

AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER AND MIGRATION IN SPAIN: FROM THE PRESENCE OF FEMINISED MIGRATORY FLOWS TO A GREATER GENDER BALANCE

Laura Oso Casas

Over the last decade scientific literature has shown a growing interest in gender and migration studies. Some authors have even gone so far as to claim that the feminisation of migration is one of the five features that define the current Migration Era (Castles and Miller, 1998). However, as Zlotnik shows, amongst international migrants, the percentage of women rose by just two percentage points between 1960 and 2000 (rising from 46.6% to 48.8%) (Zlotnik, 2003). More recent data for 2005 show that women made up 49.6% of the immigrant population (Schiff et al., 2007). Oso and Garson pointed out that the feminisation of immigration may be classified as a low intensity process; it is the growing scientific interest in the issue of gender and migration and the greater visibility of female immigrants over the last decade that have contributed to the perception of increasing feminization of migration the marked feminisation of “migratory discourse”(Oso Casas and Garson, 2005).

Since the 1980s, when Spain began to emerge as a country of immigration, one of the characteristics of this new receptive context has been the presence of migratory flows from the European Union, made up of skilled workers and retirees, characterised by a high female presence (52.2% of foreigners from the UK and 51.9% from Germany in 1996, according to the Municipal Population Census) (see table 2), as well as the progressive development of feminised labour currents from third countries. These were formed mainly by Latin American women, who were prepared to pack their bags and travel, often alone, as the heads of transnational households or pioneers in family and community migratory chains. Indeed, this has been one of the features that have characterised migration in the southern Europe migratory space, specifically in Greece, Italy and Spain. Literature addressing these issues in these countries has revealed the existence of gendered migratory trends, characterised by the growing feminisation of immigration, and the large numbers of foreign workers channelled towards specific sectors of the labour market such as domestic service and sex work (Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000). King and Zontini point to a series of factors in order to explain the development of feminised migratory flows in southern Europe: the rapid rise in education standards amongst the autochthonous population; an imperfect shift to gender equality (women have had access to education and the skilled labour market, yet the gendered distribution of domestic tasks remains uneven); society's demand for a series of services such as care for children and the elderly that the state fails to provide and where the population cannot afford the private autochthonous market; the role played by the Catholic Church in channelling migratory flows from certain Catholic countries to the region; the trend amongst certain autochthonous women to employ foreign domestic workers from supposedly 'exotic' countries as a kind of status symbol; the reproduction of the traditional relationship between servant and master through the dominant regional attitude alongside the idea of the maid being a symbol of social prestige (King and Zontini, 2000). Yet despite the presence of feminised migratory flows amongst certain nationalities, it is also true that there are more male immigrants in Spain, due to the large numbers of migrants from other regions where immigration is highly masculinised. In 2000, women made up 48.9% of the total number of immigrants in Spain (Municipal Population Census, Spanish National Statistics Institute - INE; see table 2).

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the migration of women in Spain in order to determine the extent of feminisation in the country. We will describe how domestic service became the principal gateway for migrant women, creating essentially feminised entry flows amongst certain nationalities. We will then go on to study the current masculinisation and more family-oriented nature of immigration in Spain. The ultimate aim is to show how in recent years, and in contrast to the discourse that has shaped public opinion and that tends to present the feminisation of migration as a lineal trend, Spain has experienced an inverted process of masculinisation, whereby the greater or lesser presence of female immigrants can be attributed to the state of the economy and the labour market, as well as a series of changes in Spain's migratory policy.

