

Article

Memories of the struggles for the rights of immigrant women in Barcelona

CATALINA ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ-CONDE

University of Chile, Chile

Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

CLARA ELENA ROMERO BOTEMAN

Mujeres Pa'lante, Spain

KARINA FULLADOSA LEAL

Sindibogar/Sindillar, Spain

University of the Republic of Uruguay, Uruguay

MARISELA MONTENEGRO

Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

Abstract

This article is the result of an intentional articulation between the authors' activist and academic positions as feminists and anti-racists in Barcelona. Using a narrative construction, we discuss memories of the struggles for the rights of immigrant women in the city. Firstly, the memories interact with other trajectories of struggle that go beyond 'immigrant' identity. Secondly, the memories give an account of activisms crossed by difference, in which difference operates as a linking category, from where dialogue and interpellation relationships are

Corresponding author:

Catalina Álvarez Martínez-Conde, Psychosocial Department. Building B. Carrer de la Fortura. Campus UAB (08193), Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès), Barcelona, 08193, Spain.

Email: cata.alvarezmc@gmail.com

Critical Social Policy 2020, Vol. 40(2): 215–233

© The Author(s) 2019 Article reuse guidelines: sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: [10.1177/0261018319895499](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018319895499) journals.sagepub.com/home/csp

established. Thirdly, the memories help to construct the body and day-to-day life within spaces of resistance, serving as an instrument alongside gender in the struggles for rights. We close the article reflecting on memory and gender as intersectional processes that offer further perspectives on resistance and immigration.

Key words

collective action, intersectionality, feminism, migrant women, Spain

Introduction

This article was brought into being through the conscious link between four migrant women, who occupied distinct yet connected positions as both anti-racist feminist activists and academics in Barcelona. Their shared discomfort regarding a notable lack of collective memory of activism within migrant struggles in the city – specifically those of immigrant women – has facilitated discussions on the matter of our memories and first-person interpretations (Kleist, 2017, 2013; Varela, 2007, 2013).

Current debates surrounding migration focus largely on the paradigm of integration and on the problems, shortcomings, and differences of migrants in relation to the resident population. European societies hold an entrenched self-conception of the nation state and a false notion of homogeneity (Hintermann and Rupnow, 2016). Migration is perceived within these societies as being purely contemporary and ahistorical (Varela, 2007), and immigrants are considered victims bereft of agency. The collective actions of immigrants are interpreted as exceptional, stripped of political memory, unenduring and, by their very nature, lacking vision.

It is therefore crucial to ask ourselves how migrant struggles are remembered or forgotten. In the first place, we assume that collective memory is a social practice – a field in which hegemony is challenged in a constant undertaking of reproduction and reinterpretation of the past (Halbwachs, 1968; Hirsch and Smith, 2002; Middleton and Brown, 2005; Vázquez, 2001). The act of making memory produces subjects, practices, and meanings that are authorised, to a greater or lesser extent, to form part of the public domain (Bold et al., 2002; Piper and Montenegro, 2017). That which is remembered, from which positions, and how and by whom, is ultimately crucial in the political arena.

Secondly, we understand that collective effort is deeply embedded in previous experiential journeys of resistance (Calveiro, 2006; Cappiali, 2016), along pathways of struggle and organisation that produce and reproduce processes of inequality, injustice, and mobilisation (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Harris, 2006). Thirdly, in remembering the struggles for the rights

of immigrant women, the exclusivity, colonialism, and sexism of European memory are rendered visible (Hintermann and Rupnow, 2016). The memories of migrant struggles contain other stories, but these are silenced by traditional power structures because they do not fit comfortably into the national and masculine frameworks that shape history (Bold et al., 2002; Rothberg and Yildiz, 2011). They enable us, however, to take into account those groups not recognised within these memorial frameworks.

Memory is a source of embedded non-hegemonic knowledge that offers the key to social transformation (Nayak, 2017; Troncoso and Piper, 2015). We therefore believe that memories of the struggle for immigrant women's rights can offer political resources to end the intersection of different kinds of oppression. By using memory to reconstruct past struggles, collectives can be empowered to think of themselves in terms of agency and resistance, learning not only from those struggles but also through their continuity with those of the present. In this article we reflect on the subjects, relations, and world-views we build when we remember collective efforts in favour of the rights of immigrant women, and how these efforts enable the development of political strategies in the current struggles.

With this in mind, we make use of two texts (Romero, 2018; Fulladosa, 2018) produced by the authors in a recent study¹ in which we explore the memories of two activists in the struggle for the rights of immigrants in Barcelona. The Narrative Productions technique (Balasch and Montenegro, 2003; Schögunt and Pujol, 2015) was key in the composition of these texts. Within them, the story of the activists' associations, strategies, and demands are told, as well as their relationship with other experiences of struggle. The first text concerns *Mujeres Pa'lante* (Women to the Front), a feminist first-port-of-call project established in 2007, which is managed and directed by immigrant women. Their principal efforts are framed by psycho-social engagement, socio-occupational coaching, and the construction of networks of empowerment. The second text concerns *Sindihogar*, a female domestic and care workers' union established in Barcelona in 2011. Their efforts are oriented towards changing practices in the fields of employment and migration, as well as setting up feminist cultural and artistic initiatives.

