

The Age of Migration Crisis

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Abstract: The article analyzes the historical changes in the formulation of migration policies between the 19th and 21st centuries, summarizing the emergency of an “age of migration crisis”. The first section discusses why international migration poses a destabilizing problem for the Nation-state political conceptions. The second section emphasizes the intrinsic articulation of the global changes in human mobility and their political governance between the 19th and 20th centuries, identifying the four prevailing political paradigms on migrant cultural diversity that shaped public policies in the 20th century. The third and fourth sections deal with the emergence of the fifth cycle of international migration policies, which is characterized by the generalization of a global discourse that criminalizes migrants and refugees. The above will be followed by a critical perspective of the way migration has been treated in some Latin American countries.

Keywords: Migration; Policies; Nation-state; Latin America.

A era da crise migratória

Resumo: O artigo analisa as transformações históricas na formulação de políticas migratórias entre os séculos XIX e XXI, sintetizando a emergência de uma “era da crise migratória”. A primeira seção discute por que a migração internacional constitui um problema para as concepções políticas dos Estados nacionais. A segunda seção enfatiza a intrínseca articulação dos câmbios globais na mobilidade humana e sua governança política entre o século XIX e o XX, identificando os quatro paradigmas predominantes sobre a diversidade cultural, os quais configuraram as políticas do século XX. A terceira e a quarta seções lidam com a emergência de um discurso global que criminaliza os migrantes e refugiados. A análise se faz numa perspectiva crítica sobre a forma como alguns países latino-americanos vêm tratando a migração.

Palavras-chave: Migração; Políticas; Estado-nação; América Latina.

Analyzing the relationship between migration policies, Nation-States, and capitalism's global processes requires a two-pronged approach: localizing where the discourses and categories about these phenomena are produced, and outlining the historical, political and economic processes that frame them. These maxims orient my discussion in the present article, in which I will outline the historical changes in the formulation of migration policies between the 19th and 21st centuries. This analysis will clarify the fundamental importance acquired by the notion of "national culture" in the political definitions of migration and borders; and will contextualize migration and cultural diversity policies in macro global processes.

My main argument is that, since 2001, we have entered a new phase in the governance of international migration. The last two decades of the 20th century were generically designated "the age of migration" (Castells; Miller, 1993). As many researchers stress, this expression is not related to a quantitative change in the percentage of international migrants in that period. Rather, it summarizes the contradictions of globalization regarding the production of representations on transnational mobility. Beyond the varied meanings attributed to the "age of migration", the fact is that it has come to an (unhappy) end, giving rise to the beginning of an "age of migration crisis".

The transition between these "ages" entails a change in the production of globally shared imaginaries about migration: from a discourse that celebrated (very contradictorily) cross-border and transnational mobility, to one that speaks of it, openly, as an evil to be persecuted and eradicated. Although this transition has been taking place for at least 17 years or more, its imprint was radicalized in 2016 due to a set of global political outcomes. Since then, a conservative, xenophobic and racist twist in international migration governance has been consolidated, Trump's discourse being a clear example of the above. However, this change is part of a more complex picture, articulated by the radicalization of neoliberalism, by the lack of alternative models, and by the consolidation of a capitalist realism that disavows humanist values and counter-hegemonic worldviews (Fisher, 2009).

To historicize this argument, the article is divided in three sections after this introduction. The first deals with the relationship between the concepts of culture and Nation-State. It discusses the political importance of the idea of national homogeneity in the legal composition of citizenship, addressing its intimate connection with racist theories, and with the elitist ideologies of self-representation. This debate enables an understanding of the historical articulation between a Nation-State's unity and its fictional (or mythological) inscription in a territory circumscribed by Euclidian borders. Furthermore, it explains why international migration poses a destabilizing problem for these political conceptions.

The second section emphasizes the intrinsic articulation of the global changes in human mobility and their political governance between the 19th and 20th centuries. I will identify

four cycles of migration policies, each of them enjoying the hegemony of specific political guidelines. Finally, I will briefly outline the four prevailing political paradigms on migrant cultural diversity that shaped public policies in the 20th century: *assimilationism, utilitarianism, multiculturalism and interculturalism*.

The third and fourth sections deal with the emergence of the fifth cycle of international migration policies, which is characterized by the generalization of a global discourse that criminalizes migrants and refugees. I will discuss the migrant processes and conflicts that mark this period, summarizing the global changes in the political mentality and discourse. The above will be followed by a critical perspective of the way migration has been treated in some Latin American countries.

Culture, Diversity and Nation-State

International migration differs from other forms of human mobility because it involves itineraries that cross (and link) two or more Nation-States. Accordingly, a critical perspective of migration policies cannot avoid questioning the historical-conceptual relationship that these displacements have with the most important political categories that make up the Nation-State (e.g., national identity, citizenship, sovereignty, frontiers). This exercise in questioning demands de-naturalizing certain commonalities of discourse on migrant flows, and it could start with the following assertion: international migrations are a historical outcome of the invention of Nation-states and their borders, and therefore constitute a very recent phenomenon in the history of humankind (Sutcliffe, 1998).¹

