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Two Profiles of Seasonal Workers from Chiapas in Canada' Okanagan Valley Agri-Food Industry

Dos perfiles de trabajadores temporales chiapanecos en la agroindustria del Valle de Okanagan, Canadá

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the temporary migration of two groups of workers from Chiapas mobilized to the agricultural enclave in Canada: a group of workers institutionally recruited by the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), in contrast to *nomadic workers* who independently and itinerantly mobilized to work during the harvest seasons. The objective was to contrast the subjectivities and behaviors of each group regarding work environment according to their profile. While the Canadian and Mexican States regulate the program workers through contracts, the nomadic workers with their agency and social capital enter the same country for employment. These differentiating characteristics guided the participant observation, ethnography, and open interviews. The field work was carried out during the summers of 2022 and 2023, the set of results of which allowed us to conclude that both groups of workers are differentiated as disciplinary individuals and performance subjects.

Keywords: 1. labor migration, 2. agro-industry, 3. farm worker, 4. nomadism, 5. Canada.

RESUMEN

En este estudio se analiza la migración temporal de dos grupos de trabajadores chiapanecos movilizados hacia un enclave agrícola de Canadá: uno reclutado por medio del Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Temporales (PTAT), y el otro, denominados aquí *nómadas laborales*, que trabaja de manera independiente e itinerante en las temporadas de cosecha. El objetivo fue contrastar las subjetividades y comportamientos de cada grupo frente al entorno laboral según su perfil. Mientras los Estados mexicano y canadiense reglamentan mediante el contrato a los trabajadores del PTAT, los nómadas laborales con su agencia y capital social se insertan laboralmente en el mismo país al margen del PTAT. Estas características diferenciadoras guían la observación participante, la etnografía y las entrevistas abiertas. El trabajo de campo se realizó durante los veranos de 2022 y de 2023, cuyos resultados permitieron concluir que ambos grupos de trabajadores se diferencian como sujetos disciplinarios y sujetos de rendimiento.

Palabras clave: 1. migración laboral, 2. agroindustria, 3. trabajador agrícola, 4. nomadismo, 5. Canadá.

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INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes the contrast between two groups of Chiapanecan migrant workers with distinct social profiles who enter the Canadian province of British Columbia as agricultural laborers. The first group consists of rural day laborers registered in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), originating from Indigenous communities, primarily from the Altos de Chiapas, whose migration and employment in Canada are formally regulated and documented. The second group is composed of workers of urban origin, many of them professionals, referred to in this study as *labor nomads*. They enter Canada as tourists and subsequently take up employment during the harvest season. Under these conditions, this second group circulates throughout the summer, establishing short-term, unregulated, and itinerant labor and social relations, and adopting a nomadic pattern of mobility across the agro-industrial zone.

Both groups engage in distinct approaches to agricultural work. While participants in the SAWP follow the guidelines established in their contracts, labor nomads enter farms informally and set their own schedules and routes. The purpose of this article is therefore to analyze the labor dynamics of both groups, comparing the sociocultural factors that shape the choice of one or the other form of migration and their corresponding labor integration. It further examines their interactions with employers, work routines, living conditions, leisure activities, and income, as well as their self-perceptions regarding employment and life expectations.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out from a qualitative perspective, employing a methodology based on the construction of parameters to compare the concepts of "disciplinary subject" (Foucault, 2010, p. 159) and "achievement subject" (Han, 2022, p. 17) within the social context that Bauman (2003, p. 31) characterizes as "liquid modernity." In this framework, SAWP day laborers are understood as disciplinary subjects, since power is exercised and internalized through the norms established to regulate their mobility under the labor contract defined by the Canadian and Mexican states in coordination with the employers and agribusiness entrepreneurs who recruit labor through the program.

By contrast, labor nomads are analyzed within the framework of the achievement subject, as they engage in a form of self-exploitation in which the individual assumes full responsibility for their own self-actualization. They carry out this self-exploitation without direct supervision on the farms. This dynamic was operationalized through the following empirical categories: supervision, geographic mobility, and competitiveness.

The data-gathering strategy combined participant observation, ethnographic surveys, and open-ended interviews. In accordance with the specific characteristics of each worker profile, the category of supervision was applied exclusively to SAWP participants. For these workers, it was relevant to document the mechanisms established by employers to ensure compliance with performance requirements, including the observation and recording of supervisory personnel in action. In contrast, the supervision category was not applied to labor nomads. Instead, given their

particular social characteristics, they were analyzed under the category of geographic mobility, as the absence of formal contracts compels them to move in search of irregular employment. Additionally, work schedules, daily work hours, and piece-rate production were used as indicators of competitive labor performance for labor nomads, reflecting the subjective internalization of self-demand.

Operationalizing these categories on the agricultural farms of British Columbia's Okanagan Valley enabled the analysis of migration types and labor integration for both groups, allowing for an assessment of their productivity, performance, socialization, and mobility or immobility within a context of social fragmentation characteristic of late modern capitalism. This agro-industrial region functions as a convergence point for at least these two types of workers. The research design further facilitated the examination of both groups' profiles to understand social differentiation in terms of arrival, strategies, stay, work attitude, income, and daily life. Consequently, the main variables analyzed for both groups included marital status, educational attainment, language skills, age, and place of origin.

This research was informed by the co-author's experience as an agricultural worker in Canada during the summer of 2019, when they entered the country on a tourist visa to obtain informal employment during the cherry harvest. The same approach was subsequently employed in 2022 and 2023 to collect data during July, August, and September. Accompanied by labor nomads, the co-author visited farms offering temporary harvest work. This direct participation in labor provided the means to conduct interviews and gather first-hand observational data.

For this purpose, a structured interview script with questions tailored to each group was developed. Fifteen SAWP workers and fifteen labor nomads[3] were successfully interviewed, all of whom received prior information about the study through the institution's informed consent letter. Pseudonyms are used for labor nomads, while SAWP workers consented to the use of their first names only. Some interviews were conducted in Canada, and others in Chiapas, allowing for a more comprehensive follow-up of the participants' itineraries.

FROM DISCIPLINARY SOCIETY TO ACHIEVEMENT SOCIETY

The current rise in international labor mobility must be understood within the context of historical and economic transformations that have taken place since the mid-twentieth century (Wallerstein, 1996; Harvey, 1998; Negri and Hardt, 2012). This mobility has intensified as a consequence of economic and social changes that emerged in the post-1945 period in the Western world, particularly after 1973, with the transition from Fordist production to flexible accumulation, when the commercialization of goods expanded into the international market (Harvey, 1998).