THE EARLY STAGES OF SPAIN AS A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION: WOMEN AS PIONEERS IN THE MIGRATORY CHAINS

In Spain, the first flows of migrant women from third countries to join the labour market were made up of Moroccans (12%), Dominicans (5%) and Peruvians (5%) (data for foreigners in possession of a valid residence permit, Spanish Interior Ministry, 1997). They found work in the domestic service from the mid 80s to the early 90s. This period was also characterised by a flow of Filipinas, who as group, although relatively small in numerical terms, played a significant role due to the fact that they were lone female migrants or pioneers in the migratory chain coming to Spain to work in domestic service or as carers. These early migratory flows attracted the interest of various researchers (Gregorio, 1998; Ramírez, 1998; Ribas, 1999; Herranz, 1997; Oso, 1998, amongst others). The start of the 21st century (2001) was characterised by a sharp growth in immigration from Ecuador, Colombia, and Rumania (Restrepo, 1998; Pedone, 2004, Suárez and Crespo, 2007), as well as a growth of migratory flows from Argentina (due to the economic crisis), and Brazil and Bulgaria (from 2002 on). From 2003 onwards there has also been a sharp rise in the number of Bolivian women migrating to Spain (Municipal Population Census, Spanish National Statistics Institute – INE; see table 1).

Right from the start, Latin American immigration has been predominantly female. In 1996 women made up 77% of the total number of Dominicans in Spain, 67.7% of the Brazilians and 52.1% of the Argentineans. In 2001 women also represented 61% and 60% of the Peruvian and Colombian immigrants, respectively, in Spain (Municipal Population Census, Spanish National Statistics Institute – INE; see table 2). In the case of Ecuador, the Municipal Population Census and other data reveal a greater balance between the sexes, although the study of the work permit statistics carried out in 1995 showed that 64% of the Ecuadorians in possession of a valid work permit were women (Oso, 1998, p.130). Unlike Latin American immigration, migratory flows from Morocco have always been essentially masculinised (35.6% were women in 1996), as have those from Eastern European countries (according to the 1996 Municipal Population Census, 43.8% of Rumanian and 47.6% of Bulgarians immigrants were women; see table 2).

The demand for domestic service workers in Spain during the 80s and 90s, mainly in large cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, was initially for live-in workers. The existence of this labour niche for female immigrants led to the development of feminised migratory flows, and became the principal gateway for female migration to Spain. During the 90s, immigration legislation favoured the arrival of immigrant women. Between 1993 and 1999 the quota policy favoured the regularisation of immigrant women in Spain, as domestic service in particular benefited from the contingencies during this period. In addition, the 1993 – 1997 economic crisis seriously affected the construction sector, and consequently in large cities such as Madrid the labour market was more favourable to female immigration. This explains the sharp feminisation of

Latin American labour-motivated migratory flows during this period and the role played by women as pioneers in the migratory chain. Once the major host contexts for this type of immigration (i.e. Madrid and Barcelona) became saturated, flows to other cities throughout Spain developed.

Live-in domestic service is widely acknowledged as being an optimum occupation for women travelling alone or as pioneers in the migratory chain. In the first place it provides free board and lodging, favouring rapid insertion into the host society and saving. In the case of this niche, finding a job also solves the problem of accommodation. Domestic service of this kind is also advantageous for irregular employment, as labour inspections are a rare occurrence. It is therefore a labour segment that suited the way immigrant women tended to enter Spain from the 1980s onwards: they came on a three-month tourist visa and then opted to stay in the country as irregular immigrants. The major influxes coincided with those periods when certain groups, mostly Latin Americans, were exempt from the visa requirement. The introduction of visas for Dominicans, Peruvians, Colombians and Ecuadorians reduced the intensity of these flows.

However, the disadvantages of working in live-in domestic service are well-known and have been amply described in scientific literature: the lack of personal space; difficulties in limiting working hours; a greater tendency towards exploitation and subordination, etc. (Colectivo IOE, 2001; Martínez Veiga, 2000; Herranz, 1996; Oso, 1998). In addition, many of the women working in this sector are over-qualified. The survey carried out by the Colectivo IOE research team with immigrant female domestic workers reveals that 63% of the Peruvian women had completed higher education courses and 31% had finished secondary school. In the case of the Ecuadorians, 53% of those polled had completed secondary education and 40% higher education. The figures for the Dominican were slightly lower (42% had only completed junior school), although a considerable 41% had secondary school qualifications (Colectivo IOE, 2001). These levels of education exceed those required for domestic service and the devaluation of this type of work means that immigrant women react strongly against the subordination that is associated with live-in domestic service and experience strong desires to work in other sectors.

