




THE TIGHTROPE OF TRANSIT AND CONTAINMENT: A COMPARATIVE SCOPING REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION TO CHIAPAS AND THE CANARY ISLANDS (1991-2021)

A corda bamba do trânsito e da contenção: uma análise comparativa da migração internacional para Chiapas e as Ilhas Canárias (1991-2021)

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Abstract. This comparative scoping review presents two cases widely considered as spaces of transit: the state of Chiapas, Mexico, and the Canary Islands archipelago, Spain. Following sampling and screening, 92 records from academic literature were included in this review. We found that this body of mostly descriptive research has largely focused on changes in migration policy, migrant routes, and border enforcement. In this, we have found a striking comparability between both cases, where increased containment, securitization, and criminalization of migration at the macro-level – and specifically in the United States and European Union – has trickled down within these micro-level spaces, putting into question the ‘transit character’ of these geographies.

Keywords: migration; transit; borders; containment; crisis; Chiapas; Canary Islands.

Resumo. Esta revisão de escopo comparativa apresenta dois casos amplamente considerados como espaços de trânsito: o estado de Chiapas, no México, e o arquipélago das Ilhas Canárias, na Espanha. Após a realização de uma amostra e triagem, 92 registros de literatura acadêmica foram incluídos nesta revisão bibliográfica. Descobrimos que esta produção acadêmica, majoritariamente descritiva, centrou-se em grande parte nas mudanças na política de migração, nas rotas dos migrantes e na fiscalização das fronteiras. Nesse sentido, encontramos uma comparabilidade notável entre ambos os casos, em que o aumento da contenção, da securitização e da criminalização da migração a nível macro – e especificamente nos Estados Unidos e na União Europeia – se espalhou nestes espaços a nível micro, colocando em questão o “caráter de trânsito” destas geografias.

Palavras-chave: migração; trânsito; fronteiras; contenção; crise; Chiapas; Ilhas Canárias.

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Introduction

In the study of multiple and often overlapping regimes of migration across the world, there is increasing agreement that containment, securitization, and criminalization are prominent features of the politics surrounding human movement. Specific events have precipitated such analyses, where migration scholars have pointed to the 9/11 attacks as having reverberating (and restrictive) effects on global migration policy (Kyriakides, Torres, 2015; Lahav, 2010). In the case of refugee protection, others have pointed to the end of the Cold War, marking a “shift from asylum to containment where Western states have largely limited the asylum they offer to refugees and have focused on efforts to contain refugees in their region of origin” (Loescher, 2014, p. 219). And in other assessments, the scale of these changes was most evident in 2015 when Europe responded to its migration ‘crisis’ with a range of political, diplomatic, and military strategies aimed at preventing the flow of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (Estevens, 2018). As these changes have developed over the last thirty years or so, the Euro-American frontier has not only cemented itself through surveillance and border build-up; it has also expanded its limits to the (ultra-) periphery. An often-cited example is both the United States and Europe’s efforts to externalize their borders through a range of bilateral cooperation agreements with Latin America and Africa (FitzGerald, 2020; Giuffré, 2013; Kent *et al.*, 2020; Triandafyllidou, Dimitriadi, 2014).

These changes have also permeated to transit geographies, spaces where migrants pass through to reach their imagined and desired destination. Within these sites, the overlap and tension between spatial dynamics and the above spatial frictions can be observed (Schapendonk *et al.*, 2020). Building onto earlier assessments qualifying migrants’ experience of transit as ‘liminal’, positioning migrants as “simultaneously outside (in transition, not yet arrived), yet inside (traveling through), national spaces” (Coutin, 2005, p. 196), it has become evident that such spaces are in fact liminal by *design*. Here, discourses around transit migration, and related strategies deployed by the Global North, have engineered these areas in view of containment (Düvell, 2012; Papadopoulou-Kourkoura, 2008). As Ehrkamp (2020) points out, new attention on geographies of transit have opened several lines of potential inquiry exploring the tension between legal protection and exclusion, the materiality and politics of vehicles transporting migrants, the shifting of decision-making and non-linearity of migratory trajectories, and resourcefulness of migrants ‘stuck’ in transit, to name a few.