The transformations that have accelerated labor mobility and intensified migration are accompanied by profound changes in the cultural life of late-capitalist societies. Harvey (1998)

[3] Given their profile, both men and women from the urban areas of San Cristóbal and Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, were included.

highlights not only the economic but also the cultural sense of the ephemeral, emphasizing the commodification of life and the process of individuation as consequences of flexible economies and globalization. Similarly, Bauman (2003) examines contemporary cultural formations in late-capitalist societies through the concept of the "liquid," which he uses metaphorically to describe fluidity as the governing principle of the current stage of modernity (p. 8). In this context, where state power is increasingly eroded in favor of deterritorialized transnational corporations, the logic of nomadism and human mobility assumes growing significance within the society of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2003).

The analysis of the two groups of workers in Canadian agricultural fields draws on several previous studies that align with the theoretical framework, particularly concerning workers who enter the country under contract. These studies recognize that the contract largely determines workers' activities within Canadian territory and, consequently, confines them to the mandates of their employers. In this regard, Lutz et al. (2010) examined a group of workers from Tlaxcala enrolled in the SAWP through the lens of biopanopticism, a concept describing an institutional network of surveillance, control, and subjugation over workers' bodies from their arrival in Canada until their return to their communities of origin. According to these authors, the biopanopticism imposed on workers continues to monitor and regulate them even after their return, as stipulated by the contract. Thus, the labor contract functions as a mechanism of power that consolidates the control of the Canadian state in collaboration with the Mexican state, alongside the oversight exercised by employers over contracted workers' activities.

Similarly, Binford (2006), drawing on W. Roseberry's theory of social and power fields and the concept of networks of structured relationships connecting local and global-historical processes, examines the control exerted over workers' social lives by both the state and employers. Binford also incorporates Erving Goffman's concept of "total institutions" (p. 64) to frame his analysis. According to Binford, workers entering Canada through the SAWP are subject to strict surveillance and experience limited freedom of movement within the country, leaving them little opportunity to establish social networks beyond the workplace. Despite this intense labor discipline, Binford notes that workers gain prestige in their home communities in Tlaxcala, which motivates them to return to Canadian agricultural fields under the program. As he observes, "the sacrifices made in one field (Canada, in this case) translate into gains in another (Mexico)" (p. 75).

According to Harvey (1998), the Fordist production model of the past has been supplanted by the current regime of flexible accumulation. He notes, however, that the conditions of flexible accumulation allow antagonistic labor systems to coexist across time and space, enabling capitalist employers to select between them at will. In this context, agro-industries in the global North, particularly in Canada, can hire both regulated workers through the SAWP and labor nomads who independently seek employment on the same farms. Although both groups originate from the global South, they possess distinct social profiles. Consequently, the first line of analysis considers the heterogeneity of social spaces in the southern part of North America to differentiate the modes of integration into the capitalist economy that receives them.

Consequently, it is possible to distinguish between two conceptually different types of subjects: those defined by a form of regulated labor integration mediated by transnational institutions and governed by contractual obligations, whose characteristics align with the disciplinary society (Foucault, 2010), and labor nomads, who can be identified as achievement subjects (Han, 2022). These two modes of action reflect distinct subjectivities, shaped by the specific structures that organize their socialization. Within the SAWP, the rigidity of the dominant mode of socialization has excluded women from agricultural labor in Chiapas, whereas in other regions of Mexico, particularly in the Bajío, women do participate in the program. By contrast, women have been able to enter the flow of Chiapanecan labor nomads, contributing to a feminization of this form of migration. This reveals the social plasticity that characterizes contemporary society, which, without being deterministic, generates a differentiated spectrum of subjectivities.

In this way, there is a transition from Foucault's (2010) disciplinary society to Byung-Chul Han's (2022) fatigue society, in which the achievement subject is situated. The changes imposed by neoliberalism on production systems require an achievement subject aligned with its needs. In the postmodern era, Han (2021) identifies this new subject as responsible for themself and as the manager of their own destiny, with apparent individual freedom as the core of their actions:

> The achievement-subject is faster and more productive than the subject of obedience. Yet power does not abolish duty, for the achievement subject remains disciplined. […] Power intensifies the level of productivity obtained through disciplinary techniques, that is, through the imperative of duty […] What ultimately makes the achievement subject ill is not an excess of responsibility and initiative, but rather the imperative of performance, which constitutes the new mandate of late modern labor society. (Han, 2022, pp. 27–29)

In this sense, undocumented migration bears the mark of a performance society, one of self-exploitation:

> The achievement-subject stands free from any external instance of domination forcing it to work, much less exploiting it. It is lord and master of itself. Thus, it is subject to no one—or, as the case may be, only to itself. It differs from the obedience-subject on this score. However, the disappearance of domination does not entail freedom. Instead, it makes freedom and constraint coincide. Thus, the achievement-subject gives itself over to *compulsive freedom*—that is, to the *free constraint* of maximizing achievement. Excess work and performance escalate into auto-exploitation. This is more efficient than allo-exploitation, for the feeling of freedom attends it. (Han, 2022, pp. 31–32)

Hence, major migratory flows are oriented toward global economies. Whereas in the past large agricultural production centers financed the transportation of workers, today it is the workers themselves who risk their lives and invest their financial resources in order to secure employment. This shift has unintentionally given rise to a borderless labor market—structured by mechanisms of flexible accumulation—and to the social conditions that produce large numbers of workers willing to be employed either as disciplinary subjects or as achievement subjects. Within this context, labor relations shaped by neoliberal logic benefit capitalist enterprises through the

flexibility of short-term hiring and the unilateral imposition of work terms and conditions, while eliminating the possibility of severance pay. In this sense, the neoliberal postulate prevails that the market constitutes the most efficient mechanism for allocating economic resources and meeting individual needs.

OKANAGAN VALLEY, AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ENCLAVE

The economy of the province of British Columbia is centered on tourism and the agro-food industry. The main cities that offer seasonal agricultural employment include Kelowna, Grand Forks, Vernon, Peachland, Summerland, Penticton, Keremeos, Oliver, Osoyoos, Creston, and Cawston. As Milkovich (2021) observes:

> There are about 5 000 acres of sweet cherries in British Columbia today. Most of them are grown near Okanagan Lake, […] a region known for its dry, sunny climate. […] The largest cherry grower in British Columbia, Jealous Fruits, is expanding its sweet cherry plantations on higher elevations in the northern end of the valley. Jealous Fruits will have 1 100 acres of sweet cherries after plantatings are finished this year (Milkovich, 2021, paras. 5 and 14).

