MIGRATION MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL IN MEXICO: MECHANISMS FOR DOMINATING PEOPLE IN RESISTANCE

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Introduction

Any conversation on migration and human rights requires us to examine the impact on the bodies and identities of thousands of sexualized and racialized people forced to leave their places of origin, marked by colonial histories, to establish themselves in receiving areas, also marked by colonialist structures (Herrera Rosales, 2018). For that reason, we propose an analysis rooted in the recognition of the intersectional effect of colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism as systems that structure necropolitical frameworks, defined as "the set of policies and laws enacted to produce situations, moments, and spaces that force people to leave their homes or pressure them into situations and spaces of death" (Estévez, 2018: 2).

We start from the intersection of these systems of oppression because they are the foundation on which the hegemonic global system of migration management has been erected in the Global North (Prieto Díaz, 2016; Estupiñán, 2014). This system in turn is imposed on other regions of the Global South through cooperation, regularization, and asylum agreements, as well as the externalization of borders by means of financial and military aid from the United States to Mexico and northern Central America.

From this analytical framework of interwoven systems of domination, we seek to reflect on their territorialization through three mechanisms of migration management, which we can trace at the global level and will then analyze in the context of Mexico's migration policy over the last two years,

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in light of U.S. national security policy as it impacts on Mexico and northern Central America. These mechanisms are the externalization of borders, regional asylum agreements, and the criminalization of the defense of the rights of movers, people in mobility, also called the "crime of solidarity" (Penchaszadeh and Sferco, 2019).

Finally, we conclude with an analysis of these mechanisms' effects on the bodies and agency of people forced to move who in turn have consolidated resistance processes through collective organizing and the construction of political subjects.

A Global Framework for Migration Management Mechanisms

The hegemonic approach to managing human mobility is linked to the contexts and interests of the nations of the Global North. We can identify three important factors behind the present-day migration management system: the need for geostrategic territorial control of borders and post-Cold War migration; the 9/11 attacks, which promoted the association of migration, terrorism, and national security (Prieto Díaz, 2016); and the incorporation of migration into neoliberal governance (Estupiñán, 2014).

These factors underscore the convergence of neocolonialism and capitalism as the core components of a militarized view of irregular migration, cast as a national security threat for the Global North. They also reveal a neoliberal management approach to benefit economically from irregular migration and make "movement of people more orderly and predictable as well as productive and humane" (Ghosh, 2012: 26). This approach disregards the forced nature of mobility and the historical processes of colonialism, pillage, exploitation, racism, and discrimination connecting migratory flows and routes.

As Estupiñán (2014) argues, based on the notion of migratory management technologies, both direct and indirect mobility governance exists, made up of policies and multilateral agreements on control, screening, and dissuasion. In this case, we will examine three mechanisms: the externalization of borders, regional asylum agreements, and the criminalization of the defense of rights of people on the move (movers), which, due to their global reach and impact in the area of human rights violations, are of interest for this essay.

Dismantling Asylum Systems

In the last decade, the number of unwillingly displaced people domestically and internationally doubled, growing to 79.5 million in 2019 (ACNUR, 2020). At the same time, different regions moved ahead in weakening asylum systems and signing North-South bilateral agreements for the outsourcing of international obligations and human rights violations through so-called safe third country agreements.

In the United States, the Trump administration launched an aggressive campaign to block asylum-seekers through measures implemented by executive orders like the 2017 Travel Ban, which restricts entry for people from thirteen countries in Asia, Africa, and South America; dismantling the Central American Minors Program, which allowed children and adolescents from Central America with family members in the U.S. to apply for asylum; the imposition and expansion of metering or waitlisting at the Mexico-U.S. border, denying claims of family and gang violence as grounds for asylum—disproportionately affecting women and young people—using the precedent of the Matter of A-B case; and others like those invoked in the context of the pandemic, to allow immediate expulsion of migrants at U.S. borders without the option to apply for asylum.[1]

Additional measures included formal and "informal" safe third country agreements signed between 2018 and 2019. The first such agreement, which has remained in place as a unilateral policy, was Remain in Mexico or the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), which allow the U.S. to return asylum-seekers to Mexico pending a hearing on their application (Coalición Pro-Defensa del Migrante A.C., and American Friends Service Committee, 2019). Later, in 2019, the United States signed Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACA) with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

These agreements can be traced back to 2015, when the European Union (EU) formed the European Agenda on Migration to set quotas for distribution among member states; then, in 2016, an agreement was signed with Turkey under which all asylum-seekers with pending proceedings or who were rejected in Greece were returned to Turkey. Other such agreements are the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, used to block migration and accelerate assisted deportation and "voluntary" repatriation (Akkerman, 2018), and those that promote assisted integration by international organizations subservient to neocolonial and capitalist interests. Also, in 2012, Australia signed safe third country agreements with the governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru (Karlsen, 2016) in an effort to stem the flow of ships carrying refugees from Iran, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

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[1] See DHS (2020).