Generally speaking, for many migrant women, live-in domestic service acted as a springboard towards other types of work, such as domestic workers who live out or are paid by the hour. However, the shift to other types of work is often determined by the need to pay off a debt or the lack of alternative forms of employment in a highly competitive market. Live-in domestic service was used as a means of gaining a foothold in the Spanish labour market until enough money had been saved up or family members were able to join. It also represented a means of maintaining transnational households. Indeed, one of the characteristics of Latin American immigration in Spain is the existence of these transnational households which may exist over a considerable period of time (the woman continues to work in Spain for many years, whilst her children or other family members remain in the country of origin and receive regular remittances). Consequently, live-in employment continues to be a strategy used by certain female heads of transnational households opting to sacrifice their own upward social-labour mobility in the host country in order to be able send more money back to their country of origin (Oso, 2002). However, over the years, the immigration of women who left their countries of origin alone as pioneers in the migratory chain has given rise to family regrouping processes.

MASCULINISATION AND FAMILY REGROUPING

Since the turn of the century, there has been a progressive masculinisation of immigration in Spain, with the percentage of women falling from 48,9% in 2000 to just 46.8% in 2008 (Municipal Population Census, Spanish National Statistics Institute –

INE) (see table 2). Although the relative percentage of women continues to be higher than that of men in the case of Latin American immigration, it has fallen steadily in the case of certain nationalities. Indeed, in 2008, women made up 57.9% of the total number of Dominicans, and the percentage had also dropped in the case of Peruvian (50.6%), Colombian (55.5%), Brazilian (59.6%) and Argentinean women (49.8%). The percentage of Bolivian women remained stable at between 55% and 56% throughout the period under study (Municipal Population Census, Spanish National Statistics Institute – INE; see table 2). Therefore, there has been a clear shift from a feminised to more family-based migration, especially in the case of Ecuadorians, and Peruvians. The fact that the gender division in Latin American immigration has balanced out in recent years (although women still make up the majority) is attributable to several factors.

Firstly, it is related to the economic growth that began at the end of the 1990s, which resulted in an unprecedented rise in immigrant entry flows (Balch, 2005: pp.13-15). The boom in the construction sector generated a strong demand for mostly male labour, and consequently by the late 90s the labour market was favourable for male immigrants. Secondly, changes to immigration policies also influenced the gendered selection of migration flows.

Changes to the quota system in 2002 almost certainly had a negative impact on immigrant female domestic workers' chances of entering the formal labour market. As is widely acknowledged, since the 1990s, the quota system has operated as a kind of concealed regularisation system for those immigrants already employed in the informal market. As Balch points out, from 2002 onwards, workers had to be recruited from outside Spain, mainly via bilateral agreements between the Spanish government and certain countries of origin. The quotas were determined in accordance with market demand, based on sector and region as well as on the employer requirements in each province. Recruitment was carried out via the embassies in the countries of origin (Balch, 2005). Whilst during the 1990s the quota system benefited particularly the domestic service sector, as we have already mentioned, the data for 2004 shows a more balanced distribution of the annual quotas amongst areas of activity. The data from the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Services quoted by Balch reveal that construction was the main sector (21%), followed by hotels (18%), industry (heavy) (15%), transport (10%), commerce (8%) and agriculture (7%). Apart from the annual quota, there were also temporary contracts, which were mainly used for agricultural and farming activities (86.8%) (Balch, 2005). It is worth mentioning here that whilst men dominated this employment sector in the 1990s, programmes have also been set up to recruit women in their countries of origin (East Europe and Morocco) in recent years to work in the agricultural sector in Spain. However, domestic service, which continues to be the main source of employment for immigrant women, does not benefit from the new quota system. This is understandable if we consider the complexities involved hiring a complete stranger to work in private homes. Employers are reluctant to bring workers whom they have not had the chance to interview previously into Spain via the quota system. As Balch points out, all this indicates that most immigrants enter the formal labour market via the 'general system': "an employer applies for a work permit having proven that there is no one available in the labour market (Spanish or otherwise). The reality is that a good proportion of this is through the regularisation processes, which is when an employer applies for a work permit. For the permit to be accepted, it must be proven that there is no legal resident (Spanish or otherwise) that can fill the job. The regional outposts of the public employment service in Spain are where this information is gathered" (Blach, 2005: p.27). Due to these major restrictions on legal entry channels to Spain, an alternative means of obtaining a work and residence permit via family regrouping has developed in recent years. The introduction of visa requirements for Ecuador and Colombia in 2002 and 2003 forced certain Ecuadorians and Colombians to bring forward their migration and family regrouping plans in light of the increased difficulties in migrating once the visa requirements were

