the universities in their own country or the neighboring countries; sometimes they took a job or received economical support from their families back in Haiti. Migrant Haitians define themselves as Afro-descendant or "black",[28] and are multilingual: they speak Creole, French, and many already spoke Spanish perfectly; they reside in the central urban areas of Rosario. Over the recent years, their situation has worsened due to the consequences of the economic crisis, and the pandemic in both Argentina and Haiti.[29]

According to the DNM, during the period between 2010 and 2013 a total of 4658 Haitians lived in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Rosario, which were the main cities where they concentrated. The restrictive immigration regulation changes imposed by President Mauricio Macri's administration (2015–2019) harmed the Haitian community in Rosario, who now had to obtain visa[30] to enter the country; the issuing of Decree No. 70/2017[31] introduced harsh sanctions to those not in compliance with the new requirements (Canelo et al., 2021). The new regulations were rigorously implemented: country entry rejections cases at the border were common, there were barriers to education,[32] discrimination in accessing public places, and the impossibility of family reunification. Beginning in 2016, the Haitian Civil Association (ACH) has been the community vehicle in Rosario for the promotion of Haitian culture in Argentina (music, language, and food) and an advocate of health, education, housing, violence prevention, sports, and recreation for Haitian migrants.

Language barriers are sometimes a problem in the integration process at the city of Rosario; Creole[33] is a vital component of Haitian identity, but mastery of the local

[28] The term black *négre/neg* (French/Creole) went through a process of reappropriation by the Haitians, who use it to define their identity. The derogatory intention of the term 'negro' is not part of the Haitian people history. Haiti is the only place in the world where the words *nég/négre* mean male or man, and *négés/négresse* mean girl or woman. Haitians define themselves as 'negro'. (Interview to Atiben (Haitian student), personal communication, November 1, 2020).

[29] During the first ASPO (lockdown protocol), several members of the migrant collectivity returned to Haiti following interruption in their studies, due to health issues or family reunification, they also closed their businesses, or stopped working because the mandatory lockdown left them without means of subsistence. Relatives in Haiti stopped receiving remittances because of the Haitian lockdowns. Two Haitian delivery workers died in traffic accidents during the pandemic and another one took his life, likely the result of labor insecurity among community members.

[30] In 1995, a new government resolution was issued excluding Haiti and other American countries of the tourist visa requirement (Resolution 189/95). In 2018, the resolution was turned down (Resolution 477/2018). Accessed on March 2021 at: http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/310000-314999/313642/norma.htm

[31] Accessed on: October 2020, at: https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/158336/20170130. Repealed in 2021 by President Alberto Fernandez' Government.

[32] There are 294 Haitian undergraduate and graduate students at the UNR; they are the fourth largest foreign student group after Brazilians, Peruvians, and Colombians. Consulted in December 2020, at: https://unr.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/BoletinEstadistico71.pdfote

[33] From the French *créole;* or from the Haitian *kreyól*.

language affects their economic, social, and political integration, as evidenced by various studies of migrants and refugees (Chiswick & Miller, 1998). Spanish language courses sometimes are often not enough for the fast-paced demands of integration and superior education studies. The community has suffered from racism, which manifested itself in acts of xenophobia and discrimination, stigmatizing idiosyncratic cultural differences. The racialization they are subjected to occurs within the Argentinean historic framework of the Afro-descendant denial and minimization of the migrant and Argentine blackness.

As a collective, Haitians have claims of their own, against their country of origin, or Argentina, but these are mostly expressed individually. Migrants have addressed this situation in the form of self-criticism, as a result of inaction, or lack of participation; "The diaspora is no stranger to this lack of commitment, it remains uncommitted, some express a feeling that Haiti is not going to rise up. Doing politics in Haiti says a lot about oneself" (Interview to Atiben, personal communication, December 1, 2020). Explanations for the purported passivity in face of critical situations include: the centuries of European colonialism, slavery and its long-lasting effects, as well as the years of neocolonial domination and transnational imperialism (Quijano, 2000; Broguet, 2017), vicious dictatorships, and the uneven relationship with the Dominican Republic; in short, the long-term impact generated by the continuous battling of recurring crises.

Migration involves a complex process of political socialization that implies contrasting the gnoseological universe of the country of origin against the concepts of order, power, or authority of the receiving countries (Calderón Chelius & Martínez Saldaña, 2002). The notion of being different in terms of physiognomy and language in a new city, in a different country with a particular political tradition, and, in this case, the characteristics of the Haitian middle class, might help to understand their crises management styles. An interesting case was observed during the pandemic: a Haitian collective organized to provide aid to those in need, but the names of those making donations and their beneficiaries were reserved. When someone refers to these acts of solidarity "it is always with discretion" (Jacson, Haitian student, personal communication, December 3, 2020).

Several activities carried out by Haitian collectives, such as the celebrations of Independence, the Revolution, or the flag, as well as academic activities, the submission of claims to the authorities, the National Celebration of the Collectivities, and the Gala,[34] show their enthusiasm and dynamism. Many Haitians are fully integrated in the socio-economic fabric of Rosario; despite the remaining barriers, they have established an active dialogue with the host society. The Haitian community is made up of young single people: several students, some graduated professionals, businessmen, and laborers; very few seem to be in extreme vulnerability, although it is important to note that new situations have emerged from the pandemic.

[34] The Gala is a massive night event that brings together the entire Haitian community; it has been held for two consecutive years at the end of the year, except in 2020, when it was suspended due to the pandemic.

Some have started families with other Haitians or with people from other nationalities. Although the economic success of many members of the collective is evident—there are more than 25 entrepreneurs and businessmen among Haitians in Rosario—, the crisis of 2020 forced them to "change their business, sell their capital, and start other ventures such as greengrocers or convenience stores" (Jean, personal communication, December 10, 2020).[35] Problems originating in migration policies stand out: delays in the renewal of visas; rejections at border points, and impossibility of family reunification. This is a direct consequence of the confluence of restrictive immigration policies and the administrative backwardness due to the ASPO situation, often affecting academic and work activities. "It is difficult to obtain identity documents. Haiti is not part of MERCOSUR, and for this the process is much more complicated" (Atiben, personal communication, December 1, 2020).[36] The Haitian Association is often involved in the solution of these problems through consultations with lawyers, virtual meetings, conferences, and conversations, as well as direct requests for resolution before the authorities. The Association also works to solve issues of housing and employment by disseminating information about opportunities, work notices to the community, and practical knowledge. Several Haitian students returned to their country due to delayed status regularization, difficulties in the adaptation to the school system, and language barriers.[37]

The Haitian community in Rosario faced their country's crises by emigrating. This action constitutes their response as migrant subjects (Mezzadra, 2005, 2012)—they are vulnerable, but also are capable of agency to transform their reality—; it is what guaranteed them the daily reproduction of existence in the place of residence (Mármora, 2002). New signs of the current crisis in Haiti emerged in the first semester of 2021, the members of the Haitian collectives in Rosario and Argentina denounced it: "Many children go without food and other essentials because their relatives did not receive their remittances; many people can't go to work or do their daily activities because the country is in the hands of armed groups" (Atiben, personal communication, March 11, 2021). There were few manifestations against the situation from the global Haitian diaspora, only some isolated expressions of discontent which further contributed to silence or neglect of the issue in the mass media and by international organizations. "Not all international organizations or human rights organizations understand the Haitian crisis. . . for them, Haiti does not exist. The crisis is very serious, insecurity is rampant. The diaspora is angry, not me,

[35] Gastronomic entrepreneur, he came to study, he has four brothers in Rosario with whom he has shared business.

[36] A 34-year-old Haitian student of the French translation program who arrived as a tourist in 2011. He is a member of the Haitian Civil Association, the Migration Studies Group (UNR), and the Jean Mapou Foundation.

[37] More than 25 health professionals of Haitian origin have been involved in essential service activities since the beginning of the pandemic, working long hours without rest days both in Rosario and in nearby towns. The current president of the Association is a nurse, working in healthcare doing uninterrupted day-night shifts. He came to Rosario in December 2007 to study, and left behind his mother and his older brother in Haiti.

this is the reality" (Atiben, personal communication, March 11, 2021). The Haitian migratory journey displays complex dynamics in the face of the accumulation of the effects of recurrent crises, as in the case of the 2010 earthquake, a humanitarian disaster:

> It was never my intention to leave Haiti, it was not among my plans, but after the earthquake, I said to myself: 'if I do not leave Haiti, I will lose my humanity, because at one point I was walking amid corpses all the time. I was fine at home, I could eat and everything, but living is not like that for me. That's why when I got here, I had to think about what my mother was going through. I came here, I know how to write, I know how to read, I could relate Spanish to other languages to make myself understood. And my mother, who could not read or write, how did she make herself understood in the United States? The Haitian state does not create a space for people to live. There is a new wave, deepened by the current political crisis, of emigrated artists and singers who are moving to the Dominican Republic. (Atiben, personal communication, March 11, 2021)

Atiben's trajectory intersects with that of the Haitian community, with the departure and with the arrival spaces, with the transnational scenario, and with the various strategies followed to manage the crises, enduringly putting himself back together, and being the political subject of his individual and social history.

Migrants from Venezuela and Their Association

Venezuelan migration is the most recent in the history of human mobility in Argentina. In 2018 alone, the DNM granted 70,531 status filings to Venezuelans in Argentina.[38] The city of Rosario is the recipient of this new stream of immigration. In 2019, members of the community established the Association of Venezuelans in Rosario, with 20 registered members. The association participates and collaborates in institutional, governmental, and civic activities. Its general secretary, a young entrepreneurial leader,[39] describes their objectives as follows: Provide social assistance, identify migrant fellow citizens, disseminate information, promote culture and sports, and establish alliances with other institutions in the city of Rosario, Argentinian organizations and those from other countries. Regularization of education certificates and diplomas is a prominent problem they identify.

Their activities include the collaboration with more than 30 Argentinean companies to provide jobs to Venezuelan migrants, entrepreneurship advice, and marketing. In collaboration with the Rosario Food Bank (BAR) and the Municipality of

[38] DNM, 2019, Accessed in October 2020, at: http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/pdf/estadisticas/radicaciones_resueltas_2018.pdf

[39] 30-year-old engineer. He visited Argentina in 2009 for the first time and in 2016 emigrated definitively with his family to work for a company. Following difficulties to get a permanent job, he opened a business in 2019, and in 2020, he started a Venezuelan-themed barbershop (closed during the ASPO). He has a background of activism and social action in Venezuela. Since 2016, he and his family have not gone back to Venezuela.

Rosario, the Association is providing food assistance every 2 weeks to 69 migrant families. The cultural and sports activities they promote include dance, food degustation and singing gatherings, and the National Baseball Championship, held in collaboration with the IOM. They also participate in the Acceleration Program of the Stock Exchange (Venezuelan Culture Program in Argentina), and the dissemination of Venezuelan culture through music promotion projects. In the area of education, they carry out activities in collaboration with the UNR to enroll students with the institution's commitment to evaluate students' academic documentation beyond the established deadline, due to the difficulty of accessing the documentation in their country of origin. There aren't estimates of the number of Venezuelan university students, but data from the public university report 93 Venezuelans enrolled in undergraduate studies, without so far registering postgraduate students (UNR, 2020).[40]

The Association, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Municipality of Rosario, proposed the incorporation as volunteers of Venezuelan health professionals to support services during the pandemic at health centers in Rosario: 19 nurses and orderlies, and 4 doctors. The birth process of the association is described by its president with these words: "Several Venezuelan collectives met to discuss about the political situation in Venezuela and from there they came together to democratically form a space where there is social and cultural action, provision of psychological assistance and job placement" (president of the Association, personal communication, October 30, 2020).

There is an estimated number of 4500 Venezuelans in Rosario, Santa Fe, 70% are qualified professionals, and the majority are forced migrants due to the situation in Venezuela. They are mostly young people who took their journeys alone or with their families. The difficulty of coming from a culture of immigration but not of emigration is added to the challenge of doing informal jobs, and starting businesses and *changas*[41] that do not match their education and qualifications. Many found serious obstacles trying to place their children in schools close to their homes.

Problems of unemployment, housing rental, business bankruptcy, loss of income, and job insecurity badly affected this community of immigrants during the pandemic. To face the resulting economic crisis, Venezuelan families living in Rosario supported each other, particularly during the ASPO, to cope with the inability to get food or other emergencies of varied nature.[42]

Hey's migratory journey brought her, her husband (both university graduates), and their three children to Rosario. Hey describes the crisis that led to their departure from her country years ago: "Crisis, insecurity, shortages. Look what I'm telling

[40] Accessed in November 2020 at: https://unr.edu.ar/wpcontent/uploads/2021/12/BoletinEstadistico71.pdfote

[41] "Doing changas" in colloquial language means having a sporadic, informal job, that is not in a dependent relationship under the employer. It is also a subsistence job, without unionizing rights or benefits.

[42] Gender violence among Argentine-Venezuelan couples emerged as a problem that has been referred to competent institutions.

you, all in all our experience was better than that of other immigrants. We had money, and we spend most of it, but some people just came by walking, I'm talking about families with small children." She describes families who have managed to reach success. As for the food shortages in Venezuela, the food that came in from abroad was unaffordable for them. "My salary at the Ministry of Education before I came was barely enough to buy a package of sanitary napkins and a kilo of minced meat. The economic crisis here is not comparable." Although they still cannot make any savings, both she and her husband have a job, for her, the crises in Venezuela and in Argentina are two very different crises. "I will never forget what it felt like when I saw a supermarket with a full stock again and to be able to get food and choose what to buy. We were able to come to Argentina because we had support from a relative who was in a good economic position; it was difficult, there were five of us in the family. It is difficult to start from scratch, even with family support" (Hey, personal communication, 2021 March 21).

The biography of this migrant gives a glimpse of the migratory journey of a Venezuelan who immigrated to South America. She and her family traveled by car to reach the border, then took a plane, and used their contacts and networks in the receiving country. She is a sociable person who easily adapts to new situations, her husband works in gastronomy and her children, who also play music, quickly adapted to their primary and secondary schools. The story of the crisis that motivated her departure marks the subjectivity of being a migrant dealing with the limited choices forcing her decision to migrate in response to an economic and political crisis. The crisis that encompasses the migration process, the process of political socialization, and the socioeconomic insertion in the place of reception shapes a migrant journey that makes possible the daily reproduction of existence in their overcoming of the hindrances that embody the migration process. The reception of the city and her integration do not appear hostile in her account, even though both she and her husband are overqualified for their jobs.

The Venezuelan collective has a strong institutional dynamism, in spite of its short time in existence, it has successfully managed the crises linked to migration, with particular dedication to most of the problems and projects of its community (work, immigration process support, health assistance), except issues related to discrimination. They take a political position about their country's crisis that includes voicing their concerns nationally and internationally; it seeks negotiation and institutionalized alliances as a way to develop and attain its goals.

Migrants from Colombia and Their Collective

The Colombia in Rosario Collective,[43] made up of artists and activists, is the result of the recent migration of Colombians who have been in this city for more than 10 years. Their common goals are anti-discrimination struggle and solidarity with its victims. The collective is not interested in obtaining registration as association or any other civic status. Yet, there have been moments when they needed to be recognized as institution, to participate in the NCC. "The Collective has been formed for 6 years, it has participated in the NCC for 3 years. It is not officially registered, nor does it have legal status, it is not a civil association, it holds meetings in a sporadic and autonomous fashion, considering the political situation in Colombia" (Claudia, personal communication, December 14, 2020).

The informal and political nature of this group is evident in the events that they usually organize, generally related to Colombia's political issues. The massive mobilizations of April and May 2021, under pandemic conditions, were massive. "I know that in 2016 a group of Colombian artists got together to hold a symbolic vote for the Peace Agreement Referendum between the government and the FARC forces" (Claudia, personal communication, December 14, 2020). Colombia doesn't have a consular office in Rosario; all consular matters are handled at the Consular office of the Colombian Embassy in Buenos Aires. "The collective action is directed to support people gatherings and political action in public spaces"[44] (Claudia, personal communication, December 14, 2020). They create projects, programs, and promote cultural development; they have won several cultural calls for proposals from the Cultural Area of the Province of Santa Fe, with musical, dance, and audiovisual group performances.

A young Colombian professional woman, who came to Rosario a few years ago, was referred as a key informant by two Colombian street and urban artists who together with their families sold *arepas.*[45] The young woman's migrant trajectory could well represent that of many of her fellow citizens, she originally came to study, is an artist, she is young and has job insecurity; she had problems to validate her studies and diplomas and is uncertain about her immigration future. "I am 30 years old, and I am from a town near Bogotá" (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). She arrived in Argentina in October 2017, traveling to Rosario with the intention of studying a master's degree.[46] She entered the country with a MERCOSUR visa, like many others. She does not consider herself an exile, she migrated because she wanted to study: "[I traveled] because of the limited academic

[43] Accessed on December 2020: https://www.facebook.com/ColectivoColombianEnRosario/

[44] Accessed on the Instagram page, colectivocolombiarosario, of the Colombian Collective in Rosario.

[45] Arepas is a typical food from Colombia and other South American countries. It is a flat bread made of corn that usually is served with a variety of fillings and toppings. (Translator's Note).

[46] Master in Cultural Studies at UNR. Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, UNR, accessed on December 2020, at: https://estudiosculturales.unr.edu.ar/

and labor opportunities in my country; Colombia has been at war for many years, and despite the Peace Agreement, a very complex internal conflict is still ongoing. I know many Colombian exiles in Buenos Aires" (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). At first, she thought that she was going to get a job more easily, she spent a couple of months selling bread on the street, then she got financial help from her relatives in Colombia. Like many fellow citizens and migrants of other nationalities, she has had difficulties validating her Colombian study diplomas: "Validating a degree is a very long and unfamiliar process, the bureaucracy is incredibly complicated" (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). As an artist, her way of dealing with crises is by creating, working, and engaging in activism.

The political character of the Colombian collective is constantly reinforced: a few years ago, they received a visit from a FARC guerrilla commander "for a debate event that we organized, we also hold fora regularly on the Peace Agreement in Colombia. Some colleagues traveled to other cities in Argentina or to Colombia, and we managed to hold the Digital Forum event in September,[47] as well as the celebration of December 7" (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). The last event refers to "The Night of the Candles," a Catholic celebration that syncretizes Afro-descendant and indigenous beliefs, which has become popular and is celebrated in Buenos Aires and Rosario; it is a space for remembrance, but also for making public complaints and petitions. The collective, approximately 30 Colombian and Argentine young people, made a public invitation to celebrate the Night of the Candles at the Plaza San Martin across from the provincial government building; among the participants there were students, workers, families, and bands of music, traditional dancers, and sellers of *arepas.* The candle lighting ceremony was made with a call for peace, health, and a better year. The event was massive, self-governed, and aesthetically appealing.

"The collective, is made up of 10 to 15 people, sometimes even 30. Lately, a lot of people have joined"[48] (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). The group meets sporadically, often prompted by political concerns regarding Colombia or Argentina. "Another project we have is to participate in the National Celebration of the Collectivities in Rosario, but for that you need to be registered as an association, we need around 20 to 30 people, and we have to make an investment." The interviewee says that it is difficult to establish an association. "In 2019 we built a stand to make and sell fast food, it had some complications it was like a stand outside the collectives. And before, in 2015, we presented radio shows with Che Radio Station" (Claudia, personal communication. December 14, 2020).

This political group does not have a particular structure or hierarchy; they come together for specific activities: "Most of us are women, feminist militants, we defend

[47] Accessed in December 2020, at: https://issuu.com/juliethcalderon0/docs/comunicado_ccr_16_sept.docx

[48] Accessed in December 2020, at: https://www.conclusion.com.ar/etiqueta/colectivo-colombia-en-rosario/

international peace, we Colombians migrate all over the world, we are current on all migration issues and on the issues of our country." We were able to defend the case of a Colombian boy who died [in Rosario], and his family wanted the body repatriated. A law proposal for a migration tax bill to pay for repatriations to Colombia was carried out, "currently, immigration taxes go to the consulates to provide special emergency funds"[49] (Claudia, personal communication, 2020 December 14). They have links with human rights organizations in Bogotá, as well as with other think-tank and left-wing organizations: AMSAFE,[50] District 7,[51] the political group *Ciudad Futura*[52] and the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH), which supports their political and cultural activities.[53]

Colombian students' presence at UNR continues growing: "I arrived three years ago, from that time also my two brothers came and then two of their friends went to La Plata to study" (Claudia, personal communication, December 2020 14). The group did not risk estimating the number of Colombians in Rosario, but the UNR has 394 Colombian students enrolled in undergraduate courses, ranking third behind Brazil and Peru. Among foreign post-graduate students, Colombians are the second largest group behind Paraguayans, with 313 students (UNR, 2020). The pandemic effects on this group included lack of income and job insecurity, but not difficulties in their access to healthcare.

Colombian migration to Rosario is difficult to characterize, it is a relatively new group in Argentina as shown by the census data (17,576, in 2010). The arrival of Colombians accelerated in the first decade of the twenty-first century; the number of DNM's granted residency permits significantly increased during the second decade of the twenty-first century. By 2015, Colombians living in the country had doubled their number compared to the 2010 census (González et al., 2016).[54] In 2018, another 17,692 Colombians settled in Argentina, and the increasing trend of residence applications has not shown a decline since 2004. The MERCOSUR migration category was the most used for residency requests.

