Gender, Politics and Migration in the Global Agenda: Recent Changes in the South American Region.

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GENDER, POLITICS AND MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL AGENDA: RECENT CHANGES IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN REGION

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ABSTRACT: Female migration has become a central issue in migration and gender studies. The number of migrant women has increased in recent years, along with their social and political visibility; this phenomenon is known as the «feminization of migration». Changing patterns in international migration have brought migrant women to the attention of political actors in this field. This paper begins by analyzing the place of the «female migrant» in the emerging global migration agenda promoted by United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration. It then examines said social actor in the supranational political spaces recently constituted in the South American region. We focus on the Argentine experience to discuss the presence/absence of a gender dimension in current national migration policy. This article suggests that the visibility of the female migrant as a relevant social actor in the discourses, suggestions, and outlines of the global and regional agenda on migration has not modified the historic invisibility of the processes that produce and reproduce the gender inequalities that affect the lives of women migrants.

KEYWORDS: gender, international migration, political agenda, South America, Argentina

RESUMEN: Las migraciones femeninas se ubican en la actualidad entre los temas que mayor interés suscitan en el terreno de los estudios migratorios y de género. En los últimos tiempos asistimos a una mayor visibilidad social y política y a un incremento significativo del número de mujeres en los procesos migratorios, fenómeno conocido como «feminización de las migraciones». Este fenómeno, al transformar los patrones de migración internacional, ha implicado la consideración de la «mujer migrante» por parte de distintos actores políticos vinculados a esta cuestión. Este artículo analiza primero el lugar que adquiere la figura de la «mujer migrante» en la emergente agenda global sobre migraciones impulsada por agencias de Naciones Unidas y la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones. Posteriormente, examina dicha figura en aquellos espacios políticos supranacionales constituidos recientemente alrededor de la temática migratoria en la región sudamericana, deteniéndose en la experiencia argentina para discutir ciertos aspectos de la presencia/ausencia de la dimensión de género en la actual política migratoria nacional. En este trabajo se sugiere que la visibilidad que alcanza la «mujer migrante» como actor social relevante en los discursos, recomendaciones y lineamientos de la agenda global y regional sobre migraciones, no modifica la histórica invisibilidad de los procesos que producen y reproducen las desigualdades de género, y que condicionan las realidades migratorias femeninas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Género, migraciones internacionales, agenda política, América del sur, Argentina.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the specifics of female migration have been historically ignored by several theoretical traditions, they have lately become a central issue in migration and gender studies. Even though women have historically participated in population movements, their role as relevant social players has been historically underestimated and they have been viewed as passive subjects. In recent years, women migrants have gained social and political visibility at the same time that their numbers have significantly increased; this has become known as «the feminization of migration», and the relevance of this phenomenon is attributed not only to the actual increase of women in migration flows, which has transformed international migration patterns, but also to the conceptual acknowledgement of this figure in the social sciences (Oso, 1998: 39). These factors have brought migrant women to the attention of political actors in the field of international migration.

This paper starts by analyzing the place of the «female migrant» in the emerging global migration agenda promoted by United Nations (UN) agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It then examines said social actor in the supranational political spaces recently constituted around migration policy in the South American region and focuses on the Argentine case to discuss the presence/absence of a gender dimension in current national migratory policy. We suggest that that the visibility of the female migrant as a relevant social actor in the discourses, suggestions, and outlines of the global and regional agenda on migration does not modify the historic invisibility of the processes that produce and reproduce the gender inequalities that affect the lives of women migrants. The findings here presented are supported by data provided by a number of international and regional bodies (particularly those in the UN system and the IOM): the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM); the United Nations High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE). We also reference the preliminary conclusions of the Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development, the Commitment of Montevideo of the Ibero-American Summit, the final declarations of the South American Conference on Migration, and national stipulations such as the Argentine migration legislation.