However, it would be a mistake to assume migration is a new phenomenon for human social groups. The human species has existed for about 150,000 years (Sutcliffe, 1998), and it has been migrating this entire period. It is thanks to this persistent habit that we now populate the entire planet. Our species was predominantly nomadic for about 142,000 years, until about 8,000 years ago, when the first cities began to emerge and our relationship with a sedentary lifestyle slowly began (Davis, 1955, p. 430). Rural areas were prioritized as living spaces for human beings until the first decade of the 21st century. Only in 2010 did the proportion of inhabitants in cities surpass the coefficient of rural population of the planet, for the first time in history (UN, 2015). Consequently, in demographic terms, the most important patterns of human mobility over the last two centuries have not been related to

¹ The naturalization of the idea of universality and ex-temporality of Nation-States drove many scientists to assume that peoples are territorially rooted inside their borders, deriving from a definition of international migrations as anomalous phenomena. Sutcliffe (1998) defines these biases as a "sedentary-centric perspective" of social processes.

international migration, but rather to the displacements from rural areas to cities inside the same country (UN, 2015).² International organizations predict that this sort of displacements will continue to be the most significant migration on the globe until 2050 (UN, 2015).

In short, the rural exodus remains the most important migratory movement on the planet in quantitative and qualitative terms (Rogers, 2015), but it receives much less social and media attention than international migration for reasons of political order. Since the mid-20th century, governments adhering to the most varied political spectra have strategically appropriated international migration to direct their citizens' imaginaries related to the geopolitics (Bigo, 2001, p. 122). And they seem to have been powerfully successful in mobilizing the masses, touching deeply the feelings of national belonging.

Our current understanding of migration, border and citizenship still dates from the French Revolution of 1789 (Hobsbawm, 1998; Zapata-Barrero, 2001), which triggered the construction of the Nation-States in the geopolitics of the world-system (Wallerstein, 2004). Spreading worldwide between the 18th and 19th centuries, the Nation-State political structure determined the global hegemony in a series of categorizations.

Firstly, the assumption that there is a correspondence between a national people, their government and the contours of a territory over which the State exercises its sovereignty. This forged the ideology that the unification of the nation demanded the linguistic, ethnic, religious and artistic homogenization of its inhabitants (Bloemraad et al., 2008; p. 154; Hastings, 2000, p. 14), derived from a reified concept of "national culture" that delegitimizes cultural diversity. To foster a sense of belonging among diverse peoples and social groups, the State created a myriad of icons (flags, hymns, heroes, foundational myths) whose purpose was to substitute the heterogeneous religious and ethnic objects of the local communities for more general ones, with universal aspiration (Zapata-Barrero, 2001, p. 36). This process led to the invention of national traditions, drawing a public memory of the ontology of the nation which confirmed the juxtaposition between peoples, frontiers and national languages (Hobsbawm; Ranger, 1984). The search for this mythological national homogeneity demanded and justified the violent suppression of internal cultural differences, and the systematic (and warlike) attack on other countries (Appadurai, 2006, p. 3; Hastings, 2000, p. 18; Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 114).

Secondly, throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, this national cultural homogeneity was assumed as a natural condition: cultural differences were understood as determined by biology, and the "national people" was hegemonically assumed as belonging

² This process triggered the world's urbanization (the progressive concentration of the global population in cities), and it was one of the most shocking effects of the industrial revolution, ranging from the 19th century to the present (BAIROCH; GOERTZ, 1986).

to a single race (distinguished from other races living in territories beyond the country's national borders).³ Hence, the rejection of foreigners (migrants or not) emerges as a rejection of divergent, dangerous and polluting races, which could potentially threaten the national homogeneity. Between 1870 and 1914, the myths of racial homogeneity were naturalized among European States, juxtaposing the notion of citizenship to race and nationality (Zapata-Barrero, 2001). After World War II, and due to the atrocities they justified in the conflict, these racial conceptions were strongly attacked, and citizenship was progressively de-racialized. Despite the latter, people's sense of identity and belonging is still actively connected to racist ideologies.

Thirdly, in Latin American countries, the violent effects of institutionalizing Nation-States have not ceased: they have been updated since its de-colonization Era (in the 19th century) becoming a racist structure of domination over Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples (Segato, 2007). To the extent that the Nation-State originated in Latin America as a political expression of the elite's economic and social control, it juxtaposed the notions of citizenship and national identity with the ideals of elitist self-representation. International migration represents a destabilizing element for these ideologies, because it implies a living contrast between the "citizens" and the "outsiders" (Bloemraad et al., 2008), undermining the certainty that this elitist representation really responds to the constitutive heterogeneity of Latin American States.

Thus, national cultures and identities involve problems of power, ideology and politics that cannot be understood solely as "cultural factors". Their analysis requires approaching a de-substantivized perspective of culture, understanding it as both derived from and creator of political relations that have deep historical roots. The xenophobic and racist reactions in the countries that receive migrants underline the fear of a social plurality that destabilizes the mythologies regarding the citizens' unity. They highlight the constitutive weakness of national identity (its instability), which usually manifests itself in the relentless rejection to extend citizens' rights to the "others" (foreigners, migrants, outsiders, internal others). The confrontation between the democratic rights and the radicalization of the neoliberal economic model that characterizes the global crisis we are experiencing today revitalizes the fear of "diversity". It is also a crisis of the founding concepts of the Nation-State.

³ The homogenization of the national population under the alleged unity of a common race is linked to the corporeal control of citizens, an important key to the State's political centralization project (CASAÚS-ARZÚ, 2006). International migration tensions the hegemonic scheme from which modern States subordinate and profit from the bodies of their citizens, because it causes an unpredictable contact with bodies considered to be "aliens".