Colombia is and has been a country of recurrent crisis, emigration, and forced displacement to neighboring countries, the United States, and Spain. Our interviews didn't document cases of exile or forced migration due to political violence. As it is

[49] Accessed in December 1, 2020, at: https://viapais.com.ar/rosario/1453556-piden-ayuda-para-repatriar-a-un-estudiante-colombiano-fallecido-en-rosario/

[50] Teachers' union of the Province of Santa Fe, which has a left-wing leadership, collaborating on Argentine and Colombian political issues. Accessed in November 2020, at: http://www.amsaferosario.org.ar/

[51] *Cooperativa de Trabajo Cultural,* a cultural center supported by the *Ciudad Futura* Party, among other partners. Accessed in December 2020, at: https://www.district7.com.ar/#/

[52] Recently created environmentalist political and social party in Rosario, with representatives in the Deliberative Council. Accessed in December 2020, at: https://www.facebook.com/CiudadFuturaOK/

[53] Rosario's branch of the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights, at: http://apdhrosario.com/

[54] Accessed in November 2020 at: http://argentina.iom.int/co/sites/default/files/publicaciones/OIM-La-migracion-colombiana-en-argentina-PDF-WEB.pdf

evidenced by the sociocultural, age and migratory conditions of the migrants, the reasons are mostly academic. The country's inability to retain its students and professionals, and the structural crisis in Colombia, and the eminently political and militant discourse that the Colombian collective displays seem to account for its singularity. This collective is visibly organized as a political subject because it exerts its agency making political demands to Colombia, but also in their struggles against racism, machismo, feminicide, and for abortion rights. Similarly, the outlined biography of a Colombian migrant speaks of a political subject, since as a woman, professional, activist, artist, and Colombian she develops militancy in several of those spaces, and exercises her agency engaging herself in the public arena and adhering to a political agenda of those moral causes, using art as a tool for militancy and consensus.

The testimony of another Colombian music artist and activist also offers visions of migration and crisis displaying his political subjectivity, giving migration a political character in his positioning and in that of the collective he joined: "I came here when I was looking for a place to study in Latin America and I found that in Argentina admission to the university was free of charge and there were no admission exams... And there comes the other crisis that I experienced as a migrant: finding myself in need to perform academically in a place that I am not familiar with." His militancy using Colombian cumbia gives him great acceptance in the city and contributes to his integration. Yet, he suffered discrimination at the University of La Plata. He tries to represent his positioning and political militancy in his art: "I would qualify Colombia as an eternal dictatorship, camouflaged as democracy; in Colombia, since the time of independence, the government power is divided among sectors of the oligarchy... people are silenced with bullets and violence" (Jonny, personal communication, November 8, 2020, and March 28, 2021). He sees that his compatriots have not resolved their migration situation and the Argentinean economic crisis poses the need to return. As a worker of the cultural field, the crisis impacted greatly on him, having to do unskilled jobs.

From the perspective of the subject's biographies and the collectives, it is possible to ascertain their political and artistic character. Art is a tool for expression and dissemination of culture, which stimulates solidarity. The transnational struggle, the denunciation of discrimination, minoritization, racism, and the struggle for human rights, characterizes the individual and the collective as vehicles of crises management; it is here where the personal is collective and political, for these migratory flows in Rosario.

Conclusions

The strategies used by migrant subjects and their collectives in Rosario to face crisis and migration are diverse, they possess a particular mode of action, and their creation processes result from the circumstances that shape them both socially and individually. Migrants and their collectives as subjects interact with the system, leaving

small marks in the traveled spaces—institutions, denunciations, strategies, and changes in their own lives. The crises propelling their migration, the crises of the migration process, the global crises, and the pandemic crisis impel forms of management that establish migrant's political subjectivity. Sometimes they adapt themselves as best they can in their destination places, other times migration changes their life courses, their collectives, and even their places of departure, arrival, and the transnational space.

The COVID-19 pandemic deepened migrants' vulnerability: problematics of documentation and immigration regularization, access to rights, subsidies, assistance, healthcare, and vaccinations; this, in turn, moved migrants and their collectives to take a much more active political stance to help their communities or to denounce vulnerable situations. The bond of the Venezuelan collective with institutions in Rosario contributed to their visibility; Colombians' artistic manifestations and public denunciation of racism and violence in their country engaged the solidarity of Argentinians and other groups with an important public presence, and, even under the restrictions due to the pandemic, they were able to position these issues on political and media agendas. Migration is usually a turning point for personal biographies, changing life histories. It is linked to the crises at the countries of origin, but it also entails personal crisis processes, and it is the greatest catalyst of political socialization (Calderón Chelius & Martínez Saldaña, 2002). Migrant biographies interact with the social life of their collectives beyond individuals' degree of belonging, affiliation, and participation. Migrant actions have an impact on their destinations, places of origin, and at a transnational level. Haitian, Venezuelan, and Colombian migrants and their collectives maintain political ties to their host and home countries, exercising political transnationalism (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007); counting on social remittances, they participate in global and local actions. Migrants struggle for moral and ethical causes (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) within structures of political opportunity such as the pandemic, they achieved recognition for being essential workers and managed to obtain migration regularization, public assistance, and vaccination, the exposition of racism.

The migration historiography of Argentina identified with white and European migration and had selective policies. Recent conditions, mainly after the recovery of democracy and thanks to the transnational struggle of migrants, exiles, and collectives brought to light a landscape where human rights conventions linked to migration endorsed the right to migrate as a human right (García, 2017). This has had an influence both in the presence of new regional integration flows, and also in the selection of Argentina as a place to migrate and live, which is based on its tradition of universal social protection policies (Danani, 2017).

The political structure of the city of Rosario, despite its real barriers, interacts with the strategies of migrants and their collectives to address conflicts related to migration. Migrants, at the individual and community levels, use different tactics to strengthen themselves idiomatically, economically, and socio-culturally, while seeking integration to carry out political and social activism as different ways of managing crises in this space.

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Chapter 7
Mobility and Crisis in Nicaragua: Narratives and Subjectivities of Forced Migration

Enrique Coraza de los Santos

Introduction

I take as starting points Koselleck's (2006, 2012) clinical perspective of crisis as an urgent situation or conjuncture of change (state and political violence in Nicaragua); the relevance of what is at stake in that situation (personal and family life); uncertainty as a defining feature (a change in people's everyday life); and a call to action as a way out (people's agency[1] identifies migration as a strategy). Personal narratives reveal an interruption of life plans, living a moment of uncertainty, fear, and the need to rebuild everyday lives and hopes for the future, differentiating immediate needs (short-term safety) from expectations (a return to Nicaragua). Considering Roitman's position (2016), crisis is analyzed not as a well-established notion, but as a starting point where storytelling, narratives, allow access to repertoires of meaning on multiple scales, personal-family, social, and political, and in broad temporal dimensions. Hence, narrative is what makes crisis intelligible. I share Ramos Torre's (2016) view of the content of stories as subjects in search of a narrative identity which is temporal (sequence, sense of an ending, etc.), phenomenal (events as they happen), and plotted (plots select, join, and typify). In this fashion, historicity, which can be appreciated in a story, becomes, according to Ricœur, a way of apprehending events.

The problematization that guides this work conceives of crisis beyond an interpretation in socio-political and economic terms and avoids trying to establish its

[1] I use the following concept: "...we will understand agency as the intrinsic property of 'acting' (the recurring movement by which structures and action reciprocally transform), and we will characterize action through the understanding of its subjective and social meaning" (Martuccelli, 2016, p. 17).

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existence as a category solely within a specific context. I instead understand subjects under conditions of forced mobility as historical and situated beings—following Haraway (1995)—that identify themselves within a way of life constructed from social, cultural, political, and economic elements in a particular historical trajectory.

I accessed narratives to learn about life experiences—how people perceive their situation in temporal and situational terms labeled under the analytical category of crisis. I conducted the analysis with temporal depth: the past is represented by a way of living—people's everyday life—and the present is experienced as a conflict between future expectations and a critical situation that threatens them, which leads to forced migration as a strategy to overcome crisis and rebuild the timeline that joins past (everyday life) and future (a life plan).

I begin this chapter by describing subjects in terms of situated forced migrants,[2] which leads me to describe the context people flee from as the source of circumstances I identify as triggers of the crisis. I then outline the theoretical foundations for associating the term of crisis with interviewed participants through their subjectivities. I conclude by analyzing the interviews I conducted, bearing in mind the tension between the content of subjects' narratives and the researcher's gaze.

This work makes use of the historical method, in particular of recent history and oral history, with inputs from biographical and ethnographic methods. The inquiry was based on the knowledge and recognition of Nicaraguan forced migrants arriving in Mexico via its southern border (Coraza de los Santos & Gatica, 2019; Coraza de los Santos, 2020), as well as of people applying for refugee or "visitor for humanitarian reasons" status who fled Nicaragua since April 2018.[3] To contact participants, I developed a snowball sampling strategy through civil society organizations working with migrants, which led me to identify key informants. In this way, I accessed a network consisting of key informants' acquaintances, relatives, and fellow Nicaraguans in similar situations who met in Tapachula, Chiapas. Through this approach, I kept identifying participants until a total of 13 in-depth interviews were carried out between September 2018 and March 2019 in the city of Tapachula.

The Starting Point: Some Subjects, a Situation, a Context

The interviews were possible thanks to the data provided by different civil society organizations (RET—Resiliencia, Educación, Transición-Internacional [Resilience, Education, International Transition]; UMA –Una Mano Amiga [A Friendly Hand];

[2] I do not use "subject" in individual terms, but rather as a shared experience that allows for a collective analysis.

[3] While this process began in April 2018, it remains unresolved for a number of reasons: first, people interviewed still remain in a condition of forced migration (as of May 2021), insofar as they cannot return because the circumstances that triggered their situation persist; second, authoritarian and repressive actions in Nicaragua continue and have even intensified in the run-up to the 2021 electoral process, in which Daniel Ortega sought to remain in power.

and Colectivo de Atención Psicosocial de la Frontera Sur [Southern Border Psychosocial Care Collective]) that allowed access to the informal network that Nicaraguan migrants had established in the city of Tapachula, Chiapas.[4] To gather additional data, I held informal conversations with 30 young Nicaraguans exiled in Costa Rica whom I met as a professor of the Academic Training for Political Leadership Course [*diplomado*] organized by FLACSO Costa Rica in July 2019. I must also mention my attendance to the congress *Internationalist Solidarity Tribune. Nicaragua Today. Only the people save the nation* with young Nicaraguan exiles in Argentina who shared their country's situation, personal circumstances, and experience as an opposition and resistance group to Daniel Ortega's regime. This event took place on Thursday, November 22, 2018, at the Eva Perón Auditorium of the State Workers Association (ATE).[5]

The information and elements from primary and secondary sources allowed me to identify people within the category of forced mobility according to its defining characteristics: people who fled from experiences of state-sponsored institutional political violence and with no possibility of return (Coraza de los Santos, 2020). Likewise, I was able to recognize certain differences among them based on elements such as their degree of political action in the public sphere, either from the social sector, whether their participation was organized or individual, or the political, as part of political organizations, the media, or human rights organizations. Likewise, it was also possible to identify those who had been subjected to violence due to their direct participation in political action, such as those who had suffered persecution or repression because of family relations. Finally, I found a third group of people that, although they were part of this family circle, had not experienced violence directly, but had fled nonetheless as a preventive measure after observing repressive actions by the government—what I call potential violence.[6] I was thus able to establish an analytical difference between people in a situation of forced migration—as was the case of all those interviewed in Tapachula—and those who were exiled, the young people with whom I had contact in San José and Buenos Aires. These primary

[4]The cases making up the narratives that underpin this reflection were semi-structured interviews with 13 people in the city of Tapachula. Participants were sought without an intention of representativeness, but instead as a plurality of voices to try to illustrate the diversity of stakeholders. Thus, I tried to keep a certain balance between genders (7 men and 6 women) and generations (2 people under 20 years old, 3 in their 20s, 6 in their 30s, and 2 in their 40s). It should also be noted that, for reasons of space, not all testimonies are quoted from—like every choice, this selection is subjective. A more in-depth analysis in terms of gender, class, sexual diversity, age, and place of residence is necessary, as it would give deeper meaning to expressions such as the "we" that these narratives utter.

[5]These two moments—in San José, Costa Rica, and Buenos Aires, Argentina—comprise informal approaches and are not part of the personal narratives used for this analysis. However, they were important to complement the information gathered about the situation experienced in Nicaragua, as well as the reality of forcibly displaced migrants. At the same time, they served as cross-references to substantiate the veracity of the interviews conducted in Tapachula.

[6]Potential violence is associated with the perception of danger, with people's subjective dimension of security in relation to the reality they live (Coraza de los Santos, 2020).

conclusions, as well as those related to people's choice of routes or destinations—without analyzing whether they were people in transit or settlers—led me to a hypothesis that I will only allude to here, since it requires more in-depth study beyond the scope of this chapter. Among those who left for Mexico, I found people who did not have previous migration networks in Costa Rica but did have them in Mexico or further north, especially family members. A good portion of political exiles considered migration to Costa Rica an alternative strategy, similarly to what I observed in Buenos Aires.

To understand the circumstances that produced forced migration, I cross-analyzed multiple sources: personal narratives, press information, executive reports by international organizations, and secondary academic literature. All these reinforce the degree of veracity of personal accounts and support the elements that constitute it, which is used by people both to define themselves within a situation of forced mobility and to back the set of arguments that comprise the social, political, and symbolic capital they present before the institutions (UNHCR, National Migration Institute [INM], and Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance [COMAR]) that can guarantee them national or international protection status (territorial asylum, refugee, visitor for humanitarian reasons).

The events that occurred in Nicaragua in 2018 under the last administration of President Daniel Ortega (which began in 2007) have been defined by the international press, international agencies, and international organizations (ACNUR 2019; Amnesty International, 2021; CIDH 2018; Human Rights Watch, n.d.; OEA, 2019), as well as by the academic literature (Aguilar Antunes et al., 2018; Gómez-Abarca, 2019; Gómez-Abarca & Solís, 2019; Marti i Puig, 2019; Martí i Puig & Serra, 2020; Rodríguez-Ramírez & Osorio Mercado, 2020), as a crisis (in some cases only political and in others also economic and social). However, none of these sources provided an explanation, development, or an analysis of why this is considered a crisis. Another interesting fact is that the academic literature that addresses events in Nicaragua makes no mention of forced migration or exiles as one of the consequences of the country's political context (except for Gomez's work on young exiles), focusing instead on domestic actions and actors.[7] Here I will not go beyond pointing out these elements, as they are not the chapter's main objective.

I will now recount, in descriptive, synthetic fashion, the events that took place in Nicaragua between 2018 and 2019, which created an atmosphere of institutional political violence. The government's goal was to repress, and in some cases eliminate altogether, resistance, opposition, and demonstrations against the regime of President Daniel Ortega and vice presidency of Rosario Murillo. The sequence of events defined as "Nicaragua's Crisis" or "Nicaragua in Crisis" constitutes what can be called a repertoire of meanings of crisis (Ramos Torre, 2016), at once

[7] This fact is not unusual: it has been a constant finding in my research since 2000. Indeed, I have witnessed how, in the different national/regional realities I have studied (the Southern Cone, Colombia, Central America, and Mexico), forced mobilities and exiles in particular constitute non-memories or silenced memories.

homogenous and repeated in the different personal narratives I could access. It is striking to note how the components of this repertoire of meaning are repeated in the same fashion, in the same chronological order, and refer to the same events, which demonstrates the traumatic situation experienced in Nicaragua and point to a causal relationship with forced migration.

Nicaragua's twentieth-century history is summarized by Marti i Puig (2019), from an institutional perspective, as a certain continuity in the exercise of power:

> In little more than a century, Nicaragua has experienced the United States occupation, an oligarchic liberal regime, a repressive family dictatorship, a revolutionary socialist regime, a liberal democracy, and since 2007 (with the return of Daniel Ortega to power after an electoral victory contested in 2006), a hybrid regime that combined democratic institutions with authoritarian elections and that, as of April 2018, has once again mutated into tyranny. (p. 3)

The repertoire of meanings is revealed as a consensual, subjective, mediatic, political, and academic narrative that has acquired the category of veracity. In it, one can identify *longue durée* elements (applying a Braudelian vision to Nicaragua's recent history, from the beginning of the first Sandinista government in 1979 to the present),[8] which show political and economic changes that started from the ideological opposition between the political left and right, between socialism and capitalism, to a gradual blurring of the limits between these categories (Marti i Puig, 2012; Torres Rivas, 2007). This is accompanied by the ideological and political change produced by the figure of Daniel Ortega alongside that of his wife, Rosario Murillo (current vice president of the government since the 2016 elections), and their children in what is a controversial relationship between family and governmental power. Other elements are medium-term changes related, above all, to the economic models applied, which, like politics, oscillate tensely between interventionism and liberalism, which involves regional geopolitical actors (El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba, Venezuela) as well as global ones (the USA, Russia, China). Finally, short-term changes are key components of the repertoire of meanings that can be understood as representative of crisis in Nicaraguans' everyday life and potential triggers of forced migration. The combination of elements present in Nicaragua's recent past constitutes a vision of crisis not only as a political, economic, and social process but also as a historical one. Interviewees mostly allude to the short term, but their narratives gradually refer to medium- and long-term phenomena. This allows us to interpret events of 2018 not as an origin or cause, but as in-between moment, a

[8]The field of recent history is not clearly established in chronological terms, and, therefore, this consideration may be controversial. However, we base ourselves on what Fanco and Levín point out in considering that recent history "is sustained in a particular regime of historicity based on various forms of coetaneity between past and present: the survival of actors and protagonists from the past who can give their testimonies to the historian, the existence of a living social memory about that past, the contemporaneity between the historian's lived experience and the past they engage with" (Franco & Levín, 2007, p. 33). Therefore, we rely on the references that subjects point out as starting and inflection points in the history of Nicaragua, which is tied, narratively and directly, to their present experiences, their circumstances, and their conditions.

trigger of elements of crisis in Nicaraguans' everyday life and expectations, anchored in different moments of the past. As Sánchez Benites (2018) argues, "the claim for the INSS [Nicaraguan Institute for Social Security] reforms was only the tip of the iceberg. The Nicaraguan population, in their vehement aversion to the student massacre, also released all the tensions accumulated during more than a decade of subordination" (p. 129). Baldizon (2018) remarks, "although this citizen rebellion occurred without anyone being able to foresee it, it cannot be said that it rises out of nowhere. Rather, it can be considered as the result of discontent accumulating over several years. . ." (p. 152). To summarize, we cannot speak of discontinuities, but of marks on the continuity of a process or a social and political crisis in Nicaragua that has produced others in personal, family, and social terms.

Political analysis can make use of different time scales to examine a country's recent history. Just as Martí i Puig did it for Nicaragua, Gori (2018) summarized as such the recent history under Daniel Ortega's rule:

> The Ortega regime is more complex than explicit Chavismo. It formed alliances with ALBA [the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America], the IMF, the United States, and China. This pragmatic leadership struck balance between various institutions, mobilized political and symbolic resources towards them, and centralized power by reducing competition and pluralism. For twelve years, it reconciled the aspirations of powerful and the subordinate sectors, produced benefits and guaranteed order. But that sense of balance was not enough. Ortega triumphed in 2016 with more than 72% of the vote and his party gained 71 of 92 representative seats in the National Assembly. The second runner-up was Arnoldo Alemán's PLC [Constitutionalist Liberal Party], who now returns to the fight. Both are leaders who had rebuilt bipartisanship and stable power formula. The Ortega government that had won 72% of the popular vote, and stood as the vindicator of national reconciliation, demolished its political capital in less than two years. (p. 81)

In procedural and descriptive terms, the sequence of events that comprises what the cited authors, the media, and international organizations denote as Nicaragua's unfolding "crisis" comprises the following elements: in the immediate past, a poor and delayed response to control a fire that started in the Indio Maíz biological reserve in the southeast of the country, which was linked to government interests related to the inter-oceanic canal, a project that promised to attract Chinese investment (Blanco, 2018). The second triggering element, around which there is strong consensus, was a demonstration against a pension system reform, attended by both senior citizens and young students. The government's response started and escalated repressive state violence, delegitimization and criminalization of protests and protesters, and polarization that led to a growing number of victims, especially at the hands of state security forces, parapolice groups, and mobilized government supporters (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, 2018). Although the reform was later withdrawn by the government, the social groups who opposed it, calling themselves the "self-convened," radicalized, and called for the resignation of the entire government. This was followed by an escalation of political and social violence that increased the number of fatalities, as well as the number of detainees, prisoners, disappeared persons, and persons fleeing the country. These events—which, I repeat, are only recounted here in very general terms—serve as the context for the repertoires of meaning found in interviewees' personal narratives.

Participants themselves point out these events as integral to their personal and family struggles and as causes of their migration.

Crisis in People's Lives from the Perspective of Their Narratives

According to Bizas (2016), when referring to traumatic events, crisis implies a process that involves both a diagnosis of the situation and a solution to it. As Koselleck (2006) put it:

> All three meanings refer to life-and-death decisions with a "double meaning", combining both the description of a condition (objective) —based on gnostic criteria— and the conception (subjective) of a healthy condition that urges to act for its attainment. (cited in Bizas, 2016, p. 7)

In this regard, crisis is narrowly associated with historicity, with the temporality of the socio-political territory that serves as its framework and its context (Nicaragua), but also to the realm of people's everyday life, linking it to the actions of both the government and of affected people. As Redfield (2010) points out:

> The time of crisis, however, foreshortens the temporal horizon surrounding the moment, subordinating past and future within it. Within such limited temporal parameters, action must occur quickly, if it is to occur at all. Thus, whatever the empirical purchase of any particular crisis claims, the very claim itself frames choice as limited good. (p. 128)

For this reason, the temporal dimension in a moment of crisis has a different density than that of ordinary time. Historical perspective allows us to identify the turning points that start a crisis, the process along its durability, the measures that come into play, and the moment when it can be considered as finished. Additionally, we must not forget that this also affects space, and that space is not static but dynamic in material and symbolic terms, and that it acquires particular meaning which can be redefined in the heat of crises, representing a different relationship when viewed from within the critical situation.

