ABSTRACT Whilst often adopting a feminist perspective, the literature on gender and migration has often neglected to consider the production of knowledge from this point of view. It has left unarticulated the assumptions and concerns about gender and gender relations that underpin scientific knowledge claims about female migration. The aim of the paper is to problematize the dominant paradigms in contemporary studies and how these paradigms manifest the tension between knowledge produced in the core countries and those produced in the semi-periphery. In doing this, we offer a critical review of the broader field of feminist migration studies using the concept of “gender knowledge” in order to identify some of the omissions and neglected topics in the field of migration studies – such as a de-emphasis on gender and sexuality, or on the intersectional interplay of gender with other dimensions of inequality, an over-focus on quantitative approaches, and a neglect to consider migrants’ agency which comes as a result of unexamined methodological nationalism and methodological sexism. The paper shows the importance of the geographical, political, social and cultural contextualisation of the production of knowledge and the relevance of problematizing the connection between knowledge drawn from the semi-periphery and that drawn from the core. The paper does this through a discussion of particular cases of migration for domestic and care work and the development of gender-focussed approaches to migration studies in Serbia.

KEY WORDS: migration, gender knowledge, semi-periphery, Serbia
Introduction

The aim of this article is to draw attention to the relationship between gender and migration and to trace the long and often arduous history of academic efforts to show the simple fact that gender is a constitutive element of migrations and spatial mobilities, as well as the other way around. Hence, it also considers problems in the production of knowledge which have contributed to or hindered, in a variety of ways, understanding of female migration over the last several decades.

This contribution gives an account of the ways in which feminism has transformed migration and mobility studies, regardless of discipline, while discussing the dominant paradigms within contemporary feminist approaches to migration studies and how these paradigms manifest in our research. This inevitably leads to a reconsideration of the relationship between the core and the semi-periphery. The intention of this article is to highlight a number of major omissions and neglected topics in the field of migration studies – such as a de-emphasis on gender and sexuality, or on the intersectional interplay of gender with other dimensions of inequality, an over-focus on quantitative approaches, and a neglect to consider migrants’ agency which comes as a result of unexamined methodological nationalism and methodological sexism. In doing this, we offer a critical review of the broader field of existing feminist migration studies using the concept of gender knowledge in order to identify assumptions and concerns about gender and gender relations in these studies.

The paper is organized as follows: introducing the concept of gender knowledge in our first section we show how production of knowledge is always situated and based upon a specific knowledge about gender but also that the theory is deeply connected to the persons who collect data and evidence. In
section two, by briefly reviewing feminist critiques of mainstream migration theories and highlighting critical advances in migration studies, we address the significance of an inductive approach to research, and to the experiences and everyday lives of research participants in migration and gender studies. Our last two sections – the importance of geographical, political, social and cultural contexts for the production of knowledge and the relevance of problematizing connections between knowledge from the semi-periphery and that from the core, will be discussed through the sections on migration for domestic and care work and on the development of migration studies in Serbia.

Towards “Gender Knowledge”: The Feminisation of Migration or the Feminisation of Scholarly Discourse on Migration?

In contrast to the gender-insensitivity which still underpins a large number of studies on migration, our research perspective begins with the concept of “gender knowledge” (Geschlechterwissen), introduced by German sociologists, Sünne Andresen and Irene Dölling (2005), which draws on the sociology of knowledge and focuses on the construction of gender and gender relations. This concept assumes that every form of knowledge (be it everyday knowledge, expert knowledge or popular knowledge) is based upon a specific form of knowledge about gender. In other words, it is not enough to understand how women are represented as migrants, but more importantly to understand what assumptions underpin scientific knowledge-claims about female migration. The focus on gender knowledge allows us to pay more attention to the articulation of different knowledge forms concerning, in this case, the international discourses of migration studies. Critical work on gender and migration today should insist on examining the processes by which migrants are constructed as gendered rather than as universal subjects.

