

## **Transits: Brazilian women migration in the context of the transnationalization of the sex and marriage markets<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper I focus on Brazilian women's migration to Europe in the context of the transnationalization and the interconnection of the sex and marriage markets. The analysis is based on anthropological research studies carried out in Italy and Spain with the aim of apprehending the political, economic and cultural aspects associated with migrations connected with the sex markets. On the basis of the social networks activated during the migratory process and women's participation in the sending and receiving countries, I ponder on the notion of transnationalism present in the debates about prostitution and migration studies. I argue that, in order to understand transnational practices in this type of migration, it is necessary to focus on a broader approach that takes into account women's spaces for agency.

**Keywords:** marriage market, migration, sex industry, 'sex tourism'.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based upon the ethnographic research carried out thanks to the financial support of Guggenheim Foundation and CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior/Brazil*) and is related to the Project "*Gênero, Corporalidades*", which is financed by the "Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo". I thank Luisa Leonini, Mônica Schpun, Giovanna Campani, the assistants of the "*Università degli Studi de Milano*", the Brazilian consulates in Milano, Barcelona and Madrid, specially the Brazilian Consul in Spain, Mr. Gelson Fonseca, Dolores Juliano, Verena Stolcke, Isabel Holgado, Bea, Constancia, Carla, Justine, Cristina Garaizával, Lurdes Perramon, Beatriz Espejo, and all the members of the groups I studied; Licit, Genera, Ambit Dona, Hetaira, of the Project "*Carretera en Calella*", the association "*Colectivo de Transexuales de Cataluña*" and, specially, Laura Agustín and all the members, in different countries of the on-line network "*Indústria del Sexo*", for the support, literature and contacts. I also thank Durval Ferraz, Marco Aurelio Garcia y Cristina Bellelli for their support and Kamala Kempadoo and Mariza Corrêa, Ana Fonseca and all the team of "*Horizontes Antropológicos*" for their suggestions.

Although sex workers have an important part in creating a transnational social space, they are rarely taken into account in the studies and papers about migratory issues. According to Laura Agustín (2006) immigrants of this sort are most frequently included in criminology studies, or depicted as victims when viewed from a feminist perspective.

This is clearly visible in the Brazilian literature on the topic, which, as it reproduces the hegemonic viewpoints of the public debates, tends to mistake migration for the purpose of working in the sex industry with people trafficking. The term transnational thus becomes, in such a context, a synonym for crime-related groups working across the borders.

At the same time, transnationalism as a concept emerged in the debates on migration in the midst of heated discussions. Although approaches differ from one another, those perspectives that focus on the displaced subjects, their logics and networks enable an understanding of the dynamics and consequences of migrations in a variety of social realms, and provide valuable elements for understanding the interweave of migrations and the sex industry.

In this paper, I take into account the concept of transnationalism in both fields, having as a reference the migration of Brazilian women to Southern Europe countries in the context of the sex industry. I analyze the trajectories of 22 Brazilian women in Spain and Italy from an anthropological perspective, therefore maintain a qualitative approach, which will allow a better understanding of the economic, political and cultural issues involved in this sort of migration.

I shall, in this part of the text, bring a few methodological comments. Then, I shall consider the concepts of both debates and present the settings in which this study was carried out. I go on to analyze, then, the social networks that were activated during the migratory process and how these women engaged in their social contexts of both their origin and reception societies. I shall finish with a discussion on how this type of migration melts in the pot of human traffic. I defend that, in order to have a good understanding of the transnational practices, it is necessary to keep an eye on these women's spaces for agency and their relation to the locale.

### **Ethnography and the field researches**

Ethnography, the core methodology used both in the sex industry and the immigration studies, was a powerful tool when it came to problematize certain assumptions that, in my viewpoint, materialize as they enforce the limits of sexual and migratory rights. I mean to emphasize the importance of a long lasting - several months, perhaps - permanence in the field; of direct observation, during which the intensity of the interactions impinges on the quality of the material collected through ethnographic interviews (Pack; 2006). The validity of the ethnographic method as a means to apprehend the whole of the social relations, or the diversity of forms culture may

assume, has been often criticized. In spite of that, I do share with other authors the opinion that, as it refers to locations that are constantly modified by afar forces, ethnography is of immense value in comprehending the nature and effects of the broad scope of the political and economic processes (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003).

In the first research, I followed the migratory trajectories of women from the city of Fortaleza - in the Northeast region of Brazil - to Lombardia, in Northern Italy. I should point out here that the city of Fortaleza is all-too-frequently associated with the issue of sex tourism<sup>2</sup>, and that the women that participated in my research stemmed from such a context. Some of them had, I should also mention here, participated in a previous research about the impact of international tourism on sexual and marital choices made by the local population. (Piscitelli, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2007a). These women left Brazil upon being invited to do so by foreign tourists they met in Fortaleza.

The research in which these immigrant women took part was carried out in three stages: in Italy in 2004, and in Fortaleza, where I found some of the women I had interviewed in the first stage, in 2005 and 2007. The first stage took two months, while the second and third ones several weeks. I collected the data by means of in-depth interviews, observation and the analysis of a variety of sources. I interviewed twelve women, eight of whom had emigrated from Fortaleza, while the remaining four had come from other parts of Brazil and were married to Italian men. I also interviewed five Italian husbands and carried out informal interviews with two women who spent seasonable periods in Milano and Fortaleza. I also interviewed two customer/partners.

Half of the women who had emigrated from Fortaleza were also my interlocutors during the second and third stages; the other women that completed my research universe belonged to their social networks. I interviewed women in the city of Milano and its neighboring towns, such as Abbiategrasso, Voghera and also in Verona<sup>3</sup>. A significant

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<sup>2</sup> This expression is currently under question in academic literature. According to the studies carried out along the past twenty years in different parts of the world, the interest that heterosexual tourism has raised has somehow obscured the fact that there is, concomitantly, a diversity of modes of homosexual tourism (Luongo, 2000). The kind of tourism taking place in several Caribbean and African countries, in which many more first-world women than men search for sex, counteracts the generalized assumption that sexual tourism involves only first-world aged men in search for sex adventures of the kind they would not be able to find in their own countries, at least for a reasonably low price (Mullings, 1999; Pruitt y Lafont, 1995). Last, these researches oppose the understanding of prostitution as a form of indiscriminate and emotionally neutral exchange of sex for money, and make us ponder on the relations that arise from such sexual encounters (Cohen, 2001; Oppermann, 1999). As the term "sexual tourism" becomes progressively left behind by the academic literature, it grows increasingly popular in the public debate, where it has become a native category. In Brazil, it is associated with heterosexual prostitution involving low or low-middle class young women and girls.