With these texts as a base, we engaged in a dialogue that brought a new narrative to light, one whose starting point was our particular experiences as both activists and academics involved in the fight for the rights of immigrants, especially immigrant women. In accordance with a feminist epistemology, we assume that the knowledge that comes out of this narrative is situated: it is the result of partial connections between diverse materials and discursive positions in constant transformation (Haraway, 1995). Each Narrative Production can be understood as a text equivalent to other theoretical undertakings on the subject, and each corresponds to a particular outlook. This article is, in and of itself, a narrative construction (Balasch

et al., 1999; Moen, 2006) in which we deliberately bring together different academic–activist memories. Each author has contributed to the article’s narrative from her own hybrid position which entails political participation as well as theoretical and professional work. Therefore, the article also aims, using a feminist ethical–political approach, to bridge the power gap between academic and activist knowledge. Theoretical approaches and activist experience enable us to produce a situated account of the role of memory within feminist anti-racist struggles in Barcelona.

Likewise, given that we construct the past through a narrative ordering of heterogeneous events in a unificatory temporal sequence (Piper, 2005), both *Narrative Productions* and this article can be interpreted as an exercise in building the past: an act of critical, affirmative, and selective memory that situates and delimits narration without seeking to be exhaustive (Ahmed, 2004). The focus is one of situated memories of areas of struggle that are expressed on the basis of our diverse knowledge and experiences in the field.

We have presented this dialogue through a focus on the two projects mentioned above. We seek to give an account of how we have come to shape our spaces of political action in conversation, corroboration, collaboration, and confrontation with other social actors. To this end we rely on certain arguments advanced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) regarding intersectionality. We use intersectionality to examine the effects – and provide examples of exclusion – of a politics based on identity (McCall, 2005; Verloo, 2013). In turn, this helps us to analyse how relations of power shape underlying perspectives in identity-focused movements. Our focus is on narrating the memories that have come to form our political activism, while seeing collective memory as a product of a process of creation and legitimisation of the past from the standpoint of the present and, in this case, as an exercise in the collective construction of knowledge.

Firstly, we explore how these memories reflect different campaign backgrounds, and how they generate an enunciative space for the narration of our collective practices of resistance. Secondly, we call into question the hegemonic memory of migrant activism. We analyse how various axes of differentiation appear within the construction of this collective memory. We relate convergences and divergences that the remembered projects have had with respect to other struggles and social agents. In a third area of discussion, we address practices of resistance that make use of the body as a political space. We reflect upon the importance of the affective, the aesthetic, and artistic in resistance. By way of closure, we debate the implications of this type of memory for political struggle in general and for immigrant groups in particular. We argue that a feminist perspective of collective memory can be an instrument in the fight for social justice. Through memory we can shape alternative political trajectories, relationships, and positions in consideration of the multiple intersection of oppressions and their effects. In other words,

we invoke the importance of memory as a device that enables groups that have been excluded from public spaces to express themselves and to introduce new practices of resistance to confront different forms of exclusion and discrimination.

Participation in the construction of memory has political relevance, given that non-participation implies delegating the task to other agents who may rewrite the past and write the future (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997). By the same token, it helps to highlight political and historical ties that sustain these struggles, calling into question the view of migration as something new and acute, and all that comes with it as temporary (Varela, 2007).

The emergence of the migrant as a political subject in Barcelona

The first decade of the twenty-first century are remembered in the collective memory as both the starting point and the most potent moment of migrant struggles within the Spanish state. The mobilisations during those years came about as a result of the hardening of immigration policies that hindered or denied the concession of legal status to immigrants. The movement shone a light on the effects of exclusion and the abuse of human rights that these policies brought with them (Fernández, 2012; Varela, 2015). The cycle of mobilisations in 2001, known as the *Oleada de encierros migrantes en el Estado Español*, or wave of migrant sit-ins in the Spanish state, stands out as a foundational moment in the struggle for immigrant rights in Barcelona and Spain. Various groups of migrants took over the churches of Spanish towns and cities for months at a time, using them as a means to raise awareness of their demands (Salvini, 2018).

Migrants forced their way into the public sphere with a voice and an approach of their own, attracting the attention of government agents, the media, and activists from other social movements (Varela, 2013). The repeal of the Aliens Act (or *Ley de extranjería*), the need to afford legal status to an extensive group of people, and the end of police persecution were their three key collective demands. Furthermore, Varela (2007) argues that these same mobilisations went beyond their concrete demands. They also drew attention to the need for a recognition of the effective exercise of the right to free movement and to the possibility of these people settling in the areas in which they lived – conditions denied to many migrants on the basis of the securitarian rationale of migration flow management in so-called 'fortress Europe' (Balibar, 2003; Santamaría, 2002). Thus, what drives this movement is, specifically, the need to respond to the mechanisms of negation of the very existence of migrant persons as political subjects and agents. The status of the migrant, by way of its entrance into public discourse, emerges

strengthened where once it was invisible. The sit-ins were remembered as a turning point in this development. The definition of the migrant subject as an agent of political action in Barcelona and as a part of the international movement of migrants was established.

