

Women in the border: the case of the Bolivians in Brazil

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The recent international migration in Brazilian territory already is presented as a relevant, complex and multifaceted phenomenon of the population in the last 50 years, in special in the borders areas. These flows highlight the complexity and volume of people and capitals in circulation, as well as the impacts in the migratory spaces; diverse not only in points of origin and destination, but also in motivations, trajectories and strategies.

The border Brazil - Bolivia shelters an intense movement between the two countries, in migratory waves of different intensities (Silva, 1999). In this context, appears the subject of the feminine migration and its differentials in all the aspects of the phenomenon. Based on a research of field carried through in Corumbá in the end of 2006, partnership between the NEPO and the IRD (Institute de Recherche pour le Developement) - France, this article considers a look on the involved women in this migratory flow.

The gender perspective becomes important in theory of the international migrations, because discloses latent questions that for much time had been left aside in function of an analysis directed exclusively toward the economic aspects of the international migration (Morokvasic, 2003; Boyd and Grieco, 2003). The migrant one was definite as of the masculine sex, without that questioning the presence of the women in migratory flows, and its differentials and impacts (Morokvasic, 2003).

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In this direction, constructed gender relations since the place of origin throughout all the process, delimit, constrain, shape and guide these flows, through different vectors, feminine and masculine into family relations and origin and destination places.

Corumbá - MS: the specificities of a receiving place of migrants in the border

Domenach (1996, P. 17) defines in general lines the configuration of the current migratory context in the Mercosul: *“En el MERCOSUL, lo cierto es que la movilidad va en aumento, y los movimientos de población están siendo muy flexibles, mientras que las estadísticas oficiales persisten en subestimar los datos reales pues hacen referencia a una definición restrictiva de la migración, basada solamente en el cambio de residência. Asistimos a una intensa recomposición de los territorios y de sus costumbres, lo que tiene fuertes incidencias en matéria migratória puesto que los hombres dependen cada vez más de los mecanismos de producción.”* .

The “intense resetting of the territories and its customs” seems to be directly connected on to the migratory history of Latin America, since the flows Bolivia - Argentina and Bolivia - Brazil are dynamic and throughout its histories had extended in specific places of origin and destination, transforming the spaces into different dimensions - social, demographic, economic.

In the specific case of the flow Bolivia - Brazil, Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul congregates in itself some important characteristics that they make it a city key in the analysis of the migratory exchanges in this border. According to Oliveira (1998), “Corumbá is different for its history, its geography and its economy”. In a comparative study between cities of the Mato Grosso do Sul, Oliveira (1998) enumerates multiple reasons that differentiate Corumbá and specificities allocated to it that justify its receiving of migrants in a flow that holds different migratory waves throughout 50 years.

It has one another particularity of the city of Corumbá in what it is mentioned to its paper in the migratory flow of Bolivians: located 403km of Campo Grande, capital

of Mato Grosso Sul, and only 5km of Puerto Quijarro - bolivian border city, Corumbá keeps much more narrow economic relations with Bolivia of what with Brazil (Oliveira, 1998). This is a trace that will go, throughout the migratory history of this border, keep different intensities waves of bolivian migrants. This proximity - obvious thinking that it is about border region, but very complex in the deepening intra-regional relations - also will be reflected in the migratory processes as we will see more ahead in the analysis of trajectories: Bolivian migrants, before crossing the border with Brazil, carry out an intense internal migration in Bolivia. This also points with respect to the fact of Corumbá - MS is considered stage of a migratory process essentially Bolivian, and not Brazilian (Souchaud and Baeninger, 2008).

A consideration if makes important: “it is contemplated international migration in the borders areas as a migration of neighborhood: essentially local phenomenon, where the border and its habitants are considered isolated of the dynamic continental” (Souchaud and Baeninger, 2008, P. 14). Despite the 200 km of Corumbá border - MS with Bolivia be considered isolated of the dynamics of the proper Mato Grosso do Sul, the role of Corumbá in the Bolivian migratory dynamics takes place in one another position that not “migration of neighborhood” so common in bordering areas.

