

and analyse migration in a way that respects and preserves its humanity, the particularity of individual and collective experience, while at the same time applying the cool and calculating models and abstractions that are the tools of scientific research.

It imposes itself against a backdrop of dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement, all in a general logic of urgency or emergency that disrupts our faculties--both personal and scientific-for seeing, understanding, empathising, and reacting to it. The governmentality of the 'normal' in modern, liberal experience, the tacit predetermination of the forms of life and living, even the humanity of the human, the categorisation of life as a worthy of being lived, are challenged by the scope and spectacle of migration.

Thus if the challenge of migration is a profoundly human one, it is also an extraordinary one. Even though it directly involves basic human issues, and despite the fundamental--and universal--humanity at its core, it is in a certain way super-human or extra-human. Migration in its more dramatic forms often challenges the basic daily needs that support human existence. It also shakes the more immaterial categories and concepts, emotions, and experiences that hold us together as people. From the point of view of the scientific study of migration, we face therefore a double-movement in the phenomenon of migration, and thereby a double-challenge.

n the one hand we seek to study migration with respect to its large-scale premisses and consequences. Migration studies must therefore seek to grasp the big picture, the geographical, climatic, social and political dimensions of the problem.

n the other hand, scholarship must study the person, the subject of migration, both out of a spirt of empathy or solidarity, but also because the degree to which the root categories of subjectivity, i.e. identity, rootedness, belonging, etc. shape and impact the big picture. In order to study migration we must therefore revisit, and perhaps revise, many of the traditional premises of migration studies. We must ask after migration in all its humanity, to regard it as deeply human, as a set of experiences that confront individuals at the deepest levels.

What are the limits of migration as a methodology? How does the practice of studying migration challenge migration as a methodology? How far do the limits of scholarly enquiry apply to migration? What are the limits of these methods? How do the sheer scale of human migration and its wide variation challenge traditional concepts? How do the crucial political and ethical questions of migration policy challenge standard scientific categories? What are the conditions of a future migration studies? Migration, in other words, is not just about people on the move, it is also about concepts on the move. I will examine more closely the premisses and assumptions of migration studies, and look more critically at its origins and aims, its values and finalities, its politics and powers. In doing so, I will advance the hypothesis that such a critical gaze will not only better our understanding of migration studies, but that by critiquing it, by productively cultivating a critical gaze toward the premisses at its heart, we can also learn something about ourselves, and about the scientific paradigms that organise our thought, and the scientific spirit that drives inquiry.

#### What is New and What is Old about Migration?

For better or worse, migration is perhaps the concept for our time. It is a concept of out-of-place-ness, a concept of change, evolution and modernisation. It is a concept of historical phases. It links notions of connectedness, belonging, identity, place and space.

So t is also a flagship concept for interdisciplinarity, for merging modes of thought and fields of study. In order to adequately analyse migration, we cannot limit our understanding to an anthropological or sociological one. Migration in its broadest sense is a logical function. It means uprooting something from where it belongs, and placing it where it does not belong. Thus computer scientists most commonly speak of the migration of data from one platform to another. Systems theorists speak of the migration of the fundamental elements of a system to another. Indeed migration, in our time, has come to be used, together with a range of terms as a transitive verb, as an action applied to an object. Thus I can migrate something. The term 'migration' itself spans categories and discourses. It is used in a wide variety of ways to denote the movement from one setting to another, from one background, set of facts, assumptions, logics, paradigms, experiences, etc., to another. Beyond the vast complexity of migration as an empirical phenomenon, migration is thus an extraordinary concept.

In short, the significant reference field of the concept 'migration', its notional reach and empirical scope, far surpass some simple idea of 'human bodies that move across borders'. Migration is not, and never was, this simple. It has always been the opening of the fundamental ontological categories of the world, and with them a set of questions about what a 'group' is, what a 'category' is, what 'belonging' means, what 'change' implies, what 'rootedness' and 'uprooting' can signify, etc.