Over the past two decades, there has been a dramatic interest in the “feminization of international migration” a trend which has usually been associated with an interest in the impact of globalization in recent years and with the idea that in the past migrants were normally men. Demographers and quantitative social scientists have been slowly bringing the migration of women to the foreground as women have become the majority of migrants worldwide. More precisely, researchers claimed that the 19th and 20th centuries were an “era of mass migration” in which men were the main actors and that the 21st century became characterised by the „feminization of migration“ (Castles & Miller, 1993). Despite these claims, feminist researchers in migration (Donato, Gabaccia 2015, Morokvasic 2010) have shown that “feminization” is not a completely new phenomenon. Feminist historical revisionist studies indicate, for example, that half of all the Irish and Jewish immigrants to the United States between 1820 and 1928 were women (Hsia Diner, 1983). Claims regarding the feminisation of migration flows are contested by studies showing that the proportion of international female migrants rose by just 2% in the period 1960–2000 from 46.6% to 48.8% (Zlotnik 2005).
We must acknowledge that work on the “feminization of migration” during the 1980s and 1990s was a useful first step in viewing dynamics of migration through the lens of gender, encouraging researchers to look at women as autonomous labour migrants and to rethink the causes of feminization and the composition of different types of migration. However, we are suggesting here that today, after two decades, one should be very careful in labelling any social phenomenon in terms of „feminization“ or „masculinization“. The key problem is the lack of explanatory power and descriptiveness of these terms. Moreover, there is a danger of understanding “feminization” and “masculinization” as a perpetuation of traditional dichotomous divisions based on biological characteristics. In our view the feminization lens has several issues that can affect the production of gender knowledge on female migration.

To begin with, the “discovery” of the “feminization of migration” created a framework that was mainly restricted to research surrounding the problems experienced by women migrants such as trafficking, exploitative domestic work, genital mutilation and forced marriage, and women’s exposure to vulnerabilities resulting from their precarious legal status, abusive working conditions, and health risks. This work thus failed to address the fact that these problems are the product of structures that create inequality in different ways for children, men and women. An additional weakness is that this approach runs the risk of presenting an image of women as victims with limited capabilities to mobilize their resources, thereby denying their agency. Instead of seeing the mobility of women as a revolutionary development in international migration, researchers should be focused on problems of social inequality and look critically at the role played by local, national, regional and transnational socio-economic factors in creating the need for a women-centric form of human mobility.

Secondly, we have to acknowledge that scholars in different disciplines measure feminization differently, using different statistical tools, different analytical approaches and different interpretations of quantitative data. As Katherine Donato and Donna Gabaccia (2015) showed in their historical analysis of migration demographics, some countries send men, some send women and others send both, asking why and how the gender composition of migration flows change at different times and in response to different circumstances. The observation of increased female participation in international migration strongly depends on the methodologies and measurement techniques. Mirjana Morokvašić (2010) states that when feminization is viewed as a quantitative change, it covers large variations due to the degree of development in both the sending and receiving country, as well as the development of migration patterns themselves.

Feminist critique of migration studies show that males and females migrate differently: their motivations and reasons for moving, as well as the channels they use to migrate are never identical. For example, over the course of time, broadly male migrations eventually resulted in movements that were more gender

balanced because fiancées and wives followed the initial migration of the men. Such increases in female migration, the so-called “feminization of migration”, are a consequence of marriage migration and family unifications which some authors would refer to as the “masculinization of feminization” (Donato, Gabaccia 2015:47). In other words, labour migration that was overwhelmingly male preluded predominantly female reunification (Kofman 1999:271). The fact that labour migration was viewed as a relevant subject of research whilst women's migration as dependents was not to the same degree, does not prove that men were more active, but just that they were more visible. The moment when we overcame the dominant idea of male guest-worker migration as the only or the most important one, female movements received well-deserved attention.

These few arguments have convinced us that instead of the feminization of migration it would be more correct to use the term “gender transition” (Morokvašić, 2010: 45). Or more precisely, as Gabaccia and Zanoni (2012) have suggested, more research is needed to examine the timing and causes of transitions—from male-dominated to gender-balanced flows—in international migrant gender ratios.

The obsession with the feminization of migration took place due to an number of factors including gaps in the empirical evidence, the popularity of positivist quantitative approaches which often failed to contextualize the data and the way in which “migrant” is defined in terms of creating complex categories of migrants in regard to their different motivations and intentions.