Militarization and Externalization of Borders

The most dehumanizing effect of an approach based on the growing militarization of migratory police is the death of hundreds of people on their journeys. Based on figures published by the International Organization for Migration Missing Migrants Project (IOM, n.d.), between 2014 and 2019, 36,465 people died in the context of human mobility, 54.3 percent in the Mediterranean, 23.9 percent in Africa, and 10.5 percent in the Americas.

Precisely, the prime examples of border militarization are the United States and the European Union. In the U.S. case, beyond the media impact of the promise to build a wall that already stretches along almost 1,000 kilometers of the United States-Mexico border, other more relevant issues exist, like the more than 6,000-percent growth in the budget for border control between 1980 and 2018. Also, the deployment of 60,000 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents made it one of the largest federal security agencies, reinforced with high-tech infrastructure that includes drones, heat and motion sensors, biometrics, and aerial patrols (Miller, 2019), while privatizing migrant detention centers represented a financial windfall for the capitalist elites.

In the case of the EU, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) has been transformed into a migratory control apparatus with a budget that grew 3,688 percent between 2005 and 2016 and has the full support of border surveillance and security systems for land and naval control in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe (Akkerman, 2016). In addition, the European Union has advanced its border externalization agenda toward countries in North Africa through advisory services cooperation for the formulation of national migration control policies.

Also, plans for direct investment have been implemented based on migratory cooperation agreements with countries that act as border guards in response to changes in migration routes in the wake of the safe third country agreement with Turkey. For example, in 2016, the European Union made a plan to sign agreements with Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Mali (European Commission, 2016). These agreements were the prelude to a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya in 2017, which allowed Libya to reinforce its border security with funding and training of its naval forces and border patrol, despite its conspicuous lack of a consolidated democratic state, and provided for the creation or adaptation of migrant detention centers.

These examples of the militarization of migration policy in the Global North and its self-perceived periphery can be understood based on the notion of the security industrial complex (Jones, 2018) and its relationship with migration control (Douglas and Sáenz, 2013). This refers to two central themes of our analysis, the encroachment of security and surveillance on all areas of life in response to social and environmental crises along the lines of the logic of the internal enemy. On the other hand, military and security companies exercise considerable power in shaping political agendas and security budgets in the United States and the EU, which benefit them in the form of contracts and research and development funding of military technology for civilian use in areas like border surveillance and migration control.

Criminalization of Migration and Human Rights Advocacy

Recent years have seen increasingly visible media reports of persecution against people who, acting individually or as part of civil society organizations, have been prosecuted for humanitarian actions to safeguard migrants' lives (Vosyliūtė and Conte, 2019; Front Line Defenders et al., 2019). This reflects a global trend toward securitization in migration policy, which, on the one hand, makes irregular and criminalizes the flow of people who cross borders to safeguard their lives and, on the other, limits human rights defenders' capacity for action by defining any action in solidarity as a crime (Penchaszadeh and Sferco, 2019).

Recently, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants released a report discussing the migrants' and defenders' right to freedom (2020). The document describes a series of measures that restrict the exercise of rights, which are exacerbated in countries with approaches centered on security and militarization. Hostility toward the exercise of rights and organizing by migrants and people in need of international protection has led to the imposition of new legislative and institutional restrictions that affect access to other rights, like life; access to basic services like legal aid, healthcare, housing, and education; protection against human traffickers and gender violence; information; asylum; fair working conditions; freedom of speech and assembly; and freedom from discrimination (Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, 2020).

Such criminalization measures also permeate detention and deportation regimes, especially in countries with security-based approaches, where people are discouraged from exercising rights and organizing. For example, in 2018, inmates at a detention center in Louisiana were repressed and held in isolation after launching hunger strikes (Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, 2020). Meanwhile, networks and solidarity actions by members of transit communities and civilian and religious organizations (Parrini and Alquisiras, 2019) have faced various forms of harassment and retaliation for their activities, ranging from surveillance, stigmatization, and public intimidation to harassment and criminal or administrative sanctions.