Migration Policies between 19th and 20th Centuries

There has been an intrinsic relation between the historical events of world capitalism, the changes in human mobility, and the political management of migration since the emergence of the Nation-State. But rather than giving an exhaustive description of these processes, this section will highlight how migration has mobilized different political discourses and concepts.

Migration policies are constituted by four different rubrics that can be grouped in two categories: “control” and “integration” (Arango, 2005, pp. 17-18).⁴ Both are intrinsically linked, but my discussion will focus mainly on the latter, to track the articulation between the notion of national culture, and the expressions of rejection of diversity that, in different historical moments, were assumed by the Nation-States. It is useful to stress that the concept of integration is politically polysemic and has had various applications from the 20th century onwards: from justifying the subjugation of ethnic minorities, to advocating for their social and cultural rights. Therefore, the analysis of integration policies requires dealing with the slippery history of a concept on which there is no consensus (and perhaps, there should not be). In addition, migrant policies are not only decided by the executive, legislative and judicial powers of States, they are frequently addressed through the public policy approach, which demands social participation that impacts on daily lives in both the migrant’s host and origin localities.⁵

It is possible to distinguish four cycles of political approach to migrant integration between 1800 and 2001. The first takes place in the 19th century. Europe expelled its population massively as never before in its history, constituting itself as a hot-spot emitter of migrant population. Accordingly, the direction of the migrant flows was mostly from the Global North to the Global South (Sutcliffe, 1998, p. 64). Between 1815 and 1915 some 62 million Europeans migrated to the North, Central and South Americas due to the outcomes of the

⁴ The four rubrics are: “a) the norms and practices that aim at the regulation and control of migrant flows, and especially the entry and residence of immigrants; b) regulations and practices related to the asylum application; c) measures aimed at the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, including the definition of and access to citizenship; and d) policies to combat racism and discrimination” (ARANGO, 2005, p. 17). The first two headings compose the “control policies” and the last two the “integration policies”.

⁵ The emergence of “public policy” is linked to the search for intensifying the participation in the Democratic States, at the beginning of the 20th century (VELÁSQUEZ-GAVILANES, 2010, p. 151). The term refers to the set of decisions, actions, guidelines and strategic projections – explicit, permanent, systematic and integrated – legalized and institutionalized by the State. What distinguishes public policy from other policy approaches is that: 1) they must be socially consensual and arise to respond to a specific problem or context, attending social demands. 2) Although they must be institutionalized or legitimized by the State, they can be executed (their diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation) by a plurality of actors (e.g. popular associations, trade unions, cooperatives, NGOs, foundations and religious organizations).

industrial revolution – hunger, unemployment, and unsanitary urban conditions –, and because of religious, ethnic and political persecution derived from the centralization of Nation-States (McKeon, 2004; Moch, 1996). The main host countries of this migration were United States, Argentina and Brazil: their policies, which supported the reception of migrants, were anchored in racist and eugenic ideologies that defended the necessity to “whiten” their own population through the incorporation of Europeans. In Latin America, these policies framed migrant integration policies in the local elite’s attempt to marginalize the Indigenous and African-descendent population’s demographic participation.

The second period takes place in the first half of the 20th century. The main international migration itineraries were still from Europe to the Americas, a reality fostered by the two great wars.⁶ Policies continued to assume the migrants’ presence as a positive trend, an idea supported by the ideologies of miscegenation – as in the *melting-pot* of the United States, and in the *mestizo* national identity in Brazil and Mexico (1930-1950). Nevertheless, integration policies linked to *melting-pot* and *mestizaje* were tenuously based in a homogenizing morality. They accepted the intrinsic heterogeneity of the Nation-State cultural constitution, but assumed it led to a hegemonic “way of life”. The different groups that composed the countries were violently exposed to this new fiction of hegemonic diversity, which ended up reproducing the assimilationist sense of integration (López-Sala, 2005; Malgesini; Giménez, 2000).⁷

In the third phase, in the second half of the 20th century, there was a progressive semantic change in the political notions associated with migration (López-Sala, 2005). After World War II, the universalization of human rights gained political terrain. The Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognizes that persons are free to leave their country of origin. But the statement makes no mention of “the equivalent right to be accepted in another nation” (López-Sala, 2005, p. 17). Thus, the freedom of mobility is recognized as a human right, but its implementation is still undermined by the sovereignty of nations. In this period, Europe required labor to rebuild itself and needed to import migrant workers (Sutcliffe, 1998). France, Germany and England applied policies to attract migrants for the first time in their Nation-States’ histories. This set off a new international migration trend, associated with the impoverishment of peripheral countries in the postwar period (Arango, 2005, p. 23).

⁶ However, the Great Depression of 1929 brought about a partial closure of the Southern Cone countries and the United States, which, between 1930 and 1940, implemented policies to reduce the reception of international migrants (LÓPEZ-SALA, 2005, p. 38).

⁷ Glazer & Moynihan (1963) argue that the *melting-pot* never really materialized.

Giménez (2003) mentions two political ideologies that supported integration migrant policies during this period. The first is *assimilationism*, a paradigm mostly applied in France (López-Sala, 2005, p. 81). It proposed that the rights of belonging and citizenship could be achieved if the migrant assimilated the French national and republican “culture”. Hence, it implied an aggressive concept of cultural integration: to be effectively integrated, migrants should abdicate their religious, cultural and political practices, in favor of the hegemonic French patterns. The second model is *utilitarianism*, applied in Germany. It assumed that migrants would only be accepted by the Nation-State if their presence satisfied a need (a “utility”, in economic jargon) of the receiving country. This model was implemented through Guest-Worker Contracts granted by the State (Velling, 1994). Migrants were not permitted to express political opinion, and they were obliged to return “home” once the contractual period was finished.

