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Articles

To inhabit across borders. A theoretical study on migrant women and transnational and cross-border homes

Habitar entre fronteras. Un estudio teórico sobre mujeres migrantes y hogares transnacionales y transfronterizos

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Abstract

This paper interrogates how international migrant women develop experiences of homemaking across simultaneous spatialities. Is conducted a theoretical analysis of the uses of the concept of home in migration and border studies since the last decade of the twentieth century, with a specific focus on the transnational and cross-border dimensions of the phenomenon. It explores the particularities of cross-border homes, assuming that the research carried out in border territories has revealed an intensification of the inequalities experienced by women in these areas. Following the Heideggerian debates it is proposed that the inequalities experienced by migrant and cross-border women are materialized in their bodies and in their experiences of inhabiting, which has multidimensional implications in the way they articulate their homes. Final reflections on migration, women and the homemaking across borders are proposed.

Keywords: migration, gender, border, home, theoretical analysis.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE LANGUAGE: SPANISH.

Resumen

El artículo interroga cómo las mujeres migrantes internacionales desarrollan experiencias de construir hogares a través de espacialidades simultáneas. Se realiza un análisis teórico de los usos del concepto de hogar en los estudios migratorios y de frontera desde la última década del siglo xx, con un enfoque específico en las dimensiones transnacionales y transfronterizas del fenómeno. Se indaga en las particularidades de los hogares transfronterizos, y se asume que las investigaciones realizadas en territorios limítrofes verificaron una intensificación de las desigualdades vividas por las mujeres en estos espacios. Al seguir los debates heideggerianos se plantea que las desigualdades vividas

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por las mujeres migrantes y transfronterizas se materializan en sus corporalidades y en sus experiencias de habitar, lo que tiene implicaciones multidimensionales en la manera como ellas articulan sus hogares. Se proponen reflexiones finales sobre la migración, las mujeres y la producción de hogares a través de las fronteras.

Palabras clave: migración, género, frontera, hogar, análisis teórico.

Introduction

The article investigates the relationship between female mobility and the role of women in the (re)building of homes across national borders. The aim is to understand how such mobility builds transnational or cross-border homes, what these homes are like, and how women live in these spaces.

To answer these questions, a review of English-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking social sciences studies on home, gender and borders was developed. A total of 92 publications that address social processes that have emerged since the late twentieth century, mainly in the field of feminist and gender studies, were analyzed. Taken together, these works provide an overview of the interpellation of discussions concerning migration and female mobility (transnational or cross-border) and the concept of home.

To this end, the intersectionality of inequalities marked by gender, class, racial labels and nationality and their contribution to the spatialization of experience *within* and *between* borders was analyzed. Migration is assumed to be strategic social phenomenon that provides insight into social reproduction and the family (Herrera, 2012), because it allows these processes to be observed as spatial realities.

The next section begins by explaining the concepts that constitute the analytical framework of the article and that guide the reading of the other sections. In the second section, a conceptualization and contextualization of the phenomenon of international female migration is carried out. Third, the concept of transnational and cross-border households is discussed. The study concludes with some reflections on what was analyzed.

Analytical keys

Five analytical-empirical definitions guide the interpretative framework of the discussion proposed in this text. Let us pause for a moment to explain them. First, in agreement with Piscitelli et al. (2011, p. 9), it is assumed that *mobility(ies)* is a more "fertile", flexible and dynamic concept than *migration(s)*, offering greater possibilities for encompassing the different types of movements that women can lead and their changes in time and space. However, throughout the text, both concepts —migrations and mobilities— are used to engage with the preferences of different authors.[1]

[1] Transnational and cross-border migrations are understood to be part of the broader concept of mobility. This paper borrows from Yeoh and Ramdas (2014, p. 1197), which defines it as "human movement across national borders, rural-urban migration, as well as the 'to-ing and fro-ing' that inform the embodied experiences of being here and there simultaneously".

Second, the discussion is based on the premise that all knowledge and social processes are situated (Rose, 1997). This implies the assumption that place is more than a simple reference point for the migratory or mobility process; rather, it is constitutive and constituent of both (Silvey, 2006, p. 71).[2] In addition, it is assumed that the migratory or mobility experience builds places and homes. The conducted review yielded definitions of and coinciding reflections on both *place* and *home* in the literature on human displacement. Thus, although they represent different and specific concepts, the two terms are treated as equivalent and in some works and are juxtaposed in others, which regard the home as a special type of place (Easthope, 2004, p. 135). Given the limits of the article, it is not the objective of this text to differentiate between the two. Instead, the focus is on a discussion of the concept of home and relating it to current transnational and cross-border women's movements.

Third, globalization —new information and transport technologies that have become increasingly widespread since the late twentieth century— has led to profound changes in international migrations and mobility by diversifying realities, increasing complexities and promoting constant negotiation in sociospatial processes (Herrera-Lima & Pries, 2006, p. 528). Time-space compression, a characteristic of globalization, has generated uncertainties about the experiences, feelings and representations of places (Massey, 1991, p. 177). In this debate, it becomes necessary to theorize places and homes to centralize the "geographical stretching-out of social relations" (Massey, 1991, p. 178) and its impacts on our experience of space and place.

Fourth, in the early 1990s, upon assuming the previously described analytical imperative, authors such as Nina Glick-Schiller (1999) and Peggy Levitt (1998) questioned the limitations and scope of the assimilationist paradigm of international migration studies. This paradigm affirmed the inevitability of migrant acculturation processes in destination societies. Additionally, this paradigm reproduced visions of the social phenomena and methodologies that circumscribed the entire analysis by the borders of the nation-state, with an incursion into "methodological nationalisms" (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002, 2003). Based on the perception that migrants maintain ties with their territories of origin —family, social, economic, political, religious relations— Glick-Schiller and other authors proposed the concept of "transnationalism", which establishes a new paradigm for explaining international migration (Glick-Schiller, 1999; Levitt, 1998). According to this line of thinking, migrants and migratory networks build and settle in "transnational social fields"[3] (Glick-Schiller, 1999).

