

**Freeing Migration: The Contribution of Abdelmalek Sayad to a Migrant-Centric  
Epistemology**  
**Liberar las migraciones: la contribución de Abdelmalek Sayad a una epistemología  
migrante-céntrica**

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### ABSTRACT

The migrant category is linked to the origin of the State as the predominant political unit in the world. This is because, as Abdelmalek Sayad (2008, 2010a) pointed out, without a State, there would be no migrants, as they exist as a political category, referring to the nationals of a State who cross the borders to settle (temporarily or permanently). This functional and historical connection has had a decisive impact at the epistemological level on the discipline of migration studies, where hegemonic paradigms have used analysis categories that not only reproduced the state framework, but have replicated principles such as coloniality, aimed at legitimizing their control over this population. The objective of this article is to propose an analytical framework on migrations that, following Sayad's (2010a) and Fanon's (2009) postulates, breaks with state hegemony in the definition of human mobility to point out the possibility of constructing analyses, which in contrast to the predominant State-centric approaches, start from a migrant-centric epistemology.

*Keywords:* 1. Abdelmalek Sayad, 2. ethnocentrism, 3. Frantz Fanon, 4. State thought, 5. epistemic racism.

### RESUMEN

La categoría de migrante está directamente vinculada a la génesis del Estado como unidad política predominante en el mundo. Este hecho es debido a que, tal como señaló Abdelmalek Sayad (2008, 2010a), sin Estado no habría migrantes, pues estos existen como categoría política, en tanto que esta se refiere a los nacionales de un Estado que penetran las fronteras de otros para establecerse (temporal o permanentemente) en él. Esta vinculación funcional e histórica ha tenido un impacto decisivo a nivel epistemológico en la disciplina de los estudios migratorios, donde los paradigmas hegemónicos han utilizado categorías de análisis que no solo han reproducido el marco estatal, sino que han replicado principios como el de la colonialidad, orientados a legitimar su control sobre esta población. El objetivo de este artículo es proponer un marco analítico de las migraciones que siguiendo los postulados de Sayad (2010a) y Fanon (2009), rompa con la hegemonía estatal en la definición de la movilidad humana para señalar la posibilidad de construir análisis, que en contraposición a los predominantes enfoques Estado-céntricos, partan de una epistemología migrante-céntrica.

*Palabras clave:* 1. Abdelmalek Sayad, 2. etnocentrismo, 3. Frantz Fanon, 4. pensamiento de Estado, 5. racismo epistémico.

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the predominant paradigms in the discipline of migration studies have been characterized by replicating both the logic of State thought and the principle of coloniality. This implying that, on the one hand, the characteristics of international migration taken into account by these theories have been defined by the States. This in the sense that States are the ones that have historically established which forms of human mobility are migrations and which ones do not belong to this category. Thus, for example, those analyzes based on the distinction between “economic migrants,” “professional migrants,” “asylum seekers,” “refugees,” “tourists” or “businessmen” have only reaffirmed categories created by the State and functional to the exercise of its control. It should be noted that such negative aspect is not exclusive to these paradigms, as these categories are shared by the general population, both at a social and institutional level and are assumed naturally; that is to say, with no awareness of the fact they are functional to the State entity.

However, taking into account historical-political factors it can be deduced that migrations, as social facts, do not respond to mere trans-State mobility, but rather also refer to, for example, relationships between populations with different social statuses and positions of power. This asymmetry is not natural, but instead the direct inheritance of colonial relations, and more generally, of the principle of coloniality. That is, of the historical construction that organized social, cultural, and epistemic relations hierarchically based “on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population” (Quijano, 2000, p. 243).

In exercise of their fundamental attributions, the former colonizing States have constructed those who come from a territory exogenous to their border limits as migrants, that is, as non-nationals, whose authorization to enter and reside in the destination territory depends on the State controlling it. On the other hand, not all migrants are the same, since the aforementioned categories, and the rights associated with them, are attributed to them based on the principle of coloniality that reproduces the hierarchy between States inherited from the period of colonization.

Assuming that epistemology refers to the analysis of the way in which the research process is proposed, thought, and developed, this article aims at showing how the epistemology of hegemonic migration studies has been based on reproducing a State-ethnocentric approach in which the categories employed by the State have been naturalized in order to define migrants according to its interests. The questioning of these epistemic postulates will lead us to point out the existence of other currents based precisely on a deconstruction of these assumptions, thus evidencing the possibility of conducting academic research that breaks away from State thought and the principle of coloniality. Our analysis will revolve around the epistemic proposal by Abdelmalek Sayad (2010b), who not only dedicated his prolific career to dismantling the ideological devices that predominate in

migration studies as related to the State, but also set forth a true sociology of immigration by developing a perspective that we here call “migrant-centric” (Sayad, 2010b).

This article is structured as follows: after the introduction presented above, in the first section a critique of the State-ethnocentric approach traditionally reproduced by the hegemonic frameworks in migration studies will be elaborated upon; in turn, the second section will focus on pointing out the close link that this approach has with colonial thought in order to, in the third section, characterize and highlight the epistemological value of the migrant-centric proposal in the orientation towards migration studies derived from the sociology of immigration; finally, in the fourth section, the main conclusions of this article will be presented.

### A CRITIQUE OF THE STATE-ETHNOCENTRIC APPROACH

Research is a production activity developed through links and resources, rules of conduct, meanings shared by the scientific community, and certain attitudes towards the world (Pacheco-Méndez, 2017; Wallerstein, 1996). The way of researching is a practice constructed and produced not only socially, but also historically, in the sense that it is based on a history of research and learning carried out, especially in university institutions. The way of researching is constructed both in practice and conceptually, just as that which is being researched is constructed. The fact that every research project is a practice that conceptualizes its own theoretical and instrumental objects and tools means that it must be reflected on by exercising self-control over its operating modes. Otherwise, research activity becomes a practice that “does not really know what it is doing,” because it does not know “the very principles of understanding the object” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995, p. 178).

The epistemological analysis consists precisely in reflecting on and questioning both the definition and the organization of the activities of knowledge production that, in the case of the social sciences, requires particular scrutiny, since they are carried out on a field (society) wherein researchers themselves are immersed. In fact, acknowledging that social research is a construction does not mean that we are talking about arbitrary or completely individual activities, it rather means that we intend to highlight the fact that they are socially produced, part of a collective history. This implies that research activity has a tradition and an already consolidated theoretical and practical reference body, which drives and influences the concrete ways of producing knowledge.

