THE RELEVANCE OF GENDER IN/AND MIGRATION

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CARIM

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As Zygmunt Bauman noted more than a decade ago, 'access to global mobility' had become one of the most important factors in social stratification (1998: 87). Yet, 'access to global mobility' is also gendered. What Doreen Massey called over fifteen years ago the 'power geometry of time-space compression' (1994: 149) indicated the different ways in which individuals and social groups in the world are located within the reformulation of time and space, stimulated by globalisation and mobility.

Despite the growing interest in migration as an all-encompassing fact of life, analyses and data still provide predominantly gender-blind pictures of the phenomenon. However, as all the reports that will be taken into consideration in this paper show, women and gender are crucial and dynamic actors in migration. This holds true despite and beyond the numerical or statistical relevance of women in migratory movements. Indeed, gender is a central aspect of human life. Differently from the category 'woman', gender points to the socially constructed nature of masculinities and femininities in any society or culture. Moreover, as feminist historian Joan Scott has argued, gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying a relationship of power.

Gender, therefore, not only creates patterns of expectations for women and men, but it also orders all domains of everyday life, since it is built into the major social institutions and processes and, indeed, into the very organization of society, that is the economy, ideologies, the family and politics. All phenomena are gendered, in the sense that they are performed by women and men and have different implications for women and men, and their gendered roles. Gender signals also the asymmetries between men and women who have, across different societies and cultures, uneven access to power, resources and representations. (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Lorber 1994; Ortner 1996). In other words, as we have noted above, gender is about power. "[M]ajor areas of life – including sexuality, family, education, economy, and the state – are organized according to gender principles and shot through with conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege" (Glenn 1999:5).

Awareness of the importance of gender in migration studies led, initially, to the inclusion of women in studies of mobility. Although very important in highlighting the for too long invisible role of women, the approach of 'adding women and stir' has proven useful in bringing to light women's experiences of mobility, but it was *not* enough to unfold the gendered neutral assumptions at the base of most theories of migration.

Despite the by now widely recognized importance of gender as a crucial lens to avoid allegedly 'universal' analytical explanations for social phenomena, scholarly research, statistics and policies on migration are still strikingly gender neutral or biased. The reports examined below try to provide a picture of the socio-political framework of women/gender and migration in their respective national contexts, and highlights the gaps in research or policies where the mobility of women and its gendered implications, are still invisible or underexplored.

As the national reports analysed below show, conceptualizing gender as a central aspect of migration is crucial for a full understanding of the consequences of mobility *vis-à-vis* the economy, politics, the state as well as ideologies and systems of values in the countries under examination. The national reports consider both sub-Saharan African countries such as Niger, Mali, Mauritania as well as North African and Middle Eastern contexts, notably Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Despite the socio-economic heterogeneity of the contexts analysed, and the varying statistical or historical relevance of women's roles in international migration, it is still possible to draw some comparisons and to find common elements across the reports.

Most reports attempt to go beyond a simple 'add women and stir' approach and try to analyse the socio-political dimension of migration through a gendered lens. Some of the crosscutting questions, which emerge, include:

- What are the specific traits of the feminisation of migration in these regions?
- To what extent have national policies and the representations of migration incorporated women and gender?
- How is migration shaped by gender ideologies and gender regimes both in the host and home countries?
- Is migration an empowering tool for both women who migrated and for those who are left behind and in what ways?

In what follows, I will attempt to summarize the main findings of the socio-political national reports, with a view to analysing commonalities and differences in gendered migration patterns across the countries examined.

Feminization of migration

The national report on Algeria argues that there has been a reconfiguration of Algerian emigration as a whole. Along with the emigration of intellectuals and students, there is now increasing emigration of women. Algerian emigration has gone through a process of feminization, with 42% out of the 4.5 million Algerians in France represented by women. The feminization of migration in the Algerian context is explained in the face of the changing configuration of mobility, which is no longer driven by economic reasons, but that is also a reflection of the desire to ameliorate one's life socially. Reasons for migrating are identified not simply in having a job, but in bettering an individual's life conditions and fulfilling other types of projects. Examples provided are those of university students who increasingly participate in scientific networks, members of civil society associations taking part into Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, but also of women who are engaged with transnational trade circuits, such as *trabendo*, popularly called the 'Biznasiates', that is the 'business women'.

