



Synthesizing Experiences from the Joint World Conference On Social Work And Social Development



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The Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development brought together researchers and practitioners from across the globe and from a broad array of backgrounds to share research and practice experience at the COEX Conference Center in Seoul, South Korea. In addition to learning through three days of panels, symposia, and workshops, I also had the opportunity to begin learning about various social and political contexts around Seoul, South Korea through visits to cultural sites, becoming strategically lost in Seoul's urban spaces, and a tour of the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Korea. In this poster, I highlight how conference presentations I attended and my tour of the DMZ intersect with my own dissertation research, which focuses on the politics of humanitarianism surrounding migrant shelters that assist Central Americans migrating undocumented through Mexico.



These are two images I have taken during while conducting my dissertation fieldwork in and around migrant shelters that assist Central Americans migrating undocumented through Mexico. Since 2014, with pressure from the United States government, Mexican immigration officials and privately-contracted security firms have stepped up efforts to keep migrants off of the network of freight rails that many have used as a last resort form of transportation through Mexico. These two images are taken just outside of a shelter in Central Mexico where the railway company has installed concrete posts to prevent migrants from boarding the train. The man wearing headphones in the photo on the right had been shot in the chest by railway guards two months prior and was waiting out an application for a Humanitarian Visa, a relatively new visa category providing a path for those migrating undocumented who are victims of a "grave" offense to regularize their migration status.



A common activity for visitors to Seoul is a day-trip to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a strip of land 4km wide separating South and North Korea that runs along the 38th parallel. This image shows a row of binoculars that, for a small fee, give tourists a better look into North Korea. On a clear day, tourists can see a Hyundai car factory that is currently closed. Hyundai's founder, who escaped from North Korea as a boy, opened the factory to take advantage of cheap labor in North Korea while utilizing a humanitarian discourse of helping otherwise under-resourced North Korean citizens.



These two images were displayed by Abye Tasse, Advisor to the Ministry of National Education and Research, United Island of Comoro (an archipelago north-west of Madagascar off the eastern coast of Mozambique) during his Plenary presentation titled "Waves Against the Wall? International Migration and Social Work." Dr. Tasse highlighted the need for Social Workers across the globe to address the expansion of inhumane immigration enforcement practices by governments globally. In the top image, refugees leap into the Mediterranean sea as an overloaded boat begins to sink. The bottom image shows migrants straddling the border wall in the Spanish enclave of Melilla on the coast of Morocco while golfers tee off on an otherwise pristine golf course in the foreground.

During her plenary speech entitled "Politics, Democracy, and Social Work in Latin America," Professor Silvana Martinez of the National University of Misiones discussed the relationship between "internal and external colonialisms" emerging from a market-based neoliberal paradigm that sets marginalized populations across the globe against each other. Dr. Martinez argued that social workers must take a politically active role in processes of emancipation that emerge dialectically from processes of domination. Considering dynamics of internal and external colonialisms is helpful for relating the three examples of walling I have included in this poster. The situation in Morocco is a clear example of external colonialism where the global north and the global south touch geographically. The DMZ and the situation along Mexico's freight railways represent more complicated internal colonialisms. As Social Workers, how can we respond to situations in which Mexican citizens working as railway security guards, who may themselves have migrated undocumented to the United States, are pitted against Central American migrants transiting through the country? Is opening a factory in North Korea an act of humanitarianism or does it foment competition between North and South Korean workers? How can we address internal colonialisms?

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