

BOOK REVIEW

Timmerman, C., Fonseca, ML., Van Praag, L. and Pereira, S. 2018. *Gender and Migration. A Gender-Sensitive Approach to Migration Dynamics*. Leuven: Leuven University Press. 268 pp

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The collective book *Gender and Migration. A Gender-Sensitive Approach to Migration Dynamics* introduces a gender-sensitive analytical framework to study migration. It provides an interdisciplinary overview of empirical studies from various disciplines and research methods, carried out in different European countries. The text intends to point out and explore the multifaceted relationship between gender and migration, filling the gap in migration research, which has traditionally disregarded or underestimated the specific experiences of migrant women.

Keywords: Gender; Migration; Gender-sensitive analytical framework; Gender inequalities

This collective book, *Gender and Migration. A Gender-Sensitive Approach to Migration Dynamics*, introduces a gender-sensitive analytical framework to study migration. It provides an interdisciplinary overview of empirical studies from various disciplines and research methods, carried out in different European countries. The text intends to point out and explore the multifaceted relationship between gender and migration, filling the gap in migration research, which has traditionally disregarded or underestimated the specific experiences of migrant women.

According to the editors, Christiane Timmerman, Maria Lucinda Fonseca, Lore Van Praag, and Sónia Pereira, the prevalent focus in the literature on the pioneer male labour migrant has often relegated women to the role of passive actresses in the migration of other family members. The recent introduction of gender as an analytical category into migration research has permitted us to gain insights on the fact that migration experiences differ between men and women. However, the relational nature of gender and its structuring impact on migration patterns still need to be further investigated.

In the introduction it is maintained that the main aim of the book is to demonstrate that gender roles, identities, and relationships affect migration processes at each stage, as unequal

power relations between men and women contextually influence migration opportunities, decisions and integration experiences. Gender roles and identities are embedded in specific social and historical settings and are, therefore, dynamic and situational. Besides, gender relations affect migration at different levels. At the micro-level, gender expectations influence personal decisions about migration. At the meso level, gender-specific social networks and the embedded social capital condition migration opportunities and trajectories. Finally, at the macro level, the inequalities of power create a 'gender order' that structurally disadvantages women. Moreover, the relationships between gender and migration appear to be reciprocal. The editors refer to the theories of social change supporting the need for a longitudinal approach to overcome the traditional division into migration and integration as two distinct and consecutive processes. On the contrary, migration is considered as a set of trajectories in which individual characteristics, family dynamics, and social factors in the place of origin impact upon migration in the areas of destination and vice versa. The results of these processes are specific and not generalizable, causing social changes in gender relations and identities.

The book is divided into two parts, each consisting of five essays. The first part concentrates on gendered regulatory structures and relations. In my opinion, three critical issues emerge that are poorly studied in the literature: the first concerns the existence of very precise conceptions of the roles and relations between genders, which are at the basis of the laws, immigration policies, and governance programs in the countries of settlement. The second question regards the unexpected effects of male migration on women's (dis)empowerment who are left in the country of origin, while the third concerns the redefinition of the idea of masculinity in the migratory context.

As for the first topic, migratory policies have a contradictory and robust impact on women's integration and emancipation processes. For example, Marianna Bacci Tamburlini (chapter 2) shows that European systems of family migration regulation are increasingly restrictive and highly stratified. They act as devices to institutionally select 'desirable migrants'. Depending on their origin, migrant women from non-EU countries married to EU citizens, for example Portuguese men, may be categorized as powerless victims needing protection against exploitation or as law abusers whose morality needs to be controlled. Therefore, the regulatory system produces gender inequalities, as contended by Romina Seminario Luna in chapter 3. Indeed, this system profoundly impacts also on the professional careers and settlement possibilities of highly-skilled non-EU migrants, as in the case of South Americans in Switzerland. It may act informally in different ways according to the gender of those applying for a residence permit and on the motivation behind the application (for work or family reasons), facilitating or rather hampering the processes of migratory settlement and making them more precarious and difficult. This fact suggests that the underlying and socially desirable family model that migrants should adapt to is grounded on the male breadwinner and female caregiver.

