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Abstract

Guerrero is considered one of the poorest states in Mexico. The structural violence and terror generated by organized crime in recent years have disrupted social and economic relations. Such event caused hundreds of families to be uprooted from the countryside who were obliged to escape to the regions of Costa Grande, or even outside the country with the intention of reproducing socially and culturally. Having said that, this paper analyzes the causes that provoked the internal forced displacement in communities of Sierra de Guerrero and explains the way how such phenomenon has become a contemporary form of social exclusion and capitalist accumulation. To conduct this research, fieldwork was done, as well as certain type of specific literature was reviewed with the aim of revealing the contradictions and paradoxes faced by displaced persons nowadays.

Keywords: accumulation by dispossession, state, internal forced displacement, violence

1. Introduction

How to carry out the study of a rural society completely transformed by organized crime, capitalism, and the state? What are the consequences of such individual and collective subjectivities, which have been obliged to abandon their jobs or social work? These basic questions are important in order to know the origins of the internal forced displacement in Sierra de Guerrero as well as reflect on the role the state plays in the maintenance of inequality and uprooting suffered by hundreds of peasant families. These are individuals who, in addition to having been forced to renounce all, that is, leaving their homes, fulfilled lives, and properties, are in conditions of marginality and abandonment. Such displacements in modern times are part of an expanded process of capitalist accumulation and it is manifested in its necrotic version. We refer to a predatory, extraeconomic, and necropolitical phenomenon, which during these last few years, has come to affect radically in the 16 municipalities, which are part of the following regions: Costa Grande, Tierra Caliente, and Centro.
In such municipalities, there are about “1,287 locations with a total population of 104,956 inhabitants” that have been affected by the organized crime cells [1]. What is more, their presence in these locations has generated abjection forms and eradication that are related to the conflict among criminal bands, the little capacity of the state in order to warranty the human sociality, as well as the mining of natural resources. However, such event will not be possible without the “blood quota” needed that supplies the negation of the democracy and official power, because the disposable and cheap manpower of this helps to make eternal the capital cycle of human creativity and human collective. Truth be told, these are the processes that set up, make sense, and make existence of a state that has been the center of attention in the last years due to its high rates of insecurity, (systematic) violence, and social marginalization. Once said this, the current search is divided into three parts and has as a final goal to explain the possible origins of the forced displacement, the territorial dispossession by violence, as well as the function of the state in the legitimation of the dynamics of the market. On the other hand, we have to point out that the results of the research that will be presented hereafter are part of both lab work and fieldwork done since November of last year, on such date when the pandemic began and made the gathering of interviews or data more complex in order to make a discourse to give an account on the difficulties and paradoxes that are faced by the Guerrerense society.

2. The origins of displacement

The rising of the organized crime in Guerrero has not only dislocated the social and economic relationships, above all, from the rural zones, but it has also promoted a way of displacement for violence: the internal forced displacement. It is about a social fact (original italics from author) that has been invisibilized and it is part of the social domination, which currently takes place in many parts of the globe. In Mexico, this phenomenon has its contemporary antecedents in the security policies as the Plan of Mérida was promoted at the time by Felipe Calderón and, further on, continued by the government of Peña Nieto. For many specialists in the field, the implementation of such types of politics not only provoked the disappearance of more than 62 thousand people but also caused the elimination of political leaders, human rights defenders, social activists, and peasant populations, which were found in extreme poverty conditions and exclusion [2]. Added to this, 310, 527 thousand people were displaced from the poorest states of the country, as a result of the internal war between law enforcement and drug trafficking [3].

As a historical review, we may affirm that the phenomenon of displacement remits to the Dirty War (capitals from author) from 1969 to 1979 and extended to scenarios such as Petatlán and Coyuca de Catalán. What has been said is connected to the so-called war against drug trafficking that started in 2006, the time when violence was exacerbated and the displacement of peasant and indigenous communities were generated. In the case of Guerrero, in that same year, this issue was intensified due to the rupture of the Sinaloa Cartel and the armed crossing of La Garita in Acapulco city [4]. This outcome gave cause to be disarticulation of territorial commands and control that directly affected entire communities, which were in the need of an escape to different parts of the state and even outside the country. Beneath such ending, it currently highlights the disgraceful displacement cases in “Zirandaro, Apaxtla de Castrejon, in the Zona Norte: Teloloapan and Iguala. We head toward the municipalities of Montaña Baja as Chilapa or Icaltenango, which has also provoked displacement. This issue
emerged with the division of the so-called organized division, above all, practically, in Guerrero when the so-called crime group Los Pelones was divided and each resulting group began to act. Some of them acted in Acapulco, others in Tierra Caliente [5].”

