

Central American LGBTI Migrants in Mexico: Notes for a Contextualised Feminist Foreign Policy

Migrantes LGBTI de Centroamérica en México: apuntes para una política exterior feminista contextualizada

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Abstract:

This article discusses some particularities of Central American LGBTI migrants' forced displacement in Mexico from the authors' professional trajectories in the humanitarian field between 2017 and 2019. The article aims to make visible the experiences, risks, and specific needs of LGBTI migrants and introduce a discussion on the contributions of a feminist foreign policy for the international protection of these people in Mexico and the region.

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Resumen:

En este artículo se discuten algunas particularidades sobre el desplazamiento forzado de las personas migrantes centroamericanas LGBTI en México, a partir de las trayectorias profesionales de las autoras en el ámbito humanitario entre 2017 y 2019. Desde una perspectiva feminista, el artículo tiene el objetivo de visibilizar la multiplicidad de experiencias, riesgos y necesidades específicas de las personas migrantes LGBTI, así como introducir una discusión sobre los aportes de una política exterior feminista para la protección internacional de estas personas tanto en México como en la región.

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Key Words:

Central America, forced displacement, refugees, LGBTI.

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Palabras clave:

Centroamérica, desplazamiento forzado, refugiados, LGBTI.

Central American LGBTI Migrants in Mexico: Notes for a Contextualised Feminist Foreign Policy

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Introduction

This article is a contextualised study on the forced displacement of Central American LGBTI¹ people to Mexico, allied with the principles of a Mexican feminist foreign policy.

These reflections stem from two specific experiences in the authors' professional trajectories. On the one hand, academic research that attempted to explore the experiences of trans women² from Central America who were in the migrant shelter named *La 72*, in 2017, in the municipality of Tenosique, Tabasco. On the other hand, the experience as humanitarian workers for a civil organisation providing care to asylum seekers in Mexico City, in the context of the arrival of the migrant caravans in 2018 and 2019.

¹ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) guide, *What You Need to Know: Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in forced displacement*, the authors of this article use the acronym LGBTI to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, *i.e.* diverse groups of people who do not conform to heteronormative notions of male and female gender roles. UNHCR, *Protecting Persons with Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities. A Global Report on UNHCR's Efforts to Protect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Asylum-Seekers and Refugees*, Geneva, UNHCR, 2015, p. 1, in <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/Sebe6b8d4/protecting-persons-diverse-sexual-orientation-gender-identities.html> (date of access: July 13, 2021).

² The term *trans* refers to people who may identify as transgender, transsexual, transvestite or whose gender expression shifts beyond the binary norms of the sex they were assigned at birth.

From these experiences, it is understood that the migration of Central Americans from the LGBTI community to Mexico responds to a forced displacement that has particular dimensions with respect to the rest of the population in a situation of mobility. These displacements occur as a necessary condition for the survival of this population, which is fleeing conditions of violence and discrimination related to gender identities and how they live their sexuality. They are also movements related to a search for an environment of equality and better opportunities for social inclusion or access to economic improvement. It is in this interconnection where it will be necessary to approach the complexity of the migration paths of these people.

The current scenario of people in a situation of mobility in Mexico positions it as a country of asylum which, in addition, has historically been considered a country of departure, transit and return of migrants. The Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (Comar) has registered a significant and continuous increase in the number of people seeking asylum. In the historical record of this institution, in 2018, with the arrival of the first caravans or migrant exoduses, the number reached 29 630 people. In 2019, it rose to 71 230. In 2020—the year of the COVID-19 pandemic—the number was 41 329.³ These figures are disaggregated only by nationality, which generates opacity when it comes to conducting analyses that consider dimensions such as gender identity or the sexuality of refugees, as well as to know the grounds for recognition of refugee status and whether gender or sexual identities are involved in them as arguments for refusing protection.

