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Migration, Gender, Empowerment[*]

Now I am someone and something. Back in my village in Yugoslavia I was just a rejected widow (Danka, Sweden, Morokvasic 1987a: 153).

First I worked three years in order to be able to finish building our house. Now, I have been working for three further years to maintain that house, because the heating and the rest are enormously costly and my husband is unemployed. One could never pay that without my Belgian salary. That is my life: six years of cleaning jobs in exchange for a beautiful house in which I live only for one or two months a year (Polish migrant in Brussels; quoted in Kuzma 2003, 122; my translation).

1. Contradictory outcomes of migration on the gender order and beyond

The issue of outcomes of migration and more specifically the impact of immigrant women's employment on gender hierarchy has always been a challenging one in research on gender and immigration (Lim 1990). Feminist and other scholars focused on the link between migration processes and distribution of power in the family, on the impact of waged labour and economic independence of women on household decision making towards more egalitarian relationships.

Mobility and migration do indeed have a specific significance for women: Historically they have been associated with immobility and passivity. For a long time they were either invisible or regarded as dependents rather than migrants in their own right, their migration tied to migration of men. In many societies, in spite of overall feminization of migratory movements, the obstacles and restrictions to women's mobility still persist. Furthermore, women

on the move often also face moral stigmatization even in the situations where they massively participate in migration flows or even represent the majority of migrants and main family providers (Espiritu 2005, Keough 2006, Peraldi 2001, Potot 2005). Therefore, a potential social impact of mobility as a newly gained or not yet achieved freedom will be different for women than for men.

Migrants are situated within power hierarchies – which shape the ways people think and act – that they have not themselves constructed (class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, immigrant status etc). But, they also develop different types of agency vis-à-vis these hierarchies from their different social locations within structural conditions that are both constraining and enabling. Women can be initiators of moves or even if they do not move themselves they can influence the moves of others, or be affected by the mobility of others in different ways. Gender can facilitate or jeopardize migration, settlement, gender relations prior to migration affect the migration work, the process, the migration patterns and ongoing relations (Catarino and Morokvasic 2005). The research evidence suggests that crossing borders for work purpose can be empowering, open up opportunities for challenging the established gender norms, but it can also lead to new dependencies and reinforce existing gender boundaries and hierarchies. Increasingly feminized (about half of world wide migrants are women, 52% in Europe) international migration is an area where globalisation, development and gender ideologies intersect. World wide feminisation of migration continues to reflect the presence of migrant women in precarious, low paid jobs in manufacturing, and a rapidly increasing number of them in service jobs (Anderson 2000, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, Parreñas 2001), mostly domestic work, nursing, care for the elderly, entertainment and prostitution, the latter often related to increased mobility of men (as military, as militarized peace keepers, as tourists) (Enloe 2000, Falquet 2006). Most of these occupations are often not visible or not recognized as "work" especially if they are performed outside the legal framework. They are also labelled as help rather than work: *Haushaltshilfe, assistante maternelle, aide-ménagère, assistenza* or *collaborazione familiare* are official denominations of similar occupations in France, Germany and Italy regarding personal services and care; as for the "au pairs" they can be invested with full time child care, nanny and household responsibilities, but come within "cultural exchange programme" as in Germany (Hess 2005).

These occupations are built on gendered assumptions of women's innate affinities for work in the reproductive sphere. It could be expected that precisely performing in these spheres would not be conducive or would be even less conducive to destabilizing gender norms about the division of labour in

the household and to disrupting gender hierarchies. The research evidence indeed suggests that the very presence of immigrants (and in particular women) reproduces them or intensifies them (Friese 1995, Lyon 2006, Oso 2006, Shinozaki 2005).

The preservation of hierarchies of class and gender means that – whatever the gains that may be achieved by immigrants – they are offset by the loss of status, overwork, declassing, and exploitation. Depending on the context and the sector of work, there is also a high real risk of being confronted with experiences of extreme humiliation and violence, as the evidence from work in the sex industry especially, but also in domestic services suggests.

The brief overview of the literature presented below suggests that the gender order is not necessarily challenged by migration of women (section two). There is, in contrast, ample evidence that it is considerably resistant to change in migration even in the situations of reversal of traditional roles (section three). But in the present text I would like to go beyond the usual implicit or explicit question of whether or not the gender relations are reconfigured in the context of migration and ask how are the outcomes negotiated and what space for agency and empowerment[1] there is. This seems to me indispensable from the perspective of migrants as actors of change rather than objects or targets of change. The argument in this paper, developed in section four, is that international migrants albeit women and men in different ways, tend to *use* the traditional gender order and *rely* on it for their own purposes, if they don't challenge or question it.

They are not unaware of the institutional, political, cultural-social and economic contexts which shape their employment opportunities across borders. They know that the openings for them exist precisely because the traditional gender order is embedded in them with expectations that their employment (mostly migrant women's but also sometimes migrant men's) will sustain the continuity of the order, with its class-gender hierarchies, informal employment structures and family ideals.

When migrant women's only chance to leave their home country is to join "alternative circuits" of smugglers or to feature as mail order brides via agencies or internet, when their only employment opportunity is in domestic service or the sex industry, it is very likely that they will go along rather than try to challenge the order that opens borders for them and procures them

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1 Empowerment can be understood as a process of reinforcing people's agency, it means strengthening individual and collective strategies of resistance (but also negotiation, subversion etc.) to get rid of social, economic, political pressures or/and try to find valuable alternatives.

work. Some will go even further and excel in demonstrating how they are "better" than those they are hired to replace.

They rely on it as a resource to set up businesses, to facilitate access to the labour market, to respond to both economic and social pressures, to legitimate engaging in occupation that disrupts the moral codes, to negotiate a leave from work with their employer in informal circumstances in cases of family emergencies, to acquire or maintain control over the sphere of reproductive work both in their own household and with their employer's abroad. It can be their bargaining power when negotiating terms of border crossing with customs officers etc.