Margarita Martínez Escamilla (2019) examines how criminal law has been weaponized to crack down on actions in solidarity. A noteworthy example is the case of Spanish defender Helena Maleno, who was the object of a criminal investigation in Tangiers, Morocco, facing penalties that could even include life in prison. Since most criminal investigations of this kind in Europe and North America have ended in acquittal or been dismissed by the courts (Vosyliūtė, 2019), we can assume that their true aims are intimidation, reputational harm, harassment, and dissuasion of the targeted individuals and organizations.

Mexico, a Regional Node of Territorialization of Migration Management and Control Mechanisms

October 13, 2018 marked a milestone in the history of regional migration. That day, dozens of people assembled in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to embark on a collective migration. Two days later their numbers had swelled to over 2,000 when they crossed the border with Guatemala and on October 20, a total of 7,233 people were reported crossing into Mexico's Suchiate Municipality (COMDHSM et al., 2019).

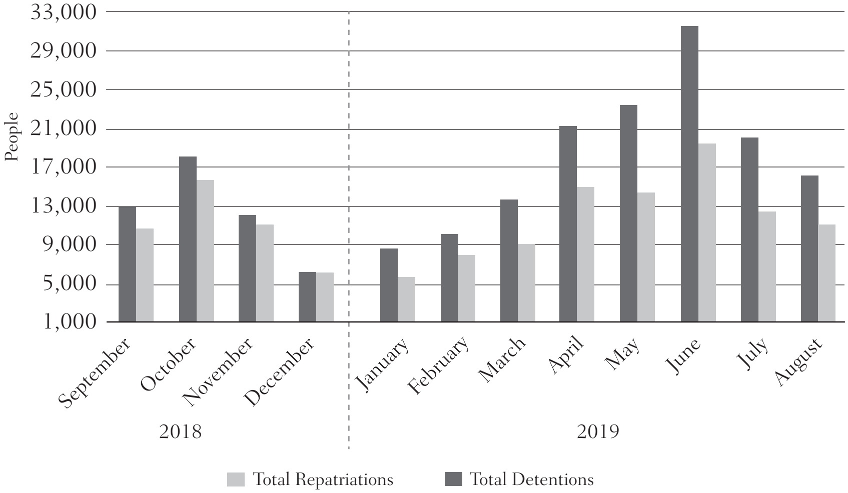
Between 2018 and 2020, this first group or caravan—that we categorize as an "exodus"—was followed by new migrant caravans from northern Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa (COMDHSM et al., 2019). Their needs are as diverse as their faces, nationalities, genders, and ages. They form an exodus fleeing from social, economic, political, and environmental conditions of death; they move through very risky territories of uncertainty and vulnerability, but that also provide local expressions of hospitality and solidarity, to finally realize the shared vision of a land of life and liberty (COMDHSM, 2019).

In the midst of this migratory phenomenon, the Mexican state and its regional neighbors have adopted and consolidated a policy of border security and migration control centered on militarizing their territories (Storr, 2020), strengthening the detention and deportation regime over and above the right to seek asylum, and criminalizing the defense of human rights for migrants and asylum-seekers (Front Line Defenders et al., 2019).

Militarization of Borders and Human Rights Violations

Although the military approach to managing migration in Mexico can be traced to the late twentieth century (París, 2014), it intensified at the southern border through the Merida Initiative of 2008 and the launch of the Southern Border Program in 2014, financed by the United States under the aegis of its war on organized crime. These facts are central to understanding the move to reinforce security forces in the region to contain the migrant caravans. The first caravans in 2018 were met with a constant deployment of joint operations involving hundreds of officers from the National Institute of Migration (INM), the Federal Police, and the Secretariat of the Navy (COMDHSM, 2019). In fact, as reported by the Migration Policy Unit (UPM) (2019), October 2018 saw the greatest number of detentions in the year, with 18,044, 75.5 percent of them in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Tabasco, and Veracruz. Although the federal administration that took office in December 2018 initially offered a discourse of respect for human rights and migration regularization, leading to a substantial drop in migrant detentions, threats by the U.S. government in the first quarter of 2019 following a spike in detentions at the Mexico-U.S. border put an end to the new discourse (see Graph 1). In April and May, the INM deported 67 percent more people than in the same period the previous year. Also, reports began to appear denouncing the presence of military police at migration checkpoints on Mexico's southern border. In fact, in those months new caravans were formed by migrants from Central America, the Caribbean, and several African countries, most of whom ended up crowded into detention centers (COMDHSM et al., 2019).