in place. This is also the case of Bolivia, where visa requirements came into force in 2007. As a result, many Latin American women who left their countries alone opted to regroup their closest family members, thereby adding to autonomous male or family migration which was boosted by the male migrants' expectations of finding work. This has led to a greater gender balance. It is equally interesting to observe that immigration from the UK and Germany has also experienced a degree of masculinisation. However, the opposite is true in the case of Rumanian immigration; although the percentage of men remains higher than that of women, since the turn of the century there has been a gradual trend of feminisation amongst immigrants from this country (with the percentage of women rising from 43.8% in 1996 to 46.2% in 2008; see table 2). This trend also points to family regrouping strategies, which were initiated by male pioneers in the migratory chain in this case.

CONCLUSION

In this brief overview of Spain as a host country for foreigners it has been exemplified that, despite immigration traditionally being male dominated, there have been a series of feminised migratory flows amongst certain nationalities since the mid 1980s, particularly in the case of Latin American immigration. This is the result of the labour market's demand for (essentially live-in) domestic service workers and carers. During the 90s an economic situation that was less favourable for male migrants and a migratory policy that favoured the quota-based regularisation of female domestic service workers contributed to the development of these nationality-based feminised migratory flows. This developed due to the fact that for the migrant household, the decision to send women as pioneers implied fewer risks from both a financial and legal perspective. However, and in contrast to the discourse recently instilled in public opinion regarding the growing feminisation of migratory trends, immigration in Spain has become increasingly masculinised, particularly in the case of Latin American migrants. The boom in the building industry during the first decade of this century and changes to the quota policy (which was no longer so favourable for women), together with family regrouping processes initiated by female pioneers in the migratory chain, explain the slight fall in the percentage of Latin American women in comparison to their male counterparts. In the case of the traditionally masculine Eastern European immigration, this process has been inverted, and family regrouping strategies have led to an increase in the percentage of women. What will happen during the current economic crisis remains to be seen. Will the impact on migrant male employment (the construction sector) once again lead to a shift of emphasis towards women in terms of meeting the financial needs of transnational households?

Table 1: Spain 1991-2008: Spain 1991-2007: Evolution in the stock of foreign women according to the principal nationalities