The focus in the text will be in particular (but not only) on women's reliance and use of the gender order in which men are privileged. It is not as self-evident as men's use of it. It will be shown that whereas sometimes the order is relied upon and as such preserved, it can paradoxically be relied upon in order to, effectively, subvert it from within.

2. Challenges for the gender order and improvements for women

Back in the 1970s the literature dealt with migration and change from the perspective of adaptation to the society of immigration. In the then prevailing tradition-modernity perspective it was seen as *adoption of modern values by traditional women*. The assumption of improvement was predicated on suppositions that geographical movement involved shifts from more to less oppressive environments and that migration could promote social mobility, economic independence and relative autonomy, provided it is accompanied by an increased participation in wage employment providing more control over overall family welfare and decision making.

2.1 The blessing of modern societies and tool of liberation

A number of studies have been devoted to this "move from more oppressive to less oppressive environments", migration seen as a liberating process in the context where old cognitive modes were no longer operative in modern environment. The assumed improvement on the level of gender was placed within the taken for granted "general improvement" resulting from migration (Abadan-Unat 1977, Hoffman-Nowotny 1977, Leonetti and Levi 1979, Ley 1979, Whiteford 1978), in particular from earning regular wages (Foner 1978) or being actively involved in the production process (Kosack 1976).

In Europe the migrant labour system was, until 1973/74, sustained by policies which tended to limit immigration to single workers only, thus avoiding

the costs attached to maintenance of all other persons related to these workers if they were not themselves in waged employment. Women who joined these migration streams were faced with the dominant western ideology of the male breadwinner model and were assigned the status of dependents, whether this dependency was genuine or not. This ideology of male support has not only shaped immigrant/minority women's social, legal and economic position in the *guest worker* countries, but it has usually been assumed to apply even more so to migrant women's societies of origin. In Germany for instance, where the ideal of a housewife has always been particularly strong, immigrant women whose labour participation has for a long time been higher than that of German women (given the then prevalent demographic structure of the immigrant population) were often labelled as victims of tradition and of the alleged male chauvinist attitudes of their husbands. The poorly paid precarious work these women performed, appeared then as a blessing of modern societies and as a tool for liberation from their oppressive traditions: Economic independence provided women with more strength to fight for emancipation from their subjugated traditional roles (Kosack 1976). As a result the cause of restricted access to formal employment has been attributed to women's own cultural heritage and oppression of their own societies. This in turn has often restricted the job opportunities for them and limited their access to occupations which were not disruptive of the supposedly cultural prescriptions of acceptable work. Their "background" was thus used as means of assigning them to jobs which were outside the formal labour market, in particular in France where during the same time policies did not facilitate exit from dependent and irregular status – the legalisation procedures foresaw conditions which immigrant women could not fulfil (Morokvasic 1987c).

2.2 Shaking the gender order in the globalized world

Although many studies insist on both gains and losses and that there could be both improvement, deterioration and restructured constants (Mahler and Pessar 2003, Pedraza 1991, Pessar and Mahler 2001, Tienda and Booth 1991), the conventional wisdom in some studies, in particular in classic "settler societies" historically as today, is that change in gender relations is closely related to the participation of women in the labour force and that women's bargaining power increases compared to their countries of origin. Despite gender inequities in the labour market and workplace, immigrant women employed in the US generally gain greater personal autonomy and independence whereas men lose ground (Foner 1978), as their low occupational status does not translate into public recognition. Besides, the new context favours

men's participation in activities traditionally considered as women's duties in their countries of origin like child care and household chores (Menjivar 1999). Women on the contrary even when they are not successful in the labour market gain access to institutional and other resources which are supposedly unavailable in their home countries. Thus it seems that women's gains are conceptualized as being more related to gender, while men's losses are in occupational status.

One of the universal findings in studies on return migration indicates that women are generally more reluctant to return (Fibbi et al. 1999, Grassmuck and Pessar 1991, Morokvasic 1987a). This on the other hand feeds into the assumption that women are "better off where they are now", more favourable to settlement as opposed to men, more adaptable, whereas men tend to reinforce their own values and norms as a response to an environment that is strange and hostile to them and excludes them.

Comparing the impact of access to paid employment of Moroccan women on "gender contract" in the context of Morocco and in Spain, Angeles Ramirez suggests that whereas their access to the labour market in Morocco is still seen as a transgression of their traditional role, working in Spain enables women greater access to and control over resources and provides them with more autonomy in managing their lives "in spite of the inferiority of their position in Spain both as foreigners and women" (Ramirez 1999: 35). The fact that Spain's immigration policy gives priority to female immigrants contributes to modifying the gender order in Morocco: Men are no longer seen as exclusive economic providers for the family as women enter the sphere as indispensable economic agents. Similar observation concerning the feminisation of the trading circuits from Tunisia to Italy is provided by Camille Schmoll (2005): Women traders are a reflection of the power that the newly performed mobility confers to women in a society which traditionally limited their mobility.

Taking the perspective of women domestic workers from the Philippines in France Liane Mozère (2005) underscores the empowerment of these women who become *entrepreneures d'elles-mêmes*. The gender order and practices are disrupted by the fact that women acquire the status of the breadwinner for the whole family, whereas men assume tasks which in the home country are associated with female roles.[2] Women also have access to liberties unknown to them in the Philippines. In spite of these changes Mozère warns that this happens in a world where they are – as migrants – condemned to "partial citizenship" only (Parreñas 2001). Migrant women are often the ones who

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2   Women often refer to their husbands staying behind as "housebands" (Mozère 2005: 227).

are blamed for the social costs of migration, for "disrupting" the social and gender order. Swanie Potot (2005) shows that although women attain more autonomy, back in Rumania the gender order reasserts itself and women, confronted with the stigma of bad reputation have fewer opportunities to make use of their success. Women's migration has generally been identified as being more problematic for families than that of men (Asis 1995). The outcry about "incomplete families" and other social costs thirty years ago when women *guestworkers* from socialist Yugoslavia left their children behind (Katunaric 1978) – no study mentions specifically men leaving their children back home – is today matched by the blame about social costs of migration. From the Philippines to India, from Moldova to Poland, the blame targets primarily migrant women family breadwinners. As Chiho Ogaya (2004) observes the most sensational social cost of migration, "disruption of the family" is always referred to through the absence of the mother and the destruction of gender norms.