GRAPH 1
MIGRANT DETENTIONS AND REPATRIATIONS IN MEXICO
(SEPTEMBER 2018-AUGUST 2019)



SOURCE: Developed by the authors with information from UPM (2019).

This was only the prelude to an intense military buildup throughout the border region. In response to U.S. threats to impose tariffs on Mexican exports to force it to strengthen migration control and in the midst of the ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), on June 7, 2019,[2] the Mexican Foreign Relations Ministry signed an agreement promising to deploy the National Guard on the southern border and make the MPP official along Mexico's entire northern border. The agreement turned June into the month with the most detentions in recent history, with 31,560 people detained for migration-related reasons. In July, the National Guard boosted its deployment to 26,000 officers as part of the so-called "Northern and Southern Border Migration and Development Plan" (Storr, 2020).

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[2] See U.S. Department of State (2019).

In step with Mexico's militarization of migration policy, the nations of northern Central America implemented similar measures. For example, through the Protocol for Joint Action between the National Civilian Police and Armed Forces of 2018 and the Special Migration and Foreign Nationals Act in 2019, El Salvador created the legal basis for police border control efforts to operate jointly with military forces. Also, Guatemala has used task forces made up of its army and National Civilian Police, created during the Internal Armed Conflict (1960-1996) and reactivated in 2016, to embrace a discourse of national security and border control as ways to minimize the actions of organized crime. These forces have received training from the U.S. Southern Command, the Texas and Arkansas National Guard, and the CBP for monitoring all the country's borders.

Bilateral Agreements to Dismantle Asylum Systems

Starting in January 2019, the general saturation in refugee proceedings was made more complex by the implementation of MPP on Mexico's northern border. From then through July 2020, a total of 65,877 asylum-seekers in the United States were returned to Mexico (TRAC Reports Inc., 2021). These persons are especially vulnerable, being exposed to violence from organized crime and gangs in several of the country's most dangerous cities, added to the fact that most of them lack access to protection, support, or legal advice or representation networks (Coalición Pro Defensa del Migrante, A.C. and American Friends Service Committee, 2019). Estimates indicate that in only around 1 percent of MPP cases have the petitioners been granted asylum (COMDHSM et al., 2019).

Faced with this situation, many people have desisted from their asylum petitions. Mexican authorities have persuaded others to board buses from the northern border to border crossings in the south, where they are abandoned (COMDHSM et al., 2019). MPP and the Mexican government's efforts to force migrants to return constitute a severe violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Also, transporting asylum-seekers to the southern border, combined with other government actions, has transformed cities like Tapachula, Chiapas, into "prison cities" or pockets of disposability for people in need of international protection or awaiting regularization of their migratory status (Estévez, 2018).

It bears noting that for years the Mexican asylum system has been sunk in a deep crisis. The exponential growth of asylum petitions, skyrocketing from 1,296 in 2013 to 70,609 in 2019 (COMAR, 2020), reflects the context of expulsion in the region and many peoples' inability to get to the United States and apply for asylum. Facing this surge in applications, the Mexican Refugee Aid Commission (COMAR), instead of boosting its capacity for action, has suffered a gradual reduction of its budget and continues to be plagued by severe delays in processing applications, extending even beyond a year.

This panorama was palpable from early 2019, when the Mexican government announced the launch of a temporary program of humanitarian guest visas (TVRH), which allowed recipients to stay in the country for a year, even asylum-seekers whom the authorities had persuaded to withdraw their applications. However, the shutdown of the program in February was the beginning of the end for handling cases of regularization and asylum in southern Mexico, leading to multiple protests and the formation of new caravans between March and October; the last was a group of more than 2,000 people, mainly from Haiti and Africa, which was blocked by more than 500 Mexican army soldiers and INM agents (COMDHSM et al., 2019).

Also, the despair of long waits to attain migratory status and continue their journey led hundreds of people to camp outside the offices of the INM, COMAR, and the Siglo XXI migrant detention center. Even so, the most shocking images of this process of disarticulation of asylum systems and border militarization forcing migrants to wait indefinitely at Mexico's southern and northern borders show events like the death of three Africans after capsizing in a boat off the Tapachula coast to dodge military checkpoints on land in the state of Chiapas. The eight survivors spent several weeks in detention before they were granted humanitarian visas (COMDHSM et al., 2019).