In the global North and South, this perspective became the main analytical tool for understanding the migratory phenomena that overflow national borders and establish ties and relationships between different localities (Guizardi et al., 2017, p. 24). The growing academic interest in transnationalism, as well as transnational female migration, inspired the "second generation of migratory studies" (Domenech & Pereira, 2017,

[2] Massey stresses that the experience of place is conditioned not only by capital but by racist and sexist discrimination that influences the geographical experience and produces differentiated mobility (Massey, 1991, p. 179). The experience of the movement is plural. There are different "places" in the same space due to the effect of time-space compression.

[3] Transnational social fields are considered "transnational social field" as a conceptual and methodological entty point into the broader social, economic, and political processes within which migrating populations are embedded and to which they react" (Glick-Schiller, 1999, p. 97). They transcend the borders of nation-states (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004, p. 67).

p. 88).[4] In these controversial debates, women —who have historically been invisible in studies on the subject, reduced to their partner's passive companions— become recognized as protagonists of individual, family and community migration endeavors (Camacho, 2010, p. 35). Thus, to accompany these debates, in this article, gender is considered a fundamental category of analysis for the study of sociospatial phenomena and for understanding female experiences of migration and mobility. As migrant women are the main supporters of households —both transnational and cross-border households— their mobility creates a series of complexities in the maintenance of a domestic space and family relationships (Diatlova, 2017, p. 62). The gender perspective applied to these processes allows the actions of the actors to be questioned and brings to light many spaces that are not usually considered (such as the domestic space). Additionally, it allows an examination of the social and power relations that are usually unseen in hegemonic and androcentric analytical frameworks.

Fifth, transnational migration does not represent all of the mobility processes that are in effect across borders. It is also necessary to consider cross-border migrations and mobility. The debate that distinguishes transnational and cross-border mobility is a recent development in migratory studies. Although transnational theory serves as an epistemological and methodological basis for cross-border studies (Garduño, 2003; Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018), border mobilities have particularities that are not contemplated by the concept of transnationalism.

The global securitization of migration policies since 2001[5] has led to new patterns of mobility, which has re-established the leading role of border areas. Since 2010, families and communities that move around and live in the border areas have been referred to as "cross-border", based on the understanding that "border crossings articulate transnational social fields between origin and host societies, differently than what is observed with long-distance migrant networks" (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 149).

According to Stephen (2012), the main differences between transnational and cross-border mobility patterns are *a*) the historical and current complexities of border areas; *b*) the radicalization of simultaneity[6] between national spaces; and *c*) the various border crossings —literal or otherwise— that individuals make in this space (Stephen, 2012, p. 473, cited in Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 155). Similarly, cross-border families and households differ empirically from what authors described from the transnational perspective (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 158).

Beyond these particularities, the intensification of transnational and cross-border female mobility caused a series of challenges for scientific research. First, it urged the questioning of some traditional concepts of the social sciences, such as space, place, home, family and marriage. Second, it involved a review of the epistemological and

[4] Studies in Latin America followed these trends. Herrera and Sørensen (2017) perform a detailed mapping of Latin American productions and confirm the shift to transnational theories in the region. They also identify considerable growth in Latin American migrations in recent years, and confirm current patterns: *1)* increased intra-regional flow (south-south); *2*) feminization; *3)* indigenous migration; and, *4)* return and deportation (Herrera & Sørensen, 2017).

[5] The attacks on the Twin Towers in New York represent the beginning of a new period of human mobility marked by the fight against terrorism and the upsurge in border control and leading to new global migration patterns (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 161).

[6] The transnational perspective defines simultaneity as "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally" (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004, p. 62).

methodological models conventionally used, which stimulated the search for new analytical tools that more effectively cover contemporary phenomena. The present text is part of these efforts.

The feminization of migration

The phenomenon called the "feminization of migration" (Martínez-Pizarro, 2003; Sassen, 2003) consists of the progressive incorporation of women into migration flows and the change in their position within them: from companions to protagonists of their own projects, oriented towards maintaining family subsistence (Camacho, 2010, p. 46). Female migration is not a new phenomenon, but globalization transformed it, giving it a new "transcontinental" configuration (Herrera & Sørensen, 2017, p. 16).[7]

Since the 1960s, there has been a sustained increase in the number of international migrant women. Starting in the 1990s, women were the majority among migrant groups from several countries in developed regions and in Latin America (Martínez-Pizarro, 2003, p. 20). However, from 2000 to 2020, this trend towards feminization diminished: currently, women constitute 47.9% of the global migrant population (Organización Internacional de la Migración [OIM], 2020). This recent increase in male participation is conditioned by the gender imbalance in migrations from regions such as South Asia (6 000 000 men versus 1 300 000 women) and the Arab states (19 100 000 men versus 3 600 000 women) (OIM, 2020, p. 37). In Latin America, the last intercensal period —between 2000 and 2010— continued to show a feminized pattern of intraregional migration, with a slight decline of 93 to 95 men per 100 women in 16 of its 20 countries (Martínez-Pizarro & Orrego, 2016, p. 18).

This feminization represents asymmetric and particular migratory experiences conditioned by gender as an element that "structurally covers the decisions, trajectories and consequences of migration" (Martínez-Pizarro, 2003, p. 8). The increase in the participation of women in international migration flows is the result of neoliberal economic transformations that alter and increase the precariousness of working conditions for workers in both the North and the global South (Camacho, 2010; Datta et al., 2010; Herrera & Sørensen, 2017; Mora, 2008). The processes of outsourcing, labor flexibility and social security reduction have pressured —at the same time as they made possible— the entry of women into the labor market and their contribution to family income (Camacho, 2010; Datta et al., 2010; Mills, 2003).