As for social studies on international human mobility, the disciplinary corpus has been built since the 50s of the last century dually, that is, separating studies of immigration from those of emigration, having privileged in this process the former over the latter (Sayad, 1984). This distinction has produced a divided and hierarchical research object, whose prioritization of immigration has left emigration aside, with the consequence of naturalizing a separation that does not make sense either in the biography of individuals or in the history

of social groups influenced by migration movements. People are not divided into emigrants and immigrants, rather both processes make up a biographical unit that this separation tends to question and break.

The epistemological proposal by Abdelmalek Sayad (2010a) comes precisely from the critique of this separation, pointing out the need to develop an analysis of migration as a unified process in the face of the emigration/immigration dichotomy. From this base, Sayad emerged as a pioneer setting forth sociology of immigration (Gil Araujo, 2010) that looks at the migration process from a holistic position, considering the historical, political, and social variables of population movements in all their phases, without distinguishing between the moment of emigration and that of immigration as isolated spaces, and placing the migrant at the center of the analysis (Avallone & Santamaría, 2018; Boubeker, 2010; Rea & Tripier, 2003). As Sayad pointed out, both moments are “dimensions of the same phenomenon, they are not separated or autonomous” (Sayad 2010a, p. 19), and so this author questions the interest that there may be not only in dividing the migration phenomenon into two but also in clearly prioritizing those studies dedicated to immigration.

The answer lies in the State. For Sayad (1999) as well as for Bourdieu (1993), the State is not only a bureaucratic body dedicated to exercising the monopoly of legitimate physical violence over a territory and a population, following the Weberian definition, but also is a “mental structure.” This means that State entities not only survive by exercising direct control over borders but also exercise socialization labor on their populations for them to assume categories of State thought, which are only destined to consolidate State power structures. By controlling socialization agencies, mainly schools and universities, the State educates citizens to naturalize categories and social divisions, such as the separation between nationals and non-nationals, whose construction is aimed at legitimizing their action. Thus, we have the “State in the head” (Raimondi, 2016) when we analyze social reality from its arbitrary constructions that we fail to question since their generalized assumption turns them *de facto* into normalized categories that are part of our social consensus. Thus a “perfect agreement” takes place “between the mental and objective structures” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 50) that permeate the entire society and make it naturalize political categories such as “migrations” themselves, whose existence is only possible in a world of States that categorize as “non-national” all those who cross their borders having been born outside them.

The naturalization of State categories and forms of thought was defined by Bourdieu (1993) as “State spirit,” and by Sayad (1999; 2010a) as “State thought.”

State thought is a form of thought “that reflects, through its own structures (mental structures), the structures of the State, thus embodied” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 385), and “develop categories that are objectively (...) national, or even nationalist” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 386). In political terms, it is an ideology, the ideology of the State “insofar as it is a worldview on the order of things and the social organization of human beings, with the ultimate purpose of perpetuating its own existence” (Molinero-Gerbeau, 2018, p. 276) but unlike other

ideologies, it is transversal, as it permeates the entire political spectrum. When exposed and reproduced by the educational organs of the State itself, State thought is assumed by the population and its categories integrated into the social psyche as natural. At this point, it is, as Sayad (1999) himself points out, an unconscious assumption. That is to say, it partakes of a mechanism by which individuals perceive the world and society through the eyes of the State. Having thus become an *a priori*, to reveal the political and arbitrary nature of the postulates that the State imposes requires an exercise in abstraction that is not without complexity, since work centers dedicated to social thought, such as universities and public research centers, not only reproduce it, but their very existence depends on the same State.

If we pay attention to the fact that State thought makes us naturalize its categories, then we can understand that the elements referring to its attributions are driven by State interests. At this point, as reflected by Sayad (2010a), migrations play an essential role, since they are constructed and produced through State categories, as they are at the center of several of its primary attributions, such as the control of its borders and population homogeneity. To synthesize some of these elements, it can be understood that if the historical legitimacy of the States comes from the supposed government of national communities with a joint history and destiny (Delannoi & Taguieff, 1993), and if “the national” is defined by their opposition to the “non-national,” then that means that the State requires of the existence of non-nationals (or nationals of other nations) to legitimize its existence (Raimondi, 2016). Therefore, migrants are fundamental for the State: by existing they not only reinforce the national community that is recognized as a separate unit from the presence of foreigners, but also, by crossing its borders, they legitimize the need to exercise control over them, as if nobody crossed the borders, it would not be necessary to control them and, therefore, it would not be necessary to exercise control of the territory, the latter being a basic attribution of State entities. The category of migrant is thus revealed as politically constructed and its reproduction as intrinsically linked to State interests.

If the State produces the categories for understanding migration, then the questions that are posed about this phenomenon are also State questions. Migrations are observed and studied from the point of view of the State and, mainly, of the State of destination. Recognizing the connection between the State and migrations, Sayad thus evidences the epistemological fact that migrations are thought as the State requires that they be thought, given that the migration phenomenon “is closely dependent on our thought categories, those categories with which we construct and think about the social and political world” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 406).

With the global expansion of the State-form (Negri, 2003), which has spread after the fall of colonial empires, there was a global increase in migration (IOM, 2017), since the incorporation of more States into the world system has amplified the global division of labor, value chains thus extending over more territories, generating mobile populations whose displacement and mobility are now met with more borders (Jones & Mielants, 2010;

Mezzadra & Nielson, 2017). The increase in the global intensity of migration movements, fundamentally from the periphery to the core, has, in turn, produced a strengthening of hierarchical thinking, promoting research that has privileged the questions, interests, and perspectives of the States that are immigration destinations, interested in controlling a social phenomenon that directly confronts their State attributions.

Knowing who is entering, how are they entering, and why are they entering are questions that the State is interested in getting answers to since it is important to exercise a control destined to perpetuate and legitimate its existence. Migrations are defined in society and the field of social sciences as a fact determined by States, therefore through their specific ways of understanding social reality “there is no other object in relation to which a problem comes so decidedly imposed beforehand like this one” (Sayad, 1996, p. 166).

The fact of not questioning State thought produces, on the one hand, a normalization of the social and epistemological separation based on nationalism, and, on the other, a hierarchical reality, determined by the asymmetry between the condition of belonging and that of not belonging to the State order. Belonging means being in the right place, in the rightful place, while not belonging means being an alien presence, being out of place.