Thus the crucial field of questions commonly formulated in scholarly discourses about human experiences of migration, its causes and effects, emotions and traumas, physical and psychological consequences, its legitimacy and legal aspects, its politics and statecraft, its geographical correlates, environmental dimensions, economics, health, and agricultural concerns, all orbit around a fundamental conceptual constellation of change.

The Evolution of Migration and the Evolution of Migration Studies

igration is without doubt among the most important phenomena in human history. As the consequence of external events and as the cause of new chains of events, the movement of peoples throughout all periods still shapes the way we live and think today.

The origin of the human species is itself dated relative to a certain exodus of Indo-Europeans from Africa and across Eurasia. It is not controversial to affirm that it is through a variety of major pre-modern migrations that the Earth became populated from an original African population and that the search for food and a changing environment were the likely causes. Modern migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries were also often marked by the consequences of industrialisation, the search for work and the escape from material hardships. The various decolonialisation processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the 2 World Wars and the rise of more recent rise civil wars, have made violence and political strife more often key factors in explaining the migration of peoples.

Sypical for the modern period, a new science of migration developed to meet, explain and understand the reality of migration. Such scientific approaches to migration have evolved both relative to the changing factual reality, but also relative to intellectual trends and fashions. Neo-classical economic theories expectedly explain migration flows in terms of a calculus of supply and demand of labour, natural resources, housing or food. More recent world system and migration systems theories attempt to explain migration flows by applying interdisciplinary methods and systems theoretical approaches. New fields of ethnic studies, cultural studies, citizenship studies, gender, identity, and racial studies have also contributed, mainly through transversal expansion across disciplines.<sup>2</sup>

The field of migration studies is rich and evolved, making important empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of migration. And yet, in becoming a dominant and authoritative field it has also begun to develop the blind spots and paradigm weaknesses that plague all scholarly disciplines: it ceases to see the limits of its own self-understanding.

# **Frames of Migration**

igration is seldom observed or declared in isolation as a free-standing phenomenon. It doesn't emerge on its own or for itself. Migration doesn't happen on a whim. It is most commonly recognised and understood as part of a larger system, a larger logic, a broader set of conditions and correlations. Yet this is only partly because people do not undertake the dramatic step of setting off on a project of migration without cause or provocation. It is also in part because science--the scholarship of migration--does not see, recognise or understand migration unless it is correlated external, 'non-migrational' with an phenomenon. Migrational movements are always understood as consequences of or correlated with a political-economic event, climate shifts changing material conditions, etc.

igration studies is in this way inevitably a science of correlations. It applies methodologies whose aim it is to link the observed movement of individuals and groups relative to forces or conditions that are external to them. This is most obviously the case for what is called 'forced migration', where one level or another of persuasion plays a role in motivating refugees to make a move. What was once belonging, prior to being uprooted through the experience of migration has a material sense, whereby individuals have possessions, homes, farms, jobs, all of which connect them to formal economic and political systems, and an immaterial sense in terms of forms of belonging and a myriad of informal systems, social, cultural, familial, affective, etc.

# **Material Frames of Migration**

The causes and motivations for migrants are many. Among these causes and motivations, there are invariably material ones: the migrant is simply confronted with one or another real threat to primary needs, such food, clothing, shelter, life and basic wellbeing, or faced with persecution, an encroaching danger, or perhaps an imminent hardship, which, in one way or another, carry the experience of a real need to flee.

ow does the science of migration, 'migration studies', approach the question of material motivation?

These are typically shown to follow one form or other of causes for setting out on the perils of migration. Such studies are invaluable in the contribution they make to

understanding and recording the facts of migration. Yet there is reason to suspect that by simply reasoning from cause to effect, from motivation to actual migration as a kind of mechanics in fact introduces as much error as it does clarity. It is too simple and too reductionist, to posit an autonomous, rational, moral and free individual who, as direct consequence of--and only as a consequence of--a discretely identifiable, observable and understandable threat, comes to the decision to flee, and that, as a direct consequence of the migratory flight, the threat disappears or is mitigated and the migrant is delivered, to greater of lesser degree, from the threat.