In the state of Guerrero, such issue provoked legitimate violence and murder was seen as device of power that build forms of being and acting in the society; the battle between crime organizations is associated with the territorial uprooting and its dispute with the state; the local political systems are seen conditioned by the forces of the organized crime; and the internal forced displacement affects especially all peasant families [6]. During fieldwork done at the beginning of this year, several displaced families located at the boundaries of Técpan, a municipality where a refuge existed, shared the idea that criminal bands forced the inhabitants to abandon their communities or forced them to work and extract their natural resources such as poppy, wood, and minerals. To this point, it is understood that the internal forced displacement must be seen as part of the dynamics of the market and the relations of domination. From this, it derives the fact that systematic separation of the individual facing the space where a relationship of (social) production is developed and it intensifies through the imposition of war and transformation of territorials in controlled economical enclaves, in this case, by the organized crime. This implies to consider the fact that not only life is objectified but also the death that also becomes valued and revalued as a part of the capital circuits.

It should be noted that the displacement does not only constitute a fact inherent to the dynamic populations but to the reorganization of capitalist society as well. For this, it is necessary to know if mobility is a condition generated by human drives or human necessities, or failing fact, it is the result of the rearticulation of capital in convulsive scenarios as the one being explained. This means that, indeed, there is a clear difference between the individual who migrates and the one who is obliged to be displaced. Perhaps a tangential difference is about the fact that a migrant individual does it for a deliberate and altruist matter, moreover, his mobility is done for his own benefit or for the well-being of some relatives that have been left behind; in contrast, displaced individuals are forced to move alongside their families or their community. In that sense, a migrant seeks to improve his life and work conditions, thus, such action has to be considered intentional. In such kind of mobility, the precarious socioeconomic conditions are the factors that constitute a reason to oblige certain people to abandon their home area [7]. The migrant, however hard he might be led to suddenly migrate due to the loss of his/her job or his/her purchasing power, he/she opts for a strategy of social reproduction that revolves around wage labor. In contrast, a displaced individual is compelled to escape and save his/her life.

Although force migration is not a novelty, because traditionally this phenomenon had been driven by unfavorable socioeconomic situations, above all, in rural areas, however, in the last years, many people were forced to leave their properties and sever their family bonds for fear of violence [8]. In that sense, forced displacements are massively produced due to the arrival of criminal bands, which lessen the economic activity of the cities and force people to pay dues. Salazar and Castro are right when they point out that displacement in Guerrero is not only explained by the deployment of the State force and the fight by drug corridors among criminal gangs but also as a result of the structural and systematic mismatches [9]. Undoubtedly this is a hard reality to deny because the economic and social inequality that does exist in several regions of the state leads to organized crime and is manifested in assassinations, persecutions, mass slaughters, forced displacement, and the disappearances of people [10]. This obliges us to consider that such displacement is rooted in political processes that are
translated into moments of exception, liquidation of liberties and suppression of human rights, capital dispossession, and the restoration of hegemonic power [11–14].

2.1 Territorial dispossession and organized crime

The results from control policy imposed by the governments of the political parties PAN and PRI brought with them a radical division of territories and work that was translated into abandonment, marginalization, and impoverishment of sectors where natural resources and social fabrics can be found, which are important for the progress of capitalist accumulation. This allows us to pay attention to the places or scenarios where displacement takes place since not all forced displacements are neither manifested in the same intensity nor under the same local problems. In this regard, Marco, who is a displaced individual from San Miguel Totolápan, and whom I could interviewed in the municipality of Técpan, pointed out that “many people that have been displaced, that includes groups and communities have been defeated”, they “belong to a specific group, and their contrary group defeat them, they escape and then they go shouting all over that they are displaced, but they are all part of it. Most of the displacement is like this, they belong to criminal bands, then they are defeated, they soon go shouting all over they are displaced individuals, the truth is that they belong to criminal gangs. On the contrary, we are the ones who have escaped, because we did not want to be part of any criminal gangs called themselves: Los flacos, Michoacanos, Guerreros Unidos, or whatever they are called themselves. We are oblivious to them” [15]. Displacement is due to the struggle for the territorial control among the same organized crime gangs, and even among them and the state. It does not exist an exact data about the number of armed groups in control of communities, but “seems to exist at least 200 groups in the entire state of Guerrero” [16, 17].

In rewarding the places of expulsion, displaced individuals in their majority belong to rural areas of Sierra, and their destinations have been the cities of Técpan, Atoyac, and Chilpancingo. It is worth noting that during the year 2020, there were eight episodes of displacement in seven municipalities and 23 locations, we are talking about around 5128 people who were placed under the margins of the municipalities already mentioned [18]. People who were forced to displace did it due to the social conflicts, persecutions, and criminal violence [6]. The term “forced” implies coercion of an entity or organization (whether is legit or not) that executes or makes use of the violence to contravene the individual and collective integrity. For the United Nations [19] for the purposes of this phenomenon, it must be understood as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” Forced displacement is not a new category, this refers to experiences of necropolitical character, what is more, its understanding must start from understanding the fact of restructuration of society and the circuits of the (drug) market, as well as from the articulation of labor.

