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## Treball Fi de Màster

*Waiting in non-places: the spatialization of discourses in Mexico's migrant integration centres*

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MASTER THESIS

# WAITING IN NON-PLACES:

## The spatialization of discourses in Mexico's Migrant Integration Centres

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\* \* \*

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## ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, the process of labelling migrants and refugees has become increasingly politicized. And yet, these labels imply access (or lack thereof) to resources, rights and protections that can mean the difference between life and death for the recipients. This thesis focuses on the effects of this dilemma on the built environment. The case study of Mexico's Migrant Integration Centres, established as a result of a series of changes to the US' asylum policies, provides an opportunity to assess how the different politics around displacement manifest in physical spaces, and how the labelling of displacement as migration affects the lives and opportunities of the displaced. Through discourse and spatial analyses of primary and secondary sources, this research shows how the contradictions between migration discourses and policies materialize in the built environment. Furthermore, the concept of "waiting" as a state of being emerges as a significant part of the migrants' narratives and experiences. Thus, waiting too becomes spatialized, revealing the MICs as non-places that reflect transience and rejection, exacerbating the negative experiences of the vulnerable groups they contain.

**Keywords:** Forced Migration, Refugees, Migration-Displacement Nexus, Externalization of Borders, Spatialization of Discourse, Non-Places.

\* \* \*

En las últimas décadas, el proceso de categorización de migrantes y refugiados se ha vuelto cada vez más politizado. Y sin embargo, estas etiquetas implican el acceso (o falta de él) a recursos, derechos y protecciones que pueden significar la diferencia entre la vida y la muerte para los destinatarios. Esta tesis se centra en los efectos de este dilema en el entorno construido. El caso de estudio de los Centros Integradores para el Migrante de México, establecidos a raíz de una serie de cambios en las políticas de asilo de los Estados Unidos, brinda la oportunidad de evaluar cómo las diferentes políticas sobre el desplazamiento se manifiestan en espacios físicos y cómo afecta el etiquetar el desplazamiento forzado como migración las vidas y oportunidades de los desplazados. A través de análisis del discurso y el espacio de fuentes primarias y secundarias, esta investigación muestra cómo se materializan las contradicciones entre los discursos y las políticas de migración en el entorno construido. Además, el concepto de la "espera", como forma de estar, emerge como parte importante de las narrativas y experiencias de los migrantes. Por lo tanto, la espera también se espacializa, revelando que los CIM son no-lugares que reflejen la transitoriedad y el rechazo, exacerbando las experiencias negativas de los grupos vulnerables que contienen.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of migration studies encompasses a vast amount of knowledge and theories that span over many decades. However, in recent times, topics such as forced migration and displacement have emerged as areas of research that are more often linked to refugee studies than to migration itself.

And yet, the boundaries between migration and displacement are not always clearly distinguishable. In a general literature review of the field of forced displacement, Mason (2007) identified how, because there are so many different disciplines involved in the research, there is a lack of “clear conceptual and theoretical framework[s], definitional dilemmas, methodological issues and scattered research output[s]” (Mason, 2007:247), which result in difficulties to identify knowledge gaps to advance the research.

Furthermore, the difficulties and incongruences brought by these “definitional dilemmas” affect not only the field of research but also political discourses, social opinion and eventually trickle down to policies and programs that impact the lives of vulnerable people on the move.

These issues are most clearly expressed by the migration-asylum debate, a debate so significant, that the resulting labels (migrant-refugee) can mean the difference between life and death for the recipients. This is mainly due to the resources, rights and protections that are afforded to refugees and not to migrants since refugees are understood, to put it simply, as people fleeing their places of origin in fear for their lives, whereas migrants decide to move voluntarily. It’s a debate around agency.

However, it has become increasingly difficult to determine agency, or to express it differently, to identify who is moving voluntarily and who is forced to flee. Prolonged conflicts, structural poverty, generalized violence, political instability and lack of opportunities, among other factors, create scenarios where people feel compelled to move from their homes, searching to secure their most basic human rights elsewhere. The degree to which some of them flee direct and targeted persecution whereas others flee the generalized instability and lack of opportunities is hard, if not impossible, to determine.

And yet, it is this distinction that drives a heated debate as to whether refugee studies and migration studies should be mixed or not. Some scholars, like Hathaway (2007), fear that “subsuming” the field of refugee studies within the broader framework of forced migration studies would, among other things, result in “a failure to take account of the

specificity of the refugee's circumstances" (Hathaway, 2007), weakening the protections afforded by this label and driving the focus away from the individual experiences of refugees and towards the bigger migration phenomenon. In response, DeWind (2007) affirms that inserting refugee studies within the broader migration space would help to assess their plight in terms of the causes for their displacement, which would inform policies that could deal with these root causes and move to prevent the displacement altogether.

So as this theoretical discussion around labels and terminology defines the number of resources and the type of response made available for the displaced, this research will focus on how it manifests in the built environment. A theoretical framework will be established to explore the debate around migration and asylum, examining the different senses in which these concepts are used and how they are turned into categories of people. Then, a critical analysis of the selected case study, through a comparison between discourse and spatial analyses, will show how these dilemmas become spatialized and the repercussions this has on the lives and opportunities of migrants.



## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Migration and displacement, a debate

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in its “Glossary on Migration”, defines displacement as

*“the movement 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”* (Sironi, Bauloz & Emmanuel, 2019:53)

As for migration, IOM defines it as “the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.” (Sironi et al., 2019:135)

The conflict appears when adding the element of “forced” to these terms. IOM considers forced migration as “a migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion or coercion.” (Sironi et al., 2019:75). As for forced displacement, the Glossary simply indicates the reader to refer back to the term displacement. Hence, although widely used, the term “forced displacement” is indeed a pleonasm, as the very definition of displacement involves the element of coercion. In other words, displacement is always forced.

The problem, then, is understanding how forced migration and displacement are different, as both terms imply the involuntary movement of people. This is addressed in a note under the definition of forced migration that states:

*“While not an international legal concept, this term has been used to describe the movements of refugees, displaced persons [...] and, in some instances, victims of trafficking. At the international level the use of this term is debated because of the widespread recognition that a continuum of agency exists, rather than a voluntary/forced dichotomy and that it might undermine the existing legal international protection regime.”* (Sironi et al., 2019:75)

Hence, two differences become apparent: the recognition of these terms as legal concepts under international law (displacement is, forced migration is not), and the existence of “a continuum of agency” (in forced migration, and not in displacement). However, it seems contradictory to indicate that there is agency -as in ‘choice’- in something that is qualified as forced.

Bakewell (2011) addresses the ambiguities surrounding the mixed use of migration and displacement in a global stage. He recognises the existence of a tendency, especially

within aid organizations, to stress the separation between the terms refugee and migrant, as the latter describes people who are assumed to have a high degree of agency in their movement, whereas the former refers to people in far more dramatic scenarios and in need of special international protection (Bakewell, 2011:16).

The interest of this divide is to restrict international humanitarian aid to the category of refugees. However, as previously mentioned, distinguishing between refugees and migrants is not always possible. Bakewell describes a “semantic confusion [that] renders the terms of the debate ambiguous” (Bakewell, 2011:17), as he notes that these terms are used “in different senses at different times” (Bakewell, 2011:18). Therefore, according to Bakewell, depending on the context these terms can be used to refer to a process, a condition or a category, and in these different realms, divisions and connections between them vary.

As a *process*, displacement can be viewed as “a particular sub-set of [the] broader migration space” (Bakewell, 2011:21). In turn, migration can also be placed within the broader space of human mobility, along with -but different from- other movements such as tourism, commuting, and changing residence (Bakewell, 2011:19). In this sense, displacement and forced migration refer to the same *process* of migration, within human mobility (Figure 1).

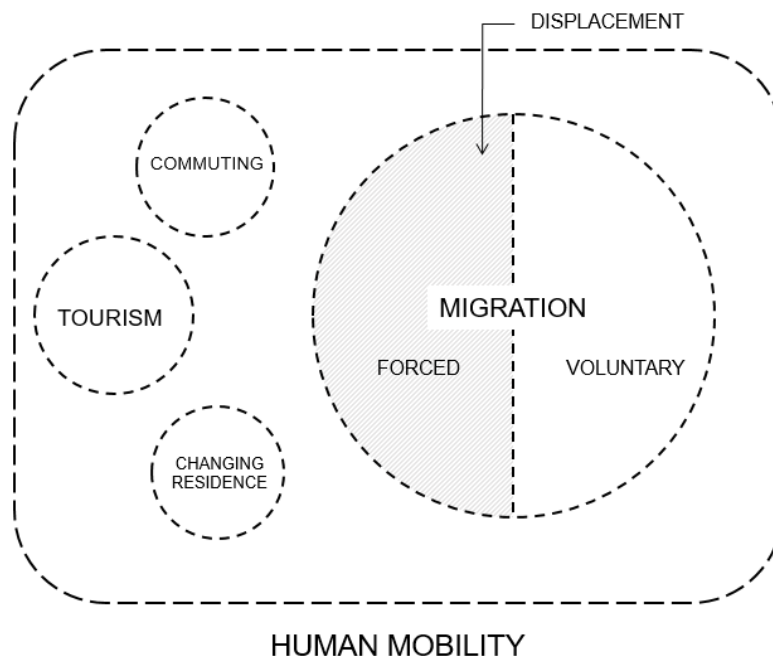


Figure 1. Migration and displacement as processes within Human Mobility. Source: Original by author, based on Bakewell's analysis.

However, as *conditions*, differences between migration and displacement appear more clearly, for they relate to the subjective experiences and perceptions of those who

moved. Bakewell (2011) asserts that the *process* of migration ends when a person takes up residence in their new setting, but their *condition* of migrant will remain forever, as they will always be someone who moved there. In contrast, displacement does not end with the end of movement, it endures so far as the displaced perceive themselves as such, cut off from their home. Moreover, as a *condition*, displacement can exist altogether separate from the *process* of moving, as it can be passed on to children and thus, “the displaced can be found among people who have never moved” (Bakewell, 2011:23).

Interestingly, Bakewell notes that the condition of displaced can be reversed when a person establishes a new home and becomes “emplaced”, but then, their condition of migrant will remain (Bakewell, 2011:23).

So as when assessing migration and displacement as processes and conditions it’s possible to see that a person can be either migrant or displaced, or both, depending on the moment in which they are being assessed and the sense in which these terms are being used.

As *categories*, a sharper divide is sought between these otherwise intertwined concepts. For policymakers, categorisation involves “dividing the world into groups of people who share particular qualities [in order to] subject group members to the same outcomes of policy: such as granting them legal rights or providing them with resources and services” (Bakewell, 2011:24). Here is where the call to separate these terms becomes especially significant, as the *category* of refugee involves the allocation of vast amounts of resources to an ever-increasing number of people.

Nevertheless, Bakewell (2011) notes that the *category* dimension of migration and displacement doesn’t always overlap with their dimension as *conditions*.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, “many people who have moved in appalling circumstances [...] may describe themselves as displaced, but having made huge efforts [to] reach their destination are excluded from the category of the displaced and labelled as economic migrants” (Bakewell, 2011:25).

Furthermore, when considering the situations that cause the movement, in contexts of generalized instability and deprivation of human rights, is it fair to label people based on the way and the reasons why they fled or the resources they mobilized to do so? In the end, are they all not fleeing the same reality? As DeWind (2007:382) states:

*“When a family seeks asylum, why should international agencies be compelled to protect one member who is fleeing torture or conflict that deprives him of*

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<sup>1</sup> Categories are determined by an external observant’s assessment of an individual, whereas conditions are described and determined by the individual’s personal experiences.

*political rights but not another who is fleeing starvation resulting from her being deprived of social, cultural, or economic rights?”*

This highlights the existence of what Ceriani Cernadas (2016:105) refers to as a “historical debate between civil and political rights, on one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights, on the other”, when determining displacement. However, the violation of any of these rights is likely to cause the violation of the others, as the scenarios they take place in are complex and multidimensional. According to Delgado Wise (in Ceriani Cernadas, 2016:104), “uneven development in the neoliberal context generates a new kind of migration that can be characterised as forced, due to structural conditions that have promoted the massive migration of excluded and marginalised people”.