The main reason for the increasing academic interest in gendered aspects of migration which have contributed to the perception that there is an increasing feminisation of migration relate, primarily, to changes in the politics and research agendas of research institutions, universities and international organizations. These, we propose, collectively encouraged a movement to the feminisation of the “migratory discourse” (Oso and Garson 2005). Feminist researchers have additionally suggested that perceptions of gender bias were a product of the absence of female researchers in the field, arguing that theory building is never dissociated from the persons collecting data and evidence. In other words, knowledge production should never be separated from social structures, relations and processes of scholarly inquiry. The way scholars understand relations between sex, gender and migration greatly affects scholarly work and its results.

**Gender knowledge in feminist critique of migration theories and paradigms in the core**

Rather than providing an exhaustive review of the growing conceptual repertoire of feminist contributions to migration theories from various disciplines (geography, sociology, economics or politics), we focus here on the feminist critique of three major paradigms which have dominated (and some of which still dominate) studies of migration. We claim that academic reasoning about migration is never gender neutral but is informed by particular gender hierarchies and the ways in which dominant theories perceive the role of women in migration.
The neoclassical macro theory of migration dates to the 1930s. According to this theory migration is triggered by geographic differences in economic opportunities, more precisely differences in supply and demand for labour. Corresponding to the neoclassical macro theory is the neoclassical micro model/theory, which explains the behaviour of individual migrants. The most extreme version of this perspective positions the migrant as a rational economic actor driven exclusively by his own interests, comparing his current income to potential earnings in other locations or countries. It should be remembered that neoclassical economic theories are responsible for the use of formal, idealized models and econometric techniques in studies which go on to form the empirical basis informing migration policy in institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD or the IOM. Patricia Pessar (1999) argued that in the 1950s and 60s neoclassical reasoning about mobility was influenced by the role model of the “Western man” or “Homo Economicus”. The assumptions of this paradigm tend to ignore unexpected social structures that shape migration (and non-monetary factors such as love, sex, academic opportunities, desire for adventure, etc) so that individual calculations seem to be occurring in a historical, political and economic vacuum. Circumstances that stimulate push and pull factors are not explored but are assumed to emerge from the universal conditions that prevail in all societies. Theories, based on macro-structural transformations, or “push-pull analysis”, were not able to explain the unpredictable variations between socially distinct migratory routes.

A greater emphasis on gender perspectives in the study of migration in Europe during the 1980s began with a groundbreaking introduction by Mirjana Morokvasić in the first IMR Special Issue “Women and migration” which reminded its reading audience that „birds of passage“ can also be women (Morokvasić 1984). In this publication Morokvasić questioned the use of men as the universal point of reference as well as drawing attention to the invisibility of women and their stereotyped representation as dependent figures within the production of knowledge about migration. In the wake of this work, it became clear that women and men participate in migration equally, but in different ways, creating different effects and migration patterns and constructing and reconstructing new migration discourses, and that the role of actors in migration processes are therefore gender-specific. Gender sensitive research revealed the significance of gendered identity in migration processes including the importance of gender roles, the division of labour, ideological constructions and perceptions of women.

Network theory sees international migration as a cumulative social process – networks are composed of interpersonal links between migrants, ex-migrants and non-migrants both in the country of origin and in the destination country.

For in-depth critique of neoclassical economic migration theory, see Schwenken, and Eberhardt (2008).