This type of billiard-ball-reasoning--whereby one utterly autonomous billiard ball, knocks into another entirely autonomous billiard ball, both behaving according to exactly the same laws of physics, and the energy of the collision being completely exhausted by the ensuing movement, which gradually dissipates to perfect equilibrium--is mostly likely so far from a reflection of the real forces at play that it risks doing more harm than good.

The critical question we wish to ask, and which will be addressed below, is, how can the dependency between the material threats that provoke a migrant's movements and the experience of these threats, their primary and secondary effects, and the subjective impact of migration as such and of migration as a function of material threats best be analysed? What will we discover by problematising the premises of the billiard-ball model, and how can this problematisation best be accomplished?

# **Immaterial Frames of Migration**

The experience of migration changes the basic conditions for life as we know it, both in material and in immaterial terms. As a rule migration follows as the consequence of a basic overturning of the baseline human needs, shelter, food, protection from dangers, etc. It disrupts the emotional, intellectual and spiritual components of who we are. in the experience of migration in its various forms, and given that this framework constitutes the basic reference for understanding life as an object of our thought and scientific observation and analysis, how can we re-tool our methods to best understand the phenomenon?

If economic and political systems form the primary material frame for migration, the experience of belonging provides the primary immaterial frame.

f migration has a logic, then its core idea is that a person or group belongs in a place, space, community, culture, tradition, etc. and that for one reason or another that belonging is ruptured. The person is no longer where he or she belongs, by whatever assessment that belonging may be made. Belonging, then, builds upon a simple aporia: belonging is indestructible. Whether or not one is where one belongs, one continues to belong there.

## What is Critique?

The idea of critique as philosophical practice was most famously expressed in Kant's three 'critiques' of philosophical reason formulated in the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The method Kant uses in the critiques is one of reconstruction. He essentially identifies, clarifies and rebuilds the complex edifices of a chosen system of thought, as it happens, epistemology, practical judgement and aesthetics. Through the critiques, Kant isolates the individual elements of the system of ideas or of thought, distinguishes them from one another, differentiates the necessary from the contingent, the core substantial elements from the logical operators, cause from effect, beginning from end.

The notion of critique as a kind of political practice has somewhat parallel roots in Marxist philosophical tradition and the 20<sup>th</sup> century thought that builds on it. That tradition regards critique as an analysis and exposure of the structural elements implicitly at work in any system of thought. It deploys the hypothesis that the economic and labour-force-related dimensions of thought, culture, and intellectual life are systematically hidden and that a certain work of disclosing the socio-political premisses of the system of thought itself has an emancipatory political function.

This set of methodological principles, of revealing the socio-political premisses of thought through critique became the touchstone of the 'critical theory' of the so-called Frankfurt School in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. In this version of critique, new principles linked to the development and institutionalisation of the social sciences in post-War Germany, combined with a critical examination of the rationality of war, and the hidden inequities of the Enlightenment notion of rationality as civilisation.

Something of a fourth generation critique, though only slightly later than the principles of the Frankfurt School, emerges in pair with the methodology of 'genealogy' advanced by Foucault in his early work, before the lectures at the Collège de France.<sup>3</sup> In his critical writings, Foucault takes the extraordinary step of putting the subject itself into a historical and political framework. Through a detailed archival study of the various 'human sciences', he identifies the historical moments when the notion of the subject of science and of rationality emerges from a different paradigm altogether. Based on this emergence, he then makes a second key contribution by mapping the way the subject itself is subject to political forces and, in particular, to power.