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, at the time of its drafting, envisaged five causal factors as the main grounds for refugee status, among which gender-based persecution was not explicitly included. However, both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Mexican law now recognise the importance of granting refugee status to those fleeing persecution on the basis of their sexual

³ Commission for Refugee Aid (Comar), “Estadística Comar. Diciembre de 2020”, January 7, 2021, in <https://www.gob.mx/comar/articulos/la-comar-en-numeros?idiom=es> (date of access: July 13, 2021).

orientation or gender identity. In the 2000s, the UNHCR established guidelines for national authorities to analyse asylum claims from a gender perspective.⁴

In its first guideline, where the UNHCR defines *gender* as “the relationship between women and men based on socially or culturally constructed and defined identities, status, roles and responsibilities that are assigned to one sex or another”.⁵ This stipulates that gender must be interpreted as a causal link to one of the grounds of persecution established by the Refugee Convention, *i.e.* race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. In this sense, the most common approach has been to establish gender as a causal link to the “membership of a particular social group” grounds for asylum, which is understood in international law as membership of a group of persons who share an innate, immutable or fundamental characteristic.⁶ However, establishing gender as a causal link to the grounds for asylum pertaining to the membership of a social group, *i.e.* relating it to the sharing of an immutable and innate characteristic, has resulted in the word *gender* being translated as “woman”. This can be problematic if one reflects on it in the light of feminist theory, in which gender is understood precisely as a mutable dimension, distinct from biology, and which cannot account for a unified, stable and homogeneous female political subject.

On the other hand, in its ninth guideline, the UNHCR argues that the notion of *LGBTI* as a causal link for the recognition of refugee status allows for the acknowledgement that violence and discrimination can be so severe that

⁴ In its guideline number one, on gender-based persecution, and subsequently in its guideline number nine, on asylum related to sexual or gender orientation.

⁵ UNHCR, “Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees”, HCR/GIP/02/01, May 7, 2002, p. 2, in <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3db6ac0c4.html> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

⁶ Felipe Sánchez Nájera (coord.), *El género como causal del reconocimiento de la condición de refugiado en el sistema de asilo mexicano*. Mexico, Observatorio de Protección Internacional-Universidad Iberoamericana, 2019, p. 7, n. 1, in <https://programadb.ibero.mx/assets/documents/PDH-2018-GENERO-COMO-CAUSAL.pdf> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

it forces the displacement of this population to other countries as the only option for protection.⁷

In Mexico, gender was included as grounds for persecution with the creation of the Law on Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum.⁸ However, once again there is a problem with the definition of terms. In the regulation of this same law, it is mentioned that gender is understood as “the gender and sexual preferences of the applicant”.⁹ This definition is not only tautological, but also differs from the content given in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Refugee Law itself,¹⁰ which is problematic, as the decision of who is to be deemed a refugee on these grounds is left to the discretion of the assessors as to what *gender* and *sexual preference* actually mean.¹¹

These legal frameworks have produced not only new legal figures, but also new routes in the displacement of LGBTI people, shaping the discourses and ways of accessing or not accessing certain protection guarantees. The persecution of people due to their sexual orientation and gender identity is not a new phenomenon. However, in recent years, an increasing number of asylum claims by LGBTI people have been made in various countries around the world.¹² This may respond to a phenomenon of greater visibility and a greater possibility of accessing refugee status, and not necessarily to an increase in the number of cases. What is relevant in this regard is to observe how this type of legal recourse is part of the very

⁷ ACNUR, *La protección internacional de las personas LGBTI*, Mexico, UNHCR, 2014, in <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/Publicaciones/2014/9872.pdf> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

⁸ F. Sánchez Nájera, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁹ Reglamento de la Ley sobre Refugiados y Protección Complementaria, art. 4, fraction IV, in *DOF*, February 21, 2012.

¹⁰ F. Sánchez Nájera, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

¹² ACNUR, *Nota de orientación del ACNUR sobre las solicitudes de la condición de refugiado relacionadas con la orientación sexual y la identidad de género.*, Geneva, UNHCR, November 2008, in <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=49b689382> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

process in which certain recognisable identities or figures are produced, such as the current LGBTI asylum figure.