2.3 Impact on those staying behind

Regardless of whether they are themselves travelling or not, people of a migrant household are affected by migration. Much of the literature since the seminal work of Ester Boserup (1970) up to now provides evidence that gendered divisions of labour may weaken as women staying behind perform tasks that have been usually performed by men. Helen Safa claimed that the impact of waged employment on women can be determined by the possibilities of employment for men (Safa 1981: 423) and when these were lacking drastic changes in family structure occurred.

The case of migration of Egyptian peasants to the Gulf region demonstrates the agency of women staying behind in the process: Petra Weyland (1993) shows that in the context of migration of young men who seek autonomisation from the extended family their wives actively participate and encourage their men to leave, their expected empowerment based on reciprocity. Other evidence of men migrating and women staying behind confirms that gendered divisions of labour may indeed weaken as non-migrant women and girls assume the tasks usually performed by the now emigrant men and boys (Gulati 1993).

However, the female headed households have a direct impact on those staying behind although implying more autonomy and decision making for women is often offset by feminisation of poverty (Brown 1983, O'Laughlin 1998, Safa 1995) and increasing dependency on men's remittances (Mahler and Pessar 2001).

3. Maintaining or strengthening the gender order

Whereas the evidence about "improvements" often stresses contradictory outcomes and social costs, many accounts point the opposite side: reproduction of gender inequalities, intensified traditional roles, dependency, increased work load for women.

3.1 Loss of support and increased work loads

Middle class women who used to rely on both paid and unpaid support in their countries of origin, adapt to escalating demands in new circumstances in the context of migration without challenging the gender order.

Myra Marx Ferree surveyed Cuban middle class women in the US in the context where female employment is needed to maintain standards of respectability for the family. In the Cuban community the traditional view of women has been stretched to include employment as a regular part of the female role (Ferree 1979: 48). Then, the author argues, the employment as a family obligation is not so much a cultural change as it is a behaviour produced by applying traditional values to changed circumstances. As such, it does not imply changes in other values such as moral respectability in terms of sexual behaviour or authority deference patterns in male-female relationships.

The Hong Kong Chinese highly qualified women migrants to Canada are confronted with deterioration of their status because of loss of support network and decrease in earning power (Man 1995). Regardless of whether the woman had paid work outside of the home, her paid work was always subordinated to her care for her husband and children. Her labour was incorporated into the family, and her everyday routine activities organized around the schedules of her husband and her children. Consequently, these women experienced an escalation of the demands of traditional roles. In some instances, husbands and children (typically daughters) did help out with housework; nonetheless, the wives took on a disproportionate amount of household duties. It is in this way that the gendered division of labour was not only being maintained, but intensified. Guida Man concludes that for many women, their power and status inside and outside the home actually deteriorated upon immigration to Canada.

3.2 When women's work is not "work"

Self-employment and immigrant entrepreneurship is also a gendered terrain. Sally Westwood and Parminder Bhachu (1988) rightly pointed out that the

divisions of labour between paid work and domestic work were not clear cut divisions for many migrant women in the UK, but were interwoven through their participation in particular in what has been designated as the "ethnic economy". When immigrants set up businesses or go into self-employment the reliance on traditional gender order and provision of cheap and unpaid labour from within a family or community, mobilisation of ethnic networks is an essential resource for male entrepreneurs (Anthias 1983, Phizacklea and Ram 1996). Garment production in metropoles of fashion like London or Paris has employed successive waves of immigrants as a constantly renewed and non-demanding work force. Observing the conditions in the 1980s in garment production in Paris Morokvasic (1987b) noticed how over the years different patterns of employment emerged for men, at least for some of them, and for women. The petty entrepreneur status is quasi limited to men whether they possess the sewing skills or not. They can, or have to rely on skills of their kin and other women. They can even expect women in their own family to work without pay at all, sewing simply being considered as an extension of women's domestic duty. Although generating income, women therefore do not get out of their dependent status. "He brings in the work to be done. I just work and work. He takes the work away, gets the money, I do not know how much, from whom, I know nothing, I have nothing" (Morokvasic 1987b: 453). Women for years remained home-workers or out-workers without the opportunity of promotion or upgrading or legalisation – the conditions for regularisation were such that women did not qualify: uninterrupted continuity at work and long term engagement. Their work on the contrary was marked by discontinuity and by short term, sporadic arrangements. The French legalisation procedure of 1982 which benefited some 135 000 clandestine immigrant workers bypassed women. Only 17% were legalised and only slightly more in sectors where women were typically a majority (22% in garments for instance, cp. Morokvasic 1987c, 1993). The state regulatory tools and gender specific discrimination at work thus combine to give precarious conditions a permanent nature.

The male bias in business ownership and gendered perception of work are also confirmed in a study of Chinese businesses in Germany, although women commonly "contribute" labour (Leung 2004). Their work is however often written off as "merely" additional help. Even when women run the business on their own like Kim who sells groceries from the front of her shop and provides sewing services in a side-room, this tends to be disregarded as work. When asked if her husband was involved in the shop, she said "No, I deal with the shop business here. My husband really works, he works in the

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factory. Here it is only for me" (ibid.: 105). The spatial connection between her shop and home implicitly defines her work as "work at home" and thus not as "real work". Though she is sewing late into the evening, this itself may be seen just as an extension of a "natural" woman's role at home and therefore not valued as "work". Thus the fundamental gender division of labour (not only in immigrant communities) resting on the expectation that "women are responsible for home and men for paid work" is not challenged but reinforced. Kim herself fits her business and her perception of it within this unchallenged order.