In Tunisia women have also been emigrating in significant numbers, considering that they represent 35% of the total number of emigrants abroad. However, the rate of their emigration is in decline, as shown by the fact that in the last 5 years they represent only 15% of those who left the country. Around 36.7% of emigrant women are employed in the labour market and this is seen as a function of women's access to citizenship rights in the host country. According to a national survey cited in the report, the more women have access to citizenship the more likely they are to be active in the labour market. However, they are more often than not employed in semi or unskilled jobs that represent for them a downward path of mobility. It might be argued, then, that women are active in the labour market, but they are not self-fulfilled.

In the context of Egypt, the national report mentions a study that discovered that the majority of women, 75 percent of the total, migrate either to accompany their spouses, to get married to an Egyptian living abroad, or for wider family reasons. Accordingly, only one fifth of migrant women migrate for economic reasons. However, once they migrate, women are twice as likely to work than the women who stayed home in Egypt and this is seen as an empowering factor. Another important element emerging from the Egyptian national report is that Egyptian migrant women are usually better educated than their male counterparts.

It is worth noting, however, that even if women's unemployment rates are double those of their male counterparts, prevailing gender norms and values push women into the marriage market rather than expecting them to secure a job either locally, or through migrating.

The feminisation of migration, in Egypt, depends very much on the destination countries. Migration towards certain countries such as North America or Australia involves the whole family, and for these destinations, women represent half of the migrant population. On the contrary, migration

towards Arab countries is a prerogative of men, with 95% of male economic migrants to this destination leaving their spouses and families behind.

Lebanese women, similarly, seem to be emigrating at a lesser rate than men. Between 1992 and 2007, for example, 13.5% of men migrated as against 7% of women. A substantial percentage of Lebanese women migrate within the context of family reunions and emigration rates are equal across Christian and Muslim communities.

In the case of Mauritanian women, we can observe a similar trend to the one observed for Egypt. International migration towards Europe, and other destinations, is still predominantly a male phenomenon. However, among migrant women, ethnic differentiation is a major factor *vis-à-vis* the migratory project. The 'négro-mauritaniennes' typically migrate towards Europe in the context of family reunions, but once settled, they are likely to become autonomous and to construct their own project. On the other hand, Arab-Berber women tend to choose the Maghreb and Arab Gulf countries. These are common destinations for women migrating alone whose aim, according to the national report, is to find a spouse or to enter into prostitution networks. This is not the whole picture, however. As with the Algerian women who engage in *trabendo*, the report underlines the long-term role of independent Mauritanian women in trade networks.

The Moroccan report brings to attention further elements that accounts for shifts in the feminization of migration, in the light of the long-term history of international migration among the Moroccan population. While, at the outset in the 1950s and 1960s, Moroccan migration was predominantly a male experience, the economic crisis of the mid 1970s and the closure of boundaries brought a structural change in the migratory flows and in the nature of the Moroccan communities abroad. As a consequence, migration of women within family reunion schemes and the stabilization of families meant the emergence of new issues and dimensions. Historically, Moroccan migration was mainly composed of men migrating alone and women joined in the context of family reunion schemes, which were, however, long discouraged in classic emigration countries such as France. Belgium was quite exceptional in this regard, in that the emigration of Moroccan women in the context of family reunification was promoted from the early 50s and 60s as a demographic strategy in the country.

Statistically, recent surveys conducted in the early 2000s, show that, in contrast to the past, when the majority of migrants were single men under the age of 30, contemporary migrants are still young, but 65% of them are married and have children. Moreover, Moroccan migration has increasingly been feminised in the last 30 years. The reasons for migrating for Moroccan women have more and more to do with phenomena such as the feminisation of poverty, the inequality between women and men, and the general discrimination that women face that led them to envisage migration as an alternative to the subaltern positions they would occupy in the country of origin. Amongst the pull factors, those seen as crucial include: the higher salaries and the better situation that women enjoy in the destination countries.