In the South, this process was accompanied by the breakdown of families and the abandonment of the home by men in the most impoverished and middle social sectors, which led to female role overload in terms of productive and reproductive work within families (Guizardi, González et al., 2018; Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018). In the North, a "care crisis" is observed (Acosta, 2015; Guizardi, González et al. 2018; Hochschild, 2002), characterized by a lack of people to maintain activities of social reproduction. This phenomenon is caused by the inclusion of women in the productive labor market (Guizardi, González et al., 2018), the increase in life

[7] In Latin America, the link between migration, gender and the sexual division of labor has been addressed since the 1970s in studies of the rural-urban exodus (De Oliveira & García, 1984; Guizardi, González et al., 2018; Herrera, 2012).

expectancy, the absence of a full redistribution of the work of reproduction between men and women and the constant reduction of the social welfare state in these countries (Herrera & Sørensen, 2017).

This crisis caused the "flight of care" (Acosta, 2015; Bettio et al., 2006; Herrera, 2012) via the internationalization of paid care. Women from the South migrate to the global North to meet the demands for domestic workers and provide care for the central capitalist countries. According to Acosta (2015, pp. 25-26), in this model, "the female and flexible workforce (usually immigrant, indigenous and Afro-descendant women) replaces the unpaid domestic work and care that women did in the developed countries". Care work is thus the main occupation of Latin American migrant women (Herrera, 2012).

Exceeding an international circuit, this model forms a "global care chain" (Hochschild, 2001) in which women serve as "substitutes" for other women in home care. The concept of global care chains has prompted important reflections and debates in migratory studies. These chains constitute "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (Hochschild 2001). Yeates (2012) defines them as follows:

> By migrating to take up paid domestic labour the migrant woman finds herself unable to discharge her own 'domestic duties' because she is geographically distant from her children and her home, creating a need for someone else to do so. That person —often another woman— is drawn from an even poorer household in the sending country or she may be a member of the migrant woman's own family. As we go 'down' the chain the value ascribed to the labour decreases and often becomes unpaid at the end of the chain, where an older daughter may substitute for her mother in providing unpaid care for her younger siblings. (Yeates, 2012, p. 137)

In this network, care is extracted as a resource and transferred from poor countries to rich countries (Yeates, 2012, p. 137). Herrera (2012, pp. 41-42) considers that the concept is useful for explaining and demonstrating the unequal macrostructures of international female migration in recent decades. For women from the global South to be able to exercise these productive functions, they must outsource the face-to-face care of their own home and their sons and daughters to women in their family networks —mothers, sisters or daughters (Assis, 2007; Datta et al., 2010; Gonzálvez, 2013; Herrera & Sørensen, 2017).

Moreover, household care is not tacitly replaced or abandoned by migrant women. They provide it from a distance. This implies a high female role overload through the reconciliation of care between different and distant spatialities (Gregorio Gil & Gonzálvez, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000). According to Herrera (2012, p. 41), "if capitalism has always rested on a sexual division in which women, with their reproductive work, subsidize the economy, global care chains express this process on a transnational scale". This complicates the exercise of social reproduction.

The concept of social reproduction, according to feminist theory, refers to "activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally" (Laslett & Brenner, 1989, p. 382). It includes mental, physical and emotional work, and care is a necessary element for the maintenance of current and future generations (Laslett & Brenner, 1989, p. 383). It is important to discuss the concept of "care" and

its centrality to social reproduction. Care refers to physical and emotional work based on the fulfillment of the needs and interests of another or others, within or outside one's family, with the aim of providing for their physical, mental and emotional well-being (Datta et al., 2010; Gilligan, 1982; Gonzálvez, 2013; Milligan & Wiles, 2010). It can be paid or free, performed inside or outside the home, within a country or among several countries (transnational care) and is fundamental for social and collective reproduction (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gonzálvez, 2013). Similarly, care is an expression of the power relations that affect the subordinate subjects of society (in this case, women in general and migrants in particular) (Datta et al., 2010).

Consequently, social reproduction is not only the biological process of procreation but includes a diversity of forms of work. In addition, feminist understanding challenges the Marxist definition of social reproduction and draws attention to the productive nature of life-maintenance tasks, which are fundamental for the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production and its inherent class and gender inequalities (Laslett & Brenner, 1989, p. 383). As the productive system is totally dependent on the reproductive system, the globalization of production is accompanied by a globalization and transnationalization of care (Yeates, 2012, p. 135).

These debates gave rise to the concept of "transnational social reproduction" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Salazar Parreñas, 2001), which allows us to understand the social organization of care at the global level and put "care at the center" of studies on migration (Herrera & Sørensen, 2017; Gonzálvez, 2013). The "occupational segregation by sex" in patriarchal societies shapes the demand for migrant labor and pushes women into jobs related to social reproduction, disengaging men from these functions (Herrera, 2012, p. 40). A "new international division of reproductive labor" is formed (Salazar Parreñas, 2001) that intensifies what feminists have, since the 1970s, called the "double presence" of women (Balbo et al., 1978); that is, the entry of women into productive work does not free them from reproductive work. All these concepts and reflections lead to a common denominator: they present globalization as a reconfiguration of gender inequality on a different scale, from the local to the transnational. Thus, the insertion of migrant women into the labor markets of destination countries is conditioned by multiple expressed inequalities. These inequalities constitute embodied phenomena, which are expressed in their corporealities (Gregorio Gil, 2009; Herrera, 2012; Piscitelli, 2012). The body identification of migrant women from the South, through stereotypes that associate their skin color and phenotype with social marginalization, constitutes a contemporary form of racism that impacts them as, regardless of their abilities and educational training, they are inserted into the domestic services and care sector (Assis, 2004, 2011; Datta et al., 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Parella, 2003; Salazar Parreñas, 2001; Stefoni, 2009) or in the sex trade (Gregorio Gil & Ramírez, 2000; Piscitelli, 2008, 2012, 2013) in the receiving countries. These insertions are mediated by informal networks coordinated in the so-called "ethnic enclaves" they live in (Assis, 2011, p. 322).[8]

Social networks in countries of origin, transit and destination play a fundamental role in migration and in the reorganization of families in the transnational social field

[8] According to Portes and Jensen (1989, p. 930), without residential groupings, ethnic enclaves are "concentration of such firms in physical space-generally a metropolitan area-which employ a significant proportion of workers from the same minority in a physical space —usually a metropolitan area— that employs a significant proportion of workers from the same minority".