<sup>3</sup> The research included also visits to NGOs working with prostitution and human trafficking, semi-structured interviews with eight clue members of these NGOs and representatives of the Brazilian consulate in Milano, informal interviews with four Italian women who supposedly hold some sort of knowledge about mixed couples, as well as bibliographic, documental and data research at the *Università degli Studi* of Milano.

part of the research implied following their daily lives, observing their workplaces, their family lives, going to parties and friends reunions with them.

The second research was carried out in Spain, in different periods between 2004 and 2008 and lasted 5 months. It aimed at understanding how such differentiating markers as gender, nationality/ethnicity and “race” crosscut organization and consumption in the sex industry, and how identity markers are resignified by the Brazilian female sex workers (Piscitelli, 2006, 2007b, 2008b, 2008c). Therefore, I analyzed the trajectory of Brazilian immigrant women from a diversity of contexts within the sex industry, whose projects were to work as prostitutes in Spain. The field research was carried out in the cities of Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao. The research implied 1) observation in male-and-female sex workers support organizations and at the women’s work places, such as streets, apartments and clubs; 2) interviews and informal conversations with: a) four club owners, b) 14 female and five transgender sex workers in such places as apartments, cafes, Brazilian ethnic bars or their own homes, on specific moments or during their leisure time, c) two Brazilian women who made part of the sex workers’ network but were not sex workers themselves, d) four Spanish ‘customers’<sup>4</sup>.

I stress on the methodology because the ethnographic work was essential in apprehending the viewpoints of the interviewed women and in understanding the relevance of the different spaces for agency during the migratory process.

### **Transnationalism, prostitution and migratory studies**

The Brazilian government ratified the Palermo Protocol<sup>5</sup> in March 2004. In this convention against organized transnational criminality, the category of “victim” includes all those people who, in any phase of their migratory process, were lured or coerced into any kind of activity, subdued to servitude or any sort of situation related to slavery, or deprived of organs for the purpose of illegal sale or traffic.

The Palermo Protocol stresses on the notion of “transnationalism”, but does not consider migration for the sole purpose of working in the sex industry a form of human trafficking, neither does it reduce the concept of “human trafficking” to coercive sexual exploitation. On the other hand, according to the Brazilian Penal Code<sup>67</sup>, “human

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<sup>4</sup> In this part of the research I interviewed 28 members of migrant and/or sex-workers support organizations, of the Brazilian consulate in Barcelona and Madrid, the legal representative of the “*Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Alterne (Anela)*” in Barcelona and the “*Comisaría de Extranjería*”. Besides that, I analyzed literature and statistical data on migration, academic researches and reports on prostitution, some mass media material and a Spanish webpage addressed to prostitution customers.

<sup>5</sup> Additional Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Organized Transnational Crime concerning the prevention, repression and punishment of human trafficking, particularly among women and children.

<sup>6</sup> It should be mentioned here that the practice of prostitution by people over the age of 18 is not considered a crime in Brazil. According to the Brazilian Penal Code, (*capítulo 5 artículos 227 and 231*)

trafficking” refers to the act of encouraging and/or facilitating immigration or emigration for the purpose of working in the sex industry. After the more recent reformulations of the 1940 Penal Code, the concept of “human trafficking” does not apply to women only, or to transnational trafficking only; the new version of the code broadens its focus to the concept of “person”, and includes in the category of human trafficking the trade of human beings within or without the national boundaries<sup>8</sup>. This change impinges particularly on transgender immigrants, whose engagement in this sort of criminality had not, until then, been regarded as such. (Teixeira, 2008). In the Brazilian law, violence, threat, fraud and profit making do not define human trafficking; they are considered mere aggravating circumstances. Any kind of aid offered to a person whose intention is to migrate for the purpose of working in the sex industry could be considered “facilitation”, and, thus, related to human trafficking (Castilho, 2006)<sup>9</sup>.

In Brazil, the notions of the Palermo Protocol and others like fraud, coercion and violence are fed into the public debate. Sex industry bondage and transnational mafias also become part of the language of the debate. Nonetheless, when it comes to legal issues and according to the Penal Code, people who are not necessarily engaged in situations of this sort may be regarded as engaged in human trafficking (Piscitelli, 2008c), as the recent analysis of legal proceedings reveals (Castilho, 2008; Oliveira, 2008). Public debates combine elements from either legal instance, relating transnationalism to organized crime across national borders.

This idea casts suspicion on the social networks that enable migration, specially on poor people and women, and even on their relatives and close acquaintances, since the members of such networks are regarded as potential associates of organized crime groups. Public debates are featured by the perception that gender influences on the networks immigrants can access (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). The women’s sexual and affective relations with foreigners especially when the former come from the lower classes, are regarded as dangerous. Foreign boyfriends are frequently regarded as bails,

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only pimping and the exploitation of other people’s prostitution in general are considered forms of felony.

<sup>7</sup> *Capítulo V, Artículo 231, incisos 1, 2 and 3.*

<sup>8</sup>After the changes introduced in the Penal Code by the 11.106 law of March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005, not only women but all people can be considered by the definition of international human trafficking. The new law also adds certain statements regarding internal trafficking, that is, human trafficking within national boundaries.

<sup>9</sup> According to Public Prosecutor Ela Wiecko V. de Castilho (2006), the term “facilitate” (*“facilitar”* “ in the Brazilian Penal Code) includes providing for such forms of aid like the money for the air-ticket, documents, passports, clothes or anything that could be necessary for the journey. In her opinion, the person who receives money to travel abroad with the purpose of going into the sex industry in mind is not committing the crime, but the person who provides for the money is, if he/she is aware of the former’s intention.

belonging to criminal organizations that will seduce vulnerable people into sexual exploitation abroad (Brasil, 2006, 2007). Sex-industry related migration, including sexual tourism and the love relations and marriage associated to it, is associated to human trafficking, in the context of these divergent legal frames, of certain gender and class notions and, simultaneously, in the face of the scarce empirical research<sup>10</sup>.

In migratory studies, the term “transnationalism” bears a variety of connotations; in fact, a conceptual battle is constantly being fought over it. The idea that the analysis of transnational migration revolves around the network that immigrants construct across the national borders has been refined, in the attempts to construct a new field of studies (Glick Schiller, 1997). Other notions, such as transnational social spaces<sup>11</sup>, transnational practices and communities, have been brought into this conceptual battle and granted more precise meanings (Fouron; Glick Schiller, 2001; Glick Schiller, 2005; Levitt, 2001). Along such process, one of the main perspectives to mark the debate restricted the concept of transnationalism to those economic, cultural or political activities that demand constant and long-lasting relations across the borders, without the participation of institutionalized actors (Portes; Guarnizo; Landolt, 1999). In such perspective, transnationalism involves groups or networks of individuals composing enterprises across the national borders, mobilization through political activities or bringing about changes in the local religious or cultural costumes through continuous exchanges. In this perspective, the adjective “transnational” could only be applied to a small number of immigrants<sup>12</sup> (Portes, 2001).