Both models reproduce the notion of national homogeneity, assuming that migrants are exogenous elements that contaminate the supposed linguistic, phenotypic and cultural uniformity of the nation. In the French model, integration is conceived as a denial of migrants’ right to be different and diverse. The German model directly denies any possibility of migrant participation. It dismisses, therefore, cultural integration itself, with migrant ties with the host country being reduced to labor relations. Both have developed into major social conflicts; especially as migrant flows have intensified and exceeded the host States’ planning.⁸

1964 marked an inflection in this scenario: for the first time in the Capitalist Era international migrants from the Global South outnumbered those coming from the Global North (Sutcliffe, 1998, p. 64). In the 70s, migration control policies became increasingly restrictive in the capitalist world. Simultaneously, there was an active search for mechanisms to promote the “integration” of those foreigners already living in European and North American countries (Arango, 2005, p. 18).

This paradox was intensified after the 80s, especially due to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989).⁹ Between 1990 and 2001, there was a sense of euphoria in the world about the

⁸ The riots in the Paris peripheries in 2005 are long-lasting results of assimilationist migration policies. They expressed the deep social discontent of the third and fourth generation descendants of migrants who, despite having been born in France and after so many decades of forced cultural assimilation of their families, still do not fully enjoy the French republican citizenship rights. In Germany, the repeated bewilderment of the authorities with the Turkish community is also an expression of the failure of utilitarianism as a policy approach. Half a century after the incorporation of Turkish migrants as a labor force, and after massive family reunification (not expected by the Germanic authorities) (VELLING, 1994), they are still considered foreigners in the country. They suffer from racial discrimination and enjoy fewer rights than the Germans who are considered “first category citizens”, following Grosfoguel’s (2007) terms of analysis.

⁹ After World War II, and considering the events of the Russian Revolution (1917) and the founding of the Soviet Union (in 1922), the progressive establishment of the Cold War between the capitalist and the communist blocs helped to denote

possibility of “borderless geopolitics” triggered by globalization (in terms of markets, communications and technologies) (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 9). Migration policies underwent a partial softening in their integrative character, inaugurating a period of relative permissiveness towards diversity (Brubaker, 2001, p. 532): “Immigrants were thus depicted as harbingers of a new multicultural and postnational world, in which the national fixity of identity, rights, and organizational capacity had dissolved” (Joppke; Morawska, 2003, p. 1). Two paradigms of migration policies emerged then.

At the beginning of the 80s, *multiculturalism* (British in origin) was a pioneer model in rethinking the constitutive mythologies of the Nation-State, advocating that eliminating cultural diversity was impossible. In this paradigm, a State is considered multicultural “if its members either belong to different nations (a multinational State) or have emigrated from different nations (a polyethnic State), and if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 18).¹⁰ All liberal democracies are considered either multinational or polyethnic (or both). Therefore, the challenge of multiculturalism would be “to accommodate these national or ethnic differences in a stable and morally defensible formula” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 26). Kymlicka acknowledges that, in liberal democracies, the fundamental mechanism for accommodating cultural differences has been individual rights, whose insufficiencies inspired (in the late 70s) the emergence of a collective defense of the right of minorities to a “differentiated citizenship” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 174). Indeed, the “right of minorities” is defined as the collective struggle of groups to gain full citizenship rights without having their idiosyncrasies reduced to the hegemonic national culture. The multiculturalist approach advocates for a combination of these two legal forms of pluralistic defense, assuming that State institutions must progressively adapt to “reflect the increasing cultural diversity of the population they serve” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 181).¹¹

Multiculturalism had deeply influenced the hegemonic political semantics of the term *cultural diversity* in globalization. Nevertheless, critics and detractors stress that the

a difference of meanings attributed to migrations under these regimes. Internal and international migrant freedom came to be understood as a distinctive element of the capitalist world, as opposed to the policy of control of displacement in communist countries. In the latter, population mobility was subject to State control: it was decided within the framework of overall economic planning and regulated through restrictive measures (GANG; STUART, 1999). Hence, the end of the Cold War led to a global change in the political conceptualization of migration.

¹⁰ Despite the centrality of Kymlicka’s debate, Vertovec & Wessendorf (2010, pp. 2-3) stress that multiculturalism has been recovered by politicians, academics, philosophers and public agents with varied meanings and under various rubrics. The latter makes the synthesis of the policies related to it more complex.

¹¹ Parekh (2000) defends the necessity to go beyond “the right of minorities”, and to direct the global management of cultural diversity towards the conception of an “active democratic consensus”, which is supposed to overcome the limitations of liberal democracy regarding popular participation. This debate frames multiculturalist analysis in the critique of classical political liberalism.

multicultural perspective promotes an alienated celebratory conception of diversity. This argument highlights that, in the multiculturalist debates, cultural practices and objects are conceived as consumer goods of global circulation (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 4), and of a supposed “free choice” of identities (which, in this circulation, become decontextualized, ahistorical and deprived of their political facet) (Comaroff; Comaroff, 2009; Walsh, 2009).¹² Nonetheless, multiculturalism became the hegemonic model of diversity management in the countries of the Global North, enjoying an unpredicted popularity in migrant public policies (Brubaker, 2001, p. 532; Vertovec; Wessendorf, 2010, p. 4).