| Year | Total | Rumania | Morocco | Ecuador | United Kingdom | Colombia | Bolivia | Germany | Argentina | Brazil | Bulgaria | Peru | R. Domini |
|------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|--------|----------|--------|-----------|
| 1991 | 180.700 | -- | 12.149 | -- | 28.133 | -- | -- | 16.236 | 10.933 | 1.793 | 121 | -- | 2.370 |
| 1996 | 269.087 | 770 | 32.095 | -- | 36.879 | -- | -- | 27.900 | 9.347 | 3.649 | 554 | -- | 9.999 |
| 2000 | 452.413 | 2.893 | 63.364 | -- | 51.082 | -- | -- | 45.170 | 12.168 | 7.694 | 1.448 | -- | 18.227 |
| 2001 | 653.820 | 12.264 | 79.940 | 70.529 | 54.888 | 52.355 | 3.691 | 50.210 | 16.471 | 11.821 | 4.814 | 21.335 | 22.233 |
| 2002 | 929.767 | 26.254 | 101.307 | 131.478 | 64.795 | 110.000 | 7.396 | 57.216 | 28.070 | 16.253 | 12.245 | 26.468 | 26.244 |
| 2003 | 1.249.418 | 58.517 | 123.548 | 199.849 | 80.768 | 139.626 | 15.485 | 65.057 | 53.636 | 21.019 | 22.420 | 32.051 | 29.736 |
| 2004 | 1.428.603 | 92.826 | 141.873 | 245.352 | 86.520 | 141.732 | 29.072 | 58.316 | 64.580 | 24.812 | 30.464 | 37.745 | 30.813 |
| 2005 | 1.738.576 | 144.050 | 170.498 | 255.649 | 112.222 | 153.482 | 54.405 | 66.113 | 75.388 | 34.657 | 41.012 | 45.729 | 35.631 |
| 2006 | 1.928.697 | 189.476 | 191.071 | 236.834 | 135.393 | 150.147 | 78.749 | 74.236 | 74.221 | 45.087 | 45.850 | 50.350 | 36.972 |
| 2007 | 2.123.869 | 249.061 | 207.634 | 219.090 | 154.898 | 147.612 | 113.004 | 81.176 | 70.306 | 54.598 | 55.775 | 53.511 | 38.558 |
| 2008 | 2.443.574 | 338.425 | 239.464 | 217.441 | 173.498 | 158.100 | 135.657 | 89.641 | 73.422 | 69.550 | 69.786 | 61.747 | 45.075 |

Source: Author's own based on:
 1991 Population and Housing Census
 Municipal Population Censuses between 1996 and 2008 (2008 data is based on the results preview) Spanish National Statistics Institute www.ine.es

Table 2: Spain 1996-2008: Evolution of the percentage of foreign women for the principal nationalities

| Year | Total | Rumani | Morocco | Ecuador | United Kingdom | Colombia | Bolivia | Germany | Argentina | Brazil | Bulgaria | Peru | R. Dominican |
|------|-------|--------|---------|---------|----------------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|--------|----------|------|--------------|
| 1996 | | 43,8 | 35,6 | | 52,2 | | | 51,9 | 52,1 | 67,7 | 47,6 | | 77,3 |
| 2000 | 48,9 | 45,1 | 36,5 | | 51,6 | | | 50,9 | 52,1 | 69,1 | 47,7 | | 73,4 |
| 2001 | 47,7 | 38,8 | 34,2 | 50,7 | 51,1 | 60,0 | 55,8 | 50,6 | 50,8 | 69,2 | 40,0 | 61,0 | 71,4 |
| 2002 | 47,0 | 39,0 | 32,9 | 50,7 | 50,6 | 57,6 | 54,7 | 50,2 | 49,5 | 68,5 | 41,1 | 59,1 | 69,4 |
| 2003 | 46,8 | 42,6 | 32,6 | 51,2 | 50,0 | 57,1 | 54,5 | 49,9 | 49,0 | 67,2 | 42,4 | 57,3 | 67,1 |
| 2004 | 47,1 | 44,6 | 33,7 | 51,6 | 49,5 | 56,9 | 55,5 | 49,7 | 49,4 | 66,2 | 43,6 | 55,0 | 64,2 |
| 2005 | 46,6 | 45,4 | 33,3 | 51,4 | 49,4 | 56,6 | 55,5 | 49,4 | 49,3 | 64,0 | 44,0 | 53,8 | 62,4 |
| 2006 | 46,5 | 46,5 | 33,9 | 51,3 | 49,3 | 56,6 | 56,3 | 49,3 | 49,4 | 62,2 | 45,1 | 52,5 | 60,5 |
| 2007 | 46,9 | 47,3 | 35,6 | 51,3 | 49,2 | 56,4 | 56,4 | 49,3 | 49,8 | 60,5 | 45,6 | 51,6 | 59,2 |
| 2008 | 46,8 | 46,2 | 36,7 | 50,8 | 49,2 | 55,5 | 55,9 | 49,4 | 49,8 | 59,6 | 45,3 | 50,6 | 57,9 |