Several aspects of the conceptualization of transnationalism have been debated along the past few years. In some perspectives, the concept of transnationalism, so conceived, could only be applied to middle class migrants, thus neglecting the forces originated in the networks stemming from other social strata (Agustin, 2005). Others problematize the central aspects of the concept, and argue that neither displacement nor regularity are,

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<sup>10</sup> The intersection of migration and sex industry has not been sufficiently explored in Brazil. On “sexual tourism”, the studies carried out by Silva y Blanchette (2005); Bessa Ribeiro and Sacramento (2006); Dias Filho (1998), Carpazoo (1994) and Piscitelli (2004a, 2004c) are worth being considered; on human trafficking, see the studies by “*Secretaria Nacional de Justiça*” (Brasil, 2006, 2007), the thoughtful critics made by “*Grupo da Vida*” (2005); the works of “*Sodreitos/GAATW REDLAC*” (2008) and Illes, Timóteo e Pereira (2008). There are several ongoing, still-unpublished studies on migration for sex-work purposes in Europe, but Mayorga (2006) and (Piscitelli, 2006, 2007b) can be seen also.

<sup>11</sup> Such spaces are considered to be created when people migrate, set up away from home and develop networks through which they maintain familial, economic, religious or political bonds with their home countries. Such bonds expand beyond each person’s social and familial relations. Thus, transmigrants maintain such bonds despite their incorporation to a new society; they invest money in their home countries, send money and presents to their relatives, and participate in local festivities and in the betterment of their home towns. Therefore, they live in two countries. (Fouron; Glick Schiller, 2001, p. 539; 543).

<sup>12</sup> Some researchers suggest that transnationalism is related to more sound legal and economic statuses, such as those of the transnational entrepreneurs, who have higher educational levels and are economically better off than local business people or retainers (Portes, 2001).

in fact, requisites for the existence of transnational practices. They even consider that one single field of social life could be sufficient for the manifestation of transnational practices (Levitt, 2001). However, they maintain some of its elements, as they sustain that transnational practices are indeed much more heterogeneous in terms of intensity and reach, than Guernizo's Portes' and Landolt's (1999) formulae depict them. According to these other perspectives, new typologies should be conceived in order to embrace all this diversity<sup>13</sup>.

The feminist perspectives that analyze how gender operates in migration prefer this more embracing conceptualization of transnationality, since it ponders on women's action across the borders. I mean to call the attention to those practices usually not associated to economic or political activities and that have significant effects on central aspects of women's lives, such as the private domain, the familial relations, affection and emotions (Aranda, 2003; Parreñas 2001; Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). More radical feminist perspectives, however, tend to go far beyond the networks created by women across borders or the diversity of spaces relevant to them; these other feminist perspectives frequently go as far as to bring into question the very assumptions that can be found in the various approaches to the issue of migrations.

According to Aihwa Ong (1999), the notion of transnationalism is employed to confront the several understandings of globalization that conceive it as a rational economy, deprived of social agency. Transnationalism also confronts, in Ong's viewpoint, the notions of globalization that equalize the global with macro politics and economy, while the micro turns out to be identified with the local, the culturally creative and resistant. The notion of transnationalism, therefore, enables the apprehension of the horizontal and relational nature of the contemporary social, cultural and economic processes that crosscut spaces, thus evidencing the ways in which they are rooted in a diversity of power regimes. Still, the prefix 'trans' refers to the movement across the space and to the changing nature of things as well<sup>14</sup>.

Ong regards transnationalism as going far beyond suggesting new relations between the national and financial capital, since it refers also to transversal, transactional aspects of the translation and transgression of contemporary behavior and imagination encouraged, enabled and regulated by the changing logics of the national states and of capitalism. If transnationalism refers to the condition of cultural interconnection and mobility across space, intensified in late capitalism, far from the restrictions imposed by some migratory studies, it refers to the cultural specificities of the global processes. This is a

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<sup>13</sup> Distinctions are made on different bases; one of them could be by differentiating the ways in which frequent travelers, seasonal migrants and those who remain permanently in one same place get involved. As far as the reach of the transnational practices, a difference could be made between the more common practices and the less frequent ones, or between the ones that are more comprehensive and those that are rather selective. (Levitt 2001, p. 198).

<sup>14</sup> I thank the consultant of "Horizontes Antropológicos" for his/her suggestions, whose name I do not know.

fertile approach to the analysis of the practices carried out by the women who participated in my research.

## Settings

In migratory processes, women from southern countries tend to be confined to certain professional categories. However, they do not compose a homogeneous contingent. In the context of the differences between North and South, the differences among them are more often than not translated into ethno-sexual boundaries, marked in the interaction between notions of sexuality and ethnicity (Nagel, 2003). The representations created in such processes are closely related to the choices and possibilities they will find. The gendered representations of “brazilianness” vary across the different societies of immigration, on the background of the historical relations between the two countries. Besides that, the social background and skin color of the immigrants have a part in shaping these representations.

However, in the fluxes of Brazilian women towards Southern European countries, the cultural translation of Brazilian subaltern position in transnational relations tends to label them as naturally and gaily sex-prone, in an ambiguous combination with a naturalized tendency towards care, domesticity and motherhood. These representations can be found in Italy and Spain in a variety of degrees and shades.

Brazilian migration to these two countries is not particularly significant in numbers, if compared to that coming from most other Latin-American countries. However, in both countries of immigration, it bares meaningful features. Both in Italy and Spain, it has grown significantly after 2005<sup>15</sup>, and it is predominantly feminine<sup>16</sup>. In both, Brazilian women are considered an important contingent in the sex industry and they make up for one of the most significant nationally-bound collective of feasible wives for indigenous men (Piscitelli, 2008a, 2007c). Milano and several nearby cities are one of the regions where many Brazilian women have settled on the basis of a sex-industry context. It is a common perception in Italy and other European countries that, after the 1990s, there has been a considerable rise in the numbers of foreign women offering sexual services. A number of researches point that foreign prostitutes, erotic club dancers and foreign, on-command wives have filled de sex industry. (Ambrosini, 2002; Campani, 1998; Leonini, 2004). They are supposed to have enhanced the consumption of prostitution by

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<sup>15</sup> According to the members of the Brazilian consulates in Madrid and Barcelona, the number of people seeking assistance has grown steadily since 2004, reaching approximately 70,000 cases at the moment of the interviews. I thank these consulate agents for their contribution to this research.