Here, we put into focus two cases widely considered as spaces of transit: the state of Chiapas, Mexico, and the Canary Islands archipelago, Spain. By casting a wide net, the aim of this article is two-fold. First, it plots out the ‘state-of-the-art’ of

academic research on international migration to Chiapas and the Canary Islands through the surveying of academic literature published over a thirty-year period (1991-2021). Second, this article has the analytical objective of exploring how transit geographies interface with the changing politics of migration. Namely, we are interested in examining how the tightening of migration policies can transform long-considered areas of transit into spaces of containment.

The next section presents our rationale for selecting these cases and our methodology for amassing and analyzing the literature under review. We then present major trends across the literature, followed by a discussion, demonstrating that the above changes towards restriction and containment have indeed penetrated the Chiapanecan and Canarian migration landscapes. Finally, we conclude by providing a critical assessment of this research, drawing out pathways for future research.

Case Selection and Methodology

Case Selection

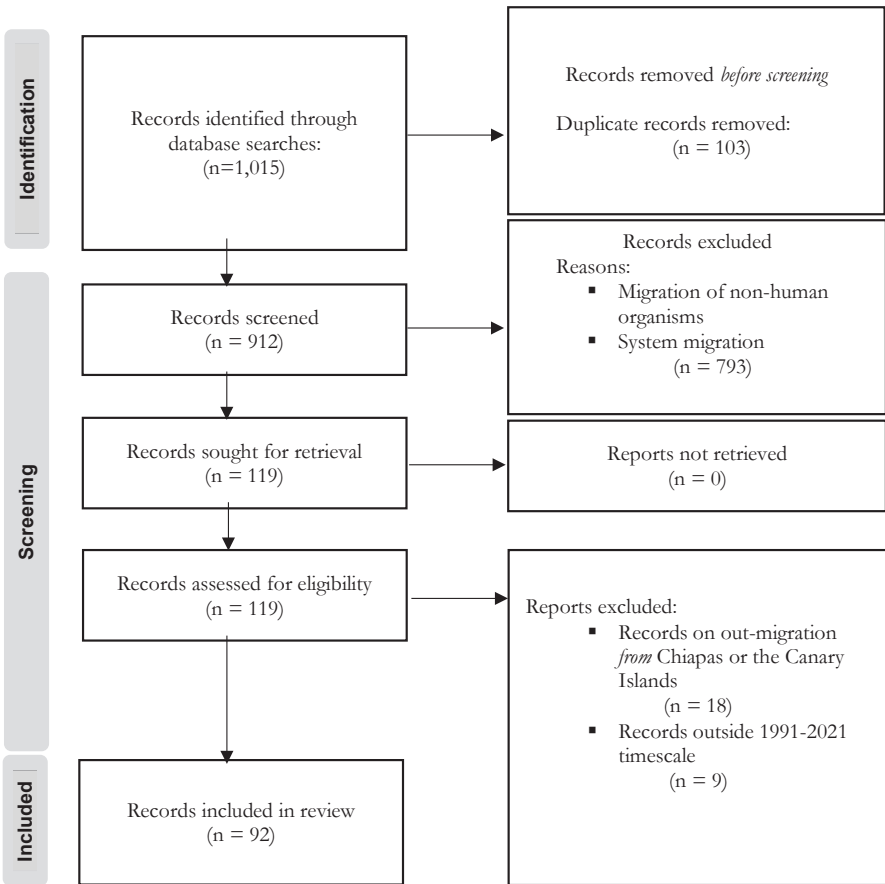
Several factors contribute to our interest in comparing the migrant geographies of Chiapas and the Canary Islands. First, having conducted extensive research within Mexico, the Maghreb, and Africa more broadly, we have found that both spaces are commonly formulated as places of transit within the imaginaries and expected trajectories of migrants. Second, in our consideration for the above-mentioned changes within migration regimes, we are interested in discovering how scholarship around Chiapas and the Canary Islands has engaged locally despite their relation to different regional hegemons (the United States and the European Union, respectively). Relatedly, we also want to consider the ‘peripheral’ character of Chiapas within Mexico and the Canary Islands with mainland Spain. Third, we are curious about the differences in scholarship stemming from the different constitution of migrants (i.e., place of origin) and the different geographic spaces they travel through (i.e., land or sea). Last, and perhaps quite predictably, we are unaware of scholarly work reviewing migration literature in Chiapas and the Canary Islands. More than ‘feeding two birds with one scone’, we believe their comparison can bring unique insight.