Agreements signed between the Mexican and U.S. governments, like that extending MPP to the entire northern border and another on militarization to contain migrants and asylum seekers in the south, were expanded to countries in northern Central America. Between June and September 2019, the governments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador signed Asylum Cooperation Agreements with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which in essence transformed them into "safe third countries." These actions are cause for concern because the same governments have acknowledged the challenges of implementing policies and legal and institutional structures to ensure the protection of migrants and refugees (CIDH, 2019). In addition, prevailing conditions of poverty, inequality, gang violence, and organized crime make it impossible to recognize them as "safe countries," thus creating an irreconcilable inconsistency regarding fundamental guarantees in the asylum system.

Criminalization of Organizing to Defend Migrant and Asylum-Seekers' Rights

Another face of the militarization of migration that seeks to maintain governability and control of migratory flows is increasing restriction of space for civil society organizations and communities in solidarity to participate in the defense of migrants' human rights. In some countries in the region like El Salvador, criminalization is achieved by implementing zero-tolerance policies against gangs and social sectors seen as threats to the government, accusing them of complicity with criminal groups as a strategy to discredit them. In Guatemala, criminalization has been pursued by enacting laws like the Non-Government Organizations for Development Act (Decree 4, 2020), which gives the state powers to surveil, intervene, and cancel the registration of organizations that "disrupt public order" and impose civil and penal sanctions on their managers and partners and restrictions on international financing, among other measures.

In Mexico in recent years, in the context of the migrant caravans and the government response, detentions and arrests of human rights defenders have been reported, using the supposed offense of "disruption of public order," as well as the detention and deportation of migrants with experience in human rights defense in their countries of origin, who have been apprehended by agents of different law enforcement agencies and then taken to migrant detention centers and rapidly deported (Front Line Defenders et al., 2019).

Also, we have seen growing use of criminal investigations as instruments of harassment and dissuasion of solidarity actions. In June 2019, two Mexican human rights defenders were detained in different places in the country and taken to Tapachula, Chiapas, on charges of human trafficking. However, a judge ruled that there was insufficient evidence and released them pending trial. The case was special, serving as an exemplary measure days after the signing of an agreement between Mexico and the United States, which had human trafficking as one of its central topics (Front Line Defenders et al., 2019).

Finally, we have seen acts of surveillance, intimidation, and repression against migrant shelters and civil society organizations. There have been increasing reports of heightened police and National Guard presence around shelters. Also, in January 2020, the INM attempted to deny organizations it had previously accredited access to migrant detention centers to monitor human rights and provide legal advice. Although the Ministry of the Interior intervened promptly to lift the restrictions, the incident revealed the government's intention to impose increased restrictions on spaces for defense of rights and consolidate various criminalization mechanisms designed to discourage solidarity actions in a country with a long and distinguished history of hospitality toward migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers.

Impact and Resistance; the Construction of Political Subjects

At many points in history, we can attest to the physical, emotional, cultural, economic impact produced by the legacy of systems of domination, primarily from colonialism and capitalism, which remain in place with redoubled strength in today's world.

In the case of migration management, the impact on people is multifaceted: the control of bodies and territories through externalization, militarization of borders, and criminalization of human rights defenders. This can lead to people lacking the minimum conditions for subsistence in their places of origin or of transit, and even harsher conditions in receiving territories.

The implementation of both development programs to forestall migration and anti-migrant policies like those described above, with a focus on militarization supposedly intended to hamper irregular migration, has failed to produce the desired effect (for example in the 2018 exodus), and on the contrary has altered the migratory dynamic by increasing risks and human costs. Faced with these realities, people are unwitting victims. They are victims unrecognized as such. They are victims denied access to reparations and justice. They are victims without the time or strength to resist the harm inflicted on them by structures that discriminate, criminalize, and kill.

However, accepting one's victimhood does not imply transformation. The terms are not synonymous and that is where talk of resistance takes on meaning. Resistance emerges from oppression. As Lenin explained in his debate with Hilferding, it is not only in newly opened-up countries, but also in the old, that imperialism leads to annexation, to increased national oppression, and, consequently, also to increasing resistance (Lenin, 1917).

Resistance

For Latin America, the concept of resistance is intricately entwined with its history, from the opposition of original peoples against colonialism to the rejection of present-day institutional measures that seek the violent physical and cultural eradication of its peoples and the appropriation of their wealth, like policies for resource control and extraction (Fajardo, 2005).