<sup>16</sup> Previous researches on Brazilian migration show that in Italy in the early 2000s, 72% of the Brazilian immigrants were 20 to 30 year-old women (Bogus; Beosso Bassanezi, 2001). In Spain, according to the data collected by the “*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*” on home registration, 62% of the Brazilian immigrants were women in 2006. This ratio was more leveled in Madrid, but in the regions of Navarra, País Vasco Extremadura and Asturias women accounted for more than 70% of the Brazilian immigrants. (“*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*”, 2007). I thank Durval Ferraz for the information concerning statistical data.



men of all ages, due to the diversification of the market (Leonini, 2004, 1998). According to such studies, in the beginning 2000s, a significant part of the sex industry was occupied by Latin-American transgenders and women, and by Nigerian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Rumanian and Hungarian women (Ambrosini, 2002). Brazilian women worked predominantly in private places, which made it difficult to estimate their numbers, and in the middle class sector of the prostitution (Campani, 1998).

The migratory studies reveal that the numbers of marital relationships between Italians and foreigners have risen. In the year 2000, marriages between Italian citizens and foreigners accounted for 7,1 % of the total amount of marriages (Daphne Program, 2005). Seventy-one percent of these mixed-couples were composed of an Italian husband and a foreign wife<sup>17</sup>. Brazil stands as the main Latin-American wife supplier<sup>18</sup>. This is a significant datum, since the number of Brazilians and Cubans, being Cuba in the second position among Latin-American countries in terms of foreign wives, with a regular migratory status is far below those of the immigrants coming from other Latin-American countries, such as Peru (*Instituto Nazionale de Statistica*, 2005).

In such a context, my interviewees make up a heterogeneous compound. Some engage in a seasonal transit routine; they stay in Italy for a few months, so as not to exceed the period permitted to tourist visitors, as they search for clients they had previously met in Brazil. They come home with money in their pockets and return to Italy to work, sometime later.

Others follow a more “improvised” pattern, which is typical of sexual tourism in Fortaleza. They visit their lovers/clients in Milano, and once they are there, try to persuade them into helping them to stay in the country. If they do not manage to stay, they return to Brazil, bringing lots of sophisticated clothes, watches, perfumes and cell phones, and search for a new foreign lover that could enable their way out of the country. Most of my interviewees, however, managed to stay in Italy and married “sexual tourists”. None of these is nowadays in the sex industry. They exemplify one of the paradoxes of this issue: in some cases, marriage is the way out of the sex industry, enabling also the migration to northern countries. The interviewees that married Italian men had an irregular migratory status for some time prior to the celebration of the wedding. At the time of the interview, all of them had become legal residents through marriage.

The organizations that assist sex workers and the researchers agree that the increasing number of immigrants in the sex industry changed the profile of prostitution in Spain

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<sup>17</sup> According to the researches on migration in the region of Lombardia, only 8,3% of the Latin-American men living in the region are married to Italian women, whereas 32,4% of the Latin-American women have an Italian husband. (“*Osservatorio Regionale per l’Integrazione e la Multiethnicità*”, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> According to the 2001 census, such countries are, in order of importance: Germany, France, Romania, Poland, Brazil, Great Britain, Spain, Albany, Cuba and Switzerland. (Istituto Nazionale de Statistica, 2005, p. 5).

after the 1990s (Agustín, 2001; Holgado Fernández, 2005; Pons, 2003; Solana Ruiz, 2003)<sup>19</sup>. Several research reports point out that the number of Latin-Americans in the sex industry is significant, particularly in certain parts of Spain, and that Brazilian prostitutes tend to work in private spaces, such as apartments and clubs<sup>20</sup>. The website [www.hotvalencia.com](http://www.hotvalencia.com) addressed to customers, reveals the relevance of the Brazilian presence (whether imaginary or actual<sup>21</sup>) in apartments and clubs in specific areas of the country<sup>22</sup>. As to the clubs, this fact was corroborated by the representative of the “*Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Alterne*” (ANELA) in Barcelona<sup>23</sup>. He pointed that, in the clubs associated to ANELA all over the country, 40 % of the sex workers came from Eastern Europe (Russia, Romania, ex-Yugoslavia and the Tcheck Republic), another 40% was composed of Colombians and Brazilians; others were Uruguayans, Dominicans and only a few were Argentineans. African women, who are prevalent in the sex industry in some parts of Southern Spain, did not make up for a significant number.

He said:

“There are only a few Nigerians in the clubs. Nigerian women bring down the level of the clubs. They are poorly educated. There are a couple, ‘cause there is always one or two clients who like wilder girls. When they work in the streets, they usually charge less than the others”

In the years that followed, the narratives about prostitution continued to stress on the importance of Brazilian sex workers in private places<sup>24</sup>. Simultaneously, according to the “*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*” (2007), Colombian and Brazilian women were in

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<sup>19</sup> However, it should be taken into account that the choice to change nationality by these people is considered similar to nationality changes in other groups, such as those of the domestic servants, fishers and farm workers.

<sup>20</sup> Female sex workers, occasionally human-traffic victims, are in the center of the debates on prostitution. However, my observations agree with the information furnished by NGOs in that there are significant numbers of Brazilian transgenders, some of whom are very young, working the streets, usually in tough locations, such as “*Campo del Barça*” in Barcelona and “*Casa de Campo*” in Madrid, although some work in private apartments.

<sup>21</sup> I am aware that, as Laura Agustín mentioned in an informal and personal conversation, sex workers often lie about their nationality. Some transgenders state that being Brazilian is of good value in the sex market and, for that reason, people of different origins claim to be Brazilian.

<sup>22</sup> Of the 280 messages from women presented in this webpage in May 2006, 132 refer to Brazilian women and 59 women from other parts of Latin-America. The rest refer to women from the European Union, from Easter Europe, Africa and Asia.

<sup>23</sup> At the time of this research, it was estimated that 10% of the clubs were members of this organization.

<sup>24</sup> According to the information offered by the “Civil Police” , the Brazilian women were the main collectivity in the Spanish clubs in the year 2005, being twice as many as the Colombians, which were in the second position among Latin-Americans, and the Romanians. (“*Policía Judicial*”, 2005).

the first and second position respectively, as to the rise in the numbers of marriages between Spanish men with foreign women in the year 2006<sup>25</sup>.

The women I interviewed in Spain had had very diverse professional trajectories when they had lived in Brazil. There had been former street sellers, factory and business workers, teachers and even those who had owned their own business and gone bankrupt. After that, and before migrating to Europe, all of them had gone into the sex industry; some had been intermittent sex workers while others, the so called “professionals”, had done it as the only way to make a living.