Finally, beyond this narrow relation with economic processes and of the important role in the migratory dynamics of Bolivia, Corumbá still presents one another specificity: “the city is a strategical place of joint of the flows of people, information and capitals, configuring the bi-oceanic corridor. This corridor connects two littoral edges of the continent, that is, the Brazilian Southeast with the Peruvian and Chilean ports of the Pacific, passing for the axle of concentration of the Bolivian population Santa Cruz - Cochabamba - La Paz” (Souchaud and Baeninger, 2008, P. 5).

Of this perspective, if it differentiates the migration in the border Corumbá - MS with Bolivia of the case of *brasiguaios*, for example, or still of other migratory flows international Brazilians, characterized for great distances. To deepen the analysis of this phenomenon, we'll approach the question of the feminine migration, its implications, impacts and new explanations in the scope of the international migration.

Gender and international Migration: a social construction

According to Boyd and Grieco (2003), gradually, gender was seen as a variable appearing in a number of researches. It was not questioned, however, the models used to explain why people migrate, where for and how they have been inserted in the receiving society. It has differences between men and women in all these dimensions, as well as specific roles, that gender seen as “variable” does not explain.

The feminist theories, throughout the 90's, contributed by pressuring for bringing gender into feature of migratory analyses. The main contribution of this period was the explanation of gender as socially constructed, dynamic and hierarchic root of behaviors, power relations, culture, identities (Boyd and Grieco, 2003; Pessar, 2003). So, it surpassed the perspective of individual decisions to migrate - essentially of the masculine sex - and later, the compensatory theory that incorporated women in migratory movements without calling this analysis “gendering migration”. This is because, throughout this period, the biggest concern of researchers was to compensate this invisibility of women in migratory flows through case studies that were worried only with the behavior of women throughout migration. This type of analysis is a prerequisite for the construction of a gender perspective (Harzig, 2003). However, gender relations socially constructed were not explained by this theoretical perspective.

Another important aspect of the feminist theory that contributed for the construction of an analytical perspective of migration through gender is that this “social construction” - that consists in expressions of masculinity and femininity and its relations between themselves - varies between societies. Thus, throughout a migratory movement, the gender relations socially constructed are reaffirmed or transformed, in other words that at the same time they are constructed and reconstructed socially through time and space (Boyd and Grieco, 2003).

Especially in the existing flow in the Brazil - Bolivia border, in the city of Corumbá, the question of gender is fundamental: the differentials for sex are latent since the planning of migration and the used strategies. The impacts of these differentials point to transformations in the scope of migrant families and in the configuration of the proper flow already in the preliminary results of the research carried through in Corumbá - MS.

The research in Corumbá - MS^[3]

From the selection of households where at least one of the heads was born in Bolivia, where surveyed data on the conditions of housing and the demographic characterization of the residents of these domiciles, having as main focus the reconstruction of trajectories of these migrants, in scope individual and related the social networks of kinship and friendship. Thus, the questionnaire was applied in 215 domiciles, in accordance with the “snow ball” method.

In the case of ENCOR, was tried to trace a consistent profile of these Bolivian migrants, as well as of their trajectories, in order to understand the paper of Corumbá - MS in this migratory flow, the relations that the migrants keep with this definite space and with that they had appeared from the results of the research (Souchaud and Fusco, 2007).