According to Kitti Baracsi (chapter 5), at a local level and in the implementation of immigration governance projects as those addressed to Roma in the suburbs of Naples, certain behaviours (such as early school leaving or early marriage of girls) may be attributed to the alleged patriarchal culture of specific ethnic groups. This fact prevents consideration of the effects of other much more binding structural variables on women's choices (such as economic poverty or lack of residence permits), strengthening stereotypes and prejudices. The second argument questions the supposition that the management of remittances by women in the country of origin always allows their emancipation. Instead, Alina Poghosyan's empirical study in areas firmly centred on a patriarchal culture in South Caucasus (chapter 1) shows that any change affects individual families in their private space. The cultural transformation of the dominant patriarchal discourse may not affect societies in general.

Finally, according to Kamila Fialkowska (chapter 4), migration fosters the redefinition of the discourse on masculinity by Polish male migrants in the UK, who have lost their hegemonic

role and power in Western urban contexts characterized by superdiversity. This process may cause defensive behaviours, like the contempt for those migrant women who have interethnic relations, the affirmation of nationalistic values, and the assertion of one's superiority according to an alleged racial hierarchy system.

The second part of the book deals with various migration trajectories in relation to places of origin and settlement. In my opinion, there are two main topics: the first concerns how refugee reception policies conceive gender. The second regards the impact that socio-demographic, cultural, and economic variables might have on women's (forced) migration. The first subject is explored in particular by Alexandra Parrs in chapter 8. The author claims that only recently in the humanitarian discourse greater attention has been given to the risks, needs, and violence suffered by female asylum seekers and refugees. This new consideration, however fundamental, seems to translate into the concept of female vulnerability, conceiving women as apolitical, dependent, and passive and men as potentially violent and sexually harassing, thus underestimating women's agency and preventing male vulnerability from being considered. As a result, refugee victimization, orientalizing, and categorization processes may occur in different host countries and in various programs managed by international and local organizations. Instead of empowering refugee women, these dynamics picture them as a uniform category and favour self-vulnerability strategies to access specific resources.

The second topic is explored in the other chapters of the book through quantitative analysis. It concerns how gender affects women's forced or desired mobility, intersecting with dimensions, like ethnicity, age, socio-economic background, educational level, family strategies of risk diversification, local 'culture of migration', and gender discrimination in the region of origin. In chapter 6, Ilse Ruyssen and Sara Salomone argue that there is a positive correlation between perceived gender discrimination and intentions to move abroad. They also maintain that there is no evidence for a relationship between this perception and subsequent migration behaviour, maybe as a result of discrimination itself, which reduces women's concrete opportunities to migrate. In their analysis on data of female migration during the nineteenth century to Antwerp, Thomas Verbruggen and Hilde Greefs (chapter 7) explore the functioning of push and pull mechanisms at the basis of women's migration, demonstrating the variability of single female domestics' profiles from different regions of origin.

In chapter 9, Milena Belloni, Ferruccio Pastore, and Christiane Timmerman unpack the stereotyped categories concerning women in Mediterranean asylum flows. They provide a more nuanced understanding of women's mobility strategies and demonstrate that the asylum regime promotes migrants' self-selection and reduces women's possibility to gain access to protection and rights. Finally, Christiane Timmerman, Zeynep Zümer Batur, and Lore Van Praag (chapter 10) explore the positive impact of a 'culture of migration' on gendered migration aspirations in Turkey.

The book supports the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in the study of migration. The empirical studies are based on different methodological approaches and analytical hypotheses and are conducted in diverse settings. This multiplicity makes the book very original but potentially fragmented. The analytical framework that structures the text is presented in the introduction and confirmed in the conclusions. However, to bring the multiple contributions to a more unitary structure, the book would have benefited from a more substantial introductory chapter, aimed at presenting its theoretical framework through the revision of the main contributions in the sociological literature, with respect to the topics covered. Nonetheless, the book remains a valuable contribution for scholars, students, and professionals engaged in research on migration and in the implementation of governance policies.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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