The difficulty in distinguishing displacement from migration results in “a system of bureaucratic labelling, based on stereotypical identities and sets of assumed needs” (Bakewell, 2011:24). Hence, for Bakewell, to separate the field of refugee studies from migration seems counterproductive. He claims it would leave it “bound by narrow legal categories and make it much more difficult to analyse the broader processes which give rise to refugees, or the situation of those who perceive themselves to be in exile, while not recognised as refugees” (Bakewell, 2011:25).

## **2.2. Labelling the displaced**

Zetter’s (2007) concept of “labelling” helps to analyse the process of “categorisation” of people as either refugees or migrants. Labelling refers to “the process of identity formation within institutionalized regulatory practices [with] a focus on institutional agency” (Zetter, 2007:173), and is based in three axioms: “forming, transforming and politicizing an identity” (Zetter, 2007:174).

Zetter’s work revises the term he elaborated almost two decades before, offering insights into the evolution of the humanitarian aid world over that time. Hence, he explains how the act of labelling refugees has now become a more complex process than in the past, for several reasons.

First, the causes and patterns of forced migration in the current era respond to “increasingly complex social transformations [that] have generated more complex forms of persecution and means of exile, whilst globalization enables refugees to reach far more varied and distant destinations” (Zetter, 2007:188). It must be noted that when the

1951 Convention on Refugees<sup>2</sup> was signed, the definition of refugee it enshrined was shaped by the context of post-WWII Europe, where persecution was attributed to reasons of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010:14). However, as Ceriani Cernadas (2016:104) notes,

*“The dynamics of population displacement in the modern world are very different from the circumstances in which the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol were adopted. The growing complexity and indiscriminate logic of violence, conflict and persecution - together with factors such as poverty and poor governance - cause involuntary migration”.*

Second, Zetter (2007) claims there has been a “fractioning” of the refugee label, with the creation of the “asylum seeker” and “temporary protection” labels as steps in the processing chain that precede the refugee status (Zetter, 2007:189). According to Zetter, this seemingly apolitical bureaucratic practice of categorizing is indeed a political tool put in place by governments as a way to deter applications and undermine asylum-seekers’ rights. As a result, refugees are increasingly “criminalized for seeking asylum” (Zetter, 2007:183) and the refugee status is no longer a human right but a “prized status and expensive commodity” (Zetter, 2007:188).

It is possible to see how this fractioning of the refugee label can be linked to the migration-displacement debate, where efforts to exclude forced migrants from the protection and resources of the refugee status have turned the label into a prized commodity that, eventually, might not be accessible even to those who would qualify for it but are unable to navigate the complex processing system.

Third, the political connotations of the fractioning of the refugee label indicate, according to Zetter, that national governments, instead of humanitarian NGOs, are now the main agencies involved in the labelling of refugees. This change implies a significant shift of perspective. As Zetter states (2007:190), “In the past, the objective of humanitarian labelling was the inclusion of refugees [within the mandate of aid agencies]. By contrast, state action mobilizes bureaucratic labelling to legitimize the exclusion and marginalization of refugees”. Meaning, their exclusion from said state’s borders and/or the protection and resources it is compelled to give them due to the international laws and agreements of which it is a signatory.

However, Ceriani Cernadas (2016:106) warns that “The discursive practices of describing, delimiting and omitting reality present the people who are displaced in

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<sup>2</sup> The 1951 Convention is the key legal document that forms the basis of all humanitarian work. It defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.

conditions of extreme vulnerability as subjects who are entirely free to make this decision, as if there were no need to protect their rights". Therefore, the labelling of refugees has become politicized, embedded within a "wider political discourse of resistance to migrants and refugees" (Zetter, 2007:172).

The works of Zetter and Bakewell illustrate how the labelling/categorisation of refugees and migrants involves processes of identification far more complex than simply assigning predetermined titles to people. They encompass many dimensions, interests and perspectives which make it impossible for these processes to be objective. Furthermore, according to Ceriani Cernadas (2016:102), the comparative use of the terms "refugee" and "economic migrant" is wrong. As he points out, "These concepts were not created during the same historical period, nor in the same way; whereas one arose from an international convention (without bias surrounding its use beforehand), the other originated in the framework of communication practices and strategies" (Ceriani Cernadas, 2016:102).

The conflation between migration and displacement has been referred to by many names, such as "mixed migrations", "the asylum-migration nexus" or "the displacement-migration nexus". This is addressed in a UNHCR (2006) report that explains how asylum-seekers with genuine claims to the refugee status are often mixed in larger population movements, in which other migrants use the same recourse of asylum application to access the right to stay legally in the destination state. This is expressed as a concern that people who do not "deserve" the refugee status are abusing the right to claim it as a way to skip regular migratory processes. In other words, a concern that people who do not need these protections will be afforded them instead of others who do.

However, as previously shown, displacement is a complex process and it is increasingly difficult to assess who is indeed in need of such protections. Furthermore, the evident effort to fraction and restrict access to the refugee status, based on political agendas rather than a humanitarian mandate, suggests that in this "mixed migration" phenomenon, it is more likely that there are people with genuine – albeit harder to identify - claims to asylum, who are intentionally being labelled as "economic migrants" to avoid the protection, resources and accountability of the refugee status.

### **2.3. Discourses, policies and aid**

The labelling of migrants and refugees has political, legal, economic and even cultural and demographic consequences for the host country and the people displaced.

Refugees are understood to flee political or civil rights violations, and are often portrayed as disenfranchised people in dire need of assistance, hence the humanitarian obligations to aid them weigh heavily in the public perception.

On the contrary, migrants are perceived to have a high degree of agency in their movement, with resources of their own and with an implicit choice: they could have stayed home. Moreover, the causes for their movement are constantly reduced to economic reasons (hence they are often referred to as “economic migrants”). Therefore, discourses and perceptions of migrants are very different from refugees. There is no evident humanitarian obligation towards them as they are not perceived to be disenfranchised or in fear for their lives, so more often than not they are portrayed as a menace to job security for the host countries’ nationals.

And yet, as this research has shown, people flee the same realities in different ways, and it is hard (and probably unfair) to make such drastic distinctions. It could be argued that nowadays, in many regions of the world, there is no “forced/voluntary dichotomy” regarding migration, there is a “forced gradient”.

To illustrate how these different discourses produce very different responses, a comparison will be made of how the displaced are labelled and assisted in two different regions of the world: Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. These two regions were selected because in one, there is a clear and open discussion about displacement, whereas, in the other, similar situations are addressed as migration. Therefore, this comparative analysis will touch on the causes of displacement in both regions, how it has been dealt with by concerned authorities, and its consequences.

In the Americas, the large exodus from the Latin American south to the northern countries of the United States and Canada has been traditionally addressed under the umbrella term of migration, attributing the movement mainly to economic reasons. However, moving for economic reasons does not mean the movement is voluntary.

Certainly, Ceriani Cernadas (2016) points out that economic factors are symptomatic of the asymmetries between countries, which influence institutional instability and failed human development policies that are “intrinsically associated to other factors (armed conflicts, corruption, social violence) that, together, lead to displacement” (Ceriani Cernadas, 2016:103).

Alternatively, Cantor (2014) focuses on violence as a cause for displacement in Central America and Mexico, especially when caused by organized crime. By analysing factors such as the type of violence, the scale of operation and the setting, Cantor identifies

three types of criminal groups as agents of displacement, “the *mara* street gangs, the drug transporters and the drug cartels” (Cantor, 2014:35). He claims that the “differences between these groups influence both the forms of displacement that they generate and the patterns of movement undertaken by displaced persons in consequence” (Cantor, 2014:35).

Among the different forms of forced displacement, Cantor mentions land appropriation, which implies a deliberate and targeted displacement, whether of specific families “in order to take over their strategically-located houses” (Cantor, 2014:48); or of entire communities, whose rural lands are located “in areas rich in natural resources or good for drug production” (Cantor, 2014:48).

In contrast, mass population movements in the African continent have been more clearly identified and studied through the lens of displacement. According to Crisp (2010), the common characteristics of most recent wars in the African continent include “high levels of organized violence and destruction, as well as the deliberate targeting and displacement of civilian populations” (Crisp, 2010:13). This resonates with Cantor’s description of land appropriation practices in Central America and Mexico, and however different to each other these regions may be, comparisons could be made in terms of displacement.

Furthermore, Cantor (2014) describes that “the astronomical homicide rates registered in parts of the Northern Triangle<sup>3</sup> and Mexico [...] are on par with some warzones.” (Cantor, 2011:35). And yet, as millions of refugees flee warzones in the Middle East or ongoing conflicts in Central Africa, Latin Americans fleeing comparable situations -in terms of human safety- are labelled as migrants.

It’s important to note that, regarding official definitions, Africa and Latin America share common ground. Based on the definition of refugee enshrined in the 1951 Convention, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) expanded it in its own 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa to include “every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence” (Organization of African Unity, 1969:2). This Convention is set in the context of some African States having recently gained their independence, while others still fought for it and thus, it was also a tool against Colonisation.

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<sup>3</sup> “Northern Triangle” refers to the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.



Years later, several Latin American countries -among which are the Northern Triangle and Mexico- signed their own Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (UNHCR, 1984), which considers both the 1951 Convention's and OAU's 1969 expansion of the definition of refugee. The Declaration suggests that the definition used in the region should also include "persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order" (UNHCR, 1984).

So if both regions depart from the same definitions for refugees, and if in Latin America there is an explicit clarification that the refugee term encompasses persons who are fleeing "generalized violence, internal conflicts" and/or "massive violation of human rights", why is it that in the African region, there is an open and consistent labelling of refugees and in Latin America, the term is hidden behind migration? Is it an oversight or an intentional use of language to address forced mobility as migration? What could be the benefits of this choice of term?

To answer the previous questions, it must be noted that the importance of analysing the terms used to label displaced groups lies in the type of assistance and resources they will require from international organisations and national governments. The refugee status entails specific protocols that afford rights to shelter, medical assistance and food, among others, whereas migrants are in charge of their subsistence while awaiting their process to be resolved. Furthermore, public perception towards migrants and refugees is different and directs political agendas in different ways. Therefore, the choice of terms is everything but random.

As a result, in the African region, INGOs, UN Agencies and local NGOs operate alongside national governments to assist the millions of refugees hosted in camps and urban settlements, mobilizing numerous resources with much scrutiny from academia and the international community. Conversely, in the Americas, people who flee situations similar to those of refugees elsewhere are labelled migrants and are informally assisted –if at all- by civilian groups, religious organizations and small local NGOs. Their plight is largely absent from mainstream media, governments are not obliged to assist them and public perception is often hostile towards them.

## 2.4. Conclusions and research questions

This section covered the existing differences in terminology and theoretical debate around displacement and migration. It showed that even though these terms may seem different, when applied to people on the move, determining who is a migrant and who is a refugee is a hard and messy process.

The importance of these seemingly simple acts of labelling lies in the resources and rights they afford to vulnerable populations. When people flee dire situations, whether because their life was directly threatened by a third party or indirectly compromised by generalised violence; being labelled refugees or migrants is the difference between life and death for them. It means being granted asylum, resources and protection or deported back to the life-threatening situations they fled.

The politicisation of the refugee label has also been discussed, regarded by national governments as a “prized commodity”, instead of a basic human right to asylum and safety. Therefore, as recognition of refugee status becomes increasingly restricted, many vulnerable people are further endangered as they turn to informal networks of smuggling to enter their desired destinations.

As evidenced by the Latin American case, displaced groups are confusingly labelled as migrants, often in the same sentences that declare they seek asylum (Figures 2 and 3). So as these migrants traverse Mexico, one could ask, what are the official stances the Mexican government has around this “migration”? And what types of actions do these discourses produce?