Methodology

Early in the research design process, we decided on a scoping literature review format based on the qualitative content analysis of academic literature in peer-reviewed journals. Drawing on the guidance of Elo & Kyngäs (2007), the following steps were followed: (1) sampling; (2) determination of units; (3) coding; (4) categorizing; (5) computation; and (6) reporting of results. For sampling, both Scopus – Elsevier’s abstract and citation database – and the Directory of Open

Access Journals (DOAJ) databases were used to identify literature. In both cases, we used the query lines “Chiapas [AND] Migra*” and “Canar* [AND] Migra*”. This allowed for the return of articles in English, French, and Spanish languages. This initial search identified 1,015 records. To engage with a systematic process of screening, we used the PRISMA method and visualization tool (Page *et al.*, 2021; see Figure 1). Through this process, we screened for duplicates and literature that was not relevant to our study; for instance, scholarly work on the migration of non-human organisms such as birds or plankton, or articles focusing on out-migration by the Chiapanecan or Canarian population.

Figure 1 - Process of literature inclusion and screening using PRISMA flow diagram protocol (see Page *et al.*, 2021)



For qualitative coding, the entire set of academic literature under review (n=92) was read twice. A coding frame was developed inductively during the first full reading. The resulting codes were then applied during the second reading. Each article was coded holistically, meaning that each record (i.e., article) was considered as a single unit. In some cases, multiple codes were applied to a single record. Codes belonged to three over-arching categories. ‘Article type’ states whether the research article is descriptive, empirical (based on field data), or theoretical (theory-building). ‘Identity focus’ refers to demographic markers that play a central role in the article, such as gender, nationality, or legal status. Finally, ‘thematic focus’ points to key themes and subject-matter explored within the article. Results from the coding analysis were computed using Microsoft Excel.

Results

General trends

In total, this review surveys 92 articles published in peer-reviewed journals (Chiapas, n=37; Canary Islands, n=55). For the case of Chiapas, 14 articles were descriptive, 7 were theoretical, and 16 were empirical. There was a similar distribution for the Canarian case: 26 descriptive, 6 theoretical, and 23 empirical. The three most prominent identities explored within Chiapas-focused literature were Central Americans (n=20), Guatemalans (n=14), and women (n=9). For the Canary Islands, most articles focused on irregular migrants (n=18), followed by Africans generally (n=13), and Senegalese specifically (n=10). For both Chiapas and the Canary Islands, border management was the most common thematic focus (n=15 and n=22, respectively). Other frequently recurrent themes included labor (Chiapas, n=12; Canary Islands, n=6), integration (Chiapas, n=3; Canary Islands, n=12), and pull factors (Chiapas, n=5; Canary Islands, n=8). Table 1 summarizes the descriptive results of our review.

Table 1 - Number of articles according to type, identity focus and thematic codes

	CHIAPAS (N=37)	CANARY ISLANDS (N=55)
ARTICLE TYPE		
Descriptive	14	26
Theoretical	7	6
Empirical	16	23
IDENTITY FOCUS		
Women	9	5
Minors	1	3
Refugees/asylum seekers	2	1
Irregular migrants	2	18

Economic migrants	8	3
Latin Americans	0	9
Central Americans	20	0
Guatemalans	14	0
Hondurans	1	0
Africans	0	13
West Africans	0	2
Maghrebis	0	1
Moroccans	0	1
Senegalese	0	10
Europeans	0	5
Japanese	0	2
THEMATIC FOCUS		
transit	8	2
labor	12	6
integration	3	12
access	5	2
border management	15	22
detention	1	1
technology	2	6
development	1	3
push factors	4	9
pull factors	5	8