The report on Niger explains emigration, as well as immigration, into and from the country, in the context of the economic crisis and the deregulation of major social services like education and health, famine, precariousness, unemployment and misery. To these, one should add natural catastrophes, especially desertification, civil wars and, since the 1990s, a political transition which has exaggerated economic and social inequalities. The Nigerian report also clearly shows that gender ideologies and norms shape decisively the patterns, reasons and types of migratory movements and tends to discourage the emigration of single women abroad, while, as we will see, women migrating to Niger from neighbouring countries manage to challenge prevailing gendered norms in the countries and communities of origin finding empowering opportunities in Niger. The country is also a major transit territory. By virtue of its location in a strategic position *vis-à-vis* Europe, it came to represent a crucial area of passage of migration chains, trade and networks between Niger, Libya and Algeria.

Malian women also migrated to Europe mainly in the context of family reunions, the majority being Soninke destined for France, but previously they were seasonal migrants in the African continent. The Malian report emphasizes what seems to be a gendered pattern, namely that women

tend to send remittances back home more than their male counterparts, and this is due to women's sense of obligations, perhaps this could also be seen as the terrain on which their mobility is legitimased by their communities and families back home. In order to fulfil their family obligations, migrant women from Mali are represented as more easily engaged with demeaning, badly-paid jobs, where they are subject to substantial levels of discrimination.

Growing attention should be devolved to the issue of domestic and care-related activities in Jordan and Lebanon. Most notably, in the Kingdom of Jordan, labour market segmentation and stereotypes define the demand for women migrant workers: demand is increasing mainly for care services in less-skilled and devalued jobs such as domestic work including home cleaning and child care, and in skilled and valued occupations such as nursing, and private institutional or home-health caring for the elderly and the handicapped. Migrant women also hold jobs as contract and hotel cleaners; waitresses; entertainers, and sex workers. Migrant women workers are also found in retail sales, and in labour intensive manufacturing, mainly in sweatshops.

In Jordan, the countries from which most immigrant women there originated in 2009 were Sri Lanka (23% of the total), the Philippines (23.5%) and Indonesia (48%), as personal service workers took the lead in numbers.

The national report on Jordan is also notably the only one to explicitly address the issue of refugee women. Indeed, as the report notes, there is an important number of Iraqi refugee women in the Kingdom, who escaped from gendered based violence in the war in Iraq. Once in Jordan, however, they find themselves in a vulnerable and paradoxical position, while their husbands often risk deportation, the police follow the unofficial practice of not deporting women, but at the same time, they are subject to stereotypes and gendered representations, seen as prostitutes and as causes of social instability. Here, the report states: 'we see clearly how the category of Iraqi female refugee migrants intersects with several other categories, most prominently that of the refugees, the poor, and the females, which explains its apparent disregard by the Jordanian authorities and, later, the selective gendering of policies targeting poverty'.

Women and migration: representation in national debates, policies and statistics

Despite the evident feminization of migration, which seems to be – with very few exceptions – a characteristic of all countries under consideration, a common trend emphasized in the reports is that women seem to be either absent from national discourses and analyses, even in demographic contexts, or that if women are mentioned, analyses and policies tend generally to be gender neutral.

Aside from the lack of reliable gendered statistics, most reports also lament the scarcity of studies on women and migration in their analyses, as well as the general invisibility of women even in national migration policies, which very often are still totally gender blind. The most striking example is that of Niger where, despite the fact that women represent 49% of the total migrant population, they do not appear in national discourses and statistics, given the nature and type of informal work that women are engaged in.

Indeed, most of the reports suggest that women migrants do not yet constitute a category that is seen as deserving special treatment in emigration policies and discourses. The absence of migrant women from national statistics is most notably reported in the case of Algeria, Egypt and the sub-Saharan countries.

In Jordan, public debates are gendered, but migration policies are not. In this context, it is noted that the 'gender' angle on the issue of migration typically goes hand-in-hand with a focus on abuse and trafficking, which has become the main target of international policy-making.