Only four of them had obtained their regular migratory statuses through marriage, whether with former clients or not, and only one of them was not a sex worker any more. A few of those who were in an irregular migratory status had actually sought legal assistance and were struggling to become a regular immigrant. This conferred them some sort of freedom, freeing them from the fear of immediate deportation. Most of my interviewees offered their services in the streets, clubs and apartments.

As we consider the two researches, the interviewees make up a heterogeneous universe, and share some common features. Most of them are in their twenties and thirties, although four of them are over forty years old. To my surprise, those women that, while in Brazil, regarded age as a major drawback, found a market place in the streets in Spain. The length of the residence in the country of immigration ranged between 1 and 10 years.

None of them had left a husband or lover in Brazil, but three of them had left children back home and four had had children in Europe, with foreign men. Most of them had, at least, started high school and one of them had begun a university course, though she had not finished it. Before migration, most of them belonged to the lower middle classes, and two of them actually came from the lower strata. Economic reasons are of central importance in the planning of a migratory project and their choice for going into the sex industry, but this does not mean referring to a condition of extreme poverty in their home country. For most of them, it had to do with the lack of opportunities of a better future for their families and for themselves. One of the women’s words reflects the perception common to the whole:

“I wouldn’t leave my country to survive only... If having what to eat is what it’s all about, I can have it in my country, I wouldn’t need to be away from my family to find food. In Brazil, if you plant a manioc or you raise a chicken, you

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<sup>25</sup> The data collected by the institute for the year 2005 show that 1310 mixed-marriages were registered most of which composed of a Brazilian woman and a Spanish man. In 2006, there were 1978 mixed-marriages, of which only 270 involved Brazilian men. That year, there were 1725 marriages between a Colombian woman and a Spanish man, so Brazilian women ranked second in the number of marriages. It should be kept in mind, though, that the Colombian collectivity is much bigger, in terms of numbers, than the Brazilian one.

have food. It's not a matter of survival; it's about being able to do something with my life. I've always been concerned about my future... what am I gonna do when I'm 60?. I have an aim in life; I want to raise some money and send it to Brazil, to do something there. And if I did something else here, like ... say ... do housecleaning, I wouldn't earn enough. I would sweep the streets for a good pay, but I wouldn't work for 800 or 900 Euros

## **Journeys**

Those analysis focused on the intersection of migrations and sex industry pay special attention to the ways the journey is planned, since the trip itself might reveal specific features that might unveil an organized crime network (Brasil, 2006, 2007). However, the narratives brought by my interviewees point to a diversity of forms of displacement, in which a variety a networks and actors are put to work. In my research, I could spot four ways of making the trip. When a European prospective husband is involved, and when the trip is carried out in a more autonomous way, few contacts are activated and the traveler assumes no debts. Debts are a common feature in a third form of migrating, in which a broader set of networks and dealers is activated. This is the case when Spanish clubs pay for the trip. The fourth mode of featuring the journey regards the involvement of informal networks, such as friends, acquaintances or even relatives. This modality may or may not imply the obligation of paying back the expenses.

The Brazilian women that came from a sex tourism context resorted to the foreign clients they had met back home<sup>26</sup>. These young women revealed similar migratory patterns. They worked in those areas frequented by tourists and started frequent relations with tourists, in order to earn more money and, perhaps, have a chance to go abroad.

Fortaleza is a two-million-inhabitant city, and only very few of them migrate to other countries. Fortaleza, unlike other Brazilian cities, could very hardly be thought of as belonging to a transnational community (Levitt, 2001). However, when it comes to sexual tourism, the sex-related touristic circuits are crosscut by a transnational "feeling", encouraged by the relations between locals and foreigners, including one-time tourists, seasonal foreigners who own houses and business in the city, tourists that come more than once a year and girls that meet one another and their "boyfriends" both in the city and abroad. In such a context, the migratory projects are stimulated by the eloquent success of those women who, after migration, maintain their bonds with their places of origin. Women networks of friends and acquaintances who migrated to different countries encourage the dream of living abroad, and provide a context for comparison among the different possibilities and choices of destination.

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<sup>26</sup> It should be kept in mind that, in this scenario, the relations with foreign visitors are not restricted to prostitution, but involve women who hold a variety of activities in the field of tourism.

In Fortaleza, some of these interviewees were in the sex industry; others held stable but low-pay jobs<sup>27</sup> in the service sector, and in spite of the fact that they maintained relations with foreigners with some sort of economic profit in mind, they did not regard themselves as having sex in exchange for money. In this universe, the Italian “boyfriends” provided for the air tickers, the money for the passport and a place to stay upon arrival. There are rumors in the city about mistreating and even imprisonment or liberty deprivation. In spite of that, invitations to travel abroad are very welcome. It is owing to such invitations that the interviewees who participated in this research were able to leave the country and start a new life in a relatively safe and debt-free context. Some of these relations yielded to marriages that could be included in the category of “marriage migration”, in which women from the third world migrate in order to marry men from the Northern countries (Roca, 2007). A 24-year-old woman who used to be a sex worker in tourist circuit of Fortaleza, describes how she left Brazil:

“When he (an Italian client who spent his vacation in Fortaleza) had gone back home, he sent me an e-mail... We began a virtual relation; we contacted each other several times a day. He told me he had never experienced anything similar to what he had lived with me. He was in Fortaleza in April. One month later, he paid all the debts I had in Brazil. He sent me money so that I could buy things for my trip ... he paid for the documents and he bought me an air ticket... I arrived in Europe in June and I married in September... He said he wanted to marry me and I asked him to give two months so that I could give it some thought; and I did. I did what was best for me. If I hadn't married, I would have had to go back to Brazil.. and that's how it works .... If a Brazilian woman finds a foreign boyfriend, she needs to marry. If she doesn't she won't be able to leave this kind of life. ... if she returns to Brazil ... she may intend not to go back to it (to prostitution), but eventually she will”.

Occasionally, girls who became residents host their cousins, friends or work partners who come to Europe either to take a chance on a “boyfriend”, or to do some seasonal sex work in Milano and Fortaleza. Usually Italian husbands are reluctant to agree with that; they want their wives to stay away from any social environment related to prostitution. Also, all too often married girls suggest possible candidates for unmarried friends of their husbands', thus enabling new mixed marriage that will end up in new marriage migrations. However, like in other contexts, migratory networks involve, specially, family members that remained in Brazil (a mother, a daughter or a sibling) in a context different from that of prostitution.

The narratives of those women who left Brazil to work in the sex industry in Spain depict quite a different picture. Some of them refer to radically money-driven processes, in which the trips costs are financed by club owners. Such narratives unveil the articulations between agents in Brazil and abroad, and imply the intermediation of Brazilian and foreigners acquainted with people in the sex industry in Europe. In some

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<sup>27</sup> The highest salary, at the time of the research, was equivalent to US\$250.

cases, the women had been contacted back in Brazil; in others, they had invested time and efforts in forging their own contact network. The narratives of women who had migrated from different Brazilian cities, such as Natal, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo refer to such intermediations.