In broader terms, multiculturalism limits the recognition of diversity to the “right of existence” of those considered to be diverse. Although it advances the cause by rejecting the idea that migrants must assimilate the hegemonic national culture, it still reproduces an insufficient notion of integration. It assumes that the contact of diverse groups and individuals is a peaceful co-existence in which the interaction between parts is reduced to its minimum expression (Giménez, 2005). As an ideological matrix of migration policies, multiculturalism led to actions that fostered the spatially segregated expression of differences, and the confinement of cultural and religious particularities to the domestic sphere. The multicultural models applied in the Global North failed not only to question the elitist constitution of citizenship, but to promote the “minorities” access to the same category of rights guaranteed to those recognized as “mainstream citizens”. Grosfoguel (2007) refers to these policies as institutionalizing an antithetical “second-class citizenship”. Thus, multiculturalism fails to recognize the violence perpetrated by States in favor of “maintaining the constitutive homogeneity” of the national identity ideologies. It loses part of its own purpose by continually defining counter-hegemonic identities as “minorities”.

A decade later, in the 90s, multiculturalism began to spread in Latin America, at a time when most of the countries of the region were emitters of migrant population, and when the concept was in clear withdrawal from public policy in the Global North (which experienced a “return to assimilationism”) (Baubock, 2002; Brubaker, 2001; Entzing, 2003; Joppke; Morawska, 2003; Vertovec; Wessendorf, 2010). Multicultural policies were discussed in Latin America, then, as part of the debates on the constitutive diversity of nations, being incorporated (immersed in non-minor controversies) in political struggles related to Indigenous and Afro-descendant rights (Arocha, 2004; Bello; Rangel, 2002).

The second political management model of migrant integration policies developed in globalization is *interculturalism*. It emerged in the mid-80s in countries of Europe and North

¹² For a synthesis of the critique of multiculturalism, see Kymlicka (2012). For the British critics, see Alibhai-Brown (2000). For Australia, see Jupp (2007) and, for the United States, King (2004) and Hollinger (2006). For Spain, Zapata-Barrero (2010).

America – of which Canada is perhaps the main example – and was developed with a more central link to education, as a critical response to the inadequacies of multicultural policies in this field and in others (Malgesini; Giménez, 2000). The intercultural paradigm questions the composition of the Nation-State, assuming its ontological diversity and framing the migrant diversity as part of a previous plural scenario, constitutive of the countries.¹³ It proposes to rethink the concept of integration, arguing that it must be multilateral, that the hegemonic society must transform itself in the measure it dialogues and incorporates diversity.

The debate assumes the need for plural participation that exceeds the representativeness of the vote. It raises, therefore, the need to rethink the concept of citizenship so that the right to belong to the country is not limited to birth in its territory (*jus solis*) or to bloodline (*jus sanguinis*) (Giménez, 2005). Thus, the model has by virtue the proposal of utopias that breathe life into the very conception of the Democratic State. As in the case of multiculturalism mentioned before, interculturalism reached Latin America between 2005 and 2010, a decade after its implementation in Europe. It has also been assumed within the framework of the struggle of Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups in their demand for State recognition of the internal diversities of the countries in the region (Walsh, 2009).

Postglobalization

Before moving towards the analysis of the fifth period of migrant policies, it is necessary to summarize the processes that shape its social and political scenario. Although the attack on the Twin Towers of New York (in 2001) caused deep changes in the management of globalization, the new trend in the political global governance became even clearer after the economic crisis of 2008. Between 2008 and 2018, mainstream media spread the idea that the Global North is suffering from a migrant invasion, and that the world was facing an unprecedented “migration crisis”. Neither imaginary is borne out by empirical data on world international migrations.

The United Nations (UN) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have been emphasizing the growing magnitude of immigration for the last twenty years. In their statistical reports, they claim that, in the present decade, about one in every 33 people in the world is a migrant, compared to one in every 35 in the last decade (IOM, 2011). The percentage of international migrants over the world population rose from 2.9% in 2000, to

¹³ Interculturalism has also become polysemic, and has been distinguished “by its diverse continental, national and regional accents of origin, as well as by the disciplinary bias of its protagonists” (DIETZ; CORTÉZ, 2009, p. 48).

3% in 2008 (IOM 2009), and to 3.1% in 2010 (UN, 2015, p. 1). In 2013, international migrants were estimated at 232 million people, 3.2% of world's population (UN, 2013). In 2015, these numbers jumped to 244 million, and 3.3% (UN, 2015, p. 1).