Figure 2 (left). News headline that reads "Hundreds of migrants take a border bridge in Mexico to demand asylum in the US". Source: *El País*. (Camhaji, 2019) / Figure 3 (right). News Headline that reads "Migration to the United States: a court temporarily suspends Trump's policy that forces asylum seekers to remain in Mexico". Source: *BBC News Mundo*, 2020

### Research questions

Considering the problem identified and the literature reviewed, many questions arise. Is this “terminological dilemma” a simple confusion that has been indiscriminately accepted by the media, the public and the authorities, without much thought to what it trickles down to? Or is this “confusion” a discursive tool intended to discredit asylum seekers, or hide them in a broader term that obscures their displacement and delegitimises their claims

for asylum? Furthermore, **how does the labelling of displacement as migration affect the lives and opportunities of the displaced?**

This work concentrates on the effects of policy on the built environment. If we were to consider spaces as physical representations of policies and discourses, then: **How do the different politics around displacement manifest in physical spaces?**

To answer that question, a set of sub-questions is required:

- What are the discourses around migration in the regions where displacement is addressed as such?
- What kind of programs, policies and spaces do these discourses transform into?
- How do these spaces compare to those arising from discourses of displacement and asylum?
- How does this spatial difference, and the discourses it stems from, affect the experiences and opportunities of the displaced?

The following chapter will describe the methodology selected for data collection and analysis, which will enable a discussion that will best attempt to answer these questions.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The data collected for this research consists mainly of secondary sources. This is due to the conjuncture in which the writing of this research takes place: The COVID-19 pandemic. As nations across the world are quarantined, fieldwork has been prohibited and thus the need to rethink data sources and collection methods has allowed for more unconventional approaches.

Hence, the data analysed in this research consists of written and audio-visual documents obtained online. It was classified in the categories of academic papers, policy papers and reports, online news sources (such as digital newspapers and magazines), news channels streaming online and public social media posts. These last ones consist mainly of twitter posts made by public figures who are stakeholders in the case study, containing information, images and videos.

The textual data collected through these sources was then analysed qualitatively in a discourse analysis, using an open coding system that yielded several emerging variables. These were grouped into the following 5 topics:

1. Euphemisms
2. Terms for migrants/migration
3. Actions and attitudes towards migrants/migration
4. MICs' purpose, justification and description of the spaces – services
5. Reactions to / opinions on – the MICs.

A sample of the discourse analysis performed can be found in Annex 1, along with the full list of emerging variables identified under each topic.

Furthermore, the visual data collected was examined in a spatial analysis, which revised photographic and audio-visual material that depicted the spaces of the case study, to describe them and compare their physical qualities to the discursive descriptions previously analysed. The emerging variables for this analysis are:

1. Location
2. Architectural Elements
3. Social Elements

The results of this study are then discussed to answer the research questions outlined in the theoretical framework and to inform the conclusions and recommendations offered.

## **4. CASE STUDY BACKGROUND**

The case study selected for analysis is the Migrant Integration Centres (MICs) built at Mexico's border with the US. Migration has always flowed through this border, but over the last few years, violence and extreme poverty in Central America, have forced increasing numbers of people to flee north. As a result, immigration and asylum policies in the US have been severely restricted and Mexico, a former transit country, has been forced to deal with the fallback.

This chapter will describe the US-Mexico border and border towns, as well as the recent changes to the US asylum policies, to show how they affect the migrants and how the MICs came to be. An analysis of the discourses around migration in Mexico will follow, to understand the way this issue is addressed in the region and the scenario migrants face as they transit and remain in Mexico. This will frame the following data analysis and discussion.

### **4.1. The US-Mexico Border**

The border between Mexico and the US spans over 3,000 kilometres, across 4 states of the US: California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas; And 6 Mexican states: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.

Focusing on migration, there are many crossing points along the US-Mexico international divide, the most important of which are located in border towns: twin cities divided by the border but with intertwined, symbiotic relationships; also known as "transfrontier metropolis" (Herzog, 1990). Figure 4 shows the international boundary and the main border towns that will be discussed in this investigation. To the west, the border is represented by a political line that divides the two countries, whereas to the east the Rio Grande River acts as a natural frontier.



Figure 4. The US-Mexico border. Source: Web image edited by author.

Migration is a significant issue at this border as it represents the door to the US, so migrants and asylum seekers from Mexico and Latin America find there their last frontier. Hence, Mexico has always functioned as a transit country, where a network of civilian-run shelters and migrant houses offers basic services such as shelter, medical assistance and food to migrants moving through the territory <sup>4</sup> (Candiz & Bélanger, 2018).

Nevertheless, recent changes to the United States' asylum policies have left thousands of migrants stranded at the Mexican side of the border, overwhelming local shelters and even causing the formation of a makeshift refugee camp in the city of Matamoros, where a sea of tents houses "as many as 2,000 immigrants [...] amid deteriorating medical and sanitary conditions." (Merchant, 2019). To make things worse, Matamoros is located in the state of Tamaulipas, a place so dangerous the US State Department assigned it the same warning level as Syria (Merchant, 2019).

Certainly, Tamaulipas has a notorious presence of organized crime, to which migrants, in their quality of invisibility, are particularly vulnerable. A detailed account of the most extreme dangers faced by migrants in Mexico can be found in The Foundation for Justice's<sup>5</sup> (2014) coverage of three massacres of migrants, two of which took place in Tamaulipas.

<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, the only government-run facilities for migrants were, until recently, detention centres called "stations": short-term "provisional" stations, or long-term "migratory" stations (Global Detention Project, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> In Spanish Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático de Derecho.

Therefore, Mexican authorities have been forced to dabble into the hosting-and-assisting-migrants territory with the so-called Migrant Integration Centres. Understanding the changes to the US' asylum policies and Mexico's discourses on migration will contextualize the appearance of these centres.

#### 4.2. Unilateral changes: Metering, MPP and the Asylum Transit Ban

Over the past couple of years, the US government introduced changes to its immigration and asylum policies that profoundly impacted the border, causing what some are calling a “humanitarian crisis” (Murphy in Blake, 2019). These changes are three: The Metering System, The Migrant Protection Protocols and the Asylum Transit Ban. Figure 5 shows a timeline of these changes and the appearance of Mexico's response: The MICs.

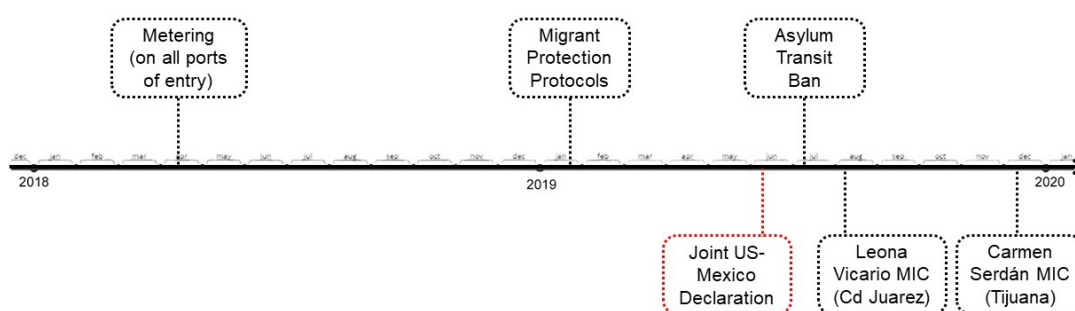


Figure 5. Timeline showing asylum policy changes in the US and Mexico's response. Source: Original by author

Metering is a system that “limits the number of asylum seekers processed at US points of entry each day” (Blake, 2020) and dates back to 2016 when it was used mainly in the San Ysidro Port of Entry (PoE) in San Diego. However, in April 2018 it was expanded to all PoEs across the border (American Immigration Council; 2020b). This has caused asylum seekers to queue for days or even months, just to make their initial asylum claim.

Then, on January 2019, with the introduction of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) -also known as the “Remain in Mexico” policy (Blake, 2020)- asylum seekers were also forced to remain in Mexico for the duration of their asylum request process, whereas previously they would have been allowed to do so in the United States.

According to the American Immigration Council (2020b), as of January 2020, the MPP were being used at 7 PoEs (Figure 6).

1. San Ysidro, CA
2. Calexico, CA (individuals sent back here must travel to the San Ysidro port of entry for hearings)
3. Nogales, AZ (individuals sent back here must travel to the El Paso port of entry for hearings)
4. El Paso, TX
5. Eagle Pass, TX (individuals sent back here must travel to the Laredo port of entry for hearings)
6. Laredo, TX
7. Brownsville, TX

*Figure 6. Border towns in the US where MPP are being used. Source: American Immigration Council, 2020*

However, only 4 of these PoEs are located in towns that have immigration courts for asylum hearings (Figure 6) (American Immigration Council, 2020b), so the cities on the Mexican side of the border (Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros) have experienced a surge in the number of migrants waiting there. Indeed, from January 2019 through January 2020, these cities received between 57,000 to 62,000 returned migrants among them (American Immigration Council, 2020b). Hence, the appearance of MICs in Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez.

Finally, the Asylum Transit Ban (ATB) was introduced on July 2019, a policy that bans asylum “for any individuals who enter the United States at the ‘southern land border’ after transiting through another country after leaving their home” (American Immigration Council, 2020b). This prevents any non-Mexicans at the Mexico-US border from requesting asylum in the US and offers them instead “two very limited forms of protection against deportation<sup>6</sup>, known as withholding of removal and protection under the Convention Against Torture (CAT)” (American Immigration Council, 2020b).

Along with these changes, the Trump administration announced a “5% tariff on all Mexican imports to pressure the country to do more to curb immigration into the US” (Gambino & Agren, 2019). This was qualified as a “unilateral move” by Mexican officials (Velasco in Averbuch, 2019), which led to a tense standoff between the two countries, who were amid negotiations to renew the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which would update the North American Free Trade Agreement (Gambino & Agren, 2019).

The dispute was eventually resolved, and a Joint Declaration outlined four key commitments to address “the shared challenges of irregular migration” (US Department of State, 2019), which included a surge in Mexico’s enforcement of migration control and the expansion of MPP across the entire border. (US Department of State, 2019).

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<sup>6</sup> Unlike asylum, these protections are not permanent, the holder cannot leave the US without losing their status, and they do not allow for family reunification (American Immigration Council, 2020).



The changes described in this section are consistent with a broader practice known as “the externalisation of migration controls” or “externalisation of borders”, used by the US since the 1980s and which is defined as “extraterritorial state actions to prevent migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the legal jurisdictions or territories of destination countries or regions or making them legally inadmissible without individually considering the merits of their protection claims” (Frelick, Kysel & Podkul, 2016:193).

It’s also worth noting that banning asylum through the ATB and offering more restricted protections instead, is a clear example of the fractioning of the refugee label previously discussed, framed within a “fight against illegal immigration” narrative that is indeed targeting asylum. Therefore, the migration-asylum conflation, evident in these discourses, is not careless or coincidental. On the contrary, it seems like an intentional use of language and terminology to delegitimize asylum-seekers by labelling them migrants and then attacking the concept of migrants itself. A practice Ceriani Cernadas (2016:107) calls the “*demonisation* of migrants.”

So as the number of people stuck at the border increases, what is the position of the Mexican authorities? How do their discourses around migration relate to those of their northern neighbour? The following section will address these issues.

#### **4.3. Migration discourses in Mexico**

Regarding migration to the US, Mexico has always played a dual role as a source and a transit country. Hence, Mexico does not criminalize immigration violations such as “unauthorized entry and stay” (Coria in Global Detention Project, 2013), and does not use regular prisons for immigration-related detention.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Global Detention Project’s (2013) profile on Mexico shows how the country’s efforts to detain and deport migrants have been advanced “in response to pressure from its northern neighbours”. As Casillas (in Global Detention Project, 2013) explains,

*“previously migrants were generally permitted to transit Mexican territory en camino al norte<sup>8</sup>, [however] during the past two decades—a period that roughly begins with the 1993 adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA]—Mexico has pursued increasingly aggressive immigration enforcement strategies aimed at preventing pass-through migration.”*

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<sup>7</sup> Instead, the aforementioned migratory stations are used.

<sup>8</sup> “On the way north”.

Therefore it's no surprise that as the NAFTA was under negotiations, once again economic agreements were used to pressure Mexico into further restricting the flow of migrants through its territory.