The approach to the temporal and its relationship with crisis is associated with the concept of everyday life. Bialakowsky's study (2018) provides a definition that is functional to the approach sought in this chapter:

> Everyday life appears, then, as an instance in which the particular contours of meaning become more visible, in such a way that there is a certain continuity between the definitions of meaning in each perspective and their ways of analyzing the "day-to-day" of the social. (p. 130)

Everyday life represents the macro temporal unit of reference for people's individual and social experiences, as Heller (1985) says:

> Everyday life is the life of the individual. The individual is always, and at the same time, a particular and specific being (. . .) Also as an individual, man is a specific being, the product and expression of his relationships and social situations, heir and preserver of human development; however, the representative of the human-specific is never a single man

> alone, but is always the integration (tribe, demos, estate, class, nation, humanity) —and often several integrations— whose conscious part is man and which forms his "awareness of us." (pp. 42–44)

By asking about everyday life, how life was for my informants prior to the situation considered as "crisis," I found precisely these evocations of different temporal depths for multiple reasons, in some cases political, in others social or economic:

> Well, it was a peaceful country, we worked peacefully, there was work and we lived well, thank God, because we worked and earned our money and everything. Our children had everything they needed. (RG, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

> [. . .] to be honest with you, our life wasn't so bad in Nicaragua. It's true that there's hardship in every country, but despite everything at least I had an education, which is the main thing for our children, also their food and a place to stay, home. For sure, that never was. . . that's only ever been a smokescreen in a Nicaraguan's life. (W, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

> We led a peaceful life. There was enough work for everyone where we lived. Everyone worked, lived, no one was well-off, let's say they fared normally. Normal stuff: getting up, going to work, then coming back home, and so on, spending time with one's family. (J, personal communication, January 14, 2019)

One can identify differentiated temporalities: a *longue durée* one, generally associated with structural time, and others of medium and short duration, associated with the conjuncture. This brings up another issue. If we consider how people live time, the time of their everyday life within a socio-political context, it might not be necessarily linear or might not necessarily coincide with the linearity with which institutions record events. There is no single way of perceiving and living time, but multiple ways, as pointed out by Clarke (2010), who argues that crisis is associated with short-term temporalities, with a conjuncture, but is also inserted in, or coexists with, other dimensions:

> "Multiple temporalities" are central to this view of a conjuncture as a site in which they become condensed, entangled, and co-constitutive of crisis. The idea of conjuncture marks this moment of condensation: an accumulation of tendencies, forces, antagonisms, and contradictions. Among other things, this accumulation and condensation produce a point of uncertainty and possibility. (p. 341)

These multiple temporalities come to light when we think in terms of what mobility implies. The context's temporality—with its own dynamic that is never isolated from the population in mobility, whose presence modifies it—coexists with the temporality of the population in mobility itself (both in terms of personal temporality and in terms of collective, historical, cultural, and political temporality, as well as the temporality generated within the mobility circuit itself), a population that has interacted with multiple contexts—space of departure, transit, and destination (the latter being where we are inquiring from).

According to Bayraktar (2019), associating mobility with crisis invokes the idea of emergency, of refugees as disposable people who need to be cared for and

contained, and attributes to them a double connotation of both criminal and victim. To face mobility, agency is required, but the language of emergency frames people as passive, lacking capacity for action, as "illegals" without a voice. There is talk, then, about flows, numbers that link crisis with emergencies for which humanitarian assistance, containment, militarization, border, and mobility management measures are needed. In this fashion, migrants are stripped of political action, of a historical context, of their memory, and of the capacity to be part of history as subjects, rendering them visible only as a phenomenon. Associating migration with the concept of emergency is common in situations where humanitarian care has replaced war and serves as a justification for military interventions or measures of exception. Fassin and Pandolfi (2010) point out that:

> Thus, power relations, but also logics of self-interest map a moral geography of the world, a map that reveals the global distribution of those who count, on the one hand, and those whose lives count, on the other. (p. 9)

Focusing on the person (not necessarily as an individual subject, since they contain their immediate environment: family, friends, colleagues) endows people with not only a name, a place, a time, and a situation, but also a memory, as stated by Bayraktar (2019):

> While the contemporary use of the term crisis often reduces complexities to easily recognizable categories, ignoring the subtleties and wider implications of situations, memory entails a dialogic relationship between forgetting and remembering that is multi-layered and nonlinear, constantly folding past, present and future into each other. (p. 357)

When referring to the concept of crisis from the perspective of people and their situations, not only do I consider their historicity but also explore what meanings and what elements people attribute to the notion of crisis through their accounts, understanding that historicity is s a process under construction, not a universal and rigid whole. As Biset (2010) points out:

> A concept is not an idea; the first, unlike the second, has an inherent historicity; that is, the attribution of meaning is not made to an entity that remains identical to itself through transformations, but rather, meaning constitutes the concept. (p. 129–130)

To quote Koselleck (2012), "Only in concepts do semantic variants produced by alterations in their context of enunciation become integrated and form an inherent part of their definition." Thus, concepts are polysemic and polyvocal in the sense that "their meaning depends on the spoken context or the social situation" (Biset, 2010, note 7). Another element pointed out by Biset, which permits the transition from word to concept, is that the totality of meanings attributed to that word are part of a context, acquiring a certain degree of totality (although with a plurality of meanings). The challenge in applying the concept of crisis to this case study, and this approach's validity, lies in being able to determine the existence of a personal/family crisis considering all the constitutive elements of personal narratives referring to a place and a time: Nicaragua after April 2018.The means to access repertoires of meaning is through testimony, orality, a personal narrative that is known to be dynamic and

relative, and that adjusts to the situation, the place, the interlocutor, and personal interests. According to Goffman (1997):

> Information about the individual helps define the situation, allowing others to know in advance what he expects of them and what they can expect of him. Thus informed, others will know how to act to obtain a specific answer from him. (p. 13)

My chosen method is to approach the past, people's past; these are the elements with which I try to reconstruct a historical account and then cross-reference it with information from other sources, which allows for contextualizing and understanding the premise from which personal narratives are elaborated. My starting point is people's own condition of suffering, framed by those repertoires of meaning and by events in their past (from the moment of evocation), their present, and their future. According to Ophir (2010), "evils" have both an objective and a subjective dimension that is associated with the concept of "catastrophizing."

For the cognitive psychologist, catastrophizing designates a "subjective" attitude: one is frightened, helpless, at the erroneous thought of an oncoming avalanche of evils. For the historian or political theorist, the humanitarian or the journalist, catastrophizing can also mean processes that provoke an avalanche of evils that harm entire populations. "Objective" catastrophizing is the sudden or gradual increase in "evils" in terms of quantity, quality, frequency, range of distribution, and durability; in short, an increase in the "volume of evils," followed by a decrease in the availability and effectiveness of the means of protection, healing, and restoration.

This contribution allows me to render explicit the relationship and the tension between the "objective" and the "subjective," between events that happened (objectified from the sum of subjectivities collected in secondary sources) and how interviewees narrate them. Similarly, Ophir (2010) establishes the difference between catastrophe—which affects a region, a space, and a time (and which marks a schism in temporal continuity)—from catastrophizing, which is what occurs to a population. To the extent that the latter is more subjective and discursive, it provides meaning and justifies the action of the former in terms of both governmentality and people's capacity for agency.

Actors on the Scene: Nicaraguan Forced Migrants in Tapachula (Chiapas, Mexico)

My goal was to collect personal accounts and memories that form part of life experiences in the recent history of people who have had to flee their places of residence due to episodes of violence—in this case, state[9] and political[10] violence—and to understand what forced mobility represents when conceived from the notion of crisis. Oral sources provided information to apply categories of analysis that make it possible to maintain that interviewees experienced the situation as a crisis in their everyday life, which makes mobility both the trigger for their capacity for agency and a strategy to overcome crisis.[11]

Testimonies refer precisely to the character that forced migration has and to what the conditions of their emigration (from the evocative present) represent in their lives as a result of the evils or catastrophizing that Ophir (2010) points out.

> There was no time to wait any longer (. . .) that was something of an emergency, so we had to leave. (O, personal communication, October 2, 2018).

> But I had to leave because I received a threat and they told me that they were going to kill my family, they told us we were dogs [....]. (OM, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

> My daughter was followed on her motorcycle, so she fell off her motorcycle and they took her motorcycle. After three days, they were at my house shooting. We were in the back of my house when I saw the truck and the hooded men, policemen. Then we jumped off the fence and left [...]. (RG, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

> All the paramilitaries persecuted us, they persecuted us. If we're here alive it's because our neighbors helped us leave through other roads. But they would've caught us right there [...]. (D, personal communication, November 25, 2018)

> [. . .] In my case, they threatened me, and they told my family that they were gonna burn down our house, and I don't know how, but I confronted them. . . one's already losing fear [. . .] It's not easy to leave your country. I wouldn't like to migrate to another country, not again, but I have to. (M2, personal communication, February 15, 2019)

[9] We understand this as "...the implementation of state violence —violence that, not as a foundation but as an 'extraordinary resource' can be understood as 'legitimate', hiding under this extraordinary character the violent foundations of politics and the State— will appear at every juncture allowing the State to interpret conflict as a rupture of the political pact" (Petz, 2014, p. 11).

[10] Understood as "an alteration of 'normality', however unjust and illegitimate this may be; an alteration of everyday political life provoked by the reaction of some groups against authorities (...) political violence always arises within power relations, altering or violating the rules that govern the political sphere, in a framework that provides rules and normative criteria" (Herranz Castillo, 1991, pp. 428–429).

[11] There is a debate around what mobility represents in cases of violence or threat, previously thought in terms of desire and will, which asks whether it is one option among others or whether it is the only option in cases of threats to one's life or the lives of loved ones. For a development of this point, see Coraza de los Santos (2020).

The references provided by the testimonies tell us about several things: firstly, about the inflection point at which everyday life is transformed as a result of the changing context, and secondly, about people's relationship with this context, their motivations, and their capacity for action, their agency considering the circumstances that affect them:

> Seeing young people from the universities fighting for elders, for a social security reform, right? They fought for us elders and we cannot leave them alone since they stood up for us, we can't be sitting at home watching them being killed, being harassed. I joined the fight against the government seeing that I watching that massacre that they were doing. It hurt me to just watch it on television, in the media, that motivated me to support young people who were barricading the university, I brought them food, brought them water, bicarbonate. (O, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

> They beat my father, so the students. . . we went to support the students because the students were being mistreated. So, through that mistreatment, we then watched the news, and we went to support my dad for the five percent that they were taking from them. And then through that, we watched the students who were being put in a cage, we saw how they kept them there, how they wouldn't let them out. (W, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

According to Martuccelli (2016), we can identify a series of elements that people refer to as part of the construction of their reality, both at an individual and family level, as well as a social and political context. He calls them regimes of structured reality about immediate experiences, which constitute what is real for people, based on common sense with irrefutable evidence (their everyday life experiences):

> [...] whose necessary respect is ensured through great representations of fear [...] The elements that order reality, first was religion, then society, and then the economy. In politics, a hierarchy is established over the role that each one plays where fear is a central element of control. When it is broken, fear disappears, and agency emerges giving rise to a crisis that needs a solution to reorder the world. (p. 21)

Fear of the rupture of people's reality regimes and of encountering others that are not intelligible or without sufficient tools to deal with it is latent and present in people who are in a situation of forced migration and is reflected in the way they respond to what it represents in their lives:

> For the time being I haven't felt any threat here. The only thing is, because I don't have documentation, I say, if I'm caught here by the federals, I don't know, they could throw me back there, and that's the fear that I have right now, due to immigration problems. (Or, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

> [. . .] here in Mexico, we sell tamales, we sell chewing gum at traffic lights, while the documentation is being processed. My fear is sometimes because of the *mareros* [Mara Salvatrucha members], who say they come here to do harm in Mexico. And I so I go out carefully, I can't get used to it, and, as I told you, there are moments when I get lost [. . .]. (OM, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

> One day a van came toward me, telling me to go with him, that they were going to pay me to change a few dollars and I was scared because the van was insistent there. And I was scared because you don't come fleeing your country because you're a fool, you leave your country because you're in danger. (RG, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

There is also a metaphorical representation of crisis that translates it into spatial and temporal forms within the framework of one's environment and social context, where immobility emerges as one of those forms, between continuing and stopping. The metaphorical representations are of the place in which the person is situated in their present (the present of evocation), the place in which crisis situates them, associated with feelings, sensations, and fears in the face of a secure past (everyday life) and an uncertain future (marked by hope and projects). Feelings refer not to crisis itself, but to the effects it has on their lives (Ramos Torre, 2016).

> No, right now, my idea is [to stay] here, for the time being, because I can't think of another country, because I can't. What interested me was keeping our lives safe. We don't think of other countries because right now we are focused on safety here.
> (O, communication staff, October 2, 2018)

> [. . .] at that point, one feels without a way out, so that's what makes us most desperate. It's an effort to start a normal life because I feel that we don't have a normal life, not really, we don't have space, our children don't have an education. That's what's most important to me, my children's studies and work. (D, personal communication, November 25, 2018)

> [. . .] there we are, and in our ordinary day-to-day, we try to have fun. Sometimes there are days that are desperate because we don't have work, money flies, but we've tried to deal with the situation and always think positively and know that we're moving forward. [. . .] I fear that the Mexican government will return me to my country, that's my greatest fear, that they will return me to my country. (A, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

There are also other spatialities and temporalities associated with the places of salvation, where they have been able to recover some of the lost things, such as security, peace, and hope, although new fears and difficulties emerge (especially work-related or legal). However, space in the present is from where people build expectations for the future and continuity projects in light of the uncertainty generated by the context that triggered a critical situation. As Ramos Torre (2016) points out, "This present is a pathologically stretched out present; its duration is excessive because it exceeds the expectations that were held when it began. In addition, it pollutes the expected future and produces confinement within itself" (p. 42):

> I want to see myself improving, being able to work, being able to help my family who stayed there, and that my children continue studying. (OM, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

> In Mexico, we'd like to have some stability to bring my sisters and my grandmother, we'd like some safe stability to bring her to a quiet place and start a life from scratch if possible. (R, personal communication, October 24, 2018)

> Well, to keep going. Keep fighting because, look, we left everything in Nicaragua. We left everything, because what was it worth for me to be there if I was going to lose my life? It's better here, I have nothing but I'm alive. (W, personal communication, October 30, 2018)

Lastly, I will return to some elements by referring to those that are the backbones of the analytical scheme and to others that Ramos Torre (2016) describes as ". . . discursive practices that are part of the repertoire of meaning at hand, that is, the

repertoire that contains the set of possible meanings with which the speakers play in their communicative exchanges" (p. 44) to address the following scheme: who acts, with what actions, to whom this happened, what is the duration, and what are the effects. Considering the totality of testimonies, we can identify that those who act are, above all, the youth from student sectors, with additional support from the general population, mostly family members. The actions identified are mainly protest actions (demonstrations) displaying elements considered symbolic (national flag and clothes with the colors of the Nicaraguan flag, worn in opposition to the Sandinista flag and far away from political party representations). People also mention participation in acts of resistance (pickets or the use of throwing objects) that are justified as a defense against state violence. The other important element is who or what can be blamed for what happened. Here we see different levels of responsibility that place, at the top, the figure of Daniel Ortega and, in some cases, his wife and his vice president, Rosario Murillo. The causes of the social and political crisis are personified in this context, and responsibility is shifted to their personal/family crises. Below them, people identify state security forces, such as the police and the military, although paramilitaries and gangs in service of the government are also pointed out. On a third level, closer to people and to political action in the public space, are the Council of Citizen Power (CPC), the Sandinista youth, public servants in general, and a population sympathetic to the current administration (not to Sandinismo itself, since some forced migrants call themselves Sandinistas, although in opposition to the figure of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo). The next element is analyzing what duration represents; in this regard, as I have already indicated, duration signifies as moment of impasse, a parenthesis full of uncertainty, but with a positive sense due to people having reached security (although, as mentioned above, new insecurities and fears resulting from the intersection between insertion in a new context and a situation of vulnerability and precariousness—especially in legal terms as refugee applicants). Finally, it is worth mentioning current and future effects associated with the loss of security, an increase in violence, economic collapse, and its impact on the labor market.

Conclusions

This work is an account constructed not from a compact and complete discourse, but from scraps and pieces of discourses that are the sources and elements that I have gathered in the form of testimonies. It is from this that I have elaborated my own repertoire of meaning that intends to show the crisis that occurs in the lives of people who have been traversed by processes of violence and subsequent forced mobility.

The final reflection I have sought to arrive at is how, in this examined context, the concept of crisis allows us to think about forced mobility, incorporating it as a rich and productive component to analyze other cases and, in this way, to continue to enrich the concept of forced mobilities in terms of content and density.

To speak of individuals in crisis does not mean to think in terms of passive subjects, victims to be tended to, but precisely the opposite: to think of them as people with the capacity to analyze and diagnose their reality, with capacity for action and for agency. Agency is present not only in the process of mobility, but in all the actions and reactions that occurred in their place of origin and that make up the historicity of crisis itself, those that the stories refer to as searches, as strategies, as activated resources —networks, solidarity mechanisms, appeals to social cohesion—that today (as an evocative present) are expressed as antecedents of their mobility process, although they were not necessarily considered as such when they occurred (Tejerina & Gatti, 2016).

The scope of these conclusions does not intend to establish a generality, but to present a way of understanding and comprehending what a process of forced mobility means in people's lives. Among other reasons, this is because we are facing a situation that generates strong emotions at the individual, family, and social levels and because not all people respond in the same way, as Le Breton (1999) has pointed out:

> From one human society to another, people experience the events of their existence affectively, through differentiated cultural repertoires that look similar but are not identical. Each term of the affective lexicon of a society or social group must be put in relation to the local context of its practical implementation. This is a matter of avoiding the confusion between words and things and the naturalization of emotions by displacing them without precautions from one culture to another through a system of translation blind to the social conditions of existence that surround affectivity. (pp. 9–10)

Even recognizing this caveat, not being able to displace emotions or generalize from them, it is true that it is possible to establish parameters of comparison with people who are in the same condition and under the same circumstances in other case studies (Coraza de los Santos & Gatica, 2017).

In this way, we unite history, narrative, and experiences under the category of crisis to expose a way to construct an account about forced migrations and consider the possibilities of understanding them within mobilities in general. This intended amalgamation of elements is well explained by Constantopoulou (2016):

> Narrative analysis has become fundamental for the social sciences, and especially for sociology. Myth cannot always be clearly differentiated from "reality" in the social discourse (fiction seems essential to the "reproduction" of the facts): it is necessary to be understood in relation with the narrated reality. Stories are part of everyday life and constitute means for actors to express and negotiate experience. For researchers, they provide a site to examine the meanings people, individually or collectively, ascribe to lived experience. Narratives are not transparent renditions of 'truth' but reflect a dynamic interplay between life, experience, and story. Placed in their wider socio-political and cultural contexts, stories can provide insights into different social conditions (for instance how forced migrants seek to make sense of displacement and violence, re-establish identity in ruptured life courses and communities, or bear witness to violence and repression). (p. 1)

Based on all the above, this text draws on testimony to interpret the reality of Nicaragua since April 2018 as a situation of crisis in people's everyday lives. This does not mean that they had not faced difficulties or "evils" in the past, but that, somehow, at the time these were overcome, and people were able to continue with

their lives, not without certain readjustments resulting from their inherited or learned lessons. However, those learnings were not useful or were not enough to confront the new situation they were living, and thus, it became a crisis in their lives that called for mobility as a form of resolution. I focus on mobility as a change in their everyday lives—material and symbolic in spatial-temporal dimensions—where a valuation of the past and the present intervened alongside a projection of the future.

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Part III
Enduring or Transitory Migration Crises?

Chapter 8
Migration Crisis in Brazil and Treatment of Venezuelan Migrants

Érica Sarmiento

Introduction

In the midst of what is considered the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times, forced migration represents one of the greatest moral challenges faced by nation-states in the twenty-first century. Thousands of people leave their places of birth, traveling long and convoluted paths either by land or by sea, before the perplexed gaze of citizens who, for the most part, feel threatened by these migrants, displaced by the global capitalist system.

Migratory flows have always existed, of course, but the movements that take on the dimensions of "crisis" and are represented as dramatic spectacles of disposable lives, leveraged by the systemic effects of globalization, are events that have trademarked the twenty-first century. In this text, when dealing with the concept of migration crisis, we understand crisis as the breakdown of "normal" relations and patterns of the operation of rules and structures, in this case, for the management and treatment of migrants. It is understood that this breakdown of normality is linked to the construct that the displacement of persons or refugees is a "problem" and an "emergency" at the international level. The migration crisis has its roots in a profoundly Eurocentric system of domination, which considers Western values as universal; in the specific case of this analysis, Latin America and Brazil act as a part of this value system. We understand the idea of crisis associated with migration as a discursive strategy, which reinforces the construction of fear of the other (Brignol & Curi, 2021).

Since 2015, an unprecedented number of people from Middle Eastern and African countries have crossed borders to and within Europe, crossing the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the English Channel; many of them are fleeing war,

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persecution, and relentless poverty. Within the context of economic globalization, this vertiginous acceleration of migrations to Europe and the United States appears concomitantly with an ideological spread of xenophobia, such as that instigated by unemployment and that which identifies certain migrant groups with terrorism, especially after the attacks of September 11, 2001. In this context, within the Global North, the issue of displacement takes on a connotation of "national security."

In accordance with Brignol and Curi (2021), we start from the premise that the concept of crisis is linked to human displacement and the focus on security guiding how they are treated. Border surveillance and the security approach to migration are broadcasted through a media system that repeatedly represents "exclusion" scenarios from the perspective of those who have economic and political interests in maintaining the current world order, in which the rich and developed countries benefit from the cheap labor of immigrants from underdeveloped countries (Brignol & Curi, 2021). De Genova (2013) argues that such hegemonic displays help to generate a constellation of images and discursive formations, which construct the criminalization of migrants.

Crisis has thus weaved migration, border control, and state sovereignty into interconnecting problems, transforming migration into not only a political event but also a media spectacle (Fernando & Giordano, 2016). This problem is exacerbated when the qualification of crisis is defined by the media, the states, and their means to exercise border control, thereby neglecting structural problems that go far beyond emergency and catastrophe, such as the causes motivating migrants' departure from their societies of origin. Furthermore, migration is not a linear process; it means lives, shattered memories, violence, and trauma. Considering the migratory experience, a temporary situation governed by each state is reductionist; it equates all forms of life and homogenizes all histories, thus controlling and interfering in the lives of those persons who want and need to cross the border (Aguiar, 2019).

In this dramatic scenario of human mobility facing the twenty-first century, we are increasingly driven to seek answers to the question of what to do with these displaced peoples, whose very existence or proximity is considered by nation-states a physical or biological threat to their societies. Throughout history, various paradigms have been designed to deal with human lives that are deemed excessive, unwanted, illegal, expendable, or superfluous. According to Achille Mbembe (2019), African political theorist and thinker, we can find a clear example of such paradigms in the early twenty-first century, which consisted of waging new forms of war, such as the so-called mobility wars, whose objective is to drive these sacrificial bodies to the borders. The targets of this type of conflict are not individuals, but large swatches of humanity that have been deemed useless or superfluous, residual humanity that is considered disposable.

