

Future research directions on the issue of global and local dynamics in cities from a gender perspective

The paper that we are presenting is the result of the seminar entitled 'Global and local dynamics in cities from a gender perspective: the case of Barcelona', that took place in Barcelona on the 29 and 30 January 2009. The seminar it was organised by SURT. Fundació de dones. Fundació privada in the framework of the project Social Polis, Social Platform on Cities and Social Cohesion, which is part of the 7th framework programme of the European Commission.

The seminar aimed at creating a space to identify and debate the main research priorities on the effects that economic globalisation, and all the changes it has implied, has on women's lives and their labour opportunities and conditions, and on the impacts of such changes on the processes of urban fragmentation and urban social cohesion. The workshop approached at a local level the phenomenon of the feminisation of international migrations and its impact on the urban context, putting special attention in to two fields of labour where migrant women are often pushed to : sexual work and domestic/care work.

The objectives of the seminar were:

- to identify and outline the most significant gaps in research on feminine migrations and the situation of migrant women concerning domestic/care work and sexual work and,
- to raise awareness among researchers and policy makers at local and European level on the identified aspects

There were 21 participants, coming from the academic and institutional fields, as well as members of civil society organisations. It was a interdisciplinary seminar, since all participants came from different disciplines and fields of work. The interdisciplinary gave richness to the discussion and the debate and, thus, to the outcomes of it. Most of the participants came from organisations based in the area of Barcelona, but there was also participation from Italy. The seminar was structured in three roundtables that focused on: the phenomenon of the feminisation of international migrations and its impact on urban context, the situation of migrant women regarding sex work and the situation of migrant women concerning domestic/care work. In each round table, there were two brief presentations of the topic by one contributor from the academic side and one from the non-academic one, and then a rich discussion and debate among the participants.

A reflection document given to all participants and where there were already some interesting ideas that were useful to have a common starting point to the discussion. Some of the issues stated in the document were:

- It is important to understand and analyse the links between local and global dynamics and its impact on migrant women's lives.
- It is needed to take into account that, up until now, most of the research concerning globalisation and migration issues have been based on male models and both, globalisation and migration phenomenon, have been understood as gender neutral

processes. Therefore, it is necessary a feminist approach to shed light on them in order to make visible the role that women play on them and to understand how gender roles are constructed through out both dynamics.

- It is necessary to realise of the emergence of new forms of survival and new economic practices linked with the global and the migration reality that have a really strong feminine identity. Thus, we can talk about a feminisation and racialisation of survival.
- Migration is a complex phenomenon and it is the result of a complex combination and interconnection of economic and social factors. Which are those factors? How can we do a feminist analysis of it?
- Importance of global cities as strategic spaces where migrant women are active actors in the global economy.
- In the context of globalisation, global cities suffer processes of economic restructuring that lead to a socio-economic polarisation: on one hand, a higher demand of low paid and unskilled jobs jointly with a higher segregation within the labour market. On the other hand, the concentration of richness and power in these global cities. In the first part of the binomial, the informal economy and the alternative circuits of survival, are not taken into consideration when analysing the economic dynamics of the cities. And, therefore, the result is partial analysis which does not take into account women's contribution.
- We assist to a process of informalisation: the realisation of a concrete service at a cost less than what is established. Informalisation implies a desvalorisation of the task. Migrant women carry out most of the informalised tasks which lead them to situations of social exclusion and poverty.
- As it stated below, in global cities exist alternative circuits of survival, which are not deviations of the global system, but structural parts of it. Thus, we need to study them as such and take into account that these alternative circuits are essentially occupied by migrant women.
- The increase of demand of care and domestic care supplied by, most of the time, migrant women is a reflection of the higher participation of native women in the labour market. But, at the same time, it is a clear indicator that there is no transferability of domestic/are tasks to men. Therefore, patriarchal structures do not disappear but are reproduced and maintained.
- Finally, it is important to state that due to the migration process gender hierarchy and gender roles may be modified. Migrant women have access to the labour market (either formal or informal) and receive a regular incomes which may lead to higher economic independence and higher participation in the public sphere.