In Mexico, the main agency in charge of monitoring the entry and departure of non-nationals is the National Institute of Migration (INM). In 2019, Torre Cantalapiedra analysed the INM's use of discursive strategies in official texts for political ends and found a clear use of "concealment and legitimation practices aimed at "(re)legitimiz[ing] the policies and actions of migratory control carried out by the Mexican government" (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019:119).

Torre Cantalapiedra (2019) highlights the use of euphemisms as conceptual metaphors. The overarching euphemism of "controlling migration is protecting migrants" (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019:134), frames discourses where activities of irregular migration control, such as "detection, detention, deprivation of liberty and forced return of migrants", are instead referred to as "rescue, accommodate, protect, assisted return, reintegrate", activities usually associated with the protection of migrants (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019:134).

Other legitimation strategies involve alluding to law enforcement<sup>9</sup>, the notion of "the fight against *coyotaje*<sup>10</sup>" (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019:136), and the integration of the Human Rights discourse into the INM's statements on actions regarding migration control. However, Torre Cantalapiedra warns that as the human rights discourse is frequently hailed by activists and academics, it can also be used by states "to legitimize immigration policies for purposes other than the protection of those rights" (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019:124).

Separately, when reviewing Mexico's Migration Law, the Global Detention Project (2013) found that the "official language used in Mexican law and policy to characterize immigration detention is arcane and misleading" (Global Detention Project, 2013). The Project identified "the omission of words or concepts relating to detention, confinement or deprivation of liberty" (Global Detention Project, 2013), as well as the presence of the euphemism of "accommodation" instead of "deprivation of liberty" (Global Detention Project, 2013). Therefore, the use of vague language and euphemisms in Mexico can be traced back to the very Law that governs migration.

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<sup>9</sup> "El cumplimiento de la ley" in Spanish.

<sup>10</sup> Smuggling.

So considering the geopolitical context, it's no wonder that Mexico's discourses on migration are plagued with duplicity. On the one hand, Mexico is a source of migration. It is a Latin American country and as such, shares cultural roots, a colonial past and the burdens of the neoliberal economic model that force Central Americans to migrate. On the other hand, its geographical location, its shared border with the US and its economic dependency on its northern, Anglophone neighbours, have increasingly forced the country to take tougher measures of migration control against its "migrant brothers"<sup>11</sup>. This compromised position is reflected both on the vague language inscribed in its laws and on the euphemistic discourses used in official statements to portray empathy, solidarity and hospitality to migrants while being "one of the most active detaining countries in the world" (Global Detention Project, 2013).

It is in this context of opaque and duplicitous positions regarding migration that we find the newly (and forcefully) opened Migrant Integration Centres. So as the endless tide of asylum seekers crashes into Trump's "virtual wall" (Blake, 2020) of policies and the number of people stuck at Mexico's northern border continues to increase, what kind of response are these MICs? Which position regarding migration do they reflect? And how do they impact the lives and opportunities of the migrants? These issues will be assessed in the following chapter.

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<sup>11</sup> In Spanish: *Hermanos migrantes*. A term commonly used in media and political discourses to refer to Central American migrants. See Graham, 2018.

## **5. EMERGING VARIABLES**

Having reviewed the selective use of terms in migration discourses, the data analysed in this research is divided into two types: subjective (or discursive) and objective (or graphic). Subjective relates to the narratives of specific actors contained in documents, interviews, conferences and speeches, and framed by their own opinions and/or political agendas. Objective consists mainly of photographic and audio-visual materials depicting the MICs, which can be analysed on their own. Accordingly, the analysis of the data is divided into a discourse analysis and a spatial analysis, aiming to understand how the MICs are depicted, and what they are.

### **5.1. Discourse Analysis**

This analysis was performed on discourses of three levels of actors: Government officials, the media and the public. After reviewing the data, 5 groups of emerging variables became apparent, which will be discussed below. A full list of all the variables, as well as a sample of the analysis, can be found in Annex 2.

#### **5.1.1. Euphemisms**

Torre Cantalapiedra's (2019) identified use of euphemisms was used as a lens throughout the discourse analysis, to consider how words and terms are chosen by different actors.

However, some linguistic euphemisms were identified. For instance, the use of the term “returned” to refer to migrants sent to Mexico, instead of “expelled”, to hide the rejection of asylum-seekers. Also, the use of the term “accommodate” to describe services offered at the MICs was noteworthy, as such term has also been used to describe actions of “deprivation of liberty”.

#### **5.1.2. Terms for Migrants / Migration**

The “displacement as migration” dilemma discussed in the theoretical framework is perceptible in all three levels of actors analysed. The long and wordy sentence of “persons who are returned from the US to Mexico and are waiting for asylum”, is used both by the government (STPS, 2019a/b) and the media (Canal Once, 2019), instead of

the simpler term of “asylum-seekers”<sup>12</sup>. Considering the fractioning of the refugee label previously reviewed, it seems that the “asylum-seeker” label is now preceded by – or hidden behind – “migrants who have applied for asylum”.

The word migration was usually followed by various adjectives such as “flux”, “phenomenon”, “problem”, “theme” or “crisis”. However, it's worth noting that when discussing the large numbers of Honduran migrants crossing through Mexico, the Chancellor of Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard, commented that “we could almost say it looks like an exodus” (Ebrard in Gobierno de Mexico, 2019). The scale implied by the term “exodus”, brings to mind Ceriani Cernada’s (2016:107) remarks on how the use of this kind of terms suggests a state of emergency that justifies the following (re)actions as proportionate responses.

Furthermore, the media also describes migrants as being “stranded” (EFE, 2019), “stuck” or even “trapped” (Mukpo, 2019) at the border, “living in limbo” (Blake, 2020) while they wait. In this sense, “waiting” as a state of being is the most prevalent description of migrants in all levels of analysis: the government, the media and the public.

### 5.1.3. Actions and Attitudes Towards Migrants / Migration

Government discourses are filled with verbs such as: “tend to”, “give attention”, “take care”, “support”, “assist”, “help”, as related to migrants, expressed in a context of “solidarity”, “dignity” and, especially, “respect to their Human Rights”. This last concept was also mentioned by Mr Ebrard (in Gobierno de Mexico, 2019). When discussing allegations of kidnapped Honduran migrants in Mexico, the Chancellor of Foreign Affairs stated that the Mexican government's actions were to return the migrants as swiftly as possible to their country of origin, "to avoid violations to their human rights, [because] the longer they stay in [INM's] stations and shelters, the greater the risk that their human rights may be violated" (Ebrard in Gobierno de México, 2019).

Furthermore, he asserts that the speed of these procedures depends on the Honduran Embassy’s cooperation in identifying its nationals, so they can be “returned” to their country. Through this narrative, responsibility for the respect of the migrants’ human rights is shifted away from the Mexican authorities’ ability to control conditions inside its facilities for migrants, and towards the Honduran representatives’ willingness and ability to quickly identify its citizens so they can be deported.

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<sup>12</sup> Migrants were only addressed as “asylum-seekers” in some American media outlets covering the border crisis and the MICs, but not specifically on the Mexican discourses.

#### 5.1.4. The MICs. Purpose, Justification and Description of Spaces / Services

At the opening of the Tijuana MIC, the Labour Undersecretary Horacio Duarte Olivares (who is in charge of the Program of Attention to Migrants at the Northern Border<sup>13</sup>), is quoted saying that

*“This is not a shelter, it is an integration centre that seeks to place migrants in the workplace so they can make a contribution to the economic life of the city, the economic life of the state and, of course, to the economic life of our country”* (STPS, 2019b).

The job-oriented nature of the MICs is highlighted constantly in government officials’ speeches, who also mention that this way, instead of being “a burden”, migrants can “contribute to” or “help to strengthen” the economy (Duarte Olivares, 2019).

Furthermore, the whole initiative is framed by the US’ threat of tariffs and the resulting agreement. Therefore, above all, with these centres, Mexico is “doing its part” regarding migration (Ebrard in Gobierno de Mexico, 2019). The public is constantly reminded that “whatever we have to invest, not spend, [in the MICs] will always be cheaper than having risked having the tariffs with the United States” (Duarte Olivares in Zavala & Gómez, 2019).

The centres are described by officials as places of solidarity and dignity, intended to be “warm” and “welcoming”, where migrants can be “in better conditions to wait for their appointment” and have “greater tranquillity to make decisions” (González in Canal Once, 2019).

However, independent media report migrants at the Tijuana MIC not having sufficient means of protection against the low winter temperatures, in addition to the fact that “the warehouse is not cosy at all” (Elenes in Uniradioinforma, 2020b). Furthermore, reports of chickenpox (Chavez, J.C., Jorgic, D. & Wallis, D., 2020) and COVID-19 (Villagrana, 2020) outbreaks at the Juarez MIC suggest a lack of proper health protocols in the facility.

Alternatively, Echavarri & Lurie (2019) take a more critical stance about the Juarez MIC, stating that “the former *maquiladora*<sup>14</sup> is about as homey as a factory could feel”. They describe the sleeping area as “cavernous”, with “concrete floors and cinder block walls, [where] rows of hundreds of blue metal bunk beds extend in all directions” (Echavarri & Lurie, 2019).

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<sup>13</sup> Of which the MICs are a part.

<sup>14</sup> A foreign-owned factory in Mexico at which imported parts are assembled by lower-paid workers into products for export (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Other rooms in the facility, described as “warehouses” and “resembl[ing] Costco”, contain a “makeshift nursery” and an “impromptu school” where “kids sit at plastic tables”.

These descriptions conflict with government narratives, as they portray the MICs as inhospitable, cold and improvised spaces and offer an overall sense of detachment and emptiness in these places.

#### 5.1.5. Reactions to / Opinions on - the MICs

This variable was analysed mainly at the level of the public, which is comprised of migrants, members of the host community, local activists and employees of the centres. Due to the impossibility to perform fieldwork, the opinions of the public discussed below were taken from news articles.

Reports of the Tijuana MIC with low levels of occupancy, failing to reach “even 100 migrants” per day (Uniradioinforma, 2020b), show migrants prefer to stay elsewhere. Such is the case of Jhoselin Fuentes, from Nicaragua, who remains at the “Juventud 2000” shelter where she claims to feel safe (Fuentes in Zavala & Gómez, 2019), even though she has to pay a small monthly fee to live in a tent inside the facility.

Other migrants, such as Lidia Cruz from Guatemala, express discomfort at being in Mexico. When commenting on her situation at the Juarez MIC, she says: “We were going to the United States to fight, we weren't going to hurt anybody, and we do want to leave here, because we're suffering a lot in this place” (Cruz in EFE, 2019). “This place” could refer to either the MIC specifically, or Mexico in general.

However, members of the local communities are apprehensive about the MICs. In Tijuana, Margarita González mistrusts migrants because “she doesn't know them yet”, but “as long as they don't harm [her], we're all human and they have a right to life” (González in Zavala & Gómez, 2019).

In contrast, residents of Mexicali, in Baja California, have been openly opposed to the creation of a MIC<sup>15</sup> in their community. Claiming not to be “racist, xenophobic or anti-immigrant” (Plevin, 2019), their concerns seemed to be more practical. Karina Lopez Herrera, a local neighbour, said the shelter should be located “not in a residential area, but near the international border. Several migrant shelters are already there [...], so people would have better access to lawyers and doctors” (Plevin, 2019). Furthermore, Sergio Dominguez believed the building selected for the Centre – a former grocery store

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<sup>15</sup> The Mexicali centre was announced by officials to open right after the Tijuana centre, in December 2019, but has yet to be inaugurated. No official reasons for its delay were found.

– “is not an adequate place to house asylum seekers and their children” and worried that the federal government was going to open the centre and “leave the problem for the community” (Plevin, 2019).

Alternatively, employees of the Tijuana MIC allegedly declared that only 7 migrants processed at the Centre were employed. The rest “don’t want jobs” and some were even found in possession of drugs. Hence, they considered that the job placement scheme was not working (Uniradioinforma, 2020b).

Finally, the director of the Scalabrini Centre for Migrants in Tijuana, father Patrick Murphy<sup>16</sup>, qualified the MIC as a “monster of a centre that will never work well” (Murphy in Uniradioinforma, 2020, January 6). He said the government should have spent those resources in supporting the shelters already in place (Murphy in Uniradioinforma, 2020a).