For the sake of reflection, it is worth mentioning that forced mobilities do not consider local problems within the same territory or city, whose resolution is limited to one border that confines a region receiving a migratory flow. It is, above all, a global problem involving thousands of people who flee wars, servitude, and violence and who are thrown into the sea, raped on their way to their destinations, silenced by history during their flight. As the sociologist Didier Fassin (2018) posits, the

disposable lives that challenge the twenty-first century are just another disposable body that is victim to globalization.

On the international stage appear those who are deglobalized, because although the world has entered the global era, not everyone in the world has been able to access the system. According to Nestor Canclini (2019), our opinions and behaviors are subordinated to global and electronic capitalism, to globalized corporations, and "in the end, the only thing that seems globalized is the feeling that we are all losers."

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004–2005), the "losers of globalization" are found in the two hierarchical systems of belonging and subordination of modern capitalist society: exclusion and inequality. For example, in the case of migration, borders are selective concerning who can or cannot enter their territories. According to Santos, in capitalist modernity, racism is presented as an important form of hierarchy that contains elements of inequality and exclusion. The principle of exclusion has its roots in the hierarchy of races; uneven integration manifests first through colonial exploitation and then through migration. Thus, disposable lives are part of the dichotomy of the "I" and the "other".[1]

Brazil, as part of this global scenario, has been doubly hit since 2015 by economic recession and political crisis, which raised the national unemployment rate from 4.8% to 14.7%, in addition to restricting labor rights. That same year, the country recorded 1,847,274 immigrants settled regularly, a number which, according to OBMigra's 2020 annual report, later decreased to 1,085,673 immigrants, considering all legal protections. This report analyzed data for the period 2011–2019.[2]

According to the OBMigra 2020 report, most of the immigrants were men of productive age, with secondary and professional education, originally from Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly Venezuelans and Haitians. Only 399,372 were women. Just over 50% (660,349) were considered long-term immigrants in Brazil.[3] Official figures indicate a decrease in the number of immigrants entering the country, which certainly echoes the economic crisis and the erosion of Brazilian social inclusion programs dating from the Michel Temer government (2016–2018). This immigration decrease might also be an indicator of the difficulties obtaining citizenship and, as has been conveyed by various authors, of the absence of public policies and integration practices.

If on economic level the balance comes out negative, on the political level the situation was further aggravated within the context of the rise of the extreme right to power. Since his presidential election in 2018, Jair Bolsonaro has consistently

[1] Interesting contributions on the issue of xenophobia in Brazil can be found in the text by Guizardi and Mardones (2021).

[2] These two moments—in San José, Costa Rica, and Buenos Aires, Argentina—comprise informal approaches and are not part of the personal narratives used for this analysis. However, they were important to complement the information gathered about the situation experienced in Nicaragua, as well as the reality of forcibly displaced migrants. At the same time, they served as cross-references to substantiate the veracity of the interviews conducted in Tapachula.

[3] According to the methodology used by OBMigra, these are immigrants who generally stay in the country for over a year.

threatened the democratic normality that the country seemed to have achieved during the New Republic period. In addition, his well-known animosity toward the immigration issue – it is important to remember his visit to the United States in March 2019, when he stated that most immigrants do not have good intentions and defended the anti-immigration stance of then-President Trump[4] – makes it more difficult for immigrants to stay in Brazil.

In the case of Latin America, an imaginary of the migration crisis in the region was crafted. The problem is not only the intensity of migratory flows but also how the states deal with them. According to the text written by Menara Guizardi, Carolina Stefoni, Herminia Gonzálvez, and Pablo Mardones, the current conservative turn in politics has fostered fascist tendencies in the region, in particular concerning border control. The human tragedy of intensified migration in the region is juxtaposed to the transnational anti-migrant rhetoric. Living on the border is considered a negative factor in the international imaginary (2021).

US voters seem to support policies that oppose certain types of migration (and this is the case even in migrant-sending countries). The media insist on portraying a "migration crisis" when even the simple use of this term is part of the problem: the result of the process is mixed up with its cause. The combination of ultra-neoliberal buildup, border closures, use of military technology at borders, and hate speech is exactly what is being produced, with escalating violence and migratory crises across the globe. For the past 5 years, South America has been immersed in this logic. In such contexts, the transnationalism of migrants in the region requires analysis from a politically situated perspective.

In this manner, we will articulate our thoughts in this chapter, based on the analysis of the dynamic interactions between local and global processes, in the context of the transformations of the global political economy, in the dynamic interrelation between globalization and localisms, at the current conjuncture of global capitalism. Transnational economic processes inhabit the spaces of nations, which poses challenges to the interpretation of migratory movements at different scales.

To understand the migration crisis, we start from the assumption that, despite being under the global system, it is rooted in a profoundly Eurocentric system of domination, which considers Western values as universal. Latin America and Brazil act as part of this value system, in the specific case of this analysis, which we will place within the context of longer historic periods, not confining the crisis to a short-term event, but locating it within a structure that entails social change and mobility in the affected places. Crisis and migration are not constituted as isolated and anomalous events, but as processes anchored in broader patterns of change and social transformation. The dynamics of the migration crisis are linked to the stories of colonialism, the formation of nation-states, industrialization and urbanization,

[4] Mauro Osório interview for Sidney Resende in https://odia.ig.com.br/colunas/sidney-rezende/2021/02/6084594-as-raizes-da-decadencia-do-estado-do-rio-de-janeiro.html. Last accessed: 07/20/2021.

deregulation of trade, jobs, market flexibility, global geopolitical changes, regional and demographic change, and also climate change.

The migration crisis brings together elements of a global scenario and involves local specificities, which, in turn, maintain colonialist traditions anchored in our Latin American societies. To become part of the Brazilian population, the color of the migrant's skin and his origin matter; the fairer the skin, the greater their acceptance will be. The further north of the globe they come from, the easier their integration will be. This conservative rhetoric, despite the advances in Brazilian migration legislation (through the tireless struggle of various civic organizations and the mobilization of migrant society and collectives), contributes to creating the perception of migrants as a problem, especially of undesirable groups. In addition, it criminalizes migrants and causes their insurrection. On the one hand, we have the search for modern legislation providing for human mobility from the perspective of human rights, and on the other, we find a judicial colonialist system that still persists, allied to the mentality of the political-social structures that prioritize securitization before human security.

In the Brazilian scenario, we find ourselves before a welcoming discourse toward the migrants, supported by new migratory legislation issued in November 2017. The Foreigner Statute Law No. 6,815, the preceding legislation, addressed immigration as a national security concern.[5] This law went in effect on August 19, 1980, during the period of the military dictatorship and had survived the transition to democracy. The new immigration law regards migration as a human rights issue. Without a doubt, this new law caused a paradigm shift.

However, there are gaps between rhetoric and reality. In fact, there is a humanitarian approach to the reception of Venezuelan migration on the northern border of Brazil, but the response has become more elaborated in the area of security. This shows a prevailing anachronistic view of the process. At the same time, discriminatory practices persist, such as treating certain groups in the category of unwanted and creating mechanisms that favor skilled migration, causing selectivity of people.

Neves and Ribeiro (2018) argue in an article on the new immigration law[6] that the main difference (between rhetoric and reality) is that under the colonial perspective, internal legal systems tend to treat people who move from one territory to another as foreigners, strangers who deserve concern from a perspective of national security,

[5] The Foreigner Statute Law, formulated to serve the purposes of the military regime established by the 1964 coup, was applied to attend to "national security, institutional, political, socio-economic and cultural aspects of Brazil, as well as to the defense of the national worker." In short, domestic legal systems treated migrants as foreigners, strangers, deserving of national security concerns, and not as recipients of international human rights standards, recognizing the cultural nature of migration. BRAZIL. Law No. 6,815, of August 19, 1980

[6] Although the new law continues to maintain a human rights approach, the presidential sanction of the law included 18 vetoes, which reinforced the prevailing notion of immigrants as a problem and accentuated the securitization of migration and criminalization of migrants. Some of these vetoes included eliminating the amnesty for migrants, the revocation of expulsions issued before October 5, 1988, the mandatory stay of migrants and residents who have committed a crime in the country, the free movement of indigenous peoples, and traditional populations across borders.

not as recipients of international human rights law standards that acknowledge the cultural nature of migration. Migrants, transitory or not, challenge the makeup of the classic configuration of the national state, in particular a homogeneous view of people, territory, and sovereignty, since they make it possible to make borders more flexible for the mobility of people, in a similar fashion to what globalization has done with the flow of capital (Neves & Ribeiro, 2018).

From the decolonizing perspective[7] and the South-South migration crisis, we will analyze how the political emphasis on crisis allows for the adoption and practice of emergency measures while concealing the continuation of routine migration control practices and, in some cases, the denial of protection to the migrant population.

Venezuelans Displaced to Brazil: Between Humanitarian Treatment and National Security

In Latin America, the drama of forced migration in the twenty-first century has sparked intense debates and actions in government policies, civil organizations, humanitarian support organizations, and also academic spaces. For current historiography, the phenomenon of forced migration represents a particular type of displacement, which has unique characteristics in the totality of population movements.

The forced migrations of the twenty-first century have peculiarities that differentiate them from previous migratory flows. According to Coraza and Arriola (2018), the phenomenon occurs at all scales, interrelating and connecting more and more the local and the global. Another characteristic is the existence of various types of mobility that involve origin, traffic, destination, and repatriation (either voluntary or forced). It is noteworthy that forced migratory flows are characterized by being mixed, that is, they occur due to a combination of conjuncture and structural factors, personal, and family issues. An individual who is forced to move may find himself in different situations, such as chronic poverty, social exclusion, racism, corruption, social and environmental disasters, conflicts related to the fight against multinationals, and the defense of the territory against companies, among others forms of violence. According to the authors:

> The southern Mexican border, in the cross-border region between Mexico and Central America, is the scene of a sustained increase in people and families fleeing from different

[7] The coloniality of knowledge is embodied by the Eurocentric character of modern knowledge and its articulation with forms of colonial/imperial domination. This conceptual formulation refers specifically to the forms of knowledge control associated with the global geopolitics designed by the coloniality of power. In this sense, Eurocentrism operates as an epistemic locus from which a knowledge model is built that universalizes the local European experience as a normative model to follow and designates its knowledge devices as the only ones valid. The coloniality of the being understands modernity as a permanent achievement in which the "race" construct justifies the prolongation of the non-ethics of war, which allows the total overthrow of the humanity of the other (Quintero et al., 2019; Mignolo, 2015; Quijano, 2015).

> forms of violence and threats, especially from countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, and, to a lesser extent, Guatemala. In many cases, those who escape also have sustained harm from multiple vulnerabilities and discrimination (social, economic, gender, sexual choice, social class, ethnicity) in what has been called mixed flows (to the extent that economic causes, threats, and violence are combined) (UNHCR 2009). This is a qualitative characteristic that differentiates what is happening now respect to the periods the 19th and 20th centuries. Another differentiating element is that, in contrast to the great visibility that was given to those who fled in the 20th century, (also intentionally made visible in order to obtain resources and condemnation of the expelling regimes), those who now are fleeing do so in relative invisibility, because concealment is part of the mobility strategy to save lives. (Coraza de Los Santos & Vega Arriola, 2017, p. 5)

In recent years, part of the migrations from Latin America has been directed within Latin America itself, reaching border countries, such as Venezuela and Brazil. The reality caused by the Venezuelan migratory flow, the human collective that we are dealing with in this chapter, was classified by many Brazilians as a "migration crisis," a fear validated by many media and by political representatives that the Venezuelan migration crisis would endure and will become permanent.

The increase in the flow of Venezuelans to Brazil was first observed in 2015 due to chronic problems in the supply of basic products associated with the growing tensions and violence that mark the recent trajectory of Venezuela. In this sense, this reality not only affects Brazil but is also present in more intense cross-border movements, affecting the reality of the three countries that border with Venezuela: Brazil, Colombia, and Guyana. However, at the same time that neighboring countries became escape routes, there was an increase in tensions between the governments of Colombia and Venezuela, which generated a diplomatic conflict that led to the closure of the border in 2015, with some repetitions of this measure at later times. Then, the Brazilian border, which historically has been much less affected than that of Colombia in terms of people movements, began to receive an unprecedented flow of Venezuelans, mainly channeled to the state of Roraima (Silva, 2018).

In the case of Venezuelans, we will consider the term "forced migrants" to include both those who claim asylum and those who have requested temporary residency visas in Brazil. We follow the definition used by Coraza to explain forced migration and its specificity:

> Their characteristics, associated with direct violence or the potential for endangering the physical and moral integrity or the livelihoods of individuals, couples, children, or their group of affiliation, makes them to have a certain specificity and differentiation within themselves. In the same way, another element is the immediacy, the urgency of the exit that does not allow or reduces to a minimum the possibilities of developing a migratory project, assuming this non-voluntary character. Another aspect to highlight is the sensation of trauma (derived from violence and dispossession) and of a hiatus in which the need to return is part of the creation of meanings of the condition of exile in most cases. (Coraza de los Santos, 2014, p. 200)

In the case of Venezuelan migrants, in recent years an effort has been made to coordinate joint action of South American countries to welcome migrants. In March 2018, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued resolution 2/2018, "Forced migration of Venezuelans," considering the human rights violations

committed in Venezuela and establishing a framework of shared responsibility in conjunction with the community and reaffirming that the states are responsible for migration issues. According to Liliana Jubilut and Ananda Fernandes (2018), these regional aspirations demand national action so that they can be realized. Until 2017, Mexico was the only country recognizing Venezuelans as refugees under the Cartagena Declaration, with 907 asylum applications accepted by the Mexican government.

In December 2019, 2 years after Mexico's initiative, Brazil approved 21,000 refugee applications from Venezuelans, a figure that is almost twice as large as the number of refugees already residing in Brazil at the time. The Brazilian government thus began considering Venezuela as a country in a situation of serious and generalized violation of human rights. According to the G1 report, published on December 5, 2019:

> In June 2019, the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) classified Venezuela as a country in a situation of "serious and widespread violation of human rights," which, according to the committee, accelerates refugee applications. Thus, the more than 21,000 Venezuelan refugees recognized this Thursday add to the 11,231 people of different nationalities who already had refugee status in Brazil, according to data from CONARE. The recent decision nearly tripled the total number of registered refugees in the country. (Vidigal, 2019)

The problem is that part of the strategies to disseminate the hegemonic visions of international organizations – including for Latin America – includes the reworking of human rights discourses in order to implement practices of mobility surveillance and control that simultaneously emphasize protection, the well-being of migrants, and the integrity of territorial borders. Thus, despite seeking to protect the security, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, at all times, regardless of their immigration status, the notion of migration control and migration as a problem is what underlies the use of neoliberal terminology emphasizing safe, orderly, and regular migration, as indicated by the Global Compact for Migration and the International Organization for Migration, among others (Vidigal, 2019).

In recent years, the growing numbers of migratory movements in the direction of Brazil and the issues giving shape to crisis in Venezuela have left Brazilian borders exposed, forcing the Brazilian state to take action in the first welcoming line of migrants at its Northwest corner, through the city of Pacaraima, in the state of Roraima.

In 2017, and in the context of the intensified flow of migrants from Venezuela to Brazil, and the creation of a humanitarian crisis in the state of Roraima, a new challenge emerged. In February 2018, Michel Temer, President of Brazil, signed a provisional measure and issued two decrees intending to enable an emergency reception of migrants (Kanaan 2018). The so-called *Força Tarefa de Logística Humanitaria* for the state of Roraima – entitled *Operation Acolhida* – was created to assist Venezuelan migrants arriving in Brazil through Roraima. It is important to emphasize the contradictions of the Brazilian government regarding migration, offering shelter and solidarity on the one hand and militarization on the other. *Operação Acolhida* illustrates this dichotomy, a state strategy designed by the

Army, with the unconditional and necessary support of international organizations, and that was the greatest response to the arrival of Venezuelans in Brazil. In February 2018, the Brazilian government addressed the situation of vulnerability in the state of Roraima (Decree No. 9,285) by creating a Federal Committee for Emergency Assistance (Decree No. 9,286) to coordinate humanitarian actions. This Committee, which has representatives from different government agencies and ministries, is coordinated by a general officer of the Brazilian Army. Operation Welcome, which was conceived following current military doctrine, can be classified as a joint interagency operation intended to allow the humanitarian reception (reception, identification, selection, immunization, reception, and relocation) of Venezuelan immigrants in the state of Roraima as a result of migratory flows fueled by the humanitarian crisis (Cerávolo & Franchi, 2020).

Despite the complexity of its organizational structure, there is no doubt that the Ministry of Defense became the main subject of this operation. Its operational limbs are the Armed Forces (Navy, Army, and Air Force), using the Base of Logistics Support as an operations center in the city of Boa Vista. We understand the Brazilian approach as a hybrid system, with a policy of securitization and reception, where reception is carried out by the Army itself who, at the same time, guards the national borders. However, having a migrant reception system does not exempt Brazil from maintaining a police presence with a securitized focus of "international border governance" that directs the policies of Western nations.

It is worth mentioning the political situation of the new migration law of 2017 and the massive arrival of Venezuelans that followed it, within a framework of increasing securitization and militarization adopted by the Temer government, which effected the regain of power in migration matters of the Ministry of Defense, the Office of Institutional Security of the Presidency, and the Federal Police, even resulting in the creation of a new Ministry of Security. This policy is also reflected in the issuing of Decree No. 8,903 of 2016 that introduced the Integrated Border Protection Program and organizes the activities of the federal public administration units for its execution in order to strengthen prevention, control, auditing, and suppression of border crimes (Fieldman-Bianco, 2018). On the other hand, although the policies of securitization and criminalization of the Brazilian borders are mainly directed against the smuggling of drugs, arms, and other illicit goods, as well as against "international piracy," this prevention and eradication of cross-border crimes result in the criminalization and stigmatization of local populations, giving them a sensation of invasion and crisis when Venezuelans enter the border.

Despite initial detentions, migrants managed to cross the Brazilian borders, since the pattern has been not to deny entry, but to control, record, regularize, and issue visas for those who enter. According to Bela Fieldman-Bianco (2018), the managing of the alleged "Venezuelan crisis" in the context of the new immigration law was through the provisional measure (MP No. 820, of 2018) and the decrees issued by President Temer also signed by the Ministers of Justice, Defense, the Office of the Civil House, and the Office of Institutional Relations of the Presidency. The Interministerial Ordinance No. 9, of March 14, 2018, signed by the Ministries of Justice, Labor, Foreign Relations and Public Security, regulated the temporary residence

permit for immigrants who are in Brazilian territory and are nationals of a border country where the Residence Agreement for Nationals of the Mercosur Member States is not in force, thus benefiting Venezuelans and also the citizens of Guyana and Suriname, but without consultation with civil society.

Among the positive points of the migration control measures is the fact that temporary residence can change into permanent residence after 2 years, for those who do not have a criminal record: the option not to waive all asylum applications and the exemption of fees for those who cannot pay them (Fieldman-Bianco, 2018). Yet, a contradiction exists between the emphasis on the temporary residence visa and not the residence for humanitarian reasons, since:

> Brazil created and guaranteed a pathway to migration regularization for those seeking a residence permit. However, the New Migration Law has already come into force, which provides for humanitarian residence and has been extended to Venezuelans. Presidential Decree No. 9285/2018 recognizes Venezuelan migratory flows as a result of a "humanitarian crisis". There is a clear contradiction that must be justified by the Temer government. (Asano, 2018)

There are important contradictions between the federal immigration legislation and state and local policies and realities that are the actual experience in the reception of migratory flows at the borders. In 2018, the State of Roraima (RR) tried, on several occasions, to restrict migrants' access to public services. In April, it pleaded the Federal Supreme Court (STF) with the Original Civil Action (ACO 3121), requesting the temporary closure of the Brazilian border with Venezuela, alleging, among other reasons, the increase in crime in the state, the overload in the health and education systems, and the risk of epidemics. In August of the same year, the state of Roraima issued Decree No. 26,681-E, which conditioned the provision of public services to the presentation of a passport, although many immigrants entered without visa documents, including the most vulnerable groups, such as indigenous people. A federal judge said that "it is frustrating to achieve so many social accomplishments, make them positive through a regular legislative process, and then having these corresponding legal principles prevented from materializing through judicial intervention" and reversed the judicial mandate. The case finally reached the Federal Supreme Court, which decided to eliminate the requirement to present a passport to access public services (Cintra, 2020).

In legislative matters, it is important to remember the status of the rights of people living in the sphere of non-being and pay attention to its normalization as it is the main and indisputable source of protection for non-white migrants. Despite the undeniable importance of the new immigration law of 2017, which favored thousands of migrants, mainly Venezuelans:

> [...] it is essential that there are no distractions. Historically manipulated as a device of social control by the elites and for the maintenance of their interests, the Law is incapable of producing the emancipation of individuals located in the zone of non-being. After decades of migration governance focused on the different interests of the Brazilian elites over non-white migrant lives that have been excluded and dehumanized in this process, it is not the seal of a legislative instrument that will determine the establishment of a new normal, in which the guarantee of the rights is a rule and its violation an exception. (Cintra, 2020)

Could the concepts of democratic citizenship and human rights affect the structures of the capitalist system that involve the field of legislation? According to Clodoaldo Silva (2018), the initial answer is no, because although the human rights hermeneutics is an achievement of modernity for having as a reference the human dignity of many people with their identities, singularities, vulnerabilities, and potentialities, in practice, the money/capital subsystem continues to control migratory flows and the giving out of rights to immigrants according to logic that is unequal and discriminatory. The logic of exclusion is intertwined with racist practices that survive from a colonialist mindset, giving rise to contradictions not only between theory and reality but also in the legislation itself (Anunciação, 2018).