These accounts show that collective memory around the 'migrant subject' is a response to the prevalence of an understanding of politics from the perspective of identity, a worldview that takes into account the shared experience of oppression of the members of a particular social group, which then serves as the basis for collective action (Ilmonen, 2017). However, constructing the memory of migrant struggles on the basis of identity politics ignores the implicitly political nature of constructing a collective identity. It makes invisible the relations of power which permit that certain significant building blocks are erected as opposed to others in specific contexts (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Anthias, 2002; Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2014).

Given the eminently political character of any collective identity, it is crucial to pay attention to how processes of collective memory play a part in the ways identities are delimited and defined. In our discussions, we remember the euphoria of the period when the mobilisations led by immigrants opened up a new space for struggle in Barcelona, and when immigration began to be understood differently.

At that time the appearance of the migrant in a public sphere that had been reserved for nationals contributed to a redefinition of migration. Instead of being 'illegals' or 'delinquents', they would come to be considered people whose vulnerability was a product of government policy. Nevertheless, we cautioned at the time that the migrant mobilisation was overwhelmingly masculine. This was so much so that only one of the nine occupied churches played host to a 'women's sit-in', which itself was undertaken to safeguard the security of mobilised women from the masculinised environment of the other sit-ins. Thus the 'migrant political subject' came to be constituted in the image of middle-aged men of different countries of the global south, obscuring examples of female leadership that we remember as being central to the struggles at the time. Karina recalls a conversation with one of the key figures of the sit-ins concerning the lack of visibility afforded to her involvement therein, on account of her being a black female activist. Clara remembers that men were for many years at the forefront of the mobilisations, assemblies, events, and demonstrations for the rights of all migrants.

Up until this point, our use of memory has permitted us to see how migrant identity, erected on the foundations of the church sit-ins of 2001, became a potent articulator of political action. Additionally, this has allowed us to situate our own experiences within the contradictions that identity politics poses: the appearance of the migrant subject meant important transformations with regard to the images associated with migration. Notwithstanding, this 'subject' could not fully represent the diversity that the aforementioned category contains. Thus, we consider the various points of difference that joint

action initiatives have encountered. These have given rise to the reflections of migrant women that follow.

Remembering difference(s) as a political act

As we have seen, the configuration of the 'migrant political subject' is remembered as a process which legitimised participation in the public sphere principally for male migrants – a process which had the effect of defining all migrant persons as part of this collective body, and of establishing an asymmetry to the detriment of the participation of women. In this sense, in constructing the past we give an account of the establishment of hierarchical systems of gender in collective action.

As Clara states, the hegemonic memory surrounding the sit-ins contributes towards visualising the 'migrant' position as a space of abuses perpetrated by political, legal, economic, and social systems related to nationality and citizenship status. Nevertheless, the homogenising effect of this category excludes the intersection of the migrant subject with other positions, such as that of 'woman' or 'worker', as well as the distinctive experiences of these positions. For Clara, the need for a separate space for political activity is clearly apparent when she remembers that *Mujeres Pa'lante* was one of the pioneering projects in the organisation of migrant women. An organisation formed as a self-managing feminist collective, it set out a clear path in the context of collective political action. The formation of the collective was a bid to create a political project in which the fight against discrimination would be fought in tandem with the feminist struggle, occupying a political space rarely traversed until that point. In this sense, the emergence of migrant struggles allowed for a questioning of the space outside which they undertook their activism, thus allowing for self-reflection on the basis of new viewpoints that put a strain as much on their stance as on their political praxis.

For some of us this marked a shift from a political activism driven by one's roots, towards an activism in the territory of arrival. It was a process which, additionally, responded – to a certain extent – to the demands of the context in which one's political efforts took on a greater meaning. The context of Barcelona, in all its effervescence, called activism into question, but at the same time offered a space for articulation in which one could propose new ways of looking at the circumstances affecting specific social groups (such as migrant women), and allow those spaces to be claimed as transformative.

In this context, and as part of migrant struggles, new demands were voiced regarding healthcare and workers' rights. The amendment of an act that regulated care and domestic work is remembered as a being key moment for several feminist women immigrant activists. Therein, a new space of articulation was posited, one that had not previously been taken on by other forms of activism:

We began to see that many of us were domestic workers and that we had the same sorts of problems related to the fact that, while we may have been professionals or had certain types of knowledge and experience, we always found ourselves working in precarious conditions in the care sector, in cleaning, in catering, without the right to social security and with the risk of being summarily laid off in a way which did not exist in any other working environment (Fulladosa, 2018: 2).

The fight of domestic and care workers erupted into the public sphere as a part of the struggles for the rights of immigrants through Sindihogar, a pioneering project within the Spanish state. A new type of collective action grew out of a struggle in which distinct axes of oppression intersected. What united women in activism, Karina remembers, was not a shared identity under the banner of essentialist or homogenising terms such as 'immigrant women', but rather one that was constructed on the basis of women's distinctiveness as domestic workers with different experiences, disadvantages, and political positions. For several of us, being defined as part of a collective indicated not so much the desire for a common experience and a totalising coherence, but rather obliged us to look towards organisations in which we could participate as occupants of diverse spaces. These would combine different ways of life and different political and feminist points of view. Our struggle included the overhauling of job insecurity that affected us as women, given that:

Women suffer different forms of oppression which mean that the collective identifies itself not only with domestic work, but also with other transversal struggles. [. . .] In this way one struggle becomes tied to the other: it is necessary to fight for the rights of migrant women because they are tied to workers' rights, rights to healthcare, to the rights of our families themselves (Fulladosa, 2018: 6).