“I am from Belo Horizonte, but I used to live in Rio de Janeiro. One day, an Argentinean man came up and spoke about coming to Bilbao. The problem is that he wanted to make too much money on me. It was through him that I came to Bilbao”.

“I used to frequent a dance club, and a taxi driver I knew said “hey, babe, don’t you wanna work abroad?” He invited my cousin and one friend of mine too. He said it was good money, and we said yes. He came with us to get our passports, and a few days later, he called and said we were about to go. They gave us the air ticket at the airport. We went to São Paulo and caught another plane there. We came to Paris, and from there we were supposed to come to Bilbao by train, where a man would be waiting for us. When we met him, he took us for breakfast and we all went to his home. We had a rest and later, we all went to the club... and said now we need to talk... they paid for the travel expenses ... the debt is a little over 3000 Euros....”

“In São Paulo, girls do not exchange information. It took me a while, more than a year, to find out how to come to Europe. A friend of mine knew a girl who knew another and this one knew another one and so on. Finally, I got in touch with a travel agency that maintains contacts in Andaluzia... you have to ask for a specific place ... [they answer]. `no, we don’t do that, but if you know the name of the place, Peter’s club, or Paul’s, club, then we can give you that information, we can bring you in contact with that person’. First I came to a club in Barcelona, but I didn’t like it. A friend of mine knew about a girl in Barcelona who had worked in a club and was a close friend of the owner’s. when I came to Barcelona I still had 800 Euros to pay back, but the very first week I was lucky to earn 1.700 Euros, so I paid what I had to and sent some money to Brazil”.

However, in the narratives I collected, this kind of migration yields to another type of sex industry-related displacement, involving friends and relatives that migrate in an autonomous fashion or being given an air ticket as a present. My interviewee from São Paulo says:

“I have a Brazilian from who hasn’t made up her mind yet whether she’s coming to Spain or to England, but she’s paying for her own air ticket. My sister is finishing her university course in December, but as she doesn’t have a job, I’m going to send her the air ticket. She’s trying to get a work contract, through the Spanish consulate in Brazil. She could find a part-time regular job in her area, she’s studying production technology in Brazil, and work the rest of the time in prostitution, which is the way to make some money”.

Last, some women paid for their own ticket and came on their own, having only a few contacts in a club or two, and moving freely between the clubs and their street work. A 47-year-old woman who works in the streets of Barcelona said:

“I used to work in São Paulo. Many times I heard other women coming from Barcelona say this was very good. I bought my ticket, and invited two other girls to come along. I had been referred to a club in A Coruña, but an aged woman like me hardly makes any money. I brought 800 dollars with me, and started to make some money on San Ramon street”.

Once they have settled, they finance other women’s journeys so that they can make a living in the sex industry in Spain. As these enterprises imply debts, they may become somewhat frustrating:

“After I had settled, I brought five girls. I helped them, I bought their tickets, lent them some money, but after a while, things changed. They didn’t want to pay me back. This sort of thing ends up being a problem”.

The narratives, in general, report to forms of migration in which only one of the people involved is acquainted with the local sex industry, maintaining contact with transnational networks and thus using them for his or her own benefit. If we consider the concept of human trafficking as it appears in the Brazilian Penal code, some of these women could be regarded as involved in this sort of criminal activity. Like any other immigrant, they relied on some kind of support for making the journey and settling abroad and some even facilitated other women’s journey so that they could go into the sex industry. However, in the perspective of the Palermo Protocol, several of these modes of displacement would not be considered crime.

Maintaining a relationship with a foreign boyfriend reports, in the cases I encountered in my research, both to a form of debt-free migration and a prospective marriage, and, on top of that, to a way out of prostitution. As to the migration for the purpose of going into the sex industry in a foreign country, the most outstanding social networks constitute informal forms of articulation that do not evoke the idea of an organized crime network<sup>28</sup>. This type of migration activates and creates social networks similar to those utilized by Latin-American immigrants who migrate for the purpose of working in any other field. Its only particularity lies on the very fact that these networks, unlike others, are composed mainly of women who enable the migration of other women their friends, acquaintances, relatives or neighbors.

As I pointed out above, resourcing to such informal networks does not necessarily imply a debt-free migration. In these cases, lending money to make the journey, sometimes with high interests, offering a place to stay and work for a price higher than

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<sup>28</sup> According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> article of the Palermo Convention, an organized criminal group is composed of at least three persons, exists for a certain period and intends to commit at least one serious crime or contravention, with economic or material purposes (Bittencourt, 2005).

its actual value, like any other type of support, is frequently regarded as “help”. However, this kind of “help” is neither restricted to Brazilian immigrants, nor to the work in the sex industry (Jimenez, 2001)<sup>29</sup>.

In my research, the case of the journeys financed by club owners is what comes closest to the idea of transnationally organized groups, as in the Palermo Protocol. However, the interviewees’ narratives do not refer to any sort of coercion, liberty restriction, slave work or deceit as to the kind of work to be done upon arrival. All these elements configure the concept of human trafficking. The only thing that could be thought of as a form of deceit is that the women do not know what the debt is until they arrive to their destination. The networks activated in this kind of work seem to fit into the concept of transnationalism formulated in the context of the migratory studies, as conceptualized by Ports, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999). This is because it refers to social agents that carry out a kind of activity in which contacts across the borders become necessary<sup>30</sup>. Despite all that, both definitions turn out to be too restricted in the face of the practices and conceptualizations of the interviews.

### **Living in two countries?**

Some of the interviewees maintain routines of coming and going between Brazil and their countries of immigration, with diverse frequencies and regularity. The migratory status is one of the key elements in determining the frequency, since an irregular migratory situation inhibits returning to Europe. Another important aspect is the economic situation; those who are in the initial phase of their saving process tend to return less frequently, so that they can accumulate more money before returning. According to their narratives, the most frequent displacements are associated to seasonal work. However, this does not mean that this kind of seasonal coming and going occurs during long periods, nor that the women work in the sex industry in both countries. The women from the city of Natal I interviewed said:

“I paid my debt in one month, but I chose to stay (in a club in Bilbao) for three months, then I returned to Brazil, but when I saw how different it was down there, I realized it wasn’t worth working tricks in Brazil. I waited the three months I need to, and returned to Spain. I e-mailed the club and asked them to send me a ticket. I was there a week later”.