The need to gender data, policies and analyses of migration is stressed by all national reports, but particular emphasis is posed by the Moroccan report, though it must be noted that the Moroccan state

has been active in promoting institutions dealing with their diaspora through the creation of several bodies such as the *Foundation Hassan II pour les Marocains résidant à l'étranger*, which signalled a whole new shift in the ways in which migrant communities abroad are perceived and represented, increasingly as members of a deterritorialised nation.

Morocco seems to be amongst the countries at the forefront of a new representation of migration and in advancing women's status. For example, the "*Projet de plan d'action pour l'intégration de la femme au dévelopment*" fully recognised the incredible hardship that women residing abroad have to go through, because of the gap between family codes in Europe and in Morocco. Attempts to advance women's status in Morocco through, for example, the integration of women in development plans has had trickle down effects on Moroccan women residing abroad.

The Algerian report also notes how the Algerian community abroad is increasingly perceived as a part of the national community albeit living beyond the national boundaries. This is especially evident in the state's attempt to develop a moral discourse to convince the diaspora to invest in their country of origin and of the general states' move towards homeland-oriented policies. Here, the government does not specifically address women in their discourses, but rather the community as a whole.

The relations between migrant women and the state is interesting in as much as the state attributes to women a role as symbolic carriers of the nation's boundaries and of the nation's honour. In countries where there are enhanced diaspora-homeland policies, like Tunisia and Morocco, this aspect is particularly evident. Migrant women are seen as playing a pivotal role in the symbolic and physical reproduction of the nation's identity and collectivity abroad. For example, when the reform of the Personal Status Law was approved in 2004, the Moroccan state was interested in promoting bilateral agreements to extend the Personal Status Code to their Moroccan residents abroad to ensure their membership of a deterritorialised nation.

It might be observed that in the reverse case, when sending countries are reluctant to allow their citizens abroad, then access to civil rights of the host countries matters, especially with regard to personal status law. The reproduction of certain gender ideologies, and the perpetuation of specific gendered roles within the communities abroad, are then also part and parcel of keeping diasporas linked to their communities of origin. In the Algerian context, this gives birth to contradictory and ambivalent policies, aiming at easing patriarchal control over the mobility of perspective migrant women by, for example, making sure that women no longer require the authorization of the spouse to leave the country, adding, therefore, to their freedom of mobility, but simultaneously maintaining the clause that women need the authorization of the fathers to register their children on their passport, underlying the patriarchal cultural logic that children belong to their fathers.

Similarly, restricting women's mobility can be seen as an act of preserving the nation's honour. Egypt offers a particularly interesting case in point. As the Egypt report discusses, the government has now become more restrictive in issuing passports for women as a result of the media campaign focusing on the discrimination women suffer when emigrating to Saudi and the Gulf states more generally. There is also evidence, provided by the national report on Jordan, that Arab Gulf countries wish to recruit women with Islamic and Arab values to suit the taste of their employers.

Moreover, since most countries examined are simultaneously immigration, emigration and transit countries, the gendered construction of women as symbolic icons of the nation is ambivalently applied to emigrant and immigrant women. The Egyptian report, in particular, notes that Ethiopian and Sudanese women entering Egypt, trying to migrate to Israel, suffer from institutional state violence as a result of the increasing pressure from Israel to prevent these flows. Moreover, there is evidence of widespread arranged marriages in exchange for money amongst poor families in Egypt

Gender and migration: Is migration empowering?

A line of enquiry that cuts across some of the national reports addresses the extent to which migration is empowering for migrant women and for those left behind.

In order to assess whether migration is empowering, we first need to define empowerment. Naila Kabeer suggests that empowerment might be defined as agency.

Agency relies also on capability, which rests on people's potential for living the life they want, whereby access to resources is a crucial element in exercising choices. A gendered analysis, however, reveals that resources are often distributed through institutions, families, and communities according to asymmetric power relationships. The ways in which resources are distributed thus depends on the ability to define priorities and enforce claims. Therefore, agency in relations to empowerment implies not only actively exercising choices, but also 'doing this in ways that challenge power relations' (Kabeer, 2005).