In the Mexican context, the migration of LGBTI people has had a recent impact in the media and in public discourse due to the visibility of LGBTI people who joined the so-called migrant caravans in 2018 and 2019.¹³ These people travelled in groups to the U.S.-Mexico border and, like other members of the caravans, were fleeing contexts with high levels of generalised violence and poverty. In addition, LGBTI people were also fleeing persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity in their home countries.

Although Mexico City is perceived by many Central Americans as a place of freedom to live their gender and sexuality, we still cannot say that the country is a safe place for them. Mexico ranks second in the world for crimes motivated by transphobia, after Brazil.¹⁴ Despite important legal reforms in Mexico, very high levels of violence against the transgender population are reported, violence that extends to the LGBTI community in general. In other words, this is a highly vulnerable population, exposed to many types of violence and discrimination.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, this alarming problem must also be framed within a generalised increase in violence that the country has experienced over the last decade, including femicide violence.¹⁶

¹³ Human Rights Watch, “*Vivo cada día con miedo*.” *Violencia y discriminación contra las personas LGBT en El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras y obstáculos al asilo en Estados Unidos*, New York, Human Rights Watch, 2020, in https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/10/centralamerica_lgbr1020sp_web.pdf (date of access: July 14, 2021).

¹⁴ In the case of Mexico and Brazil, which have the highest number of crimes in absolute numbers, it should be borne in mind that these are densely populated countries. These positions change when these crimes are calculated in relation to the population rate.

¹⁵ Transgender Law Center and Cornell University Law School LGBT Clinic, *Report on Human Rights Condition in Transgender Women in Mexico*, Ithaca, Cornell University, 2016.

¹⁶ According to data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System, in January 2018 there were a total of 2563 intentional homicides. In January 2019 it increased to 2855 victims; in the same month of 2020 it reached the record figure of 2994; while in January 2021 the figure was 2831 victims of this crime. From December 2018 to January 2021, the number of victims of intentional homicide in the country has reached 76 841. Mario Luis Fuentes, “Así arrancó la violencia en 2021”, in *México Social. La Cuestión Social en México*, February 23, 2021, in <https://www.mexicosocial.org/asi-arranco-la-violencia-en-2021/> (date of access: July 14, 2021). While the Ministry of the Interior reported that from 2006 to April 2021,

In many cases, the violence, exclusion and/or discrimination that people face because of their sexual orientation and gender identity determine migration routes, even from their communities of origin, generally with internal displacement within their countries, which extends to other countries in the region. Thus, the search for the possibility of expressing their gender intersects with the search for security. These are intersections of subjective searches that are not always resolved with the arrival to a new country or with the recognition of refugee status, and which are carried out through a heteronormative migratory apparatus.¹⁷

Displacement of Central American LGBTI persons

Our research identified that the stories of LGBTI asylum seekers present complex interconnections between sexuality and conditions of displacement. From the accounts of various people interviewed both at the *La 72* shelter on the southern border and asylum seekers in Mexico City, it has been possible to locate certain shared elements in their stories, in which the particularities of LGBTI displacement were identified.¹⁸

85 006 missing persons were registered in Mexico. Pedro Villa y Caña, "En 15 años se registran 85 mil personas desaparecidas: Encinas", *El Universal*, April 8, 2021, in <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/alejandra-encinas-en-15-anos-se-registran-85-mil-personas-desaparecidas> (date of access: July 14, 2021). With regard to violence against women, March 2021 became the most violent month since 2015, with 359 femicides and intentional homicides; according to the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System, 29% more femicides were reported in that month than those registered in February 2021. Lidia Arista & Linaloe R. Flores, "Marzo 2021: el más violento para las mujeres desde 2015, reportan 359 asesinatos", in *Expansión Política*, April 26, 2021, in <https://politica.expansion.mx/mexico/2021/04/26/voces-marzo-2021-el-mas-violento-para-las-mujeres-desde-2015-reportan-359-asesinatos> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

¹⁷ *Heteronormative* is a social system that does not accommodate the multiple complexity of gender, but assumes a notion of binary and complementary sexual difference between the sexes.

¹⁸ It is not intended to totalise the experiences of Central American people categorised as LGBTI because, as complex psychic, social and historical subjects, they are irreducible and uncategorisable.