Epistemologically, this means that those who belong to that which is “national” place themselves in the position of those who can define others, who are individuals. That is, they are those who can think and act, while those who do not belong to this group are in the position of those who are defined, being passive objects of observation.<sup>3</sup> People who migrate, when perceived through State thought, are defined by others, by points of view that are external to them and that have their own different interests, rules, logic, and modes of operation. By becoming an object of the other, or defined by others, migrants lose their subjectivity, their defining characteristics, and their individuality, as they are subjected to a process of homogenization, being framed in pre-established categories that encompass the group in a single definition, which produces a process of cognitive simplification of reality. Certainly, migrants are inserted into an epistemological relationship in which they occupy the position of the object, becoming a played down social subject, not existing by themselves but only as defined by others.

From the point of view of the history of migration studies, the separation between nationals and non-nationals has produced a hegemonic assumption of specific models of interpretation consistent with State thought. In their work “Worlds in Motion,” Massey,

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<sup>3</sup> National belonging does not necessarily equal State citizenship from the analytical point of view proposed here (Sayad, 2010a). The concept of State thought divides the world between nationals (although this condition does not belong to all citizens, for example, the children of immigrants may have national citizenship, but be racialized or stigmatized as not belonging to the nation) and non-nationals (considering that not all non-nationals are played down by State thought, since this depends on their social condition and on the relations of force between their State of origin and the receiving State).

Aranjo, Hugo, Kouaouci, and Pellegrino (1998) reviewed those theories that have predominated in migration studies throughout the 20th century, identifying both their defining characteristics and their limitations, which allows pointing out how these theories have been reproducers of State thought.

A series of theories that can be grouped within what has been called the “hydraulic” or “push and pull” model, such as the “neoclassical economic approach” (Todaro, 1969), the “new economy of migration” (Stark, 1984; Stark & Bloom, 1985) or the “labor market segmentation theory” (Piore, 1977) predominated in migration studies throughout the second half of the 20th century (Massey et al., 1998). The name of this model comes from its perception of migrations as flows where “mechanical parts [...] moved by “push and pull” forces, just like fluids in a hydraulic system [...] [flowed] in response to “pressures” and were “thrown” out through “exhaust valves”” (Simmons, 1991, p. 6). In them, State thought is clear, as it arises from economic postulates, either understanding migrations as flows from an origin to a destination moved by the cost-benefit equation (Todaro, 1969), that migrants are people who play being entrepreneurs in a global economy (Stark, 1984), or that migrations are about flows of workers covering needs in labor markets that undergo difficulties in covering the supply of jobs. In all these perspectives, as stated by Massey et al. (1998), the macrostructural elements explained migration movements so that the State had better knowledge to regulate them at will. The idea was that depending on the needs and knowing the drivers of migration, States could develop regulations that would allow them to control these population movements so that they would be “useful” to their interests. To this must be added the fact that also a part of those who reproduced the hydraulic model did so under racist theories, whose main concern in controlling population movements was avoiding the ethnic replacement of white populations by others of color (Commons, 1907; Walker, 1889).

Certainly, not all hegemonic currents reproduced the hydraulic model since certain theories of strong impact emerged as a criticism of the first. Theories such as that of “social capital” (Loury, 1977) or that of “cumulative causation” (Massey, 1990), associated with the liberal interdependent paradigm of International Relations, also had a strong impact, without thereby breaking away from the framework of State thought. The value of these theories lay in breaking with the economic vision of the push-pull model. In the case of the theory promoted by Loury (1977), for example, it was pointed out how migration becomes an accumulated knowledge of groups of migrants that, when shared with their fellow nationals, promotes connections between the territories of origin and destination, thus facilitating that other fellow nationals also undertake the migration journeys of their predecessors. This would generate an interconnection between territories that would end up establishing migration channels independent from the decisions of their promoters, which would explain why differentiated social groups continue to undertake the same migration as their fellow nationals. For Massey (1990) this perspective was true, but it overlooked the fact that the

interconnection between both territories ultimately structuralized these migrations, which in turn modified the labor market of the destination State, whose need for workers from the emigration territories generated again a dual market, which then caused mutual dependencies between regions. Although different and more complex, these theories did not manage to break away from the framework of State thought either, since they were also aimed at pointing out how the State could handle migrations to its advantage, with the difference that by highlighting the interdependence generated in both contexts, their promoters ended up concluding that the State could hardly control migrations (Massey et al., 1998).

As it can easily be seen, these theories do not take into account the wills, behaviors, desires, expectations, and decisions of the subjects and of the social networks in which they are inserted, as well as the limits, links, and obstacles to spatial mobility determined by State policies. Both the hydraulic model and the theories of interdependence are based on a reduction, since they only recognize “in such a vast object, its immediate, phenomenal function, which is also an instrumental function (the labor function)” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 21), overlooking the subjective and relational dimensions implied in this phenomenon.

Both models converge towards an idea of migration as a fact that is imposed on individuals, whose adaptation to the conditions of immigration—that is, to those of the society they arrive in—and utilitarian availability to the destination State is their biggest concern. In this theoretical and epistemological construction, individuals are passive beings entirely determined by external forces, from whose biography only those parts of interest to the destination State stand out.

Despite these approaches predominating in migration studies for half a century, it is important to note that especially in the 1990s various currents began to develop that were critical towards the hegemonic postulates in migration academia. Thus, frameworks that were not designed directly for migration studies, such as Wallerstein's world-system theory (Massey et al., 1998) originally developed to study the international and social relations of inequality at a global level, welcomed numerous studies that, breaking away from the State framework, pointed out how the inequalities produced by historical capitalism made it possible to explain both some migration movements and their direction. Despite everything, a critical framework as it was, it maintained an eminently structural character that continued to push the agency of migrants to the margins of its analysis.

Even so, the perspective of Wallerstein (1979; 1988) influenced the migration discipline, giving place to a debate that opened spaces to new perspectives, such as the transnational theory of migration (Glick Schiller, Bash, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992), whose genesis stems from a critique of the world-system approach, or the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013), which applied its main postulates to explain the need for States to impose a tight border control.