In a report published on the *amazoniarea*l website, dated February 25, 2019, about the city of Pacaraima (Roraima), some testimonies were recorded denouncing the violence suffered in the first phase of the migratory experience. Migrants are forced to escape the clashes within their country and, also, between states, suffering the dangers imposed by borders, arriving in Brazil with hunger and signs of dehydration, walking along dangerous paths. Once they arrive in Brazil, they begin a new stage of looking for a future in the new host country (Wladimila, 2019). In an attempt to leave the country, many Venezuelans travel to the city of Santa Elena do Uairén, on the border with Brazil. In February 2019, for example, the border was closed on February 22, as determined by President Nicolás Maduro. Every time a border is militarized, human rights are violated, which makes the migratory passage even more violent and traumatic:

> The Brazilian Army does not know how many went into the trenches, as many went to buy food at the markets of Pacaraima, on the Brazilian side, and returned with full plastic bags. At several times on Saturday (February 23), the flow of people was intense, mainly in the stretch that passes over the monument that separates the two countries. On this exact stretch, many refugees celebrated, some even humming derisively to the guards, or were greeted with joy. (Wladimila, 2019)

When migrants manage to cross borders, they face new kinds of problems. A constant concern regarding Venezuelan migrants in the border region is xenophobia. In the city of Pacaraima, due to the increase in the migratory flow, Venezuelans have been blamed for the increase in levels of violence in the state, for the unemployment of Brazilians, and the chaos in health care. The automatic assumption of a correlation between Venezuelan migration and the worsening of social problems in Boa Vista has become commonplace. This is a narrative resource through which neighbors often demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the arrival of migrants, although this correlation is highly questionable (Sarmento & Rodrigues, 2018).

According to Rickson Ríos Figueira in an essay written on xenophobic violence against Venezuelan immigrants in Roraima, 2018 was marked by a series of violent and xenophobic events in different cities, including Pacaraima and Boa Vista, the capital city of the state of Roraima. The immigration increase has changed the urban scenario, deepening the feeling of anxiety towards foreigner (Figueira, 2018). Several media reported xenophobic acts against Venezuelans that have gained national prominence.

On August 18, 2018, a group of Brazilians destroyed the makeshift camps where hundreds of migrants were living. According to a report published in the Spanish newspaper El País, the last straw that prompted the attack on immigrants was the news that a merchant from Pacaraima, Raimundo Nonato, had been assaulted and beaten, a crime allegedly committed by four Venezuelans. The case gained international repercussions, highlighting the tensions experienced in the border regions (Mendonça, 2018).

The lack of federal government public policies and cooperation with border municipalities that receive migratory flows, in addition to the lack of information regarding the responsibility of the states and municipalities to manage their migrant population, contributes to the entry of migrants generating situations of conflict with the local population. In times of socioeconomic crisis, xenophobia and factors such as fear and anxiety intensify, blaming migrants for social ills.

When it comes to the effectiveness of human rights enshrined in the migration law, such as health, education, the fight against racism, sexism, xenophobia, and the protection of children and adolescents, reception of foreigners and providing housing and security are responsibilities of the municipalities, which should outline public policies appropriate to their needs, geographical characteristics, and economic profile, which will result in the establishment of the competences of the Public Ministry of the State to act preventively or remedially in favor of the migrant (Anunciação, 2018).

Considering contemporary international migration as a necessary issue on the local political agenda is a challenge since local political groups and local society as a whole tend to consider this issue as the exclusive responsibility of the higher spheres of government policy, especially the federal government. However, this is not always the case, and changes are taking place in the twenty-first century. Brazilian migration policy is currently centralized at the federal level, but it is worth noting that from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930s, state governments had autonomy to define their own migration and colonization policies. The second decade of the twenty-first century has seen public policy initiatives at the state level, as in the case of the state of Paraná, and at the municipal level, as in the case of the municipality of São Paulo (Baltar et al., 2018). According to:

> These municipal initiatives, which were implemented first at large urban centers and later extended to other municipalities, could constitute a paradigm shift in municipal policy, helping to strengthen the local sphere as a point of reference for the development of public policies for migrants (...) the accumulation of municipal experiences aiming at becoming a referent for the development of public policies directed at migrants has taken relevance in the first decades of the 21st century. (p. 652)

However, local policies do not always address migration as something positive. In some instances, the goal of politicians is to criminalize migrants even before taking public office. This was the case of two candidates for mayor of Boa Vista, in Roraima, who were denounced on October 2020 by the local Venezuelan community for probable criminal conduct in front of the Federal Public Ministry. The accusation, presented by the Venezuelan Ricardo Delgado, assured that Antônio Carlos Nicoletti, from the Social Liberal Party (PSL), and Gerlane Baccarin, from

the Progressive Party (PP), both of liberal and conservative ideology, committed an act of "inducing and inciting discrimination and harm to the detriment of indigenous peoples from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" (Figueiredo, 2020).

Delgado is a member of the Pemón indigenous community of the Venezuelan municipality of Sábana Grande, on the border with Brazil; he works as a volunteer in the region where the largest numbers of Venezuelan refugees concentrate. The two candidates advocated in their campaigns for the end of state aid to Venezuelan immigrants. The episode occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many Venezuelans as well as immigrants from other countries received emergency assistance from the Brazilian government.

The claim refers to violations of immigration law (13,445 / 2017), which rejects and prevents xenophobia and provides for the social inclusion of immigrants and access to public health and social assistance services without discrimination, among others. The accusation also refers to Law 7,716/1989, which defines crimes resulting from the prejudice of race or skin color. Article 20 of the Law specifies a penalty of up to 3 years in prison and the payment of a fine.

Nicoletti, the candidate of the Social Liberal Party (PSL), promised in social networks that in his eventual government as mayor, the "Venezuelan will not have privileges." Gerlane, for her part, assured that "we are going to limit health care and places in schools for immigrants. We understand that immigration is a difficult subject and we respect all immigrants. But the Boavistans must once again be a priority for the City Council" (Figueiredo, 2020).

In addition to the public acts of repudiation on social networks for the manifestations of racism by political candidates, the migrant community also published a note on RedeVen, a site that brings together groups of Venezuelans residing in several Brazilian cities (Delfim, 2020). Among other points, the letter mentions that the Brazilian Constitution itself and the migration law guarantee access to public services for all residents of Brazil, regardless of their origin:

> Attitudes that promote xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against migrants are opportunistic, senseless behaviors that are purely attention-seeking and electoral. The political actors who use this type of strategies don't think about the consequences that these attitudes can generate in the social peace and the physical, psychological and moral integrity of the Venezuelan citizens residing in Boa Vista, says an excerpt from the document. (Delfim, 2020)

The mobilization of Venezuelans reached different institutions of civil society linked to the migration issue. It also helped to promote the creation of an office at the DPU (Defensoria Pública da União) that encourages electoral authorities to act against xenophobic manifestations of the candidates.

> Although the freedom of expression of candidates for elective positions is guaranteed within the framework of current electoral regulations, it is unwise for electoral propaganda to be a vehicle for xenophobic discourses and to incite Boavista voters to support proposals of discriminatory nature, especially when it is regarding the access of thousands of inhabitants of the municipality to basic public services highlights part of the action, signed by public defenders Thiago Moreira Parry and João Chaves. (Delfim, 2020)

The Boa Vista mayor candidate for the PSL, the party that elected the president of the Republic Jair Bolsonaro, used the marked flow of Venezuelans across the Brazilian border to promote his campaign for the highest office in the capital of Roraima. Despite arguing that Venezuelans enjoy excessive privileges, the candidates denied being xenophobic. Apparently, they see the equal rights of Venezuelans and Brazilians as a privilege. Unrestricted access to the Unified Health System (SUS) is a constitutional right ratified by the new migration law, sanctioned in 2017 by former President Michel Temer and highly criticized at the time by Congressman Jair Bolsonaro, using the same views as the mayor candidates from Roraima. If there is a shortage of hospital beds and limited medical appointment slots, and care centers are lacking, it is not the fault of the Venezuelan population who left their home country just to choose the right to a good life – or just to survive.

As in the case of health, limiting education access for immigrants and refugees was also one of the promises made by the candidates, which seems even more cruel if we remember that the language barrier is the greatest difficulty in labor and social insertion. The views on migrants assumed by these politicians consider equal treatment of immigrants and nationals a privilege and unequal treatment as the "natural order of things." In this manner, inhumanity is naturalized, considering natural to deprive the migrant of health amid the global pandemic scenario (COVID-19) and depriving children of the right to free schooling.

Unfortunately, the advances in legislation and the entry of migrants in recent years have not eliminated from society the conservative elements of its colonial past, especially concerning certain groups. In an interview with Madison González, a Venezuelan migrant who arrived in Brazil in 2016, she points out the contradictions experienced in her daily life:

> For the State, theoretically, I am already all right, and integrated to society, I am a permanent resident, I am already very well off, within the provisions of Brazilian regulation. On the social level, this is true depending on the region. From all the areas where I have lived, in the north of Brazil, in Roraima - RR, and Rio de Janeiro - RJ, as well as in the South, will you believe I felt most welcome in Rio de Janeiro? It is the way people are there, Cariocas are super "friendly", one day you don't know a person, next day you are visiting at the person's home; and this idiosyncrasy of the Carioca is very similar to ours, we are also very friendly. In BoaVista, in Roraima the experience was completely different; it is an episode of my life that I want to forget, I don't even want to remember. But in Curitiba what happens is that the people of Paraná and Curitiba are very conservative; first, they are very white, the whiteness is seen in everyone. And my skin is dark, darker, I don't how we can be identified here, they know from the first that I'm not from Curitiba, you see, and when I speak, I'm not even Brazilian, –ah, where is that accent from? (Personal communication, Madison Ramiro González García, 2021 January 14)

There are different realities in the reception of migrants in a country with a continental dimension like Brazil. The testimonies of the Venezuelan migrants reveal uneasiness about the bureaucracy to request asylum and daily life difficulties with the local population that must be faced; they are seen as different because of their skin color, origin, and way of speaking. At the border, in Roraima, conflicts become palpable, to the point that the migrants do not want to share the experiences lived there. In the south of the country, inhabited partly by white descendants of

nineteenth-century European migrants, the darker-skinned migrants are victims of Brazilian racism, which is also suffered by the black Brazilian population, and as Madison says: “and here there are people from Italy who are well accepted;if you are Italian, you are European, then you are a European and not a foreigner. But, if you are from South America, you are from abroad” (Personal communication, Madison Ramiro González García, 2021 January 14). The foreigner is the undesirable, and the undesirable is an element that comes from the South, from the border to the side, the darker neighbor, with indigenous or African features, that we do not want to resemble.

Conclusions

In this text, which addresses the category of migration crisis, we understand crisis as the breakdown of “normal” relations and patterns in the functioning of the rules and structures, in this case, of the management and treatment of migration and forced migrants. This breakdown is understood to be linked to the construction, at the international level, of the issue of migration as a “problem” and an “emergency.” Likewise, this construct of crisis allows states to exercise control over migration and make it appear in a negative light toward society. The construction of a crisis is usually a prelude to guaranteeing consent or support for emergency migration measures such as restrictions on migration, border closures, mass deportations, extended confinement in camps, and protected status or humanitarian interventions.

Brazil is not, on the one hand, absent or alienated from the global scene and, therefore, not exempt from homogeneous discourses concerning migrants and the idea of "migration crisis”; on the other hand, the country preserves many of its colonial ideas such as racism, the position of a racist state, and the suggestion of civilization hierarchies that determine who are the most desirable migrants (Europeans), as well as the least desirable, those from the Global South. Therefore, contradictions appear between theories and practices, with its new migration legislation and treatment of migrants designed to alleviate the crisis while at the same time that legal colonialism and racism hinder and traumatize society. Welcoming and solidarity, together with militarization of migration, all occupy the same space on the border – the Army receives migrants and watches over national security and defense; there is a hybrid system that makes the entry of migrants a species of militarized reception within a military logistics infrastructure. In this way, human and state security are intertwined, contributing to the notion of migration as a critical emergency in all situations with the presence of the Armed Forces.

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Chapter 9
Nicaraguans in Costa Rica: Continued Crisis as Context in Nicaragua and as Breakdown of Normality in Costa Rica

Catalina Benavides and María A. Amador

Introduction

Migration processes have been constant in the history of relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica and are framed in conditions of sociopolitical and economic instability. In the midst of these conditions, conjunctural moments arise that trigger an increase in migration,[1] the most recent case refers to the events that took place as of April 2018.[2] Protests and disagreements based on government policies, the increase in inequalities both in the exercise of power and economic, as well as police and military abuses against civilians are a sample of a period of conflict amplification and social repression in Nicaragua, which started from the authoritarian management of the constant sociopolitical crisis in its inherited history.

As defined in Lindley (2014), crises are conventionally seen as an exceptional turn of events; however, in Nicaraguan history, the norm and constant has been this

[1] Morales (2007) identifies three great historical moments of migration dynamics from Nicaragua to Costa Rica: (1) the flow of labor to the banana enclave in the nineteenth century, (2) forced displacement because of the armed conflict in the 1980s, and (3) labor migration as a consequence of the internationalization of the labor market in the region. In this paper, a fourth moment is proposed, also defined as forced migration as a result of the persecution and repression of the population opposed to the Ortega-Murillo regime.

[2] On April 18, 2018, the largest social upheaval that has occurred in the course of the Daniel Ortega regime (in power since 2007) in Nicaragua took place; this event will be explained later. Among its effects are the persecution, repression, illegal detention, and the murder of people opposed to the Daniel Ortega administration. It is the moment from which a long latency period of the conflict is identified that has not allowed a return to peace and social stability.

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critical process of social and political instability where power has been concentrated in few hands. Thus, we start from the concept developed by Vigh (2008), where crisis is *the* context and not *a* context, that is, it is the constant and not the trigger for normative change in Nicaragua. Under this premise, we must determine which are the possible consequences on the Nicaraguan society that lives in a normality of political and social instability and, furthermore, when they are forced to migrate to other countries with different contexts than their own, their inclusion or emancipation in a different environment.

For Pérez Sáinz (2019), "the migration phenomenon must be understood as a flow that, of course, is not linear or unidirectional. It never was because there have always been returns or circulation" (p. 33). In the case of cross-border mobility, migration flows are even more fluid due to the porosity of borders as has happened between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the last four decades mostly for economic reasons.

Since 2018, the present migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica can be considered as "forced" (Zetino-Duarte & Avelar, 2016), given the level of dispossession to which people have been subjected, they seek to leave the country as an alternative to neutralize the potential social marginalization, due to the economic, labor, and educational barriers they have experienced, in addition to political persecution and the risk of imprisonment and disappearance.

The challenge that migrants undertake to enter a society that has built its imaginary of "otherness" based on the Nicaraguan migrant subject (Sandoval García, 2019) is relevant. Fundamentally, we are before the presence of a long-standing historical construction that establishes thresholds that limit access to services and the recognition of rights, remaining mostly as "diminished citizens" (Morales, 2007). In this sense, how Costa Rica receives migrants deserves a critical consideration and also to take into account the impact on the receiving society. It is here where it is worth to mention a twofold crisis, one as continuing history in Nicaragua and the other as a breakdown of normality in the host country, in this case Costa Rica.

Normality in Nicaragua understood as a continued crisis of social, political, and economic instability favors constant migration and the flow of people who return and circulate in search of better living conditions (what we will understand as an economic migrant), but also years-long cultivation of concentration of power in a few hands, as well as the decisions favoring the perpetuation of these conditions, end up like social and political conjunctures that force many people to flee seeking to attain protection for their physical integrity and that of their relatives (what we will understand as a political migrant).

To understand the situation of April 2018 as a normality breakdown crisis diverts focus from those structural problems that allow for similar events to occur in Nicaragua history, for this reason, in this paper a historical exercise is carried out in order to try to define the crisis not as a trigger but as a constant in Nicaragua.

On the other hand, normality in Costa Rica will be regarded as one that allows the daily operation of migrant assistance without critical peaks. Economic dynamics of the host country have largely contributed to the migration of Nicaraguan people, who have played a part in the economic performance of Costa Rica. Nevertheless, the volume of people who have sought refuge after the events that took place in 2018

in Nicaragua have made apparent that Costa Rica saw its assistance capacity overwhelmed.

However, the fact that the crisis in Nicaragua is experienced as a constant process does not mean that it has the same impact in Costa Rica since its way of dealing with the migration dynamics, at least until now, allows the recognition of the crisis as a breakdown. As Roitman (2014) clearly points out, crises are an indicative that something is taking place and that is why a breaking point and a moment of change occur, where certain measures are undertaken to address them. The abovementioned raises the need to deal with the migration situation in the host country as a continuous process rather than critical points, "crises are the outcome of conditions that build up over long periods of time, and the transition to normality is also often marked by long periods of 'no war no peace' situations" (Richards 2005 quoted in Hilhorst, 2018, pp. 7).

This paper will examine the crisis approach from two different standpoints: first, by understanding the crisis situation as the context in Nicaragua, which leads to the forced migration of its population, and on the other hand, crisis as a breakdown of normality in Costa Rica when dealing with migratory flows from the neighboring country, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis that takes into account the dynamics and binational effects based on informants' experiences and supported with relevant data and documentation, given that the authors consider that the analysis in the host country deserves to be included, since the increase in migratory flows in the last decade from different Latin American countries and extracontinental migrations could eventually turn the crisis into the context for Costa Rica.

To carry out this assessment, we have applied a qualitative methodology that takes account of various experiences of refugee claimants, a work that for 3 years has collected the information received from young people's experiences who left Nicaragua following the 2018 conjuncture and arrived in Costa Rica. Ten interviews were conducted with young people between 18 and 35 years old, two interviews with minors between 8 and 15 years old, and the other three interviews with people who entered Costa Rica in the diaspora of the 1970s and 1980s,[3] with the purpose of gathering information about the exile experiences of these two political migrations in Costa Rica. The interviews were focused on their reasons for leaving their country of origin, moving to and staying in Costa Rica. Moreover, documentary research was carried out from data provided by government agencies and UNHCR, and queries were made to public officials who have dealt with the situation in the last 3 years.

This paper makes it possible to identify refugee claimants' experiences from their country's history and in exile with the institutional and structural shortcomings for their support and personal growth. It tries to set a twofold reflection and, specially, if Costa Rica should adapt to the crisis as a Nicaraguan context rather than responding

[3] We deeply appreciate all the people who gave us their time and trust to be interviewed, as well as the colleagues who provided us with contacts or suggestions for this article.

as if it were a normality breakdown, mainly taking into consideration that the migration flows will persist.

The document has two main sections, in the first one a historical synthesis of Nicaragua is completed to highlight the similarities in the events that have shaped society from the perspective of *crisis as the context*, and it concludes with the impact that this crisis could have on exile. The second part will describe the migration approach of Costa Rica and the challenges that arise when trying to improve the living conditions of the people in exile based on data and the lived experiences of refugee claimants.

The Continuing Crisis in Nicaragua

A History of Continuous Crisis

Historically, the political background in Nicaragua has been that of a divided society with authoritarian leaders. According to Kinloch (2012), both the political culture and the division in society, as in many Latin American countries (with their particularities), are the result of the colonial era. This authoritarian culture continued when independence from Spain was achieved; regardless of whether it was a liberal or a conservative project, the constant repression of political views and opposition led to the generation of different internal conflicts and occasionally civil wars. In brief, the acceptance of political and ideological diversity has not been one of the strengths of its social thought.

Nicaragua has been characterized for having the necessary resources for the perpetuation and control of power, beyond the long-lasting construction of a powerful state. In this regard, Acuña (2020) mentions that Nicaragua's specificity may lie in its formation processes which have not been cumulative since independence and that the great difficulty lies in the consolidation of an irreversible political centralization process. In other words, Nicaragua has not been able to consolidate the construction or formation of a state.

From 1934 to 1979, Nicaragua was under the dynasty of the Somoza family.[4] An authoritarian and strongman culture that has historically represented Nicaragua prevailed, but it was not until the accumulation of circumstantial acts, among them, the 1972 earthquake, where there was blatant corruption in the management of international donations, the 1974 elections where the intentions to remain in power were no longer hidden, and the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro in 1978 that occurred in a convergence of the different opposition forces that worked together with the objective to overthrow the president.

[4]The Somoza dynasty began with Anastasio Somoza García (president from 1934 to 1956) and, later, the sons: Luis Somoza Debayle (1956–1963) and Anastasio Somoza Debayle (1967–1979).

Eventually, the opposition led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN, per its Spanish acronym) group prevailed in power through armed insurrection after Somoza Debayle was exiled from Nicaragua to Miami. The arrival of the Sandinista revolution meant a new attempt of state-building (Jarquín, 2020). In fact, in the beginning, the Government Junta of National Reconstruction (JGRN, per its Spanish acronym) was composed of different opposition forces that, according to Kinloch (2012), sought to establish democratic principles that would broadly guarantee human rights; furthermore, it sought political plurality, freedom of association, and universal suffrage. And as such, it was similarly perceived by people who were part of that opposition struggle at the time, as stated by one of the interviewed informants:

> A lesson learned that differs from today's (opposition) is that the people were organized, there was a lot of organization and political study that was not short-sighted, we dreamed of being builders of a new society, we prepared ourselves politically but not institutionally. (1980s diaspora informant, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

Although the Sandinista project had ambitious actions such as literacy and health policies promoted throughout the country, divisions appeared when personality-driven actors took power and sectors of the opposition that were not part of the FSLN left the JGRN. Half-way through the conjuncture, foreign intervention increased in the conflict. The United States financed a group of contras who supported Somoza and groups that also resented the policies imposed by the FSLN. This contributed to the civil war of the 1980s in Nicaragua, a conflict that inherited resentments in present-day families and that has also generated a significant displacement of peasant sectors and Caribbean ethnic groups to other countries.

The civil war of the 1980s once again created otherness in Nicaragua; polarized representations of the "other" prevailed which, according to Irene Agudelo, "hid and distorted the deepest motives that mobilized both parties - Sandinistas and Contras - to defend themselves and fight for their interests" (Agudelo, 2017, p. 11 as cited in Carrión & Ruiz, 2020). Open wounds remained in the social fabric. Divisions between pro-Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas sides impacted families:

> In the 1980s my father was imprisoned for months and he was a frequent political prisoner in the FSLN jails. That led me to have certain resentment against the Sandinistas. (Young informant, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

Likewise, there were economic and social effects that were not possible to heal once the democratic transition arrived, which was a short-lived process. The exacerbation of the economic crisis, the lack of a true resolution to the internal conflict that took place after the end of the civil war, and the high levels of corruption did not allow for the consolidation of a statist project with strong institutions, a situation which motivated a lot of people to migrate to Costa Rica in search of better economic opportunities. The social conflict continued and on top of that the pact between caudillos (strongmen/warlords) of opposite ideologies, Arnoldo Alemán of the Liberal Party (PLI, per its Spanish acronym) and Daniel Ortega (FSLN), who wanted to return to power after his defeat at the 1990 elections. This facilitated Daniel

Ortega's win in the first round of the 2006 elections, and that is how he became president of Nicaragua once again.