WOMEN MIGRANTS AS «NEW» PLAYERS IN THE GLOBAL AGENDA

Starting in the 1970s, the incorporation of gender studies into the social sciences and the development of feminist social movements affected political agendas around the world. A number of local and global actors evidenced the invisibility of women in a number of social processes and demanded the implementation of public policies that would incorporate the gender dimension into their approach to women's issues in a variety of social contexts. The social and political impact of these demands was evidenced when, in 1975, the UN called an international conference on women (García and Valdivieso, 2005: 42). And yet it took three decades for the figure of the migrant woman to become visible in the global migration agenda.[1] The impact of feminist debates, accompanied by transformations in international migration patterns, led to a redefinition of the «migrant woman» as a central player in migration processes. Within this framework, gender became the central axis around which all recommendations issued by organizations focused on international migration circled. This can be seen, for example, in the 2006 UNFPA report, which is completely devoted to the subject of female migrations, or in the multiplication of reports focusing on women migrants and being issued by other UN bodies such as INSTRAW. A working document on gender, remittances, and development published by this institution in 2006 shows that it is essential for transversal gender-based approaches to be integrated into research, programs, projects, and policies. From a regional viewpoint and in tandem with the global agenda, ECLAC has taken such an approach in a large number of reports focused on migration in Latin America and the Caribbean and issued during the past few years (Cepal, 2000; 2003; 2005; 2006). The centrality of the gender-based approach can also be seen in the preliminary conclusions of the 2006 Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development, which recommended that «future meetings on migration take a transversal approach to the topic of gender, which should be present in all analyses and not only as a specific issue» (Encuentro Iberoamericano sobre Migración y Desarrollo, 2006: 16).

Since gender was acknowledged to be a key aspect in international migration studies, the global political agenda promoted by the United Nations has

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[1] The first academic studies on female migration were carried out during the 1970s. These works viewed women within a family context and signaled their absence during the first phase of the migratory process, which appeared to be dominated by the man. During the 1980s, research on Yugoslavian female migrants in Germany, France, and Switzerland questioned some of these assumptions: firstly, it revealed that women were present in the initial migration wave and were oftentimes the initiators of this process; secondly, it determined that the reasons for migrating were not limited to family ties or family-based economic strategies, and could also be the result of women's individual decisions (Morokvasic, 1988, cited by Timur, 2000). During the 1990s, global changes in relations of production and reproduction led to an increased interest in female migrants. Currently, most of the research focused on migrant women points to the transversal nature of the gender dimension (Papi, 2003; Parella, 2003), and the need to approach female migration from a multidimensional perspective that accounts for gender as well as other forms of social identification, including ethnicity and social class (Parella, 2003; 2005).

demanded the creation of policies that address this issue. The 2005 GCIM report states the need to implement «migration policies and programmes [that are] gender-sensitive … give special attention to the social situation and inclusion of migrant women, and ensure that women are empowered by the migration experience (Chapter 4, Art. 41). The IOM, on the other hand, has pointed out that gender «is perhaps the single most important factor shaping migrants' experiences –more important than their country of origin or destination, their age, class, race or culture. As such, it affects many policies and programmes that governments put in place, not only in the field of migration» (IOM, 4). These political recommendations are inscribed within a framework that takes a new approach to the organization, classification, and control of international population movements –an approach based on notions of balance and efficiency and known as «migration management». This viewpoint is, to a large extent, based on a cost-benefit logic embodied in accountable balance (Sayad, 1998), and takes a pragmatic stance in regards to the impossibility (from a restrictive point of view) of efficaciously controlling migratory flows, especially in the case of «irregular» flows. Migrants are classified according to their purported usefulness or lack thereof and are seen to embody a series of «advantages» or «benefits», «disadvantages» and «prejudices» (economic and otherwise) associated to migration. In what is a recent change, migrations are nowadays mostly seen in terms of «opportunity», a notion that has displaced the problem-laden perception that commanded the global agenda for decades; the «vulnerability or migrants» is often highlighted, along with the opportunities they offer. In fact, the have been granted an unprecedented capacity for transformation: they have been assigned a key role in economic growth, development, and poverty reduction.[2] Consequently and in the name of development, migration flows are classified as «desirable» or «non-desirable» depending on their orderly/disorderly, voluntary/forced, and reduced/massive character.[3] The approach to female migration follows along these lines.