However, despite an emancipatory and critical stance and as pointed out by various research studies (Kalir, 2013), the latter did not escape State thought, because when explaining the need that States had to regulate migratory flows to better position themselves within global capitalism, it did nothing but reify it as a hegemonic actor in the definition of migrations. In addition, their perception of these as “flows” or the use of State terminologies that reproduced the separation between nationals and non-nationals clearly marked the influence of State thought in their positions.

For its part, transnationalism was an attempt at placing migrants at the center of the analysis, pointing out how they generate social fields that interconnect their States of origin and destination in which numerous social, cultural, economic, and even spiritual dynamics take place. However, in the fierce criticism that their authors made of world-system theories, Glick Schiller et al. (1992) precisely criticized that this theory did not take into account the centrality of States in these processes, pointing out that transnational social fields, even if articulated by migrants are still defined by the State itself.

In this academic context, Abdelmalek Sayad (2008) pointed out that the pre-eminence of the State in the main approaches to migration constituted a true epistemological problem, which is why his proposal, unlike hegemonic paradigms, focused on elaborating a sociology of immigration from a “migrant-centric” approach (Gil Araujo, 2010).

It was particularly Sayad (2010a) who perceived that the desires, interests, and capacities for emancipation, mobility, initiative, or the right to escape were totally underestimated or, often, erased in the predominant analyzes in the discipline. On the other hand, hegemonic approaches have tended to divide the biography of migrants based on their demographic and/or labor utility for the countries where they immigrate, and marginally, on their economic role in the countries from which they depart. Thus, migrants have been interested in issues, needs, and questions imposed by the States to which they transfer to, becoming the object of questions and sources of problems: passive objects of observation by the State and host society.

The epistemological *habitus* consolidated by these models makes it so that migrations are studied in the arrival areas through their (State) thought forms and with reference to their questions: their interests, leaving aside the interests and questions of the areas left behind. The societies central to these analyses (immigration societies) thus impose the categories to be applied and the research questions. Therefore, State-centric and ethnocentric points of view are imposed, which leave society and the people of the countries of departure on the sidelines, that is, the emigration society and, above all, those who migrate. Ultimately, it is the State and the immigration society that speaks about migration, becoming the privileged points of view.

As a consequence of all this, the analytical categories of the societies and States of arrival that refer to terms such as “assimilation,” “adaptation,” “integration,” and ideas that point

out migration as a problem to be solved are imposed. The fact that migration is commonly studied as a social challenge as if migrants existed only to the extent that they bring problems, reflects a consolidated way of thinking about the phenomenon that motivates research to focus on “the litany of social problems to which immigration is associated, which also dictates to researchers the problem of inquiring” (Boubecker, 2010, p. 39). Reproducing this vision of migration as a social problem is ultimately the manifest expression of State thought that poses it as a fact that “ultimately concerns public order” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 177).

### DECOLONIZING THE VIEWS ON MIGRATION

The state-ethnocentric approach privileges the point of view of the arrival society, determining a hierarchy of interests and questions that place the presumed protagonists — migrants— on the margins, who should otherwise be the center of attention. Thus, a condition similar to the colonial one is produced, where some interests have always been central, also in the framework of knowledge production, corresponding to those of the colonizing society, characterized by having more capacities to control political, economic, and symbolic resources. For this reason, reproducing State thought, which is also the thought of the formerly colonizing States, implies reproducing a colonial view of migrants because, as Sayad shows, colonization furthers its presence through immigration since its effects “for the most part, survive the disappearance of the cause that generated them” (2010a, p. 407).

It is so that the point of view of the dominant societies is reproduced at the epistemological level. That is, migrations are looked at from the position of the strongest within the international division of labor and power, which in itself constitutes an ethnocentric position as it privileges some societies over others, helping to reduce the space of knowledge to questions legitimate for the States receiving immigration. Therefore, the conditions, lives, and social relations of migrants are not studied, but rather their presence is analyzed by subordinating studies to the problems and interests of the society they arrive at.

Thus, an epistemological relationship of a colonial nature is set forth, in which the research is done “through imperial eyes” (Tuhiwai, 1999, pp. 42-57). Such was the case of the view of the colonizers and explorers who looked for the indigenous “other” through their “objective” and “neutral” perspective that they assumed as if it were the only and true one, ignoring the definitions that the “others” could make of themselves. As Chandra Mohanty (2008) has recognized in the case of Euro-American white feminism that analyzed the social and political conditions of non-Western women, also in the case of migration one can speak of an object of study constructed under the eyes of the West. That is to say, of a heterogeneity of subjects reduced to the condition of a singular monolithic object by the representations and the relations of dominant forces.

The white eye is in this sense the dominant eye that is presented as universal, general and neutral, characterized by being the manifestation of a reason that is placed beyond any place, time, and space (Mignolo, 2010).

In this framework, Sayad's analysis is proposed as a critique of the universal and its imperialism (Bourdieu, 2005) by not coming from general/abstract questions (such as integration, for example) —that are of interest to a State in a position of superior strength— in order to study what happens at the concrete/specific level, but rather building an inverse methodological direction, from the particular to the universal.

This same methodological orientation is also found in the work of Frantz Fanon (2009), who likewise rejects the abstract universal, as pointed out by Grosfoguel (2009). The approaches of Sayad (2010a) and Fanon (2009) converge in their questioning of the imperialism of the universal, refusing to understand migration processes and race relations from the point of view of the State, which embodies what is universal, general, and “objective.” His proposal, on the contrary, comes from what is concrete, specific and particular, acknowledging the centrality of the subjects and stories that make up this material reality.

All this means that by questioning the universal —a partiality that becomes totality— State thought is also questioned, as it builds a hierarchy of points of view, placing the universal above and the particular below.

The critique of the universal implies the critique of epistemological hierarchies since it rejects the idea that social reality can be looked at as if it were located nowhere, or in no geopolitical and body-political position of knowledge. All knowledge is localized, although in the historical experience of the social sciences “Eurocentric epistemology hides [...] carefully [...] its own geo-historical and biographical locations” (Mignolo, 2010, pp. 10-11). Acknowledging this condition could help to locate each knowledge (including one's own), thus favoring a reflective practice that can contribute to transcending the epistemological and methodological issues naturalized in social research, following a “participant objectification” that, for example, would allow ethnologists studying the beliefs and rites of others first “mastering and holding possession of their own rites and beliefs” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 110).

By recognizing that all research develops from a specific position, then the supposed objectivity of the perspective and the observer/observed relationship in research on migration can be questioned.