Feminist economists and social theorists targeted this hegemonic ideal figure of man which assumes a preference for higher wages, selfishness, narrow rationality and social isolation and depicts as universal a human nature which is linked to certain type of masculinity– white, young or middle-aged heterosexual and middle-class.
According to this theory social networks increase mobility because they reduce the costs and risks of the migration process. Early research on networks was driven by two principles. The first was an emphasis on the importance of networks (although largely male networks) in encouraging or preventing migration from one area to another. The second was the insight that social networks were based on solidarity in which gender was completely neglected. Revisionist research has shown that social networks can be very controversial resources, which are not always shared equally within the family or between spouses. (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 33). The point is that families and migrant networks are gender-based institutions. Feminist critique was grounded on the criticism of family structures, aiming to demonstrate that households and families are neither unifying nor united, neither generational nor gender-based entities in which there are no hierarchies of authority, power and resources. Since the 1990s, research has shown that women have their own networks including other women and they use these networks in order to migrate and settle in other countries. However, we cannot assume, for example, that women automatically have access to male dominant migrant networks, or that women necessarily migrate with the help of other women. Instead of assuming women automatically migrate with the help of other women, it would be more fruitful to look at how women access and mobilise social networks during the migration process.

The emergence of the transnational paradigm marked a new era in the study of migrations at the end of the 1980s and through into the 1990s. With its focus on the international dimension of migration, this perspective has shifted the focus from the dominant topic of migrants’ inclusion and settlement within new societies, onto the relationships that migrants attain and maintain with their country of origin. Migration has thus started to be seen as a multi-level process, with new perspectives challenging purely economic and macro-level approaches by examining migrant practices and strategies. More-recent approaches have introduced the importance of social and symbolic capital in migration processes (Levitt 2001: 54) and focused on the benefits that migrants have from modern means of communication and transportation, the resources and opportunities provided by the global market, and on the new social forms, political challenges and cultural resources arising from linkages formed between multiple geographic locations. The most celebrated contribution of transnationalism to migration studies was the questioning of the equivalence between national state and society known as “methodological nationalism”, an approach that rejects the national state as the only starting point for empirical analysis and call for the denaturalization of categories such as nation and space (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994, Vertovec 2007, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003, Pries 2001).

However, the problem of transnationalism is that it does not adequately differentiate between migrant groups according to gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality and age-specificity. In her ethnography about Dominican sex

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6 Hondageu-Sotelo 1994 monograph, *Gender Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Migration* has shown that social networks that mediate between migrants are deeply embedded in gender ideologies and the redistribution of power: men and women have different networks even when they belong to the same families.
workers, Denise Brennan shows connections between large structural forces in the globalized economy and their effects on individuals by examining two transnational processes: sex tourism and migration (Brennan 2004). These transnational processes and the linkages that result affect individual’s lives unequally – depending on hierarchies of race, class, citizenship, mobility, gender and sexuality. Her work is illuminating because it explores how transnational flows are not equally liberating for everyone but instead offer some subjects opportunities to enhance their possibilities while contributing to the subordination of other, less privileged subjects. As she argues, our task should be to explore the ways transnationalism remakes inequalities. The conditions for transnational mobility are not always favourable to women and often limit them to normative and cultural gender rules. Women’s activities are conditioned by a set of legal and cultural provisions based on the governing interpretations of gender roles within the country of departure, but also within the country of destination. This implies that the narratives and experiences of transnational migration vary depending on gender relations, economic opportunities and legal opportunities in a country, as well as the extraordinary effect of these factors on the lives of individuals.

Another criticism of the transnational approach comes from the debate on specific forms of mobility. Pointing to the limitations of transnationalism, such as an emphasis on sustainability and the duration of transnational connections over time, Mirjana Morokvasic has called for the inclusion of short-term migrations such as those from Central and Eastern Europe (Morokvasic 2004). Morokvasic emphasizes that the identification of the conditions under which transnational practices take place can reveal a wide range of migration types as well as highlighting the power differentials between participants in different forms of transnational work. Her field research among Polish women in Berlin between 1991 and 1992 demonstrated, for example, that circular journeys (which can include the smuggling of goods, domestic and care work etc.) are a way of life which are „settled in mobility“ – far removed from the expected classical pattern of migration to and settlement in another country (Morokvasic, 2004).

