MIGRATION, AGENCY AND PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE

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International migration has expanded and diversified around the world in the 21st century, with an important role in the dynamics of labor markets, arrival and departure societies and the lives of migrant populations (Sassen, 1998; Baeninger, 2013). The complexity of migrations requires a theoretical and methodological effort to problematize the fixed or binary categories of migrations as origin and destiny places; temporary, definitive or return migration; national and international migration; forced or voluntary migrations. These categories and typologies have been the subject of criticisms considering the fluidity and plasticity between these types, as well as the often circular nature of national and international migrations. In pursuit of overcoming fixed or binary categories, some notions have been proposed such as those of field, space and circulatory territories (Tarrius, 1993), as possibilities to understand the spaces through which migrants circulate. The problematization of  categories and  typologies has been followed by reviews on the structuralist paradigms. The dynamics of globalization, the processes of domination of violence and political domination, the mobility of capital and the labor force are important components to explain contemporary national and international migrations, but what is wanted is to go beyond and incorporate the meanings attributed to the migrations by the agents involved in this social process as well as their practices in contexts of control and domination over working conditions, displacements, and access to rights.  It proposes a shift from "migration" to the subjects of this social process that are the "migrants" (Menezes, 2012). We believe that the manifestation of structures in the practices and actions of individuals and groups does not neglect the capacity of the migrants' agency. They are not mere reflexes of structural forces, but are active social  agents.

Sociological theory –  classic and contemporary - has as one of its central dilemmas the relationship between individual and society, or between actors and structure. This issue crosses several subjects and disciplines of the social sciences. We hereby highlight the contributions of social historian E. P. Thompson and social scientist Anthony Giddens (1984). Edward P. Thompson (1978) criticizes structuralist theoretical perspectives, which assign a secondary role to the action of concrete social subjects, thinking them as a mere result of structural determinations. He proposes a methodology of analysis in which real men and women can be apprehended as the center of the historicity of social processes. The notion of experience is the path used for the elaboration of its theoretical-methodological proposal. Giddens introduces another analytical category, which is that of agency. There are two understandings about this notion. The first is a general conception of agency in which individuals are given the ability to process social experience and to discern paths within limits of information, uncertain ties and other constraints (Giddens 1984: 1-16). Although the notion of agency is embodied in individuals, it is not attributed solely to individuals. For this capacity of agent is also the constituent element of collectivities: groups, social categories, representatives of state, church organizations, for example, appear as forces capable of acting in events, social processes, relations among social agents.

Understanding migrants as active social and political subjects in diverse contexts in which they experience situations of labor exploitation, political, cultural or religious domination, constraints and legal frameworks, also involves considering their resistance practices in contexts of control and domination over their lives. The notion of 'everyday forms of resistance', proposed by Scott, is developed in two books: Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (1985) and Domination and the Arts of Resistance (1990)  Both day-to-day practices and social movements are considered by Scott as forms of resistance. Thus he disagrees with the separation between "real resistance" and "incidental resistance."

The theoretical and methodological perspective centered on the agency and experience of migrants and their resistance practices has been evidenced in several recent researches and publications on internal and international migrations (Denaro, 2017, Menezes and Cover, 2002, 2016, Marinucci, 2016; Mainwaring, 2016, Moreira, 2017).

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