Overview of the literature

Using article types as a starting point, we now provide an overview of the literature. Our results show that international migration research focusing on both Chiapas and the Canary Islands is largely descriptive. Here, the literature is mostly bifurcated between work that describes trends, patterns, and routes of migration, and work that focuses on documenting changes within borderscapes. Specific to Chiapas, academic research has focused on this region's shift from a labor migration destination for Guatemalan agricultural laborers (and in some cases, refugees) towards becoming a transit space for Central Americans more generally (Anguiano Téllez, 2008; Castillo, Toussaint, 2015; Rojas Wiesner, Ángeles Cruz, 2001; Villafuerte Solís, García Aguilar, 2014). Following others' dream of reaching the United States, the feminization of migration is also explored within these demographic changes (Cruz, Rojas Wiesner, 2000). Literature focused on the Canary Islands has also documented the emergence of transit migration since the turn of the century, pointing to the increased popularity of the Atlantic

Route (Carling, 2007a; Domínguez-Mujica, 2006, 2011; de Haas, 2008a). As will be further discussed below, the shift in migration routes has corresponded to increased maritime patrolling and restrictive migration policies operating in and across a range of scales, including the European Union (Andersson, 2012; Carling, Hernández-Carretero, 2011; Cross, 2009; Hernández-Carretero, 2009; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012; Vives, 2017a), Spain (Alscher, 2005; Carling, 2007b; López-Sala, Godenau, 2016), the Canary Islands (Carrera, 2007; Esteban, López Sala, 2007; Godenau, Zapata Hernández, 2008; Vives, 2017b), and also within Africa (Carling, 2007b; Cross, 2009; de Haas, 2008b; Triandafyllidou, 2014). While research focusing on the Chiapanecan context has not been as extensive, descriptive work has demonstrated a similar trend of increased securitization and border enforcement, pointing to a trickle-down effect of restrictive immigration policies in the United States and their role in transforming the Mexican southern border from an asylum space in the 1990s to a highly regulated space more recently (Basok, 2020; Torre-Cantalapiedra, Schiavon, 2016; Villafuerte Solís, 2017a, 2017b; Villafuerte Solís, García Aguilar, 2015).

In the Chiapanecan case, the richest body of empirical work has focused on the experience of Central American women who face multiple forms of discrimination because of their gender and migrant status. Widespread sexualization of these women (Cruz Salazar, 2011), and particularly for Hondurans and Salvadorans, has exposed them to sexual violence, coercion, and abuse during transit (Infante *et al.*, 2013), and studies suggest that women's – voluntary and forced – entry into sex work is often linked to socioeconomic vulnerabilities resulting from being 'stuck' in transit (Fernández-Casanueva, 2009; Maldonado Macedo, 2020; Pintin-Perez *et al.*, 2018). While Kuromiya (2019) nuances the literature on discrimination in her more optimistic work exploring the liberating imaginaries of young female domestic workers from Guatemala, other studies point to the material implications of gender as an important factor in women's ability to access a range of services linked to finances, social programming, healthcare, and documentation (Carte, 2014; Ramírez-López *et al.*, 2012). Relatedly, Temores-Alcántara *et al.* (2015) further link discrimination of both migrant men and women to access barriers for mental health services. Mental health is also the object of a few studies within the Canarian context, where it has been reported that Latin American women who work largely within the domestic service sector (Domínguez-Mujica *et al.*, 2016) experience psychological distress because of a perceived loss of attachment to their homeland and occupational circumstances (Aroian *et al.*, 2008), or as Suárez-Hernández *et al.* (2011) find, due to unemployment-related anxiety and relationships-related depression. Bover *et al.* (2015) associate these factors with lower quality of life scores, and in León & Hernández Alemán's (2016) work on migrant decision-making, psychological factors related to negative emotions, expectations, and social integration are mostly important for those migrants with a

low probability of staying in the Canarian context. Another small area of empirical research is focused on migrants' continued connectivity to their place of origin; in the Canary Islands, either through remittances (Hernández Alemán, León, 2011), returnee associations following – often forced – repatriation (Pian, 2014), or in subjective negotiations between different cultural identities (Domínguez-Mujica, Avila-Tàpies, 2013), and in the Chiapanecan case, through the maintenance of cultural traditions and family ties through the embodiment of identities best described as 'translocal' (Fernández Casanueva, 2012; Lerma Rodríguez, 2016). The largest body of empirical studies centered around migration to the Canary Islands, however, focuses on the Senegalese population and the intersection between motivation (i.e. pull and push factors) and assessments of risks associated with maritime travel (degli Uberti, 2014; Hernández-Carretero, Carling, 2012; Hernández Carretero, 2008; Ifekwunigwe, 2013; Nyamnjoh, 2010; Poeze, 2007, 2010). Here, results are relatively consistent, showing that Senegalese find the risks to be acceptable considering the few opportunities they have within their homeland.

