Conference Reports

Fugitive Histories and Migrant Knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean

Workshop at the University of California, Irvine, May 20–21, 2024, sponsored by the GHI Washington. Conveners: Kevan Antonio Aguilar (University of California, Irvine), Amy Kerner (GHI Washington Pacific Office), Fabio Santos (GHI Washington Pacific Office), and Chelsea Schields (University of California, Irvine). Participants: Grace Aneiza Ali (Florida State University), Ernesto Bassi (Cornell University), Agustina Carrizo de Reimann (University of Leipzig), Tathagato Ganguly (University of Delhi), Jeffrey Kahn (University of California, Davis), Carolin Loysa (Freie Universität Berlin), Owen MacDonald (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Maurice Rafael Magaña (University of Arizona), Rachel Grace Newman (Colgate University), Rudolph Ng (University of Portsmouth), Catherine Peters (Tufts University), Manoel Rendeiro Neto (University of California, Davis), and Juliana M. Streva (Freie Universität Berlin).

The 2024 "Knowledge in Transit" workshop focused on fugitivity and migrant knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean. Working across various geographies and landscapes, participants engaged in enriching conversations regarding fugitivity, diasporas, and knowledge production. The conveners' opening remarks emphasized the diverse uses and applications of fugitivity within each paper and the necessity for these uses to address the structures that make subjects and histories peripheral. Their remarks also posed the question of how migrant knowledge and fugitive histories engage with transborder encounters, Indigenous knowledge, and notions of Blackness in Latin America. Lastly, the conveners asked participants to consider how might scholars historicize groups that refuse categorization? And does

theorizing or attempting to capture the fugitive do away with the very essence of fugitivity?

The first panel, "Entangled Mobilities and Inequalities," discussed socio-political interracial and intercolonial encounters through forced migration, diasporic communities, and exile. Papers drew on a wide array of socio-political contexts, from Cuba and Equatorial Guinea (Agustina Carrizo de Reimann), Brazil and the Caribbean (Owen Macdonald), to revolutionary Nicaragua and China (Rudolph Ng). Despite the spatial and temporal distinctions in each paper, the comments and discussion emphasized the significant role of racial logics and hierarchies in transnational migrations and entanglements.

The second panel, titled "Ecologies of Fugitivity," interrogated "peripheral" spaces in relation to fugitivity in autonomous models of social organization outside of the metropole. Catherine Peter's paper examined how Asian migrant workers in Trinidad challenged colonial authorities' racialization of their labor by settling on the island as specialized laborers. Other papers in this panel also investigated how the extraction of knowledge from fugitive spaces challenged the labeling of places and geographies as peripheral. Manoel Rendeiro Neto's paper reexamined French Guyana as a site where Maroons' botanical knowledge was extracted by Portuguese colonial authorities. Ernesto Bassi's paper excavated how late eighteenth-century Spanish colonial authorities imagined the Santa Marta region (now part of Colombia) as a new epicenter of elusive revenue extraction. The papers in this session encouraged readers to ask how centering histories of fugitive geographies and knowledge contests regional peripheralization.

In the third panel, "Knowledges and Societies in Movement," panelists examined migratory knowledge(s), Indigeneity, and the relationship between space and the state.

Juliana Streva's paper theorized the history of quilombos and Maroon fugitivity in Brazil. The following paper, by Rachel Newman, examined routes of Indigenous knowledge in Mexico and the United States through the life of Pablo Velásquez Gallardo. The comment and papers in this panel emphasized the importance of engaging in critical settler colonial studies and with Indigenous communities when discussing migrations and migrant knowledge.

The fourth panel, titled "Resistant Cartographies of Mobility," focused on how migrants utilize(d) acquired knowledge of geographies to assert agencies and challenge their state of subjugation. Jeffrey Kahn's paper explored the expertise of Haitian sailors in navigating the Caribbean alongside the racialized fugitivity of Haitian mobilities. Tathagato Ganguly followed by presenting a paper on collective memories of Black marronage in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, and how "*memoria colectiva*" is critical to how Afro-Esmeraldans understand local geographies. Both papers in this panel and the discussion that followed emphasized the necessity of critically engaging with the history of Black agency in Latin America and the Caribbean and the making of insurgent and fugitive spaces.

The final panel, "Arts and Affects as Archives of Belonging," explored visual and ethnographic forms of community formation by diasporic communities in and from Latin America and the Caribbean. The first paper, by Grace Aneiza Ali, explored how Guyanese artists produce art that counters narrations regarding Guyanese migration and demonstrates local and diasporic communities' attachments to Guyana. Maurice Rafael Magaña's paper explored Chicanx art and cultural production in Los Angeles as creating a "fugitive archive" of anti-racist and radical politics. Finally, Carolin Loysa's paper on Lebanese-descended communities in Mexico examined how Lebanese elites construct Phoenician and Christian identities which emphasize their whiteness and

connections to Europe in order to maintain their elite status. The comments at the conclusion of this panel focused on the necessity of critically engaging with community-constructed archives and memory as a way of understanding diasporas and migration.

The "Fugitive Histories and Migrant Knowledge" workshop concluded with a session of critical reflection on the converging and diverging perspectives and themes within papers across all panels. Participants and conveners drew on the ways in which subaltern historical subjects refused and resisted categorization and challenged imposed peripheral narratives. They also emphasized the relevance of engaging with settler-colonialism's making of fugitivity and its role in shaping racialized mobilities. Lastly, the workshop ended with the same question with which it began, as participants reflected on whether capturing fugitivity is an accomplishable task.

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