As most national reports illustrate, migration is potentially an empowering enterprise which gives women access to new resources or symbolic capital, notably, by providing women with jobs in the labour market, whether informal or formal, by exposing them to new lifestyles or, in the case of women left behind, by providing them with greater decision-making power within households.

However, to assess whether this has an empowering effect, we should differentiate between, for example, women's labour for survival and labour that leads to some kind of independence. Similarly, to assess the extent to which women left behind are empowered, we should analyse not only who controls the resources, but also how they are invested. Investing in girls' education, for example, would potentially provide women with more power than investing in immaterial, consumer goods.

In other words, for empowerment to be defined as such, there are some conditions that need clearly to be in place. These include:

- The existence of alternatives (disempowerment and poverty go hand-in-hand and gender related inequalities intensify the effect of poverty)
- Alternatives must be available: women have to clearly be able to perceive the power relations and cultural constructions that may govern their lives in order to choose differently.
- Women should be able to exercise strategic life choices, not only basic choices.

Empowerment, therefore, is rooted not only in access to resources and power, which are, however, a *sine-qua-non*. It should also translate into women's major involvement in decision-making processes and, finally, impinge upon their sense of self. Ultimately, empowerment should have a transformative element, it should translate into women's ability to question, analyse, and act on the structures of patriarchal constraint in which they live their lives.

It is in the light of this framework that we will now turn to the analysis of the national reports.

The Niger report makes a very important observation about immigrant and transit populations. While usually men migrate to Niger hoping to find jobs or in transit for Europe, women usually migrate from neighbouring countries to find job opportunities which would enhance their economic condition back in their countries of origin, where they are often confronted with lack of social mobility and with deficient economic policies. Generally, therefore, women search out employment opportunities to better their life conditions in domestic work, tourism, beauty centres and saloons, leisure bar and restaurants.

For example, by undertaking informal activities in such contexts, women who have left Togo and other neighbouring countries, found themselves quite successful, in their migration journeys. They left their countries unemployed, challenged the hegemonic cultural and social expectations of their gendered roles back home, and managed to get a job in Niger and to secure a salary

Local women, on the contrary, are very often unable able to challenge local socio-cultural values and taboos, and this prevents them from getting such jobs.

The report on Palestine makes some very interesting observations on the relations between emigration, gender and cultural and social change. Women have been migrating in lower percentages than men and their mobility has usually taken place in the context of family reunions.

This pattern reinforces a gender regime that is not favourable to women. There are historical reasons, which account for the persistence of social conservatism in Palestine. A major one is the occupation by Israel of urban centres in historical Palestine, a fact that prevented the flourishing of a progressive political culture. Emigration or expulsion of Palestinians abroad did not bring about significant changes but, if anything, it increased conservative views within Palestinian society.

Indeed, Palestinians have generally emigrated to Arab countries, which, over the last twenty years, promoted Islamism and conservative views. Moreover, Palestinian emigration is traditionally directed towards countries where women's participation in the public sphere is scarce. Palestinian women have either been left behind or have migrated later to join their husbands, but they were never fully exposed to public spheres. In addition, the fact that emigrants in the Gulf countries have not had access to civil, political or social rights has reinforced the reliance and linkages of migrants to their families of origin in many ways. At the same time, the Israeli occupation reinforced family dependence on emigrants. This pattern ended up reinforcing family networks and patriarchal relations, rather than promoting, as an indirect effect, independence and new family patterns or the weakening of existing networks.

Moreover, the fact that Palestinian migration was mainly economic, particularly male commuters headed for Israel, is seen as an important factor. In Israel, there is no exposure to new lifestyles, and women left behind do not benefit from any acquired social capital. On the contrary, there are surveys showing, for example, that endogamous marriages go hand in hand with emigration, so emigration does not promote openness or new family formations.

Finally, the occupation and the lack of a Palestinian state are also seen as being responsible for the persistence of conservative gender ideologies. The economic sphere, for example, also relies on the majority of privately owned businesses which are small family owned and run, since all economic activity made impossible by all kinds of repression and control exercised by Israel.