The title of this intervention, 'What is critical migration studies?' piggy-backs on the notion of relatively newly minted 'critical security studies' an analytic movement inspired by Foucault's insights about the subject of the human sciences and, above all, of the subjugation of the subject to the determinations and variegations of power.<sup>4</sup> The central role that power plays in traditional, or realist, concepts of security makes critical scrutiny of the subject of security all the more power important. A similar motivation generates important questions and queries about the subject of migration and the of the scientific discourses that shape both institutionalised and popularised understandings of migration.

C ritique, in the sense we mean it is a many-leveled methodology that builds on a simple premiss: the 'subject' is regarded not as a given, but rather as a variable. The aim of a analysis is to both map the changes that the subject undergoes, and clarify the conditions under which variation takes place. The analysis inevitably takes place in either scientific or some other official discourses whose essence or function presupposes or depends in a crucial way on its premisses being taken for granted. Critique means that the questions themselves are productively disruptive of the very equilibrium presupposed by and for the subject.

# **Elements of Critical Migration Studies**

If the fact that the academic disciplines relevant to the study of migration are heterogeneous, that their principles and premisses are not identical, and that they they do not entirely agree in their methodologies or execution. The discipline of migration studies is not singular, it is multiple. The subject of migration is not one, but many.

Coherent composition of elements of a critical migration studies will therefore consist of a range of objects, discourses and subjects. Part of the challenge of its coherence will lie in combining discourses that did not develop with the aim of analysing or understanding the harmony and clashes between competing discourses, that did not set out to systematise or collate knowledge about migration.

Reprint of the point of view, the interest and curiosity, the insights and the blind-spots that shape the knowledge accumulated and produced by the scientist. The subject of scientific discourse a distinct set of values, an orientation that orders the world according to what is

important, what has worth, what deserves to be pursued, what should be dropped or forgotten, what should be financed and what should not. The discourse of science is the voice that speaks to the classroom or auditorium of listeners, seeing these listeners accordingly, telling a story of the world in which the scientific discoveries that interest it are situated and justified as important, explained as rational, and advanced as meaningful.

The discourse of migration consists of several subdiscourses, and this is an important part of its way of producing meaning. Seven major subject positions can be identified as supporting the discourse of migration. Seven positions, scientific standpoints, and valueconstellations anchor, orient, give institutional legitimacy and motivation to the discourse of migration. These are the anthropological subject, the demographic subject, the economic, geographical, historical, legal, and political subjects. They all play a role, intersect, collide and cohabit the discourse of migration.<sup>5</sup> For each of the following subjects, an introduction is made, followed by an indication of possible entry points for a potential critique of the assumptions of the subject.

# The Anthropological Subject

The discourse surrounding the subject as anthropological entity understands subjectivity as a function of culture and identity. The subject is constituted as belonging to a culture, as possessing a cultural identity. The logic at the heart of the anthropological narrative of the subject is at once structurally simple and yet has complex consequences. The identity of the anthropological subject stems from a logic of group-belonging. Such a group is identified by a certain set of cultural properties, which all members of the culture are said to possess. This possession is the marker of the individual's belonging to the culture, to the group, and to the narrative.

The critique of the anthropological subject will focus on the modalities of culture and identity, belonging, inclusion and exclusion. The logic of belonging, like the logic of identity and difference is complex, opening up two primary critical challenges.

First, the criteria for belonging is not determined or defined independently of the group and those who belong to it. Rather, it is defined as part of the function of their belonging itself. Only those who already belong can decide who shall belong. Yet, the criteria for belonging can by principle not exclude those who would define it. Those who belong belong less by virtue of adhering to the criteria of belonging than by the fact that they are among those who decide who shall belong.

Second, In order to be a part of the group, one must be a part of the group. One must be something other than then group, distinct from it, and yet a part of it by virtue of belonging to it. Membership in a culture requires thus both sameness and difference. Indeed the difference between the individual members, and between the individual members and the collective whole, is crucial. The irreducibility of the one to the other, the heterogeneity of membership, the inherent out-of-placeness of a member of any group is fundamental.

