Migrants as Knowledge Producers: Participatory Photography as a [Limited] Tool for Inclusion

Magdalena Arias Cubas[1]

Abstract

Who is the expert or the knowing subject that produces knowledge? This is a key question driving postcolonial and feminist critiques of the social sciences, which is yet to be fully explored with regards to the production of knowledge on migration. These critiques emphasise that 'experts' do not generate knowledge from a detached and neutral point of observation, while they also question the distinction between 'experts' and those that are construed as 'objects' of study. Through a reflection on primary research conducted as part of a PhD project with Indigenous people in Mexico and Indigenous migrants with an irregular status in the US, this article draws attention to the role of migrants (and others affected by migration processes) as potential producers of knowledge, rather than as merely passive 'objects' of study. In particular, this paper emphasises the significant (albeit limited) role of participatory methods, such as participatory photography, in correcting common practices of exclusion in the production of knowledge on migration.

Keywords: *Participatory photography; participatory methods; qualitative methods; knowledge on migration; inequality.*

Introduction

Who is the expert or the knowing subject that produces knowledge? This is a key question driving postcolonial and feminist critiques of the social sciences, which is yet to be fully explored with regards to the production of knowledge on migration. These critiques emphasise that 'experts' or knowing subjects do not generate knowledge from a detached and neutral point of observation, and question the distinction between 'experts' and those construed as 'objects' of study.[2] Through a reflection on primary research conducted as part of a PhD project with Indigenous participants in Mexico and Indigenous migrants with an irregular status in the US, this article draws attention to the role of migrants (and others affected by migration processes) as potential producers of knowledge, rather than as merely passive 'objects' of study. In practice, this research centres on the histories, experiences and agency of Mixteco participants in one Indigenous village in Oaxaca (southern Mexico) and their counterparts in an agricultural town in California (west coast of the US).[3] Drawing from this case study, this article emphasises the potential role of participatory research methods – such as participatory photography – in challenging common practices of

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[1] Magdalena Arias Cubas, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia. Email: magdalena.ariascubas@deakin.edu.au.

[2] Throughout this paper, quotation marks are used to problematize dominant conceptualisations of what constitutes 'experts', 'objects' and 'development'.

[3] Mixtecos form one of Mexico's largest Indigenous groups. Mixtecos have been mobile for decades, migrating primarily as agricultural labourers to the east coast and the north of Mexico (Velasco Ortiz 2002; Vogt 2006) and later to the west coast of the US (Fox and Rivera Salgado 2004a; Stephen 2007), often in precarious conditions.

exclusion in the production of knowledge on migration in general, and on migration and 'development' in particular.

This paper first outlines the ways that migration studies could benefit from incorporating a more critical questioning of its epistemology in line with postcolonial and feminist analyses (Escobar, 1995[2012]; Mignolo, 2009; Sandoval, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This emphasises the need to interrogate the role of the 'expert' or knowing subject and the exclusion of others. This paper consequently emphasises the potential of participatory research methods, such as participatory photography in its incarnation of photo voice, to include migrants and others as knowledge producers. Notably, this section also emphasises the importance of methodologies that engage with broader issues of power, collaboration or transformation, which in this case study translated into a research strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering. The subsequent section highlights some of the key conceptual issues that emerged from exercises of participatory photography with participants in Mexico and the US as an example of the ways that this method can re-orientate and rejuvenate existing debates. In particular, this points to existing inequalities (in the distribution of material resources, the social status and the political constitution of societies) that affect the wellbeing and mobility of Indigenous participants, their families and communities on both sides of the Mexico–US border as issues that should guide further research. This paper concludes by drawing attention to the importance of participatory methods as a tool to include those that have been traditionally excluded from the production of knowledge on migration, while also drawing attention to the constraints of such methods unless deeper epistemological issues driving research on migration are addressed.