This, of course, is not the only outcome of migration on women left behind. The Niger report emphasizes, for example, that the absence of men meant new responsibilities for women. First and foremost, women left behind are charged with taking care of the family. This can become an empowering experience for women, or alternatively can translate into a major burden, especially when men do not share their revenues with their partners. In this case, women are left alone facing death, uncertainties, economic difficulties, poverty and illnesses. Indeed, famine and food scarcity are very gendered processes. Women and children represent eighty percent of those affected by food crisis and scarcity. In Niger, local values and cultural patterns constitute impediments to women's empowerment, as well as strongly conditioning women's mobility and access to resources that could result from migration. On the other hand, by migrating, women who settle in Niger from neighbouring countries show that they are able to carve out new spaces and opportunities, but this means they have to challenge patriarchal and hegemonic gender norms. When this happens, the report suggests, it can be affirmed that migration plays a catalyzing role in changing gender relations. Moreover, as the report also makes clear, the economic role played by migrant women is underestimated and not taken into consideration in the formulation of migration policies.

In Lebanon the report stresses that women gain access to new roles and responsibilities as a result of their men's emigration. The report on Lebanon emphasises how those women left behind have acquired new roles and responsibilities in the households' decision-making process and have new and increased roles in the public sphere.

In Egypt studies found that during the migration process, females attain more decision-making powers, and make important household decisions pertaining to the education of their children, welfare and household maintenance (Assad 2010; Elbadawy and Roushdy 2009). Nevertheless, it is argued that these empowerment measures last only for a short time and that they are essentially reversed when men return from their time abroad. In fact, Egyptian migrants in Gulf countries are likely to even come back home with more conservative views on gender relations, views that they have acquired in their host countries, where conservative gender ideologies are in place. This, the report notes, may result in less progressive gender roles and attitudes among migrant households *vis-à-vis* households where men stayed put (Elbadawy and Rousdy 2009).

In Egypt, it is argued, female empowerment and employment levels differ according to the amount of remittances received. Employment of female relatives who are left behind seems to be higher among those households, which do not receive remittances. As a result of the absence of remittances, the *de-facto* female head of household acquires a dual role in the domestic and extra domestic spheres. Female self-employment levels are also higher in households where there are no remittances (Assaad 2010, 37).

Remittances, however, could also have a positive impact on those women left behind. For instance, in households receiving remittances, female enrolment's rates in schools increase, especially for girls aged between 15 and 17 years old, which is usually the average age where drop-out rates are higher, especially amongst rural poor families (AHDR 2009). Thus remittances ensure that girls potentially acquire a higher level of education. The number of hours spent in domestic work by young girls also decreases, thanks to remittances, which result in higher incomes and in access to electrical and time-saving domestic appliances.

In conclusion, women left behind may gain autonomy thanks to the absence of their men and to access to new resources, but they may also experience new forms of stress and vulnerability and an increased workload in agriculture as well as in the household.

Conclusions: Gendering theoretical approaches to migration

With a few exceptions, all countries examined highlighted that the number of women migrating under various forms has been increasing. However, the types and patterns of women's migration are extremely heterogeneous. Women migrate under family reunion schemes, as single migrants, to pursue their studies or as active agents of trade and as economic migrants, but women are also increasingly trafficked to work in the sex industry, exported as suitable wives to Muslim countries under arranged marriage schemes, and exploited as domestic servants with no legal or social protection. They also flee from wars, violence and conflicts as refugees. Most national reports underline how all types of motilities characterise female migration and immigration from and to their countries, making it very difficult to reach uniform or monolithic conclusions on the empowering or disempowering nature of migration for women.

At a general level, the feminisation of migration flows to Europe and especially to the so called new countries of immigration (notably Italy and Spain) occurred within a frame of changing socio-economic conditions with respect to the industrial expansion of the 1950s and the 1960s (see Harvey 1989). Changes have occurred both at the demographic and economic levels. In particular, the increasing need for immigrant manpower should be located in the globalisation processes affecting local economic processes and in the demographic decline of the local population. While European industrial societies in the post war period were characterised by a high level of recruitment within an expanding Fordist industrial sector, in the 1990s, migrant labour forces are employed in highly segmented, flexible and precarious jobs that are not satisfied by local labour supply. In particular, to be competitive within an internationalised and globalised market, small industries are urged to reduce labour costs and to introduce a high level of flexibility in their recruitment policies. Many such industries, for example, employ only seasonal workers.

