

# Migrant Street Vendors in Spain Reclaim Their Right to Political Citizenship

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The word migrant has been turned into an all encompassing term: foreigner, poor, dirty, illegal. Similarly, the word “mantero”, which has no direct translation into English, has been turned derogative, a synonym for a good-for-nothing. Manteros are street vendors who undertake their unregulated activities on top of a blanket, or manta in Spanish, where they place their counterfeit goods. In October 2015 they declared their unionisation, creating the Sindicato de Manteros, reclaiming through these words their pride as migrant workers, and their rights.

I explore the formation of a common identity among Manteros through the exclusions created by the criminal and migration legal system in Spain. Manteros struggle under a thick fabric of mixed, oppressive identities. Their criminalisation is manifold, and overlaps

migration and criminal law: owing to their status as irregular migrants, their illegal labor, and their race, which highlights their difference in the eyes of law enforcement.

Through a combination of qualitative interviews and comparative discourse analysis, I have found that the fight against the criminalisation of migration is only going to be led by those migrants affected themselves. This struggle engages the group in a process of recognition and incorporation into the political debate, granting them access to a sphere of the state that is otherwise denied to them as third-country citizens. In the recognition of this exclusion, manteros gain the capacity to engage in politics and to defend their intersectionality, crossing over an identity as migrants, workers and racialised men.