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<sup>29</sup> In her analysis of the migratory processes in Galicia, Oso reveals the existence of a small-scale traffic system, composed mainly of individuals and small clubs owners. Besides that, she points to the somewhat autonomous migration of women who find support in migratory networks and end up working in clubs and apartments (Oso Casas, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> The interviewees’ narratives about this modality of migration allows us to catch sight of regular contacts between both countries, maintained on the basis of some economic activity that evokes the sort of activities carried out by transnational entrepreneurs during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who, in turn, organized and induced labor migrations” (Portes; Guarnizo; Landolt., 1999, p. 219, 226).



Most of the interviewees in regular migratory status return to Brazil once or twice a year. During the stay in Brazil, they nourish their affections and ponder on possible investments and profitable activities, especially those associated with a return home in the middle-term or distant future.

“I plan to return, maybe in ten years or so. I wanna buy a few little houses, may be about 10 or 15 thousand *reais* each, and rent them out, so I can live on that. Figure it out, if I could buy four little houses and rent them out for ... say ... one hundred *reais* .. or two hundred... Then I have some fix income doing nothing. I could also own a small shop, something worth about 6 thousand *reais*, and if the shop doesn't go well, then I still have the money of the rents”.

In fact, the most recurrent investment is on real estate. Five of the interviewees bought houses and apartments in Brazil, which they use when they go home on vacation. They may also rent them out. One of them bought a piece of land and cattle.

“I wanna return to Brazil in a couple of years, so I invest there all the money I earn here. I wanna spend three months in Brazil, with my family, return here, stay three months and go back to Brazil and so on. I have lands and cows in Rondonia. My son is in Rondonia and takes care of these things now. I send money there so that I can make things better, 'cause in a couple of years I wanna retire. Every month I send about 1,500 to Brazil. That's why I've always valued what I have here. I'm patient with my old tricks here, 'cause I know that with the 20 Euros the give me for a 20 minute job I can pay a peon's salary for four days, in the country. One needs to have a good perception of things. I want my cows to shit money. I have quite a bit already. My son draws 100 liters of milk a day. I wanna have my 5000 *reais* income and some ten houses to rent out, and that's it. I can retire”.

However, the regularity of the investments in Brazil is relatively independent of the frequency of the trips. The studies about the feminization of contemporary migrations tend to regard this fact as part of the familial strategies (Anthias, 2002). The interviewees' migratory projects confirm it, but reveal also that it is part of their individual strategies. These strategies introduce some sorts of tension in the familial relations, since they may lead to the partial abandonment of certain obligations that, in the social sectors these women come from, are frequently regarded as parental. One former sex worker who was beginning a job as a waitress in Milan, said:

“I don't do as most Brazilian women do. I have a cousin who lives in Paris and sends all the money she makes to her mother... I don't .... I chose to live my own life ... I have a brother, that makes six people at home. It's impossible to send money all the time, to support six people all the time. I said this to my mother this morning. I'm going to pay for the electricity bill, the phone bill and the water supply directly at the Banco do Brasil. And that's it”.

Most of the interviewees acknowledges and takes care of their parental obligations. This applies to transnational heads of the family<sup>31</sup> (Parreñas, 2001), whose children remain in Brazil, under the custody of some sister or grand-mother, however, it is not restricted to them. The concept of family and familial obligations may include not only children, but also mothers, younger brothers and even nephews and nieces in Brazil. The familial obligations, including those of the women who married and had children abroad, may involve the purchase or reform of houses in Brazil, the monthly remittances they never fail to make and occasional remittances on special circumstances, such as for medical treatments, school material or trousseaus.

“My husband promised he would send money to my daughter in Brazil every month, and he does it. Every 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month he sends her 200 Euros. That’s enough in Fortaleza. We raised money for two years. When we went there, we had 2,800 Euros. We took 2,000 to buy a little house for my mother. I still need 800 Euros to have the kitchen and toilet made, that house is for my mother, my daughter and my sister to live in. my sister is the same age as my daughter. I registered the house on my daughter’s name. this way, they don’t have to pay for a rent. With the money I send them, plus the government’s aids for kitchen fuel and schooling, they can live. My sister is now pregnant. She rang me up the other day and said she didn’t have any money to buy things for her baby. I told my mother-in-law and she and her sister raised 50 Euros each, and I sent them the money. My sister was really happy, ‘cause this makes 300 *reais*. With that money she bought the baby-bottle and all the other things for the baby”.

“My mother used to live in an adobe house in Natal. I had the house rebuilt; five rooms and a tiled patio. I bought a fridge, cupboards, everything, even the silverware and dishes. I wanted to give my brothers and sisters all those things I hadn’t had. I bought one bike for each of the. I send 100 Euros a month, maybe more if there is some urgent need”.

“My family, that is, my mum and dad have died already. In Rio de Janeiro I have a brother and nephews and nieces. I send them money every single week. I have the feeling they all live on that money”.

According to these narratives, the greatest difference between those women who are in the sex industry and those who are not is that the former send bigger amounts of money. One sex worker in Barcelona said:

“Every month I send money to Brazil. I pay for the expenses where my parents and sister live. At least, I send 800 Euros a month. Six hundred to pay for the

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<sup>31</sup> I consider “ transnational family” as a domestic nucleus whose members live in, at least, two different national states. A transnational head of the family refers to, in this case, a family in which the mother lives and works abroad whereas some or all the other members of the family that depend on her remain at home (Parreñas, 2001, p. 361).

rent, their expenses, and those things, and 200 for a house I bought there. I bought it in small installments”.

According to some migratory studies, remittances and presents are not indicators of transnationalism. In Portes, Guarnizo and Ladlott's perspective (1999, p. 219), remittances are not activities or occupations and are not always regular enough. On the other hand, other authors suggest they are, in fact, transnational practices, since they involve people whose social and economic lives depend and are shaped by the money, ideas and persons in the country of migration. This is the case, for example, of grandmothers who, with the aid from their migrant sons and daughters, bring up their grandchildren (Levitt, 2001; 199). This is an interesting comprehension of transnationalism, since it conceives the domestic/familial realm, which is basic for social reproduction, as a social space that is equally important to that of the work and economic realm.

In the interviewee's narratives, remittances and presents are part of the circulation of economic and symbolic goods that, in implying actions such as sending and phone calling, they provide resources to transnational networks of kinship across the borders. Such circulation is the main source of economic support for those who remained, and contributes to support the emotional life of those women who departed, by offering them affective resources and identity references. Simultaneously, their narratives report to a broader range of relations and consequences.