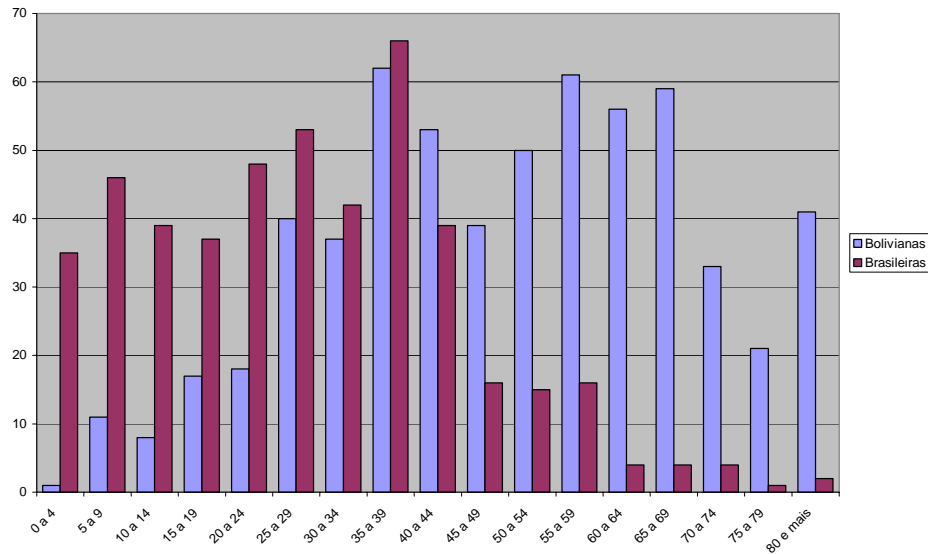
One specificity of the questionnaire of ENCOR was an exclusive module for the Bolivians: the reconstruction of the biggest number of migratory stages before the arrival in Corumbá - MS showed a very intense internal migration in Bolivia, before the crossing border to Brazil (Souchaud and Fusco, 2007). From there the presence of diverse migratory waves can be detected, that had varied in the time and the spaces of origin and destination in 50 years of flow.

Some features of the research, however, must be salient, if mainly inserted in the scope of gender analysis: the possibility of dissociation of the data, the reconstruction of the migratory trajectories of men and women, the information on strategies to migrate and the differentiated use of social networks are important fields of inquiry on the differentials for sex in the migration, that cannot be caught in other sources as the demographic censuses, for example. The presented results to follow if relate exactly to these mentioned features, above so valuable for studies of feminine migration.

The first results of Encuesta Corumbá (ENCOR)

Will be presented, then, a general social-demographic profile of the Bolivian women in Corumbá, its trajectories and the strategies used for them since the planning of the trip, until the first contacts in the destination. Graph 1 shows the women interviewed in the research, according to age groups and Brazilian or Bolivian nationality.

Graph 1: Distribution of Bolivian and Brazilian women according to age groups

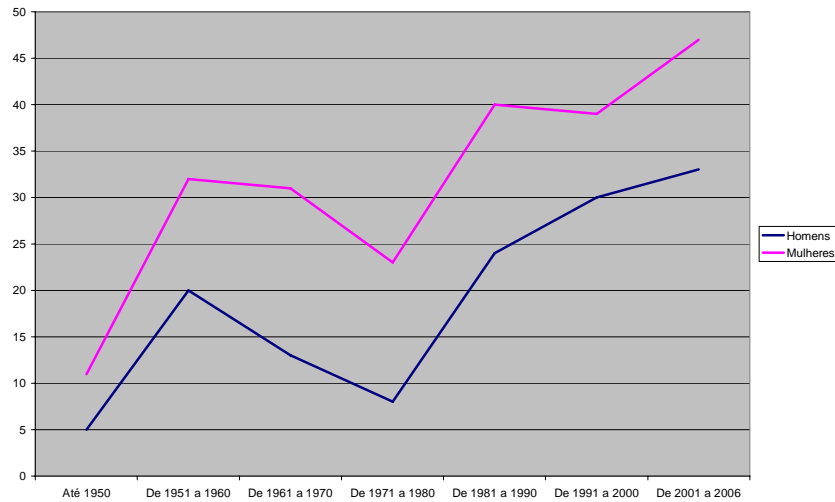


Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

Information on 1157 women had been raised^[4] in this research, being that of these, 676 they are Bolivian, 470 are Brazilian and the 12 remains are of other countries of Latin America.

In accordance with Graph 1, is noticed a bigger distribution enters the Bolivian women to the long one of the age groups. A very important question is the second generation of migrants: it's important to remember that the interviewed Brazilian women in this research of field inhabit in domiciles where at least one of the heads is Bolivian. However, it is clear the formation of a wave of one second generation of migrants, children of the Bolivian women with more than 50 years that, if been born in Brazil, are Brazilian. Graph 2 presents the period of arrives of the Bolivians caught for the research Corumbá - MS.