### The Demographic Subject

The demographic subject of migration represents a specific kind of quantification of migration, or, better put, a counting of migrants and migration. If demography concerns itself with populations then a critical distinction will need to be made between population as quantitative measure of individual bodies belonging to a pre-defined group in a pre-distinguished place, and the demos, understood as a kind of meaningful approach generating non-quantifiable categories or concepts of belonging.

ritical demographics will need to ask questions  $\mathcal{O}$ about the dominance of the demos over the number, about the way the group is constituted at the conceptual level as a prologue to the counting of the group or its members. If the demographic subject is the basis for a core metric of migration--the subject of migration--, then the delicate relation between population, people, and groups should also be closely examined. What, for example, is being said when the demographic subject invokes 'population change'? It presumably refers to the fact that a stable demographic subject, member of a stable society, part of a stable group, region or country, has been changing in a stable way that puts into question none of these premisses. Such stability in all the parameters would of course be a seldom occurrence indeed. The population at the heart of the demographic subject is highly unstable, even unto itself, its own self-understanding and selfgovernance. This instability not merely weakness. It is a richness and a strength, one that may be artificially weakened by the demographic gaze.

#### The Economic Subject

he discourse of the economics subject is by many regarded as the most powerful and consequential in the overall study of migration flows. The neo-liberal market logic of human displacement has done more to impact scientific understandings of migration and migration policy in the world, than any other discourse. Most fundamentally (and most visibly) it advances a quantification of migration and its variables. The motivations of the migrant, the hindrances, the advantages and disadvantages, the gains and losses, risks and uncertainties, are all transposed or translated into a quantified mosaic, frozen in the logic of binary logic, then analysed, manipulated, distributed, aggregated and disaggregated, all in order to model past movement in the aim of explaining present movements and predicting future ones.

The organisational advantages of the this construction of the economic subject of migration are patent. It permits a generalisation of both premisses and results, a kind of universal language enabling communication of data and analysis across linguistic borders and, in part, across disciplinary borders.

critique of the economic subject would examine the instrumentalisation of the experiences, impressions, values, traditions, memories, judgements, and risks of the migrant experience. It would consider the economic rationality of potential and actual migrants, the limits to quantifiability of the particular experience of discontent or desperation that shaped the decision to leave one economic situation to the advantage of another or perhaps to a certain image of another.

The critique of the economic subject would also be interested in undertaking an analysis of the assumptions it cloaks, the prejudices it transmits and the limits to the freedoms it assumes or promises. The notion of exchange is a rich and lively one and doubtlessly plays a role in the lives of migrant subjects, governing their aspirations, shaping their images of the other, other settings, their perceptions and analyses of risk, and their fears for the future.

## The Geographical Subject

The geographical subject of migration is the centre of an attempt to conceptualise, that is, to give both subjective form and concrete content to the experience of migration in space. Migration studies as geography sees the physical movement of bodies in geographical space as the base-line for understanding and analysis. Geographical formations--deserts, mountains, oceans, rivers, etc. become the limiting dimensions of the flow (or non-flow) of migrants, and this limitation is then re-correlated as experience. The migrant subject experiences the world as geospatial. Events are projected onto geography, the horizon of events is projected onto the spatial horizon, history and future projections become spatial correlates.

The subject of geography has the potential to spatially instrumentalise the subject of migration, to reduce migrant experience to distance, depth, width, and the combination of spatial patterns that may be generated from these.

The critique of the subject of geography would regard this as both a limit to an understanding of how migrant experience unfolds in space and a deconstruction of the opposition between space and experience, permitting an interpretation of the unfolding of events in space, across terrain, in such a way that a new interlocking of experience and space is generated.

