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# MIGRATION AND STIGMATIZATION. YOUNG MIGRANTS AND PUBLIC SPACE IN MEXICO CITY

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> Today, international migration is a significant global issue. In Latin America, Europe and other places, an increasing number of people have left their places of origin due to different circumstances. Mexico, in particular, is characterized as a country that mainly “sends” people to the United States; however, it is also a place with transit migration, return, and immigration. This case study focuses on transit migration and immigration of young people to Mexico City (many of them Central Americans), who are currently residing in shelters in Mexico City and most of whom do not have residence documents or are processing them. In general, shelters are considered stigmatized spaces and their inhabitants are mainly discriminated against for residing in such places and for coming mostly from Central American countries. We will be studying how these young migrants practice public spaces, and how do they adapt to the stigmatizing conditions of Mexico City?

# Highlights

## General objective:

> To analyze how young migrants use public space in Mexico City and how they adapt to conditions of stigmatization by the national population.

## Specific objectives:

> Establishing how the nationality or migratory status of young migrants in Mexico City is a factor that facilitates or hampers the way this population uses public spaces.

> Characterize how these young people are perceived by urban residents and how these young people react to this.

> Analyze what would be transgressive responses by young migrants to the way they are perceived by other urban actors.

## Aspects to be addressed:

> Discrimination, stigmatization of migrant youth (non-citizens).

> The public (civil society as a sphere of the public?) vs. the private (internal tensions in the street, the neighbourhood).

> Actions to live/use public space with the aforementioned characteristics (to transgress).

> The public and the private in a "public" space: conformation of the collective (the shelter).

## Preliminary results

The issue of immigration and transit migration has become more evident in Mexico in October and November 2018, with the arrival of the so-called Migrant Caravan, mainly from Honduras, although many migrants also come from other Central American countries. This Caravan has generated different manifestations of acceptance and rejection on the part of the national population. In the opinion of some media and part of the general public, the way in which the Caravan entered the country violates the migration law currently in force in Mexico. The Caravan did not enter with the proper documentation, i.e., through an application for a temporary or migratory visa or in any case, through an application for asylum.

Regarding the circulation and transit of the migrant population through Mexican territory, it is important to note that Article 11 of the Mexican Constitution states that: "Everyone has the right to enter the Republic, leave it, travel through its territory and change residence, without the need for a security card, passport, safe-conduct or other similar requirements. The exercise of this right shall be subordinated to the powers of the judicial authority, in cases of criminal or civil liability, and to those of the administrative authority, as regards the limitations imposed by the laws on emigration, immigration and general health of the Republic, or on harmful foreigners residing in the country. In the event of persecution for political reasons, everyone has the right to seek asylum; for humanitarian reasons, refuge shall be granted. The law shall regulate their origins and exceptions." This is also stated by the National Institute of Migration, when it refers to the fact that entering the country in an irregular manner is not considered a crime. It is considered an administrative infraction that does not imply a criminal sanction (INM, 2017). Likewise, the Mexican Migration Law, published in 2011, refers to unrestricted respect for the

human rights of all migrants including returned nationals and foreigners, regardless of their nationality, origin or migratory status. The law even mentions that what is sought is congruence with requests for respect for the human rights of their fellow nationals in foreign territories. Thus, the manner in which the Caravan entered the country should not necessarily be considered as a form of transgression of the laws in force, since it is precisely the attention of people whose political rights are being violated that is being sought.

As is well known, the increase in migratory flows is generated by the inequalities and economic, political and social imbalances experienced by the population in different international contexts. As mentioned by Granado (2012: 490, our translation), "The disparate distribution of the population among different parts of the world, the unjust distribution of wealth and the unequal attribution of rights and, therefore, the inequality between the types of lives possible in this global world, act as factors increasing displacement and as factors producing paradoxes in the world." The economic and political crises experienced in recent years in different places have generated mobility between contexts that were not very common before, as is the case of the growth of intraregional migration in Latin America and, of course, the case of Mexico.

In principle, and given the conditions of mobility of the current Migrant Caravan in Mexican states where they transited without the support of NGOs or state or municipal governments, public spaces, and in particular the street, became their daily life; the place where they ate, slept, transited and interacted with other compatriots in similar situations or with the national population. This generated disputes and confrontations with certain sections of the national population, but also displays of solidarity and support from other groups. In contexts where there was some kind of support, spaces such as sports centres, coliseums and other places that could also be considered as "public", fulfilled functions such as the street, a space for coexistence and daily life.

In the case of the population that currently resides in the country and did not arrive directly with the caravan, the way they live and practice public spaces shows differences and similarities to the first group. When they have no documents, transgression is generated only by being in the city. For those who have documents, transgression could be perceived when they make some public demonstration on political issues, as expressly prohibited by Article 33 of the Mexican constitution, so that the way to transgress the rules can even be virtual (in the case of those who make political demonstrations via social media for example).



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## What was done this year

This is a case study only recently incorporated into the project. The work in this short period of time has focused on the bibliographic review, much of which had already made by other groups, to establish the concepts that best suit the case we want to work. In addition, contact has been reinitiated with a migrants' shelter in Mexico City with which we previously worked and with which we intend to work with young irregular migrants. In addition, we identified some young regular migrants in order to contrast the differences in both nationalities: of origin and migratory status.



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## What is planned for next year

The work for the requested period will focus mainly on continuing the bibliographic review, on the design of data collection instruments and the elaboration of the field work.

## Type of products planned for next year



> Scientific publication





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