Departure and the start of the journey

The first movements related to the displacement of LGBTI people are related to the moment of their departure from the family environment. This may be chosen or forced, but it is intrinsically linked to the moment of an “awakening” to sexual life and the rejection experienced within the family. Thus, we find a relationship that seems to be indissoluble: the first manifestations of a sexuality that escapes the heteronormative binary and the expulsion from the family space. This departure can have a profound impact, not only in the psychic and affective dimension due to the forced abandonment of primary relationships, but also because of the impression of expulsion and precariousness that it can have. Expulsion can also imply abandonment of the community and, often, an exit from the educational system. All this leads to new needs that can be articulated with access to jobs in highly precarious contexts, entry into sex work or having to establish relationships with other people in highly dependent situations.

This first approach presents the need to consider the interactions between sexuality and migration as articulated dimensions. Sexuality, like gender, is related to the decision to migrate and influences the way in which migration takes place.¹⁹

A second approach to the articulation between sexuality and displacement has to do with the diversity of movements and experiences that are configuring new scenarios of flight, as well as new searches in relation to self-image, the body, economic autonomy and the exercise of a fuller sexuality. These scenarios lead to displacement to different cities within the countries of origin, or even to other countries, as a result of multiple and constant situations of discrimination that arise along the way. Thus, the departure is not final, but rather inaugurates a seemingly endless circuit between Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States. This is what has been identified as the forced displacement of LGBTI migration.

¹⁹ Vek Lewis, “Volviendo visible lo invisible: hacia un marco conceptual de las migraciones internas trans en México,” in *Cuicuilco*, no. 54, May-August 2012, pp. 219-240.

The forced nature of the displacement is present in the decision to leave in order to preserve one's life.²⁰ For LGBTI people, mainly transgender people, territorial mobility and gender transition are dialectically articulated and violence can become a relevant factor in this process, although not the only one. Moving is a condition for gender transition away from their communities of origin and away from family rejection. But, at the same time, these transitions (territorial and gender) can shape new situations of vulnerability that bring new violent scenarios. Thus, people may be forced to move again, in order to safeguard their lives, but also to continue their subjective search for the ideal space in which to position themselves in their transitions.

LGBTI asylum applications in *La 72*

The *La 72* Home-Refuge for Migrants, located in the municipality of Tenosique, is a Catholic project of the Franciscan Province "San Felipe de Jesús". It is a civil society organisation, founded in 2011, which provides accommodation, food and guidance to migrants. The name of the shelter is in memory of the 72 Central American migrants who were murdered at the hands of organised crime in complicity with the municipal police of San Fernando, Tamaulipas in 2010.

It is the only shelter for migrants in the area and its location, almost 60 kilometres from the Mexican-Guatemalan border, makes it the first one that people find when entering through the state of Tabasco. Currently, it is a space where migrants are aware of their right to apply for refugee status in Mexico, so that by accessing this resource, they make this shelter their home for very long periods of time (months or years) while awaiting a decision.

According to data from *La 72*, in 2016 they accompanied 752 people in asylum application processes, of which 43 people identified themselves as part of the LGBTI community. Of the latter, 30% initiated a process

²⁰ Cristina Gómez-Johnson, "De la migración económica a la migración forzada por el incremento de la violencia en El Salvador y México," in *Estudios Políticos*, no. 47, July-December 2015, pp. 199-220.

of migratory regularisation, as opposed to 5.6% who applied for asylum from the rest of the population.²¹ These data were easily observable in the daily life of the shelter, as the people who identified as LGBTI and had a separate dormitory space from the rest of the population- were the ones who spent long periods of time living in the shelter, waiting for their decisions.

The issue of the temporality of stay of these people is relevant as it presents a particular complexity for the times of migratory transit, which cannot be homogenised for the entire migrant population, and which are often crossed by bureaucratic provisions and state administrative procedures related to the recognition of refugee status.²² The decisions that mark the times and spaces of migration are not fixed, as they can change at any time and are constantly reconfigured, depending on issues related to people's desires, possibilities and resources, as well as contingencies in the regional administrative provisions that regulate migration.