## The Historical Subject

The historical subject combines two crucial dimensions of experience: that of chronology and that of historical meaning. By chronology we mean both the ordering of things and the emphasis put on the punctual in the flow of time. By historical, we understand they way that the content of the flow of time is interpreted retrospectively. We differentiate in this way between the gravity with which the course of time is experienced and the way it is integrated into stories about the present, between the duration of events and the intensity or importance granted to events in the our understanding of our past, present and future.

The subject of migration understood as a historical subject reflects a variable, culturally and socially determined, experience of time. This implies that not only the present and the future, but the past also counts for migrant experience, for migrant subjectivity. Indeed, in many cases, the past counts quite considerably, recalling and carrying the norms, ideals and modes of remembered life that is understood as appropriate and right and good.

Historical memory functions as a kind of projection into the future, a future vision of a nostalgia of what has been lost, and that may never be re-created. And yet an idealised memory of the past, understood as what could be a better future, will often times provide the force of progress, of change, the reason or justification for migration, for moving on, for moving against the resistance of the path chosen.

Finally, linked to the nostalgic discourse of the historical past, also provides a certain interpretation of the past, one that is cultivated through the discourse of the historical subject. This interpretation, this hermeneutic of historical time, provides in many cases legitimacy, even necessity, for the departure, pronouncing a kind of historical-moral imperative over the sacrifices and suffering borne in its name. It can provide a justification to sacrifices made to oneself and to others for some cause couched in events or myths of the past.

critique of the historical subject accounts both for the multiplicity of such historical narratives that may be supporting migration, and exposes the complex function of the role of time, the tension between what has been lived and what is implied for the future.

# The Legal Subject

The legal subject of migration is particularly forceful because it marks the site where formal belonging to a given people--understood in formal and legal terms (through the various devices and dimensions of citizenship)--overlaps with the informal types of belonging to a people (understood as demos) or to some smaller or transversal group or subgroup. It is the legal subject of migration that comes in contact with the institutions of the state, either as a bona fide documented residence, an undocumented resident subject to the pursuits and persecutions that might involve, as an asylum seeker legally awaiting the due process of an official application for asylum, or in the limbo of a-legal status, outside of due process, with neither knowledge or recognition of the state. The legal subject of migration thus deals with the sovereignty of the state, from a position of greater or lesser personal sovereignty as legal or political subject.

Thus a critique of the legal subject will be required to disentangle the tensions and overlaps between the legitimacy of the legal subject of migration, legitimacy within the state, in one form of citizenship or another, or in some cases even as a stateless person, with the status of legality relative to a parallel set of dilemmas.

mortantly, the status of the legal subject of migration links on several levels to the complex matter of citizenship, itself correlated with the issues of group-belonging discussed above. There is among political theorists only partial consensus about what citizenship means, what it presupposes and implies. The foundations of citizenship differ widely. The way it is acquired--and lost--also varie. The supra-national, subnational and simply national political stakes are often high as a consequence of the ambiguities in level (minorities and sub-groups, original, secondary, subsidiary citizenship rights, etc.) and in scope of citizenship (i.e. different transversal types of citizenship claims from one group to another). Finally, the social and political norms invoked by the discussion about the legal subject surround the legal subjectivity of migration, generating a new politics of normality, extinguishing old ones, synthesising and erasing them. The same may be said of the life-cycle of political values in the complex determination of the legal subject of migration.

# The Political Subject

Finally, the political subject. The politics of migration is a politics of control on several levels. Some of these have been examined in the preceding discussion, others--like the different types of police operations deemed necessary in different political settings in order to physically control the movement of migrants whose lives and movements are already controlled by so many material and immaterial forces--are well documented in other forms of political and socio-political commentary.

Species of groups and individuals--then the political subject of migration becomes the one that responds to the whole range of forms of governance, of being governed, of being subject both to discourses of control and discourses that control without explicitly controlling. The political subject is the centre of control and self-understanding of the migrant, and the voice that impacts more than most discourses, public attitudes surrounding migration.

## Conclusion