Generally speaking, the discourse that characterizes the global political agenda promoted by several UN agencies identifies women migrants as a «vulnerable group» while highlighting the economic and social benefits female migration has on places of origin and destination. It also points out the need for «orderly» and «legal» migration flows while underscoring the negative effects other kinds of mobilization could have on places of origin and destination, as well as the women themselves. Those who travel without legal authorization could well suffer

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[2] It is one thing to state that international migration contributes to the global economy and that its expansion depends on the mobility of the workforce, and quite another to maintain that migrant contributions to global economic growth advance the welfare of the general population, including social sectors and classes who are exploited and socially marginalized, as in the case of migrants themselves. The expression «Managing Migration for the Benefit of All» summarizes the stance certain UN agencies have on this matter.

[3] For an initial approach to the emerging global agenda on international migration see Domenech (2007).

from increased vulnerability and exploitation in receiving countries. According to this approach, the desired positive effects associated to female migration and the easing of women migrants' vulnerability depend precisely on the nature of the migration flows, which should be orderly and purposefully channeled. This will help avoid the dangers, violence, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation to which a high percentage of migrant women are subjected. The UNFPA's 2006 State of World Population report suggests that «[r]emoving discriminatory provisions and ensuring that women have opportunities to migrate legally can help lower irregular migration, reduce smuggling and trafficking, and enable women to support their families without undue risks. (UNFPA, 2006, Chapter 5). At the same time, it states that the «explicit recognition of the human rights of women and the need for gender equality is a basic prerequisite of any sound, equitable and effective policy framework that seeks to manage migration in an orderly and humane manner» (UNFPA, 2006: Introduction).

In accordance with migration management approaches, female migration is seen as a development tool for communities of origin and destination. The IOM has stated that, «by virtue of the uses given to their diverse abilities and the remittances they send to their countries of origin», women migrants «are the main factor in the migration-development equation. […] In order to support their participation in processes of development, we must improve their economic and social position in countries of origin and destination» (Ndiaye, 2006: 23). The UNFPA's report also states that «[i]mmigration and development go hand in hand. Stepped-up investments in poverty reduction, gender equality and development … are part and parcel of efforts to achieve a more orderly migration system» (UNFPA, 2006: Introduction). On the other hand, the relationship between female migration and development has been influenced by the inclusion of gender perspectives in development theory. Theoretical models that historically portrayed women as inactive in the productive sphere have been modified in the past few decades as a consequence of changes in global production and reproduction patterns (Parella, 2005: 104). The quantitative increase of women in migration flows; migrant women's economic activity rates in receiving societies; feminist contributions to women's position in society and gender relations, and the sending of remittances to places of origin have all altered the approach to issues of development. Focus is now placed on a reversion of female subordination through empowerment or gradual access to the control of material and symbolic resources (Parella, 2003: 84).

The view of female migration as a «contribution to development» is also linked to the idea that migration could lead to many positive changes in gender relations. This perspective is based on the assumption that social and labor insertion in receiving countries gives migrant women the opportunity to change established roles and gender relations while acquiring a degree of autonomy and independence they did not enjoy in their places of origin. These ideas rest on

ethnocentric assumptions that presume that migrating from peripheral to central countries provided women with greater opportunities to break away from their subordinate and unequal position. In this regard, Gregorio (1998: 192) has pointed out that most of the studies centered on female migration are based on ethnocentrically determined and erroneous premises that simply assume migration implies moving from a traditional society into a modern one and that this would result in an improvement for women. Several researchers have criticized this stance since, in many cases, not only does gender inequality remain an issue but traditional roles might even be strengthened (Morokvasic, 1984; Hugo, 2000). This is not to say that migration, insofar as it is a social process, cannot lead to changes in gender relations but, as Ariza (2000: 226) points out, we cannot take for granted the direction of the change or even its occurrence.