(Assis, 2011, p. 325). Gender studies show that women not only use migratory networks (established by migrants and nonmigrants) but are also fundamental agents in the maintenance of these networks and their links across borders (Assis, 2011; Sørensen, 2008; Tapia & Ramos, 2013).

Taken together, studies on female migration from a globalization standpoint allow us to propose that, despite the process of global economic, social and political restructuring, reproductive work continues to be the basis of productive activity, and the hegemonic gender order remains intact. Women continue to be primarily responsible for reproductive work: mothering and caring for the home, children, young people and the elderly (Datta et al., 2010; Mills, 2003; Sørensen & Vammen, 2016). According to Sassen (2003), this implies that the processes of economic globalization intersect with gender inequality.

Transnational and cross-border female migration thus emerges as an option for female providers and heads of household, mainly from countries in the South, who, in the face of labor difficulties, cross borders. Paradoxically, in doing so, they further contribute to social inequalities conditioned by gender (Acosta, 2015; Martínez-Pizarro, 2003; Mora, 2008; Tijoux, 2007). In a world in motion, these women continue to occupy a position of inequality (Assis, 2014, p. 31). Simultaneously, migration is a dialectical phenomenon that releases people from situations of violence and inequality and represents opportunities for the construction of autonomy, agency, resistance and political action (Assis, 2004; Bosco et al., 2011; Herrera, 2012; Piscitelli, 2012; Wilkins, 2017). Thus, opportunity and inequality are the two faces of a phenomenon that Sassen (2001, p. 103) calls "the feminization of survival".

Consequently, there is a close link between the feminization of migration —national, transnational and cross-border— and care work. This link serves to motivate female mobility, providing the main job opportunities in destination locations and representing an extended practice among the different moments/spaces of the migration project.[9] It operates, then, as a coordinating element for relations and territories in the context of international migration (Yeates, 2012).

Beyond the impact of female migration on the lives, bodies, identities and subjectivities of these women and their closest relationships, care also transforms and produces/reproduces their own landscapes and spatialities. Women, in their mobility, reinvent ways of living. Care involves interpersonal relationships between places, which constitute a spatialized network (Milligan & Wiles, 2010, pp. 737-738). Therefore, there is an urgent need to study and understand the geographies produced by a new form of transnational and cross-border living, a form of intermediate and/or simultaneous living between here and there, between the place of origin and the place of reception: the crossing of borders. These "care landscapes" are not limited to a physical territory but are a product and (re)producer of the care structures (Milligan & Wiles, 2010, p. 736).[10]

According to Milligan and Wiles (2010, p. 736), "care and care relationships are located in, shaped by, and determine particular spaces and places that stretch from the local to the global" and can encompass the institutional, domestic, familiar, public

[9] Sørensen and Vammen (2016) and Muñoz Bravo and Mendoza (2018) indicate that domestic violence is one of the driving factors of transnational female migration.

[10] The concept of "care landscapes" aims to articulate new spatialities and complex relationships among people, places and care (Milligan & Wiles, 2010, p. 736).

and private and the intersections among them (Milligan & Wiles, 2010, p. 738). To understand transnational care, it is necessary to study households as a social field where care practices are established (Gonzálvez, 2013, p. 135). Next, we delve into the debate on the concept of home and establish its relationship with gender and transnational/cross-border mobility.

The concept of home

According to Moore (2000), the concept of home has been approached and constructed since the romantic literature of the nineteenth century. However, it was Heidegger's (1954) interest in dwelling in the mid-twentieth century that made the home a central theme in different areas of the social and human sciences.

According to Heidegger (1954), the activity of building homes as the spaces where human beings live approaches the very nature of being: "I dwell, I am" (p. 151). To refer to this meaning, the author retrieves the old German word *bauen,* which means build, dwell, stay or be, and alleges that the human being *is* what he *lives* (p. 152). Being and dwelling thus have an intrinsic relationship, as do dwelling and building. Building is defined as the daily experience of creating, caring for and cultivating the space in which one lives, i.e., the home: "Building how to live, that is, being on Earth, is part of our everyday experience, as language happily says, in anticipation of the 'usual'" (Heidegger, 1954, p. 152). Dwelling, then, is a "fundamental trait of being" (Heidegger, 1954, p. 161).

Bachelard (1964) resizes these statements and defines the home as a welcoming and emotional place, a fundamental element of human development (Easthope, 2004; Moore, 2000; Pinto de Carvalho & Cornejo, 2018). Here, the home appears as a "poetic place"; as "poetry, metaphor and experience"; and as the initial reference for one's inscription on the world (Pinto de Carvalho & Cornejo, 2018, p. 8). With Bachelard's work, the significance of place and home creates the basis for a "philosophy of space" (Moore, 2000, p. 210).

Under the influence of these philosophers, the home came to occupy a prominent place in the human geography of the 1970s (Easthope, 2004; Moore, 2000). For humanist geographers, the home is the basis of identity; it is where individuals build a sense of themselves and their relationship with the world (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 11). People's perception of their environment and themselves is produced through their lived and imagined home experiences (Bonhomme, 2013). The home, according to these geographers, is a place of intimacy, protection and creativity. It is also sacred.

For Tuan, the word *home,* in English, represents the place of belonging, of human development-nurturing, the center of emotions, a place of refuge and rest. This representation can move between different scales: the house, the neighborhood, the region or the state (Tuan, 1971, p. 189). It lies on the opposite side of *journey*; in the *home-journey* binary, Tuan links the home to a private and domestic environment, distinct from the public and working world.