Questioning the Production of Migration Knowledge

This paper is based on primary research with Indigenous people in Mexico and with Indigenous migrants with an irregular status in the US. Building on a critique of dominant readings of the migration–development nexus, the project used participatory photography as part of a broader research strategy to elicit and represent knowledge that might otherwise remain obscured by dominant frameworks of knowledge on migration in general, and on migration and 'development' specifically. This reflects the need to interrogate how knowledge on migration is currently being constructed, analysed, circulated and used (Asis et al., 2010; Castles, 2009; Faist, 2014). This is important, as knowledge on migration is not 'a set of disembedded practices, but also a located and historical entity … [that is] produced within, and may well be expressive of, the social hierarchies and inequalities of those who produce and circulate it' (Raghuram, 2006, p. 14). Accordingly, a crucial aspect of questioning how knowledge on migration is created and used involves interrogating the 'expert' or knowing subject behind this knowledge (Grosfoguel et al., 2015), as per postcolonial and feminist critiques of the social sciences (Escobar, 1995[2012]; Mignolo, 2009; Sandoval, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). These critiques highlight that knowledge is not generated from a zero-point-of-observation (Castro-Gómez, 2007) and problematise the expert-object relation (Quijano, 2007). This is particularly relevant in migration studies, given that migration is an issue that does not merely transcend national boundaries, but is concerned with movements on a global scale that cross cultural, social, economic and political borders.

Arguably, migration necessitates the production of planetary knowledge that challenges dominant epistemologies and ethnocentrisms (Connell, 2007). Yet, knowledge produced today is far from planetary in its epistemological breadth or depth (Kabbanji, 2013, 2014). In particular, global material inequalities are reflected in the hegemonic position wielded by North American and

Western European languages, epistemologies, institutions and 'experts' in the global economy of knowledge production that permeates the social sciences (Alatas, 2003; de Sousa Santos et al., 2007) and excludes others – mainly academics from outside North America and Western Europe and migrants themselves – as knowledge producers. This imbalance is exemplified by the fact that much theorising and research on migration has been conducted by 'experts' in countries of 'destination' in North America (particularly in the US) and Western Europe (particularly in the UK). For instance, those affiliated with institutions across these regions are overrepresented on the editorial boards of leading academic journals on migration.[4] Similarly, much of the research published in English – the international language of the academy – on topics of current interest, such as migration and 'development', has been conducted by academics based in these countries with very little input from academics elsewhere.[5] Of course, this is not to imply that those outside these regions have been entirely muted, but rather to emphasise that their knowledge has often been neglected due to persistent inequalities of language and funding and to the marginalisation of certain topics and methodologies.

Addressing the lack of inclusion of those outside North American and Western Europe should be a priority. 'Not least in view of the policy dimensions of migration and the potential conflict of interests over migration issues a fairer distribution of migration expertise is desirable' (Lee et al., 2014, p. 13). Fundamentally, this is important as scholars or 'experts' always speak from a particular location within power structures and one's own perspectives are formed by social and political experiences that shape and limit what one knows. As summed up by Mignolo's (2009, p. 2) concept of the 'geopolitics of knowing', the 'expert' is not 'transparent [and] disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geopolitical configuration of the world'. Recognising the geopolitics of migration knowledge can aid the deconstruction of current dominant knowledge frameworks on migration and development, where a 'distanciating function of knowledge production gives a sense of objectivity and makes a particular, rather limited version of development, knowable' (Asis et al., 2010, p. 80). The geopolitics of knowledge also illustrates why the dominant position of North American and Western European academics and institutions 'limits research options and subjects them to priorities dictated by the urgency felt in [these] countries' (Kabbanji, 2014, p. 272) and hence why – even despite critical voices within and outside these regions – funding and policy priorities have limited key issues of interest to security, management, integration and the positive impact of remittances (Castles & Delgado Wise, 2008).

Moving beyond this bias also necessitates the inclusion of migrants themselves – the female refugee, the migrant with an irregular status, the 'low-skilled' temporary worker – who have so far been construed as 'objects' of study, their voices excluded from dominant debates. Again, one can draw from postcolonial and feminist critiques of the social sciences to deconstruct the distinction between the 'experts' and the 'objects' of study. Escobar (1995[2012]) most famously identified the manner in which certain actors become 'objects' of knowledge and targets of power under the

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[4] Up to 87 per cent of the editorial boards of the *International Migration Review* (IMR) and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS) is made of members based at institutions in North America (excluding Mexico) and Western Europe alone. Members affiliated with an institution in these regions also represent 50 and 73 per cent of the boards of *International Migration* and *Migration Letters* respectively. In comparison, there are no members based in Latin America or Africa on three and two of these boards, respectively (based on data available at Sage Publishing, 2019; Taylor & Francis Online, 2019; Transnational Press London, 2019; Wiley Online Library, 2019).