The interviewees show different grades of integration to the society of immigration. A number of aspects such as migratory and marital statuses, length of stay and the permanence in the sex industry somehow shape their social life and relations. Those women who gave up the sex industry upon marriage are the ones who suffer the greatest isolation, even when they have some sort of regular job, like in bars or supermarkets. They claim to have sensed racism in their job environments; They are reluctant to engage in friendship with local women, since they feel they need to avoid possible questions about their past life. They regard relations with local women as involving some sort of combination of suspicion and disdain, all involved in a context of stigmatization of third world immigration and of the sexualization of Brazilian women in particular, especially when they come from the lower social strata. Besides that, husbands tend to disapprove of encounters with other Brazilian women. Even within marital relations, these ambiguous aspects of “Brazilianness” turn against them, resulting in jealousy and constant surveillance by their husbands. In such a context of assumption of the new rules in order to put up with life in this new world (ONG, 2003), social relations tend to be confined to the family realm.

The narratives of the women who remain in the sex industry reveal their participation in networks of a diversity of widths and densities. Those who are in an irregular migratory situation are in contact with their work colleagues, most of whom are Brazilian; fearful of deportation, they tend to restrict their circulation. The others, reveal a freer transit in the city and show to have a broader scope of relations, including their work colleagues,

friends, boyfriends and persons from other sectors of their social network, both Brazilian and nationals. Besides that, many of them are in touch with sex-worker supportive NGOs. These women also claim to be the target of racism, but tend to have a better management of the aspects associated to “Brazilianness”. They regard being considered “sensual”, “affective” and “hot”, which is a plus, as far as work in the sex market is concerned.

Some of the interviewees frequent ethnic places, both in Spain and Italy; places like Brazilian bars and restaurants, where they can dance and meet other Brazilians, enable a positive valorization of ethnicity. However, as is the case of women from any part of the world and devoted to any activity whatsoever (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006), but in particular for those who feel more isolated, daily phone calls stand for the main sources of emotional shelter and valorization of their origin. Besides that, such phone calls are the best way to participate in their family life across the ocean. It is by this means that they make part of their daily family life in their home country.

I mean that it is this way that they manage to interfere in the lives of those people that make up their family network, and whom they “help”. Based upon the strength they gained by living abroad, regardless of being or not being a sex worker, they make all sorts of decisions. They decide upon a wide range of aspects of their relatives’ lives; such irrelevant decisions such as those regarding food, clothing, or a dentist appointment, as well as those that could have more long-term consequences, such as house reforms or purchase. Even marital affairs end up in their hands. The woman who bought a house for her mother, sister and daughter to live in said:

“My mother got a lover, a man younger than herself, and brought him to live with her. I made her send him away. It was me who bought the house. I told her: one day, he’ll wake up, look at you and think you’re too old for him; he’ll look at my sister or my daughter and then, what do you think is gonna happen?”.

This strength can be perceived also in the cases in which the help is denied, frequently with a tint of revenge. One of my interviewees said:

“I haven’t seen my father for three years now. My sister asked me to send 350 reais to start his retirement, and I said no: he used to say i’d become a whore!”.

Sex-work-related migration from Brazil, like any type of displacement stemming from any impoverished region of the world, reports to gender-crosscut structural inequalities. In spite of living abroad, my interviewees still maintain inferior social positions. However, migration has enabled them to escape the context of inequality they were inserted in in Brazil, and this is of great value for them.

Feminist studies on labor relations point out how precarious the jobs are and how vulnerable women feel even in Europe, as a consequence of globalization. Salaries are low, jobs are unstable and receive little value, the chances of betterment are scarce or null and the access to social rights is diminished or even inexistent. This affects

specially women and migrants (Hirata, 2006). In such a context, Brazilian women, like all other Latin-American women, even those coming from the middle classes in their home countries, and maybe having completed university courses, submit themselves to performing low-pay jobs in the Northern countries (Maia, in press). In the migratory process, these women end up belonging to a very different social category in the country of immigration. Although I do not intend to deny the relevance of such approaches, I think it should be kept in mind that these studies are conducted on the basis of a global westernized perspective that frequently overlooks the realities of these 'other' women. In ONG's (1999) viewpoint, it should be paid due attention to the interlacing of the material and symbolic processes in translocal gender systems.

Most of my interviewees come from the lower-middle strata. In Brazil, they performed precarious, low-paid and highly stigmatized jobs. They regard their jobs abroad, regardless of whether in the sex industry or not, as more profitable, in terms of the benefits and efforts. In their point of view, they improved their life styles after migration, and this is a central point in the comparison they make with Brazil.

Giving due attention to the interviewees' social positions in the diverse hierarchies that operate on either side (Mahler; Pehsar, 2001) enables us to understand how this social mobility across the borders impinges on their possibilities of social agency. Such possibilities influence the valorization and even the envy they elicit in their original realms. In their narratives about their migratory trajectory, the permanent contrast they make between their lives in Brazil and in Europe is closely associated to the place they earned in Brazil after migration. Such place is constructed through transnational practices, mediated by economic power and colored by the prestige stemming from the fact of living in Europe.

## **Conclusion**

The migratory trajectories I here analyzed allow us to state migration from sex industry contexts in Brazil involves diverse modes of displacement, in which informal networks constitute an outstanding form of support. Such diversified fluxes should not be thoughtlessly identified with transnational criminal networks. On the contrary, ethnographic work reveals the urge to problematize such generalizing narratives, which depict migrations on the basis of the assumptions that migration from these contexts is necessarily a synonym for human trafficking and it could only take place in the context of transnationally organized crime networks. Furthermore, ethnography may lead us to reconsider the supported migration, involving "help", in order to work in the sex industry as a form of human trafficking. The trajectories of the interviewees reveal that migration and marriage with foreigners are, more often than not, part of well-planned strategies of social ascension and of achieving better life styles for themselves and their families in Brazil. This can only be comprehended if we consider displacements in sex industry contexts as a form of migration.

Also, the interviewees' narratives on their experiences of living in two countries make us ponder on the concepts of transnationalism the different authors resort to in their migratory studies. Only rarely do these narratives refer to an idea of transnational entrepreneurship. However, most of these women are involved in activities that become manifest in the routine of social reproduction and affect daily life in both countries, thus justifying their migratory projects, offering the migrant women emotional support and stimulating informal networks that will be supportive to other migrant women. They become especially manifest in the networks through which they support familial relations, what puts them in the same scale as those women who work in any other field of activity. But the sense in which these trajectories are embedded in transnationalism is much wider.

Economic rationality and creativity combine in these women's activities. Along their migratory processes, they activate those cultural configurations that express the unequal positions they live in, both in Brazil and abroad, but that render them more attractive in the sex industry and in the marriage market in these Southern Europe countries. As they displace across national and social boundaries they traduce, incorporate and recreate the qualities and stereotypes they are conferred on either place; they reorganize their personal and ethnic identities, as they trespass the social fate that has been imposed on them in their home country.

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Translated by Daniel Etcheverry Burgueño

Translated from **Horizontes Antropológicos**, Porto Alegre, vol.15 no.31, pp. 101-136,  
Jan./June 2009.