Kelowna serves as the gateway to the Okanagan Valley and is one of the main cities for seasonal harvest work across a variety of fruits exported worldwide. For example, "The province's cherries are sold to the rest of Canada and the United States, and many are shipped across the Pacific Ocean. Eighty percent of its cherry exports go to China" (Milkovich, 2021, para. 7). Cherry production is among the most profitable in the region: "Gala [apples] might net a grower $8 000 to $9 000 an acre. […] Sweet cherries, on the other hand, can net $30 000 to $40 000 an acre, said Hank Markgraf, a British Columbia grower and industry consultant" (Milkovich, 2021, para. 2).

Field observations indicated that employment opportunities in the harvest begin in June with cherries, followed by the harvesting of apples, grapes, and other regional fruits from August to September. Consequently, both SAWP workers and labor nomads arrive over a four- to six-month period each year, reflecting the seasonality that characterizes agricultural labor in the region.

The Okanagan Valley is the second most common destination for Chiapanecan workers participating in the SAWP (Unidad de Política Migratoria, Registro e Identidad de Personas [UPMRIP], 2021) and the primary destination for labor nomads, as it offers conditions of deregulated hiring. Most farm owners in this region are of Punjabi origin (Ross, 2019), although Canadian, Dutch, and German proprietors are also present. On several farms, women owners stand out for their involvement in directing, supervising, and managing worker payments, while husbands are typically responsible for recruitment. Farms frequently provide breaks for breakfast, and on some occasions, owners offer food. As shown in Photograph 1, the Punjabi owner provided chai tea to her workers; on that occasion, five Mexicans from the SAWP and five labor nomads were working together in the grape harvest for wine.

Photograph 1. Owner in her Vineyard with Family Members and Workers During the Grape Harvest Break

Source: Fieldwork in Osoyoos, autumn 2023.

Punjabi Indians own agricultural empires, as well as warehouses for the distribution, packaging, and export of various fruits. This group settled at the end of the nineteenth century thanks to the flexibility policies of the Canadian state (Ross, 2019). For this reason, the surnames of Indian-origin families that stand out in the Valley include Shidu, Ramish, Dhaliwal, Sandu, and Saran. In this region, despite existing sanctions, informal hiring is permitted, and Punjabi Indian employers rely on both SAWP workers and labor nomads to consolidate their position in the agro-industry. They also own farms with diverse crops, as illustrated in Photograph 2, which shows the owner selling peaches next to a cherry tree. According to participant observation, this farm employed SAWP workers and approximately 20 labor nomads from Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, as well as Canadians from Quebec. The same owner also possessed other farms in different cities of the Valley.

Photograph 2. Punjabi Farm Owner Selling at his Fruit Stand

Source: Fieldwork in Penticton, summer 2022.

Canadian employers, unlike Punjabi Indian proprietors, generally seek work permits and tend to recruit nationals from the Quebec region to ensure their temporary contracts remain in compliance. However, they occasionally hire immigrants informally, particularly when a worker fails to appear or when production exceeds the available labor force. Although employing individuals without a work permit is heavily penalized, conditions in British Columbia have fostered the emergence of "spaces of illegality" (Basok et al., 2015, p. 26). In this regard, "if an employer knowingly hires someone who is not authorized, they become liable to fines ranging from 10 000 to 50 000 Canadian dollars, and/or imprisonment from six months to two years" (Dongier & Villaran, 2003, as cited in Verea, 2010, p. 111).

During the two fieldwork seasons, it was observed that, despite the substantial presence of Mexican, Guatemalan, and Jamaican workers registered in the SAWP, the region experienced a significant labor shortage. For instance, in 2022, the first post-pandemic year, substantial crop losses occurred due to the insufficient number of workers available to carry out essential tasks. Employers reported that these shortages were largely the result of strict government-imposed restrictions, which remained a persistent concern throughout the harvest season: "Picking 5 000 acres of cherries within a few months requires a lot of short-term labor. Canada has a foreign worker program, and transient labor from the eastern provinces helps, but labor shortages are becoming a serious problem" (Milkovich, 2021, par. 8).

Typically, temporary Canadian labor on Okanagan farms consists of young people from the province of Quebec, who explore the mountainous region while earning money to fund their travels. During the two fieldwork periods, it was observed that these young workers travel to the Valley to work as pickers, sharing seasonal labor with young people from other parts of the world, particularly Chiapanecans. When the harvest concludes and winter begins in Canada, these local workers travel to tourist destinations in Latin America, such as Chiapas, where they have established connections with local residents. In this way, networks of Mexican travelers seeking to move to Canada have emerged, according to information provided by the labor nomads.

CHIAPANECANS IN THE SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS PROGRAM IN CANADA

Currently, nine Canadian provinces participate in the SAWP.[4] When the agreement between Canada and Mexico was signed in 1974, only four provinces required labor. Between the 1980s and 1999, Canada's agricultural regions underwent a transformation, shifting from family farms and orchards to agro-industrial zones and monoculture (Lara et al., 2015). As a result, by 2000, five additional provinces gradually joined the SAWP to request labor from various countries in the Americas, primarily Guatemala, Jamaica, and Mexico, surpassing the four provinces that had initially participated in the program.

In response to this demand, the Mexican government expanded the SAWP through the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare to all states of the Mexican Republic (Becerril Quintana, 2011), since, beginning in 1974, it primarily sent laborers from the central and northern regions of the country. In 2000, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Chiapanecans registered in the SAWP was 46; by 2010, this figure had increased to 474 workers, placing Chiapas eleventh nationwide in terms of its contribution of migrant labor to Canada (Suárez, 2011). From this point onward, it can be inferred that the employment of Chiapanecans in Canada through the SAWP has remained stable, as shown in Table 1. Additionally, Table 2 presents the distribution of Chiapanecan workers across the nine agro-industrial regions of Canada, with Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec standing out.

Table 1. Chiapanecan Workers in Canada, 2000-2022

	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Farmworkers	46	474	825	920	1 099	1 052	1 043	892	926	902

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from UPMRIP (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022), and Becerril Quintana (2011).

[4] The nine provinces requesting labor for the SAWP are Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.