However, this data allows for more than one interpretation. It is contradictory to defend the idea that globalization fostered a global migration boom when the percentage of international migrants in the world's population has remained close to 3% for the last decades. International organizations are correct when they state that, in absolute numbers, the world has never had so many migrants (UN, 2013, p. 7). But the world's population has increased at a rate that far exceeds the growth rate of international migrants (Abel; Sanders, 2014).¹⁴

As Abel (2016) has shown, the way in which the international organizations present the migration data is biased.¹⁵ In fact, the importance that international migration has acquired in global discourses since the 90s refers to aspects that go beyond its quantitative growth. Contradictory as it may seem, we can trace these aspects in the very discourse of the international organizations:

Most international migrants reside in the developed regions (59 per cent). Europe hosts the largest number of international migrants (72 million), followed by Asia (71 million) and Northern America (53 million). (...) The share of international migrants in total population varies considerably across development groups and major areas. Thus, international migrants represent 10.8 per cent of the total population in the developed regions compared to 1.6 per cent in the developing regions. Oceania (20.7 per cent), Northern America (14.9 per cent) and Europe (9.8 per cent) record the highest proportions of international migrants in total population. (UN, 2013, p. 2)

As the text stresses, the Global North is the predominant host area of international migration. The perspectives and positions assumed by international organizations and experts on the migrant issues are centrally influenced by the imaginary about the “migrant invasion” reproduced in “developed countries”. These discourses suffer from a historical

¹⁴ The world population rates of growth maintained an upward trend between 1850 and 1950, reaching its apex (of 2.1% annual increase) in 1962 (ROSER et al., s. d.). Thenceforth the rate is decreasing. It is estimated that, by the year 2100, the planet's population will have reached its historical maximum (10.5 billion) and will slowly begin to reduce. In 2013, the world's population reached 7.1 billion people, jumping to 7.2 billion one year later. In the same period, the international migrant population experienced an annual increase of 0.5%: half the rate of growth presented by the world population (ABEL; SANDERS, 2014).

¹⁵ Abel (2016) introduces a change in the data methodology currently used by these organisms, which measures the amounts of international migrant population accumulated in different countries and continents year after year. In disagreement with this practice, he proposes to compute the return migrations, subtracting the returnees of each receiving country. Through this exercise of mathematical sincerity, he obtains surprising data: the migration rate of growth between countries of origin and of destiny is decreasing in most continents.

memory lapse, erasing that, for four centuries, Europe led the expulsion of international migrant populations to Southern areas of the world (Sutcliffe, 1998). The latter was neither announced as “a migration crisis”, nor as a “migrant invasion”: international migration was hegemonically assumed as positive. Consequently, talking about migration from a Global South perspective requires a critical effort in positioning the arguments from the realities of the peripheral countries, which are now accused of producing the migrant invasion. This critical effort should be based on locating the migratory experience as part of the process of change in the capitalist relations from globalization to postglobalization.

Between the 70s and the 80s, a new phase of capitalism began. It was characterized by the internationalization of production, the concentration of capital, the fragmentation of economic processes, and the strengthening of flexible accumulation (Sassen, 1991). This scenario fostered the acceleration of the international flow of goods, the development (cheapening and popularization) of communication and transport technologies, the possibility of simultaneous interconnection between spatially distant regions, and the ultra-fragmentation of the labor market (with the progressive crushing of wages worldwide). All these processes were backed by the hegemony of neoliberal policies in different regions of the globe, being their articulation generally known as *globalization* (Harvey, 1989). Human mobility was an important part of this process: it was one of the pillars of the globally fragmented labor market,¹⁶ and that is why Castles & Miller (1993) refer to globalization as “the age of migration”.¹⁷

In the late 20th century, some analysts cultivated the expectation of a broad and widespread democratization of global human circulations in globalization. This democratization of flows would be supported, it was believed, with a progressive decline in the sovereignty of countries in favor of a “global liberalization” of markets. However, such a decline in the importance of the Nation-State in the management and economic-political planning of flows (whether migrant, merchandise or capital) never materialized.¹⁸

¹⁶ This emerging global labor market fostered the precarization of the female labor force in productive and reproductive spheres (MILLS, 2003). It is estimated that 48% of international migrants are women (UN, 2013), and feminization is a sustained trend, especially in migrations originated in Latin America (MARTÍNEZ, 2003). Latin American female mobility is deeply connected to the mechanisms of internationalization of reproductive work, and to the formation of global chains of care between continents (YEATES, 2009). Furthermore, the predominance of Latin American women as migrants - and as “the heads” of migrant networks that mobilize their social groups - is connected to the implementation of neoliberal reforms in their countries of origin (between 1980 and 2000) (MARTÍNEZ, 2003).

¹⁷ International migration also implies an economic monetary market. In 2010, remittances from international migrants to their countries of origin (or families in a third country) totaled 440 billion US dollars (WORLD BANK, 2011). In the first half of 2016, they accessed 442 billion (RATHA et al., 2016).

¹⁸ The intervention of the Global North States in the great crisis of the banking system of 2008 is strong proof of this double standard in the neoliberal discourse, which calls for a reduction of the State, but demands in practice a continuous

After the attacks on New York (in 2001), a tendency to intensify the border protection services and the control of migrant flows has been observed in European and North American countries, transferring these functions to subcontracted private companies (which are derived or subsidiary companies of the armaments industry) (Sørensen; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013). The latter has generated a new global industry of border and “anti-terrorist” protection that depends on (and produces) the criminalization of South-North migrations.

This migration control industry responds clearly to the deconstruction of utopias over the process of globalization, clearing the way for a mode of political action that reproduces the hierarchies between development and underdevelopment through frontal and brutal mechanisms. Fisher (2009) called this process “capitalist realism”, understanding it as the new hegemony of the modes of production of reality that have inaugurated the transition to a “postglobalization” period. Some examples can help us explain how this realistic violence has been operating in the construction of a global agenda on migration and borders.