The processes of differentiation – of gender, nationality, race, class, and so on – that we were all affected by brought us together, and at the same time they allowed us to think in context (Fulladosa, 2018). This reflection questions the ostensibly immutable logic of the subject, and moves us towards addressing relational and contextual processes from which, at any given moment, different positions may be assumed. Through the memory of Sindihogar we can see how a collective that thinks and acts on the basis of difference comes into being, and we can thereby identify how this difference is produced and reinforced in discrete stages.

These memories allow us to participate discursively in several debates surrounding intersectionality, and specifically those which question the trend towards identity-driven struggles to overcome differences (Nash, 2008). A critical and, at the same time, proactive movement is one that allows whoever is welcome to participate in it to imagine the possibilities of building communalities, and to make efforts to build transversal coalitions to tackle different

systems of oppression (Lorde, 1998). These points of view lead us to consider the activities that might motivate us to understand and combat oppression, rather than simply to define the sameness of people – categorised as the 'other' – who are pushed towards the margins (Presley and Presswood, 2018).

Speaking from a place of difference or, if one prefers, a place of knowledge situated at the intersection of multiple and dynamic forms of discrimination, is remembered as an act of disagreement within the organisational tapestry of the moment. In this context, there were as many bones of contention as there were alliances. We recall that it was not easy to carve out a space within activist circles in the city.

At the time, the plethora of social actors with whom we could seek to enter into dialogue with were composed largely of autochthonous bodies: European feminist women's organisations, social services, public sector agencies, and Catalan trade unions. In the area of social care, for example, migrant women occupied the silenced role of a subject to be attended to (Montenegro and Galaz, 2016). Notwithstanding this, *Mujeres Pa'lante* sought to put into practice a care service for migrant women managed by other migrant women. As such, their presence challenged the traditional points of view of social care units in Barcelona, positing relationships which stripped back interventionist models in favour of building networks of collective empowerment (Agrela, 2004). 'When we went with this idea to the bodies that worked with women they would say to us "Hold on, what role do *you* play? Who do you think you are?'" (Romero, 2018: 8).

In the case of *Sindihogar*, Karina recalls that its legitimacy was questioned by the major trade unions, who took no notice of the demand that domestic and care work should be regulated by the same law as the one that governed other areas of work. The reluctance on the part of different social actors to establish horizontal relations with *Sindihogar* was the result of a distrust and an infantilisation to which women and immigrants were subjected, and all the more so as a result of working in care, a field little valued within gendered frameworks of work (Gutiérrez, 2015). These misgivings meant that their activism took on an even greater force:

We couldn't allow others to keep legislating on our behalf, it was now in our hands to create a stink about laws that only had an effect in our lives. We certainly didn't want them to infantilize us, telling us that others knew better the way in which the fight had to be undertaken, or where we ought to be headed as women migrants (Fulladosa, 2018: 5).

Constructing a memory of how our spaces of struggle came into being has a relevance in at least two ways: on the one hand, it allows us to shed light on the intersection of personal systems of oppression that have brought these struggles together, and on the other, it helps us to move away from images

that homogenise immigrant women in fixed and victimising roles more befitting colonialism (Bentouhami, 2016). Racialisation, gender imposition, and the 'othering' of immigrants intersected in distinct ways, and were collectivised upon the conception of the structural character of such differentiation (Dhamoon, 2011). This then created multiple battlegrounds.

Such a fluid and at the same time targeted stance in the fight against structures of domination also allowed for the development of unexpected alliances that challenged the identity-driven focus of traditional social movements (Hatzidimitriadou and Çakir, 2009). To this end, Clara points out that one of the principal contributions of women immigrants to white feminism has been the demonstration of their diverse capabilities, which in turn has resulted in the overhauling of the gaze that perceived women immigrants as victims.

The coming together of women's collectives and feminist organisations is a fundamental part of our memories in terms of our activist praxis. This has entailed an opening up of new areas of action and reflection. Karina remembers that the alliance *Sindihogar* established with the Francesca Bonnemaison Women's Cultural Centre was an important development in this process. This alliance has gone beyond the identities of white and immigrant women, bringing together feminists committed to combatting a variety of different forms of domination. As part of this process, the *Jornadas Migrótonas*² were proposed to be a space for reflection in which both migrant and resident women gathered 'because we didn't want to feel like Catalan women would come to set up a workshop for us only to leave straight after' (Fulladosa, 2018: 10). The aim of this initiative was to set up an alternative to the interventionist relationship that white feminism (Gandarias and Pujol, 2013) had established with migrant women's feminist groups.