Table 2. Destination Provinces of Chiapanecans in Canada, 2015-2022

Year	Alberta	British Columbia	Manitoba	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Ontario	Prince Edward Island	Quebec	Saskatchewan	Total
2015	47	228	13	1	18	346	8	161	3	825
2016	38	271	10	1	22	383	8	183	4	920
2017	43	369	8	1	23	421	8	224	2	1099
2018	45	315	17	1	21	397	10	242	4	1052
2019	44	306	15	1	21	424	10	220	2	1043
2020	42	297	9	-	15	348	8	171	2	892
2021	54	328	8	-	11	349	4	168	4	926
2022	54	308	6	-	14	335	3	180	2	902

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from UPMRIP (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

As shown in the previous table, the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec stand out as the main employment destinations for Chiapanecans. In the study region, during the period 2015–2022, the number of documented Chiapanecans ranged between 200 and 300. Table 3 presents the municipal origins of SAWP workers from the Altos de Chiapas region.

Table 3. SAWP Workers from the Altos de Chiapas Region, 2015-2022, by Municipality

Municipalities	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Amatenango del Valle	17	22	42	43	42	35	38	38
Oxchuc	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	15
El Bosque	50	51	55	51	52	46	50	45
Chamula	45	47	58	55	54	49	47	33
La Independencia	21	23	24	22	21	15	12	13
Larrainzar	17	17	16	15	11	-	14	10
Las Rosas	30	34	38	37	35	35	33	33
Tenejapa	37	46	65	64	67	58	66	63
Teopisca	29	31	34	37	36	29	31	33
SCLC	5	10	12	5	6	4	15	10
Zinacantán	-	-	-	-	10	10	8	9
Bochil	3	4	5	-	-	5	8	18
Totals	254	285	349	329	344	286	322	320

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from UPMRIP (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

Regarding the 15 SAWP workers interviewed who are employed in British Columbia, Juan and Antonio, brothers from Chamula, work at the Green House farm in Osoyoos. Upon returning, they no longer plan to reside in Chamula, as they now live in the community of Betania, in Teopisca, Chiapas. Jeremías and Diego work in the town of Keremeos for a company that cultivates various fruits, as well as in the company's packing facility during the winter. Both arrived in 2022 and were hired from June to December; they also worked during the same months in 2023. Together, their experience amounts to 11 years of uninterrupted employment. Jeremías is 38 years old, married, has two children, and is originally from San Andrés Larráinzar. He currently resides in the municipality of Ixtapa, Chiapas, where he has invested part of his remittances in livestock farming. Diego is 56 years old, originally from El Bosque, speaks Tsotsil, is married, and has children and grandchildren.

Heriberto, also born in El Bosque, is married and has one child. He works in Summerland at the winery Dirty Laundry Vineyard, which, in addition to cultivating grapes and producing wine, operates a restaurant. Heriberto is 31 years old and has completed 58 seasons in Canada; in previous years, he worked in Quebec at an apple-growing company. Sebastián, originally from Teopisca, also worked at the same company in 2023. He is 43 years old, married, has children, and has completed five seasons in Canada.

Cristóbal and Andrés live in the municipal seat of San Juan Chamula and work in Chilliwack, an agricultural area near Vancouver. They have been employed for over 10 years in the greenhouses of Rainbow Greenhouses Inc., a flower production and export company. Also interviewed were Pablo, Andrés, and Víctor, who are from Tenejapa and speak Tseltal. In December 2022, Pablo, aged 22, traveled to Canada for the first time, where he was hired for six months; in May 2023, he returned, making him one of the youngest SAWP workers interviewed. Andrés and Víctor are brothers; Andrés initially traveled to the Quebec region in 2022 but requested a transfer to British Columbia to work for a Canadian employer in Kelowna in 2023, the same year his brother Víctor joined him on the farm.

Miguel and Juan, both from Zinacantán, and Gilberto, from San Cristóbal de Las Casas, work on the farm of a Punjabi owner in the rural town of Summerland. Gerardo, born in Teopisca, is 48 years old, married, and has children; he worked for six seasons on a cucumber farm in Penticton before transferring to a farm in Summerland in 2023. Heriberto and Jeremías completed up to secondary school, while Pablo finished high school. The remaining workers had only completed primary education.

As observed, the profile of SAWP workers from Chiapas is predominantly rural and aligns with the requirements stipulated in the contract: basic education, married, and with children. The latter criterion ensures that workers will return to Mexico once their employment contracts are completed. These workers typically travel at the beginning of summer, with contracts lasting from one to a maximum of eight months, and must leave Canada by December 15 at the latest. Some, however, have contracts that begin in late summer and extend through the winter, allowing them to work in the farms' packing facilities, as in the case of Jeremías: "In my case, my contract starts

in June, and I return before December 15. During the cold season on my farm, my work is packing apples. Now my employer has sent us here, to this farm, to pick cherries" (Jeremías, SAWP worker, personal communication, July 25, 2022).

The above indicates that the SAWP mobilizes its farmworkers within a framework of labor flexibility through temporary contracts, requiring them to change employers, coworkers, and provinces each season. However, this flexibility also generates an environment of uncertainty, as workers are unable to establish lasting ties in the places they arrive each year. Juan's[5] testimony illustrates the labor integration process of SAWP workers:

> I have worked eight seasons in Canada. A friend told us about the Program, and I had to process the paperwork and wait a year for the results. I went through the Secretariat of Labor. I have to pay for the trip from Tuxtla to Mexico, the plane ticket, and food; the employer does not cover these expenses. In Mexico, they give me my employment contract: it includes the employer's name, the farm, the hourly pay—everything is in that contract. I usually arrive in Vancouver and then take another flight to Kelowna, where the employer picks us up. The next day, we buy groceries because the employer advances us 400 Canadian dollars. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

SAWP agricultural workers adhere to the rules of their employment contract from the moment they begin the application process at the State Employment Secretariat in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. Upon entering Canada, they are subject to the authority of both their employer and the consular representatives (Government of Canada, 2024). Furthermore, after completing the contract, workers must report to government offices in Chiapas within the first five days of their return. Throughout this process, they remain under the supervision of the Mexican and Canadian states, as well as the employer, who guide each of their actions, leaving them with very little agency (Lutz et al., 2010). Their lack of English proficiency further compounds these constraints while living and working in a country unfamiliar to their everyday environment.