This is even more urgent if we recognize that society is divided into two parts allocated asymmetrically by universal thought. Sayad (2010a) and Fanon (2009) studied this division, opting to place themselves, albeit with different positions, on the side of those who are placed in the “area of no.” For Sayad (2010a), this area is made up of those who do not belong to the nation, while, on the other hand, for Fanon (2009) it is more about the area of “non-

being,” that is, of those who do not belong to the whole of humanity or belong to a subaltern humanity. This is the area of non-whites, those who, having become colonized by the conquering man in a specific historical moment, have had to ask themselves the question of whether or not they were men (Fanon, 2009). The separation into nationals and non-nationals produced by State thought has similar effects to the separation between whites and non-whites recognized by Fanon as a characteristic of modern colonial societies where it is “the colonizer who has made and continues to make the colonized” (Fanon, 1974, p. 31), just as it is the State that makes the immigrant.

Both separations —the one produced by the State and the one produced by racist colonial social structures— are constitutive of modernity and the power relations that define the relations with the others made inferior, constructed as those who do not belong, or belong in a subordinate way, as they are placed outside the national order (as non-nationals) or outside the order of being (as non-whites).

This context questions the possibility of applying analytical objectivity when the investigations themselves reproduce inheriting categories of a social world based on a hierarchical division. The separation between populations has methodological consequences, since it does not merely follow geographical criteria, but rather defines epistemological geopolitics that constructs different subjects and social realities. This cultural, political, and epistemological separation produces the body-politics of the legitimate, dominant, central zone and the body-politics of the non-legitimate, dominated, and marginal zone. Each body-political category is connected to specific ways of thinking and being thought, knowing that the hierarchy between areas and their relative body-politics produce a hierarchy in the knowledge elaborated within them.

The “area of being” is the subject of the cogito and the word, whereas the “area of non-being” is the object of the thought of others. At the epistemological level, this translates into coloniality of knowledge and of looking at others —who is looking at whom? — and into a hierarchy of the questions and the interests of looking at others —why do you look at others? — where the dominant party is the one that looks from its interests and categories at the dominated party, which is in the “area of no.”

The construction of the world based on a hierarchical separation between ourselves and others affects the epistemological level because when researching from specific points of view, supposedly legitimate due to belonging to the national order or the “zone of being,” legitimate questions are raised. Conversely, if one thinks from the “zone of non-being,” non-legitimate questions are posed, as they are not legitimized by the political, social, and epistemological relations of force. Social and intellectual hierarchies are thus correlated, since the former organize the latter, characterizing the social sciences, which:

must know what they owe to this type of overdetermination that weighs on their object [...] [as] it is part of an intellectual tradition that places great importance on the distinction between noble and ignoble objects, between noble ways (the so-

called “theory,” speculation) and ignoble ways of treating these objects (Sayad, 1990, p. 8).

The study of migrations is located within this hierarchical intellectual structure, as it refers to an ignoble, inferior, vulgar object, insofar as it is an expression of the “area of no” and, therefore, it will always be suspected of reproducing the current common sense and social and epistemic hierarchies, doing the “work of a colonizer or an immigration-society-work” (Sayad, 1990, pp. 20-21).

In decolonial terms, this means that there is no neutral perspective, as perspectives always depend on a point of view and, therefore, on a specific historical, social, and academic position; that is to say, of a position in global power relations, as is evident in the case of statistical data on migration, an expression of the so-called “scientific objectivity and neutrality.” For example, this can be verified with the data that is usually considered as obvious, such as that related to the original nationality of migrants, which does not allow knowing the socio-historical specificities of the different socio-territorial contexts from which migrants depart, hiding if they come from rural, urban, metropolitan, rich, poor, etc. areas:

plenty of data, even those that we could classify as scientific, as produced or used by science, do not escape the discursive logic upheld to justify and legitimize the phenomenon or, on the contrary, to condemn and denounce its illegitimacy (Sayad, 2010a, p. 25).

For his part, Fanon (2009) has made of this criterion an explicit protagonist, adopting a methodological approach that recognizes this impossibility: “I have dedicated myself in this study to touching the misery of the black. With tact and affection. I have not intended to be objective. Furthermore, that would be falsity: it is not possible for me to be objective” (Fanon, 2009, p. 95). His methodological approach does not arise from radical skepticism or absolute subjectivism but rather assumes that knowledge is produced from a point of view that in his case is the one that tries to transform the geopolitics and the body-politics of knowledge “beyond the coloniality of power, knowledge and being” (Grosfoguel, 2009, p. 360).

In the case of migrants, this point of view is found in their otherness, which produces an ethnography that reveals the gap between their image built by the State and their physically present concrete bodies, thus becoming “without realizing it, in the true deconstructor of the Western epistemological and political subject, since, provoking the logocentric subject, it leads him to say what he has always wanted or tried not to say” (Raimondi, 2016, p. 44).

In this approach, the relationship between the observed and the observer changes, which is in line with the perspective of Tuhiwai (1999), who in pursuing the goal of decolonizing research methodologies has explored the critical practices of ethnocentrism. Thus, taking the case of the Maori people, and reversing their traditional role of the researched to that of the researcher, their knowledge is affirmed as valid, and that produced exogenously by applying

Western classifications and generalizations is questioned. In short, this case calls into question the coloniality of knowledge, identifying the Eurocentric construction of a part of humanity that places “its historical-cultural specificity as a superior and universal reference standard” and that “is transformed by this colonizing device of knowledge into the “normal” form of the human being and society,” thus making “the other forms of being, the other forms of organization of society, the other forms of knowledge [...] lacking, archaic, primitive, traditional, pre-modern” (Lander, 2000, p. 10).

Breaking with these *a priori*s, different rules of knowledge production can be proposed, letting go of what Mignolo (2009, p. 322) calls objectivity without parentheses (“the separate existence of the one who states and the statement, the subject and the object”) and opening our mind to objectivity in parentheses; that is, to the coexistence of different epistemologies and ontologies, going beyond epistemological hierarchies.

Thus, this deconstruction process makes it possible to criticize the categories produced within Eurocentric frameworks, recognizing them as State words assumed as referential in migration studies. In this sense, the concept of assimilation constitutes a paradigmatic example, referring to the idea that becoming a national of the immigration nation-State is an undeniably positive fact. This clearly reflects the fact that what is partial, specific, what belongs to the State, expresses imperialism of what is universal.