From Methodological Nationalism to Methodological Sexism – Production of Knowledge Between the Core and Semi-Periphery

Over the past 20 years there has been a significant increase in the production of knowledge within migration and gender studies focused on the intersection of feminist theory with domestic work, care, migration, globalization and social policies. In this section we attempt to show how the feminization of scholarship on women’s migration for care and domestic work produces the knowledge that can on the one hand, devalue women’s care work and construct an image of the female migrant as a feminine caring subject which is premised on white,
Western, middle-class gender norms and which contributes to the construction of a premodern non-Western subject. On the other hand, this knowledge created in the “core” appears to be universal and cannot be applied in semi-peripheral countries without addressing geographical, cultural, political and economic contexts. These arguments are based on a more general critique of two main concepts in the aforementioned strand of literature, namely global care chains (GCC) and care drain (CD).

Global care chains relate to a theoretical concept established by pioneering feminist labour scholar Arlie Hochshild (2000) aiming to describe the global phenomenon of women migrating to perform care work and social reproductive work. Her original work on GCC focuses on care work particularly in the form of nannies and live-in caregivers. Although the concept has been criticised and expanded since its introduction (Yeats 2004, 2009, Parrenas, 2001, Manalasan 2008, Kilkey 2010), here we focus on the original idea of commodified care as a “surplus value” that is taken from the migrant workers and their home countries (periphery countries) in migration to richer nations (core countries). Hochschild and others introduced the economic notions of “care surplus” and “care drain” which are grounded in neo-Marxist dependency theories used to explain the mechanisms supporting economic inequalities between the global North and the global South. From this perspective, GCC are created by importing care from poor to rich countries, leading to new care deficits or “care drains” by which migrants as mothers and their children become most affected. Parent-employers and their children in contrast enjoy the benefits of outsourcing, which are also conceptualized in terms of “surplus love”. This perspective expands the notion of economic inequalities to inequalities of emotion (Yeates, 2009). Hochschild compares care and love provided by third world women with “the nineteenth-century extraction of gold, ivory and rubber from the Third world” (Hochchild 2004). The “new gold” which is extracted at a low cost from the poorer countries by richer ones give us an image of a third world woman as a person without any agency and who is necessarily on the losing side. Portrayals of the miserable woman who must migrate to ensure the economic survival of her family are one-dimensional because women involved in the GCC come from a variety of backgrounds and levels of privilege. Viewing migrants from one perspective only creates invisible groups who do not fall into this category including, for example, women who have advanced educations involving medical and nursing degrees and thus comparatively better skills. This perspective therefore gives an overly straightforward description of the globalization of care processes. It connotes a simplistic and unilateral dependency between households in developing and developed countries.

The second problem with this perspective is that “care chains” do not exist everywhere, and there is a danger of generalization. In the context of intra-European migration in which the sending country is geographically close to the country of work, travel costs are affordable and migration laws make it possible to cross borders. It is more likely here to encounter “interrupted care chains”, a type of care chain typical of former socialist countries such as Poland and Ukraine. Moreover, this perspective overlooks how migrant care workers manage to combine their own reproductive labour and continuing transnational care. Finally,
the original formulation of GCC portrays them as feminine; overlooking care work done by men, both paid as well as unpaid (see e.g. Manalansan 2006 for critique).

In our view, the GCC framework should analyse how the globalization of care is gendered in multiple ways. GCC should be contextualized both historically and geographically. Care chains involve different countries and cultures with different culturally specific logics of exchange. More particular criticism should be directed to the generalisability of much published research that uncritically applies the concept of care chains, especially in the countries of Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (for example, Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013, Lutz, Möllenbeck, 2012, Redlova, 2013). Questions related to the globalization of care work and the outsourcing of domestic and care work to “migrant women from the ‘Global South’” reveal how boundaries between realms where care is taking place – such as families as the main caregivers, the market where care services are organized, third sector and the state – are blurred, resulting in overlaps and mixed forms. Another concept developed by the same author is that of “care drain” – a metaphor aiming to characterize women’s labour migration as a loss. The concept operates as a female counterpart to “brain drain”. Hochschild points out that care and domestic labour migration has added an important dimension to the ways in which care is commodified. Care work has in this way, become associated with women who, as a result, are exclusively studied as care givers without any interest in their professional ambitions or the way in which migration provides or reduces opportunities. The legal statuses of these women, their negotiations with employers and their responses to exploitation have not been part of the picture. Care has been understood as an extension of “motherly love” neglecting the consideration of: 1. the involvement of men in reproductive labour; 2. other forms of caregiving, such as care for elders or disabled persons; 3. “care gain” (Dumitru, 2014, 209) – or the positive outcomes of care work abroad such as a change of attitudes towards the family of migrant worker and the development of care skills which can show us how care can be learned and improved within migration contexts. As Dumitru (ibid) has rightly suggested, constructing female migration as “care drain” is dangerous in two ways: one, firstly because it describes care as an attribute necessarily attached to specific categories of people such as women and mothers and secondly, because it portrays them according to their social remit rather than as bearers of knowledge. The “feminization of migration” here lays on assumption that women migrate in increasing numbers as potential care givers towards receiving countries. While that may be true in terms of global structural inequalities, gender inequalities, and the crisis of the welfare state, we cannot assume that all female migrants are mothers (and that care, nurture, and love are qualities tied to the biological female body) nor that struggles regarding care are new or evident in global relations. An exclusive focus on the feminine caring subject according to gender can easily fall into the trap of accepting gender-role theory, which in turn carries the possibility of leading us into a methodological sexism, as Speranta Dumitru has suggested.