Employers hire workers for specific schedules based on the size of the farm, as well as the planting and harvest cycles, during which workers are expected to perform at maximum capacity. Once the hourly shifts are established, workers are constantly monitored by farm staff, who record their performance and encourage them to work faster. They have few days off, and transfers to Canadian healthcare facilities are often avoided if their health deteriorates, despite their right to request such care. Daily shifts range from 8 to 10 hours, or sometimes longer, since, during the summer harvest season, the days are long and the sun does not set until after 10 p.m.:

> I worked for five years in Surrey; the owner was Chinese. It is 40 minutes from Vancouver, a farm growing fruits, vegetables, and chili. I worked on my knees all day, 12 or 13 hours bent over; you have to stoop. We started from 6 to 8 a.m., had breakfast at 10 a.m., then worked until 1 p.m., had lunch at 3 p.m., and continued until 10 p.m. In June, the days are longer, and

[5] Juan's experience was followed up upon his return to Chiapas, as he granted permission to be interviewed at his home with his family.

> we follow that schedule. The farm is called Green Life. Twenty-five Mexicans worked there; I worked with two other Chiapanecans, one of whom was my brother, and the other from San Cristóbal. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

In Canada, farms may be managed directly by their owners. In small family-run businesses, there are typically around five or six SAWP workers, with additional temporary labor hired during the harvest season. To manage this larger workforce, positions such as crew leaders are employed to monitor and record progress. In the production area, workers wash, pack, label, and store products in boxes for final distribution. At this stage, the workers no longer interact directly with the owner; instead, several foremen or crew leaders intervene, placing the workers under constant supervision and direction.

> If it is a large farm, there is a foreman, and they employ 60 or more workers. At the Surrey farm, there was indeed a foreman; he was a program worker. The employer entrusted him because he already had experience and knew the workflow—I met him during my first season. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

Fieldwork observations indicated that SAWP workers do not have breaks during the workday. In their limited free time, they typically stock up on groceries, and work ceases entirely on rainy days. Although the contract stipulates one day off per week, this is ultimately determined by the employer. For the farmworkers, days without work are considered lost opportunities, as Gerardo explains:

> It just rained. Yesterday we were only given two hours because of the rain, and the fruit spoils if we move the branches. It is also dangerous to work in the rain. […] The employer already stopped us; I didn't complete my hours. This week it's going to rain, so it doesn't work out; I don't complete my eight-hour day. The same goes for resting, only one day, not the whole week, otherwise, I can't send money to my family. (Gerardo, SAWP worker, personal communication, September 5, 2023)

When workers' health deteriorates during their stay, it is difficult for them to access Canadian healthcare facilities, even though this is their right as established in the contract. However, they do not claim this right because they must demonstrate good behavior if they want to be rehired:

> When you get injured, the boss does not pay attention; he just gives us pills. I have health insurance, but the boss does not take me, even though it is his obligation. He gives me pills that I don't know what they are for. Last year, I was affected by the sun and developed rashes on my skin; I went to the doctor on my own. If the boss gets angry, I have the option to file a complaint with the consulate. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

The housing infrastructure where they stay during the season belongs to the employer, but the workers pay a fee:

> Currently, I live alone in the house; I pay 825 dollars for the entire season. Four years ago, I paid 500 dollars. This amount is deducted from my total pay. They provide internet, laundry

> service, a kitchen, and a room. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023).

Juan also describes the willingness of farm owners to hire labor nomads for seasonal work:

> At the farm, tourist workers [labor nomads] suddenly arrive; they are hired when the workload piles up. They get a chance for about three months, cherry harvest, then peaches, apples, and finally grapes. That is when they need more people, sometimes up to 7 or 10. They always arrive and stay from June onwards. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

One factor that limits the worker is their limited knowledge of English; they cannot learn it due to lack of time, and not speaking it also prevents them from forming social connections, as Heriberto explains:

> Here [in Canada] there are groups that offer support and want to teach us English, but when? I hardly have any time; I am very tired at the end of the workday, and I don't feel like doing anything. We have little free time, and the owner gives us the car to go grocery shopping and then we go back by bike. And when I return to Chiapas, where? My community is far away. And how am I supposed to learn English? In Quebec, the boss speaks French; only the Mexican foreman helped me, he knew French and Spanish. (Heriberto, SAWP worker, personal communication, August 20, 2023)

Furthermore, the SAWP clauses between Mexico and Canada define a worker profile that ensures their return to their country of origin, constituting a limitation and a form of control that binds them to their employer:

> I don't know the Canadians. I don't talk to them. When we go shopping, we just buy things; we don't talk to people because I don't speak English. We don't go out for leisure; I only talk with my coworkers at the beaches in Penticton when we occasionally go out. We have had visits from workers from other farms; with the employer's permission, we have some beers, and about 10 of us get together and cook. At other farms, drinking is not allowed. (Juan, SAWP worker, personal communication, January 25, 2023)

The workers do not frequently visit social spaces such as libraries, sports centers, churches, or parks; their social interactions are mostly limited to shopping centers. Many reported feeling disconnected from social life, as their routine revolves solely around work without sharing the lifestyle of Canadians. They experience a sense of confinement and eagerly anticipate returning to Mexico. Consequently, during fieldwork, several gatherings among fellow Chiapanecans were observed, centered around the preparation of Mexican food. Their enthusiasm was evident as they procured ingredients to prepare traditional dishes such as mole, soups, beans, and enchiladas. When the employer's vehicle was available, they traveled to Penticton, the nearest city where they could obtain the products necessary to recreate flavors reminiscent of their family and community.

In addition to Mexico, Canada has established relations through the SAWP with 11 other countries in the Caribbean and Central America: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica,

Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guatemala (UPMRIP, 2024). The agreement and the consolidation of temporary programs for the agricultural sector:

> It began in 1966 with Jamaica; Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados joined in 1967; Mexico in 1974; and the Eastern Caribbean Islands in 1976. […] In 2003, Guatemalan workers entered the cities of Quebec and Montreal for the first time (Durand, 2007, p. 70).

Observations revealed that farms in British Columbia were predominantly staffed by Jamaican and Mexican workers, with Guatemalans present to a lesser extent (Mayell, 2024). In 2022, it was noted that, unlike the Chiapanecans, Jamaican SAWP workers enjoyed greater freedom of movement and had established networks of friendship with fellow Jamaicans in various cities hosting program workers, facilitated by their proficiency in English. Additionally, this community received support from their consuls, who monitored working conditions through surveys and interviews, ensuring that labor rights were respected. In contrast, such oversight was not observed from Mexican authorities. Jamaicans also had the option of renting housing outside the spaces designated by their employers.

