

CALL FOR PAPERS

**International Conference Institut des Amériques
Université Paris Diderot, France - June 6-7-8, 2012**

INHERITING THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN THE AMÉRICAS

The term « migration » is contemporary with the first transatlantic migrations which followed the « discovery » of the Americas in the late 15th century. The « New World », as it was then identified, already gives evidence of the temporal dimensions of the migration process. The Americas have attracted multiple migration waves, both intra- and intercontinental, making the American continent a place where populations from all over the world have converged and settled, sometimes coming into conflict or conversely engaging in fruitful exchanges. At the level of the continent as a whole, the long-lasting dimension of migration patterns must be taken into consideration. This timespan forms an integral part of the migration experience.

Research on migration has long been the focus of scholars in the Humanities. In this conference, we seek to explore the topic from an inter-disciplinary perspective and want to remain as close as possible to migrants experience, whether individual or collective, whatever their trajectories, home countries, time and place of arrival or generations. While fully acknowledging the large body of research marked by the debates which have renewed migration theories (ethnicity, identity, transnationalism, globalisation), we aim at placing the migrant's perspective at the center of our analysis.

The four following themes will be explored throughout the conference without necessarily corresponding to individual sessions :

1/ Temporal dimensions of the migration process

The temporal aspect of migration from, to and within the Americas comes in a variety of forms, rhythms and chronologies. The constantly renewed web of the migration experience is woven of individual micro-histories and collective and recurrent migration patterns despite contrasting rhythms and conflicting trajectories. From this point of view, the question of flow and timespan in the migration process can be understood and analyzed from both a macro and micro perspective. A comparative approach to studying the temporal dimension of migration can also be considered. From the migrant's point of view, should this dimension be reduced to a migrant's lifetime, a family experience or that of several generations ? Such an analysis would help us shed a new light on return migration and why return is postponed from one generation to another. It might also enable us to explore further the specificity of the

political consciousness of migrants. Might there be a contradiction between this reduced temporal dimension and an enhanced understanding of the experience ?

2 /Migration trajectories

Migration postulates trajectories which cover varying distances and are rarely limited to simple round trips between two points. It often involves complex odysseys as migrants take detours, voluntarily or involuntarily. There is no set itinerary pattern. They will rely on varied human, economic or technological resources depending on the situations they encounter. In most cases migrants will go where jobs are available, but they will also leave to escape major political or economic crises, not to mention ecological disasters, in their country of residence. In all cases, family and social events affect migration plans and trajectories which, in the end, impact both migrants and those who remain at home.

How do migrants perceive, analyze and utilize the stops along the way, the obstacles they encounter or fall prey to and the accidents of which they are the victims – we will analyze these questions from their perspective. How do they feel about these experiences ? How do they plan and organize their itineraries ? Are such plans decided on the basis of past experience, their own or that of relatives and friends ? In the latter case, are their plans inherited or do migrants innovate ? As we investigate such issues, we will also examine the role of mediating agents and formal or informal organizations as well as how they interact. The very notion of migration trajectories will be examined, since migrants do not just leave home for one country but travel across different regions and countries in which they may or may not stay longer than expected. Work destinations and settlement patterns are not linear and take place in different stages.

3/ The lived experiences of migrants

Whether individual or collective, migration displacement patterns engender confrontation with a new world. Interactions with a universe of norms, sounds, and images produce perceptions and new feelings for the migrants as they adapt to and appropriate the environment they are in.

The combination of preconceived ideas and images of migration prior to departure, what has been transmitted by previous generations and what migrants actually experience joins together individual experience with collective background information. The daily interaction between old practices, the imagined migration process and new situations transforms the migration experience into a reorganized set of individual and collective norms. This transformation affects many aspects of the migrants' life from hygiene, health and eating habits to work, cultural activities or family structures, gendered roles and ethnic identities, and even affects the life of the host country populations. In this context, we will also focus on the experience of undocumented migrants.

We will thus seek to understand the migrants' capacity to invent new ways of life. They prove that they are active participants be it by voicing their own concerns or by participating in political life.

4/Transmission of migration capital

The migration experience may also be seen as a legacy from one generation to the next. We will study this aspect of migration from different perspectives.

At the level of the group, migrants' cultural productions are grounded in the migration experience: their linguistic and cross-cultural mixing are a good illustration of this point. Collective inheritance plays a significant role in the migrants' ability to set up the social or economic structures which will foster the intergenerational transmission of group values.

At the family or individual level, migration is also a legacy which will be valued and transformed according to the same sort of logic as capital or property inheritance. This inheritance can be simply transmitted as is or it can be used as a stake in the struggle between generations. We will try to show what the rules are for this intergenerational struggle.

Three perspectives will be emphasized so as to fully grasp the mechanism of transmission:

- observation of specific events in migrants' lives through which the inheritance is passed on ;
- the way migrants transmit their inheritance while at the same time adopting the culture of the host country ;
- the simultaneous existence of rupture and continuity within the same migrant group, a phenomenon which challenges the migration process and interferes with transmission from one generation to the next within a sociocultural group.

Please send proposals of up to 450 words in either French, English or Spanish to:
colloquemigrations2012@institutdesameriques.fr

Abstracts should include a working title and an institutional affiliation.

Calendar:

The proposal submission deadline is June 30, 2011.

Participants will be notified by October 2011.

Authors of accepted papers are expected to have sent their full text by May 2012, thus allowing time for discussants to read them.

Presentations will be given by confirmed and junior researchers as well as doctoral students who are encouraged to contribute. Organizers welcome proposals across all disciplines.

Scientific Advisory Committee:

Fernando Devoto (Buenos Aires), Luin Goldring (University of York, Toronto), Nancy Green (EHESS, Paris), Ramon Gutiérrez (University of Chicago), Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart (URMIS, CNRS, Nice), Carlos Vainer (Univ fédérale de Rio de Janeiro), Victor Zuñiga (Univ de Monterrey, Mexique)

Conference Organizers (University Paris Diderot):

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