The extermination of the nature and precariousness of work silted by the presence of drug trafficking are evidence of capitalist accumulation that is being legitimized by necropower. The wave of discomfort sheathed by peasants against the territorial dispossession in rural zones of Guerrero force us to rethink concepts and categories that help us to rescue the (historical) individual from social tearing. We refer specifically
to those peasant populations that have been in the necessity to fight the cells of the organized crime and the state either opposing at all or generating a “negotiation.” Displacement led peasant populations to be unable to defray their own existence. We refer to the most violent and horrifying side reproduced by our society since such forced mobility is linked to the subjugation of the creative capacity of men in relation to the territory or nature. In other words, such occurrence inherent to the anatomy of capitalist accumulation is kept alive not as a mere event of transformations from the so-called precapitalist populations or peasants but in a manner of speaking to a continual and antagonist open process.

This is known by Marx as “The so-called capitalist primitive accumulation” and as such, accounts for the origins of the transformation and valuation of labor, the making, or the creativity in capital [20]. Unlike certain ideas that support that in this form of capital accumulation lies the metamorphosis of labor and the shift from traditional societies into industrial societies, it must be considered that its existence is only possible through its historical phase. That is to say, as it is made known by the author Zerenka “the accumulation of capital properly named without the need of the adjective primitive includes the force and the violence to reach the capitalist objectives of separation between producers and means of production” [21]. It is needless to resort to the word “primitive” to recognize this fact. Reflections made by Rosa Luxemburg are consistent with our perspective. Lenin, in defining the accumulation of capital as reproduction on an amplified scale, was indeed responsible for such distortion, but following certain ambiguity present in Marx himself, a problem that Luxemburg addressed, on the other hand, is sustained that the original accumulation does not only consists of mutation from labor done by rural individuals into free individuals able to sell their labor force in the so-called capitalist society, it rather refers to the existing antagonism between the relationships of capital-labor, and therefore, allows us to comprehend the social emergencies and social rejections.

This event is described as “the midwife of history,” which externalizes the transformation that is suffered by the work, but this time, in its double dimension to know: concrete labor and abstract labor. In other words, this “original sin” does not only explain the mutation of “expanded reproduction” that is being carried out in conditions of “peace, property, and equality”, but instead, it shows us enough evidence to understand the reorganization of life and work through forms of elimination of the creative doing of others [22]. Human potential of the denied individuals is considered a needed energy and essential in the process of capitalist accumulation. However, this will not be possible without the presence of a political form that has no other function but to guarantee the rhymes of its expanded reproduction. Such forms of submissions of the individuals are updated and carry out cycles of dispossession that in the long term destroy the social fabric. As Harvey states [23]:

Ultimately, the processes of dispossession are constitutive and intrinsic to the logic of accumulation of capital, or, in other words, they represent the reverse side needed in the expanded reproduction. If the latter is present as a mainly economic process –of surplus production–, which takes pre-eminence during the periods of stability and sustained growth, the dispossession is generally expressed in extraeconomic processes of predatory type and take control under moments of crisis, as a mode of “spatio-temporal fix” or “headlong rush”. This means that the surplus production struggles over internal and external borders of the system, in order to permanently incorporate new territorials, areas, social relationships and/or future markets to allow its profitable execution. In that sense, both logics are “organically entwined”, i.e., they feedback to each other, as part of a dual and cyclic process that is inseparable.
Such process of dispossession leads to an “apparently” population of workers that are in the pending of being absorbed by capitalism. This responds to a systematic law in the sense that “the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labor army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labor” [20]. In that latter phase is where the state is found in the sense that it is in charge of applying policies of protection and social security, as well as taking part in the reorganization of local powers, that is, the elites and their links with the organized crime. Illades [24] does not spare when he states that “dirty war and narco war, the dispossession in the communities of territories where later on the criminal economy was expanded with the acquiescence of public authority, the transfer of police commanders and military elements to the ranks of crime, the submission of the population to the law of the strongest” might not exist without the presence of a state power that dominates the subaltern classes.