Constructing memory around our activist praxis – as well as feminist theoretical and political perspectives – has allowed us to envisage the different processes that have defined the positions we take. While we have employed these positions in a strategic manner (Lloyd, 2005) to avoid others speaking on our behalf, they have not by any manner of means come to define us as homogenous and static subjects. In our memories, 'difference' takes on the following, complex definition: an indicator of oppression, inequality and hierarchy, but also a democratic condition of political agency in certain contexts (Brah, 2011). The objective is not how to resolve such differences, but rather how to build alliances through them, by recognising and understanding what these differences may mean in any given context (Gandarias and Pujol, 2013). Following this logic, Clara remembers how important the workshops on stereotypes (undertaken with various collectives) were. Groups of both migrant and resident women participated:

There's a lot of racism within feminism as well, but we believe that what we ought to do is reach out to Catalan-born women and to work with them in order

to change the stereotypes and prejudices that we carry around with us. While there are some women who get defensive, the point for us isn't to pick out the white woman as our enemy, but more to jointly challenge our beliefs, recognise them for what they are, and change them. Because, at the end of the day, we have a lot more in common which we need to fight for (Romero, 2018: 12).

Bodies as a boundary of resistance

On looking back on our experiences in fighting for human rights, we can see that certain strategies (for example, the 2001 sit-ins) occupy a privileged space on account of their breadth and effects. The sit-ins have been held up as a touchstone in our shared memory. At one point it seemed that to speak of the fight for the rights of immigrants was to speak of the sit-ins. This obscures other forms of everyday resistance whose effects are not necessarily felt in spaces in which the 'migrant' identity is traditionally present, such as when individuals try to secure legal status in the country in which they settle. The memories we narrate in this section shed light on the complex ways that our activism develops and on the central role that other forms of political action play in the struggle for rights.

To this end, we might reconsider the importance of the relationship between gender and politics in spaces that do not traditionally fall within such bounds. Certain feminist approaches highlight these (Salih, 2017; Vidaurrázaga, 2015). Women academics have also proposed such a reconsideration with respect to immigrants' acts of resistance (Hellgren, 2014; Varela, 2016; Verkuyten, 2017). Both of these perspectives highlight the need for less restrictive interpretations of the 'political'.

Hereupon, we touch on several strategies for collective action that make up a key component of our own activism. One of the principal elements we might recall is that of care: care for ourselves, for our communities, and for the collective. This leads us to challenge the often solitary nature of domestic and care work, especially when it is undertaken by immigrant women who carry it out in the absence of significant networks of support and protection; likewise, the emotional intensity experienced when working with immigrant women who are experiencing precarity and are needful of help as a matter of urgency. Activism, therefore, appears to us as 'a space for the establishment of relationships, for . . . care and relief' (Fulladosa, 2018: 9). These circumstances reinforce the importance of establishing different forms of solidarity that bring to the fore emotional and creative considerations in any given political project, such as the development of spaces for artistic creation or cultural entertainment. Solidarity, liaison, and emotional support play a key part in such activities, evincing what Hemmings (2012) refers to as affective solidarity, or activities in which the emotional-relational operates as a basis for resistance.

For Clara, this is something that characterises the journey of *Mujeres Pa'lante*, breaking as it did with the traditional distinction between inter-venor and intervener as formulated by domestic social care units. She sees herself as an end user of her own organisation, given that 'we have also experienced genuine insecurity, including being without legal status, and *Mujeres Pa'lante* has helped us to push ahead together and, on that basis, face up to our problems head-on' (Romero 2018: 8). Similarly, the role which *Sindihogar* affords to rest and recovery, propounding a type of activism which gains strength not only thanks to the constant presence of its activists, but also from the way in which time out to recover is valued (Fulladosa, 2018). Resistance funds, which offer modest economic aid to comrades in need, or registering immigrants with the census in our homes, are remembered as forms of resistance that, although less visible, enable us to get on with daily life in spite of the marginalisation which confronts us. In this way, what happens within and between our organisations defines our praxis of resistance.

Furthermore, this focus on additional spaces of resistance reminds us of collective actions that have a creative and artistic focus. The importance of the artistic lies is in the way it can offer alternative readings of how we think of ourselves as women immigrants (Fulladosa, 2018). This in turn places other interpretative frameworks of our status at the disposal of society at large. To this end, one phrase in particular stands out in our memory: 'We can stage performances as well'. Karina remembers participating in an open-air performance as part of an awards ceremony organised by the Barcelona City Council in 2015. The stage consisted of different doors through which women would appear to tell a short story about their life. The purpose was to shed light on the oppressions and difficulties suffered by women in various sections of society. The performance was enlightening and illustrative of the power of taking direct action in public space.

Occupying our bodies as a space of resistance allows us to reassert ourselves and highlight our agency, this being in and of itself a political act. We must make ourselves visible not only symbolically, but also materially, despite the dynamics of negation that affect immigrant women (Butler, 2015). As a consequence, our bodies cannot be appropriated through the dislocation of established spaces by hegemonic relations of power surrounding gender, race, and nationality. By dint of appearing in our performances, and also in demonstrations held in public spaces, we call into question the reduction of our bodies to a role determined by the socioeconomic function we perform in society (Fulladosa, 2018; Bentouhami, 2016). The significance of this can be seen 'in the way we have created new images for ourselves, which differ from those that paint us as migrant women that only spend our time in the kitchen' (Fulladosa, 2018: 14).