#### 5.1.6. Conclusions

The analysis of the discourses about the MICs shows contrasting realities. The government’s stance is to describe them as a humanitarian response to the migration crisis. They claim to offer dignified spaces that enable migrants to rest, acclimate to the city and find jobs. And yet, if humanitarian arguments do not appease critics, officials remind the public of the threat of tariffs with the US, to show that this investment and the growing presence of migrants are the lesser evil.

Conversely, some media outlets paint a different picture. They describe poorly-planned, underused and barren spaces that the migrants avoid and the neighbours reject.

However, the migrants’ testimonies are seldom included in the news coverage, and the impossibility of performing fieldwork sadly deprived this thesis of their insights and experiences. Nevertheless, the statements obtained from some reports evidence their overall weariness and frustration with their situation. There is a general feeling of placelessness and suspension related to the migrants, their existence defined by - and devoted to - their “waiting”.

As a result, this analysis shows the reality of a project that nobody wants: A government that has never hosted migrants and would probably not do so, were it not for the position it was forced into by geopolitics; citizens that often do not understand nor want these projects in their communities; activists that believe these centres will fail and would do better with those funds; and migrants who would rather be somewhere else.

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<sup>16</sup> Who is referred to in the video as an “activist”.



## 5.2. Spatial Analysis

This section aims to discover the impact that the contradictory discourses identified above, and throughout this research, have on the built environment, namely on the MICs. Therefore, the centres themselves are analysed, through audio-visual and photographic materials. The analytical components for the study are location (within the city and concerning the border), architectural elements (size, scale, shape and building materials) and social elements (uses of spaces, occupancy).

### 5.2.1. Location

The Leona Vicario Migrant Integration Centre in Ciudad Juarez is located about 7km away from the Paso del Norte Port of Entry (Figure 7). This means a 1.25 hr walk or a 14 min car ride away from the PoE where migrants must cross constantly to attend court hearings and other procedures regarding their asylum process.

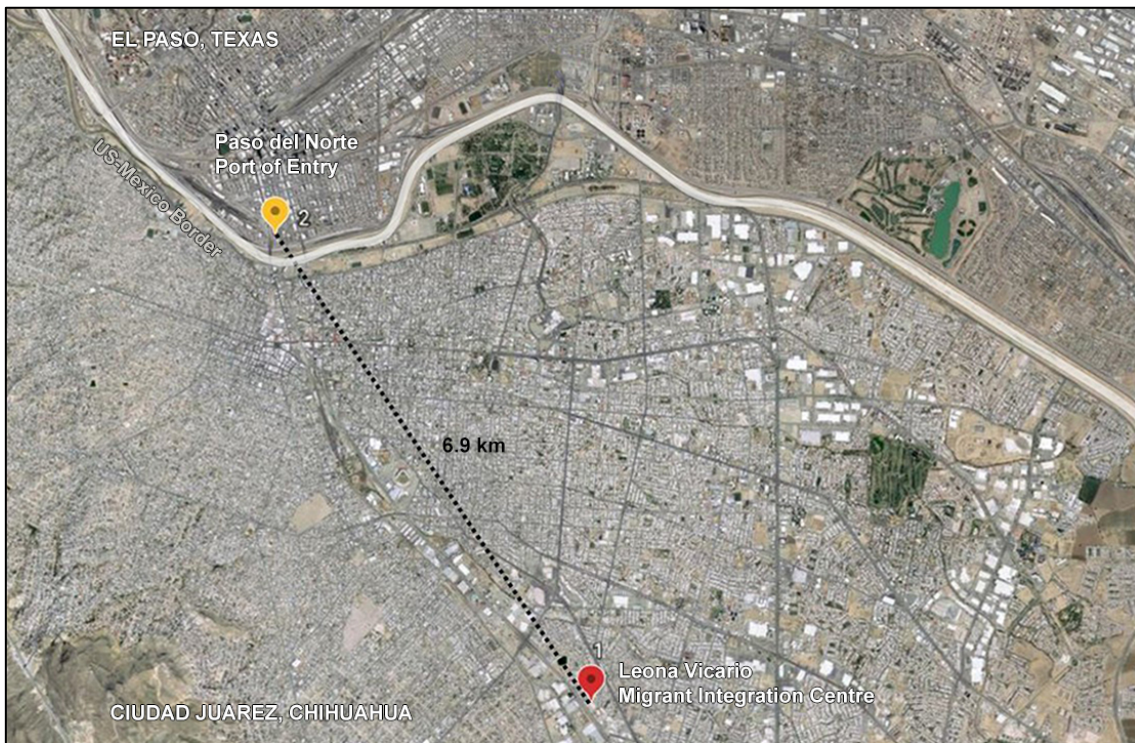


Figure 7. Leona Vicario MIC location in Ciudad Juarez, in reference to the US Port of Entry. Source: Original by author.

Alternatively, the Carmen Serdan Migrant Integration Centre in Tijuana is about 16 km away from the San Ysidro Port of Entry (Figure 8), which means a walk of over 3 hrs, or 22 min by car to the PoE.



Figure 8. Carmen Serdan MIC location in Tijuana, in reference to the US Port of Entry. Source: Original by author.

Although the Juarez centre's distance to the border is almost half than that of the Tijuana centre, both are significantly far from the PoEs. Considering that both cities are notoriously crime-ridden and their temperatures rise to over 30°C in summer, a 3-hour or 6-hour daily walk, through desolate highways and unfamiliar neighbourhoods, is hardly recommended for vulnerable migrants. Therefore, the border becomes far removed when migrants can only access it through paid transportation.

Furthermore, the MICs are located in industrial areas, surrounded by -but separated from- low-income neighbourhoods. As revealed in the previous section, residents' animosity towards the centres and the migrants, as well as the physical barriers of the industrial facilities (such as big parking lots, walled plots and long and wide highways) further segregate the migrants from the local communities. Hence, the centres are isolated and detached places, islands of migrants disconnected from the urban fabric.

### 5.2.2. Architectural Elements

Both centres are industrial facilities adapted for human habitation, so they both have the same architectural style: big, open, industrial spaces with metallic structures, concrete block walls, CGI roofs and polished concrete floors (Figures 9 and 10<sup>17</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> For the Juarez centre, a base map of the internal arrangement was obtained (Annex2). For the Tijuana centre, the distribution of spaces is assumed by author based on the images and footage analysed.

# LEONA VICARIO MIC, CIUDAD JUAREZ



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Figure 9. Layout of the Leona Vicario Migrant Integration Centre in Ciudad Juarez, with images of the spaces. Source: Original by author. Base map and image references in Annex 2.

## CARMEN SERDAN MIC, TIJUANA



Figure 10. Layout of the Carmen Serdan Migrant Integration Centre in Tijuana, with images of the spaces. Source: Original by author. Image references in Annex 2.

These buildings were designed for manufacturing processes, where machinery of all sizes could manoeuvre, production lines could be set up and industrial materials could be processed, considering toxic fumes and residues. However, for human habitation, factors such as thermal and acoustic isolation, privacy, accessibility and safety must be considered.

The programme for both centres is mostly the same: a shelter area with dormitories, toilets and showers; an eating area with kitchen and *tortilladora*<sup>18</sup> facilities; children areas such as a school and a nursery; and an administrative area with offices of all the necessary institutions for job placement (INM, Ministry of Finance, Social Security Institute, and National Employment Service, among others). The Juarez centre also contains a “multi-purpose room”.

Nevertheless, the transformation of the spaces for this programme was done not through architecture or construction, but by introducing furniture and reversible solutions: movable bunk beds to sleep in, food trucks as kitchens, drywall partitions and portable toilets (in the Tijuana centre only). Hence, the reversibility of the adaptations and the resulting spaces speak of impermanence. The industrial qualities of the constructions are still the predominant features of the places, and the high ceilings and big, open spaces, offer no intimacy nor privacy of any kind, features needed to associate a space with a home.

Furthermore, specific elements are worth noting. At the Juarez centre, a picture of the entrance (Figure 11) shows a sign by the door that reads “Humanitarian Response” in all caps (Figure 12), but it is unclear what kind of humanitarian standards were followed, to qualify the facility as such.

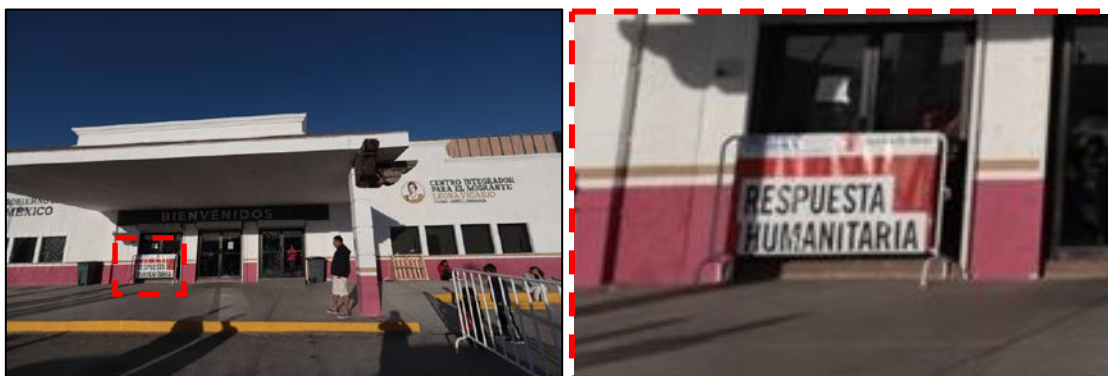


Figure 11. Leona Vicario MIC Entrance. Source: Relaciones Exteriores, 2020. / Figure 12. Sign that reads "Humanitarian Response".

<sup>18</sup> Area for making fresh tortillas.

And the kitchen, or more specifically, the choice of term to name the kitchen is also noteworthy (Figure 13). *Cocina comunitaria*, or “community kitchen”, is a term often used to refer to grassroots efforts of well-knit communities, or local groups, to provide food for the poor or the homeless, a term akin to “soup kitchen”, but with the concept of “community” expressly in the title. However, this kitchen is run by the army in a truck that speaks of everything but “community”. Indeed, this seems like another euphemism: The use of a name associated with warmth and familiarity to refer to a space that physically represents an institution known to terrorize and oppress communities<sup>19</sup>.



Figure 13. Army truck with the name "community kitchen" on it. Source: Echavarri & Lurie, 2019.

### 5.2.3. Social Elements

The centres were established mainly to service the Central American migrants deported through MPP (although officials have stated that other migrants who request shelter will also be accommodated). Hence, the Juarez centre showcases a mural of two outstretched arms with clasped hands, one made of the Mexican flag, while the other made out of several Latin American flags (Figure 16 and image 7 on Figure 9). Other

<sup>19</sup> It is outside the scope of this investigation to cover the human rights’ violations and accusations of rape, forced disappearances and murders at the hand of the Mexican Army, but interested readers could start by learning of their involvement in the case of the 43 missing students in Ayotzinapa here: <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-enforced-disappearance-of-the-ayotzinapa-students>

than that mural, it's not possible to discern how else the users' different nationalities and cultural identities are considered in these spaces.

There seem to be intentions to engage migrants in different activities, like in Figure 14 where a board at the Juarez centre calls for offerings for the Day of the Dead celebrations, or in Figure 15, where a man stares at a board of weekly activities at the Tijuana centre.



Figure 14. Daily activities at LVMIC. Source: Echavarrí & Lurie, 2019. / Figure 15. Weekly activities at CSMIC. Source: Carlos González Gtez, 2020.

However, Figure 16 shows migrants simply sitting around in the hall at the Juarez centre, “waiting”, while Figure 17 shows the dormitories in the Tijuana centre with very few occupied bunk beds, which questions who actually partakes in these “weekly activities”.