Graph 2: Period of arrives of the Bolivians Corumbá – MS



Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

The feminine migration suffers a fall much more accented in the 70's, but it still recovers in the same decade and presents an increment accented throughout the 80's, to come back to grow in the end of 90's. The variation of the masculine standard is softer, but still thus, dynamics and in ascension.

One of the questions most relevant for analysis of the feminine migration is the roles of gender of each one of the residents in the domicile. Thus, the condition in the family and the domicile are basic variables for the differentials for sex throughout the migratory trajectory. The family reconfiguration has a basic paper when pointing transformations in power and gender relations in the private spheres (domiciliary and familiar scope) and public (referring mainly to the entrance of the woman in the market of work of the destination country).

Table 1: Condition in the household according to sex.

Relation with the head of the Household	Men	Women	Total
Responsible	73	134	207
Husband/Wife	24	48	72
Son/Daughter	23	27	50
Father/Mother	0	1	1
GrandsonGranddaughter	1	0	1
Brother/sister	5	8	13
Another relative	6	6	12
Aggregated	0	1	1
Not relative	2	5	7
Total	134	230	364

Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

It is important to notice the number of households under feminine commands between the Bolivians in Corumbá - MS: 58.3% of the interviewed women are responsible for the household, whereas 54.5% of the men represent this paper. With regard to the total of responsible for interviewed households, 64.7% are women. Of the table above we can still elaborate the hypothesis of that the typology of Bolivian families in Corumbá will be formed substantially by the arrangement “couple with children”, since other relations with the responsible one present low frequencies.

The role of women in of the families is also a basic element for an analysis of the international migration under the gender perspective. According to Morokvasic (2003) the increasing participation of women in international migratory flows transforms the configuration of the families, especially in patriarchal societies of origin. The entrance of women in the labor market destination countries is also related to this process. Table 2 to follow sample the distribution for sex of the relation with the head of the family of the Bolivians in Corumbá; it previously strengthens the data seen in Table 1: 60.0% of the interviewed Bolivian women in Corumbá - MS are responsible for the family (the total of responsible they enters represents 63.9% of the interviews).

Table 2: Condition in the family according to sex.

Relation with the head of the family	Masculine	Feminine	Total
Responsible	78	138	216
Husband/Wife	23	50	73
Son/Daughter	21	28	49
Father/Mother	0	1	1
Grandson/Granddaughter	1	0	1
Brother/sister	5	7	12
Another relative	5	1	6
Aggregated	0	1	1
Not relative	1	4	5
Total	134	230	364

Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD

In comparison with the households without the Bolivian presence that had been interviewed in the research, the command of the family between the women is of 10,1%. Meanwhile, it is necessary to attempt to the information of Graph 1, that shows that most of the interviewed Brazilians was concentrated in younger age groups, having a bigger proportional weight, above all, among sons and daughters of Bolivian migrants.

In the context of family configuration, the marital state of migrants also has great importance for the analysis of transformations of gender relations and roles of each individual in the domestic hierarchy. According to the research data, the Bolivian and Brazilian women have the following marital status:

Table 3: Marital status of women, according to birth country

Marital status	Bolivia	Brazil	Total
	N	N	N
Single	44	139	183
Married	90	27	118
Joined	28	14	42
Separate	23	10	33
Widower	35	6	41
Total	230	276	508

Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

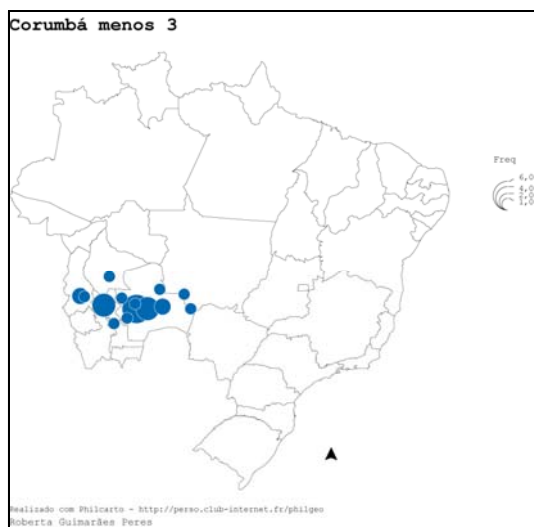
In accordance with Table 3, 19.1% of Bolivian women interviewed in Corumbá is single, whereas 51.3% are married or if they find in stable unions. The picture between Brazilians loads the seen differential of age previously: the interviewed Brazilian women have lesser average age that the Bolivians (21 and 44 years, respectively).