A similar example of a perfect match between the cultural expectations and resources and their implementation in business creation is that of gender relations in the families of Indian motel owners in the USA (Assar 1999). They own two thirds of the motels across the country and access to family labour is a key competitive advantage for their business. The official US family re-unification policy is instrumental in selecting specific kinds of immigrants whose costs of migration are met by social networks and family relationships rather than by the state. Motels simultaneously provide living quarters, a business and employment for the entire family. Women are indispensable in running the motels and the bulk of their work involves cleaning and laundry. It requires no additional skill or training for women to do the work. It can be viewed as an extension of their domestic domain, which is facilitated and even enhanced by the fact that everyone lives on the motel premises. The economic success of the family does not lead to improvement in their status as women and there is no opportunity for autonomy. Challenging gender hierarchies comes onto the agenda only with the second generation: Women train their sons to do all the work they do and their fathers do not, thus raising indirectly their awareness about the situation: "Say my mother wants a divorce from my Dad. What is she going to do? She has no education, she has never been on her own. She probably doesn't know how to use the credit card. So she stakes a lot ..." (Assar 1999: 96). Meanwhile, however, the brides-to-be in India have become reluctant to marrying into the family of the motel owner and require not to do the heavy work when they come to America.

3.3 Gender, class, migrancy: substitute women and preservation of the gender order

The globalisation of reproductive tasks and South-North migratory movements contribute to the reproduction of gender inequalities. Female immigration to Spain enables some Spanish men to find a woman who fits their

expectations of the "feminine housewife" either due to her more traditional socialisation or to her position of vulnerability as an immigrant combined with the fact that native women are increasingly rejecting such a role: "I think that a Colombian woman looks after a man better than a Spanish woman" (Oso 2003: 224). The study of German internet match making agencies carried out by Riitta Vartti (2003) confirms similar desirable feature of partnerships for their customers (99% are men): They expect "old fashioned traditional femininity" from the immigrant would-be-bride, i.e. non emancipated, docile, home loving and not career-oriented women, pretty and faithful home-keepers, better alternatives to local women, who are too liberated and career-oriented.

Spanish quota policy, a kind of annual regularisation process, reflects an increasing demand for domestic work and encourages the immigration of women into domestic service which has been in Spain, together with the agricultural sector, one of the major sectors offering employment. For Spanish working middle class women reliance on foreign women to take over the domestic tasks reflects their reproductive strategy to solve the problem of double burden by employing substitute women. For upper class non working housewives the presence of a domestic is a way of maintaining social status. Thus the outsourcing of domestic tasks (rather than sharing them within the family)

> has an emancipating effect on working middle class women while preserving the status quo, whereas it perpetuates tradition among those who have chosen to stay at home to raise family (Oso 2003: 213).

As in Spain, in Italy, Greece, France, Germany, Turkey among other countries where increasing female employment rates and aging population have created a demand in a "domestic niche" (Lutz 2002), foreign women increasingly replace both paid and unpaid labour of women as housekeepers and carers. Their employment is framed by inadequacy of welfare regimes and, in terms of migration policies, by the absence of legal immigration channels, compensated by toleration of informal inflows and a circulatory pattern (Finotelli and Sciortino 2006). The shift to a "migrant-minder" model creates a new racial- and class-based divisions between Italian or other European women and women who take over as carers. The gendered and racialized characterisations continue to be the rationale behind migrant women's employment: They are considered naturally gifted and generally charitable in disposition, undemanding and subservient i.e. perfectly suited for service and care work (Lyon 2006: 222–3). Their labour is marginalized as unproductive and excluded from the category of work not only on the basis of gendered relations

but in addition through the dimensions of migrancy and legality. But as such it remains even more strongly embedded in and sustaining of the ideal of family care for the elderly.

After the *Wende* (1989) one of the most important features in the new migrations from and within Eastern Europe was that people became free to leave and to come back. An abundant supply of redundant workers from transition economies became readily available to respond to persistent demand which was only partially covered by official recruitment into short term programmes as in Germany, and which mainly concerned men (Rudolph 1996). Women have had to rely on alternative informal networks and on circular patterns, favoured by geographic proximity (for Germany and Austria). They mainly find work in personal services and function on a rotation basis through a series of temporary stays, they "settle in mobility" (Morokvasic 2004).

The presence of migrant women in personal services enables the gender hierarchies to be preserved in their employer's households. Increasing equal opportunities between German men and women in the labour market is parallel to increasing inequalities among women as Friese (1995) notes. Most of Eastern live-out cleaners, baby sitters and caretakers to whom German middle class career-oriented women transfer the reproductive work are declassed and de-skilled: They are themselves middle class, often academics and professionals in their own countries and are trying to hold on to their high status-low pay jobs at home. Their upward mobility or status preservation at home is thus contingent to declassing in their country of work.

Whereas for their employers they contribute to maintain as a norm the caring arrangements functioning on a daily basis, closely bound spatially and temporarily, for their own families they improvise the "living-apart-together arrangements" managing separations across time and space. Although this can be empowering for them – as economic and bargaining power within households may have improved for many of these women (Irek 1998) – as we shall see, the system nevertheless reinforces their traditional identities as mothers and carers. The traditional gender roles have not necessarily been reconfigured.

'I would like to stay here and work likes others, regularly. I would maybe have less money, but I would have insurance, vacation, pension one day. It has been now twelve years that I have been undocumented in Brussels, twelve years that will not count for my pension. I have not had a vacation for years'. And in Poland things are unchanged: 'When I go home to Poland, I do not rest, there is so much to do. Imagine a man alone with two kids ... If I go to stay one month for instance, the first two weeks I do nothing but cleaning, housework' (Kuzma 2003: 124).

The typical traditional gender order remains unchallenged, even though (or precisely because) the father or the partner had taken over in the wife's absence. When the new post-socialist mother worker superwoman is back things have to "return to normal" and of course it is she who does everything even though it may take half of her vacation.