This has further relevance in terms of the feminist struggle in the city. Through our own political actions and their role in this struggle, we have

drawn attention to the fact that the perspectives within the hegemonic feminism of Barcelona that make victims of us as immigrant women are not helpful. We assert, therefore, as others before us have (Hatzidimitriadou and Çakir, 2009; Yamanaka, 2003), that our collective actions are capable of challenging established gender roles within the societies in which we settle, and this cannot be fully understood without taking on board the intersection of other processes of 'othering' based on race, class, and national origin.

Of course, in disrupting the rationale of the intelligibility of political practice, we provoke reactions that seek to delegitimise our proposals. Karina recalls being told a number of times that, in Sindihogar, people only come together to have tea, since 'there was an idea that combining the political with the artistic meant that we weren't taking things seriously, that there was no critical thinking, or that we were part of a different fight' (Fulladosa, 2018). Patriarchal and racialised structures within activism create obstacles that women need to overcome both on a personal and public level, as well as on a theoretical and practical one. In tackling these issues we will evince the relations of power that cut across activism. Memory can play an important role here. Differentiated collective action forms part of a wider historical political landscape and is entwined in the relations of political legitimacy. As such, remembrance presupposes that there will be certain ruptures with long-standing perspectives.

To remember those actions focused on day-to-day life and emotional relationships weakens established dichotomies between the political, the rational, the public, the artistic, the emotional, and the private, since in our experience these dimensions are already tied together in the very conditions that we seek to change. In other words, caring for ourselves is the lifeblood of our struggle. In acting collectively, we inevitably bring to light and call into question those mechanisms of marginalisation that affect us negatively, yet reveal our capacity to survive in a multi-dimensional society in spite of them (Butler, 2017). In our memories these resistances come to form a part of the struggle for the rights of immigrants. In this sense, valorising strategies for action is an essential part of the struggle. We must also recognise our differences when we come together on a daily basis to pursue the political aims we have set ourselves as migrant and feminist women.

By way of closure: Situating and diversifying memory

Our narrative exercise has sought to contribute to a collective memory of the struggles for immigrant rights, taking as a starting point our points of view as immigrant women, feminists, activists, and academics. We have understood this narration of memories to be a condemnation of the effects of

marginalisation inherent in hegemonic European memory, as well as a means of establishing a stable space in the public sphere that enables us to counter these effects. The building of memory has become a device of political praxis (Calveiro, 2006; Harris, 2006) in the activist strategies that we have outlined and in the alternative points of view we have presented with regard to the processes that define us.

For several years we have been strongly affected and challenged by the struggles of those whose rights have been denied through socio-political manoeuvring; that is to say, people who have not been treated well by the communities in which they reside (Butler, 2010). The memories we build legitimise and make comprehensible our efforts to overhaul the mechanisms that sustain the socio-political system. An analysis of the relations of power that reinforce the differences and asymmetries between us is a necessary step in the search for strategies to subvert them. The processes of differentiation have been a crucial element of our discussion. These define us as labelled bodies but at the same time open up spaces for us to articulate ourselves; this paradox is manifested in the context of our political action. When the labels of belonging to a community with guaranteed rights have been established on the basis of exclusion (colonial, patriarchal, and economic), setting down who can form part of it on the basis of normative constructions of nationality, race, or gender (Mezzadra, 2012), the act of presenting oneself in terms of difference becomes a political one. Unlike the perspective that sees migrants as passive, vulnerable, or dangerous, building collective memory on the basis of our political journeys is an affirmative act, bringing to light connections and resistances that have a direct effect on the present.

The compilation of our memories has also led us to question the identity-focused readings of migrant struggles, rendering them more complex as their situated, intersectional, and historical nature becomes visible. The recognition of multiple axes of oppression functioning in an intersectional way may be critical in enabling us to conceive of alternative forms of agency, such as establishing bonds between social groups (Butler, 2015) and building bridges (Anzaldúa, 2002) that favour the construction of memories from different political, cultural, racial, gender-based, and other experiences. In this sense, it is not only the concrete practices of activism that have a transformative potential, but also the abstract definition of ourselves as collective subjects who are active in the public sphere. In remembering these processes, we must not allow others take control of either our individual or our collective bodies (Calveiro, 2006).

To summarise, memory as an interrogative practice of the past undertaken in the present has served as a useful tool in producing alternative, situated knowledge regarding the processes that define us. Differentiations, boundaries, and conducive precepts that feed into our political praxis are integral to collective memory, while experiences of inequality, injustice, and

resistance are mapped out in distinctive ways (Harris, 2006). Political memory, or memories that sustain processes of resistance (Calveiro, 2015), could draw important contributions from discussions surrounding intersectionality, given that both deal explicitly with the constitution of subjects in distinct temporalities. Just as intersectionality offers us an analytical road map, memory provides us with a device for producing subjects, relationships, social worldviews, and vice versa (Piper and Montenegro, 2017). Thus, diversifying the positions from which we make memory is essential. It will lead to the building of a pluralistic society with a polyphonic history and multiple perspectives of its past, present, and future.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Memories of the struggles for immigrant people's rights in Barcelona (1990–2017). MSc research, Autonomous University of Barcelona, 2017–2018. Both texts are available here: <https://cartografiasolidaritat.cat/memories-migrants/>
2. The title is a play on words, loosely translated as 'Migresident seminars', which highlights the establishment of cooperative relations between women defined as migrant and those defined as resident or autochthonous.

