

an introduction from the Guest Editors

Women migrants now form over half of the world's migrant population (Zlotnik, 2003). Although the tendency towards parity of men and women in migration streams is not new (even in 1960, 47% of all migrants were women), the last 40 years have seen consistent increases in the number of women migrants in most regions of the world. The only two regions where the proportion of women in the migrant stock has actually declined are North Africa and South Asia.

Female labour migrations has not only become globalized but also diversified in the past three decades. In the 1970s and 1980s the migration of females into manufacturing in Western countries and export processing zones was the focus of attention. Today their presence in manufacturing, as Rita Asfar and Miri Song note, has been neglected as the shift to services, and especially the growth in domestic work in Europe, North America and the Middle East (Shah), has led to an emphasis on the globalization of reproduction. Arlie Hochschild (2000) argues that these global-gendered inequalities are transferred along chains of care, with care being provided by Third World women in households in affluent societies, leading to a care deficit at home that is then filled by internal migrants. Migrant women from the Third World are seen simultaneously as heroines of the nation for the remittances they send back and the creators of social and familial problems through their absence overseas. Through an analysis of the Filipino movie 'Anak', Chiho Ogaya highlights these contradictions in representations of migrant women in the Philippines, a country that has become one of the major female labour exporters.

As Nicola Yeates points out in her article on migrant nurses in Ireland, chains of care can be extended beyond domestic labour to nurses in other sites of social reproduction, such as hospitals and schools. Migrant women are being recruited increasingly to fill severe shortages in many countries, including those such as Japan that had previously not imported skilled labour. Although little research has been carried out on the role of skilled female migrants (Raghuram and Kofman, 2004), this is a topic worthy of attention if we want to understand the full contribution of migrant women to the reconfiguration of welfare.

Another aspect of the globalization of migration has been addressed under the rubric of transnationalism. This literature seeks to understand the diverse ways in which migrants live across and between different localities and nations.

Most of the studies (Pessar and Mahler, 2003) have focused on long-term gendered migrations in settler societies. However, transnationalism takes different forms in different regions. Mirjana Morokvasic suggests that regular border crossings by Eastern and Central European women are leading to a pattern of migration where migrants are 'settled in mobility'. Regular movements may enable them to enhance or limit the loss of their capabilities as transnational actors from below. This has been made possible by the easing of borders controls in post-wall Europe.

However, for many people, borders remain difficult to cross. Besides, crossing borders is a highly gendered act for immigration policies shape the gendering of migration flows. It may, as in the case of South Africa, as Belinda Dodson and Jonathan Crush demonstrate, entrench long-standing male-dominated migrations. They present in their report one of the first detailed studies of the gendered impact of immigration legislation across different levels of skills. Detailed gender-based analysis, such as the one they present, have in other countries, such as Canada, led to attempts by the state to modify some of the elements prejudicial to women migrants. As such, it is hoped that this airing of the gendered impacts of this piece of legislation will lead to a review of the legislation. While this review argues for gender sensitivity, what is still lacking is a recognition of the heterosexism of much immigration. In most countries, lesbians and gay men are rendered partial citizens because of the limits on their rights to family life. Even where same-sex couples are allowed to form a family, Tracey Simmons argues that the actual ability to migrate is based on other criteria, particularly the skill levels of the applicants and their 'race', class and gender.

Several of the dialogue pieces suggest new ways of challenging the discrimination faced by migrant women. These range from the use of international human rights conventions to the creation of spaces of representation, contestation and activism. One of the most important arenas for these activities in recent years have been the series of Social Fora such as the European Social Forum in Paris in November 2003 and the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004. Encarnacion Gutierrez Rodriguez discusses the representation of undocumented migrant women who experience objectification and exclusion as subjects in political movements. Nonetheless, as she highlights, a variety of migrant women's groups have attempted to challenge their invisibility and make claims for a presence in the public sphere. Addressing the restricted spaces of dialogue in the representation of migrants was also the ambition of the MAIZ workshop *Traded Bodies*, a collaboration between an activist group in Austria and migrant women in London.

At the international level, Margaret Satterthwaite counsels against placing too much emphasis on international conventions that locate women as fixed identities but instead suggests we adopt an intersectional approach in which we consider the interplay between processes of subordination. While human rights as discourse and practice are limited by states, they can offer a means with which to engage with states to provide protection and to work against discrimination. Rita Asfar, in her

analysis of Bangladeshi women, also argues for the need to pressure sending and receiving states on violation of human rights and exploitative labour conditions.

The papers seek to generate a better understanding of gendered labour migrations, especially in relation to the globalization of care, and the ways in which women use transnational movements to enhance their economic and social resources. Crossing borders and working and living in affluent societies present many problems. However as the dialogue pieces argue, a myriad of interventions in public spaces and engagements with human rights instruments too populate the landscape of female global labour migration.

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