The LGBTI people who found themselves in *La 72* during 2017 said they had arrived in Tenosique with the idea of staying there for a few days and then continuing on their way to Mexico City. However, after crossing the southern Mexican border, experiencing the dangers that characterise these roads and learning about the possibility of applying for asylum on grounds related to gender and sexual identity, they decided to stay at the shelter indefinitely until they found a way to regularise their migratory status or a safer route strategy.

With regard to the processes that occur in these temporalities of waiting,²³ we recognise a dimension of analysis related to the exchange between people and the migration authorities and the subsequent appropriation of institutional discourses amongst LGBTI migrants. As if it were a definition

²¹ La 72 Hogar-Refugio para Personas Migrantes, *En los límites de la frontera, quebrando los límites: situación de los derechos humanos de las personas migrantes y refugiadas en Tenosique, Tabasco. Informe 2016*, Tenosique, La 72 Hogar-Refugio para Personas Migrantes, 2016.

²² According to Mexican asylum legislation, the applicant must remain in the state where the application was filed for the duration of the procedure. Leaving the state without Comar's authorisation results in the abandonment of the procedure, so the applicant loses the protection guaranteed by the procedure.

²³ Alain Musset, "De los lugares de espera a los territorios de la espera. ¿Una nueva dimensión de la geografía social?", in *Documents d'Análisi Geogràfica*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2015, pp. 305-324.

of gender identities and sexual orientations based on an institutional order, which also modifies the ways in which people position themselves in relation to their own identities and these discourses (reproducing, appropriating, imitating and/or transforming them) in the negotiations to access legal protection resources. What is relevant here is to show how there is a discursive transformation to name themselves, to identify themselves and to organise their own life stories in new ways, with the subjective effects that this entails. For example, many of the LGBTI people arriving at the shelter in 2017 did not know the acronym LGBTI, nor the flag of sexual diversity. However, the existence and use of these resources by the migratory institutions produced identity movements in asylum seekers, causing them to make a more or less strategic use of appropriation and positioning. However, finding symbolic resources so that the state would recognise the need to grant international protection did not resolve the exclusions that cross institutional spaces, discourses and apparatuses.

The hope for asylum in Mexico City

In the context of the so-called migrant caravans in 2018 and 2019, we worked in humanitarian care for asylum seekers in Mexico City. These tasks were carried out by a civil organisation that forms part of the network of non-governmental actors (national and international) that coordinate actions to accompany people during their asylum process with Comar. This network of actors is responsible for providing accommodation in shelters around the city, economic support for subsistence, as well as legal advice and psychological accompaniment for asylum seekers.

In this context, with the arrival of people in unprecedented numbers, the demands for attention overwhelmed the capacities of civil society. Being Mexico City, the advantage of having spaces that provided specialised care for the LGBTI community was apparent,²⁴ in contrast to the structural lack

²⁴ One of these spaces is the Condesa Specialised Clinic in Mexico City. It is worth noting that the existence of these specialised services derives from the status of “Sanctuary City” declared in 2017 and established in the Political Constitution of Mexico City. A sanctuary city implies guaranteeing access to shelters, health services and labour integration programmes to people, regardless of

of services in cities such as Tenosique on the southern border of the country. However, the challenges in attending to this population appeared in other contexts. In particular, they were related to the difficulty of providing safe and appropriate accommodation for LGBTI people in existing shelters. This is not to say that shelters in Mexico City do not allow LGBTI people to enter or stay in their facilities. Rather, it is about a series of determinants articulated with regulations, discursive and organisational conformations of institutional spaces that, although they manifest themselves as inclusive spaces, are traversed by binary and heteronormative logics as deep as the cultural contexts to which they belong. The result is the inevitable marginalisation of LGBTI-identified people without any deliberate intent on the part of the people who manage these spaces.²⁵

However, this marginalisation of LGBTI asylum seekers does not only occur in temporary accommodation spaces. It is also seen in the daily routes established by the network of actors, institutions and services available to the migrant population in Mexico City. Operating within a context governed by the lack of a broad gender perspective leads to responses that can increase the risk for LGBTI people in their journey through the city. Thus, due to discrimination in the formal labour market and the lack of inclusive integration frameworks, LGBTI people find themselves at risk of forced sex work, falling into trafficking networks or reproducing the dynamics that forced them to leave their countries of origin in the first place.