However, the humanist idea of home suffered significant criticism from academics and feminist groups that reinterpreted the concept and made it more complex based on the visibility of other experiences of living that are practiced by subjects

who are historically marginalized and excluded from social/academic analysis, such as women and LGBTQI groups (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Feminism then produced a shift towards the concept and study of the domestic that incorporated gender as a critical unit for understanding the home and its multiple forms: the domestic space and its relationships are gendered, colored by gender experiences and expectations (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 16). In this argument, the home becomes an optimal space for understanding daily relationships marked by differences and inequalities (Walsh, 2006, p. 126).

From the feminist and gender perspectives, the home is not always considered the sacred and safe place that humanist geographers have proposed; it is also a place of violence, oppression, alienation and resistance. This perspective challenges the humanist vision of the home as a place of refuge from work, as well as the Marxist vision that assumes that it is a space solely focused on social reproduction, which draws attention to the unpaid work of women in the domestic field (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 15-16).

From a social and critical psychology perspective, Pinto de Carvalho and Cornejo (2018) recognize that the home can have a negative role in the lives of people (especially women), which contradicts the hegemonic (and exclusive) position that defines the home as a positive space. Thus, they point to the "ambivalent and negative roles" of the home, which are associated with situations such as work, violence, seclusion, lack of privacy, vulnerability, stigma or nostalgia for places that once were (Pinto de Carvalho & Cornejo, 2018, pp. 13-15).

Feminism also questions the relationship between social structures and the home; it rejects the polarity between the public and private spheres and understands them as categories and articulated spaces: "What happens in, and definitions of, the domestic sphere are influenced by processes and characteristics of the public sphere, and vice versa" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 18). Consequently, the home is a dually public and private place where the various social and power relations merge (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 21-27). This leads to an assumption of the home as "intensely political" (Brickell, 2012, p. 227). This approach criticizes the dichotomous reading of "small politics" (home) and "big politics" (geopolitics), highlighting the influence that one has on the other. Thus, the home is perceived as "a vital space for understanding the micro-geographies of social and spatial uncertainty which influence, and are influenced by, wider structural forces" (Brickell, 2012, p. 227).

The feminist perspective indicates that the experiences and senses of the home are colored by the intersection of multiple axes of difference and power, such as racial labels, class, gender, age and nationality (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 18-19). Within this "power geometry", as mentioned by Massey (1991, p. 179), people are differently located in relation to the home and experience it differently according to their "social position" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 24-25). The conception of the intersectionality of these markers of inequality is used by feminism to account for the "crossed or imbricated perception of power relations" and the multiple interdependent inequalities that these relationships generate (Viveros, 2016, pp. 2-5).

People of different genders experience and signify place in different ways. Black feminism, in turn, criticizes the idea of home developed by white middle-class feminism and claims it as a space of opportunities and identity and cultural resistance due to the racialized processes of segregation that some women experience in the external space (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 20). In theorizing about the United States, Davis

(2016) argues that black women, since the era of slavery, have never been included in the "feminine ideology", which was limited to mainly middle class white women.[11] For black women, marriage, home, work, and public space are conceived in a particular way. Black women, first enslaved and later "freed", always fulfilled the role of productive workers, working more outside the home than their white contemporaries did (Davis, 2016, p. 135). Therefore, it is not possible to apply a universal notion of home to the different experiences that women embody.

Generally, when considering home as a place located in space and time, contemporary studies on this concept agree that it transcends the materiality of domestic space (Ahmed, 1999; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2012; Moore, 2000; Morley, 2001; Easthope, 2004). However, they consider housing a fundamental element for its understanding (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Diatlova, 2017). In these debates, the home is defined as an emotional place (Massey, 2001, cited in Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 25), a space of belonging: "the home is where the heart is" (Ahmed, 1999, p 341). Easthope (2004) considers it "particularly significant" (p. 128), a special type of place (p. 135). In short, a place has social, psychological and emotional meanings for individuals and groups (Easthope, 2004, p. 134). Along these same lines, Miller (2001) states that the home is where what truly matters happens.

From viewpoint of critical geography, Blunt and Dowling (2006) consider the home as both a materiality —a physical location— as an imaginary loaded with "spatialized feelings", such as belonging/attachment, desire and intimacy, but also fear, violence and alienation. The home is thus a "spatial imaginary", according to the authors, a set of intersected and variable meanings and feelings related to a specific context that simultaneously constructs places and extends them through spaces and scales (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 2). The material and imaginative geographies of the home are relational: their materiality depends on the perception/imagination of the home. However, this perception is influenced by its physical context (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 22). The home is linked to physical structure(s), although it is not the physical structure(s) itself (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 10).

The construction of the link with that special place —the sense of home— is constituted in action, in daily performative acts (Bonhomme, 2013, p. 8) that connect being with a place. "We feel at home" in the place where habits develop (Easthope, 2004, p. 133). For Diatlova (2017), care routines are fundamental for the establishment of a sense of home: we belong to the place we care for and to the place where we care and are (self-) cared for (Diatlova, 2017, p. 67). The home, then, is the extension and expression of bodily routines (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 5), especially those of care.

According to Baxter and Brickell (2014, p. 134), building a home —homemaking— is the aim of all individuals in the process of living. Chardon, influenced by Heidegger (1954), considers that dwelling is necessarily linked to the notion of constructing a context, a living environment (Chardon, 2010, p. 22). On the other hand, home deconstruction —home unmaking— is "the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged or even destroyed" (Baxter & Brickell, 2014, p. 134). Home unmaking can be the result of forced evictions, war, genocide, natural

[11] Under the "ideology of femininity", women were relegated to perform as docile and obedient mothers, sisters and wives (Davis, 2016).

disasters, and more regular life events, such as voluntarily leaving home, including migratory processes.