2.2 The state and management of death

Insecurity and forced displacement are not only merely understood as the class between the state and the criminal organization but as a result of the crises of social relationships, which are forms of contemporary domination. It is important to point out, since it allows us to understand how violence is materialized, because it is not coincidence that the destructuring of social and political fabrics in which the state of Guerrero is found becomes margination, poverty, and oblivion. For CONEVAL [25], we refer to one of the most unequal states in the whole country, 66.5% of its population lives in poverty, 26.8% of such in extreme poverty, 3% is vulnerable population, 32.2% is vulnerable population due to social deprivation, and 7.3% belong to the non-poor and nonvulnerable population. What has been addressed above leads to rethink of the grounds on which Guerrero is anchored in a political moment to the point of necrosis. The idea is that the changes produced from above instead of protecting the organic character of society have generated, among other problems, phenomena that have gone unnoticed as the internal forced displacement of thousands of rural communities. This problem gives a guideline to see inside the anatomy of society not only the contradictions and antagonisms of capitalist society but also the possibilities of developing from the memory of the displaced individuals a rich matrix of alternatives that place dignity and labor at the center of debate.

The answer for those phenomena widely questioned by most of the states of law is translated into the creation of moments of pacification or states of peace that in the long term become true silences of all human creativity that calls into question necropolitical reason. This makes sense, since the state despite strenuous efforts to create conditions of sociality and democracy, makes it more difficult for human existence. In this point of view, we can affirm that necropower is the reason for being of modern politics, since it has begotten its outcasts and, above all, it has not managed to meet the real needs of those from below. On the contrary, during the last decades what has been most highlighted has been a profound delegitimization of power and the destructuring of society. Additionally, the extreme polarity that permeated and the high indices that exist with respect to the maelstrom of violence, that is, the war as a result of the clash between organized crime and state forces have caused that the daily life is translated in moments of social crisis.

The existence of political forces, as well as the presence of factual powers or, as considered by certain academics, powers parallel to the state have eroded the historical meaning of political participation. This fact is important to highlight, because
it is related to the way the regions in Guerrero have been spatially and politically reconfigured and how capitalist accumulation is consolidated. It is well known, for example, that the Sierra is home to a large number of criminal cells that dispute the territorial political control with the state. What is more, in these scenarios not only is social domination reconstituted but also unofficial forces push actions that contradict the social order.

According to what was previously said, Armando Bartra [26] states that democratization of the country has passed through different temporary natures of fighting, resistance, and domination that were tied to a kind of reinvented colonization. The rise of elites, the spatial rearrangement, and the political administration of such issues in the hands of certain family clans gave meaning and reason to a society anchored to processes of corruption, bureaucratization, and political despotism. The interest of the state does not only consist of promoting the “internal conflicts and militarization that are centered in important geographies for energy and resources extraction projects but also in the management of historical form of “letting die” and the extension of the such in creating “organizational forms of accumulation that involve dispossession, death, suicide, slavery, destruction of habitats, and the organization and administration of violence” [27].

3. By means of conclusion

Displacement in Mexico is a contemporary form of social exclusion that is being silently legitimized by the state because in principle it does not desire to recognize the emptiness of power and does not attend to the necessities of families and victims of organized violence [28]. This phenomenon has been aggravated in recent years by the territorial dispossession and internal war generated by armed drug trafficking groups. Such kind of abandonment of state power has reasons to be, because refugee families in different scenarios as in the case of the municipality of Técpan, who had to escape from the Sierra due to the persecution of criminal drug trafficking cells and the violent response of law enforcement, they are under conditions of abandonment. Hernandez argues that the displacement phenomenon has not been understood per se, due to the fact that the issue refers to the struggle for natural resources from the 60s in the municipalities of Costa Grande [29]. That is the reason why the state has not been able to restore society as such despite the fact of existing, for instance, Law 487 published on July 22, 2014, at Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado (Official Journal of the Federation) [30]. There are also other similar experiences, such as “Ley para la Prevención y Atención del Desplazamiento Interno en el Estado de Chiapas,” published as Decreto N° 158, at Periódico Oficial del Estado, on February 22nd, 2012 [19].

The absence of the state in territories where drug trafficking operates gives a glimpse of the crisis of legitimation of Mexican power and democracy. This is related to the gap of power that exists in many Guerrerenses municipalities and the lack of governmental aid in order to such municipalities could fulfill the needs of the displaced people from the region of Sierra de Guerrero, who continue to live in precarious conditions and at the margins of official power. There is every indication that, despite the fact beyond looking at this phenomenon as a national problem, the purpose of the state consists of normalizing relations of domination, as well as languishing the dreams of the “common people.” This means that if the basic subsistence needs of the families who were forced to leave their lives are not met, then marginalization
and inequality will continue to reproduce, what is more, peasant people might be part of a disposable army of laborers, we refer to the last link in the chain of production of illegal drugs goods and trade imposed and controlled by organized crime, or, in the absence, therefore, to join the ranks of such organization.

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[15] Interview from February 2021