Lastly, our results show that scholarship on international migration to Chiapas and the Canary Islands has not been extensively engaged in theory-building. There are a few exceptions, however, in Chiapas-based work qualifying Mexico's southern border as a 'non-place' (González Roblero, 2018) and assessments on emerging border enforcement strategies as embedded within a geopolitical security paradigm (García Aguilar, Villafuerte Solís, 2020; Rioja, 2015; Villafuerte Solís, 2017b, 2018), and in the Canarian context, scholarly work exploring the particularity of islands as geographies of confinement (Godenau, 2012; King, 2009; Mountz, 2011). In the latter case, Düvell (2012) draws strong links between the Canary Islands and theoretical understandings of transit migration, although as we will discuss in the next section, its 'feature of transit' is increasingly debatable.

Discussion

Returning to the assessment that the global migration regime has undergone a transformation over the last thirty years or so, incrementally moving towards the containment, securitization, and criminalization of migration phenomena, our review revealed that most scholars focusing on the Chiapanecan and Canarian contexts draw concrete links between these changes and specific 'crisis events'. This is certainly in line with broader theoretical work on 'crisis-making' and 'crisis-talk', and their role in legitimizing the use of diplomatic, political, and military strategies responding to the exceptionality of 'temporally-bounded' migration events (Cantat *et al.*, 2020; Menjívar *et al.*, 2019). In tracking these events, these so-called crises all occurred on American or European soil, prompting either regional power to deploy migration-limiting strategies not only locally, but also globally. Our review shows the extent in which hegemonic power, and conversely,

American and European paternalism, penetrates the ‘periphery’. This discussion begins by tracing a ‘chronology of crisis’ and the migration management changes (or initiatives) they produced locally in Chiapas and the Canary Islands. We then outline how the literature describes changes in migration routes, where migrants have adapted to increased border enforcement. Last, we describe how difficulties of migrating have reformulated migration to and through these regions, perhaps questioning their qualification as spaces of transit.

The events of 9/11 and the resulting state-of-crisis it produced, both in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, had ripple effects on Mexican migration policy and border enforcement. As Castillo & Toussaint (2015) explain, prior to the September 11th attacks, the leadership of George W. Bush (United States) and Vicente Fox (Mexico) were working towards reaching a comprehensive agreement on migration. These events, however, shifted the focus from safe and orderly migration towards a migration-security paradigm focused on the restriction of human movement. In the following years, a series of mostly bilateral measures were implemented in Mexico. In 2002, Mexico signed an agreement with the United States, initiating the Smart Borders Program involving twenty commitments to strengthen border surveillance (Villafuerte Solís, 2017b). That same year, still under U.S. pressure, the High-Level Group on Mexico-Guatemala Border Security (GANSEG) was established, targeting irregular migration and its links with organized crime and drug trafficking; Belize was later added to this working group through the High Level Group for Border Security (GANSEF) in 2005. Following a meeting in 2007 between Presidents Bush and Felipe Calderón, 2008 saw the establishment of the Merida Initiative, where the United States committed to financing, providing equipment, and training to Mexico on security matters, with irregular migration as one of its focus areas (Villafuerte Solís, García Aguilar, 2015). Through extensive funding, the Merida Initiative was largely effective in externalizing the U.S. border, transforming Mexico as a geostrategic center for Central America and the Caribbean, leading to increased surveillance and enforcement at its southern border (Rioja, 2015). Relatedly, in 2005, the National Migration Institute (INM in Spanish) was absorbed into Mexico’s national security framework (Villafuerte Solís, 2017b).