Ahmed (1999) questions the opposition between home and distancing and considers that movement is part of the process of building the home as a complex phenomenon of living (Ahmed, 1999, p. 341). For the author —who considers herself to live in various homes— the experience of "being-at-home" encompasses permeability and interpenetration of subject and space, rather than inhabiting an alien space that is exterior to one's being/"I" [self] (Ahmed, 1999). In this way, she understands the experience of being at home as living in a second skin:

> The home as skin suggests the boundary between self and home is permeable, but also that the boundary between home and away is permeable as well. Here, movement away is also movement within the constitution of home as such. That is, movement away is always affective: it affects how 'homely' one might feel and fail to feel. (Ahmed, 1999, p. 341)

Massey, in turn, challenges the notion of home as something fixed and delimited, regarding it as comprising open nodal points built by networks and social relations (Massey, 1991). Consequently, the home is not a thing —static, permanent— but rather a collection of processes and social relations. Places and homes do not have borders, although borders are necessary for the conceptualization of the place itself (Massey, 1991, p. 184). This (in)definite concept is very well aligned with the current transnational and cross-border perspective of deterritorialized/reterritorialized households, which we will discuss next.[12]

Migration and new spatialities

The transnational home

Since the end of the twentieth century, several studies have called for understanding households and migratory experiences as phenomena endowed with a "complex, mutually constitutive and interdependent" interrelation (Walsh, 2006, p. 124). This implies rethinking the notion that the home is left behind in migration and recognizing that it can be anywhere (Walsh, 2006, p. 125).

The home is "multiscalar" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Morley, 2001; Tuan, 1971). The building of homes and their imaginaries can occur beyond the scale of the house: in the body, the neighborhood, the nation and even in the world (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Tuan, 1971). Consequently, households and their imaginaries constitute spaces of belonging and identity on different scales: personal, local, national or transnational (Morley, 2001, p. 425). According to this perspective, transnational movements are

[12] For Haesbaert (2013, pp. 12-13), the concept of deterritorialization refers to a new type of territory —the network territory— and, more fully, to the intensification of the phenomenon he calls multiterritoriality or territoriality. Deterritorialization always involves reterritorialization and can have both a positive and a negative meaning.

the best representation of the multiscale household. This reading conceptualizes globalization not as a phenomenon of destabilization, deterritorialization or home unmaking, but as a process of reterritorialization (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Miller, 2001; Morley, 2001). It understands that, in the globalized world marked by large flows and mobilizations, people are "building a home away from home". In short, the home has become more portable (Miller, 2001, p. 9), which provides mobility (Walsh, 2006).

Thus, the senses of belonging and rootedness are lived through the link with multiple forms of home, distributed in different temporalities and spatialities (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 202). Walsh (2006, p. 138) found that the transnational home lies between the imaginary space of belonging and the lived space, which connects "past, present and future notions of home through domestic practices". Therefore, the transnational home implies an even deeper desire for belonging/roots (Walsh, 2006, p. 126). Case (1996, cited in Moore, 2000, p. 211), in turn, considers that the home begins to make sense when one distances oneself from it, from the absence of the home. Diatlova (2017, p. 62), in a study of Russian-speaking sex workers residing in Finland, recognizes how mobility becomes essential for the understanding of the concept of home in the face of the crisis of belonging experienced by her collaborators, originally caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. These approaches assume that movement and belonging are not opposite or disconnected things, nor are home and distance (Ahmed, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2003).

Consequently, transnational subjects have multiple senses of home, belong to many homes, build "hybrid homes" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 218-219), are situated between present materialities and everyday life and past memories that are connected to other "imagined homes" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 212): "Being at home or leaving home is always a matter of memory" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 343). The transnationality of the migrant household arises from this multiplicity of households, from this new spatiality that encompasses the parallel and simultaneous coexistence of households of origin and destination (Bonhomme, 2013, p. 9).

Considering the above, Blunt and Dowling (2006, pp. 196-198) propose a consideration of the transnational home as one built from ideas and experiences of location and dislocation, place and displacement. Thus, it is a *root* but a *route*. This definition challenges Tuan's (1971) view of the home in opposition to working. However, it comes close to Ahmed's definition (1999, p. 330), in which "home is here, not a particular place that one simply inhabitats, but more than one place: there are too many homes to allow place to secure the roots or routes of one's destination". The "migratory journey", in addition, disaggregates the notions of home between the place of origin and the "sensory" world of the "everyday experience" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 330).

In this journey or interval between places of origin and destination —where daily experiences are developed— (Ahmed, 1999), the migrant home becomes an interweaving of functions of the productive and reproductive spheres. These fall on and burden migrant women, the main supporters of these transnational camps (Parella, 2007, p. 158). Transnational households and the social networks that are organized through them function as vital elements of migratory processes and, later, as key analytical bases for the study of migration and globalization (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 160; Parella, 2007, p. 159).

Consequently, the home plays a fundamental role in the experience and integration of the migrant with the destination societies, serving as the intermediate place between

the individual and the new society where social, cultural and identity elements are negotiated and adjusted (Bonhomme, 2013, p. 9). Similarly, it is where identities are constituted and reconfigured to build what Bonhomme (2013, p. 65) calls "fluid transit between the worlds of origin and destination".

Similar to Bonhomme (2013), Blunt and Dowling (2006) emphasize the importance of the materiality of the home in its intersections with memory, identity and belonging in the transnational space (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 212). Certain objects accompany migrants along their trajectories, representing the memory of these households and contributing to the affirmation of their identities. These objects are charged with a "sense of home" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 205). Material culture is the representation of this multiplicity of homes and a transnational sense of home that travels through objects (Miller, 2006). These items reconnect migrants with the home of the past, help them deal with the "disorientation" that results from mobility to contribute "to current homemaking and future projections" (Walsh, 2006, p. 138).

The cross-border home

According to Grimson (2005), borders are spaces where the (historical) relationship between state and local action (personified by subjects or groups) meet. As they are constituted by asymmetric relationships, life and living on the border are intersected by state control. In addition, the particular political configuration of borders implies that this relationship is extremely conflictive. This conflict also pertains to the relationship between the construction of transnational identities and national stigma and between the plurality of sociocultural phenomena and bureaucratic-state reductionism, among others (Grimson, 2005). Likewise, borders condense conflicts, particularly violence related to gender patterns and relations. However, the experience of women in these spaces has been made invisible in border studies. Thanks to the work of "Chicana" theorists —among them, Gloria Anzaldúa— in the territories of the Mexico-United States border, the stories of cross-border women have begun to be recovered (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 158).