A second determinant in this context, linked to the previous one, is that we identify a frequent relationship of greater dependency of LGBTI people on the institutions that provide financial support to asylum seekers. This produces an apparently paradoxical situation. On the one hand, this is a population that is becoming invisible along migratory routes due to the same

their migration status. In addition, these cities may limit their cooperation with federal immigration laws aimed at deporting or removing undocumented foreign nationals.

²⁵ Some practical implications of institutionalised heteronormative logics are the inflexible timetables for entering and leaving the shelter, which make it impossible to carry out the sex work that many trans women have to resort to for lack of other employment alternatives or for other types of choices that we will not discuss in this paper. Other examples are the division of spaces and dormitories in binary terms or the tendency to separate LGBTI people from traditional family groups.

heteronormative cultural logics that permeate the organisations; on the other hand, LGBTI asylum seekers remain linked with greater dependence on humanitarian aid agencies for refugees, given the conditions of profound precariousness and marginalisation that hinder access to jobs, educational spaces or the possibility of fuller integration into the host societies. The logics of social exclusion that have expelled them from their countries reappear with new faces.

These unique circumstances provide a glimpse of a complex context, a glimpse of the challenges that still lie ahead for the shaping of policies that disarm the cycle of exclusion linked with these journeys, as well as the need to create new logics of integration that can configure habitable places for thousands of people in search of a place to exist.

Feminist foreign policy?

With the rollout of the feminist foreign policy in January 2020, Mexico positioned itself as the first country in Latin America to adopt gender equality principles as the roadmap for achieving its foreign policy objectives. While this policy places greater emphasis on the organisational structure of the Mexican government, two of its five axes are aimed at ensuring that multilateral action has an “intersectional approach in all positions, strategies and actions” in order to achieve an “impact on substantive gender equality”.²⁶

We know that foreign policy and migration policy are closely linked to the characteristics of the international refugee regime and the implementation of migratory policy.²⁷ Naturally, the creation of border regimes, asylum procedures, the repatriation or return of migrants, and the granting

²⁶ Martha Delgado Peralta, “Mexico’s Feminist Foreign Policy and the 2030 Sustainability Agenda”, in *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, no. 118, pp. 7-13.

²⁷ Alexander Betts, *International Cooperation in the Global Refugee Regime*, Oxford, Global Economic Governance Programme (GEG)-Oxford University (GEG Working Paper 2008/44), November 2008; & Michael S. Teitelbaum, “Immigration, Refugees, and Foreign Policy”, in *International Organization*, vol. 38, no. 3, summer 1984, pp. 429-450.

or denial of refugee status are all part of a country's foreign policy.²⁸ Thus, understanding the implications of foreign policy on the protection of migrants and refugees, understood as a guarantee of access to and enjoyment of civil, political, economic and social rights,²⁹ becomes especially necessary under any policy bearing the title of feminist. Even more so if the state, as the provider of this protection, has historically been part of the source of insecurity for those who cross its borders.

What would be the approach of a so-called feminist policy in relation to the protection of migrants and refugees? Let us take some definitions that can help us understand a concept that might be too abstract and problematic in this context. Different academic sources agree that feminist foreign policy is:

The politics of a State that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a way that prioritises gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalised groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision, and, through its implementation, seeks to dismantle patriarchal power structures in all its spheres of influence.³⁰

Mexico's feminist foreign policy design integrates some of these and other particular characteristics. For now, the most immediate results have been an increase in the presence of women in decision-making positions. This is undoubtedly relevant and necessary, but it cannot be the only principle of any feminist policy. Women's access to decision-making positions, *i.e.* positions of power, is not enough if it does not include a transformation of the very logics of power that are constituted within