While Pinyol-Jiménez (2012) links the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil as having initiated the European process of immigration securitization, most literature focused on the Canary Islands has zeroed in on the ‘cayucos crisis’ (2005-2006) as its precipitating event. Along with several border breach events at the Ceuta and Melilla Spanish enclaves in 2005, this crisis – marked by tens of thousands of migrants reaching the Canary Islands using cayucos – led to the militarization and technologization of border control. The EU border regime also shifted towards externalization efforts, as expressed in its 2005 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) which sought to increase collaborative border management

efforts with a range of African countries (Vives, 2017a). The now well-known Frontex agency was also created, where its first three operations – Hera I (2006), Hera II (2006), and Hera III (2007) – focused on regional technical assistance and maritime operations to intercept migrants voyaging to the Canary Islands. As such, the cayucos crisis effectively “drove the growing Europeanization of the management of the maritime borders in the Canaries [through] the gradual deployment of the European Union’s Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategy” (Godenau, 2014, p. 138). Simultaneously, Spain created the Canaries Regional Coordination Centre in 2006, a high-tech facility tasked to coordinate between maritime patrol units, based on centralized information from a range of sensors; for example, from the Integrated External Surveillance System (SIVE), expanded to the Canary Islands following the cayucos crisis, and the Autonomous Maritime Surveillance System (AMASS) established in 2008 (Alscher, 2005; Godenau, 2012, 2014; López-Sala, Godenau, 2016).

The 2014 ‘kids in cages’ crisis during the Obama Administration, where over 60,000 unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle were detained, also initiated a series of measures within Mexico. Operation Soconusco II was carried out during the months of January and February, where nearly 1,500 people were arrested and detained by Mexican authorities (Villafuerte Solís, 2018). In March of that year, the National Security Commission of Mexico also announced the establishment of land and maritime containment belts along its southern border (Villafuerte Solís, García Aguilar, 2015), leading up to its major Programa Frontera Sur inaugurated in June. This program, receiving nearly 100 million USD in funding through the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, led to the creation of mobile checkpoints, detention centers, Centros de Atención Integral al Tránsito Fronterizo, and increased monitoring of key migration corridors such as La Bestia train networks, all with the objective of addressing five action lines: (1) organized and formal transit through regularization; (2) improved border organization and security; (3) increased migrant protection; (4) strengthened regional coordination; and (5) promoting inter-institutional coordination (Villafuerte Solís, 2017a, 2017b). As Villafuerte Solís (2018) maintains, these measures are part and parcel of a migration policy of containment directed to Central Americans; and relatedly, these are formulated by a political imaginary of security that is highly influenced by Mexico’s northern neighbor (Rioja, 2015). This was made further evident in 2019 in the direct aftermath of the 2017/2018 migrant caravan crisis. Responding to President Donald Trump’s threats to raise tariffs if immigration was not controlled, Mexico detained over 150,000 irregular migrants from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, expanding its number of detention and removal centers across the country. We found the most extensive description of Mexico’s migrant detention system in Campos-Delgado’s (2021) work, which defines this ‘transit control regime’ as having two defining features:

(1) ‘reverberation,’ “the process where border control and migration policies from one state [i.e. the United States] echo in the political, institutional, social, cultural and intimate spheres of another” (p. 478); and (2) ‘distancing,’ taking place physically – keeping migrants at the edge of the Global North – and morally – by using a “‘rescue’ legitimization discourse that uses migrants’ vulnerability and clandestine nature of their journey as a justification for control” (p. 479).