During the seminar most of the questions and the issues stated below were approached and answered, and, at the same time, new interesting issues were raised.

The outputs of the seminar were substantial recommendations concerning concrete topics that should be included in the European research agenda. One of the issues discussed was, for instance, the need to study migration as a process and not as something static, taking into account the different stages migrant women go through.

The aim of the paper is thus, to write down the most important issues that were raised and highlighted during the one day and a half seminar regarding feminisation of migration in the context of economic globalisation, and specifically, the situation of migrant women concerning sexual work and domestic/care work. The idea is to link the recommendations that were suggested with the two proposals Focused Research Agenda and the following Existential Fields (EF):

- **Urban labour market and economic development:** it places special emphasis on the issue of internal differentiation and polarisation of labour markets and to the continuous, but highly differentiated, flows of migration. As it is stated in the definition of the Existential Field¹, urban labour markets and economic development need to be understood in the context of the non-state regulation (and higher importance of global cities), work and family nexus, and the international division of labour market. As we will see in the research recommendation, the sexual division of labour market is as important as the international one to understand urban markets and economic development dynamics. Those dynamics generate inequalities which lead to social conflict. On the other hand, global cities must be analysed as creative space of experimentation to generate alternative to overcome conflicts and achieve social cohesion.
- **Social cohesion and the city as a whole,** it highlights the importance of an inter- and trans- disciplinary research since social cohesion concerns the whole society and affects multiple spatial scales. Social cohesion goes beyond issues of inequalities, exclusion/inclusion. Social cohesion is understood as a multifaced challenge that needs comprehensive proposals to be addressed.
- **Diversity and identity,** are understood as the consequence of the increase of flows of people, information and goods, that has led to a growing diversity of people to interact and collaborate across the world. As we will see in the research recommendation, it is suggested to carry out transnational researches in order to analyse and understand those transnational dynamics and relations.

¹ www.socialpolis.eu

Research recommendations for the future research directions on the issue of global and local dynamics in cities from a gender perspective

The text that follows are substantial recommendations that are the result of the debate and discussion of the seminar. The research recommendations are organised on the basis of the three main topics that were addressed: feminisation of migrations in the context of economic globalisation, the situation of migrant women concerning sexual work and the situation of migrant women regarding domestic/care work. For each of the topics concerned there are specific research proposals, but during the seminar there were as well common issues that were raised in all round table. Those issues are the following:

- **Interseccional approach:** all researches need to be based on an interseccional approach that has to consider diversity of factors that condition urban social cohesion and migrant women. It is essential to analyse reality taking into account that gender can not be understood as an isolated factor, but as interrelated category that is interlinked with other such as ethnicity, class and age. In doing so, any research should take into account the heterogeneity and diversity among women.
- **Interdisciplinary approach:** all researches should include an interdisciplinary team and an interdisciplinary approach since, as is stated in the EF, social cohesion issues concerns the society as a whole. Therefore, it is needed to analyse social cohesion, feminisation of migration, globalisation, migrant women and its situation in the labour market, from a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach.

1. Feminisation of migrations in the context of economic globalisation

Feminisation of migration is not a new phenomenon, women have been migrating for a long time. Today, half of the population who starts a migration process are women. The problem has been that migrant women's flows have been ignored and thus not analysed. Increasingly, migrant women have a leading role of the migration process and play a really important role on global economy. Reproductive work has been internationalised, which has created an increase of the demand of workforce that has been covered mostly by migrant women. Their labour opportunities and conditions need to be analysed and understood in the context of globalisation and international migrations.