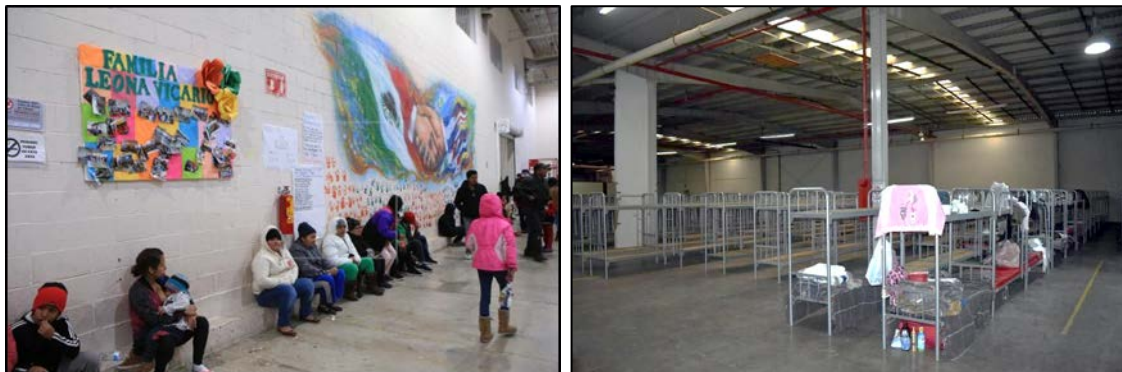


Figure 16. Migrants sitting in the hall at the Juarez Centre. Source: EFE, 2019. / Figure 17. Empty bunkbeds at the Tijuana Centre. Source: Corpus, 2019.







Therefore these images show conflicting realities, where intentions to engage migrants are hindered by the migrants' absence and, more importantly, by their overall state of waiting.

### 5.2.3. Comparisons and Conclusions

In the final part of this chapter, a comparison is made between the architectural qualities of the MICs and the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) detention centres for migrants in

the US, to comment on the underlying messages the spaces have. Criteria commonly agreed on for humanitarian responses will also be analysed, to detect how these centres are (or are not) indeed humanitarian.

Figure 18 shows a comparison of images of CBP detention centres (left) and MICs (right). Regardless of context, these images have very similar characteristics. The only discernible differences between them relate to the “deprivation of liberty” aspect, as shown mainly by chain-link fencing and the Mylar blankets.

 <p>1. CBP Migrant Processing Facility in McAllen, Texas. <i>The Guardian</i>.</p>	 <p>2. Leona Vicario MIC, on opening day. <i>Canal Once</i>.</p>
 <p>3. Dormitory at a Florida detention centre for migrant children. <i>LA Times</i>.</p>	 <p>4. Dormitory in the Carmen Serdan MIC. <i>El Sol de Tijuana</i></p>
 <p>5. Migrant holding cell at a CBP placement centre in Nogales, Arizona. <i>USA Today</i>.</p>	 <p>6. Industrial Nave of the Carmen Serdan MIC before remodeling. <i>Reporteros en Movimiento</i></p>

*Figure 18. Table comparing images of CBP Detention Centres in the US to the MICs in Mexico. Source: images referenced in Annex 2. Edited by author.*



At the CBP detention centres, migrants are held in custody while processed, which is generally “no longer than 72 hours” (American Immigration Council, 2020a). Hence, these facilities are bare, with minimum adaptations as comfort and hospitality are not required features. Indeed these spaces are most likely intended to be cold and inhospitable.

However, there should not be as many visible similarities between those places and the MICs, whose purpose is supposed to be welcoming and integrating migrants. Furthermore, these similarities confuse the migrants themselves. Echavarri & Lurie (2019) explain how most migrants that arrive at the Juarez centre were first detained in the US and then deported to Mexico “with little explanation”. Therefore, “many are in shock [and] *some believe that they are still in the United States*<sup>20</sup>”. Although this last statement was not further elaborated, it’s possible to see, from an architectural standpoint, how the similarities between both types of facilities would contribute to such confusion.

Finally, when reviewing IOM’s guidelines for shelter and accommodation for migrants, the MICs resemble three types: collective centres and reception and transit centres, which are temporary settlements as defined in Figure 19, and institutional shelters, which “typically house multiple people and are used in situations where shelter is needed immediately or in an emergency” (IOM, 2019:44).

Collective centres	When there are significant numbers of migrants in a particular place, the migrants may find accommodation in pre-existing public buildings or community facilities, such as schools, factories, barracks, community centres, town halls, gymnasiums, hotels, warehouses or unfinished buildings. These are often located in urban settings.
Reception and transit centres	Reception and transit centres are often used by migrants on arrival in a new location, pending transfer to longer-term shelter or accommodation, or before departure from a location.

Figure 19. Excerpt of IOM’s table for types of temporary settlements for migrants. Source: IOM, 2019:42.

The standards required for migrants housed in institutional shelters recommend “private sleeping quarters for residents, with their own beds, and with sufficient and secure space to store their belongings” (IOM, 2019:44). Where private sleeping quarters are not possible<sup>21</sup>, communal spaces are allowed, but the handbook clarifies that

*“In shelters of this kind, it may be difficult to preserve the dignity of residents, protect their safety and prevent health problems; they should therefore be*

<sup>20</sup> Cursive added by author for emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> “for instance in an emergency setting where shelter needs to be found quickly and existing spaces are adapted to house vulnerable migrants in a dorm-like setting” (IOM, 2019:44)

*avoided except in circumstances when emergency shelter is required or used as transitional accommodation for short periods of time.” (IOM, 2019:44)*

In any case, the MICs are neither temporary settlements nor institutional shelters used during an emergency. They are instead improvised spaces aimed at housing many migrants for indefinite periods of time. They are an experiment, taking place in a terminological grey area where they comply with some guidelines but not others, and it is not clear to which standards they should be held.

This analysis has highlighted many problems with the MIC. First, their locations are ill-suited for the migrants' needs, which drives them to choose other shelters closer to the border or even camp outside the ports of entry. Second, the industrial facilities are segregated from the local urban fabric and poorly adapted to human habitation, making them inhospitable and deprived of identity. Third, their remarkable similarities with the CBP detention centres contradict the intended message of warmth and welcoming. Instead, they reinforce the underlying message of rejection of migrants.

Therefore, the impact that the contradictory discourses regarding migration have on the built environment is significant. The MICs are clear reflections of these contradicting discourses. More so, they are their spatialization. The Mexican governments' duplicitous stances on migration are materialized in duplicitous places that claim to be integrating but are indeed rejecting, through sterile spaces, the very people they accommodate. Ultimately, the MICs are placeless spaces for transient people. The following chapter discusses the implications of this.

## 6. DISCUSSION

After analysing the discourses and spaces of the centres, the interplay of two concepts became clear: spatialization and transience, which will be discussed below.

### 6.1. Spatialization: MICs as the materialization of euphemisms

Spatialization is used here to reference how the discourses around migration become spatialized. That is, how they take –or are given- spatial form. More specifically, the data reviewed shows the MICs to be physical representations of the euphemistic discursive practices used by the Mexican government.

As previously mentioned, Torre Cantalapiedra (2019:119) identified concealment and legitimation practices used by Mexican authorities on discourses regarding migration, highlighting the use of euphemisms as conceptual metaphors. This research argues that the centres are the embodiment of these concealment and legitimation practices. Indeed, their conversion into physical spaces.

The analysis showed how the discourses try to legitimize the MICs (and the Mexican government's treatment of migrants) by describing warm, welcoming and “humanitarian” places where migrants can find jobs and acclimate to the cities. However, the spaces themselves reflect obligation, improvisation and detachment. With barely any adaptations done to the industrial architecture, the centres are cold (literally and figuratively) and unwelcoming, revealing the message the discourses tried to conceal: the rejection of migrants.

Furthermore, if, as their name states, their purpose is to “integrate” migrants, the MICs seem to suggest that integration into a community is solely achieved by providing employment. Conversely, integration is a long and convoluted sociocultural process that, in this case, is further complicated by the fact that the migrants did not choose to integrate there. Moreover, the underlying message of “temporality” contradicts integration: the jobs, legal status and lives the migrants make in Mexico are not permanent. They can and will be taken away once their asylum process is concluded.

Hence, the only purpose the MICs seem to serve is to show that the Mexican government is “doing its part” regarding migration, which in turn relieves pressure from the US government for its policy changes and the effects they have on asylum-seekers.

## 6.2. Transience: Waiting in Non-Places

The second concept, transience, refers to the above mentioned “temporality”. “Migrants in transit”, a term commonly used in Mexico, describes migrants and their movement. It expresses the fact that they have not *arrived* in Mexico, but they are merely *crossing through* on their way north. However, in the discourses analysed, the term that emerged as more commonly used was “migrants waiting”. This change evokes neither arrival nor movement, but a pause.

“Waiting”, as experienced by displaced people, has been studied by authors such as Haas (2017) and Brun (2015). Haas examined the experiences of asylum-seekers in the US, while Brun studied Georgian IDPs<sup>22</sup>. Their findings on the negative repercussions that waiting has on the attitudes and aspirations of the displaced can apply to Central American migrants at the US-Mexico border.

Haas (2017) describes waiting as a suspended state of existential insecurity, a “limbo” derived from the asylum claimant’s “dual positionality of citizen-in-waiting/deportee-in-waiting” (Haas, 2017:77). Haas illustrates the distress felt by asylum seekers who are waiting for their resolutions at their intended destination but are legally unable to begin their life there. She explains how “waiting” occupies all of their time<sup>23</sup> and causes them new/renewed feelings of suffering: uncertainty, powerlessness, alienation and despair.

Alternatively, Brun (2015) talks about the experiences of IDPs waiting in protracted displacement to return home. It could be argued that Central American migrants share the worst of both groups: they are waiting in displacement, but not in their intended destination and not for the return home. They seek to be granted asylum somewhere else, somewhere they are close enough to see but unable to arrive. Hence, their waiting is also defined by a sense of transience, of being “in-between”.

Furthermore, their transience is omnipresent. Their legal status and jobs in Mexico are temporary, and the spaces that accommodate them reflect impermanence. Even the label they carry speaks of movement: “migrants” will eventually “migrate”. They are waiting in transit.

“Waiting” can be linked to physical spaces by Marc Augé’s (1995) concept of “Non-Places”. The sense of placelessness identified in the spatial analysis and the

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<sup>22</sup> Internally Displaced People.

<sup>23</sup> “The asylum system entailed a seemingly endless series of waiting events” (Haas, 2017:80), for instance, waiting to hear from their lawyers, for paperwork, for their hearings, for results, etc.

descriptions of waiting as a suspended state, echo Augé's depiction of the non-places. He describes them as spaces where a person

*"Is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences [there]. He is still weighed down by the previous day's worries, the next day's concerns; but he is distanced from them temporarily by the environment of the moment."* (Augé, 1995:103).

Augé describes non-places as products of supermodernity, "installations needed for the accelerated circulation of passengers and goods" (Augé, 1995:34), and the transitory nature of their users makes them spaces "which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (Augé, 1995:77-78). He exemplifies them with airports, train stations, commercial centres or "the extended transit camps where the planet's refugees are parked" (Augé, 1995:34), which brings up an important distinction.

Refugees in camps, especially those in protracted situations, can also be said to be "waiting" (for conflicts to be over, for citizenship status or resettlement, among other things). The difference is that in refugee camps, many levels of place-making and place-attachment have been found, of creating and re-creating identities and even of preservation of culture and traditions<sup>24</sup>. Conversely, the MICs offer almost no possibilities of attachment, belonging or identity. In this sense, the MICs are non-places. Moreover, they have been intentionally created as non-places. It is not an unforeseen outcome or a by-product, they are deliberately transitory and impermanent.

Another difference between refugee camps and the MICs is visibility. Refugees in camps have, on occasions, used them to draw attention to their plight, like in the case of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan, who use the camps as sites of "political activism and irreducible resistance" (Achilli, 2014). Conversely, the MICs' detachedness could obscure the migrants' ordeals. Therefore, the instances where Central American migrants have achieved most notoriety have been while moving. That is, with the migrant caravans<sup>25</sup> (Figure 20).

Going forward, one must wonder about the impacts that the continuation of this dynamic of policies could have on the migrants and the landscape of the border cities.

If restrictions to asylum in the US continue, while the issues causing displacement in Central America remain unaddressed, migrants will likely continue to swell towns across the Mexican border. Further research will be needed to understand the effects that a

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<sup>24</sup> That is not to argue in favour of refugee camps, only to show how they differ from the MICs and the non-places in terms of place attachment.

