

## **Research project: Nieves, Pilar & Anne Marie**

### **Bolivian (women) Migrants in Spain; between globalisation and a Colonial Past;**

#### **Discourses, Gender and Identity Constructions:**

We are beginning to formulate a cross disciplinary research project in which we want look on discourses, gender and identity constructions. Empirically we want to work with narratives. We are at the moment searching for different kinds of material as for example web sites, new papers, journals, migrant organisations, associations, networks and NGOs. We will probably also conduct qualitative interviews with migrants and others.

We hope to be able to collaborate with researchers in both Spain and Bolivia.

Below we will give some back ground information:

#### **Migration and Latin America:**

The phenomenon of migration is closely connected to the history of the Americas. European conquerors and settlers have moved to the continent since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and have determined the history of the societies that existed prior to the colonisation and likewise also greatly influenced the independent nations which emerged after the revolutions at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Argentina received 6 million European emigrants between 1880 and 1920 and Buenos Aires even to day has a larger number of migrant citizens than New York.

There has thus always been a very important component of international migration connected to Latin American societies, and at the same time internal migration has been significant, both from the countryside to the cities and from region to region. So Latin America must be considered a continent determined by flows of migration, forced and voluntary, of so called multi-local livelihoods, transnational family bonds, illusions and lost dreams, nostalgia and longings.

After the changes in economic policies of the 1990's towards neoliberal policies, millions of Latin Americans have left their home countries to look for work, primarily in the USA, but also in Europe, especially Spain and even in places as far away as Japan.

#### **The situation in Bolivia:**

Bolivia has not attracted European migrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to the same degree as for example Argentina. Rather Bolivia has been sending out migrants, especially during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Argentina has received many migrants from Bolivia, but during the last decade there has been a large migration to Europe, especially Spain. The colonial past means that in Spain the language problem is relatively insignificant.

While it was previously mostly men who migrated from Bolivia, it is now often women who decide to migrate to other countries looking for work which can improve the living conditions of their families in Bolivia. Many Bolivian women migrate alone and therefore live separated from their families, their children and their partners. A local investigation in the third largest city in Bolivia states that women constitute 67% of the international migration during the past 6 years from that city (Cochabamba).

There are several reasons for this new phenomenon: one is of course the poverty that has worsened during the past decades and the lack of jobs, another is the general discrimination of women in Latin American societies, also in Bolivia, and a third is the effect that globalisation has on the transnational or international labour market, where especially women find jobs as service workers or in homes of families, to substitute the European women who also work outside their homes.

### **The situation in Spain:**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain has changed from being a country that people were leaving in search for livelihood and safety in other European countries and in Latin America, to a country which during the past two or three decades has been receiving millions of people. The economic growth and the decline in the number of children born in Spain created a shortage of labour. This made the country attractive for Latin American migrants, who furthermore very often could claim a double citizenship, because their parents had migrated during the Franco dictatorship and the poverty after the civil war from Spain to Latin America.

The economic crisis has hit hard in Spain and there is now between young people especially a very high unemployment rate (50% for people under 24). This affects the whole labour market and of course also the situation of the migrant. The Zapatero government, who was one of the few governments in Europe who recognised the contribution of the migrants to Spanish economy is now under pressure and the discourses towards migrants, is changing.

### **Research on Migration:**

Research on migration from Latin America is done both by Latin Americans, by USA scholars (especially 'Latino Studies') and by Europeans.

Much research concentrates on 'mapping' the flows of migration and on defining the 'push' and 'pull' factors. Others discuss the remittances and the influence of these on local politics in the 'sending' nations. A new phenomenon is the existence of 'strategic citizenship' i.e. migrants become USA citizens to be able to travel to their countries of origin and come back – thus questioning the meaning of citizenship and the nation state, and not least, the issue of identity.

The feminization of migration is a relatively new research area, as is also the research on the effects on families and gender roles.

In general we find that there is a lack of research from the humanities. The closest is anthropology where we can find studies on the transnational family, gender roles in migration, on integration (or

the lack of integration), but also on the life stories of migrants and the meaning of transnational experiences etc.

### **Literature:**

Balbuena, Patricia (2003): “Feminización de las migraciones: del espacio reproductivo nacional a lo reproductivo internacional”. Programa Andino de Derechos Humanos. Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar. *Revista Aportes Andinos nr 7*

Ferrufino, Celia & M. Ferrufini; C. Pereira (2007): *Los Costos Humanos de la Emigración*. PIEB/CESU, Cochabamba

Hijonosa Gordonava, Alfonso (2008): *España en el Itinerario de Bolivia. Migración transaccional, género y familia en Cochabamba*. En *Migración, Cultura y Políticas*. CLACSO, Buenos Aires

Pérez Gonzalez, Vicente (2006): *La Inmigración extranjera como desafío y esperanza*. Universidad de Alicante. Departamento de Geografía Humana.