Based on the discussion of these issues, particular research focuses should be:

- 1.1 The social construction of the category *migrant* as part of the urban imaginary. Migration is constructed by the person who migrates but also by both the origin and host society and by (the absence of) migrations policies. Which are the consequences of this construction? How does it perpetuate structures such as the patriarchal system? How does it lead to social exclusion and urban fragmentation?
- 1.2 Racism and xenophobia as obstacle to achieve social cohesion.
- 1.3 Reconceptualisation of the term migration: its causes, consequences and approaches, understanding it as a structural phenomenon and carrying on an holistic, integral and gendered approach to the phenomenon.
- 1.4 The lack of human rights based migration policies and its consequences such as the creation of new exclusion strategies based on the border control.

- 1.5 Transnational families and its impact on migrant mothers, putting special attention on monomaternity.
- 1.6 Feminine migration as an strategy linked to the internationalisation of domestic and care work and the increase of its the demand. Links between global and local dynamics.
- 1.7 Migrant women careers, both personal and professional, need to be studied carefully, in order to have a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the migration project.
- 1.8 Migrant women's participation in the urban labour markets. Which are their labour opportunities and conditions? How are urban labour markets segregated and how does it affect to migrant women's labour opportunities and conditions?
- 1.9 Due to the difficulty for migrant women to conciliate their work and private life, it exists the creation of social networks within the urban context. How do they foster and ensure social cohesion?
- 1.10 Creation as well of transnational networks between origin and host society. How do they work? Engendering the issue of remittances: the circulation of money, ideas, resources that have the potentiality to change identities, households, families and gender roles.
- 1.11 Due to the fact that migrant women who can work have access to a monthly salary and therefore, economic independence, that may lead to a reformulation/transformation of gender roles and gender hierarchy. Migrant women's labour market participation as a way of empowering women and enhancing their participation in the public sphere.
- 1.12 Global economy does not take into account informal economy and alternative circuits of production, which are essentially occupied by migrant women. Therefore, their work it is neither visible or valued. How migrant women contribute to the global economy? Special focus should be put in the alternative circuits of the informal economy taken into account that they are not collateral effects of the system, but structural parts of it.
- 1.13 The role of origin countries in the migration process. The origin countries are an essential part of the analysis of the phenomenon of migration.
- 1.14 Foster positive discourse on migrant women through the visibilisation of their social, cultural and economic contributions.

2. Migrant women and sexual work

As stated before, sexual work is one of the fields of labour where migrant women are often pushed to. Therefore, it is important to understand which are the dynamics within this field and to analyse the situation of migrant women working in this area. Migrant women in general suffer multiple discrimination and they are exposed to social exclusion. Their labour conditions are unstable, their salaries are the lowest and they work in the less qualified jobs. When looking at migrant women inserted in sexual work, all those mechanisms are even worst and their consequences are more harmful and damaging. The stigma of prostitution operates as one of the most important factors of social exclusion and, interlinked with other grounds of discrimination such as gender, ethnic origin and legal status, creates a powerful dynamic of segregation.

Based on the discussion of these issues, particular research focuses should be:

- 2.1 Labour and personal careers of migrant women involved in sexual work.
- 2.2 Comparative research in different Member States on the situation of migrant women involved in prostitution, analysing the high level of vulnerability and the interseccionality of several factors of discrimination and exclusion. Work towards a non stigmatisation approach.
- 2.3 Comparative analysis in different Member States on the legislation on prostitution and its impact on rights and conditions of (migrant) women involved in sexual work. To determine the characteristics of each one, the situation of (migrant) women involved and the legal provisions foreseen concerning their rights and protection measures.
- 2.4 Comparative analysis in different Member States on the different bylaws designed and implemented to deal with prostitution. How different cities deal differently with prostitution? Which are the consequences of these different regulations on sex workers' rights and labour conditions?
- 2.5 Comparative analysis in different Member States on different models of regulation of public spaces and its consequences on the practice of prostitution. How does it effect urban social cohesion?
- 2.6 In urban context, analyse prostitution as a conflict of coexistence: How does it effect social cohesion? Which are the solutions proposed in different Member States? Analysis of initiatives of conflict resolution linked with civil society dialogue and mediation: creative strategies to tackle and redirect conflicts.
- 2.7 Violence suffered by (migrant) women working on prostitution as another factor of vulnerability and exclusion.
- 2.8 Regarding trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, it would be interesting to analyse the efficacy of different protection mechanisms that exist in different Member States to protect women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. In this sense, for example, which is the role of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (Warsaw, 2005)? How has it been transposed in different states?