[5] A search through leading migration journals reveals that out of 91 articles published with the term 'development' in their title, 58 per cent were by scholars affiliated with US-based or UK-based institutions alone. In contrast, less than 2 per cent of articles were written by academics based in either the whole of Latin America or Africa (based on data from the Web of Science, for articles published in the *IMR*, *JEMS*, *International Migration* and *Migration Letters* between 2000 and 2019).

gaze of 'experts'. While he referred mainly to peasants and women, one could argue that migrants have emerged as another 'object' of knowledge in general, and targets of 'development' management in particular. Likewise, one can draw from Osamu's (2006) critique of the division between the 'humanitas' and the 'anthropos'. This encapsulates two unequal concepts of human being deployed in Western academia since the identification of the colonial other as a subordinate object of study.[6] The key difference is that, whereas in the past the humanitas encountered the anthropos on his travels, expeditions or colonial companies, the contemporary anthropos is 'knocking at the door' of the humanitas' home as the result of their migration (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, p. 165).

The challenge to migration studies here lies in unsettling the terms of the debate and in including migrants (and others affected by migration processes) as rightful knowing subjects (Piper, 2009). This resonates with the call of Grosfoguel et al. (2015) not for 'a naïve populist celebration of whatever is said from below by oppressed groups, but for incorporating critical thinking and knowledge produced from below' in migration studies. This brings attention to subaltern knowledge based on the histories, experiences and agency of those in the 'zones of non-being' (Fanon, 1976): that is, from those individuals and groups whose humanity and rights are not socially recognised due to power relations operating at a global, national and local scale. This inclusion can potentially re-orientate and reinvigorate debates on migration away from issues of security, management, integration and the positive impact of remittances towards critical debates on the embeddedness of contemporary migrations in the realm of neoliberal globalisation; the relationships between migration and existing forms of inequality; the human and labour rights of migrants who are most excluded; their contributions to places of 'destination'; and the costs of migration for migrants themselves, their families and their communities (Delgado Wise et al., 2013).

Participatory Photography as a Tool of Inclusion

Participatory research methods, such as participatory photography, can be utilised as part of a broader research strategy to make knowledge on migration more inclusive. Participatory research is a practice that attempts 'to put the less powerful at the centre of the knowledge creation process; to move people and their daily lived experiences of struggle and survival from the margins of epistemology to the center' (Hall, 1992, pp. 15-16). While there are no set rules on participatory methods, methodologies tend to be framed within a context of power, collaboration and transformation (Hall, 1992). Photo voice – an incarnation of participatory photography – is based on a combination of theoretical principles of education for critical consciousness, feminist theory and documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1997). These principles are implemented by (i) enabling people themselves to create pictures that facilitate critical discussions on issues affecting them; (ii) recognising the expertise and insights of populations who are usually excluded from knowledge production; and (iii) creating graphical records and potential catalysts for consciousness and change. Photo voice is thus characterised by an emphasis on participation, recognition and documentation that differentiates it from related visual methods such as photo elicitation.[7]

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[6] As argued by Osamu (2006, p. 268) 'this asymmetrical relation between "humanitas" and "anthropos" is being continually reproduced: the former as the owner of knowledge, the latter as the owned object of knowledge and as a manipulated object to be folded into the domain of knowledge'.

[7] Photo elicitation relies on 'inserting a photograph into a research interview' without necessarily engaging participants as photographers (Harper, 2002, p. 13).

In this case study, an adaptation of photo voice was used as part of a mixed-methods, multi-scalar approach to elicit and represent knowledge on the relationship between migration and social change and on key inequalities affecting the wellbeing and mobility (or immobility) of Indigenous people in Mexico and Indigenous migrants with an irregular status in the US.[8] This approach was framed by a broader research strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering that sought to address traditional power imbalances in the production, outcomes and sharing of research (Barinaga & Parker, 2013), while maintaining a 'productive tension' between critical analysis and everyday political realities (Speed, 2008). This strategy included important practical steps such as: forming a partnership with the Binational Front of Indigenous Organisations (FIOB) – a leading Indigenous-led migrant organisation in Mexico and the US – and abiding to a 'Memorandum of Collaboration' that established principles of respect and informed collaboration; consulting with migrant and community leaders on the strengths and weaknesses of the project design; obtaining the consent of local authorities before conducting fieldwork in the Indigenous village in Oaxaca and providing volunteer assistance whenever requested; volunteering in the office of the FIOB on an everyday basis assisting Indigenous migrants with immigration, health and housing matters in the agricultural town in California; working together with Indigenous interpreters with in-depth knowledge of the 'local' people, culture and ways of life (Bujra, 2006); and sharing all research findings (including photographs) with the FIOB.