For Segato (2003), patriarchal violence is the elemental structure of relations on the border, which manifest the constant tension between the individual(s) and the universal(s). This structure marks and reinforces the exclusion and violation experienced by women in these places (Guizardi, 2019; Segato, 2003):

> This experience of the intersectionality of excluding factors, which is lived by migrant women (in border areas and beyond them), defines their spaces, rights and possibilities for social incorporation. However, it does so by combining two simultaneous border experiences: that of belonging to the "other gender" and that of challenging the borders of the nation-state. (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 157).

Guizardi (2019) suggests that border women live in a "hyperintersectionality".[13] Cross-border families and homes are marked by constant overlapping of and dispute

[13] "Hyper-intersectionality" (Guizardi, 2019) refers to the juxtaposition of the intersectionality of gender-based violence and ethnic/racial, class and other discrimination that women *inhabit*, along with the gender-based violence typical of border areas.

between the diversity of material and symbolic borders that they cross (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 155). To understand the conformation of cross-border households, it is necessary to consider them from a historical and contextual point of view and investigate who transnationalizes whom (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 160). Are individuals crossing borders, or are borders crossing individuals? In many cases, living between territories —translocal living— becomes a transnational and/or cross-border practice based on the formation of nation-states and the demarcation of physical borders (p. 174). Thus, the concept of a cross-border home leads to rethinking distances. Unlike the transnational home, it is not necessarily built between widely distant materialities and imaginaries. However, this does not mean that it does not embed itself between countries and social networks established in two or more spatialities. "Are these families not operationalizing a transnationalization of the territory?" ask Guizardi, Valdebenito et al. (2018, p. 173). This argument suggests that the transnational home is not measured in distance but rather is based on a "cross-border incorporation of capital" (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 170). Consequently, families and homes on the border are more than transnational: they are cross-border (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 173).

López (2020), in turn, rescues the concept of "transmigration", coined by Alegría (2002), to analyze the daily crossing of workers on the border between Mexico and the United States. The author recognizes that, in the case of working women, these trajectories combine the daily crossing of borders with family responsibilities, mainly related to care (López, 2020). The home, in cross-border areas, is an expanded and ambivalent place. It can represent an improvement or diversification of the family economy. However, this situation also overburdens women and worsens their living conditions, mainly for three reasons: *a*) in border areas, women are more exposed to less formalized and more precarious jobs than in the central areas of countries; *b*) transnational motherhood generally reinforces and aggravates the centrality of women in the role of social reproduction; and *c*) women are more exposed to experiences of discrimination (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 176). Given the above, transnationalization does not necessarily improve family living conditions and can even aggravate and expand them by augmenting "intersectional patterns of exclusion of women, in favor of increasing family economic resources" (Guizardi, Valdebenito et al., 2018, p. 177).

Simultaneously, in border areas, different conceptions of home can be explored and negotiated (Wilkins, 2017, pp. 3-4). The border itself is constituted by daily practices through which people and places are defined, "altered" and regulated (Wilkins, 2017, p. 4). More than fixed spaces, borders are transition spaces where people "may feel a sense of belonging to either one of the two sides, to each of the two sides, or even to a form of hybrid space in which they adopt parts of each culture and/or speak both languages" (Newman, 2011, p. 37, cited in Wilkins, 2017, p. 4). In ethnographic work carried out on the border between Myanmar and Thailand, the collaborators of Wilkins (2017, p. 9) present an idea of home based on three elements: housing (materiality), home building (practices of living) and emotions. The women felt that they were in-between two homes. From her experiences, Wilkins defines the border home as an ambivalent space: on the one hand, it is marked by vulnerability, insecurity and impoverishment; on the other hand, it has the potential to negotiate female subjectivities linked to social reproduction, the domestic world and the preservation of national culture (Wilkins, 2017, p. 2).

The border home is also transitional: it constitutes a place for constructing and exercising political subjectivities by challenging the public-private and intimate-geopolitical binarities as well as gender identities and patterns (Wilkins, 2017, p. 15). Personal transition experiences are enhanced by the opportunities offered in border areas, including work, education and personal development (Wilkins, 2017, p. 12). Similarly, Bosco et al. (2011) show the potential of the US-Mexico border as a place to build the militancy and political engagement of Latino women.[14] This refers to the notion of a geopolitical or "intensely political" home, of which Brickell (2012) speaks.

Continuing with the concept of the ambivalence of the cross-border household, Vargas et al. (2019) observe that the significant concentration of Guatemalan households in the rural areas of the southern border of Mexico reflects the obstacles to integration and access to citizen rights that members of these households have faced.[15] The southern border of Mexico has a long history of cross-border mobility: many Guatemalans are temporary border workers or permanent residents. Beyond economic/labor factors, making a home on the Mexican side of the border is also influenced by political motives and violence (Vargas et al., 2019, p. 2). The border presents Guatemalans an opportunity to live, but their homes there are poorly integrated and marked by precariousness and poverty, conditions that are aggravated among indigenous people. The articulation of the inequalities of being indigenous and a migrant hinders the integration process. To cope with these realities, these subjects develop strategies related to transnational and cross-border life that reduce their risks and increase their quality of life through ethnic social networks between their countries of origin and destination (Vargas et al., 2019, pp. 3-4). Thus, the building of a Guatemalan home between these borders is a family survival strategy that allows for ethnic and social reproduction (Vargas et al., 2019, p. 3).

Although not all Guatemalans have built a (material) home in Mexico, a significant number have cross-border jobs and cross the border daily (Vargas et al., 2019, p. 6). The Mexican government has tried to control various forms of cross-border habitation: in addition to residence and naturalization visas, it issues a Border Worker Visitor Card (Tarjeta de Visitante Trabajador Fronterizo [TVTF] in Spanish) to workers who cross the border daily and a Regional Visitor Card (Tarjeta de Visitante Regional [TVR] in Spanish) to citizens of Guatemala and Belize, which allows short-term visits to border areas for different reasons (shopping, family visits or medical consultations) (Vargas et al., 2019, p. 6).