<sup>25</sup> The term 'migrant caravans' emerged as a way to describe the large groups of people moving by land across international borders (Astles, n.d.)

growing population of temporary workers and residents will have on job security or rent, and how this could impact the livelihoods and lifestyles of the border cities. Furthermore, research should also examine the impacts that the expansion of non-places throughout the cities could have on their sense of place and cultural identity. Will they become an extension of the migrants' existential limbo? Or can the MICs be transformed into the places of integration and welcome they claim to be?



*Figure 20. Central American migrant caravan in Mexico, headed for the United States. Source: Arias in Martínez, 2018.*

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The initial interest for this thesis was, as expressed by the research question, to identify how the different politics around displacement could manifest in physical spaces. To address this, Mexico's Migrant Integration Centres was selected as a case study. Departing from the knowledge that the Mexican government uses euphemisms as conceptual metaphors to conceal and legitimise actions of migration control, the research sought to identify this practice in the built environment of the MICs.

An analysis of the discourses around the MICs and the spaces themselves revealed contradictory realities between their discursive and spatial dimensions, which can be understood as the spatialization of the euphemistic practices of the Mexican government. Hence, displacement politics, exemplified here as migration discourses, become spatialized and are expressed in physical form by the spaces occupied by the displaced.

However, over the course of the research, the concept of transience gained importance, as it was present in both in the discourses, - through the constant use of the word "waiting" - and the spaces analysed. This opened new lines of enquiry regarding the concept of waiting itself, as experienced by displaced persons, and the spatial dimension of transience as expressed by the concept of the non-places.

This showed Mexico's MICs to be, above all, spaces meant for – and defined by – waiting. They are, too, the spatialization of the existential limbo the migrants are stuck in. Furthermore, they actualize and reinforce this sense of suspended life through an architecture (or lack thereof) of impermanence. They are non-places whose improvised and experimental nature is made evident by the contradictions regarding their purpose and operation: they seek to *integrate* migrants, but only *temporarily*. They are *not shelters*, but they *will house* people indefinitely. They are meant to be *warm and welcoming*, but the spaces are *cold, bare and inhospitable*. They are the *humanitarian response* of a government that was *bullied* into offering it. But worst of all, they are supposed to ensure the *respect* of the human rights of migrants, but their very existence already *violates* these rights, as it legitimises -and distracts from- the broader efforts of externalization of borders aimed at deterring (or ending) asylum.

This research confirms that the spaces where vulnerable, displaced groups are held reflect the politics and practices of those who build and run them. This has a direct and profound impact on the psyche of the displaced, whose traumas and hardships are only exacerbated by complex legal barriers, endless waiting and impersonal spaces.

Rejection of migrants is imbued in most political agendas and it's transmitted to them in many ways: verbally, socially, bureaucratically and now, spatially too. Eventually, the hopelessness of their situation and their state of indefinite suspension causes many migrants to give up and accept to return to their countries of origin, which for many of them means a death sentence.

## **Recommendations**

Migration does not negate displacement. Being a migrant does not mean you have not been displaced. However, as displacement occurs in the countries of origin and the labelling is made in the destination places -by States intent on rejecting foreigners-, delegitimation and determent tactics are more easily used to discourage and break asylum-seekers.

The Central American migrants represent decades of failed migration and development policies from national and international governments in the region. Therefore, their visibility must be enhanced. The causes that forced them to move need to be made visible. They must own their displacement and assert themselves as refugees under the Cartagena Declaration, which Mexico has signed, to demand the protections that are due to them. In other words, they must take the labelling into their own hands. To achieve this, informed and organized migrants could seek linkages with local activists and artists to plan interventions on the urban space and demonstrations throughout the city that shed light on their presence and their plight.

Furthermore, the migrants should weaponize their waiting. They could demonstrate it by occupying public spaces and forcing their surroundings to wait with them: for their claims to be heard, for their cause to be seen and for better responses to be provided.

Finally, they should claim the MICs. As they are, these centres are tools used by the Mexican government to legitimise its actions regarding migration and by the US government to conceal its targeting of asylum at the border. Therefore, migrants should claim and transform the MICs from non-places into spaces of political activism and resistance where they can organise, foster dialogue and devise paths to real and sustainable integration.



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## ANNEX 1. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS SAMPLES

### Sample 1.

1.1	<b>Inaugura Gobierno el primer Centro para Migrantes; ofrecerá 50 mil empleos en Ciudad Juárez</b>	<i>The title advertising the opening of a centre for migrants is directly followed by the fact that it carries a significant job offer (50 thousand jobs)</i>
1.2	El recinto a cargo del Subsecretario Horacio Duarte <b>ofrecerá alojamiento, servicios de salud, seguridad y vinculación laboral; se proveerá de cocina, comedores, habitaciones y regaderas.</b>	"Safety" is included as a service offered, along with health and job placement.
1.3	El Subsecretario de Empleo y Productividad Laboral, el delegado estatal del INAMI, Héctor Padilla y el delegado de Bienestar, Juan Carlos Loera recorrieron hoy las instalaciones.	<i>The Centre's job oriented nature is highlighted by the fact that the Undersecretary of Employment and Labour Productivity is the person in charge of it, instead of an official of the National Institute for Migration (INM)</i>
1.4	El Gobierno de México inauguró hoy el primer Centro Integrador para Migrantes "Leona Vicario" que <b>ofrecerá atención integral a personas que son retornadas</b> desde Estados Unidos a México y <b>que están a la espera de asilo.</b>	The target of the Centre's "integral attention offer" are "people who are returned from the United States to Mexico and who are awaiting asylum".
1.5	La estrategia integral de <b>"Atención a Migrantes en la Frontera Norte"</b> –encargo del presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador– será operada por el Subsecretario de Empleo de la Secretaría del Trabajo federal, Horacio Duarte Olivares, quien <b>garantizará que se ofrezca alojamiento, servicios de salud, seguridad y oportunidades laborales.</b>	The Centre is part of an integral strategy called "Attention to Migrants at the Northern Border", <i>but instead of being carried out by the INM, it falls to the Labour Ministry. This suggests that "attention" is not meant as "assistance" but more like "enabling livelihoods" [for people who are described to be "waiting" / in transitory state].</i>
1.6	Además, el recinto funcionará como un centro de acopio y guardarropa que contará con áreas específicas para <b>la estancia</b> de niños, mujeres, hombres y en su caso, para familias enteras.	The Centre will function as a "collection centre" and "wardrobe" with specific areas for children, women, men and families.
1.7	Este jueves, el Subsecretario de Empleo y Productividad Laboral, Horacio Duarte Olivares; el Delegado Estatal del INAMI, Héctor Padilla; y el Delegado Estatal del Bienestar, Juan Carlos Loera abrieron el "Leona Vicario" y realizaron un recorrido por las instalaciones y anunciaron el <b>fortalecimiento de la economía</b> en la Zona Norte y sus ciudades fronterizas.	The officials in charge toured the facilities and announced the strengthening of the economy in the North Zone and border cities
1.8	Ahí, en Ciudad Juárez adelantaron que en los próximos días operarán también otros centros en Tijuana y en Mexicali.	There will be two more Centres opening in the following days in Tijuana and Mexicali
1.9	"Lo que buscamos con este centro es <b>integrar a los migrantes y colocarlos en la vida laboral.</b> El objetivo es que los <b>migrantes que están en México nos ayuden a fortalecer la economía</b> de la frontera norte. En unos días más estaremos abriendo también en Tijuana y en Mexicali.	Integrate and place migrants into the work life Migrants in México to help strengthen the economy

1.10	“Lo que busca el Gobierno de México es <b>dar atención de respeto a los derechos humanos de los migrantes</b> , de <b>solidaridad</b> , y para lograr <b>que se integren al mundo laboral</b> . Vamos a <b>apoyar y a atender</b> a los <b>migrantes con dignidad</b> ”, afirmó el subsecretario Duarte Olivares.	Mentions of respect to human rights of migrants, of treating them with solidarity and integrating them to the labour market. Support and tend to migrants with dignity
1.11	En su área administrativa, el centro "Leona Vicario" contará con oficinas del Servicio de Administración Tributaria (SAT), el Instituto Mexicano para el Seguro Social (IMSS), y sucursales bancarias.	There will be offices of institutions that can issue the necessary papers for work (treasury), health services (social welfare) and bank branches at the Centre. <i>No mention of INM presence...</i>
1.12	Además, tendrá una oficina del Servicio Nacional de Empleo (SNE), que tiene como misión <b>colocar perfiles en empresas</b> adscritas al programa de atención a migrantes.	There will also be an office of the National Employment Service to link migrant's profiles to companies ascribed to the program
1.13	“Buscamos que la <b>atención a los migrantes no sea un lastre</b> , sino <b>que puedan sumarse a trabajar</b> . Hemos encontrado buena respuesta de los empresarios, de las cámaras empresariales para ofertarnos fuentes de empleo. Esperamos que muchos <b>migrantes colaboren con la economía</b> de las ciudades fronterizas de México.	<i>Emphasis on this attention to migrants not being a “burden”, but instead, they will contribute to the economy of the border cities</i>
1.14	“Colaboramos con el Gobierno de Chihuahua y con el de Ciudad Juárez y esperamos que muchos <b>migrantes colaboren en la economía de ciudades</b> fronterizas”, manifestó el Subsecretario.	<i>Repetition of the statement on migrants collaborating to the economy of border cities.</i>
1.15	De acuerdo con estudios de la Secretaría del Trabajo federal, en el norte del país se tienen al menos 50 mil vacantes para los <b>migrantes</b> en el sector manufacturero y agrícola.	The 50 thousand vacancies are in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors
1.16	Se espera que, en el transcurso del año, las ofertas de empleo también vayan hacia el Bajío y el resto del país.	Job offers are expected to expand to the rest of the country. <i>(How would this work if migrants are waiting their court dates in the US?)</i>
1.17	Como parte de sus tareas, el centro integrador <b>ofrecerá capacitación para empleos</b> que demande cada ciudad y contará con <b>cocina, una tortilladora, un comedor y regaderas</b> .	The Centre will offer training for jobs
1.18	Además, el gobierno <b>dará a los migrantes un plan de movilidad</b> para que, de ser el caso, sean trasladados hasta el lugar de su trabajo junto a su familia y tengan un fácil <b>acceso a la vivienda</b> .	The government will provide a “mobility plan” so that migrants can be transferred to their employment site along with their family and they can access housing. <i>(again, hinting at “permanence” instead of “transience”)</i>
1.19	"Nosotros <b>nos haremos cargo</b> de los costos asociados a tu transportación y la de tu familia en caso de venir acompañado".	We will “take care” of the costs associated with your transportation <i>(feeling of benevolence, of doing a favour)</i>
1.20	Los <b>migrantes</b> interesados en <b>obtener empleo</b> podrán solicitarlo en el Centro Integrador para el migrante "Leona Vicario" a partir del 5 de agosto.	“Migrants interested in obtaining employment”

STPS (2019, August 1)