Another concept clearly reflecting the universalization of the partial is that of integration: “a loaded notion” (Sayad 2010a, p. 309), a “discourse meant to produce an effect of truth” (Sayad 2010a, p. 304), in which social science and myth interact, since “it is a discourse that intermingles two opposite principles of coherence: on the one hand, a proclaimed coherence, of scientific appearance [...] and, on the other, a hidden coherence, mythical in principle” (Sayad, 2010a, pp. 304-305). As an example, the case of a student named Aicha is very illustrative; she was interviewed by Sayad (2010a, p. 370), who compares the myth of integration with the asymptotic curve of the exponential function: “that is how integration is, it is necessary to run after it, and the closer you get, the more you are reminded that is not entirely it.”

This metaphor reflects how integration is an impossible achievement, as it is a constitutively incomplete trend that conditions the migrant subject experiencing the impossibility of reaching the goal of integration. This same situation is also experienced by blacks, as Fanon (2009) highlights: subjects defined, as migrants are, by privation, as members of the “area of non-being,” as people who always lack something. Analyzing the conditions of migrants in the societies of arrival through State categories, such as assimilation and integration, predetermines the understanding of the phenomenon since it guides research towards cognitive goals that are those of the immigration States and societies, obscuring the conditions and the life trajectories of migrants.

State thought, conjoined with colonial heritage, therefore, continues to reproduce the being/non-being dichotomy, organizing the ways of researching and producing knowledge about migrations, determining a reproduction of the epistemological approach that privileges the categories and the words of the State in understanding migration, confirming that the discourse on the immigrant and immigration is none other than an imposed discourse (Sayad, 2006).

Transcending State words and the concepts produced throughout colonial relations is a fundamental condition to free migration studies from predetermined issues and preconceived questions about the relations of force between peoples, geopolitical areas, and races. It is at this point where Sayad's (2010a) migrant-centric approach takes on special relevance.

### TOWARDS A MIGRANT-CENTRIC EPISTEMOLOGY

As has been evidenced throughout this article, migration studies, like other disciplines such as geography (Torre, 2013), have historically been constructed as knowledge of the State, coming from its point of view, replicating its categories, and imposing its questions. In this way, an ethnocentric and colonial mode of knowledge production has been constituted hegemonically, founded on a set of geopolitical, racial, and epistemic hierarchies.

The critique of the constitutive aspects of this type of knowledge, based on the questioning of the universal, of the object-subject and researcher-researched relationships, and the categories predetermined by the State must therefore propose an alternative model of research on migration coming from the critique of State-centrism and the principle of coloniality.

It should be noted that, especially since the beginning of the 21st century, various currents have tried to elaborate theories that place migrants and their agency processes at the center of analysis, thus breaking away from the hegemonic frameworks in the discipline (King, 2012). However, despite providing interesting theoretical tools, as it will be shown later, these currents have still suffered from State thought.

The value of Sayad's approach lies precisely in developing an epistemological framework in which all those theories that break away from State thought can be based, giving rise to true sociology of immigration (Sayad, 2010b; Gil Araujo, 2010). In our case, and in line with Fanon's (2009) thesis, we propose an approach that recognizes migration as a "total social fact."<sup>4</sup> This means recognizing that immigrating is doing so "with their history, their traditions, their ways of living, feeling, acting and thinking; with their language, their

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4 The concept of "total social fact" was originally developed by Marcel Mauss (2009), in reference to certain phenomena that transversely involve all the constituent elements of a society. Sayad (2010a) reinterpreted this concept in order to say that migration had an impact on all areas of society.

religion as well as all the other social, political and mental structures of their society” (Sayad, 2010a, p. 22), as well as highlighting that “to talk about immigration is to talk about society as a whole [...] but under the condition of not deliberately choosing to mutilate [...] a part of oneself, the part related to emigration” (Sayad, 2006, p. 7).

This way, “an analytical and methodological postulate that leads to treating at the same time the conditions under which immigrants live, and the social conditions that produce them as emigrants” (Gil Araujo, 2010, p. 243) is proposed, since all people who migrate move with their entire lives and the world of social relationships in which they are involved, introducing changes in both the emigration and immigration society.

Thinking migration as a total social fact means assuming a methodological point of view that, on the one hand, avoids dividing individuals into parts (being exclusively an immigrant or exclusively emigrant) and functions (demographic contribution or economic resources), and on the other, questions the separation on which migration studies have been built.

Methodologically, applying a migrant-centric approach entails transcending the instrumental analyzes that look upon migration as a demographic or economic fact, recognizing it as a social experience that implies a totality, since migration is undertaken with traditions, ways of living, languages, and political, cultural and mental structures. Migrating means carrying out an “epistemological itinerary” (Sayad, 2006, p. 6) that “provides in itself an order [...] for all the questions about the migration phenomenon as a whole (emigration and immigration)” (Sayad 2010a, p. 101).

On the other hand, transcending the separation between emigration and immigration allows studying socio-spatial mobility through the concept of migration (emigration-and-immigration) and, therefore, of migrants (emigrants-and-immigrants). In this way, the fictitious separation is also overcome from the epistemological point of view, and reproducing the hierarchy between the knowledge produced about emigration and the knowledge produced about immigration is avoided.

On these foundations, it becomes possible to produce a methodological alternative based on the reference to the category of migration that we choose to call the “migrant-centric” approach, as it stands in opposition to the “State-ethnocentric” approach that has permeated hegemonic theories of migration studies. By way of synthesis, table 1 below shows the main differences in both approaches.

Table 1. Main differences between the “migrant-centric” and the “State-ethnocentric” approach

	Migrant-centric approach	State-ethnocentric approach
Main associated theories and currents	Sociology of immigration by Abdelmalek Sayad (2010a), decolonial thought by Frantz	Hydraulic model, interdependence paradigm, transnationalism, new mobilities paradigm



Construction of the study subject	Fanon (2009), autonomist theories on migration Migrations as a total and indivisible social fact	Biographical divide between emigration and immigration
Central element of the analysis	Autonomy of migrations	Reification of the State
International Relations framework	Migrations as inheritors of colonialism, driven by the international division of labor and conditioned by the multiplicity of borders	Economicist and demographic vision (hydraulic model), “entrepreneurial” conception of the migrant (transnationalism), or “submissive” with respect to the State (new mobilities paradigm)
Analytical hierarchy	Centrality of individual experiences as a driver to understand the undertaking of migratory itineraries	Centrality of the State and orientation of studies towards how the State can handle migrations understood as homogeneous flows

Source: Own elaboration.