Migrant women, in this context, are increasingly filling the gaps left by the crisis of the welfare state in post-industrial societies through their (often illegal) jobs in the domestic sector and in care related occupations. This is a consequence of the fact that, especially in the southern-Mediterranean countries of the EU, the increasing participation of women in the labour market has not brought about changes in the traditional division of roles within their families. Migrant women seem to substitute for European women in their reproductive roles. What Andall calls 'the racialization of the live-in sphere' means that an old system can be maintained with a new supply of labour (2000).

The need for migrant women's labour is also a reflection of demographic trends. For example, the rapidly increasing percentage of aged people has been accompanied by a major restructuring of the European welfare system, due to cuts in public expenditure. Indeed, most migrant women find employment in the domestic and cleaning sectors and, in a very few cases, in small industries. Most of them are paid cash in hand, without insurance or contributory schemes being paid for by their employers.

The feminization of the labour force goes hand-in-hand with the flexibility of the labour force due to deregulation and globalisation. It needs to be remembered that women are still paid 20% less than their male counterparts and suffer from a double type of discrimination, as women and as migrants. For example, the average pay of a migrant woman in Germany in the early nineties was 48% that of a German man.

When we talk about migrant women labour in Europe we should also emphasise intergenerational shifts. Women belonging to the first generation usually moved from manufacturing to the service economy with the crisis of the industrial economy, their daughters have now entered more skilled jobs, thanks to their access to education in Europe. However, racism and lack of citizenship rights still impinge upon the ability of migrant women to empower themselves. Indeed, the new migratory flows happen in the context of increasingly fortressed boundaries, which also means that sex work or domestic work is becoming the only possible channels for employment and mobility.

The internationalisation of domestic work invests other areas of the world, such as the Middle East. As Moors *et al* (2009) argue: 'Not only in Europe and North America, but also in East Asia and the Middle East, growing economic inequalities on a global scale, shifts in family relations and household composition, and changing patterns and evaluations of women's employment and unpaid domestic work have drawn migrant women into this field of employment'.

We can conclude by stating that when it comes to understanding gendered mobility, the major theoretical approaches to migration present limitations in that they either concentrate exclusively on structural factors such as relations of production, on cultural factors, or on individual strategies as explanations for female mobility or immobility. Chant and Radcliffe propose a household strategy approach in order to understand gender selectivity in migration patterns, which focuses both on economic factors such as the gender division of labour and of relations of production, and on the reproductive roles and hierarchies within the household.

A further insight stemming from these reports is that they show the inadequacy of the 'push and pull factors' approach as the sole lens to understand the feminisation of migration. Indeed, these alone cannot fully explain women's migration. As these national reports illustrate, migration cannot be seen as the result of an individual choice resulting from a rational economic calculation, taking place independently from structural factors. Gendered normative rules, international regulations, cultural and religious pressures shape, hinder or prevent individuals' subjectivities and ability to exercise their choices. Nor can migration be understood solely from within a political economy approach whereby migrants are the inevitable outcome of an unequal distribution of economic and political power on a worldwide basis. To fully understand contemporary forms of migration and their gendered nature there is a need for a meso-level of analysis where migration results from a dialectic relation between structures and agency. As the analysis of the national reports also demonstrates, three levels need to be unfolded to understand the gendered dynamics of contemporary migration:

1) The migratory regime that includes the relations between countries of residence and of origins and the conditions of entry and residence,

2) The migratory institutions, both the formal and informal institutions and network through which individuals negotiate migratory regimes,

3) Individual migrants whose migration choices are influenced by their personal histories and households. (Kofman et al, 2000).

Of course, in addition to these, we should note the importance of the material conditions as well as the weight given to the cultural and social roles women are expected to perform in both the society of origin and that of destination. Ultimately, we need to grasp the concurrent action of economic and political structures, of cultural and normative gender norms and regulations, and of individual strategies and agencies for an understanding both of migration and its gendered nature.

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