Stated differently, resistance at different historical moments is linked through organizing by people who have been historically oppressed by a system like capitalism, which gives rise to a permanent revolutionary situation driven by the exacerbation of social contradictions. It can be stationary, organized, unorganized, or developing (Fajardo, 2005).

Revolutions are a constant throughout history, but society's structure has not yet been transformed. The oppressive systems remain the same. Various critiques have been leveled against revolutions and different forms of resistance or social movements, but it is important to clarify that self-proclaimed revolutions embrace the established social conceit of pursuit of hegemonic power, setting aside the revolution's main achievement embodied in the movement itself, organizing, annexation, closeness, empathy rooted in pain, dispossession, and uprooting. Revolutions are replete with individual and collective resistance and memory. They resist based on everyday experience, the struggle for access to rights, nonconformism, questioning accepted truths, doubt, rage, and the hope for a better life.

Consequently, it is important to seek harmonization between modern-day processes of resistance and the struggle for political power, given that some theoretical positions reject the pursuit of political power on the grounds that it should suffice to resist immediate situations, even affirming that power can be derived wholly from everyday experience. Dignity is not a private matter, because our lives are so intertwined with those of others as to make private dignity impossible. It is precisely the pursuit of personal dignity that, far from taking us in the opposite direction, brings us face to face with the urgency of revolution (Holloway, 2005).[3]

Today, processes are evaluated by an essentially local and regional dynamic, which does not strive to "take power," but rather to build power. In other words, some projects have abandoned traditional left views regarding power, which saw taking central power as a step toward deciding the fate of an entire population. This other perspective aspires to build power by taking local and regional structures of popular organization as its point of departure and action (Fajardo, 2005).

The Active Political Subject Who Constitutes Resistance: Migrant Exodus

As we have observed, 2018 produced a milestone in migrant flows called exoduses or migrant caravans, which marked a historical trend as a collective survival strategy in the search for a safe territory where migrants and their families can fulfill their dreams and ensure their day-to-day survival.

This form of mass mobility is capable of disputing borders as national security technologies. It seeks to challenge migration and refugee policies in Mexico and the United States, revealing the collapse of the U.S., Mexican, and Guatemalan asylum systems, as well as government simulation of attending to and protecting migrants in transit and people seeking international protection and in conditions of extreme vulnerability.

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[3] This is one of the pillars of the Zapatista uprising. The Zapatistas insist that dignity compels them to rebel. See Holloway (1998).

Everything this mass forced mobility and the challenges facing each state have produced and continue to produce confirms that there is a social movement challenging a hegemonic power through the construction of a collective political subject. This mass forced mobility, which is much more than a simple social and demographic phenomenon, is a subject made up of thousands of people, with different individual and family plans and aspirations, united in the common cause of safeguarding their lives and building a better life in Mexico and the United States. It is a political subject because it breaks from the conventional migratory pattern of disperse and invisible human mobility, individual or in small groups, reshaping it into a collective, public form capable of exercising a social force that allows it to dialogue with actors in government and civil society (COMDHSM, 2019).

It is a political subject aware of its ability to exercise power through resistance. This does not mean that the active political subject seeks hegemonic power; in fact, they have no interest in it. What does interest them is the search for a place where living is possible, which they are denied by global anti-migration policies, by the xenophobia and aporophobia they may encounter in transit territories, which are often the minimum expressions remaining from the legacy of neocolonialism and the capitalist system also manifested in forms of human interaction.

The individuals who make up the active political subject have been shaped by resistance, by nonconformism; they appear in everyday life, but are not aware of it, because the system has not allowed the self to believe that it can have power over its own life, over its body, and that such power is shared and experienced collectively. It is discovered through resistance and survival and is placed at the service of survival instead of legitimizing the power that is violating human integrity. This is where indignation, anger, rage, fear, pain, and hunger lead people to organize with others who share their plight, to transform their conditions, without realizing that, when they seek to transform conditions they are challenging the system, they are challenging the entrenched hegemonic power, they are challenging themselves, but they are challenging a system that has made them believe that they have no chance of aspiring to power. That is where what has been historically denied, the ability to claim what one is entitled to, to demand well-being and dignity, comes to life.

Thus, what we discern is individual movement, generated from resistance to oppressive systems, that leads to collective organization, based on a firmly held belief in putting down roots in a land of opportunity. People are denied a livelihood and nevertheless they live because they resist individually and collectively.

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