The empirical examples in this section demonstrate that the gender order is not only resistant to change, but under certain circumstances intersecting with class, migrancy and legality can be intensified. Are there nevertheless potentials for agency behind the unchallenged, preserved gender order?

4. Reliance on the gender order: turning it to one's own advantage

We will see below how migrant women (and sometimes men) negotiate the contradictions between economic gains and downward social mobility, how they turn their "handicaps" into advantages in response to stigmatisation and blame, how they disconnect norms and behaviour or use traditional patterns to follow their own objectives etc.

4.1 Coalition: traditional family and marriage as support

As we have seen so far, the evidence from studies is mixed pointing to the contradictory outcomes of migration on gender order: Both husbands and wives have become more interdependent as they are forced to rely on each other and on the traditional family for economic security and emotional support. On the other hand, to the extent that the traditional division of labour and male privilege are unchallenged, paid work increases the women's overall workload. The majority of women, instead of expecting their husband's help with housework, often choose to solve their double day syndrome by hoping to displace it on less privileged women relying on what Arlie Hochschild (2000) called the *global care chain.*

The evidence based on the study of Filipina nurses in the US suggests that even in the situation where migrant women are in a relatively more favourable position with respect to access to the labour market then men, this labour market advantage does not directly translate into more egalitarian relationships in the family. Instead the cultural ideals about the men as breadwinners and economic providers still shape the behaviours and outcomes of the changing balance of resources in the US. A women may give up her job and the position of breadwinner when the situation or role reversal are/become unacceptable for her husband, to re-establish a traditional gender balance, when

he regains self esteem through a steady job while she goes back to working part-time. "It is better for him, so I am happy" (Espiritu 2005: 68).

In the families of Romanian bi-professionals Mihaela Nedelcu (2005) observed a recomposition and a come-back of a traditional extended family as a strategy Romanian female professionals rely on to free themselves of a double burden and thus be more successful in facing and overcoming structural barriers in accessing the Canadian labour market. This in turn induces a new type of transnational mobility where grandparents take turns to shuttle between Europe and Canada to take over the reproductive tasks.

Whereas the migration of nurses from Kerala to the Gulf states (Percot 2005) is a way of upward mobility both for them and for their families and there is evidence that they gain respect and more autonomy, they are however not always able to control the investments of their economies. Therefore especially the younger ones are keener to realize their aspiration to live in nuclear families or to envisage migrating to the US. This desire for more autonomy does not lead them however to reject the institution of arranged marriages and the dowry system. On the contrary it is they who to a large extent now finance these dowries and thus "earn their husbands" emancipating themselves from their fathers and brothers. Thus they sustain the system but turn it to their advantage. Similar instrumentalising of the traditional norms and reconfiguring them from within was also observed by young emigrant Sikh women in the UK and the US who contribute to the inflation of dowries which, as Parminder Bhachu notes, is advantageous for brides (1991). The capital earned by Tunisian women on their trading trips (Schmoll 2005) is invested in their daughters' dowries but also in their education. Thus mothers are dealing with the contradiction between keeping some gender norms intact and trying to promote emancipation of their daughters. The contradiction was also observed among Yugoslav mothers in the upbringing of their daughters: They projected onto their daughters what they did not have themselves – fostering girls and boys education alike, insisting that both participate in household tasks, but still adhering to sexual double standards (Morokvasic 1987a).

Resorting to marriage with a local is particularly common among women from Eastern Europe (in France over 80% of these binational marriages are between French men and Eastern European women). This is not necessarily a strategy from the beginning, but is nevertheless framed by the logic of social promotion using of the traditional institution of marriage especially among students and au pair girls. For elder women whose migration is mainly moti-

vated by family obligations at home (Rotkirch 2005), starting a new marital relationship is the most efficient way to assume these family obligations as well as to escape poverty in the home country (Giabiconi 2005). The same is true of Filipinas who come to Japan as entertainers with regular short term contracts. Marrying a Japanese is the alternative to returning to the Philippines or to overstaying illegally in Japan. Stable residence permits thus obtained open up opportunities of self-employment and business creation in Japan that short term permit holders or illegal residents do not have. It further opens doors for reuniting family members and their employment in the created businesses. This enabled Annie to support her parents in the Philippines and bring her elder son over to Tokyo: "I wanted to come back to Japan [...] for me he [Annie's husband] was my stepping stone."[3]

4.2 Good mothers, self-sacrificed and irreplaceable heros

Thirty years ago as well as today the responses of women themselves seldom contest the order, but rather preserve it and re-position themselves in it even more firmly. It is the good mother and the good carer of children that went abroad, sacrificing herself for the benefit of the children and the entire family. "He did not mind having so many children (we had seven) without being able to ensure they would have proper education. I could not stand that." So Stana left for Germany "firstly to enable my daughters to have better education, to be able to earn their own living [...] and second, I wanted to get some pension for my old age, even if very little" (Morokvasic 1987a and field notes).

Today migration from post socialist countries for work abroad has become a way of life. Women often outnumber men in migration flows from the Central and Eastern European countries. In Moldova, the poorest nation in Europe, one fourth to one third of the population works abroad. The majority are men working in Russia, but as Leyla Keough (2006) says it is women's transnational labour and their absence from families and villages that has provoked anxiety over transformations in the social order. Blame for social disorder in Moldova is placed upon migrant women, especially those who work in Turkey: They are depicted as irresponsible mothers, immoral wives and selfish consumers. Migrant women themselves argue back that in going abroad to work they are selflessly making sacrifices for their children and thus are being more resourceful and better mothers as transnational ones than are

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3 Morokvasic, Mirjana (2001): *Being Your Own Boss*, a video about Filipinas in Tokyo.

those who stay at home. In doing so, they push the limits of local norms of "motherhood as the key to social order" not only to justify their absence but to reassert themselves as "better mothers" (ibid.: 433).