As an expected consequence of increased ‘border build up’ and enforcement, largely influenced by paternalistic and hegemonic power exercised by both the United States and the European Union, the routes migrants take have been significantly transformed. Within the Chiapanecan context, observations on these transformations have been rather anecdotal, pointing to changes along the railway routes of La Bestia (Martínez *et al.*, 2015; Villafuerte Solís, 2017b), increased irregular crossings at the Suchiate River (Maldonado Macedo, 2020), and the emergence of the Pacific Route bringing migrants to the Port of Chiapas (Villafuerte Solís, 2017a, 2018). Within the Canarian context, new migration routes have emerged as migrants have adapted to increased maritime patrolling, what Hernández Carretero (2008) has called a ‘patrol-induced, southward shift.’ Whereas migrants travelling from the African continent used to use small fishing boats known as pateras, mostly leaving from Morocco to cross the Strait of Gibraltar or towards Lanzarote and Fuerteventura (the closest of the Canary Islands), cayucos and pirogues became the preferred means of transport, creating the Atlantic Route heading towards the central (Gran Canaria and Tenerife) and western islands (La Gomera, La Palma, and El Hierro) (Godenau, 2014). Relatedly, the departure point incrementally shifted southwards, moving from Morocco to Western Sahara, Mauritania, and Senegal, with documented departures even further south from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, and Ghana (Carling, 2007a; Hernández Carretero, 2008; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012).

While our review certainly echoes Godenau’s (2014) assertion that transit to the Canary Islands is ‘conditioned’ by border management, the above shows that the same is true in Chiapas. The most striking evidence of this can be observed in the case of Central American women who initially enter the region with the aim of continuing onwards to the United States, but because of difficult transit conditions, logistical and financial barriers, the need to support children, and in some cases through coercion, extortion, and trafficking, must change their trajectories and remain in Chiapas as sex workers (Cruz Salazar, 2011; Fernández-Casanueva, 2009; Pintin-Perez *et al.*, 2018). Here, the ordering of Mexico as the ‘site of development’ and Central America as the ‘site of underdevelopment’ (Cruz Salazar, 2011) plays into the gendered racialization of Central American women, and particularly in the case of Hondurans and Salvadorans who are considered locally as ‘easy’ and ‘sexualized’ Others (Maldonado Macedo, 2020;

Pintin-Perez *et al.*, 2018), contributing to their difficulties in accessing a range of services (Carte, 2014; Ramírez-López *et al.*, 2012).

That said, not all migration to Chiapas has been for transit purposes. This region has also been a long time place for cross-border labor mobility, where Guatemalans have been working in the agriculture sector since the late 1980's on crops producing coffee, bananas, papaya, and sugarcane (Anguiano Téllez, 2008; Cruz, Rojas Wiesner, 2000), and Central Americans more generally working in construction, domestic sector, the bar business and street vending (Anguiano Téllez, 2008; Fernández Casanueva, 2012). Specific instruments, such as the Forma Migratoria de Visitante Agrícola (FMVA, 1997), Forma Migratoria de Trabajador Fronterizo (FMTF, 2008), and Tarjeta de Visitante Trabajador Fronterizo (TVTF, 2011), have provided legitimate means for Central Americans to work in the region. The same can be said for the Canary Islands, where a regularization processes in 2000, 2001, and 2005 gave short-term residence and work permits to tens of thousands of irregular migrants, mostly from Africa (58.9%) and Latin America (25.7%) (Parreño-Castellano, Talavera, 2006).

As Domínguez-Mujica *et al.* (2016) point out, however, the largest number of irregular migrants travelling to the Canary Islands occurred in the direct aftermath of these processes, in 2001, 2002, and 2006. For those arriving during this period, their transit was largely interrupted as a result of increased border enforcement at a range of scale (as explored above), pushing them to work within the informal labor market in the construction, agriculture, domestic, and hospitality sectors (Domínguez-Mujica, 2011; Domínguez-Mujica *et al.*, 2011; Domínguez-Mujica, Talavera, 2005; Ifekwunigwe, 2013). Yet if we compare temporalities, from the 1990s and 2000s when migrants saw the Canary Islands as a stepping-stone towards Europe (Carling, 2007b), to now where massively-stifled irregular migration faces the perils of detention, deportation, interception by both European and African authorities, or loss of life at sea, findings from our review seem to confirm Godenau's (2014, p. 129) assessment that perceiving the Canary Islands "as being exclusively places of migratory transit could be faulty." This is indeed supported by empirical work on Senegalese migrants, or 'migrant hopeful' persons, where the bulk of this literature points to the growing impossibility of transit and West Africa as the new site of containment (degli Uberti, 2014; Ifekwunigwe, 2013; Poeze, 2010). Empirical evidence focused on Central American women, as described above, along with recent work on migrant detention in Mexico (Campos-Delgado, 2021), also seem to suggest that assumptions on Chiapas as a transit space may need to be revised.