While many international bodies underscore the contributions made by migrant women to both sending and receiving societies, the subjects themselves are classified as part of the so-called «vulnerable groups». The 2006 United Nations High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development stated that, since migration is riskier for women than for men, it was important to «adopt policies that addressed the particular circumstances and experiences of female migrants and reduced their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse». This approach classifies migrant women as fragile and weak subjects vulnerable to exclusion and social marginalization (Agrela, 2006) and takes a passive view of their participation in migration flows. The belief that they do not make individual decisions regarding their mobility and that they are more likely to be abused and exploited paints them as victims in need of protection and compassion, a view which, according to Juliano (2002), is yet another form of stigmatization and social segregation. A perspective that links migrant women to vulnerable groups essentially because of their femininity emphasizes a stance of passivity and weakness when it comes to explaining their mobility and is based on the kind of attitude that naturalizes socially established male and female behaviors and roles. It fails to take into account the different strategies used by migrant women to redirect their lives.[4]

Finally, the attention currently received by migrant women from a number of social and political actors in the field has not lead to a questioning of the gender status quo. The international migration agenda's outlines and recommendations prioritize the need to acknowledge the gender dimension in migration programs and policies and seek to address the «vulnerability» of large groups of migrant women while encouraging their contributions to development in sending and receiving countries. Yet they fail to address the dominant social, economic, political, and cultural model, which has deepened, legitimized, and repro-

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[4] Studies on social vulnerability suggest that impoverished people, families, and groups who live in spaces of exclusion continually use their own resources to improve their situation and face adversity (Kaztman, 1999: 3).

duced gender inequalities. As Calavita (1989: 175) points out, the debate on migration policy should be part of a wider discussion that includes socio-economic policy as a whole.

GENDER, MIGRATION, AND POLICIES IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN REGION. THE ARGENTINE CASE

Latin America's current migration flows have been branded by the effects of the neoliberal policies implemented throughout the region since the 1970s and, particularly, the 1990s. Increased unemployment levels and poverty rates, and labor precarization and deregulation turned migration into a survival strategy for an important number of women. Increased female participation in the region's migration flows (especially toward central nations) has played a crucial role in the inclusion of gender perspectives in the Latin American political scene. This context, in addition to the centrality achieved by the global discourse on the feminization of migration, led to the inclusion of migrant women in the regional migration agenda. The growing importance of the «migration issue» in the South American political sphere is reflected in the multiplication of officially-designed meeting and consultation spaces, which include the South American Conference on Migration and the Ibero-American Summit.[5]

In regards to the South American Conference on Migration, which began meeting in 2000 and included most of the countries in the region, the figure of the migrant woman began to acquire visibility and specificity during the sixth meeting in Asunción, Paraguay, in May 2006, within the framework of migrants' rights. The Asunción declaration states that «the human rights of migrants must be respected in their totality, especially those of migrant women and unaccompanied minors, regardless of migration status»* (Article 1). In tandem with the international willingness to highlight migration's benefits to development, migration flows are perceived as a «contribution» to both sending and receiving nations (Article 3). The Ibero-American Summit's Commitment of Montevideo states that, «faced with the gradual increase of women's participation in international migration, we must adopt gender equality policies that address the differentiated impact migration has on women and the need to attend the structural causes that lead them to migrate» (Article 18). It also pledges to pay due attention to the peculiarities of feminine migration, fostering and guaranteeing full respect of migrant women's human rights across individual states regardless of the subjects' migration status, and eliminate all forms of discrimination and

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[5] For a critical analysis of the South American and Argentine migration political agenda see Domenech (2007).

* This and all subsequent quotes from South American and Argentine laws and regulations are unofficial translations of the Spanish originals cited at the end of this document.

violence against them (Article 25, section l). Here again we have the woman migrant as part of a vulnerable group and classified alongside children. This view of helpless female migrants evidences how the very nature of sexual difference is given social significance, naturalizing and reproducing these sorts of social stereotypes (Stolcke, 1999).

However, it is within the nation-state that the growing visibility of migrant women should be explored, because even if the state's role has changed in the international political arena, where arguments over the production of meanings, practices and policies has grown increasingly complex, it retains power of decision regarding migration issues and plays a key role in the formulation and implementation of migration policy.[6] The case of Argentina is peculiar insofar as the current migration legislation, issued in 2003 during Néstor Kirchner's administration and not yet regulated, is seen as a model of migration policy in the region.