In accordance with the data, 67.4% of these women who are married or in stable unions had reached this marital state in Brazil, after the arrival the Corumbá. With this data the possibility of the high number of women in this migratory flow stimulated by family reunification issues or by the woman in a secondary paper of companion is discarded.

One of the main vectors that they differentiate men and women throughout migratory trajectories are the strategies used for the accomplishment of the migration: the relation with spaces that compose the flow, the use of these spaces as migratory resources and still the relation of the use of these resources with the cycle of life of migrants.

As previously mentioned the movement of internal migration which pass by the Bolivian migrants before crossing the border it is constituent element of the migratory process that crosses the national limit (Souchaud and Baeninger, 2008). Map 1 shows the Bolivian women in Corumbá at the moment of 3 previous migratory stages.

Map 1: Bolivian women in Corumbá, 3 previous migratory stages.



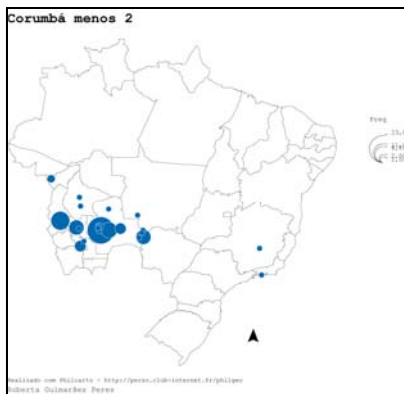
Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

One of the particularities of the questionnaire applied in Corumbá - MS is related exactly to the trajectories: a migratory historical was build by the interviewed in the inverse direction of the flow. In such a way, starting in the arrival in Corumbá, the Bolivians went building their trajectories, stage for stage, of most recent to oldest.

Thus we arrive at the reconstructed trajectories of these migrantes: the strong internal migration before the crossing of the border verified for the migrante population in its set (Souchaud and Baeninger, 2008) also occurs for the women. In Map 1 above we see that it has, to the exception of two concentrations in Santa Cruz and La Paz, a dispersion relatively far from the border with Brazil, spread for some bolivian departments.

To the measure that the migratory stages go advancing, a species of axle is formed in direction to the border with Brazil and, more ahead, in direction the Corumbá. Map 2 to follow sample the same migrantes two stages before arriving the Corumbá.

Map 2: Bolivian women in Corumbá, 2 previous migratory stages.

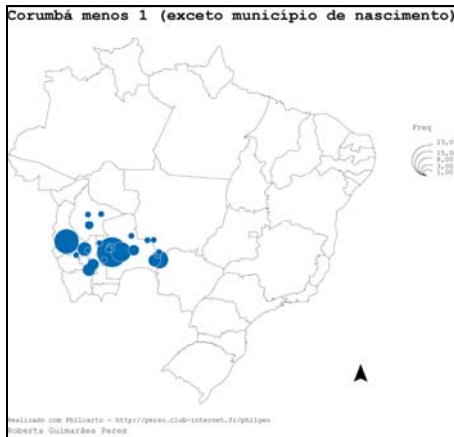


Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

It is important to stand out that to each migratory stage it increases the volume of women, since nor all had fulfilled number of stages the same. Thus, we can above observe in the map a bigger concentration in the border, and, throughout the Bolivian Departments, a certain convergence of other regions that if they had formed. The presence, despite in a very low volume, of Bolivian migrants, two stages of the arrival

in Corumbá, already in Brazilian territory: in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. Map 3 to follow sample the last stage before the arrival in Corumbá.