Thus they resist by turning around the very same argument employed to blame them. The same gendered logic is guiding those who see a problem with migration of mothers and blame them for being involved in it and migrant women themselves who rely on it to legitimate their own performance and participation in migration. Leyla Keough argues that whereas the migrants' gendered justifications to position themselves enables them to assert new ideas of what makes a good mother and what makes a better social and economic order, this "new moral economy" aligns with global and Moldovan state neo-liberal rationales.

The argument of how to be a good mother women also use for justifying their revenues from an occupation seen as transgressing moral codes, as for example single and divorced mothers who lost their jobs and engage in prostitution along the Czech-German border: "I had to feed my kids" (Sidén 2002: 36). Among Polish traders in the beginning of the 1990s there were grandmothers who were hitting the road daily or weekly in order to save to help their grandchildren's education or to acquire a flat (Morokvasic, field notes). They acted in line with the ideal of a socialist good worker-mother superwoman.

Reasserting themselves as "good mothers" may be the only viable solution as response to blame and stigma related to their migration. This in a way legitimises their absence and enables them to come to terms with the contradiction of the "good mother provider" and the "bad absent mother".

4.3 Disconnecting norms and behaviour

The evidence about Yugoslav migrant women in France, Germany and Sweden in the 1970s and the 1980s (Morokvasic 1987a) suggests that migratory experience is constantly reinterpreted in the light of previous experiences, pre-migratory socialisation and values. Previous socialisation and ideology of equality is an important asset in coping with new conditions in an empowering way: Most came from a country which institutionalised equality, promoted a working woman as a societal norm, and provided equal access to education while the relations in the household remained unquestioned. In the same time this was an opportunity to experience the gap between the equality oriented ideology and their own reality, between progressive legislation and its application.

Yugoslav migrant women worked in badly paid unstable and low status jobs, often outside the legal regulations. Their living conditions were appalling and most of those who had children left them with families in Yugoslavia. In their subjective experience their status of a foreigner was the most sharply felt as the source of their current position. They knew that given the nature of their working experience they were less likely to benefit from legislation that would improve their status. Even when they were wage earners, the deeply rooted identities of wives and mothers were not challenged. Rather than questioning their roles as good housewives, women tried to redefine them in order to adapt to the unchallenged requirements in a more satisfying way. "I cook and do housework in my free time." Or they disregard it as unimportant given the circumstances: "When you live in a shabby room like this then you don't think very much about housework." In damp flats crowded with landlord's old furniture, having their own furniture to dust, their own kitchen to cook in becomes on the contrary something to work for and a symbol of a successful stay abroad. In that situation the issues of who does cooking and dish washing at home – which is often both a workplace – loses relevance. So does the issue of childcare – when children are left back in the home country. In the hostile environment they may also feel in the same boat as their partner and look for compromises rather than change through conflict. This runs counter to those views in feminist research prevalent[4] at the time of my fieldwork which put central focus on the family as the primary and most significant site for women's oppression. A migrant family on the contrary often serves the function of a refuge.

The gender hierarchy is the most deeply embedded and the least perceptible as such among Yugoslav respondents. Over the years some changes occur. New behavioural patterns may be adopted without a corresponding change in the normative system and vice versa. A woman may continue doing housework as she always did in spite of the fact that she may have adopted the view that housework should be shared. She may find that behaving according to some newly adopted norm requires much more effort and persuasion (and partner's consent) than to continue performing according to the old norms. The fact that this is often the only area in which women receive some recognition makes it even more difficult to challenge. In other aspects of gender relationship it is the behaviour that may be at odds with unchanged norms: Thus the extra-marital relationships of women who left their families in the home country contrast with their adherence to double sexual standards and reflect a

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4 In Europe, one of the first critiques came from Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1983).

situational adaptive change, a temporary adjustment to a new situation. This was also reflected in their birth control practices. Their excessive reliance on abortions and reluctance to use contraception mirrors the reliance on the partner. While aware of the dependency this attitude establishes, Yugoslav women prefer it to accepting something which would disrupt old practices and force them into different type of dependency (Morokvasic 1987a, 1981).

4.4 Facing contradictions of gender, class and migrant status

It was also observed that men migrating alone perform domestic tasks out of necessity, however they revert to the established order as soon as their wife or another woman is around or when they are back under the watchful eyes of the community (be it back in their country or among the co-ethnics abroad).

This is the case also when men get employed in the domestic service sector and care, i.e. in what is seen as "naturally" women's work. Francesca Scrinzi (2005) trying to understand the feminisation of migration by interviewing men sheds light on the way the gender order changes or does not change in the context of migration. At the first glance for these men the gender order is reversed: They are the ones who do domestic work or care for the elderly. Highly gendered qualities of work and capabilities become a requirement and therefore a norm to observe and put forward as an exceptional trait to qualify for the job. Thus, being capable of "working like a woman", or being "as good as a woman", becomes for men a resource in negotiating employment opportunities, a "normative ideal". Their rationale for doing "that kind of work" is absence of other options and this lack of options is related to male domestic workers being migrants ("back home in the Philippines it used to be different"). With time, beyond this primary rationalisation and justification of their occupying a female occupation they reinvest their present role of a male domestic worker with "naturally male" attributes. These would make them even more suitable for that work than women. Physical strength – which indeed is a necessary quality but is rarely mentioned when the performers of caring and domestic tasks are women, is something the male domestic workers Scrinzi interviewed put forward as their competitive advantage in this female dominated sector. Returning home for vacation is for them an opportunity to reconstitute their masculine identity, the way they conceive it: They would not participate in the housework of their sisters or mothers. Those who do not do domestic work for pay but stay at home whether reunited with their wives family breadwinners or back in the country of origin say they "have to get used to the situation [...] in order to help their wife and child. [...] I know

I have to accept, so I adapt" (Scrinzi 2005: 235, my translation). Here we see the reversal of the gender order accepted as an expedient out of solidarity and out of family interest.