Although many regions of the globe are suffering the impact of this new migration political agenda, the Mediterranean is undoubtedly the worst example. In the first semester of 2015, 137,000 persons crossed the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2015, p. 2) trying to enter European territory as undocumented migrants or asylum seekers. This situation has become a social, humanitarian and political crisis without precedent in the recent history of the European Union (UNHCR, 2015). There has been an undeniable surge in the number of non-European migrants arriving at Southern European borders.¹⁹

The phenomenon became a humanitarian crisis not because of the impressive number of migrants, but due to the intensification and spread of the violence and danger that accompany different stages of the migrants’ itineraries before their arrival in Mediterranean port cities. There has been an intensification of the role carried out by criminal transnational human trafficking organisations in transporting migrants, sometimes including long journeys that imply desert crossings or lengthy traverses on foot. The latter is a consequence of the change in the management of Mediterranean borders (Wolff, 2008). The intensification of the use of high technology in border patrol and defence has led to an increase in casualties among those who try to cross these frontiers, fostering the influence of human trafficking agents that offer

public investment in the rehabilitation of economic fractures of the banking system, the stock market and large corporations (FISHER, 2009, p. 2).

¹⁹ The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) states that the number of migrants increased around 400% in 2015, in comparison with the previous year’s figures. In July 2015, migrants numbered 107,500 persons: an amount three times superior to that of July 2014, making it a record high since Frontex started registering this data (FRONTEX, 2015). In terms of asylum seekers, the most important ports of reception in 2015 were in Greece (where 68,000 migrants arrived), Italy (with 67,500 migrants), and Spain (with 1,230 migrants) (UNHCR, 2015, p. 3).

ways to avoid border persecution. Hence, this massive investment in technology for border control – generating what some experts have called “Fortress Europe” (Alscher, 2005) – has created the exact opposite effect of what public managers pointed out as its finalities: while there has been no reduction in the numbers of people who attempt to migrate, there has been an increase in the number of those who die during the journey.²⁰

It is hard to relate the Global North’s current political agenda on migrant issues to any humanitarian rationale. Postglobalization configures a scenario in which the migrant condition – especially when experienced by populations from peripheral countries – has become a fundamental part of the fragmentation processes of advanced capitalism. Migrants are increasingly being used to sustain a generalized fear of “external enemies” that has economic purposes: it justifies the increase of State investments in the war industry (which happens to be the most important economic niche in the US and many European Countries). This discursive use of fear is based on bringing together nationalist sentiments that are easily manipulated politically: an outcome we observed in 2016 in the United States’ presidential election campaign, and in the vote for Brexit in UK. In the European Union, we have seen it repeatedly in the reaffirmation of the restrictive policies applied to Syrian refugees. The imaginaries of fear and rejection of cultural difference are getting progressively stronger, and the claims for “renationalization” of borders, economics and politics are becoming hegemonic ideas. The metaphor of these ideological outputs is the emergence of a renewed interest in materializing the national barriers through literal walls. Trump’s proposal regarding the Mexico-US border is the clearest example of the latter. Postglobalization seems to be, as the Cold War was, another “Era of Walls”.

In Latin America, these outputs have also been observed in countries such as Argentina, where the current president, Mauricio Macri, announced executive decrees that alter the immigration law, removing fundamental aspects of its approach to human rights (Canelo, 2016, 2018; Canelo et al., 2018; Domenech; Pereira, 2017). Argentinean ministers and senators have been promoting a discourse of hatred stating that migrants are responsible for the lack of jobs, drug trafficking or for the decay of public services (ideas that are not backed up by empirical data). We also witnessed it in Chile (Poblete; Galaz, 2017; Vera et al., 2018), with the disastrous use of the migrant issue in campaigns for presidency in 2017, in which various candidates repeated xenophobic, racist and exclusionary statements regarding the migrant population living in the country. It is evident too in the recent wave of xenophobic demonstrations that has been crowding social networks, with the number of videos of Chilean

²⁰ UNHCR (2015) identified the Mediterranean Sea routes as the most dangerous in the world for migrants and refugees. Furthermore, many of those travelling are escaping from territories at war, trying to evade violence and religious persecution. On their arrival, they are moved to “detention camps” or “holding centres”.

citizens offending migrants and demanding that they “go back to their countries of origin” multiplying. In Brazil, in a context of institutional crisis rarely seen in the recent history of the Nation-State, discriminatory actions against Latin American, Caribbean, and African migrants have been reproduced and multiplied (Feldman-Bianco et al., 2017), and the government in office has shown signs of wanting to interrupt the debate on the reform of the immigration law (which began in 2009 attempting to solve one of the main gaps of the constitution promulgated in this country in its democratic transition) (Carneiro, 2018; Rodrigues; Pereira, 2017).²¹

Shortly before his death, Bauman (2016) stated that all these events must be read from a specific political context: as part of a deep crisis in the global neoliberal economy, which is proving to be incapable of restoring itself after its cyclical breakdowns. Simultaneously, they are also related to the inability of democratic regimes to reconcile their structural legal principles with the intensification of the neoliberal models of accumulation. As Hroch said two decades ago, the nationalist rejection of “the others” is “a substitute for factors of integration in a society that is disintegrating. When society fails, the nation appears as the ultimate guarantee” (in Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 183). Denominating this new postglobal scenario as immersed in a “migration crisis” is part of the problem (Bauman, 2016): it fosters the production of hate for minorities as an escape valve that relieves the prevailing tension, but at the price of reproducing and materializing it in a specific rejection of certain social groups (Appadurai, 2006). The “crisis” is related to the mode of production, and its increasingly conflicting relationship with the forms of political institutions that are minimally necessary for the existence of democratic regimes.