As a research method, the practicalities of participatory photography with migrants vary significantly (Barndt et al.; 1982; Holgate et al., 2012; Pereira et al., 2016; Sutherland & Cheng, 2009; Yefimova et al., 2015). In the present case study, four Mixteco photographers were recruited to take part in the project for a two-month period. As the project was designed to elicit and represent knowledge that was transnational and with a gender dimension, two photographers (one male and one female) were recruited at each site, in Oaxaca and in California. This period was structured around three one-on-one meetings between the photographer and researcher, which included an initial training session where photographers were introduced to the ethics of research, how to use a digital camera, and the prompt and goals for the photography;[9] a mid-way discussion to reflect on ethical and practical challenges of the participants' practice; and a final photo-elicitation interview, where the photographer and researcher discussed and recorded (in a semi-structured way) a selection of the photographer's choice of photographs and an explanation of their meaning in their own words (excerpts of these discussions are included next to each photograph below).[10] At the conclusion of this two-month period, and as a form of remuneration for their work and knowledge, photographers were given the equipment (cameras, batteries and SD cards).

In practice, participatory photography can be limited by budget and time constrains, and can be complicated by difficulties in recruiting and engaging participants. Indeed, the most immediate challenges in this study were securing funding (required to purchase equipment and provide remuneration to participants and interpreters) and being able to conduct slow-paced research

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[8] This included a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant and site observation and participatory photography in one Indigenous village in Oaxaca and one agricultural town in California; semi-structured interviews with key informants across Oaxaca and California; and analysis using academic and non-academic secondary research on local, state and national issues and trends.

[9] Photographers were guided by the written prompt 'to document and contextualize the lives of Mixtecos in their communities of origin and destination in Oaxaca and in California and to reflect on the positive and negative relationship between migration and the wellbeing of Indigenous individuals, families and communities'.

[10] A useful strategy to stimulate discussion is to incorporate some or all the questions from the mnemonic 'SHOWeD' – What do you SEE here? What is really HAPPENING? How does this relate to OUR lives? WHY does this problem or strength exist? What can we DO about it?

(needed in the context of research based on a strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering). In practice, a compromise was reached in which the core of the research strategy was maintained, but fewer participants were recruited for all aspects of primary research to address these constraints. A second practical problem was the difficulty recruiting and engaging Indigenous female participants (Williams & Lykes, 2003) due to factors such as their mistrust of outsiders, time scarcity, limited digital skills and language barriers (as the researcher was unable to speak Mixteco, the language spoken by most female participants). However, as a result of the research strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering, female participants joined the project over time.[11] In addition, it was notable that the flexibility and privacy of one-on-one meetings (at a time and place suitable to participants), and the opportunity to reflect on practical challenges in a mid-way discussion (with the support of a local interpreter), was useful for supporting the practice of these participants.

In addition to these practical problems, there are ethical quandaries and power dynamics to be considered and managed with participatory photography. Potential ethical quandaries – such as the 'intrusion into one's private space', the 'disclosure of embarrassing facts about individuals', or of 'being placed in a false light by images' (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) – were prevented through ongoing discussions with photographers on power and ethics and through a practical emphasis on obtaining consent. To supplement these discussions, photographers were given a 'cheat-sheet' of principal guidelines (which included never taking a photograph without consent, taking extra care with children and vulnerable people, and respecting private spaces). Interestingly, photographers also implemented creative techniques (such as 'setting-up' photos of difficult situations with family and friends as models) to abide by these guidelines and avoid intruding, embarrassing or misrepresenting others. Lastly, but not any less important, one must keep in mind power dynamics, not only between the researcher and photographers, but also between photographers and those they shoot. In particular, and given the normative construction of migrants as 'objects' of study, Prins' (2010, p. 427) warning of the dual potential of participatory photography 'for social control and surveillance, and for collective learning and action' deserves consideration. In this study, mistrust and fear of surveillance were managed through the strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering, while power dynamics (between photographers and those they shot) were managed through discussions and strategies on power, ethics and consent as discussed above.