In another case reported by Kyoko Shinozaki (2005), the male domestic servant claims having been treated as "family" thanks to reasserting his "maleness" through his attitude of resistance to unacceptable treatment by his lady boss. This in turn made it easier for him to negotiate the contradiction between his educational and professional status in his home third world country and his current occupation in service of a female white professional. Thus the direct confrontation and resistance in this case leads to a compromise where the power hierarchies remain intact under the shell of "family" of which he considers himself to be a part.

Being treated as part of the family is often in the literature pointed to as a trap of domesticity, a situation where the line between work "out of love" and paid work is blurred and which leads to exploitative relationships and around the clock availabilities. However, being considered as a family member who does not "really work" but only "cares for" or "helps out" etc. has not only discursive advantages allowing for easier coming to terms with the situation when for instance a highly skilled professional is hired as a domestic worker, but is also considered by the latter as a desirable one. It enables them to negotiate spaces of control and responsibility, to take the initiatives to impose her/his own way of functioning ("I can do as I would do at home"), to get leave of absence for family reasons etc. Addressing the employer's family members by family names (granny, auntie or by personal names) is an attempt to introduce into a highly unequal relationship some signs of equality.

4.5 Home and workplace: the blurred line

It seems that the traditional gender pattern reproduces itself also in situation where it had in fact been reversed (woman a wage earner, man a dependent) (Morokvasic 1991). Like their male counterparts women entrepreneurs have to rely for labour support on networks of family members, kin and community. However, this reliance is more limited in particular as far as the close community network support and financial help goes. For that they turn to other support, often cross-ethnic female networks. Immigrant and minority women across Europe who go into self-employment as a survival strategy or start up their businesses usually after a previous experience in waged work (Morokvasic 1991) tend to put forward a family strategy and reciprocal interests in the household often at the expense of their entrepreneurial strategy.

The very setting up of an enterprise may be merely a tool to achieve some family related goal – to bring adult children or a husband from the home country:

> My husband was a clandestine worker, he entered Italy as a tourist, without a work contract. It was difficult to find work without a residence permit, the only possibility was to enter street trade illegally, but that was risky, for the police could expel him. That is why I got a licence as a street vendor and could then employ my husband. Without this he could probably never have stayed in Italy. (Morokvasic 1991).

This may also create an opening for unemployed husbands (as Filipina self-employed women in Japan who create jobs for their Japanese husbands).[5] Reciprocity rather than confrontation underlies their common agency towards social promotion in an environment where they jointly face obstacles and together can take advantage of opportunities.

In a cross European study focusing on the quality of life of the families of ethnic entrepreneurs in the food sector (http://www.ethnogeneration.org) the reproduction of a traditional gender division of labour was observed in the parent generation. Women tend to contribute rather as "hidden persons" to the maintenance of the business and the social reproduction for the family either as housewives or as dependent workers. The rationale for the encouragement of married women by their spouses to develop an independent commercial strategy lies in their joint migration project – together they can earn and save more. But, once the woman's own project develops into an autonomous one as in the case of the Ferreira family in France, the husband's support is no longer there. Flores Ferreira, who in coping with the double burden of her family tasks and running her restaurant, gradually loses ground and support from her family at home, finds in her restaurant a source of social recognition, empowerment and agency. This becomes her territory and her "home" where she imposes the authority and norms which she can no longer impose in her private household. She does not question the gender division of labour (as a matter of fact it is her daughter that comes to help in the restaurant, rather then her son), but adapts it to a new situation (Morokvasic and Catarino 2005).

4.6 Gendered mobilities as a resource: the rotation system

Domestic workers and caretakers from Eastern Europe usually set up a rotation system with a network of women of the same origin to optimize the

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5 Morokvasic, Mirjana (2001): *Being Your Own Boss*, a video about Filipinas in Tokyo.

opportunities and minimize the obstacles relative to their reproductive paid and unpaid work both at home and in Germany (Morokvasic 1996, 2004). It relies on solidarity, reciprocity and trust of its participating female members. The regularity of commuting is determined by the care for the family remaining in Poland, Ukraine, and Romania etc. The rotation system enables women a transnational double presence combining life here and there, improvising new transnational family arrangement, a kind of "living-apart-together".

In the context where "the freedom to move" becomes "the main stratifying factor of our late modern and post-modern times" (Bauman 1998: 2) mobility and the ability to be mobile play an important part in the strategies of these migrants. Rather than trying to immigrate and settle in the target country, migrants settle within mobility, staying mobile as long as they can in order to improve and maintain the quality of life at home. Migration thus becomes a lifestyle, an occupation, and leaving home and going away, paradoxically a strategy of staying at home, an alternative to emigration. Such transnational short term mobility can be a resource and an important dimension of their social capital. Therefore remaining in control over their own mobility is *a conditio sine qua non* for achieving the original target of social promotion or status preservation at home: The more they have control over their mobility, the more they are able to use it as a resource whereas vice versa, the less control they have, the less they are likely to benefit from the returns of their mobile strategies.

Circulation is facilitated for those who do not have to cope with obstacles such as visas and to worry about temporary permits. Therefore it is important to regularize one's situation and obtain resident permit. Stable status is instrumental not only for easier mobility but also enables more control over that mobility (Morokvasic 1999, Riccio 2003). Women are more likely to rely on family reunification channel or marriage to obtain the stable status (Giabiconi 2005).

Rotation system yields mixed outcomes as already mentioned concerning renegotiation of the division of labour in the household and other aspects of gender relationships. There are however other opportunities for agency: Sharing several employers women avoid being trapped in dependency *vis-à-vis* one employer (as live-in maids do). Second, their constant mobility enables them to avoid an illegal status – as long as they do not overstay. Third, in a sector where upward mobility is impossible the rotation system can be a stepping stone to setting up own business using the acquired social capital for building their own "rotation group" and thus acting as a gatekeeper to available jobs within the network.