Source: Author's own based on:
 1991 Population and Housing Census
 Municipal Population Censuses between 1996 and 2008 (2008 data is based on the results preview) Spanish National Statistics Institute www.ine.es

REFERENCES

- Anthias, F. and Lazaridis, G. (eds.) (2000): *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe: Women on the Move*, New York: Berg, 263 pp.
- Balch, Alex (2005): *Immigration as a labour market strategy. Spain – Europe and North American perspectives*, Migration Policy Group, June, p. 13-15.
- Castles, S.; Miller, M. J. (1998): *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- Catarino, C., Oso, L. (2000): "La inmigración femenina en España y Portugal: hacia una etnización del servicio doméstico y de las empresas de limpieza", *Papers*, nº60, pp.183-207.
- Catarino, Christine y Morokvasic, Mirjana (2005): "Femmes, genre, migration et mobilités", *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales, Femmes, genre, migration et mobilités*, (21), 1, p. 7-27.
- Colectivo IOÉ (2001): *Mujer, inmigración y Trabajo*, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Madrid, 877 pp.
- Escriva, Angeles (2003): 'Inmigrantes peruanas en España. Conquistando el espacio laboral extradoméstico (Peruvian immigrants in Spain. Conquering the extradomestic labour space)', *Revista Internacional de Sociología* 36: 59-83.
- Gregorio, Carmen (1998): *La migración femenina y su impacto en las relaciones de género*, Madrid: Narcea.
- Herranz, Yolanda (1997): Transformación del mercado laboral de Madrid y feminización de la inmigración latinoamericana, en Maqueira, V.; Vara, M.G.: *Género, Clase y Etnia en los nuevos procesos de globalización*, Madrid: Edras, pp. 171-182.
- King, Russell y Zontini, Elisabetta (2000): "The role of gender in the South European immigration model", *Papers*, 60, p. 35-52; Catarino y Oso (2000), *Op. Cit.*
- Martínez Veiga, Ubaldo (2000): "Evolución y clasificación del trabajo doméstico inmigrante", *Ofrim Suplementos*, June: 76-96.
- Oso Casas, Laura y Garson, Jean-Pierre (2005): *Migrant women and the labour market : diversity and challenges*, OCED and European Commission Seminar, Brussels, 26-27 September 2005, 16 p.
- Oso, Laura (2002): "Stratégies de mobilité sociale des domestiques immigrées en Espagne », *Revue Tiers Monde*, t.XLIII, nº170, April-June, pp.287-305.
- Oso, Laura (1998): *La migración hacia España de mujeres jefas de hogar*, Madrid, Instituto de la Mujer, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Serie Estudios nº52.
- Pedone, Claudia (2004): *Tú siempre jalas a los tuyos. Las cadenas y las redes migratorias de las familias ecuatorianas hacia España*. Doctoral Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.
- Ramírez, Angeles (1998): *Migraciones, género e Islam. Mujeres marroquíes en España*, Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 380pp.
- Restrepo, Ofelia (1998): *Mujeres colombianas sujetos históricos en la historia de la inmigración*, Doctoral Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.
- Ribas, Natalia (1999): *Las presencias de la inmigración femenina. Un recorrido por Filipinas, Gambia y Marruecos en Cataluña*, Barcelona: Icaria, 463 pp.
- Schiff, Maurice, Morrisson Andrew R., Sjöblom Mirja (ed.) (2007): *The International Migration of Women*, Herndon, VA, USA, World Bank, 218 p.
- Suárez Navaz, Liliana; Crespo Bordonaba, Paloma (2007): *Familias en movimiento. El caso de las mujeres rumanas en España*, *Migraciones*, Jun. (21), pp. 235-257.
- Tornos, Andrés and Aparicio, Rosa (coord.) (1997): *Los peruanos que vienen. Quiénes son y cómo entienden típicamente la inmigración los inmigrantes peruanos*, UPCO, Madrid.
- Zlotnik, Hania (2003): *The Global Dimensions of Female Migration*, at: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=109>.