Even though the sanctioning of this new law has modified the position of the Argentine State in regards to human rights and international migration, it has yet to overcome the gender invisibility that characterized the migration policies implemented in the country during the 20th century. And while it follows the international agenda in regards to its approach to human trafficking, which is seen as one of the major problems faced by migrant women, no mention is made of migrant women themselves or gender identity. Differentiated forms of insertion and access to the labor market for men and women migrants are not considered either.[7]

While the new law's focus on human rights signified an evident rupture with the national security doctrine that had been in place since the last military dictatorship, one of its greatest paradoxes is precisely that, in spite of this human rights-based approach, it ignores the gender aspect.[8] This results in an understanding of human rights within the traditional view espoused by the United

[6] Even though the discourse and policies of certain international agencies exercise a profound influence on the development of national political agendas, we must also take into account that the global agenda is built around national cases that are considered successful. This agenda is not always unilaterally imposed and the negotiation strategies of international bodies can be substantially different. Internationally speaking, even if state initiatives and measures can respond to the suggestions and demands of international bodies (which, in turn, are comprised of individual nation-states), many of them are the result of commitments made by a given nation in regional agreements and international meetings.

[7] The new migration law defines human trafficking as a «crime against migration order» and assigns different punishments depending on the type of involvement in this activity. «Crimes against migration order» involve those who undertake, promote or facilitate illegal human trafficking and impose one-to six-year sentences on those who engage in this activity (Ley de migraciones, 2003, Art. 116). These are increased to between five and fifteen years «when the lives, health or integrity of the migrants has been placed in danger or when the victim is underage; and eight to ten years when human trafficking was undertaken with the purpose of carrying out acts of terrorism, drug trafficking activities, money laundering or prostitution» (Ley de Migraciones, 2003, Art. 121).

[8] Human rights have taken center stage in the Argentine political agenda since Néstor Kirchner's administration (2003-2007), mostly in response to demands by human rights groups that have protested the acts committed during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983).

Nations, which has been criticized by gender researchers for its androcentric perspective insofar as it maintains a purported gender neutrality that only reinforces processes of female exclusion, discrimination, and inequality across a wide range of social contexts. Secondly, it maintains a restricted view of the concept of «labor» and who constitutes a «migrant laborer». The current legislation understands «migrant» as a «foreigner who desires to enter, transit, reside or settle permanently, temporarily or transitorily in the country in agreement with current legislation» (Article 2). It specifically defines «migrant laborer» as that person who «enters the country to exercise a licit, remunerated activity with an authorization to remain in the country for a maximum of three (3) years that is renewable, has multiple entries and exits, [and a] permit to undertake salaried work» (Article 23, section a). This notion of «migrant laborer» neutralizes gender differences and excludes a wide range of migrants, particularly women who work in remunerated but unregulated sectors not recognized by the law, such as sex workers, or those who are not remunerated for their «reproductive work» in the domestic space, which the state has historically rendered invisible insofar as it is not salaried.[9] This is linked to the traditional social construction of the laborer that, according to Pateman (1995), presupposes a male economic provider and family head who has a woman, a wife, who in exchange attends to his reproductive needs. Migrants are not merely laborers, even if the State oftentimes addresses them exclusively on those terms (Sayad, 1998: 55), and the lack of attention paid by migration policies to the gender/labor relationship could well deepen the exploitation to which many migrant women are subject.

Finally, even though, in agreement with migration management precepts, one of the goals of this migration policy is the regularization of migrants, this does not address the often informal nature of female employment, a limiting factor in terms of obtaining documentation and, consequently, legal immigration status. As a result of the gender-, ethnic-, and socially-based segmentation of the labor market, most women migrants work in informal and low-qualification activities. At the same time, the activities carried out by migrant women in Argentina (domestic and sexual work, street vending, agricultural and textile labor) tend to be in unregulated spheres with little in the way of legislation –which, assuming there is any, is usually not followed. Given that female activities are often precarious and lack employment contracts, proposals that omit or deny this reality only add to the irregularity and informality of the situation, confining many women to exploitation or exclusion (Juliano, 2006: 211).