Map 3: Bolivian women in Corumbá, 1 previous stage migratory.



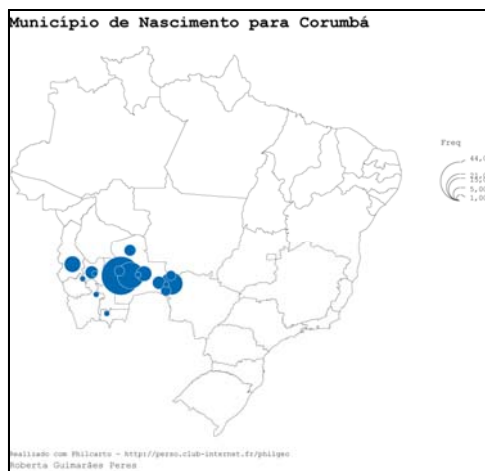
Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

One possibility of analysis of the trajectories allowed by the data base is the separation of the migratory stages and the place of birth. Thus, the women are illustrated in the Map are only who had passed for a migratory stage before arriving Corumbá - MS. That is: they had passed for this stage, before arriving at the final destination (at the moment of the research).

Other regions of concentration appear to the measure where the trajectory goes arriving at the end. It has a bigger number of concentrated people already in bordering cities, as Puerto Quijarro and Puerto Suarez and, at the same time, the dispersion between the Bolivian departments diminishes.

Finally, Map 4 shows the migrantes that had left the birth place and, without passing for any previous stage, migraram for Corumbá - MS.

Map 4: Bolivian women in Corumbá, as place of birth as only migratory stage.



Source: Encuesta Corumbá, 2006. NEPO/IRD.

Among the Bolivian women who had not fulfilled another migratory stage that the proper place of birth, the distribution is waited: concentration in places as Santa Cruz and La Paz, and also already in the border region, thus moving away this group from the intense internal migration in Bolivian territory before the arrival the Corumbá.

Conclusions

Since the Bolivian feminine presence in Corumbá - MS presents with an excellent historical importance throughout century 20, the question of gender in migration appears as an important perspective of analysis. The fact of Bolivian women be majority in a migratory flow in the border between two countries points with respect to diverse specificities of this process, that could only be analyzed taking in consideration distinguishing for sex and the transformations in gender relations throughout the migration.

In such a way, Morokvasic (2003) calls the attention for important questions, as the different strategies and migratory trajectories of men and women. The same, differences in processes of insertion in the destination society disclose to specific markets of Bolivian men and women in Corumbá, deeply on to Bolivian culture of

sexual division of the work (Allen, 1981). The economic tradition commercial finishes creating bonds with the insertion them women in specific labor markets, over all in fairs.

The question of the transformations in gender relations also is important in the flow of Bolivians for Corumbá. The feminine empowerment, the profit of autonomy in the management of family resources, the increment of the power of decision in the family, is characteristic of the involved Bolivian women in this migratory flow.

It is important to still detach the Bolivian importance of aspects and traditions in the specificities of this migratory flow. The strategies and migratory trajectories of women are constructed through ritual relations of kinship, as the “*apadrinhamento*”. The commerce in Bolivia - culturally less valued - is feminine activity. The work in the field, much valued in the cultures quéchua and aymara, is traditionally work of men (Allen, 1981). When crossing the border, these relations suffer shocks, a time that the commerce is the main activity of the region, that, for its natural aspects, have made it difficult the agricultural production. Reconfiguration of gender relations in the family, feminine empowerment, culture and tradition, differentials of sex throughout the migratory project, are questions that must be taken in account to especially understand the flow of Bolivians in Brazil and in Corumbá, a dynamic border.

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^[3] Inserted in an ample untitled project of research “migratory Spaces and problematic ambient in the MERCOSUL” in association between the NEPO and the IRD - France, research ENCOR (Encuesta Corumbá) was carried through in the city in October of 2006, with the main objective of (reverse speed) constructing the migratory space existing in the border between Brazil and Bolivia in that e region coordinated by Sylvain Souchaud and Wilson Fusco.

^[4] Including the not-residents.