²⁸ M. S. Teitelbaum, *op. cit.*; Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas & Mark J. Mille, *The Age of Migration*, 5a. ed., Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; & N. Ela Gökalp Aras & Zeynep Şahin Mencütek, "The International Migration and Foreign Policy Nexus: The Case of Syrian Refugee Crisis and Turkey", in *Migration Letters*, vol. 12, no. 3, September 2015, pp. 193-208, in <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v12i3.274> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

²⁹ A. Betts, *op. cit.*; & M. S. Teitelbaum, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Lyric Thompson and Rachel Clement, *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy*, Washington, D. C., International Center for Research on Women, 2019, p. 7.

institutions. Indeed, we believe that an innovative foreign policy—such as a feminist foreign policy—would have to be aware that new practices in reforms of this scale depend on more than the goodwill—or the gender—of the people spearheading the changes. Transformations of power relations, of the discourses that sustain them and the practices that reproduce them, are also necessary, as well as reflective revisions of the histories and inequalities that traverse their populations.

None of the existing feminist foreign policies to date, including Mexico's, make explicit reference to migration, nor do they analyse the specific and intersectional contexts from which migrants or refugees come as feminist foreign policy issues.³¹ Moreover, in terms of inclusion, recently adopted feminist foreign policies apply the concept of gender narrowly, as synonymous with women and girls, without acknowledging the diversity of intersectional positions.³² In this sense, a feminist foreign policy that integrates the complexity of such an approach implies that the policy is not only of/for women, but integrates the broad and complex spectrum of gender and is concerned not only with achieving state objectives, but also with the impact of its policies on host communities, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups.³³

Addressing the Mexican migratory context specifically, it is important to highlight the impact on Mexico's relations with neighbouring countries in the region and even with countries in Asia and Africa. Internally, this translates into a challenge for the country itself in terms of security. However, it is a phenomenon that overlaps with other social issues related to far-reaching historical processes. These involve unequal gender relations, non-heteronormative sexual experiences excluded from the confines of the idea of citizenship, as well as exclusions resulting from long colonial processes

³¹ Vaishnavi Pallapothu, "A Feminist Foreign Policy Approach to Immigration," in The Gender Security Project, January 17, 2021, in <https://www.gendsecurityproject.com/post/a-feminist-foreign-policy-approach-to-immigration> (date of access: July 13, 2021).

³² Shannon Zimmerman, *The Value of a Feminist Foreign Policy*, Washington, D. C., Women in International Security (WIIIS Policy Brief), February 2020.

³³ Karin Aggestam, Annika Bergman Rosamond & Annica Kronsell, "Theorising Feminist Foreign Policy," in *International Relations*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 2019, pp. 23-39, in <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818811892> (date of access: July 14, 2021).

and imprints experienced in our regions. All of this cannot be left aside if we intend to take a feminist stance in order to think and act from a foreign policy which, like all exteriority, has its inseparable interior dimension.

In this migration scenario, where would a feminist foreign policy be directed? Without attempting to give a programmatic answer, we consider that this type of policy will face several challenges, as it cannot be considered solely on the basis of a problems with security or border control, nor can it be resolved simply by the inclusion of women in decision-making positions. Thus, we agree with the idea that a Mexican feminist foreign policy needs to materialise the intersectional aspect³⁴ and extend the scope of its principles to the protection of people who leave their countries because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.³⁵

With a substantive gender equality perspective in foreign policy, Mexican institutions face the challenge of translating these agreements into actions also within the country and making explicit the specific rights and needs of LGBTI persons on the move, while considering the particularities of the region. Specifically, taking into account that current migration policies do not address the specific risks of LGBTI people who migrate on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and/or sexual characteristics.

³⁴ The term intersectional is a perspective that makes it clear that exclusion is never the result of isolated factors, but of the intersections of different social identities (*i.e.* gender, disability, race/ethnicity, geography, religion, etc.); power relations (*i.e.* laws, policies, religious institutions and economic unions among others); and experiences.

³⁵ Olena Hankivsky, *Intersectionality 101*, Vancouver, Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy-Simon Fraser University, April 2014.