According to Sassen (2003: 178), the «informalization» of the labor market that accompanied the implementation of neoliberal policies in Argentina from

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[9] Reproductive work symbolizes the domestic and caring labor undertaken within the framework of the home and family. The absence of a salary, the fact that it is socio-culturally defined as feminine work, and that it remains invisible even to those who carry it out are some of its main characteristics (Carrasquer et al. 1998: 96).

the 1970s onward must be viewed as part of the economic restructuring phenomenon that has contributed to the fall of the industrial complex during the postwar era and moved from a manufacture-based economy to one largely grounded on the service industry. This de-industrialization process, begun by the military dictatorship in the 1970s, led to important changes in the Argentine social structure: the expulsion of workforce from the industrial to the tertiary and self-employment sectors, and the making of an incipient, marginalized workforce (Svampa, 2005: 23). This situation became increasingly acute during the 1990s, when the prevailing pattern became that of increased productivity but reduced employment and worsening labor conditions (Svampa, 2005: 34). In this context, a substantial portion of the South American migrants who have entered Argentina in the past few decades have moved into the informal sector of the economy, where they constitute a part of this «marginalized workforce» and often lack regular immigration status.

Regularization has become much simpler since the implementation of the new law, especially for citizens belonging to the Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur or Southern Common Market) region and associated states; the requisites to obtain «provisional residency» (residencia precaria) are minimal, the status is renewable and, under certain conditions, can be upgraded to «temporary» (temporaria) or «permanent» (permanente) residency (Article 20).[10] Permanent residency is restricted to the spouses and children of Argentine citizens (Article 22) and those who have proof of legal and paid economic activity. The National Program for Migration Document Regularization (Programa Nacional de Normalización Documentaria Migratoria) for foreigners belonging to Mercosur block and associated states (Disposición N° 53253/2005), issued in December 2005, states that

> beneficiaries can solicit the change to permanent residency prior to the expiration of the temporary residency issued through the present Program by supplying proof of absence of a criminal record in the Argentine Republic; legal and paid economic activity; payment of the required fees; sworn declaration of having remained in national territory for more than eighty percent of the time covered by the provided benefit (Article 17).

In this sense, obtaining permanent residency necessitates demonstration of legal and paid economic activity, which entails participation in the formal labor market. This excludes a large number of women who participate almost exclusively in the informal sector of the economy or carry out activities that are considered neither «work» nor «licit» by the State. The informality that character-

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[10] According to the State's classification system, «foreigners will be allowed to enter and remain in the country in the categories of «permanent residents», «temporary residents», or «transitory residents»»; until the «required procedure has been made official, the applicable authorities can provide «provisional residency» authorization» (Ley de Migraciones, 2003, Art. 20).

izes migrant female work leads to the kind of irregularity this law seeks to fight.

The current legislation also contemplates the right to family reunification and states that «the State will guarantee migrants' right to family reunification with their spouses, minor single children or differently abled adult children» (Article 10). The importance of family reunification and migrant's family rights were addressed during the Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development, where the Argentine delegation stated that the «State will guarantee migrants' right to family reunification with parents, spouses, and children, since we understand the family is a necessary and important concern for all migrants» (Una experiencia Argentina para América del Sur. Plan Patria Grande, Encuentro Iberoamericano sobre Migración y Desarrollo, 2006). These family reunification polices have been discussed from a gender-based perspective given that they have historically fostered women's dependency on the family unit. Gil Araujo (2006) sustains that, generally speaking and as far as migrant women are concerned, this legislation has reproduced the traditional concept of female dependence in a private sphere regulated by a man. This view is associated to the figure of a dependent woman who migrates in a family context and is based on the public/private dichotomy that characterizes classical attitudes toward the presence of women in migration flows. According to Maquiera (2001: 52), the separation between the public and private spheres exemplifies the spatial and institutional separation between the men's working place and the domestic realm associated with women, a divide that was consolidated during the development of industrialization and employed the ideological justifications that accompanied this process.[11] Indeed, these new structural conditions, the social consequences of which were legitimized by the liberal theories of the age, assumed the partial confinement of many women to household chores and their exclusion from the labor market. Domestic work was not considered labor because it was not done in exchange for a salary. At the same time, women's productive role became invisible due to their portrayal as economically inactive.