In the first place, the migrant-centric approach starts from the category of total social fact, recognizing migrations as a phenomenon that crosses multiple social dimensions, from their relationships, reference groups, and departure and arrival societies: migration is defined as a totality. Conversely, the State-ethnocentric approach is based on the biographical division of migrants, reducing societies (of departure and arrival) to mere entities interested in the benefits that migrants can bring to them, regardless of the interests and needs of people who migrate, as this is not in the interest of the State.

Interpreting migration as a total social fact means assuming that each migratory experience is a multifaceted process, internal to a biography, influencing people —those who migrate and also, although differently, those who do not migrate— in its entirety, and not in a divided way. Each experience is a totality, and its reduction translates not only into a reduction of people but also a reduction in knowledge since a part of the phenomenon is erased. Some parts matching those of interest to the receiving State are privileged, determining a new version of ethnocentrism, by knowing “only what we are interested in knowing” (Sayad 2008, pp. 14-15).

Second, the migrant-centric approach recognizes the autonomy of migrations, unlike State-ethnocentric frameworks that base their studies on structural factors, which reproduce a passive image of migrants, assuming that they make up a passively available labor force, without acknowledging their agency, projects, and organizational capacities (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2017). The fact is that, as Moulier-Boutang (2000, p. 68) points out, mobility cannot be reduced to a mere movement from one State to another, but rather it “must be seen as a collective behavior of flight, active rejection and subjective to a level of exploitation,

underdevelopment, and submission.” In this sense, it should also be noted that Sayad’s approach (2010a) not only places the agency processes of migrants at the center of the analysis, but also gives fundamental importance to the entire migratory itinerary, also paying attention to the places of transit, and not just to the departure and arrival.

The State-ethnocentric approach pays attention exclusively to “objective” factors, without acknowledging the options, and above all, the network of social and family relationships, feelings, expectations, and individual desires that can enable and influence the processes of spatial mobility of individuals. And in those theories where some of these elements are present, as in transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al., 1992), these are intrinsically linked to economics, and especially to the State. In any case, it should be noted that in the migrant-centric approach, the subjectivation of migrants does not imply falling into methodological individualism, since this is an expression of a “method prejudice that consists in the fact of silencing or minimizing the part that objective structures, that is, the relations between the forces that confront each other, assume in all social relations” (Sayad, 2008, p. 101), but rather it means acknowledging that migrations express autonomy, in tension with the structures that condition them.

As already noted above, the migrant-centric approach has favored the construction of other approaches, such as that of the autonomy of migrations, characterized by recognizing the centrality that the action of migrants occupies. However, for these theories, this centrality takes on a different character, as it is built-in permanent tension with State and super-State devices for the control and direction of labor mobility (Moulier-Boutang, 2006; Mezzadra, 2012). For Sayad (2010a), on the other hand, acknowledging the autonomy of migrations means looking at it as a movement of people who have and express interests, reasons, and ways of thinking for themselves that do not match the political and economic interests of the immigration States. For the migrant-centric approach, autonomy means that migrations do not adapt to the perspective of the State, but rather exceed it, also producing different ways of understanding, recognizing, and defining human spatial mobility.

Certainly, as has already been previously reflected upon, some approaches that can be framed within the State-ethnocentric paradigm also seem to give relevance to certain spaces of migrant autonomy, as suggested by transnationalism and the new mobilities paradigm, but it is important to note that they do not transcend the perimeters of State thought.

When it comes to transnationalism, the prefix *trans* refers to a construct of relations between citizens present in different States, whose projects are characterized by border crossing, with both States conditioning and imposing said relations (Vertovec, 1999; Santamaría, 2008). On the other hand, Sayad offers a radically different transnational vision since “considering the migrant as an emigrant (and not only an immigrant) makes it possible [...] to move away from some ethnocentric views present in this field of studies, and to make visible the relationships that migrants keep with the people who remain in origin” (Jiménez-Zunino, 2018, p. 77). This means, Sayad’s theory (2010a) is transnational (although the

Algerian sociologist will never use this term explicitly) since it recognizes the social fields that migrants articulate between origin and destination, but from an autonomist perspective not mediated by the State.

In relation to those approaches where family and “community” networks occupy a determining space in each phase of the migration process, such as the “new economy of migration” (Stark & Bloom, 1985, p. 173), it is also worth highlighting that said autonomy is relative, since these approaches not only come from an economicist and structural vision, but the habitual use of terms such as “integration” indicates their State-centric nature (Castles & Miller, 2003, p. 278). Here again, migrations are subordinated to the words of the State; that is, to the “legitimate” view of the immigration context, confirming its methodological nationalism, although it should be recognized that it is so in a less pressing way than, for example, in the neoclassical economic approach.

For its part, the State-ethnocentric character of the new mobilities paradigm is better disguised, since the biographies of individuals occupy a central role in this perspective. As its promoters Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013) point out, this approach proposes to analyze both the relationship between mobility and immobility and the link between migration experiences and imaginaries, acknowledging that there are different mobility regimes, articulated on the basis of the existing tensions between structures and relationships. According to this paradigm, mobility regimes and migrant subjects should not be looked upon separately, since “the agent and the structures of mobility are co-constitutive” (Salter, 2013, p. 8). However, the fundamental difference between the autonomy of the migrant-centric approach and the new mobilities paradigm lies in the fact that, for the latter, State control defines and configures migrations, without taking into account the fact that indeed the autonomy of migrants challenges control which is shaped as a response to the autonomous projects of migrants (Kalir, 2013). Therefore, this paradigm reifies the State despite coming from emancipatory positions, thus falling into its epistemological framework.

For Mezzadra (2012, pp. 159-160) on the other hand, “the autonomy of migrations approach does not view migration in isolation from social, cultural and economic structures; on the contrary, migration is conceived as a creative force within these structures.” The foregoing in the sense that emphasis is placed on “the fact that migrants act as citizens, regardless of their legal citizenship status” (Mezzadra, 2012, p. 176).