Whilst extensive qualitative research on care and domestic work from post-socialist countries to Western Europe has been conducted, very little is known about women migrants’ experiences from the Former Yugoslavia countries within
care and domestic sectors. In fact, research into the dynamics and structuring effects of gender as well as other dimensions of diversity (e.g. ethnicity, class, religion) in the context of migration for domestic work is generally lacking – with only a few exceptions from Croatia and Slovenia (for instance, see Loncar 2013, Hrzenjak, 2014). The latest qualitative research of women's migration experiences that draws upon in-depth interviews, official statistics, state policies of employment in Germany and Serbia as well as state migration regulations gives insight into increasing levels of circular female migration.7

This new pattern of circular migration for domestic and care work (similar to the case of Polish female commuters to post–wall Germany) is facilitated not only by the “liberalisation of the visa regime” in Serbia, the ideology of the “flexibilisation of labor” in Germany and increased demand for care and domestic workers, but also two political processes: the post-war transition in the former Yugoslavia and the enlargement of the European Union towards the East and South-West8.

In the light of such citizenship-related complexities, EU migration policies and regimes are essential for differentiating who can and who cannot pass the border, who can have access to the labour market, who needs an extra work permit, and who has no other option than to work irregularly. This perspective opens up new interpretative possibilities in research on gendered labour subjectivities, bringing up the idea that gender and migration is the point where conflicts around the changing nature of labour, gender roles and citizenship are materializing.

By this we mean, for example, breaking the citizen-worker dyad as a dichotomy which originates from a unified model linking citizenry to national territory. This breaking apart becomes necessary as we witness constant changes in the labour markets and transformation of socio-economic processes, both in the semi-periphery and the core countries.

Knowledge Production at the Semi-periphery
– The Case of Serbia

Notwithstanding very vivid and inspiring discussions among feminists at the core, migration studies in Serbia can be criticized as “gender-blind” for failing to acknowledge the gender selectiveness of migration processes and neglecting gender-specific types of mobilities. While a tendency towards the invisibility of

7 We refer here to ongoing doctoral research project Ethnography of living arrangements, in/formal work and transnational care: Experiences of domestic and care workers from the former Yugoslavia in Germany conducted by Tanja Visic, Ph.D. candidate at the Max Weber Center for Advanced Social and Cultural Studies in Erfurt, Germany.

8 The period after the civil war in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s is characterized by the possibility of acquiring double citizenship for the refugees (ethnic Serbs) who escaped war from Croatia (which is the member of the European Union). For the women in the research mentioned above, possessing a Croatian passport means that they can enjoy the benefits of visa free travel to the Schengen zone. The second “undesirable side effect” of the external EU borders is the fact that Serbian citizens from northern Serbia can obtain Hungarian citizenship which opens the door to the European Union’s job market as well. The women, who live villages in the Banat and Backa (Vojvodina) regions close to Hungarian border, can claim their right to Hungarian citizenship on the basis of their Hungarian origins or, more commonly, on that of their husbands or ancestors.
women in migration studies was present in European academic research until the middle of 1980s, from the perspective of Serbian scholars we can say that 35 years later there is still an important gap in literature on gendered migration and a lack of empirical descriptive work on the gender composition of historical migration flows, leaving this aspect of migration significantly under-researched. In this section we attempt to show how, in spite of the highly developed feminist tradition in Serbia (as evidenced by this volume), women are still not recognized as autonomous actors of migration, a situation which could be attributed to unfavourable material conditions for performing scientific activity, as well as the general weakness of the feminist community in the social sciences (Blagojević, 2009: 97–119).