Insights from Participatory Photography

So what were the contributions of participatory photography to the broader research project? Foremost, and despite the limited scale of the case study, the work of each of photographer stood as a valuable 'micro-level' study of specific migratory experiences, which, when combined with the findings of the broader research project, became 'embedded in an understanding of the macro-level structural factors that shape human mobility in a specific historical situation' (Castles, 2012, p. 16). In particular, the graphical records of local histories, experiences and agency created by photographers have been powerful in eliciting understanding and empathy among academic and public audiences. This reminds us that while words have been the favoured language of academia, images can 'speak as eloquently of the things to be said in the language of pictures' if not more (Stryker, 1974, p. 1180). This added visibility of the local is important given that factors such as ethnicity, language, immigration status and employment patterns have contributed to the histories,

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[11] In particular, it was only after potential photographers engaged with the researcher through her volunteering and research work with the FIOB and local interpreters that they agreed to participate.

experiences and agency of Indigenous people and migrants often remaining 'hidden in plain sight' (Yescas, 2010).

Conceptually, the participatory photography highlighted a number of key themes. Across the geographical and gender divide, photographers drew attention to the precarious nature of work for those in Oaxaca and California (Figures 1 & 2); the ongoing significance of agriculture for Indigenous people and migrants (Figures 3 & 4); and the burden of accumulated expenses and debts faced by participants and those around them (Figures 5 & 6). Differences based on the location and the gender of the photographer provided a more complex picture of the relationship between migration and social change and of key inequalities. For instance, while the three themes described above were of outmost concern for those in California, photographers in Oaxaca emphasised more the cost of family separation (Figures 7 & 8); the complexity of remittances for households and the community (Figures 9 & 10); and the ongoing significance of agriculture. Similarly, while each photographer drew attention to the precarious nature of work and the salience of agriculture (thus cementing the significance of these two themes), male photographers stressed more the burden of accumulated expenses and debts, and female photographers emphasised more specific cultural challenges (such as loss of culture and language barriers) (Figures 11 & 12).

Figure 1 & 2. Precarious Work

...Farm work is hard and seasonal. People sometimes work ten to twelve hours a day in the sun... When it rains everything gets covered in mud, but you have to continue to work. There are also times that you get sick and you don't even know if it is a dust allergy or something to do with pesticides. (Male photographer, California, 2013)

There is a very sharp difference between the wages one earns for work in the village (or within Mexico) and those paid abroad. This is one of the realities that push each Indigenous person to migrate to the US... Work [here] is seasonal and wages are very low. (Male photographer, Oaxaca, 2012)

**Figures 3 & 4. The Ongoing Significance of Agriculture**

… He lost his job because he did not have papers… Since then he has had to work on the fields. In the field one works up to 70 hours a week and earns on average US$380 a week, but only when there is work… (Female photographer, California, 2013)

There are women who have emigrated in the past. Her children have also emigrated, but the situation has not improved. Like her, many still depend on the coffee harvest [because there is no other source of income]. (Female photographer, Oaxaca, 2012)

Figures 5 & 6. Accumulated Expenses and Debts
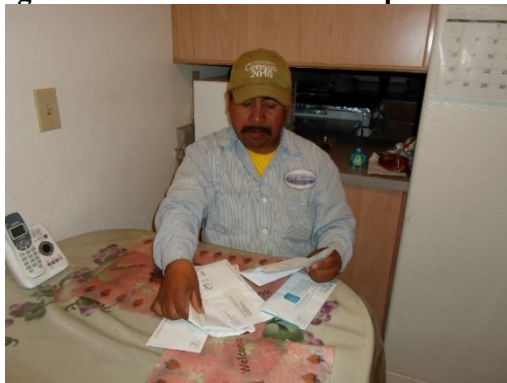
One arrives from work, and even if you are tired, you have to deal with the bills. When they arrived, when they are due, when they can be paid so that they do not cut the services, and so on and on. So many bills even make you emotionally sick… (Male photographer, California, 2013)

Migration has taken place for a very long time, and one of its main causes has been the indebtedness of people. This is because the would-be-migrant is unable to find [paid] work in the village, so he has to borrow money to support his family. (Male photographer, Oaxaca, 2012)

Figures 7 and 8. The Cost of Family Separation

'These seats belonged to my children and we ate together, always together, but they had to go to north for work.' *Several families have disintegrated for long periods of time due to migration…* (Male photographer, Oaxaca, 2012)

Many children do not have the privilege of knowing their fathers, so they grow up and are educated surrounded only by the mother, grandparents and other close relatives. (Male photographer in Oaxaca, 2012).