References

- Agrela B (2004) La acción social y las mujeres inmigrantes: ¿Hacia unos modelos de intervención? *Portularia* 4: 31–42.
- Ahmed S (2004) *Differences that Matter. Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alexander J and Mohanty CT (1997) Genealogies, legacies, movements. In: Alexander MJ and Mohanty CT (eds) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 13–42.
- Anthias F (2002) Beyond feminism and multiculturalism: Locating difference and the politics of location. *Women's Studies International Forum* 25(3): 275–286.
- Anzaldúa G (2002) Preface: (Un)natural bridges, (un)safe spaces. In: Anzaldúa G and Analouise K (eds) *This Bridge We Call Home*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–5.
- Balash M and Montenegro M (2003) Una propuesta metodológica desde la epistemología de los conocimientos situados: Las producciones narratives. *Encuentros en Psicología Social* 1(3): 44–48.
- Balash M, Montenegro M and Pujol J (1999) *Governabilitat i formes actuals de participació política*. MSc thesis. Barcelona: Autonomous University of Barcelona.
- Balibar E (2003) *Nosotros ¿cuidados de europa?* Madrid: Tecnos.
- Bentouhami H (2016) *Raza, cultura, identidades un enfoque feminista y poscolonial*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.

- Bold C, Knowles R and Leach B (2002) Feminist memorializing and cultural counter-memory: The case of Marianne's park. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28: 125–148.
- Brah A (2011) *Cartografías de la diáspora identidades en cuestión*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.
- Butler J (2017) Corporeal vulnerability, coalition and street policy. *Nómadas*: 13–29.
- Butler J (2015) *Cuerpos aliados y lucha política. Hacia una teoría performativa de la asamblea*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Butler J (2010) *Marcos de guerra: las vidas lloradas*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Calveiro P (2015) Políticas del miedo y resistencias locales. *Athenea Digital. Revista de pensamiento e investigación social* 15: 35–59.
- Calveiro P (2006) Antiguos y nuevos sentidos de la política y la violencia. *Lucha Armada en Argentina* 4: 1–23.
- Cappiali T (2016) Activism of immigrants in vulnerable conditions and radical-left allies: A case study of Italy's struggle of the crane. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42: 2508–2527.
- Crenshaw K (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–1299.
- Crenshaw K (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1): 139–167.
- Dhamoon R (2011) Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly* 64(1): 230–243.
- Fernández C (2012) Migraciones y fronteras: Nuevos contornos para la movilidad internacional. *Frontera Norte* 24: 201–204.
- Fulladosa K (2018) Tejiendo luchas, armando redes. Available at: <https://cartografia-solidaritat.cat/memories-migrants/> (accessed 18 December 2019)
- Gandarias I and Pujol J (2013) De las Otras al No(s)otras: Encuentros, tensiones y retos en el tejido de articulaciones entre colectivos de mujeres migradas y feministas locales en el País Vasco. *Encrucijadas – Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales* 5(0): 77–91.
- Gutiérrez E (2015) Espacios transculturales – (des)encuentros afectivos una perspectiva descolonial sobre intimidad translocal, migración latinoamericana y trabajo doméstico en Alemania. *Clivajes. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 2(4): 12–27.
- Halbwachs M (1968) *La Memoria Colectiva*. Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias.
- Hall S (1996) Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In: Hall S and Paul G (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, pp. 1–17.
- Haraway D (1995) *Ciencia, Cyborgs y Mujeres. La reinención de la naturaleza*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.
- Harris F (2006) It takes a tragedy to arouse them: Collective memory and collective action during the civil rights movement. *Social Movement Studies* 5: 19–43.

- Hatzidimitriadou E and Çakir S (2009) Community activism and empowerment of Turkish-speaking migrant women in London. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* 5(1): 34–46.
- Hellgren Z (2014) Negotiating the boundaries of social membership: Undocumented migrant claims-making in Sweden and Spain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40(8): 1175–1191.
- Hemmings C (2012) Article Affective solidarity: Feminist. *Feminist Theory* 13, 147–161.
- Hintermann C and Rupnow D (2016) Places, spaces and the memory of migration. Remembering in a (post-)migrant society. *Annals of the Austrian Geographical Society* 158: 59–83.
- Hirsch M and Smith V (2002) Feminism and cultural memory: An introduction. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28: 1–19.
- Ilmonen K (2017) Identity politics revisited: On Audre Lorde, intersectionality, and mobilizing writing styles. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 26(1): 7–22.
- Kleist O (2017) *Political Memories and Migration*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kleist O (2013) Remembering for refugees in Australia: Political memories and concepts of democracy in refugee advocacy post-Tampa. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 34: 665–683.
- Lorde A (1998) *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: The Crossing Press.
- Lloyd M (2005) *Beyond Identity Politics: Feminism, Power and Politics*. London: Sage.
- McCall L (2005) The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs* 30: 1771–1800.
- Mezzadra S (2012) Capitalismo, migraciones y luchas sociales. La mirada de la autonomía. *Nueva Sociedad* (237): 159–178.
- Middleton D and Brown SD (2005) *The Social Psychology of Experience: Studies in Remembering and Forgetting*. London: Sage.
- Moen T (2006) Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5: 56–69.
- Montenegro M and Galaz C (2016) Gubernamentalidad y relaciones de inclusión/exclusión: los dispositivos de intervención social dirigidos a mujeres inmigradas en España. *Universitas Psychologica* 14(5): 1667–1680.
- Nash J (2008) Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review* 89: 1–15.
- Nayak S (2017) Location as method. *Qualitative Research Journal* 17(3): 202–216.
- Piper I (2005) *Obstinaciones de la memoria: la dictadura militar chilena en las tramas del recuerdo*. PhD thesis, Autonomous University of Barcelona, España.
- Piper I and Montenegro M (2017) Ni víctimas, ni héroes ni arrepentidos/as. Reflexiones en torno a la categoría 'víctima' desde el activismo político. *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 59: 98–109.
- Presley RE and Presswood AL (2018) Pink, brown, and read all over: Representation at the 2017 women's march on Washington. *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies* 18(1): 61–71.