Generally, the scientific production of knowledge on migrations in Serbia is characterised by the slow development of the systematic study of this phenomenon, which is a consequence of the semi peripheral position of Serbia in the global (scientific) system. The perspective of the sending country, a lack of resources, and the conservatism of the scientific community are very important determinants of the acceptance and usage of new findings, which are mainly explored within the developed, receiving counties. On the other hand, as Blagojević (2009) showed, the semi periphery cannot simply rely on theoretical frameworks created in the core and just “add in” local examples: it would be unreasonable to claim that knowledge created at the center would “cover” the realities of the semi periphery. At the semi periphery, neither a narrow minded refusal of new knowledge produced in the center, nor its implementation without critical review itself, can be considered heuristically fruitful. Likewise, at the core, close minded resistance to the concepts developed at the semi periphery are not useful. With this being said, we can differentiate two main features of the migration field – that of lagging behind the theoretical, methodological, epistemological and empirical discoveries of the core, and at with it an imposed duty to copy and apply the paradigms built in the countries of the center (which are better suited to immigration than emigration societies)9.

Moreover, the slow development of migration studies in Serbia is also the consequence of an insufficient academic institutionalisation of migration studies. Besides two institutes that have been studying migrations for many years – the Institute of Social Sciences and the Institute of Ethnography SASA, the phenomena of migration are still rarely studied by university institutions in Serbia. Work on the presence of the topic of migrations in the curricula at universities across Serbia from 2015 has clearly shown that “not one university institution analysed by us has a systemic, unique, comprehensive studies of the issue of migrations in all their forms of manifestation, as well as of the integral findings of all consequences (social, political, economic, security, psychological, ecological and other) produced by them” (Simić, Živojinović, 2015:40)10.

9 Although these two features may look mutually exclusive at first sight, the lagging behind is relevant as it directly influences the promptness to modify the “core paradigms”: only when the scholars from semi periphery deepen the knowledge of dominant concepts, they will have the opportunity to adapt these paradigms to the local context by criticizing them.

10 Since this school year at the University of Belgrade, a new multidisciplinary Masters programme – „Studies of migration“ has been introduced. This is the first masters course in the region on migration issues.
Over the past 70 years, firstly as a part of Yugoslavia and then in the post-socialistic period, Serbia has experienced a great variety of mobility types – both internal and international. Following the positivistic approach represented through statistical data it can reasonably be suggested that the feminization of migration exists in Serbia – for example, the percentage of women in emigrant population increased from 40.7% in 1971 (Predojevic Despic, 2010:9) to 46.6% in 2011 (Stanković, 2014:33). When we take into consideration only documented migration, we can say that even though women in Serbia are not inactive when spatial mobility is pursued, the forms of movement in which they are more represented than men continue to speak in favour of the fact that traditional patterns of mobility have not completely overcome their patriarchal origins (Poleti, 2016). In the former Yugoslavia, trends in international migration followed the typical pattern of European labour force movements at the time. During 1970s and 1980s men were seen as the central and main actors of migration – they were the ones who had moved to Western Europe to be followed by wives and families (Pavlica, 2005). In the 1990s patterns and forms of migration has transformed, due to the fact that the largest wave of migration to and from Serbia was caused by the wars. The composition of migrant populations changed so as to involve the migration of entire families, mostly those without precise plans for the future and weak links with the home country (Pavičević, 2004: 132). In the period after 2000, and especially after the visa liberalisation which began in 2009, migrant flows are characterised by their temporary duration, a diversity of motives (seeking asylum, studying, employment and family reunion), as well as by heterogeneous gender patterns. Although a significant number of studies from various disciplines (history, anthropology, sociology, demography, geography, literature and linguistics) have been written on this subject, little has been done to deepen the understanding of women’s migration, especially to explain undocumented and circular forms of mobility.