## Sample 2.

2.1	<b>Abre Centro Integrador en Tijuana con servicios de hospedaje, alimentación, salud, empleo y educación</b>	<i>This title highlights the services offered at the centre, which are the same as in Juarez, but here education is also mentioned</i>
2.2	Horacio Duarte Olivares inauguró el Centro Integrador “Carmen Serdán” para atender a personas retornadas a México en espera de asilo en Estados Unidos	Again mentions its target are “people returned to Mexico to await asylum”
2.3	Se habilitarán oficinas del INAMI, SAT, IMSS y del Servicio Nacional de Empleo para que las y los migrantes tramiten documentación oficial y sean vinculados con empresas que les garanticen empleos bien remunerados y con prestaciones de ley	Offices to be included in the Centre are the same as in Juarez but <i>now INAMI (INM, National Institute of Migration) headlines the list.</i> Mentions the jobs offered will be well-paid and with benefits
2.4	Como parte de la estrategia nacional para atender a la población migrante en la frontera norte, Horacio Duarte Olivares, Coordinador Nacional del Plan de Atención a Migrantes, inauguró hoy el Centro Integrador “Carmen Serdán” que recibirá a las personas retornadas a México con espera de asilo en Estados Unidos y les garantizará un espacio digno y seguro, alimentación, servicio médico, empleo y educación.	“to serve the migrant population at the northern border” Mentions the Attention plan and again refers to “people returned to Mexico awaiting asylum” The centre will guarantee a dignified and safe space, and lists other services
2.5	Se trata del segundo Centro Integrador para Migrantes (CIM) instalado en ciudades fronterizas, el cual ofrece servicios como hospedaje y alimentación gratuitos, servicios médicos y de emergencia las 24 horas del día, dental, psicológica, talleres y actividades lúdicas, así como oficinas móviles del Servicio Nacional de Empleo, Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, Sistema de Administración Tributaria y el Instituto Nacional de Migración.	Mentions the Juarez Centre and describes a longer list of services, among which stand out dental, psychological, workshops and recreational activities. <i>Specifies</i> there's emergency medical attention 24 hours
2.6	Asimismo, se promoverá la vinculación laboral a través del Servicio Nacional de Empleo (SNE) y con convenios de colaboración de la Industria Manufacturera, cuyas bolsas de trabajo deben garantizar empleos bien remunerados, con prestaciones de ley y seguridad social.	The job markets in the manufacturing industry must guarantee well-paid jobs with benefits and social security. <i>(shifts responsibility for job availability and quality away from the government and towards the industry's job markets)</i>
2.7	“Estamos arrancando el día de hoy el Centro Integrador Migrante ‘Carmen Serdán’ en la Ciudad de Tijuana y pronto también estaremos abriendo uno más en Mexicali y Matamoros, Tamaulipas, con lo cual estaremos teniendo cuatro centros para la atención al migrante como mecanismos para ayudar a que los migrantes centroamericanos puedan encontrar un empleo formal, afirmó en conferencia de prensa Horacio Duarte Olivares.	The next centres will be in Mexicali and Matamoros ( <i>second mention of Mexicali, first of Matamoros</i> ), totalling four centres as mechanisms to help Central American migrants ( <i>only migrants from Central America?</i> ) to find formal employment ( <i>avoid informality / illegality</i> )
2.8	El también Subsecretario de Empleo y Productividad Laboral de la STPS recordó que desde octubre pasado fue inaugurado el Centro Integrador “Leona Vicario” en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, donde se han atendido a más de 7 mil migrantes en donde se han otorgado 180 mil comidas gratuitas, educación continua, talleres de computación, acceso a la Biblioteca Circulante y a la estimulación cognitiva.	References the Juarez Centre's work, quantifying how many people have been serviced and how many “free meals” have been served, as well as education, computer skills workshops and access to libraries and cognitive stimulation. <i>All of these services were not initially included in the services of said centre, which had been operating</i>



		for 4 months by then (evolving / improving?)
2.9	<p>“Reitero que <b>este no es un albergue</b>, este es un Centro Integrador <b>que busca colocar laboralmente a los migrantes y con ello tengan una aportación a la vida económica de la ciudad, a la vida económica del estado y evidentemente a la vida económica de nuestro país</b>”.</p>	<p><i>Important distinction:</i> The undersecretary is quoted saying that “this is not a shelter, it is an integration centre that aims to place migrants labour-wise [so they can make] a contribution to the economic life of the city, the economic life of the state and evidently the economic life of the country”</p>
2.10	<p>“La labor del Gobierno de México es muy importante para que los <b>migrantes logren la integración a la comunidad y contribuyan a la economía de la región</b>. Este gran esfuerzo será replicado en los otros Centros Integradores, donde <b>garantizaremos la atención a la salud, a las adicciones</b>, así como estancias para niñas y niños y seguimiento a familias enteras”, precisó el funcionario federal.</p>	<p>The work of the government is important for migrants “to achieve integration to the community and contribute to the economy of the region” Specifically mentions attention to addiction (<i>recurring problem among migrants at the border?</i>)</p>
2.11	<p>Además de los servicios <b>brindados</b> en CIM, una de las partes fundamentales del Plan de Atención a Migrantes en la Frontera Norte es <b>la incorporación de este grupo poblacional a empleos dignos y socialmente útiles</b>, por ello se creó <b>la bolsa de empleo para migrante</b> que consiste en <b>su vinculación laboral a centros de trabajo</b> a través del Servicios Nacional del Empleo, para ello dentro de los CIM están instaladas oficinas de generación de documentación tales como el Instituto Nacional de Migración, SAT, IMSS y SNE.</p>	<p>It is fundamental for the MIC to incorporate this population group to dignified and socially useful jobs. There’s a specific job market for migrants</p>
2.12	<p>El formato de registro para los <b>migrantes solicitantes del empleo</b> contendrá campos a llenar como:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Datos personales</li> <li>• Escolaridad y otros conocimientos</li> <li>• Expectativas y experiencia laboral</li> <li>• Situación laboral</li> </ul>	<p>Describes the registration format for migrants applying for employment (“migrants job-seekers” = <i>short term used when talking about jobs. When talking about asylum, instead of “migrants asylum-seekers”, the lengthy “migrants / people returned to Mexico and awaiting asylum” is used</i>)</p>
2.13	<p>El Subsecretario de Empleo, Horacio Duarte agregó que se busca <b>revertir la estigmatización al fenómeno migratorio</b>.</p>	<p>The undersecretary is quoted saying that a goal is to “revert the stigmatization [of] the migration phenomenon”</p>
2.14	<p>“Vamos a <b>honrar los compromisos</b> del Gobierno de México y reiteramos que no haber hecho nada en <b>el tema migratorio, implicaba tener repercusiones de los llamados aranceles</b> que el Gobierno norteamericano buscaba imponerle a México, eso hubiera devastado <b>la economía</b> del país, desde la frontera norte hasta la frontera sur. Por eso el presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador y en el Gobierno de México actuamos con mucha <b>responsabilidad</b> y estamos seguros de que de esta manera vamos a tener la <b>cobertura y atención</b> necesaria”, refirió el Coordinador Nacional, Horacio Duarte.</p>	<p>It’s noted that this Centre arises from the commitments made by the Government of Mexico to the US in terms of “the migration theme”. It’s explained that to have “done nothing” (i.e. not opened the centre) the repercussions would’ve been devastating for the country’s economy. <i>It seems that the whole document is trying to convince or justify the MIC’s existence, first with the figures from the Juarez Centre (success story), then with the opening of other centres in Mexicali and Matamoros (there will be more, not just this one, here), then with the contribution to the economy (it will be better for everyone) and now with the threat of the tariffs (this is the lesser evil).</i></p>

2.15	Además del Centro Integrador “Leona Vicario” y del Centro Integrador en Tijuana “Carmen Serdán”, se instalarán otros albergues en Mexicali y Reynosa	Another reference to the Juarez Centre and the upcoming Mexicali and Reynosa ones. <i>(Before it said Matamoros. Both cities in the state of Tamaulipas but significantly different... which one is it?)</i>
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STPS (2019, December 11)

## COLOUR SCHEME FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

### 1. Euphemisms

- Detection / rescue of migrants
- Detention / Accommodation of migrants
- Deprivation of liberty / Protection of migrants
- Forced Return / Assisted return
- Deportation / Reintegration
- Respect for the Law

### 2. Terms for migrants / Migration

- Migrants in transit / People in situation of mobility
- Returned / repatriated / deported migrants/people
- Migrants **waiting** / migrants stranded
- Migrants requesting asylum
- People / Population group
- Central American migrants / Central American brothers
- Asylum-seekers / Asylum-seeking families
- Migration phenomenon
- Migration crisis
- Migration problem / complexity
- Migration theme
- Migration flux / dynamic

### 3. Actions and attitudes towards migrants / migration

- Help / assist / support them
- Grant them / offer them
- Tend to them / take care of them
- Guarantee
- Facilitate
- Restrict
- Improve their conditions

- Integral attention
- Respect their/treat them with – dignity
- Respect their human rights
- Solidarity
- Responsibility
- Revert stigmatization / Not a burden
- Fear them / worry /concern

**4. MICs' purpose / Justification / Description of the spaces - services**

- Integrate them to the labour force /Promote work placement
- Formal employment
- Contribute to / collaborate to / strengthen the economy
- Welcome them / Receive them/ Inform them
- Train them
- Tariffs threat by the us
- Honour commitments /agreements made by the government
- Response to changes by the US asylum policies
- Warm / welcoming
- Safe / safety measures
- Free /open spaces
- Healthy / health services
- Mobility plan / transportation
- Community kitchen / warm meals

**5. Reactions to/opinions on- the MICs**

- Protest / Oppose / Disagree
- Dysfunctional
- Unsafe / Unwelcoming

## ANNEX 2. IMAGE REFERENCES

Figure 9 - Leona Vicario MIC (Juárez)

1. <https://twitter.com/Jeivan94/status/1196204917872091138/photo/1>
  2. <https://twitter.com/Jeivan94/status/1196204902952919041/photo/2>
  3. <https://twitter.com/Jeivan94/status/1196205064798572544/photo/3>
  4. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/11/asylum-at-the-border-is-over-and-now-mexico-is-building-shelters-in-old-factories-to-clean-up-trumps-mess/>
  5. <https://twitter.com/Jeivan94/status/1196204981352902656/photo/2>
  6. [https://twitter.com/SRE\\_mx/status/1232463300685783040/photo/1](https://twitter.com/SRE_mx/status/1232463300685783040/photo/1)
  7. <https://mvsnoticias.com/noticias/nacionales/atiende-centro-integrador-para-el-migrante-de-juarez-a-780-centroamericanos/>
- Base Map: <https://elsoberano.mx/principal/centro-integrador-ciudad-juarez/>  
+ Google Earth

Figure 10 - Carmen Serdan MIC (Tijuana)

1. [https://twitter.com/carlos\\_glezgtez/status/1232452980760203264](https://twitter.com/carlos_glezgtez/status/1232452980760203264)
  2. Screenshot from video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLthKgOp2wk>
  3. Screenshot from video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLthKgOp2wk>
  4. <https://www.elimparcial.com/tijuana/tijuana/Inicia-operaciones-albergue-para-migrantes-en-Tijuana-20191206-0039.html>
  5. <https://www.telemundo20.com/noticias/local/habilitan-nuevo-centro-para-migrantes-en-tijuana/1971683/>
  6. [https://twitter.com/cinthia\\_news/status/1204871397639475200/photo/2](https://twitter.com/cinthia_news/status/1204871397639475200/photo/2)
  7. [https://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?\\_rval=1&urlredirect=https://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?id=1833349&utm\\_source=Tw&utm\\_medium=@reformanacional&utm\\_campaign=pxtwitter&referer=--7d616165662f3a3a613b767a3a2c67435654467b43736d2a7478652824--](https://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?_rval=1&urlredirect=https://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?id=1833349&utm_source=Tw&utm_medium=@reformanacional&utm_campaign=pxtwitter&referer=--7d616165662f3a3a613b767a3a2c67435654467b43736d2a7478652824--)
  8. [https://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?\\_rval=1&urlredirect=https://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?id=1833349&utm\\_source=Tw&utm\\_medium=@reformanacional&utm\\_campaign=pxtwitter&referer=--7d616165662f3a3a613b767a3a2c67435654467b43736d2a7478652824--](https://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?_rval=1&urlredirect=https://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?id=1833349&utm_source=Tw&utm_medium=@reformanacional&utm_campaign=pxtwitter&referer=--7d616165662f3a3a613b767a3a2c67435654467b43736d2a7478652824--)
- Base Map: Google Earth.

Figure 18 - Table comparing images of CBP Detention Centres in the US to the MICs in Mexico

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/12/us-immigration-detention-facilities#img-3>
2. Screenshot from video <https://twitter.com/CanalOnceTV/status/1184642976850444288>

3. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-katz-immigrant-concentration-camps-20190609-story.html>
4. <https://www.elsoldetijuana.com.mx/local/inauguran-el-albergue-migrante-4573243.html>
5. <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2019/09/23/migrant-children-2014-american-immigration-crisis-obama-trump/2025687001/>
6. <https://reporterosenmovimiento.com/2019/09/10/abrir-a-el-segundo-centro-de-atencion-a-migrantes-en-tijuana/>