- Romero CE (2018) Caminando juntas en el activismo. Available At: <https://cartografiasolidaritat.cat/memories-migrants/> (accessed 18 December 2019).
- Rothberg M and Yildiz Y (2011) Memory citizenship: Migrant archives of Holocaust remembrance in contemporary Germany. *Parallax* 17: 32–48.
- Salih R (2017) Bodies that walk, bodies that talk, bodies that love: Palestinian women refugees, affectivity, and the politics of the ordinary. *Antipode* 49(3): 742–760.
- Salvini F (2018) Space invaders in Barcelona: Political society and institutional invention beyond representation. *Antipode* 50(4): 1057–1076.
- Santamaría E (2002) Inmigración y barbarie. La construcción social y política del inmigrante como amenaza. *Papers* 66: 59–75.
- Schöngut N and Pujol J (2015) Relatos metodológicos: difractando experiencias narrativas de investigación. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16.
- Troncoso L and Piper I (2015) Género y memoria: articulaciones críticas y feministas. *Athena Digital Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social* 15: 65–90.
- Varela A (2015) Movimientos sociales protagonizados por migrantes: Cuatro postales desde México, España, Francia y Estados Unidos. *Journal of Transborder Studies. Research and Practice*, 1–18.
- Varela A (2007) ¿Papeles? ¡para todos! Diez años de movimiento de migrantes sin papeles en Barcelona. In: Suárez L, Macià R and Moreno Á (eds) *Las Luchas de Los Sin Papeles y La Extensión de La Ciudadanía. Perspectivas Críticas Desde Europa y Estados Unidos*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, pp. 185–213.
- Varela A (2013) *Por el derecho a permanecer y a pertenecer. Una sociología de la lucha de migrantes*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.
- Varela A (2016) El Movimiento Migrante Mesoamericano. Una aproximación desde la sociología de la acción colectiva a un ejemplo de luchas migrantes. *Amnis* 15. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/amnis/2854> (accessed 18 December 2019).
- Vázquez F (2001) *La memoria como acción social*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Verloo M (2013) Intersectional and cross-movement politics and policies: Reflections on current practices and debates. *Signs* 38: 893–915.
- Verkuyten M (2017) Supporting the democratic political organisation of Muslim immigrants: The perspective of Muslims in the Netherlands and Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(1): 137–155.
- Vidaurrázaga T (2015) Subjetividades sexo genéricas en mujeres militantes de organizaciones político-militares de izquierda en el Cono Sur. *La ventana. Revista de estudios de género* 5(41): 7–34.
- Yamanaka K (2003) Feminized migration, community activism and grassroots transnationalization in Japan. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 12: 155–187.
- Yuval-Davis N (2014) *Intersectionality, Inequality and Bordering Processes*. Presented at the XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, Japan.

Author biographies

Catalina Álvarez Martínez-Conde is a PhD student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the University of Chile. She is a member of the Memory's Social Psychology program (University of Chile) and the research group Fractalities in Critical Research (UAB). She is an activist in feminist and anti-racist movements in Barcelona. She has published articles in *Universitas Psychologica* and *Psicoperspectivas*.

Clara Elena Romero Boteman was born in Colombia and has lived in Barcelona for 25 years. She is a founder and the current coordinator of Maloka-Colombia Colective, a member and coordinator of Mujeres Pa'lante. Her publications include *Bateman, el profeta de la Paz*. *Planeta Editorial* (1992) and *América Latina dones en resistència, testimonios de brigadistas Associació Catalana per la Pau* (2007).

Karina Fulladosa is PhD in social psychology by the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She has been an activist in the Union of Domestic and Care workers Sindihogar/Sindillar, since 2012. Her articles have appeared in *Psicología, Conocimiento y Sociedad* and *Universitas Humanística*.

Marisela Montenegro is a lecturer at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She is an activist in feminist, LGTB and antiglobalization movements in Barcelona. Her research focuses on critical and postcolonial analysis of research and social work. Her publications a chapter in *Intersectionality in Social Work: Activism and Practice in Context* (Routledge, 2018) and an article in *Feminism/s*.