Considering the border between China and Hong Kong, Chiu (2019) expresses the difficulty encountered in cross-border marriage, that is, marriage between individuals who switch places as migrants and nonmigrants (citizens) from one side of the border to the other. In Hong Kong, state norms discriminate against migrant spouses by depriving them of basic citizenship rights. In addition to gender and nationality discrimination, Chinese women face ethnic, cultural and class discrimination.

Currently, the "cross-border regulation of privacy" has increased (Chiu, 2019, p. 2). In some Asian countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea, migrant

[14] A group of Latino women organized to improve living conditions in a California border neighborhood (Bosco et al., 2011).

[15] The authors consider "Guatemalan homes" those inhabited by citizens from Guatemala and located mainly along the border area with Mexico.

spouses must wait an average of four years to obtain residence rights that allow family reunification (Chiu, 2019, p. 2). Thus, border migration policies generate families of mixed immigration status made up of citizens and noncitizens (Chiu, 2019, p. 2).

During the immigration process, the family is forced to live separately on either side of the border and make daily crossings to reunite and exercise their citizenship. The cross-border family is "geographically fragmented" (Chiu, 2019, p. 2), and the responsibility for childcare generally falls to the woman on one side of the border (Chiu, 2019, p. 9). In addition, discriminatory and exclusive state legality causes couples and families to live at the border (material and symbolic), creating a liminal space between legality and illegality (Chiu, 2019, p. 4) —the "illegalizations" of which Renoldi (2015) speaks[16]— through which "people make their ways of living viable" (at) the border (Renoldi, 2015, p. 420).

Renoldi, in turn, perceives borders as an experience, as environments full of life (Renoldi, 2013, p. 128); they are places *in* and *with* which life happens. In her work on the triple border of Paraná (between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay), she understands that walking, for the Guaraní people, "is a way of living the world". She identifies that the words "live" and "walk" possess etymological equivalence in the Guaraní language and suggests movement as central to their lives (Renoldi, 2013, p. 129).

Is walking, then, a particular way of border living? The following section leads us to propose some reflections provoked by the literature analyzed up to this point.

Final thoughts

The present work carried out a theoretical analysis on the construction of transnational and cross-border homes by associating them with international female migration. From this review, it is concluded, first, that the experience of migration and living are conditioned by major economic, social, cultural and political processes. The migration of female heads of household is part of a macrostructural process of global inequalities (including gender inequalities) that are reproduced due to female responsibility for the work of social reproduction. This inequality is permeated by hierarchies and by power relations and domination (Herrera, 2012).

Second, it is concluded that migration/mobility, border and gender are important analytical frameworks for revealing the structural inequalities that accompany and constitute individuals who are spatialized in their ways of being, living and belonging (Heidegger, 1954).

Third, transnational and cross-border households act as a spatial and imagined representation of these intersecting inequalities, marked mainly by sexism, racism and nationalism. These structures determine which bodies belong where and how different social groups subjectively experience spatialities (Silvey, 2006, p. 70). Thus, mobility and living are not homogeneous. One's social placement in the world allows and limits mobility, displacements, belongings and the possibilities of living in certain geographies and not others.

[16] Renoldi (2015, p. 419) conceptualizes "illegalizations" as "the combination of actions, objects and decisions that allow punitive order to be dodged through strategies that are not necessarily outside the domain of legal instruments".

Fourth, feminist and transnational perspectives have made a valiant contribution to the international debate by stressing the rigidity of theories and concepts by interweaving and recognizing a variety of spatialities, experiences and actors that orbit the "transnational social field" (Glick-Schiller, 1999). From the transnational perspective, long-distance living is made visible through the maintenance and development of ties and relationships between the territories of origin and destination through a female-dominated social network. Thus, new concepts arise with which to analyze the family, marriage, motherhood and the transnational home.

Fifth, transnationalism laid the foundations for contemporary studies to reinterpret global movements around border areas. The ideal of globalization as freedom of movement met obstacles in the policies of securitization that have been adopted worldwide, especially by countries of the global North, since the beginning of the 21st century. Borders have gained centrality, and people have sought to reinvent possible cross-border movements. Thus, new and old mobilities have challenged another view, and cross-border studies seek to meet that challenge through their progress in showing the particularity of living near borders.

Sixth, the conceptual differences between the transnational household and the cross-border household are established. The latter challenges the notion of distance from the transnational home. Both are homes —material, imaginative, and emotional— established simultaneously between nations. However, transnational households are supposedly linked through a long material distance, measured in kilometers, hours, days or other units of measurement. Cross-border homes are built from shorter material distances, which can mean greater physical contact between families and households. On this topic, this work coincides with Guizardi, Valdebenito et al. (2018) in that the cross-border home is also transnational. However, it is not a two-way street: the transnational home is not cross-border since the border areas build particular social fields. There are many ways to live in this ambivalent, asymmetric and transitional space called the border.

Seventh, living at the border is marked by violence, inequality and continuous conflict with the state. It is always mediated by state presence, which regulates and controls the trajectories and geographies of living by increasing historical processes of inequality. This intervention has a particular impact on the female experience as the "other gender". Simultaneously, the cross-border home empowers women to challenge imposed patriarchal patterns and inhabit the historically masculinized public space. In the experiences of border living, women have the opportunity to build political subjectivity. Thus, the border constitutes an ambivalent place of inequality and opportunity, marked by movement and intersectionality.

Finally, the burden of cumulative productive and reproductive work falls exclusively on women in their daily work of caring across territories in transnational and cross-border homes. Despite the robustness of academic production on international migrations (and particularly in Latin America), the relationship between cross-border households and gender inequalities of women who cross borders is yet to be explored. This research agenda is urgently needed, and the attention of researchers from the different fields of the social sciences should be mobilized, particularly in light of the complex COVID-19 pandemic landscape, which will impact the work and care regimes of women at the border.

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