Conclusion

In this scoping review, we have provided a snapshot of the 'state-of-the-art' of academic research on international migration to Chiapas and the Canary

Islands. The bulk of research in both contexts has been descriptive, largely focused on changes in migration policy, migrant routes, and border enforcement. In this, we have found a comparability between both cases, where increased containment, securitization, and criminalization of migration at the macro-level – and specifically in the United States and European Union – has indeed trickled down within these micro-level spaces. Relatedly, we found that the literature often pointed to American and European crisis-making around migration as precipitating increased border enforcement across scales, showing – in terms familiar to world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1992) – that a *realpolitik* at the core is indeed articulated in peripheral spaces that succumb to regional hegemons. Some empirical work in these contexts, and particularly that focusing on Central American women in Chiapas, has shown the extent in which these changes have led to localized containment. It has also been felt further afield, as is clearest in the Canary Islands case, where a range of technological and military border enforcement strategies have been successful in massively reducing maritime travel, where West Africa itself has become a site of containment. And thus, our review suggests that we may need to reevaluate the extent in which both Chiapas and the Canary Islands constitute places of transit, and especially so for the latter and its island geography that certainly complicates transit migration.

Several research gaps presented themselves through this scoping review. First, and perhaps a symptom of the over-representation of descriptive articles, we found that migrants were often characterized in essentialist and monolithic terms, usually defined through their African and Central American backgrounds rather than their peculiarities or the range of circumstances that may explain their desire to be ‘on the move.’ While we also appreciate that writing through the categories of ‘refugee’ or ‘economic migrant’ would also be unhelpful, we found that a bulk of work did not make efforts to tease out different experiences of migration, migrant identities, or drivers of their movement. Although rather limited, work on Central American women and Senegalese did indeed work towards this, and we believe more empirical work like this is necessary to understand how changes towards the containment, securitization, and criminalization of migration have measurable and qualifiable impacts on human lives. Second, we hope that our showing of the ‘comparability’ of both contexts will lead to empirically grounded, multi-sited research comparing the two. Third, and specific to Chiapas, we were surprised that virtually all academic articles focused exclusively on migrants from Central America, not recognizing the growing presence of South Americans (importantly, Venezuelans), Caribbeans (Haitians and Cubans), and African transmigrants within this region. We see these as important demographics for future research, and a focus on the latter group – transiting towards Latin America in response to increased border control by the EU – could strengthen our comparison between the American and European migration regimes. Fourth, given the scale

of containment within both contexts, more extensive work ought to focus on detention. From the full body of literature we reviewed, our assessment is that only two articles actively engaged with this pressing theme (Campos-Delgado, 2021; Mountz, 2011). Fifth, as our review has demonstrated that most scholars see the Chiapanecan and Canarian migration landscape as the product of larger political changes at the national and supranational levels, we believe there is a potential oversight in terms of local forms of resistance to such pressures. As sites where important forms of resistance already exist, for instance with the presence of EZLN in Chiapas and a long-standing independence movement in the Canaries, we wonder if and how these intersect with migrants' own struggles against hegemony. And lastly, we believe that future research should engage more directly with the process of theory-building. As our review has demonstrated the importance of crisis-talk in the precipitation of increased border enforcement, theories of 'risk society' (Beck, 2009a, 2009b) and 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972) can potentially produce more robust assessments on the state of change within these migrant spaces. Relatedly, the role of crisis-making in manufacturing exceptionality demanding specific responses can perhaps be aligned with Agamben's theory on the 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005).

Our review is not without limitations, however. Most importantly, our search criteria retrieved articles that were solely focused on either Chiapas or the Canary Islands. As such, it excluded a range of academic literature that speak to broader contexts that most likely have direct implications for our cases. This includes literature in other island contexts part of the European southern frontier, states neighboring Chiapas yet still at Mexico's southern border, or other work at the national and continental geopolitical scale. In only surveying scholarly works published in peer-reviewed journals, our review also excludes abundant grey literature relevant to international migration to and through Chiapas and the Canary Islands.

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