The Fifth Cycle

In the last three decades, neoliberalism has been characterized by a fast capacity to dismiss or engulf alternative models, and by its crude mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities. However, since the beginning of 21st century, it has also been advancing towards a new form of realism; towards a generalization of ways of acting that dismiss any humanizing symbolic mediation for economic processes (Fisher, 2009). Border closures, recent military interventions, and persecution of refugees and migrants with high-tech weapons of war are expressions of this realism in concrete modes of political action. The bleak collective impression that

²¹ In the Brazilian transition to democracy (1985-1989), the various political forces involved chose not to discuss the migrant issue and to maintain in the democratic constitution (then under construction) the same rules adopted in the military dictatorship.

there are no alternatives to this progressive dehumanization fuels the cynicism, which is presented as the only viable alternative to survival in this agonizing atmosphere.

International political analysts say that this sense of lack of alternatives is linked to a kind of “political trend” that also became global in the first decade of this century. Annually, the Oxford Dictionary chooses a word that has gained extraordinary relevance in the year, synthesizing the most relevant social, political, cultural and economic processes on the globe for the period. In 2016, the expression chosen was “post-truth”. It was the political scientist Ralph Keyes (2004), who constituted a meaning to the expression that links it more systematically to a style of production of discourse and political ideology. In general terms, the concept emerges “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Oxford Dictionary, 2016, s. p.). The latter would be a consequence of a process of extreme naturalization of dishonesty in contemporary life (Keyes, 2004, p. 5), and would be supported by the constitution of a global public sphere in which credibility becomes more important than truth (Keyes, 2004, p. 3).

Keyes attributes the triumph of dishonesty to ethical decline: to the loss of the collectively constituted senses on “good and bad”. He also attributes it to the active destruction of political convictions which, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, progressively gave way to a “socially validated cynicism” (Keyes, 2004, p. 10). Extrapolating his arguments, it would be possible to argue that this victory of cynicism over convictions is linked to the process of radicalization of neoliberal domination, and to Fisher’s (2009) concept of “capitalist realism”. As capitalist economic accumulation becomes more and more violently realistic, the constitution of political opinions in the globe is increasingly settling on post-truth, endorsing the political victory of those who succeed in making the masses and the groups of pressure believe in clearly distorted versions of social processes. These are versions that fulfill expectations and respond with tranquilizing illusions to the anxieties of large segments of population. The discourse that blames migrants, equating them to terrorists, is one of the main articulating resources of these post-truths. And it is only one of the characteristics of the fifth period of the governance of international migrations.

In general terms, this new phase of migration policies is also characterized by: 1) the radicalization and naturalization of State and supra-State political violence against migrant, transboundary, refugee and displaced populations in general; with the exponential use of war technologies to persecute and imprison them. 2) The cruel increase of numbers of migrants who die trying to cross borders. 3) The emergence of a globalized imaginary that justifies daily violence, making it banal and assimilable for the general “audiences”. 4) The progressive deconstruction of the minimum rights that had been granted to the migrant populations in different countries (especially between 1980 and 2000). In addition, although this process is

driven by the countries of the Global North, is becoming generalized to other areas as well. In fact, it conforms to the expansion of political mechanisms of domination that reproduce asymmetric historic links between the centers of capitalism and their peripheries.

In this context, multiculturalism and interculturalism are rapidly losing ground as paradigms of orientation of migration policies, both in Europe and in North America. Different authors agree that between 2000 and 2010, migration policies were redirected towards a return to assimilationist ideas. But, in the last five years, even assimilationist policies are being displaced in favor of discourses of radical rejection of migrants.

In Latin America, migration paradigms of public policy are usually discussed and implemented one or two decades after their emergence in the Global North. This delay is a symptom of the subordination of Latin American countries regarding the decision-making axes of policies globally implemented. We have little or no influence on the decisions of countries receiving Latin American migrants in Europe or North America, but, usually, even behind schedule, we end up adopting their political paradigms. Both multiculturalism and interculturalism bring advances in relation to the recognition of migrant rights that we have not fully incorporated into migration policies yet in Latin America. Worryingly the return to conservative, exclusivist and assimilationist conceptions comes even before States have been able to establish the minimum rights achieved by the previous global migration policy approaches.

Despite the latter, Latin American Indigenous and Afro-descendent movements have actively carried out a critique of multiculturalism and interculturalism. The debate in migration policies should learn from their long history of political struggle to adapt these paradigms of diversity to the region's national contexts. The challenge is not only to generate a migration policy in countries such as Chile, Peru and Brazil, where legislation is still seated in the segregationist principles of the mid-20th century, but also to face the urgency of rethinking the notion of cultural diversity to assume readings of the term that reject the de-politicization of differences. This effort also demands discussing the notion of "minorities", assuming the diverse social groups as constitutive of the Nation-States. All this leads to the redefinition of the notion of citizenship and the urgency of extrapolating its founding matrices – the *jus solis* and the *jus sanguinis* – to other possibilities. It also leads us to rethink the Democratic State; and in doing so to safeguard the minimum migrant rights that have been established in globalization.

The idea is not to adopt a radically pessimistic position over the migration policies created in other parts of the world. It is rather to advocate the need to contextualize the relationship between national identities, belongings, rights and citizenship to the asymmetrical local realities of Latin America. The new trend towards the dehumanization of migration policies, once more, attends to a logic that does not favor the Global South's populations or countries.

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