In 2023, a Mexican SAWP worker was observed spending weekends with his family in various public spaces. This was possible because his employer regularized his status, allowing him to reside in British Columbia. By being a reliable worker and maintaining a stable relationship with his employer, he was able to work as a permanent seasonal worker throughout the year. However, there are also cases in which workers have no interest in settling in Canada and view it solely as a place of employment:

> The one who brought his family enjoys being here; as for me, I don't like it enough to stay permanently; there are no lively celebrations, no family, no food, no friendships, no life itself. Everything is boring here, and we have to endure the cold during the grape harvest. The 6 to 8 months I'm given to work are enough for me. (Heriberto, SAWP worker, personal communication, August 20, 2023)

This perspective is common among SAWP workers who are unable to access social spaces, either due to limited English proficiency or fragile social connections with the local population, unlike those who have established stable working relationships with their employer.

Juan considers the earnings he obtains from his work acceptable. Upon returning to Mexico, he works temporarily in Teopisca as a bricklayer or driver and tends to his own land. He has held traditional positions of responsibility in his community, where leaders are elected on a rotating basis each year in an assembly—for example, to join the water or education committee. However, assuming these roles would tie him to his community and prevent him from migrating. To maintain his freedom to participate in the SAWP, Juan contributes 25 000 pesos to his community to be exempt from these responsibilities for four years. Each year he returns to Mexico and hopes to go back to Canada for two more seasons. He also shared that, upon returning, he sometimes struggles with alcoholism and occasionally prefers being in Canada, where he works and experiences

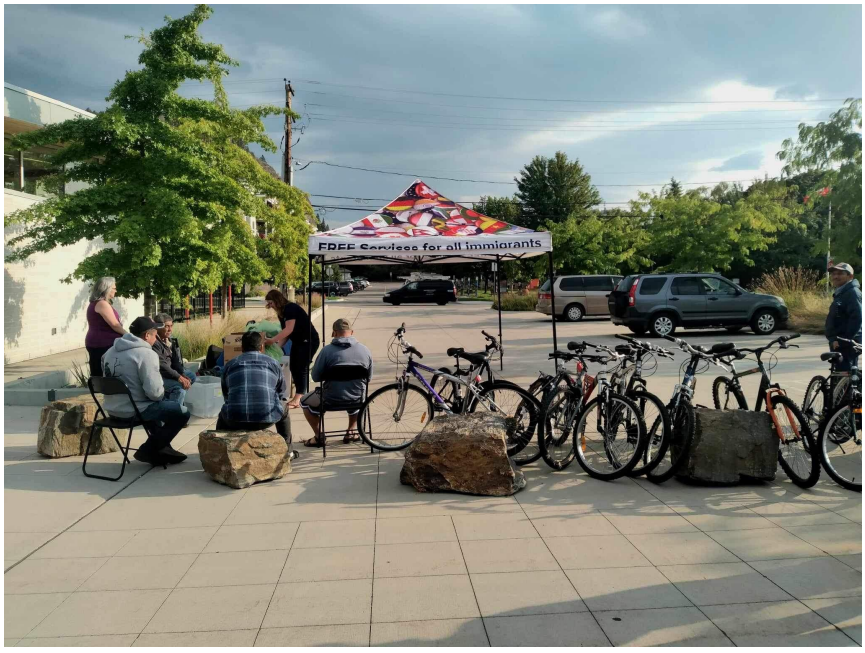
discipline—contrasting with life in his community, which fosters social encounters with friends and family. This perspective is also reflected in Pablo's account:

> In Canada, one learns to be responsible; it's all work, and time is strictly measured. We barely have time to eat, and the employer also teaches us how to work, because he doesn't like us drinking since the next day we wouldn't be able to work as he expects. (Pablo, SAWP worker, personal communication, November 15, 2023)

In British Columbia, two organizations supporting agricultural workers have been gaining prominence: Dignidad Migrante Society (2024) and MOSAIC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities [MOSAIC], n.d.). MOSAIC aims to integrate migrants from around the world and employs Mario Avendaño, a Chiapaneco from Comitán, who is based in Penticton. In 2023, the organization organized sports activities in the public park of Summerland and provided a meal to bring together not only SAWP workers but also the broader migrant community. Additionally, English courses are regularly offered to workers holding a work permit, including SAWP participants.

In Summerland, MOSAIC also organizes events in which bicycles are distributed and safety courses and informational talks are offered on their proper use, specifically targeting SAWP workers (Photograph 3). Heriberto, originally from El Bosque, Chiapas, has benefited from this program. According to several studies conducted in Ontario and Quebec, bicycles are frequently used by workers, and multiple accidents have been documented (Becerril, 2011; Lara Flores et al., 2015). However, on several farms, it was observed that employers provide cars for workers, which may only be used for grocery shopping.

Photograph 3. MOSAIC Provides Bicycles to SAWP Workers



Source: Fieldwork in Summerland, summer 2023.

Dignidad Migrante Society, in contrast, is a network of Latin American SAWP workers that organizes monthly meetings to hear complaints and provide legal advice addressing labor-related issues. Both organizations aim to create social spaces for workers, offering activities such as English lessons and other programs to facilitate the integration of foreign workers into Canadian society (Dignidad Migrante Society, 2024; Xantomila, 2024).

CHIAPANECAN LABOR NOMADS

Their profile differs significantly from the traditional understanding of labor migrants, as they exhibit a set of highly specific characteristics related both to their social origin and individual development. In this study, the term *labor nomads* refers to workers who arrive in British Columbia during the summer as backpackers or travelers[6] to take advantage of the harvest season. These workers move across towns in the province in search of employment for a day, a week, or several months, since a tourist visa allows them to remain in the country for up to six months. According to interview data, upon returning to Chiapas, they resume academic activities or informal work related to their backgrounds in tourism or business, plan trips to other countries, or take vacations with the resources earned during the harvest season.

Fifteen labor nomads, nine women and six men, were interviewed, all of whom had worked at least once on agricultural farms in the Okanagan Valley. At the time of the interviews, they were temporarily residing in San Cristóbal de Las Casas or Tuxtla Gutiérrez, although none were originally from these cities. Most come from urban backgrounds and hold university degrees or postgraduate qualifications; they are proficient in English and have traveled to other countries multiple times. The majority reported that their first harvest season was physically demanding and exhausting. Their primary motivation for traveling is to experience Canada and earn resources to invest in a business, continue traveling, or pursue informal labor opportunities as travelers in countries where entry is permitted. Of the total interviewees, only three (two women and one man) have children; one is married (male), and the rest are single. Regarding this, a man from Tuxtla Gutiérrez explained: “I don’t have children, I’m not interested in having children either; I traveled, I like to see places, and I found a job that would allow me to travel” (Flaviano, labor nomad, personal communication, July 31, 2022).