Ortega's project, as rightly noted by different authors (Acuña, 2020; Cortés, 2020), has been built in a similar way to the Somoza family dictatorship: it centralizes political power by ensuring a dynasty of family power, and it corrupts economic elites; it centers its state-building on clientelism and the strengthening of not only military and police groups but also illegal "clash groups."

April 2018

Since Ortega came to power, situations arose that suggested that the country was heading toward an authoritarian project, as he almost took complete control of the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE, per its Spanish acronym), the National Assembly, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ, per its Spanish acronym), public universities, the National Police, and the Army (Cuadra, 2016; GEII, 2018; Icaza, 2016 as quoted in Cortés, 2020). Additionally, different policies were put in place to close the participation of opponents; protests and demonstrations were suppressed via "clash groups," as well as the establishment of citizen control groups:

> This shows precisely that when the upheaval broke out in April 2018, the crisis was in reality a constant situation, though the expression of societal discontent had not been massive. On April 3, fire broke out in the Indio-Maíz Reserve; several organizations warned about this, however, the government did not take action and even ignored international assistance to control the fire. (Salazar, 2018)

The situation was already critical when on April 18, the social security reform decree was published. Immediately in León, a group of retirees came out to demonstrate in front of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute (INSS, per its Spanish acronym) who were attacked by people aligned to the regime. Images of the attacks went viral on social media and produced outrage. College students, that some days ago spoke out against the situation in the Indio-Maíz Reserve, organized again in various parts of Nicaragua, mainly in Managua, León, and Masaya to support retirees. Furthermore, they were joined by civil society activists, people belonging to LGBTIQ+ groups, feminists, and peasants, among others. "Clash groups" acted against these protests:

> I had never seen what I saw on April 18, to see those groups closing in. I thought we wouldn't make it out alive. I screamed when a colleague saw that motorists had weapons, we had nothing to harm them, it was a peaceful demonstration. (Young informant, personal communication, July 8, 2020)

By the end of May and the beginning of June 2018, the "Cleaning Operation" began, a strategy created to clear roadblocks and barricades, by employing police

and paramilitary forces. It was the moment of greater repression and police persecution, and it was when many people were driven to exile.

In total, from April 2018 until the first semester of 2019,[5] there were at least 328 people murdered (including 24 boys, girls, and adolescents), 2000 injured, 700 people detained, and prosecuted 300 health professionals, and 144 students were expelled from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (IACHR, 2019). Similarly, human rights violations that took place included extrajudicial executions, three disappearances, torture, sexual abuse, and rape against women and men, as well as crimes against humanity (Chamorro, 2020). Also, according to 2020 data provided by UNHCR (personal communication, July 2020), there are at least 100,000 people in exile in Costa Rica, Spain, the United States, Panama, Mexico, and Canada.

This political conjuncture relives the experiences of people exiled by effects of the Somoza dictatorship, a historical sociopolitical crisis that perpetuates over time.

> It is a second chapter of the same tragicomedy, I lived through the seventies chapters in what was then the Sandinista Front and we swore that there would never be a dictatorship once again. (1980s diaspora informant, personal communication, June 6, 2021)

History allows us to identify that through the years a political culture of repression has established itself in Nicaragua. In this regard, Carrión (2020, p.23) mentions that "inherited ideas related to political culture and the authority model comprise a collective fabric of beliefs that must be dismantled by future generations." However, overcoming historical roots inherited from *habitus* merits structural transformation and changes that do not appear overnight; instead it has effects and consequences on people even beyond their country's borders.

This historical experience kept in the memory of past events and uprootings is relived and reopens unhealed wounds which in a way serve as reminders of previously sought ideals that remain unchanged:

> The diaspora of the eighties connects me with this new wave of exiles because we lived it as well with the phenomenon of the fall of the Somoza dictatorship. (1980s diaspora informant, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

This section enables us to identify that Nicaragua still faces historical challenges that it has yet to overcome, which translate into social deterioration and in a continuous crisis that forces constant economic and political migration at conjuncture moments, mainly to the closest country, Costa Rica.

[5] It is important to note that as of August 2021, the repression, apprehensions, and migration continue.

Crisis as the Context and Its Impact in Exile

The Nicaraguan crisis as the context transcends generations. According to interviews carried out, informants have experienced similar effects and pains such as family disintegration. Conflicting and dichotomous political positions polarize families; many people have been excluded from their families as they are identified as opponents, even going to extremes such as handing them over to authorities in power, and in some cases, they have had to flee the country to avoid it.

Family disintegration is experienced in exile as one of the strongest grievances; in many cases people decided to leave not only for personal protection but also to protect their loved ones, their families, and significant others. Physical separation truncates domestic social and cultural dynamics and affects the emotional fulfillment of people who are forced to live in a new social context they do not want to be a part of due to their attachment to their national identity and their desire to return promptly to their country (both diasporas identify with this feature). People who have left for political reasons have done so on the initial understanding that they have left for a brief period, while the political situation is quickly resolved to resume their lives in their country of origin:

> They took away my right to decide whether to leave my country; they took away my right to be with my mother, by her side to be able to support her, to be with my friends. At that moment, I felt that I had no right to be happy because I felt that this body did not matter, I immersed myself and drowned in that struggle.[6] (Young informant, personal communication, July 4, 2020)

To feel part of another society depends on many factors and cannot be generalized without considering an individual's particularity. Identity and self-definition are a sensitive issue in exile; being forced to leave one's country generates a sense of loss of what is considered intrinsic; therefore, nationality as such is one of the possessions that become a symbol of what one does not want to lose. For this reason, although they have been living in Costa Rica for many years, there are people from the 1980s diaspora who have decided not to opt for the Costa Rican nationality. Apart from that, the devastation and the immediate and medium-term effects that appear because of armed conflicts also make it difficult to return to a society that no longer offers the personal stability sought:

> Upon arriving something very curious happened, when I had to leave for Costa Rica they told me that I was coming for six months, in my case I managed to return to Nicaragua for the first time in six years (...) something that happened to me and it was very sad and painful: a post-war scenario, a depressed society, an impoverished nation, a huge military apparatus sustained with minimal productive capacity. I got there and the first thing I did was to try to meet the friends that I left and went to . . . and I find that many are deceased, friends with children and I felt like a foreigner in my own land because I did not know anyone else other than my core family, and it took me a week to return. (1980s diaspora informant, personal communication, June 3, 2021)

[6] Referring to the events that have developed since April 2018

There are similarities in social effects, as well as in the opening of old wounds that reveal continuing crisis, which calls for structural change and of political culture change in society and all the mechanisms for an operation in favor of the well-being of the Nicaraguan citizen.

Crisis as Breakdown from Normality

Migration is a complex phenomenon framed within a larger economic and sociopolitical reality.[7] Social, economic, and political conditions in Costa Rica and Nicaragua favor constant migration of Nicaraguan people to Costa Rica. Since the economic model shift in Costa Rica, binational relations started to strengthen mainly for economic reasons. Two main factors coincided and promoted migration, one was the need to substitute labor force due to labor migration in Costa Rica, and the other corresponding to social, political, and economic instability in Nicaragua.

Owing to migration from Nicaragua, Costa Rica is the country with the highest positive migration balance in Latin America (Feldmann et al., 2020, p. 11 as noted in Cunningham, 2021), since around 8.8% of the five million inhabitants of Costa Rica are immigrants.[8] Overall, Nicaraguan immigration has increased steadily; according to the 2011 census, before 1980, 22,655 Nicaraguans had entered the country; between 1980 and 1989, 31,161; and between 1990 and 1999, 96,761; and from 2000 to 2011, 107,666 Nicaraguan immigrants were registered.

In that case, with the increase on immigration that emerged in the 1990s, the Costa Rican authorities made adjustments; they implemented policies and overcame the polarized discussion of immigration control, strengthening their position in favor of human rights. It has been a process that has spent many years and that still requires much future work to be done, not only at a national level but also regionally; such endeavor must be carried out with an agenda that prioritizes optimal support of a culture of compliance where migrants' rights are a political concern and not just a fine speech (Changala & Arias, 2014). These experiences, supported on economic grounds over the last 40 years, are challenged by recent conjunctural conditions that derive from the political migration of 2018, where authorities' failure to address the crisis is exposed.[9]

Although the crisis in Nicaragua is the context, migrations to Costa Rica that reveal themselves in specific moments drive the host country to crisis. At this point,

[7] "Currently, the majority of world countries are generators, transit or hosts of migration flows and in economic terms, it can be said that practically there is no country that is not receiving or exporting labor, whether qualified or not, documented or undocumented. Therefore, migration is not exclusive to a single region of the world..." (Cerritos, 2005, p. 9).

[8] The most recent reliable data on the percentage of the Nicaraguan population in the country are available in the last census carried out in 2011, where 74.57% of the total of immigrants are Nicaraguans; by then immigrants represented 9% of the Costa Rican population.

[9] For further information, review Benavides (2021)

we can speak of crisis as a breakdown of normality in Costa Rica consequently of the challenges that this country faces because of a larger migration flow. In connection with the events of April 2018, the government of Costa Rica opened its borders, and the number of refugee applications by Nicaraguans increased greatly from 78, that is to say, roughly 1.23% of the total applications received in 2017, to 23,063 in 2018, representing more than 80% of total applications.

This substantial hike was noteworthy during the "Operation Clean-Up," as it went from 87 refugee requests received in May to 3344 in June and 5279 in July. The Refugee Unit of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME, per its Spanish acronym) collapsed; neither the staff nor the facilities were sufficient for the task at hand. Despite the constant migration history between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, in addition to the increase in refugee requests from other countries before 2018, Costa Rica never adopted, nor adapted to a context of continuous crisis in the neighboring country, but it reached turning points in which the Costa Rican State and its institutions hit their maximum capacity and urgent decisions were made in this case to try to provide specific assistance to Nicaraguan refugee claimants. Particularly, in the 2018 refugee category, the DGME approved a total of 165 requests, 6 of which were from Nicaraguans. In 2019, a total of 39,423 refugee requests were received, of which 31,604 were from Nicaraguans; a total of 928 were approved, of which 665 belonged to Nicaraguans. During the first half of 2020, 10,972 requests were received, of which 8325 were from Nicaraguans; a total of 1064 requests were approved, of which 766 belonged to Nicaraguans.[10]

In the period between 2018 and 2019 and the first semester of 2020, a total of 62,992 refugee requests were received from Nicaraguans, of which 1437 were approved and 2929 were denied. These figures enable us to recognize the slow response in the determination of the requests. According to interviews carried out, one of the main problems identified and pointed out by refugee claimants has to do with immigration proceedings. They stated that they felt unprotected at that moment as the information to which they had access was limited and they lacked a work permit[11] and could not access formal employment:

> I entered without any papers, only with the Nicaraguan identity card, I did not have a passport, I did not have an identity in Costa Rica, I could not carry out any paperwork and my appointment for the delivery of a first provisional refugee claimant ID was due several months later. The processes are too slow and at first one faces too much uncertainty because one doesn't know which institutions to go to and you don't even have a refugee claimant ID. (Young informant, personal communication, July 29, 2020)

Institutional capacity issues and response times have worsened with the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The asylee recognition legal procedures have

[10] Data provided by the DGMEM, July 2020

[11] The work permit is granted 3 months after the refugee request has been made. Notwithstanding, in some cases the delivery times for this document (which precedes the refugee claimant ID and works temporarily as an identification document) in 2018 exceeded this time frame. In July 2021, an agreement was reached for people to receive the work permit at the same time as the refugee request.

been extended to longer periods, causing greater uncertainty in the refugee claimants; meanwhile, in accordance to the sanitary measures taken by the authorities, in the 2020 DGME guidelines, request documents will be renewed automatically, but this is not reflected in a physical document which becomes a problem when it comes to its recognition in certain institutions, given that inter-institutional communication and coordination is a pending task.

Another of the measures adopted is related to medical care centers. Costa Rica has a social healthcare system and pension system for disability, old age, and death. This unified and mandatory system is sustained with contributions from the State, employers, and taxpayers. Regardless of nationality, those who are uninsured must pay for incurred healthcare expenses. In 2018, the government issued Decree No. 10 that exempts refugee claimants from this rule and allows them to receive primary healthcare and emergency services, but the lack of experience of civil servants with refugee claimant population alongside misinformation, among other factors, hampers compliance of the migrants' right to healthcare.[12]

Although efforts have been made to solve problems related to healthcare services provided to migrants (Morales, 2008), these are still insufficient for the volume of migrant population that arrives in Costa Rica; the country declared a humanitarian emergency to activate different protocols that would have authorized access to more resources in a quicker way; nonetheless, it did not do so. There are many conjectures as to why the government did not opt for the declaration of a humanitarian emergency, additionally considering that the international cooperation resources to which it has access are few, since Costa Rica is categorized as a middle-income country.

Precisely, among the hypotheses, those that are more realistic have to do with commercial reasons: when the crisis occurred, Costa Rica was in the middle of negotiation processes to enter the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In addition, it's presumed that the country's image before foreign investors when declaring a humanitarian emergency could have influenced the decision, implying that the country does not have the capacity nor resources to deal with a crisis, especially at a time when investment banks lowered Costa Rica's risk ratings.

The bureaucratic reality of the country also affects, as well as what it implies for the government to make a declaration of this level, as it involves the reallocation of resource flows to deal with the crisis. This would have been politically inconvenient considering that the Carlos Alvarado administration (2018–2022) had just begun and, in addition, was in a negotiation process with the opposition to pass an important tax reform.

Although it is true that bilateral agreements were brokered via the UNHCR, such as the free healthcare insurance, which only covers 10,000 refugee claimants of all nationalities, it is obvious that Costa Rica is not prepared to address the crisis. Even the participation of civil society was indispensable in the solution of urgent

[12] For further information, review Nassarand Benavides (2019). And also, Benavides (2021)

assistance issues, mostly for the diaspora, which managed to organize and extend assistance to new arrivals.

Said organization efforts were achieved in quick actions such as the improvisation of a hospital in the iconic Braulio Carrillo Park,[13] where the police force arrived and collaborated in the protection of Nicaraguan medical personnel and patients. Humanitarian assistance has also been required because of the difficulty to cover basic needs. As mentioned before, completion of procedures and the encounter with institutionality are some of the main difficulties identified by refugee claimants or refugees in Costa Rica, in addition to the acknowledgment that in this country *everything is regulated*, which becomes a challenge for labor integration. With the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have decided to return because of the complexity of supporting themselves in a country that is considered one of the most expensive in the region and with strict regulatory controls for productive and administrative activities:

> In Nicaragua, it is easier to be hired at any age depending on the position and the type of activity you are going to perform. I am considering returning to my country to start over, because it is not possible to make it here if the situation continues like this. I think that this time it is different from past exiles, there is little work and a pandemic that did not affect those who went into exile in the eighties. (Young informant, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

For young students to maintain their life projects and personal growth is more complex; higher studies completed in the country of birth were affected by actions such as the elimination of their university records and course registry, which limits having documents or proof to be able to continue their studies in Costa Rica:

> Although the University of Costa Rica has an institutional policy of access to education for refugee claimants, some officials are unaware of this, so I tried to find legal support from the UNHCR agencies because at a certain point they did not want to accept my grades, because they were not officially certified and, in some instances, they told me that the refugee ID was not valid to apply for a scholarship. (Young informant, personal communication, July 29, 2020)

This constraint does not affect people under 18 years of age who must attend preschool or primary or secondary school,[14] who by obligation and law must be admitted to the educational system of the Ministry of Public Education. To enter the educational system allows greater integration of children in society. In the interviews carried out with boys and girls, some positive elements stand out and that they underlined as differentiating elements related to their country of origin, such as improvement in their education, positive perception about police authorities, and the freedom to visit public places like parks.

[13] Known as "Parque de la Merced," this venue has been the physical place used by the Nicaraguan people and which somehow gives them a sense of belonging to their country; it is a symbolic space where they share meals and conversations.

[14] Preschool, primary, and secondary education in Costa Rica is free. It is also compulsory for minors between four and 15 years old.

In terms of the impact on the education sector, Morales (2008) states that it has been one of the most affected by the growth in the enrollment of children born abroad, mainly Nicaraguans. This poses important challenges to the system such as the variations in educational profiles. Among the issues found in addition to access and attendance of children to educational centers, a study carried out by Contreras (2001) for the IOM cited in Morales (2008) mentions a few like:

> School overcrowding in places with a high concentration of immigrants, which exacerbates infrastructure, equipment and teaching materials shortcomings; *above-age* issues for immigrants and a lower knowledge level hinder the instructional management of fractured groups from a technical, psychological and social perspective; technical challenges when handling a group of students with different pedagogical needs; attitudes of intolerance and use of stereotypes among students because of their nationality, which generates low self-esteem among immigrant children. (p. 57.)

As a result, historically, actions were focused on the implementation of educational programs for migrants. However, even today education policy is far from taking into account the repercussions of leaving posed challenges unsolved. To take actions that guarantee the implementation of rights is the responsibility not only of the central government but also of local authorities action that has great influence in community development. Short-termism must be overcome and public policies that in the long-run seek to sustain the welfare of people that arrive and of those who receive them.

To comprehend the Nicaraguan reality as a permanent and non-detonating crisis and, hence, its impact on Costa Rican society could contribute to a constant preparation with assessment activities that enable for the reformulation of policies limited to the repercussions on the social reality of Costa Rica and immigrants, their assistance, and integration.

Conclusions

A twofold focus on crisis makes it possible to explain the social impact of migration both in the country of origin, in the host country, and in binational migration dynamics. Constant crisis in Nicaragua, its history of conflict, the failure to establish a strong state protected by regulatory institutions with counterbalances, constant military strengthening, and the lack of a sound electoral system are some aspects that compromise a society that over the years and through different generations has suffered family separation as people are forced to migrate.

To perceive the critical and constant context in Nicaragua can bring about in the sound decision- and policy-making that prepares the institutional structure and civil society in Costa Rica for constant migration flows, especially at moments of greater influx that lead to a crisis that results in the overcrowding of assistance, difficulties for employability, education, and social adaptation. Therefore, Costa Rica must evaluate policies that can immediately address the needs of this population and guarantee the exercise of human rights (mainly, to streamline and facilitate refugee

requests) and to contemplate the medium- and long-term conditions so that people are able to access employment and have favorable living conditions.

To understand crisis as normality in Nicaragua enables the comprehension to assume that constant migration flows have different characteristics depending on the historic moment in which they are found; economic migrants who have been the constant for 40 years are people that, in a way, can maintain their direct relationship with their country of origin, unlike the political migrants who can suffer persecution and imprisonment or being murdered if they return in a non-discretionary way. To realize the needs of the migrant population favors the timely approach for their assistance and integration. Hope of return for young people who migrated after 2018 is shared with many people who emigrated in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the complexity of the return and of staying alive while recovering what was left behind, in a way, encourages the search for alternatives to continue with truncated life projects in exile.

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Chapter 10
Violent Contexts and "Crisis" in Mexico-Central America and Colombia-Venezuela Cross-Border Dynamics, 2010–2020

Cristina Gómez Johnson and Adriana González Gil

Introduction

The singularity of contemporary population movements demands an examination that goes beyond the commonplaces of the social imaginary frequently referred to as a "global migration crisis." The changes that arose after September 11, 2001, and the economic crisis of 2008 are constitutive milestones of a context that places "irregular migration" as one of the problems threatening the global order, such as organized crime or arms and drug trafficking (López Sala, 2005; Domenech, 2013). Although this migration/crisis relationship has been gradually assimilated into narratives, discourses, and academic work, we distance ourselves from it to underline the importance of examining the conditions that directly impact the migrant population in specific socio-historical contexts, in which an already precarious situation is aggravated by the persistence of violence. Although we recognize the critical situations that underlie the migration events, we attempt to explain the structural nature of their root causes and not only the conjuncture of "specific events." The emergence of violence arising from socioeconomic, political, environmental, and cultural conditions makes it possible to explain specific features of the migration process and not just mobility as a reaction to an event, which has implications on the state response (McAdam, 2014). The above-described conditions are associated with issues of a political nature, which in our two case studies demonstrate the role of persistent violence in the deterioration of the conditions necessary for a dignified life

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by directly or indirectly precipitating the decision to migrate in search of new horizons or turning mobility into the only strategy to preserve life when physical or symbolic violence is expressed directly. We understand violence as the trigger for persistent population mobility and as a means of controlling border flows, often resulting in the violation of the rights of the mobilized population. This violence becomes established and normalized and extends over time (González, 2006) beyond its definition as an action, phenomenon, or episode, without this leading into a war situation.[1]

This chapter originates from the analysis of the conditions that lie behind the growing and persistent migration of Central Americans to North America, via Mexico, and of Venezuelans to Colombia as a final destination or transit point to other places. In both cases, the population movements involve significant changes in cross-border contexts, particularly during the last decade. A complex combination of forced and voluntary population movements, associated with multiple causes taking place under circumstances that impact the rights of migrants, deepens an already precarious situation exacerbated by a violent context that demonstrates their increasing vulnerability.