Figures 9 & 10. The Complexity of Remittances

[Our village]… has seen changes in its infrastructure every year… thanks to the support of migrant citizens who after every payday send their savings to their agency [local government] and to their relatives. (Male photographer, Oaxaca, 2012)

Her children went to the US and it is as if they forgot her. They send her money whenever they can, but a woman of her age has to eat always – not just when you can… (Female photographer, Oaxaca, 2012).

Figure 11 & 12. Cultural Challenges Highlighted by Indigenous Women

An important barrier for those of us who speak Mixteco, is that we have to get an interpreter… when we go to the hospital or try to access another service. There are many in the community, particularly women and older people, who speak only Mixteco. (Female photographer, California, 2013).

Customs have been lost as people emigrate, for instance young women now dress differently. This saddens the elderly. Embroidered shirts and naguas [skirts] are very important for them – the clothes are the roots of our pueblo [people]. (Female photographer, Oaxaca, 2013).

These salient themes, which complimented the findings from other research methods in the project (e.g. interviews, focus groups, participant and site observation, and secondary research) led to the ultimate re-framing of the project around issues of economic distribution, political representation and cultural or social recognition (Fraser, 2005, 2010). This provided a useful framework for conceptualising many of the actual inequalities affecting the wellbeing and mobility (or immobility) of Indigenous participants, their families and communities on both sides of the Mexico–US border, while it created a space to discuss issues that are often neglected in dominant debates on migration and 'development'. For instance, photographs on the precarious nature of work supported broader research findings on how inequalities in the distribution of wealth, income, labour and leisure time affect the wellbeing and mobility of Indigenous people in Mexico and Indigenous migrants with an irregular status in the US. Similarly, photographs that captured the cost of family separation illustrate the political exclusion (and human cost) associated with immigration laws that reinforce inequalities in the political constitution of society. Likewise, photographs depicting the cultural challenges faced by Indigenous participants show how institutionalised patterns of disrespect and disesteem reinforce their social subordination on both sides of the border. In this context, it is important to recognise the potential of participatory photography to foster the inclusion of migrants as owners and producers of knowledge and to re-orientate debates on migration away from dominant issues of security, management, integration and the positive impact of remittances. Indeed, knowledge based on the histories, experiences and agency of participants brings to the fore often neglected issues that simply deserve further attention.

Conclusion

Migration necessitates the production of planetary knowledge that challenges dominant epistemologies and ethnocentrisms. Drawing from postcolonial and feminist critiques of the social sciences, one can problematise the hegemonic position wielded by North American and Western European epistemologies, institutions and 'experts', and call into question the centrality of issues of security, management, integration and the positive impact of remittances within migration studies. With regards to migrants (and others affected by migration processes), this problematising and questioning emphasises the importance of including them not as owned 'objects' of knowledge, but as owners and producers of knowledge in their own right. In particular, this implies an epistemological shift to incorporate critical thinking and knowledge based on the histories, experiences and agency of those individuals and groups who are most excluded due to power relations operating at a global, national and local scale.

One way of fostering this inclusion is through participatory methods, such as participatory photography, which offer a creative technique for producing, interpreting and disseminating knowledge on migration. Notably, this method can be strengthened by a research strategy of collaboration, consultation, respect and volunteering with peoples, organisations and communities affected, such that the broader methodology and epistemology of the project reflects the goal of challenging power imbalances in the production, outcomes and sharing of research. In practice, participatory photography can ground and make visible local histories, experiences and agency in ways that facilitate an understanding of existing inequalities and their social meanings. More profoundly, by doing this, participatory photography has the potential to re-orientate and reinvigorate critical debates on migration that are planetary in their epistemological breadth or depth. As exemplified by this case study with Indigenous participants in Mexico and Indigenous migrants with an 'irregular' status in the US, this can bring to the fore knowledge on a plethora of social, economic and political issues – from the precarious nature of work to the specific cultural challenges – that should guide further research.

Without doubt, the use of participatory photography is a limited step towards the inclusion of those that have been traditionally excluded from the production of knowledge on migration. Aside from challenges associated with the method itself that can and need to be considered and managed, there are more fundamental and troublesome limitations that inhibit the potential of participatory photography and other participatory methods to include migrants as owners and producers of knowledge. Indeed, the reality is that knowledge on migration will remain exclusionary unless deeper issues – such as persistent inequalities of language and funding – that reflect the broader social hierarchies and inequalities in which knowledge on migration is embedded are addressed. From this reality, the only way forward is to continue to problematize these social hierarchies and inequalities and to highlight the restraints they place upon the development of more inclusive knowledge on migration that is able to truly transcend epistemological borders.

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