In the previous testimony, one can discern a subjectivity that currently prevails among many individuals in this group; in other words, they drift within a context of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2003). In this sense, late-modern capitalism tends to erode social bonds across all aspects of sociability. This is reflected in temporary labor, where social relationships are unstable and unanchored, leading the itinerant worker to move away from their homeland and assume a nomadic existence outside traditional institutions such as the family. Today, globalization and the flexible economy have made the world the worker’s home. Given the predominance of time over space due to the immediacy of information, social changes occur more globally and rapidly, reflecting

[6] They are commonly referred to as “pickers,” derived from the word picking (to harvest).

advances in communication technologies. Consequently, a sense of uprootedness and displacement underlies modernity, accompanied by an idealization of travel and mobility as the pinnacle of success (Bauman, 2003). These characteristics of liquid modernity are evident in labor nomads, who are willing to move freely within changing environments, such as temporary employment across diverse points of the global landscape. Unlike SAWP workers, who often struggle with adaptation upon arriving in Canada, labor nomads tend to respond positively to change, perceiving space, free from predefined archetypes, as an opportunity to experience life.

The temporary and ephemeral work environment predominates in their trajectories, which is the main reason they choose to migrate to British Columbia, as described by Girasol:

> My main motivation was wanting to get to know another country, but there was also the whole burden of unemployment; I had finished university, I had already been in Cancún, doing other things unrelated to my career. In the end, it was also about traveling far from my hometown to go somewhere else and seek new opportunities. Among my friends, I already had a friend who had gone to Canada, and she influenced me, since her father and brother had spent a year there. (Girasol, labor nomad, personal communication, June 22, 2023)

In this group of workers, women stand out. Due to their urban mobility and the network of contacts they have built with travelers visiting San Cristóbal, they became aware of cherry-picking opportunities in the Okanagan Valley. Their incorporation as labor nomads follows a profile and socialization distinct from that of SAWP workers, as their educational level and social capital enable them to navigate the globalized world with relative ease: they are university-educated or have travel experience, hold tourist visas, maintain contact with foreign travelers, are proficient in English, and possess the agency to travel independently. Once they obtain information about the Valley and secure support upon arrival in Canada, these women prepare to pass migration checks and justify their stay using tourist status, as Soluna recounts:

> I left Tuxtla Gutiérrez airport in July 2019 and traveled to Cancún, where I took a flight to Vancouver with a layover in Toronto. For this, I had started processing my passport and ETA[7] earlier that year. Upon arrival at the airport, we had to go through the migration checkpoint, being careful to erase any evidence on our phones related to job searching, as well as have a return ticket to Mexico within a week and reservations for the places I planned to stay, to prepare for any questions from immigration officers. I passed the migration checkpoint, not without some nervousness, and upon leaving the airport, I traveled to the Valley. (Soluna, labor nomad, personal communication, March 3, 2022)

Participant observation conducted during the summers of 2022 and 2023 revealed that the temporary work previously carried out by Canadian tourists in the agro-industrial areas of British Columbia to fund their travels has largely been abandoned due to low wages. Consequently, Latin

[7] The Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) is an electronic travel permit that allows a stay of up to six months in Canada, at a cost of 7 Canadian dollars. On February 29, 2024, the Canadian government reinstated the visa requirement for entry into the country (Canadá en México, 2024).

American and European travelers have increasingly arrived in the region, integrating as temporary workers during the harvest season. It was also observed that labor nomads can move with greater freedom than SAWP workers, owing to their experience as travelers or their proficiency in English, which enables them to interact with Canadians and workers from Quebec. Some labor nomads even acquire cars and use digital social networks to find work. WhatsApp groups created by the nomads themselves serve to share information about job openings on farms, while certain agricultural employers post opportunities in dedicated Facebook groups (The Farm Workers of the Okanagan-Similkameen, 2022).

Mobility is a defining characteristic of labor nomads, who, not being tied to a single employer, enjoy freedom of movement and can travel throughout British Columbia without remaining long at any one farm. Under unfavorable conditions, they can request their payment and move on to other farms or different towns within the Valley. This flexibility is facilitated by access to a vehicle and proficiency in English, which enables them to navigate both the labor market and local communities effectively.

For these workers, this mobility is advantageous, as it allows them to reduce employment uncertainty during the agricultural season and refine their strategies when negotiating payment terms through verbal agreements with employers. However, some may be dismissed without receiving compensation and without recourse to file a claim, either because there is no official record of their work or because employers fail to report it. For example, in 2023, several labor nomads used social media to report being deceived by crew bosses who had arranged work for them but ultimately did not provide full payment. Additionally, these bosses threatened to call immigration authorities if complaints were made. This information circulated widely through WhatsApp groups of Mexican workers in Canada.

Since their work is piece-rate, labor nomads are not subject to employer supervision, formal contracts, or regulatory protections. Instead, the workers demand maximum performance from themselves, even during the most grueling work hours, such as night picking. Given their freedom to choose schedules, they often request specific hours based on the availability of fruit for harvest. Observations also indicated that when labor nomads finish a job early, they seek to fill the remainder of the day at other farms. Those with access to a vehicle, in particular, can take advantage of these free periods to move efficiently between farms.

> Sometimes you would start at 3 a.m. and finish at 7 a.m., or else start at midnight and finish around 5 a.m. In other places, you would begin at 7 a.m. and finish at noon or 2 p.m., about eight hours; you set your own goals. (Maple, labor nomad, personal communication, June 12, 2023)

> The hardest part of the work was when they asked us to work all night, from 11 p.m. until 7 or […] 9 a.m. Another schedule was from 4 a.m. to noon. (Soluna, labor nomad, personal communication, March 3, 2022)

Unlike SAWP workers, labor nomads exhibit heightened competitiveness among themselves, as they do not have guaranteed working hours and must maximize output on a piece-rate basis, upon which their pay depends. In other words, they are "free" to work as much as they choose in a day. According to Han (2021), "Only the exploitation of freedom generates the highest performance" (p. 7). This reflects a form of subjectivity shaped by a performance-oriented ethic—a perceived freedom that is inseparable from self-exploitation (Han, 2022).