The selection of Colombia-Venezuela and Mexico-North of Central America border regions as study cases allows the identification of differences and similarities in their migratory dynamics and trends occurring within national contexts. During the past decade, these two study locations have been afflicted by relentless violence that contributed to various transformations in the cross-border areas. Initially, we planned to observe the migration journeys of Central Americans to the United States and Colombians to Venezuela. However, the growing nature of the current Venezuelan exodus forced us to embrace some modifications in our research and turn our gaze toward the migration of Venezuelans to Colombia. To this end, we conducted 53 semi-structured interviews—using the same protocol for the two populations in the study—and a pilot test was carried out in Mexico City and Tijuana. Of these interviews, 26 were conducted for the Mexico-Central America case, in Tapachula, Mexico City; Tijuana, Mapastepec; and the state of Chiapas, and 27 were conducted for the Colombia-Venezuela case in the states of Táchira and Lara, the Peninsula of Paraguaná, the municipality of Pampanito, and the city of Caracas (Venezuela) and in the Colombian cities of Cúcuta and Bucaramanga (see Annex 1). Fieldwork was carried out between September 2018 and January 2020. The distribution of the interviewed population by gender and age, in the case of Mexico-Central America, was 44% women and 56% men, of whom 74% were adults and 26% young people between the ages of 14 and 28. In the case of Colombia-Venezuela, 62% of the interviewees were women and 38% men, 62% were adults, and 38% were young people between the ages of 14 and 28. All study participants had middle school

[1] Maria Teresa Uribe uses the concept of "states of war" to explain that, in the case of Colombia, there hasn't been a state of permanent war, but the continuation of hostilities as a tool to resolve the tensions and conflicts typical of the social world and the presence of violence as the strategy for solving life conflicts, both in the private and public spheres of politics and government (Uribe, 2000).

education, and all of them gave their informed consent to be interviewed. Codification and content analysis of the interviews was done using the qualitative analysis software N-VIVO 10, a tool that was also useful for organizing other information collected through hemerographic monitoring, in both cases, bibliographic review of academic papers, reports from national and international organizations, documentary information and databases of government agencies, ethnographic observation, and field diaries.

Methodologically, this is qualitative research that uses a comparative approach, i.e., the examination of the two cases is based on a common situation concerning different forms of violence in migrants' places of origin and that takes particular forms during the mobility process. Without claiming a rigorous use of the comparative methods favored by political sciences, we return to some of their approaches to define the criteria for comparison. Following Sartori (2002), we address the questions of what to compare, how to compare, and why compare. Likewise, from a relational perspective, we collected some indicators for comparison presuming that we are dealing with similar cases that admit contextualized comparisons based on qualitative inferences (McAdam et al., 2005), without ignoring the authors' warnings about the advantages and disadvantages of the comparison made under the assumption of "common bases." Although we start from the recognition of the similar impacts of violence in each of the cases examined, we consider the particularities of the individual national contexts and propose some explanatory notions that may contribute to the broader discussion of the recent changes in cross-border migration.

While violence underlies the growing population mobility in both cases, explicitly or in a veiled manner, it is necessary to specify the distinctive features of its presence and differentiated impacts based on the involved subjects, state actions, and social responses. Similarly, while in the most recent conjuncture violence has become a means of controlling border flows that entails the violation of the rights of the migrant population, it is necessary to identify the differential impact of said measures and consequences. We observed recurrent periods of violence that have affected the living conditions of populations that are exposed to situations of vulnerability in which safety and life are put at risk, as well as the emergent issues concerning the most recent cross-border dynamics. We question the global explanations—regarding humanitarian and/or migration crises[2]—based on our observation of the articulation of factors that reveal their particularities and identify significant changes in the migration profile of these countries. We start from a hypothetical approach that considers that the responsibility of the state in terms of the protection of citizen rights and its role as guarantor of their exercise seem to

[2]The Venezuelan situation of the last 5 years has been labeled as a "humanitarian crisis," especially by multilateral and human rights organizations, the media, researchers, governments, and public opinion in general, from which the so-called migration crisis, exodus, or diaspora stems, with a diversification of its destinations (Serbin Pont, 2018; Vargas Rivas, 2018). Some authors wonder if Venezuela is witnessing a "migration crisis" or a "migration in contexts of crises" (Gandini et al., 2019).

weaken in contexts of prolonged violence; a situation related to the gradual loss of the monopoly of violence that the state is having and the increasing interference of armed groups. The social fractures promoting the engagement of agents that debilitate the performance of the state as a result of their capture or persistent conflict and the inability of the state to meet the demands and expectations of diverse segments of the population are factors that underlie the growing population mobility, which must be explained.

Firstly, this chapter unveils fundamental aspects of the departure and transit conditions of those who have passed through and inhabited these border areas, as well as the impacts and perceptions of their migratory experience; secondly, it addresses the ambivalence of migration policies and the impact of the adoption of control measures on populations in cross-border areas and in need of special protection; thirdly, it describes particular features of the social response to migration in terms of "welcome" and solidarity, but also discrimination. Lastly, we close this reflection with the elements that we proposed as explanatory trends from a comparative analysis of the two study cases.

Conditions of Departure and Transit in the Perception of the Populations in Movement: Precariousness and Violence

Until recently, Central American migration through Mexico was primarily in transit to the United States. However, since the Obama administration, the journey became more perilous and the asylum application almost unattainable. The Trump administration made these conditions even worse by further criminalizing irregular migration, even threatening to move the National Guard to the border with Mexico in order to stop the *Viacrucis Migrante* caravan—the first migrant initiative to prevent human rights violations and abuses in their passage through Mexico to the United States.[3] Faced with this pressure, the Mexican government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador signed an agreement with Washington to deploy Mexico's National Guard to border areas throughout the country and to host US asylum seekers while they awaited the resolution of their applications. The implementation of these policies transformed Mexico into a country of destination and no longer only of transit, under the premise of border security. The economic precariousness in the Central American region has only grown as a result of the continued increase in violence and the subsequent deterioration of social conditions, turning migration into an option to protect one's

[3] Let us remember that the caravans were an initiative of the mothers of migrants who disappeared in their transit through Mexico. Initially in Honduras and later in El Salvador, they were organized to demand "free" passage through Mexican territory in order to search for their missing children. They were sometimes joined by migrants who took advantage of the "amnesty" they had to cross Mexico with greater safety (Gómez Johnson, In Press).

own life or the life of the immediate family, as evidenced by this testimony: "[...] Honduras is very difficult [...] I was left all alone, they killed my son's father and I decided to come [...] not to the United States; to Tijuana"(Interview 10, personal communication, January 4, 2019).

The organization Doctors Without Borders (*Médicins Sans Frontières*), henceforth MSF, reports that, in a survey of migrants and refugees, 61% said they faced some situation of violence at least 2 years before leaving their country of origin. Children and adolescents are the most vulnerable to the effects of violence; many who were exposed to violence from an early age present hostile behavior patterns, which, together with family fragmentation, made joining street gangs seem like the only exit (MSF, 2020). From this perspective, the violence that characterizes the most marginalized communities of the main expelling countries in the region (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) builds "invisible borders" that delimit the state presence and expand the authority of the gangs, forcing the population to run away. The following testimony speaks of how violence affects economic activity: "Well, I can't eat the money, I can't invest it in something because I'm going to continue being threatened by the same thugs, (...) I better emigrate, I'm going to try. [I was threatened] because I reported them to the authorities and they did nothing" (Interview 19, personal communication, June 5, 2019).

Understanding how violence inserts itself into the communities of origin of a large percentage of people in irregular mobility allows us to appreciate how marginalization and stigmatization are experienced by migrants, in their place of origin and in transit; we argued that this is a consequence of the abandonment by the states and that the violation of their human rights abroad is a replica of their experience within their own countries. The situations of vulnerability and violence to which people in transit are exposed cannot be dissociated from the tacit statement that shows that the logic of the irregular hindrance of border crossing is part of the government's inability to respond to the causes of irregular mobility. Thus, migration in this region, to a large extent, responds to structural causes that exacerbate situations of precariousness and marginality and deepen inequality. Mexico, as a country of origin, destination, transit, and return, has become a relevant context to account for the enormous vulnerability experienced by persons in situations of irregular mobility.

According to Mexico's Migration Policy Unit of the Ministry of the Interior, 22.3% of registered irregular migrants are younger than 18 years of age, while the majority, 77.7%, are 18 or older. In both cases, the majority of them are male, 29.5% are of legal age, and 63.3% are minors. The three main registered nationalities are Hondurans (42.7%), followed by Guatemalans (34.7%) and Salvadorans (10.1%) (UPM, 2019). These figures coincide with our 2019 fieldwork findings in the Mexico-Guatemala and Mexico-US borders, where most of the migrants we interviewed were within this age range and came from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, with the United States being the preferred destination of this population. In recent migrant arrivals, the presence of children and adolescents is observed with increasing frequency. In 2019, a total of 53,507 children and adolescents were

registered. Most came from Honduras (25,442), followed by Guatemala (16,999) and El Salvador (6976).

Regarding the main factors for migration, we found that economic precariousness and violence are, to a large extent, the determinants of the current migration from Central America and Mexico, a situation that has been worsening and that makes survival in the middle of the ongoing confrontations among criminal gangs in Mexico very difficult. This is reflected in what informants told us:

> [. . .] they are fighting among armed people, I don't know why they fight, and they shoot each other all the time for whatever reason [. . .] one hides under the bed or wherever possible to protect oneself [. . .] there were no school classes, we can't go out on the streets or go to work anymore, or do anything because we just can't [. . .] The children are terrorized, scared, nervous. They listened to the noises and trembled with fear. We had a shooting so bad that we had no place to stand behind, and I felt that my nerves were burning. (Interview 1, personal communication, September 23, 2018)

Mexico has implemented migration control policies that affect the entire population moving across its territory. The massive increase in migrant mobility since 2018 evidenced that Mexico, as a destination country, lacks policies aimed at improving the conditions of migrants from Central America; "... the hurdles and violence imposed by organized crime, institutionalized persecution... the absence of economic resources" (REDODEM, 2018, p. 94) force those who are in transit to remain in this country. This makes the phenomenon more complex because forced migration is also transformed into involuntary settlement caused by persecution and immigration control. The United States continues to be the desired destination, but the multiple obstacles to reaching this territory cause many people on the move to stop halfway, without the possibility of returning to their place of origin, nor of settling in Mexico, where they are not even guaranteed safe transit, much less regularization or employment assurances should they stay. When fleeing from a violent context, one passes through an unsafe space, frequently controlled by unlawful actors, who "always take whatever they want from you, they leave you naked, without shoes, without money, the little money you bring to buy a taco or to take a collective taxi, you are left with nothing, and from then on begins . . . I can say, our ordeal" (Interview 8, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

One of the most important observations made by those who accompany migrant populations in their transit through Mexican territory is that current migration policies are useless to protect younger people, especially since they are the ones who leave their countries with the purpose of safeguarding their lives and distancing themselves from the risk of being victims of gang violence, and who, upon arriving in Mexico, are victimized by state security agencies that do not guarantee their physical integrity.[4] The Mexican navy also makes migrant detentions; they are said

[4]The figures reported by the Migration Policy Unit indicate that in the 2016–2019 triennium, 40% of all migrants reported having been victims of crime. More than two-thirds of the reports were made by men, the majority (80%) from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The most recurrent crime is robbery, followed by human trafficking and kidnapping. 81% of the victims are of legal age, always in the age profile mentioned above, and the rest are minors. 44% of the events are reported in the border area of Chiapas (UPM, 2021a, b).

to hold detainees incommunicado, to physically attack them, undressing, beating, suffocating, and burning them. These abuses are more likely to happen with the navy than with other police bodies (Data Cívica, Animal Político, January 16, 2019). This situation has been aggravated by the Lopez Obrador administration's decision of incorporating the National Guard into "border security" tasks. In previous administrations, the enforcement of migration policies was under the legal charge of the National Migration Institute, which could be accompanied by local, regional, or federal security forces, but only in a supportive role. The violation of human rights in Mexico is a constant, as stated by an interviewee: "they are all the same in Mexico, the police, organized crime, migration authorities, Federal Police, everyone violates human rights" (Interview 5, personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Various civil society institutions (MSF, 2020; REDODEM, 2019) report that a high percentage of Central American migrants suffer violence in their country of origin, as well as during their transit through Mexico and in detention and deportation settings. This is important because it brings the high levels of risk faced by those who are in irregular mobility to light. It is a highly vulnerable situation explained by the lack of government guarantees to protect the life and well-being of those who have to migrate to another country and by the responsibility of receiving governments regarding human rights violations, similar to those that motivated the migrants' departure from their place of origin. The documentation of aggressions, violations, and barriers that hinder access to basic rights allows us to point out a responsibility shared by the governments of expelling and receiving countries.

The case of Colombia-Venezuela demonstrates a similar situation regarding how populations on the move are affected, which results from the increase in cross-border and extra-continental migration (OEA-OCDE, 2017) that has transformed Colombia into a place of transit, favored by its geographic location sharing land borders with Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Brazil. Historically, Colombia has been a population-expelling country, reaching internal displacement and international migration figures which make it possible to state that approximately 20% of its population is in mobility conditions (CNMH, 2015, 2018). Among the recognized causes of growing population mobility, particularly toward the end of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, are the consequences of the armed conflict and the escalation of violence due to the presence of different unlawful armed actors who have had disputes over territorial control, drug-trafficking routes, and sources of extractive wealth (CNMH, 2015, 2018). The Colombian armed conflict introduced dynamics of territorial expansion and border control, resulting in the transformation of borders into permanent spaces of confrontation, also revealing the limits of the state's capacity to control those territories due to the loss of the monopoly of legitimate violence (González et al., 2003). The strategic value of these territories based on the development of megaprojects, particularly at the border with Venezuela, has revealed that in addition to the armed conflict, there are now economic interests that emerge from other groups—cattle ranchers, landowners, drug traffickers, and national and transnational investors—which give a more complex dynamic to the migration phenomenon due to the presence of causal factors that trigger and expand it. Similarly, the recent

conjuncture introduces a new problem to the Colombia-Venezuela cross-border dynamics, due to the mass migration of Venezuelans to Colombia.[5]

In this new context, important changes are envisaged regarding the Colombian migration pattern as an expelling country whose population found in Venezuela a preferred migration destination; this trend is now beginning to go on the other direction because of the Venezuelan situation, which has led its population to a mass exodus toward various destinations, among which Colombia occupies a central place. Thus, population mobility has diversified and the conditions of the context in these cross-border spaces have become more complex, considering a critical situation of economic precariousness, violence, and insecurity that affects the entire population on the move. The perception of the burden of these factors is not homogeneous; however, some studies and a large part of the testimonies reveal it. A Colombian migrant in Venezuela points out that "Colombia has a repressive State policy at the service of multinational corporations, of the United States," which in her family experience has resulted in "generations that had to migrate within the country" and later were forced to migrate to Venezuela in order to "safeguard their lives" (Interview 38, personal communication, December 5, 2019).

Regarding the conditions that have generated the growing migratory flows of Venezuelans and the change in the Venezuelan migration trend, different circumstances and moments are revealed in the analysis of the information: domestic factors such as food shortages; lack of hygiene products, medicines, and medical supplies; a collapse of the economic situation; as well as generalized violence and "heavy-handed" operations by the National Guard (Serbin Pont, 2018; Vargas Rivas, 2018). The economic crisis that erupted in 2014, exemplified by the devaluation of the national currency, the shortage of food and medicine, power cuts, lack of water, and poor nutrition (Interview 33, personal communication, November 15, 2019), led to a large number of Venezuelans leaving the country without any preparation. They traveled without knowing where to go, without money or contacts, even walking, spending the night in the open. Some of the people interviewed allude to the support they found in the destination or transit places—from relatives or residents of those towns—including temporary accommodation, cash, information, and references to find employment.

Violence and political persecution constitute another trigger of migration, especially since 2017 when cases of harassment by the national armed forces and intelligence agencies became a constant; people were also banned for having voted against the government and had no way to get a job in their localities; there were

[5] Despite the difficulty in providing definitive figures on the Venezuelan migratory flow in Colombia, due to, among other factors, the lack of mechanisms of registration of Venezuelan migrants, its sustained growth during the last 5 years is unquestionable. Colombia Migration reports a growing trend that goes from 403,702 Venezuelans in 2017 to 1,174,743 in 2018 and 1,442,927 in January 2021 (759,584 regular and 983,343 irregular) (Ministerio de Relaciones Exterioresia, 2021).

conflicts with members of the police; and organized crime unleashed violence (Interview 31, personal communication, November 14, 2019; Interview 35, personal communication, November 23, 2019). The testimonies collected also exposed the role of the Venezuelan public forces as an actor responsible for migration: "The National Guard, which is the militarized police in the country, is the most hostile element that citizens face every day" (Interview 29, personal communication, December 28, 2019). The Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) harasses and persecutes citizens for ideological reasons; they act against members of opposition political parties (Interview 53, personal communication, January 7, 2020). Overall, the increase in violence and insecurity, the increase in the consumption of illegal drugs, and the ensuing "decomposition of the social fabric" (Interview 29, personal communication, December 28, 2019) stand out as triggers of migration. The state institutions have had an "increase in bureaucracy and an absolute inability to respond to requests, complaints or claims made by citizens, particularly with the documentation processes" (Interview 33, personal communication, November 15, 2019), and there has been police violence promoted by the state, which has materialized in acts of police abuse, arbitrary detentions, extortions, and threats (Interview 31, personal communication, 2019 November 14). These acts of abuse and neglect constitute what is called "symbolic violence," which gives another dimension to the violence exercised by the state.

To these conditions that compel citizens to leave, migrants' testimonies add experiences of violence and insecurity during their transit: "the violations in transit are many: physical and economic violations (...) there is even human trafficking under the pretense of offering a better quality of life in another place" (Interview 38, personal communication, December 5, 2019).

A context of transformations underlies and precedes all the violence and human rights violations in cross-border spaces. For years, relations between Colombia and Venezuela fluctuated between conflict and cooperation. As of 2010, there were substantial advances in regularizing the relationship of Colombia with the Venezuelan government, but almost exclusively in commercial matters and without including matters related to voluntary or forced migratory flows in the binational agenda (Naranjo, 2015). However, various incidents on the border with Venezuela have generated increased tensions between the two governments for years, a situation which has posed an imminent risk for Venezuelans who try to cross the border through trails or improvised crossings.

Government measures have oscillated between the mass expulsion of Venezuelans for alleged transgressions of "social order and public safety" (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2019)—measures that end in direct violations of human rights—and the recognition of rights, as in the case of children of Venezuelans born in Colombia after 2015, who were regarded as stateless and for whom granting the Colombian nationality was considered (Semana, July 15, 2019). The situation of Venezuelan migrants has been aggravated by the crisis that the

peace process in Colombia is going through[6] and its implications in terms of human rights: criminalization and murder of social leaders, re-victimization of internally displaced populations, land claimants, and returned emigrants; other aggravation factors include increased controls aimed at population movements and the registration process in response to the increase in the migrant population from Haiti, Venezuela, and Senegal, which arrives in precarious conditions and aggravated by the absence of policies that respond to the dynamics of growing immigration. Likewise, the health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to an exacerbation of the migrant population's rights violation.

Since late 2017 and early 2018, the sustained growth of Venezuelan migration took massive dimensions, showing the presence of migrants leaving on foot, who are beginning to be known as "walkers," exposing themselves to insecurity during their journey and even in confinement centers and shelters due to pandemic-related mobility restrictions. The Latin American and Caribbean Ecclesial Network for Migration, Displacement, Shelter, and Human trafficking, CLAMOR, gathered, between August and December of 2019, more than 200 testimonies from Venezuelan migrants in 17 countries where migrant support organizations of the Catholic Church are present. These testimonies shed light on the reasons for leaving Venezuela (political issues, violence, and loss of social, economic, and cultural rights) and on the "transit routes," where migrants face xenophobia and rejection, but also the "support and sympathy of citizens who offer them food, shelter (...) and essential medicines in case of an emergency" (Red CLAMOR, 2020).

The social and economic conditions experienced in recent years by the inhabitants of both sides of the border have revealed the complex relationship between factors associated with the socioeconomic and political changes in both countries and the pre-existent precariousness, inequality, and poverty suffered by various social sectors. The situation in the cross-border space shared by Venezuelans and Colombians also evidences the challenges faced by the states (at different scales) and by the society to guarantee migrant care, concerning both the conditions of social reception, whether favorable or not in terms of their settlement, and legal matters. Even though not all consulted migrants mention violence as a triggering factor for migration, the testimonies reveal the combination of situations and the perception of insecurity present before departure and in transit spaces. In general, the loss of access to rights related to health, education, housing, and food, the changes in the sociopolitical situation of the country of origin, and the conditions of insecurity are recurrent within the testimonies, in which the responsibility of the governments appears in the foreground:

[6] In 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla signed the Final Peace Agreement; in order to reach this agreement, reparation measures for the victims and guarantees of non-repetition were agreed, which have been affected by a resurgence of violence, the non-compliance with government commitments, and the lack of resources necessary for implementation, among other factors. See follow-up reports on the implementation of the Peace Agreement (Instituto Kroc, 2019; PNUD, 2020).

> Venezuela was a very prosperous country: good health, good schools, transportation [...] water, nature, electricity, everything was good there [...], but under the Maduro government there is virtually no electricity, there is no transportation, no gasoline, the food is too expensive, what people who have a job earn is not enough to buy anything [...] he turned everything into nothing. (Interview 51, personal communication, January 6, 2020)

Regarding security, they point out that "there is no protection, not even social, there is no kind of security for the people [...] they have a subjugated nation, because over there, if you do not agree with them, they will just shoot you" (Interview 44, personal communication, January 4, 2020). Faced with the decision to migrate, some define it as a decision forced by the circumstances, "all the time hearing that it is going to get fixed, that this is going to get fixed [...] awaiting the news [...] my grown-up son, I was going to look for him because so many young men were killed" (Interview 48, personal communication, January 5, 2020). Similarly, the information collected in the survey of the Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows (GIFMM) during 2020 indicates the high levels of vulnerability of the Venezuelan population in Colombia: 85% of Venezuelan families have difficulties obtaining food, 68% are homeless, 44% cannot get a job or sources of income, 65% only have two meals a day or less, and one in three Venezuelans has had to ask for money on the streets to buy food (Ida y Vuelta, bulletin about the Venezuelan migration process, 2020).

In both cases studied, the examination of the conditions of departure from the countries of origin and the circumstances migrants go through during their migratory journey position the problem of human mobility in contexts where the presence of violence associated with diverse groups—legal and illegal—and the growing precariousness of social and material conditions of the local population permanently expose migrants to obvious risks in border areas, unfulfilled basic needs regarding food, housing, and health care, as well as labor exploitation, human trafficking, and xenophobia, which constitute a persistent chain of exclusions and extreme vulnerabilities that casts doubt on the capacity of the states to guarantee the well-being of their population and the population on the move.