4.7 Mobile entrepreneurs

Trading is another occupation of the people on the move. It involves mixed groups among Eastern Europeans: Gender and intergenerational role attribution during trips provide a family like profile to the group – inconspicuous because looking more private than professional. Trading further relies on unquestioned gender relationships and hierarchies which assign to women and men different expectations and positions. Men act as group leaders and protectors, while women are assigned the task of negotiators with customs officers: "One does not throw a woman out of the train." Women are in charge of transport of more sensitive goods and may be expected to make use of their charms to attract customers. Occasional prostitution can be a by product of a trading trip (Irek 1998, Karamustafa 2001).

Those women who manage to remain independent and in control of their mobility, use the accumulated capital to improve their condition by setting up businesses at home. Others because of lack of other alternatives or because of institutional obstacles to mobility are obliged to rely on a protector or a smuggler in order to cross borders (Lazaroiou and Ulrich 2003, Morokvasic 2006). This may lead to a situation where women are no longer in control of their mobility and get trapped in the circuit of forced sexual nomadism, being rotated by their pimps from one European city to another within a system in which gender power hierarchies are exacerbated.

The circulation in the Euro-Mediterranean region involves beside the Eastern Europeans other groups of people, mostly from North Africa. There, trading used to be done by women traditionally in the private sphere and shifted to *soukhs* (markets) only recently. Now in majority, the female traders have not only invaded an originally completely male sphere, but also exit into the public space to do the trading. Their circulation is in service of social promotion for the family and gaining autonomy for themselves (Peraldi 2001).

Beside the changing patterns of migration and trading, the feminisation of cross-border trading circuits reflects also the power that the newly performed mobility confers to women in a society which traditionally limited the mobility of women. Being a woman becomes an advantage: Crossing borders, confronting obstacles (visas, customs officers) is easier for women, in particular mature women. Feminine attributes and dress are (like with women from the Eastern Europe) used as a tactic to cross the borders, to smuggle some articles. North African women instrumentalise the veil for instance which, as Michel de Certeau argues becomes the instrument of the weak (2002) and confers a feeling of security enabling women to cross the boundaries of the domestic space (Schmoll 2005).

They develop a specific "know-how to circulate"– as Alain Tarrius (1992) would say which differs from the rotation of Polish domestic workers and traders. The Polish domestic workers function as a group but travel individually and substitute each other at weekly or monthly intervals. The North Africans travel in groups: This has a socializing function for the newcomers, but also the group, as a social control minimizes the dimension of transgression of the gender code implied in geographic mobility. The groups of women traders from Tunisia manage not only to invest public spaces in the cities like Naples but also transform them (Schmoll 2005). Women in the world of men often have a male "protector": Whereas among the Eastern Europeans the protector regulates and manages the services including sexual services that some women of the group would provide as a part of trade negotiations (Irek 1998), the protector of Tunisian women observes that the moral code is preserved and that they are not sexually assaulted.

In a society where according to the prevailing gender norm the man is the provider and bread-winner whereas women working outside are transgressing that code, women handle this major transformation carefully. Although it eventually may become a prime source of income for the family, it continues to be considered as complementary only. They make sure that men "do not lose face" in the process and provide them with "an alibi" for not participating in cross border trading: Men are often either formally associated with women's business, they assist, and when they don't, outside forces are mentioned as an alibi for men's non-participation: "They have obstacles in getting visas" (Schmoll 2005).

Thus although this brings major disruption in family life and in the decision-making of women, it is important to negotiate the transformations without conflict, under the mask of continuity in gender relations. As the evidence from other studies shows, the changes in gender relations are taking place gradually, based on reciprocity and constant adjustments rather than radical transformations.

5. Arrangements

Migration patterns and processes, the experiences of migrants, as well as the social, political, economic and cultural impact of their migration are gendered. Gender can facilitate or constrain mobility and settlement, gender relations prior to migration affect the migration work, the process, the migration patterns and ongoing relations.

Transnational migration continues to be predicated on the gendering of work: Women continue to be in demand across borders to perform stereo-

typically women's work in a genderized manner of substitution. Today, world wide feminisation of migration reflects an increasing number of women in service jobs as domestic workers, child minders, carers for the elderly. These occupations are built on gendered assumptions of women's innate affinities to work in the reproductive sphere and hence not conducive to destabilizing the gender norms about the division of labour in the household, but rather reinforcing gender hierarchies.

The empirical evidence presented here has an exploratory rather than conclusive character: Processes of reproduction of gender order are manifest in variety of situations but contain in the same time elements of change, of subversion from within. After briefly reviewing "gains and losses" this text looked at the ways the contradictory outcomes are negotiated. Whereas conflict and confrontation is reported in some literature as unavoidable (Pesquera 1993), much of the research including our own various surveys in the past thirty years suggest that compromising and reliance on reciprocity and solidarity is given priority in overcoming contradictions of observing traditional gender norms, while at the same time performing in a way that puts these gender norms in question.

The privileges that the traditional gender order conveys to men are offset in a number of ways, as Raewyn Connell (2005) emphasises in reference to William Goode (1982). They are cross-cut by the interests men and women have in common. For immigrant men and women more specifically these common interests stem from their status as "partial citizen", discrimination, insecurity and inequality relative to migrancy and legality; or from the fact that, as they are de-classed and trying to achieve upward mobility, they have to join forces. Feminist researchers stressed already long ago that gender processes cannot be understood independently of class, race, immigrant status etc. with which they intersect (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983). The evidence suggests that in the process migrant women negotiate and learn to take advantage of attributions that initially handicap them. Most look for compromises rather than confrontation and rejection of the traditional gender division of labour and values. Providing men with an "alibi" for not performing what the traditional order expects them to do, creating jobs for them, contributing to the dowry system or reasserting themselves as the key to the social order that blames women of disruption, relying on mobility as a resource and performing according to sex role expectations, finding ways in bridging the gap when norms and behaviour are at odds etc., are, to borrow from Erving Goffman (1977), different "arrangements" mainly "between sexes" but also with broader social surroundings and social expectations.

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