The law specifically demands that the person applying for family reunification present documents that prove their personal solvency. It requests the «past six work invoices or an accountable income certification covering the past six

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[11] «Domestic» and «private» are not synonyms. Murillo (2006: 20) has questioned the «public/private» pairing and included the «domestic» space in this coupling: he points out that «private» is not the same as «domestic» and, what is more, those who enjoy some private time have taken care of their domestic infrastructure (either directly or through a third party). Otherwise, their time would be subject to restrictions. The State, in an attempt to remain neutral as far as events within a household were concerned, became a key player in the reproduction of the «public/private» dichotomy, rendering domestic work invisible insofar as it was part of the «private world». This purported neutrality in regards to the regulation of «domestic» space has been much discussed in gender studies. See Pateman, 1995; Maquiera, 2001; Sánchez, Beltrán and Álvarez, 2001; Murillo, 2006.

months and certified by the Professional Council of Economic Sciences,* as well as other documentation with proof of income», bypassing the fact that a high percentage of male and female migrants work in the informal economy and are therefore unable to fulfill these requirements. As Parella (2003: 208) points out, the absence of an employment contract would mean that many women cannot access certain rights. On the other hand, reunification is only available to legal spouses or those who possess rights considered equal to those of marriage in accordance with local, provincial, national, and international legislation (CELS, 2005). This requisite discards other extant social family models and further strengthens the classical concept of the nuclear family as a unit composed of parents and children. While the State «guarantees family reunification» and considers family «a necessary and important concern for all migrants» (Encuentro Iberoamericano sobre Migración y Desarrollo, 2006), the current definition of family as a nuclear unit and the accompanying economic requirements pose an impediment to a large number of migrants who cannot request reunification on these terms.

In short, the current Argentine migration policy is based on the concept of the migrant man while ignoring the trajectory and dynamics of female migration and the specific social conditions that surround migrant women. The fact that migrant women are seen as vulnerable, dependent, and passive subjects and that the law fails to account for their forms of labor and social insertion prevents them from easily obtaining the documentation required by the State. This fosters irregularity, informality, and family dependence when reunification becomes the only way to acquire permanent residency. By failing to account for the gender dimension, these migration policies become yet another factor in the exclusion of migrant women and condition their social, political, and economic incorporation.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The recent and growing visibility of migrant women in the global migration political agenda has not been accompanied by a profound examination of the structural causes behind the production and reproduction of gender inequalities. This way, while a number of social and political actors on the national and supranational level acknowledge the importance of migrant women and define them as key players in processes of international migration, they also fail to question the social, economic, political, and cultural hegemony, reinforcing certain social representations of female migration and migrant women. In a framework that links development and migration, the latter is viewed positively as long as population flows can be «channeled» and provide the «contributions» ascribed to them: an «orderly» female migration can theoretically aid development pro-

* Translator's note: «Consejo Profesional de Ciencias Económicas».

cesses in sending and receiving countries. And yet, even as migrant women's contributions are lauded, the women themselves are seen as a vulnerable group, a stance that reproduces notions of dependence, passivity, and weakness.

While the current Argentine migration legislation takes a new national approach, it maintains a traditional view of migrant women; even though it addresses the issue of human trafficking in accordance with the political agenda promoted by the IOM, it ignores some of the major problems faced by migrant women. This lack of sensitivity and the absence of a gender-based approach to the State's public migration policies not only deepen the exploitation and social marginalization encountered by this sector of the population: they also encourage the persistence of social stereotypes regarding women's role in migration flows. Through its discourse, practices, and policies, the Argentine State has become a key player in the production and reproduction of gender inequality. This inequality is made manifest in differentiated forms of socialization for men and women, forms that determine the sexual and social division of work. To transform them would entail a radical change in the current social, political, economic, and cultural structure, which has established and perpetuated female exclusion and subordination across a wide range of social spheres.

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