Migration Policies and Violence: The Role of the State Concerned

The "Remain in Mexico" program, officially called the Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP), was conceived by the Donald Trump administration as a tool to reduce immigration by forcing asylum seekers at the border to wait for their case hearings in Mexican territory. It has had negative consequences for people who want to reach the United States to request asylum or improve their living conditions. This restriction has become a migration containment mechanism that makes it difficult to enter Mexico from the south and, being inside without "papers," prevents migrants from continuing north (Ruiz & Varela, 2020). The consent of the Mexican government to participate in the program was given under the pretense of "humanitarian aid," but it

in fact has further violated the rights of migrants. Although the Mexican government was initially reluctant to accept President Trump's request, in January 2019 the program began to operate in the northern states of Mexico. The Trump administration never hesitated and after threatening Mexico with import tariffs, a bilateral agreement that made President Trump's threats stop and contained the migratory flow to the United States.[7]

The general agreement stated that Mexico would be in charge of processing residence permits for third-country nationals. The Mexican government ensured that migrants would have access to work, health, and education. However, the program did not materialize the promises that were intended to guarantee humanitarian assistance; on the contrary, this revision in Mexico's migration policy posed a clear attack on the rights of people in transit. In many cases, civil society organizations, and international organizations such as UNHCR,[8] are the ones looking after this population. These organizations also document the degree of vulnerability in which migrants find themselves, especially those waiting in high-crime border areas, as in the case of Tamaulipas. Between January 2019 and March 2020, the US government sent more than 66,000 asylum applicants to Mexican territory to await the resolutions of their cases. By the end of 2020, most of these applicants had not yet received an answer and were forced to live in extremely precarious conditions and without any guarantee of safety from the Mexican government (HRW, 2021).

In fact, the humanitarian discourse[9] of the Mexican government was transformed into a tacit military and police border control in line with Trump's provisions. The

[7] On June 7, 2019, a "Joint Declaration" specifying the agreement's actions and terms was issued: "1. Security: involving the deployment of the National Guard in Mexican territory, primarily on the southern border. 2. Expansion of the Remain in Mexico Program to other border locations. 3. Development of a regional strategy, seeking to increase economic investment in Mexico and Central America" (Moncada, 2020, p. 25). The Joint Declaration is ambiguous, given that it contains provisions that do not seem to be compulsory for the Mexican government and others that are, due to being included in an international treaty, such as providing job opportunities, access to health, and education to minors. Thus, we understand that this modification derives from the fact that Mexico tacitly becomes a safe third country, and therefore all asylum seekers arriving in the United States by land will be sent back to Mexico. "The Joint Declaration here refers to Section 235 (b) (2) (C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and The Migrant Protection Protocols [. . .]. Said section states that foreigners arriving by land from Mexico can generally be returned to the territory from which they come [assuming that they are of Mexican origin]. By decision of the Trump administration, it is also stated that non-Mexicans, foreigners who enter the United States through Mexican territory, are to be returned to Mexico as well, where they will remain for the duration of their immigration process" (Becerra, 536).

[8] UNHCR launched the CONECTA program, on whose website people waiting in Mexico for their asylum application resolution could register, all this to put an end to the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). This program, supported by IOM and UNICEF, offers information and guidance, legal advice, access to shelters, and issuing of IDs. It also supports work-related relocation and local integration (ACNUR, 2021).

[9] From the field of critical studies on migration and borders, humanitarianism has been problematized as a particular form of migration and border control legitimization (Fassin, 2016; Basualdo, 2021).

government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador has treated the migration phenomenon as a matter of national security; this reasoning was consolidated with the deployment of at least 6000 military personnel to the border in mid-2019. The trend toward the securitization[10] of migration is demonstrated in, among other things, the faculties to detain migrants in Mexican territory granted to the National Guard by the migration policy. Most of these servicemen are active soldiers or military police who have been temporarily reassigned to support border control. In addition, it is necessary to remember that "the migration-related actions of the NG are illegal since they violate articles 2, 66, and 67 of the Mexican Migration Law (...) under no circumstances will irregular migration situations constitute a crime" (Moncada, 2020, pp. 31–32), although, as has been evident, not only the National Guard has been the instrument of migration control but also the Federal Police and the National Migration Institute itself.

In addition to the securitization of borders, we must also consider the measures adopted under the health emergency caused by COVID-19. These constitute two elements that have placed those who try entering Mexico to reach the north of the continent or those who are already in transit in even more extreme situations. In fact, the military deployment found optimal conditions thanks to Mexico's epidemiological containment plans. The expansion of the capabilities of the military is not consistent with the protection needs required by the migrant population. On the contrary, those who have been sent back have given testimony of the state of vulnerability in which the "Remain in Mexico" program has left migrants: they are left out in the open and with no chance of entering a shelter with decent conditions (HRW, 2021; Meyer & Isacson, 2019; Moncada, 2020; MSF, 2020). Their life and integrity are left adrift; once they set foot on the northern Mexican border, they are exposed to illegal trafficking and the risks inherent to the violence of organized crime.

The extreme violence that plagues Mexico at least since 2006 has notably affected populations on the move. Kidnappings and disappearances of migrants are documented facts (Casillas, 2010, 2011; CNDH, 2018; Díaz Lize, 2020; Gómez Johnson & Robles Rodríguez, 2021; Martínez-Castillo, 2020), even when the actual number of migrants affected is not known. These types of violence do not occur in isolation and are often intertwined. One of the most ominous acts of violence that have been heard of and that have directly affected migrants is massacres. On August 24, 2010, the bodies of 72 migrants were found in San Fernando, Tamaulipas; they

[10] According to Pereira and Domenech (2021), the securitization of migrations "in Mexico and Central America has been used to account for the outsourcing of the United States border control policy and the experiences of disappearance, kidnapping, and death that migrants have suffered on their journey north. In South America, with some exceptions, the use of the term is associated with changes in national migration policies, especially since the so-called 'turn to the right.' In the region, the term commonly refers to migration regulation schemes associated with 'national security' as well as processes and practices of migration criminalization." To learn about the genealogy and transformation of the term "securitization" and its use in migration studies, particularly in Latin America, see Domenech (2013, 2017, 2020) and Varela (2015, 2019).

were murdered by the criminal group called "Los Zetas." One of the official versions circulated was that the victims had been kidnapped to carry out forced labor for the cartel, which they probably resisted amid a territorial dispute with the Gulf Cartel. Some evidence indicates the involvement of municipal police officers.[11] Soon after, on May 13, 2012, the army found 49 human torsos on the Monterrey-Reynosa highway. The conclusion reached was that they belonged to bodies of migrants; this terrible event became known as the Cadereyta massacre (Ronquillo, 2020 May 26). On January 22, 2021, another shocking event took place in Mexico:19 people were murdered and burned in a municipality of Tamaulipas, consummating what is now known as the Camargo massacre. In this last massacre, at least 14 migrants were identified as victims; state police and immigration agents were identified as part of the group of perpetrators (Aristegui Noticias, February 7, 2021).

Regarding the role of the state in the Colombian-Venezuelan case, it is important to remember that Colombia has historically been an emigration country, and consequently migration policies have fundamentally been oriented toward the care of the Colombian population abroad. Only in recent years has this trend shifted into gradually becoming a host country, particularly of migrants from Venezuela. Undoubtedly, this situation represents a challenge in this regard, precisely when the country has been discussing the design of a comprehensive migration policy[12] that considers returnees, Colombians abroad, and foreign migrants for the regularization of their immigrant status. As for Venezuela, its predominant character as a host country has shown that the migration policy measures of the last 20 years have not deemed the care of its population abroad relevant, despite the sustained growth of the population that is mobilized beyond its borders (Freitez, 2019). Binational migratory flows have a trajectory marked, firstly, by the departure of Colombians in different periods and for different causes and, secondly, by the recent growing and mass migration of Venezuelans, with preferential destination to Colombia. Across the extensive land border between these two countries (2219 km long), a permanent neighborly relationship has operated, which, beyond the tensions between the governments at different junctures, showed a continuous transit of people.

Since the late 1990s, the binational agenda has been marked by border security issues, particularly due to the impact of the Colombian armed conflict and the Venezuelan standpoint in that regard, consolidating a notion of the border as a national security problem (Naranjo, 2015, p. 342). Toward the end of the twentieth century, the US government had concerns regarding the possible impact of the Colombian armed conflict escalation on hemispheric security and the alleged inability of the Colombian government to defeat the insurgency. This prompted the

[11] The investigation report can be access in full at https://masde72.periodistasdeapie.org.mx/capitulo1.html

[12] On May 26, 2021, the Colombian Comprehensive Migration Policy Project was approved by the House of Representatives, becoming a Law of the Republic.

formulation of Plan Colombia.[13] This program was expanded in 2002 through the Andean Regional Initiative,[14] given the renewed importance that the region acquired as a strategic scenario in the context of the global counterterrorist crusade following the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

Since 2005, the government of Venezuela increased the militarization of its border area in response to the intensification of the Colombian conflict. Beginning in 2010, the change of government in Colombia facilitated diplomatic actions, framed within the creation of binational security commissions that made cross-border human mobility invisible, privileged illegal trade problems, and smuggling and drug trafficking and ignored the presence of migrants in search of protection. The measures adopted in both countries contributed to strengthening a securitarian perspective of migration; migration issues, the information provided to migrants and refugees about protection mechanisms, and the identification process were all handed over to the Army and the National Guard, based on the growing militarization of border areas (Naranjo, 2015).

In 2020, according to information from the website Colombia Migration, there were 1,764,883 Venezuelans in Colombia, 763,411 with regular and 1,001,472 with irregular status (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2019), a figure that temporarily began to decrease by 3.33% since the health emergency was declared in the country in March 2020. The main cities where Venezuelan immigrants were located are[15] Bogotá (347,178), Cúcuta (104,370), Barranquilla (96,410), and Medellín (88,489). By July 2020, there was an increase of 244% in the Venezuelan migratory flow, which warns of an upcoming migration wave (Palomares, 2020 July 24).

The absence of a migratory regulatory framework in Colombia that could guide the care and protection actions directed toward the mass Venezuelan migration has led to the adoption of provisional measures that stem from considering population mobility as an "emergency" and, consequently, receiving an exceptional and transitory treatment that accentuates the irregularity conditions of migrants, hindering their access to rights. Measures such as Special Permit of Permanence (PEP), Border Mobility Cards (TMF), and the declaration of social emergency at the border in

[13] On July 13, 2000, and after 9 months of debate in the US Congress, President Clinton signed Law 106–246, whereby funds (1.3 billion USD) were approved to be transferred as financial aid to the Colombian government in order to finance Plan Colombia. Its implementation privileged military action, at the expense of budgets contributing to the social and political resolution of the Colombian conflict (Estrada, 2002).

[14] In 2002, the Plan Colombia strategy was expanded through the Andean Regional Initiative (IRA), which included Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Panama as part of the "global war on terror," which meant prioritizing a new regional and global control policy.

[15] The estimation of the concentration of Venezuelans resulted from cross-checking the administrative records of the Foreigners Registration Information System (SIRE), the Special Permit of Permanence (PEP), migratory entries (accommodation intent), and the 2018 National Population and Housing Census—DANE. The information recorded corresponds to what Venezuelans voluntarily declared in the systems provided and to the collection generated from the migratory verifications developed by Colombia Migration, taking into account that the estimated permanence of Venezuelans in Colombia may vary and that there is free movement within the national territory.

2017—to facilitate an alleged temporary regularization of Venezuelan migrants in Colombian territory—have been accompanied by police presence and action during the migrant registration process and have a certain level of discretion from immigration authorities, which generates mistrust among irregular migrants, who are exposed to deportations and expulsions. Furthermore, it should be recalled that Colombia has received "about 950 million dollars from the United States, the European Union, the World Bank, and Japan" (Ida y Vuelta, 2020, p. 7) to assist the Venezuelan migrant population. This calls into question the role of the Colombian government, which exploits the situation of Venezuelan migrants to obtain economic benefits while making political use of Venezuela's response capacity. As Becerra Ramírez (2021) points out, "the increase in Venezuelan migration [...] not only affected the migratory landscape of the entire region but was also used in political terms as one of the most visible faces of the failure of the so-called 'twenty-first-century socialism'"(Becerra Ramírez, 2021, p. 3). It follows that the migration policies adopted by these countries in recent years must be examined based on the tensions that impact not only domestic dynamics but also Latin American geopolitics.

After the discourse of emergency humanitarian aid in the provisional measures of Colombia, a trend toward the securitization of migration persists, reflected in border control and closures, under which the vulnerability of migrants in transit has deepened; they find themselves confined in border towns without food, shelter, or money and exposed to conditions of insecurity and violence. In particular, women have suffered high levels of sexual violence, and children have been exploited through begging or abandoned in transit from Venezuela to Colombia. In addition, just as in the recent past, when a significant number of Colombians required international protection, in the recent conjuncture numerous Venezuelans transit in need of international protection; however, in both cases the respective governments have made this problem invisible and reduced their responses to provisional measures and humanitarian assistance, mainly through the support of social organizations.

In summary, in the two study cases examined here, there is a government tendency to adopt political measures of migration containment and control, which corresponds to the predominant securitization hidden in the humanitarian discourse of the governments in office. The trend toward the securitization of migration, present in the region at least since the 1990s to contain migratory flows, initially from Central Americans and later from South American, Caribbean, and extracontinental migrants (Inmovilidad en las Américas, Covid-19, 2020), has deepened in the last decade, with the consequent result of migratory irregularity, the increase in disregarded or suspended asylum applications, and deportations. Although the South American Conference on Migration (2000) intended to distance itself from the Puebla Process (1996), which created the "barrier" against South American migratory flows in Mexico, and from the Conference that in 2002 linked the issue of migration to the problem of national and regional security, the purported reorientation of migration policies toward an approach that privileges human rights has not managed to prevent "numerous migration control and surveillance practices"

framed in the common purpose of favoring national and binational programs of "migratory regularization." This trend is not reduced to coercive controls, but even uses the "humanitarian discourse" and the deployment of subtler forms of control that allow to organize migratory flows and prevent irregular migrations (Domenech, 2013, 2017). As Naranjo suggests, a broad vision of migration regulation involves actions that begin before arrival at the border and are maintained at the origin, during transit, and at the destination; on a level of securitization/externalization of national borders, as a mechanism of migration control (Naranjo, 2014; Varela, 2015).

Social Response to the Migrant Situation and the Migration Policies

The context of restrictions and control of the population on the move in the two case studies reveals a situation of human rights violation that, coupled with the production of fear, insecurity, and violence in cross-border spaces, shapes an environment of uncertainty and precariousness. Nonetheless, migrants resist and display a series of actions and organizational forms that go beyond survival and give an account of their agency capacity and articulation with the host society, through different strategies or as part of a struggle shared with residents who suffer similar vulnerability conditions.

Mexico has seen the emergence of a movement that accompanies migrants in their defense and resistance. These are associations, civil society organizations, and people who individually or collectively have been doing important work as an urgent response, offering water, food, and medical care and also documenting and making human rights violations visible, as well as accompanying migrants through immigration applications. The organized action of these actors has contributed to the processes of social awareness in the face of discrimination, racism, and criminalization of populations in mobility situations. However, it has also generated situations of vulnerability, risk, and criminalization for those who are within these support networks, due to their closeness to migrants, particularly because of their role in documenting human rights violations. Detentions and arrests of migrant defenders have been a constant since 2019; the physical accompaniment of migrants and the direct intervention in moments when a situation of risk or violence is detected have been criminalized and equated with crimes that range from disturbing the public order to human trafficking. Despite this, the work of migrant defenders continues. The migrant caravans registered in the last 3 years (from 2018 to 2021) have caused the attention paid to the phenomenon to involve the consideration of the efforts to look after populations on the move and guarantee that their transit is safe and consistent with the unrestricted respect for fundamental human rights.

In the Colombian-Venezuelan border, the information obtained—interviews, press, magazines, and reports—reveals the existence and formation of support networks, family and social, operating before migration, in transit, and at the place

of destination, temporary or final. These networks are engaged in the provision of basic resources (food, housing, health), as well as guidance regarding documentation procedures, employment, and settlement, especially through local NGOs and with the support of international cooperation and churches, not only Catholic:

> "An NGO two blocks away, on the corner, gives Venezuelan women and children lunches and medicines" [. . .] this is handled by the Los Pinos church, which is managed by a foreign NGO, a Christian church in Cúcuta, the biggest one [. . .]; there is an NGO at the entrance of San Antonio in Villa del Rosario, that one belongs to the Catholic Church; we have a page called "Venezolanos en Bucaramanga" (Venezuelans in Bucaramanga), we find out about everything on Facebook. (Interview 52, personal communication, January 15, 2020)

The increase in migration on foot from Venezuela has led to the formation of support networks along the way, assistance offices: "there are people who have come on foot, [. . .] and they went on foot to Bogotá and [. . .] and they were given soap, brown sugar, toothpaste, and toilet paper at assistance posts" (Interview 46, personal communication, January 5, 2020), as well as spontaneous support in transit sites, "And they told me that people came out with plates of food when they passed through Boyacá, people came out with plates of food for those who were walking" (Interview 48, personal communication, January 5, 2020).

Meanwhile, Venezuelan migrants have adopted pressure, mobilization, and demand measures—protests, camps, and mobilizations—to attract the attention of local governments and society in general, strategies that entail the deployment of mechanisms to combat control and to demand protection and assurance of human rights. These strategies also evidence the consolidation of solidarity between migrants and solidarity from migrants toward residents, who, in recent years, give an account of emerging hospitality that transforms solidarity into a horizontal relationship, given the extent to which they share similar conditions of exclusion and denial of rights:

> I came from Cali twenty years ago. I work in auto mechanics, it was well paid so I stayed twenty years [. . .] because of the crisis, work went down, so I am going back to Cali, and meanwhile, this crisis makes me sad for the many people who come from there, who don't have any food, so I offer them some and I have become friends with many families who have passed through here [...] whether they are returning to Venezuela or going to Ecuador, I have given them some kind of shelter for three days, for a week, while they are looking for money or for a way to travel. (Interview 41, personal communication, January 3, 2020)

On the other hand, there are also discriminatory and xenophobic responses manifested in explicit tensions with migrants, problems of coexistence in neighborhoods or shelters, and evictions from homes: "Internal struggles and complaints led to confrontations with the police, fights, vandalism, and the seizure of sharp-edged weapons and illicit drugs within the camp [...] with the threat of expulsion by Colombia Migration" (Motoa, 2018). Stigmatization is another source of discrimination, which in the case of Venezuelan migrant women increases their vulnerability. In an investigation carried out by OXFAM between February and July 2019 in Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador, it was concluded that:

> About half of the population consulted in the three countries thinks that migrant women will end up practicing prostitution, while sexist roles of overburdening women with care

> responsibility are replicated, which facilitates the violation of human rights. (Oxfam Internacional, 2019)

Undoubtedly, the growing mass nature of Venezuelan migration has led to the emergence of prejudices, which sometimes fuel actions and practices of xenophobia, of fear of strangers, given that they are deemed "dangerous" or "intruders." Similar attitudes grow in the face of the increasing number of Central Americans and their prolonged stay in the areas bordering Mexico. However, what is present in both case studies is that, among those who transit and inhabit cross-border spaces, an everyday nature that faces hostility and transforms it into solidarity prevails.

Conclusions

The criteria that guided the definition of the two case studies involved, firstly, documenting each case with sufficient information about its development. To this end, an inquiry path was drawn up that included fieldwork in which semi-structured interviews and participant observations were conducted; a review of various sources of journalistic, documentary, and bibliographic information; and recording of the information collected. Secondly, it involved adopting a comparative perspective that would allow us to analyze from a "common base" the persistent presence of violence in national contexts to reveal the differential and similar features that are often hidden behind the label of "crisis." The recognition of similar impacts of violence and its articulation to other social, economic, and political phenomena facilitated the projection of some explanatory trends that could contribute to the broader discussion on the changes in cross-border migration that have happened in recent years.

Violence influences the decision to migrate and follows migrants' journeys through places of transit, where they face extreme situations, the violation of their rights, and are exposed to risks that threaten their survival. Likewise, the political measures adopted by the governments were monitored, in such a way that the approaches on which the state responses to the migration situation in the region were based could be compared, with an explicit or subtle tendency to use migration control mechanisms becoming visible; this tendency is frequently under the protection of the human rights discourse as justification for the police and coercive drift. Another area of comparison has been the social response, i.e., the expressions and practices of the provisional (in transit) or final (in destination) host communities, which have not only favored the solution of socioeconomic precariousness situations but have even accompanied migrant response and vindication actions. In the case of Mexico, the social response was observed primarily from the role played by civil society organizations or the third sector. On the Colombian-Venezuelan border, broader social reception actions were also observed, which made it possible to detect traits of discrimination as well.

As proposed by Coraza and Gatica (2018), the methodological challenge is to define from which perspective the comparisons can be made, additionally, to answer

the question of why there is a need for comparison. In this last regard, we agree in pointing out that there is copious research production on migration in national spaces, but it is necessary to go beyond individual cases to establish comparisons/interactions between them, in such a way that we advance in explanatory trends. We can derive theoretical-methodological results from profound changes in migration in Latin America, particularly due to the increasing and unprecedented migratory flows between the different countries in the region and within the current global context. This means that the exercise of comparison has been a complementary strategy to document similarities and identify differences, without reducing the exercise to assimilation, i.e., to an operation to make the dissimilar *similar* (Sartori, 2002).

In summary, it was an exercise of description and exploration of the features of the expulsion contexts and observation of the transformations of the transit contexts, a route for the comparison of the three fields of analysis: a context of expulsion and transit marked by the presence of violence, prone to great impacts on human rights, lack of protection, and precariousness of the population on the move; an area of state action—increasingly restrictive migration policy strategies, measures, and actions—to control the mobility of migrants in transit and contain population flows, transforming cross-border dynamics through border securitization/externalization based on the adoption of control measures and mechanisms that deactivate or discourage population mobility; and a social response based on the challenges posed by the sustained and unusual growth of population mobility, particularly in cross-border areas. A response that oscillates between the reception and exclusion of migrants favors bonds of solidarity, collective action, and organizational processes of the population on the move in their interaction with local actors and finds an ally/protector in civil society organizations or third sector, one that facilitates their permanence in the places of transit.

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