3. Migrant women and domestic/care work

As stated before, domestic and care work is one of the fields of labour where migrant women are often pushed to. Therefore, it is important to understand which are the dynamics within this field and to analyse the situation of migrant women working in this area. The internationalisation of care and domestic work, the higher participation of women in the labour market, the non sharing of care and domestic responsibilities and the lack of intervention of the welfare state are some of the causes of the increase of the demand of domestic and care work. Most of the time, care and domestic work are part of the informal economy and, thus, it is invisible and not taken into account as an indispensable factor when analysing global economy. Global care chance reproduce and maintain gender inequalities and the patriarchal system.

Based on the discussion of these issues, particular research focuses should be:

- 3.1 Labour and personal careers of migrant women involved in domestic/care work.

- 3.2 The internationalisation of domestic and care work and the creation of global care chains. Which are their causes and consequences? How does it influence feminine migration?
- 3.3 The situation of migrant women in relation with domestic and care work should be analysed on the bases of the following features:
- a. Double presence: private and public sphere
 - b. Double absence : women are invisible in host society and in origin society
 - c. Multiple presence in several dimensions: transnational, own family, families where they are working
- 3.4 Comparative analysis in different Member States on the specificities of the working conditions of migrant women in the domestic and care work, i.e. isolation, stigmatisation, non recognition of the value of the work, under paid work, etc ., and its consequences on migrant women's lives and on social cohesion.
- 3.5 In the context of host society, the higher participation of women in the formal labour market has not led to a sharing of the care and domestic tasks between women and men. The reality is that those tasks have been transferred to migrant women through the commodification of this work. Thus, there is transfer of tasks without transforming gender roles and hierarchies. Which are the consequences of this commodification? Which is (or should be) the role of the welfare state? How does it affect the achievement of gender equality?
- 3.6 Increase of the demand of domestic and care work linked with demographic changes.
- 3.7 Invisibility and undervalorisation of domestic and care work. Which are the consequence of it for migrant women working in this area?
- 3.8 Lately, increase of the professionalisation and formalisation of work relations of domestic and care work through the commodification of it. Which are the causes and the consequences? What changes and what remains?
- 3.9 Commodification of domestic and care work understood as a private answer to a public question due to the lack of welfare intervention. Comparative analysis of the answers given by in different Member States.
- 3.10 Mechanisms of quantification of domestic and care work (informal economy) and its impact in the global economy.
- 3.11 Due to specific characteristics of domestic and care work, host societies are facing new forms of coexistence: transnational and transcultural households. Which are the consequences in terms of social cohesion?
- 3.12 Comparative analysis on social policies on reconciliation in different Member States: how do they reproduce patriarchal structures? Which is the role of migrant women? How do these policies effect social cohesion? How do migrant women manage to conciliate their own private and professional lives?
- 3.13 Absence of studies on irregular migrant women. How is their situation? How do they face discrimination and exploitation?

Final remarks and conclusions

The seminar on 'Local and global dynamics in the cities with gender perspective: the case of Barcelona', aimed at highlighting the research needs concerning feminisation of migration in the context of the economic globalisation. As pointed out before, the 21 participants of the seminar had a very reach discussion and debate after each one of the presentations. The outcomes of this debate are the research recommendations proposed above.

As stated at the beginning of this paper, up until now research on migration and globalisation issues has been based on a male model. Now, it is time to change. On one hand, it is needed to introduce gender perspective in all researches. On the other hand, to study those issues that feature migrant women migration process, labour opportunities and work conditions. All these processes are not gender neutral and it is needed to understand them from a feminist analysis.

In doing so, we will have a comprehensive and holistic knowledge of the reality which will be useful to understand global and local dynamics and issues such as social urban fragmentation and social urban cohesion.