



CMS Research Conference 2025

Migration, Mobilities, and Changing Political Landscapes

Indigenous Mobilities and Racialization of Space: Argentine Shantytowns as a Location of Non-Whiteness

Ana Vivaldi | Sessional Instructor, Sociology, UBC Vancouver

Indigenous mobility is a key factor in understanding both the experiences of Indigenous people within and beyond their traditional territories, as well as the racialization and subalternization of non-white people in Argentina. This presentation analyzes Qom Indigenous mobilities in relation to urban Indigenous racialization in Argentina. I focus on the racialization of “Indigenous” non-white transnational migrants, and the racialization of lower classes—all of which become enfolded into the same category of “negros” (black), and the same space, the shantytown.

The specific experience of migrant, urban Qom highlights the tensions of Indigeneity, displacement, and racialization. While they are racialized as “negros” (black) in the city and this racialization leads to spatial segregation in shantytowns; this segregation generates new connections and cultural productivity within the city. As “negros,” Indigenous people are subjected to forms of racial profiling and regulation of their movements through urban spaces, a shared experience among non-white people. Yet, as “negros,” the Qom participate in subaltern cultural production and engage in the conversation about the Indigenous ancestry of urban subaltern groups in Argentina—many of whom now identify as Marrón (Brown), as well as the Indigenous ancestry of many border migrants. As “negros,” the Qom reintroduce the origins of racial categories in urban Argentina, which has often denied the ongoing existence of Afro and Indigenous groups in the city today.

I argue, the commonality generated under the category negros and the shared daily interactions is less about creating a homogeneous identity uniting Indigenous, urban subaltern, and migrant groups, and more about generating a renewed conversation about the underlying logic of an ongoing racist project enacted from cities as white spaces.