It is clear that, unlike other theoretical approaches that have recognized a certain autonomy to the migration experience, the migrant-centric approach translates at an epistemological level into a recognition of the autonomy of the very object of study of migration, whose questions and interests are guided by the migration subject himself and not by State thought. In other words:

[...] It is necessary to establish a way of perceiving and apprehending emigration, in itself and for itself, as an autonomous reality [...]; it is necessary to institute an autonomous discourse on emigration and, before this, the constitutive reasons for this discourse (Sayad, 2010a, p. 181).

Sayad's (2010a) epistemological approach, therefore, comes from the need to overcome the scholastic division between subject and object, but also from a different approach to the structure-agency equation, preventing the former from holistically defining migrations. It is not a matter of denying the power and conditioning factors of States in shaping migration, but rather of not applying their categories to analyze a phenomenon that is not explained only by their vision and interests.

In the epistemological politics of methodological nationalism based on State thought, there is no space for the autonomy of migrations, or it occupies a very limited space, so in the end, those approaches that reproduce the State-ethnocentric vision feed the division of social space between those that belong to the national order (nationals) and those that do not belong to this order (non-nationals) (Mezzadra & Ricciardi, 2013). Calling into question State thought changes the way of approaching research, without establishing a definitive indication as to the methods to be used, since the migrant-centric approach does not translate into a set of methods that exclude others, but rather suggests the adoption of an epistemological view that allows the non-reproduction of the State-ethnocentric approach.

Third, the migrant-centric approach acknowledges the importance of the international division of labor and the multiplicity of active borders at the global level (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2017), unlike the State-ethnocentric approach, which tends to assume the economic and demographic model of the market equilibrium and national boundaries, as reflected in the theories that can be framed within the hydraulic model or transnationalism itself. Sayad (2010a) instead places the study of migratory relations in the capitalist historical context, assuming the world-system approach of Wallerstein (1979, 1988), which means that migrations can only be understood if the asymmetric power relations produced by the international division of labor are taken into account. This means that the hierarchical position of the migrant is marked by the position occupied by both his State of origin and that of destination in the world-system: "in effect, among the characteristics that lead to constitute immigration into a system are, foremost, the relations of domination that prevail on an international scale" (Sayad, 2010a, p. 234).

The power relations between States and economies are transmitted to the protagonists of the migration process, reproducing the global hierarchies of power at the level of symbolic order logic (Sayad, 2006). The coloniality of power is reflected in the hierarchical and hierarchy-establishing classification of the different populations, including migrants, being the expression of the "relationship from dominant to dominated, objectively inscribed in the relationship from the country of immigration to country of emigration" (Sayad, 2010a, p. 126). This geopolitical character, although assumed by approaches such as the new

mobilities paradigm, is usually replaced by developmental discourses in hegemonic approaches for which the areas of the world-system do not interact based on dependency relations but rather based on the supposed historical stage of the economic development of each one (Thwaites Rey & Castillo, 2008). This perspective thus puts aside all influence of historical capitalism on the territories of emigration, allowing the construction of migrants as “entrepreneurs,” or simply as rational economic actors (Massey et al., 1998) within an unequal global economy but not built to reproduce systematically said inequality.

Fourth, the migrant-centric approach is based on the study of social and power hierarchies, as well as the dialectic between individuals, societies, and States, as opposed to the State-ethnocentric approach that is based on the positioning of migrants in the demographic structure and the job market of the destination State. This point thus recognizes that migrations are not only an individual phenomenon or only a phenomenon determined by the State, but that they are at the same time an individual and collective fact that involves both people and their social relationships and societies in general: “The migratory itinerary [...] is at the same time the individual itinerary of each one of the emigrants-immigrants and a collective itinerary, which is the history of the emigration and immigration process” (Sayad 2010a, p. 101). Consequently, the migrant-centric approach does not only focus on the general movements or trajectories of individuals but also proposes to focus on the force field determined by the interaction between individuals (considering their social relationships), societies (with their internal differentiations), and States (with their immigration policies).

In order to transcend the State-ethnocentric approach and decolonize migration studies, special attention is needed since researchers, also educated under State thought (Raimondi, 2016), must reflect on the categories they employ and their origin. Migrations, as well as borders and the State and international policies to control mobility, are political facts, that is, they are the result of political decisions and active power relations between States and among people who migrate. This means that they are social constructs and, therefore, their categorization is due to historical-political factors that respond to the interests of the actors involved. Once the migrant-State dichotomy has been revealed, it is worth questioning which approaches are based on the vision of one or the other, leaving it up to the researcher to decide which is more appropriate for a scientific analysis of this reality.

We propose the migrant-centric approach, since it denatures the State, pointing out its existence as an exclusive and totally political fact, just as its practices, its words, and the borders it builds are a solely political fact. Starting from its artificiality and from the fact that the way of acting of each State is the expression of internal relations of force (towards the society it administers), and international (in relation to other States), we understand that to position oneself on the side migrants allow the deconstructing of power structures and, therefore, to point the way towards emancipatory research, in line with what Fanon (2009) has set forth. Fact is, on the one hand, the State tends to continuously discipline, select and filter migrants to influence and control their movements, while on the other, it turns them

into an analytical category, functional to its interests. Dismantling this State epistemology constitutes a first step towards unveiling its arbitrary project (Sayad, 2010a) and towards pointing out a path that allows “to liberate migration” (Avallone, 2018).

### CLOSING REMARKS

State thought and the heritage of colonial perspective have built a consolidated way of looking upon international migrations that have privileged the questions and cognitive interests of the societies of arrival, which in turn are the societies positioned in the most powerful strata within the international division of labor. This has produced a partial knowledge of migration, guided by questions, categories, and views that have left migrants aside, defining them by their condition of immigrants and, therefore, as a social problem for the States that host them. The partiality of knowledge is a limit for social research that some scholars have presented evidence for over time, especially those who have criticized the imperialism of what is universal, characteristic of State thought, and of the colonial perspective.

The theoretical and epistemological analyzes of Abdelmalek Sayad (2006; 2008; 2010a) have developed in this direction, being proposed as a possibility to denature the ways of looking upon migrations. In this sense, his analysis, in combination with the critique of coloniality, allows the construction of a different epistemology, whose questioning of the subaltern views to the still-dominant perspectives in migration studies allows the elaboration of an emancipatory approach, opening the field to perceive migrations outside of the conditioning imposed by the mental and political structures of the State.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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