Working periods on a farm can last days, weeks, or months, depending on seasonal conditions, the employer, pay, and living arrangements. Unlike contract-bound workers, labor nomads can leave a job at any time and seek alternative employers or farms offering better pay or conditions. In this context, workers experience their performance as closely linked to their labor precarity, as illustrated by the testimony of Nube, a worker from Tuxtla Gutiérrez, recounting her experience during the 2019 cherry harvest:

> The workdays were long, lasting at least 10 to 12 hours. We faced rainy periods, and the farmers pressured us to finish harvesting the entire crop before the rain. On some farms, meals were provided so that we could continue working if we wished, rather than leaving early. On other farms, work stopped at midday, and it was up to each worker whether to continue in the afternoon at another farm, such as cleaning apples. Most people took advantage of the opportunity to move on to other jobs. (Nube, labor nomad, personal communication, February 18, 2023)

Labor nomads often experience workplace accidents and must cover the high costs of healthcare themselves unless they have travel medical insurance, which most of these informal workers do obtain. This situation underscores the independence of labor nomads from their employers, as well as the advantage to employers of avoiding medical expenses. Workers who have repeatedly participated in the Okanagan Valley harvest frequently share information on digital social networks about accident prevention and warn newcomers of the risks associated with this type of informal work. They often recommend obtaining travel insurance to avoid spending their earnings on hospital care or returning to Mexico in poor health to recover.

Social fragmentation is a condition experienced by both SAWP workers and labor nomads, though it is more pronounced among the latter. This occurs because community ties form only during their stay at a farm and dissolve once they move on; just as relationships begin to develop with new colleagues, workers must leave again. Some relationships are maintained through digital social networks such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and other applications, allowing friendships to continue online. Along the way, labor nomads encounter peers who may join their future work itineraries, thereby creating ephemeral communities in which they share experiences and provide guidance and support to newcomers.

Since labor nomads internalize the idea of the traveler-explorer, they can settle on farms with their tents (Photograph 4) while the workdays pass in spaces devoid of social relationships, as described by Augé (2009), ephemeral transit spaces temporarily occupied by individuals ready to leave at any moment, as they have no obligation to build a community in the physical space. These

camps tend to be unanchored spaces, that is, "places of transit rather than residence" (Clifford, 1997, p. 29).

Photograph 4. Temporary Stay of a Labor Nomad in Tents Among Cherry Trees

Source: Fieldwork in Penticton, summer 2022.

In their free time, labor nomads often visit libraries to use the Internet or read, and they also take advantage of their freedom of movement to stroll and socialize in parks, around lakes, or at other tourist sites in the province. Most work schedules end around noon, 3 p.m., or 4 p.m., depending on how many hours each individual chooses to work. As Maple, a labor nomad, explained: "Yes, we had free time because we finished early; we had the rest of the day to buy food, rest because it is very exhausting, and since it's a hot region, it tires you out, so we eat and sleep and had enough time to relax" (Maple, personal communication, June 12, 2023).

In British Columbia, church communities have designated days to provide food to those in need, and they are aware that travelers arrive in the area during the summer to work. Consequently, they offer meals, drinks, and groceries at their churches, either weekly or daily. Many labor nomads take advantage of these gatherings to socialize with the local community, as long as their work schedules allow. In addition, food banks are available; in Penticton, for example, there are two: the Salvation Army and Soupateria, which operates daily from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Labor nomads regard Mexican SAWP workers as fast and, at times, supportive. In turn, SAWP workers describe the "tourist" workers as freer, since they can change farms, combine jobs, and often earn more by saving on housing costs when living in tents. Ultimately, although both groups

share the same labor space, their patterns of socialization remain distinct. During a day of cherry harvesting in 2022, while conducting fieldwork, Jeremías and Diego, SAWP workers, spoke in their Tseltal language; only a few meters away, Jamaican SAWP workers conversed in patois, their Creole tongue. Meanwhile, labor nomads chatted and sang in Spanish, English, French, and other languages alongside coworkers of diverse nationalities. It was also common to hear Punjabi spoken by farm owners of Indian origin. In this way, globalized society materialized in the polyphony of workers and employers—many of whom were not strictly Canadian—on an ordinary day of cherry harvesting in the agro-industrialized Okanagan Valley

CONCLUSIONS

In 2024, the SAWP celebrated its 50th anniversary in Mexico. Indigenous Chiapanecos began participating in the program in 2000, and in 2017, following the flexibilization of Canada's migration policies toward Mexico, labor nomads were incorporated, resulting in a workforce with diverse profiles for Canadian agriculture. As previously discussed, the social characteristics of both labor groups allowed for an expanded labor supply, which positively impacted the economic management of Canadian farms, regardless of their size. These neoliberal-style agricultural enterprises have implemented a management strategy focused on recruiting both regular and irregular labor, with the objective of optimizing operations through flexible hiring to achieve maximum productivity in a timely and efficient manner.

First, the SAWP enforces regulations for enrolled workers according to the program's provisions. Next, in coordination with immigration authorities, workers' entry into Canada is legalized, enabling them to participate as restricted mobility labor during the months covered by the contract. In this context, a relationship of domination is established, as the contract functions as a mechanism of subjection, allowing for labor abuses and precarious working conditions. Moreover, workers' limited language skills and unfamiliarity with the social environment contribute to their passivity, reinforcing their subordination to the organizational structure in accordance with the characteristics of their labor profile.

Second, companies demonstrate flexibility by hiring a labor force with a different social profile, whose freedom of movement and undocumented or temporary status provides strategic advantages that ensure operational continuity. This occurs despite circumventing federal regulations designed to regulate immigrant employment and meet specific labor demands at particular moments of the production cycle. The social profile of labor nomads aligns with the operational dynamics of the farms, as their high mobility allows them to disperse across the region and fill vacancies during peak harvest periods, generating functional "zones of illegality" for both employers and workers. The autonomy and flexibility of this second group, combined with the employers' logic of absorbing migrant labor, reinforce the reproduction and expansion of agro-commercial capital within a framework of labor flexibilization under neoliberal globalization.

Undoubtedly, program workers also make essential contributions to the farms, sustaining much of the production process regardless of their social background, while adhering to the stipulations

of their contracts. The characteristics of Chiapanecan SAWP laborers are deeply embedded within the disciplinary society (Foucault, 2010), as institutional structures exert continuous surveillance over their bodies. In contrast, labor nomads operate without external oversight and engage in self-exploitation, motivated by self-imposed performance targets. Their earnings are often reinvested to generate further experiences within a short-term temporal horizon, reflecting a labor subjectivity aligned with achievement-oriented imperatives.

Translation: Érika Morales.

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