Numerous studies coming from ex-Yugoslavian scholars have been written on the phenomenon of guest-workers, also known as Gastarbeiter. While some questioned the influence of work migration on Yugoslav society or measured its economic effects (see e.g. Mežnarić, 1985 for literature review), the others have attempted to explain the process of acculturation in Western European countries from an anthropological perspective (Lukić Krstanović, 1992). It should be noted that the first historiographical monograph ever written within the boundaries of former Yugoslavia on this topic was published in 2012 (Ivanović, 2012). In cases where women have been recorded, they have usually been treated as secondary migrants and reported as being dependent on their husbands or parents, neglecting the analysis of individual trajectories or women’s significant contributions to the economic sphere. The gendered aspect of women in migration processes remains unaddressed in the studies mentioned thus-far.

On the other hand, studies devoted to migration practices from the 1990s onwards have shown greater awareness of female actors, but still without
recognition of their agency. In the first waves of refugees’ movements, women outnumbered men – they accounted for over two thirds of the adult population (Lukić, 2015). Although this gender ratio has become more balanced over time (ibid), the problems of female refugees in Serbia, such as unemployment, living in poverty, housing, difficulties in realizing the right to education and health care, became important research topic especially in action research (Babović, Cvejić, Rakić, 2007; Pavlov, Volarević, Petronijević, 2006). Even though the number of refugee women has raised the level of interest in female actors within forced migrations, the attention dedicated to this theme has been insufficient – „Despite these obvious and warning indicators of the vulnerability of women in refugee and displacement statuses, it has not been systematically investigated, nor has gender perspective been systematically included in the work of organizations and institutions dealing with refugee and displaced populations“ (Pavlov, Volarević, Petronijević, 2006: 8).

An analysis of contemporary studies in Serbia shows that they focus overwhelmingly on positivistic approach within economic (e.g. Marjanovic, 2015), demographic (e.g. Rašević, 2016), geographic (e.g. Penev, Predojević-Despić, 2012) or sociological (e.g. Babović, Bobić, 2013) fields of research. Sub topics include “brain drain” (e.g. Grečić, 2010); migration and development (e.g. Pavlov, Grečić, Petronijević, 2008); identity and cultural conceptualization (e.g. Antonijević, 2013; Thematic issue “Guest Workers”, Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology. Vol 6, No. 4, 2011); asylum seekers and returnees in relation to the Readmission Agreement (e.g. Stojić Mitrović, 2014); migration as a security challenge; as well as the mixed migration trends of people that are trying to reach Western Europe through the Balkan route (Bobic, Jankovic, 2017). While some of the studies can be defined as scientific in a strict sense, the others are the products of action research, written at the request of international institutions or as a result of engagement with international, as well as NGO projects.

Considering the methodologies being used, we can say that quantitative approaches are most prevalent in the literatures on migration authored in Serbia. Other than a group of anthropologists12 who cultivate qualitative approaches, most scholars perform a secondary analysis on data using official statistics (Stanković, 2014) or new data gathered through surveys and questionnaires (Pavlov, 2009). This fact is even more interesting if one bears in mind the objective problems of quantitative data collection: Serbia does not have any migration statistics on stocks and flows, and the most accurate data on the size and structural composition of the emigrant population is obtained through Census data13 (Nikitović et al, 2013).

12 Gathered mostly around the Institute of Ethnography SASA and their publication Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA.

13 Emigration data have been gathered in Serbia since 1971, but the scope and quality of the data have declined over time. This problem became especially visible in the last census from 2011, when the data on the population living abroad were gathered exclusively through the members of their families that remained in Serbia (Stanković, 2014). It is estimated that in the first census from 1971 there was an underreporting of about 30% of the population
Gender approaches to migrations in Serbia thus remains rather scarce. Except for occasional publications (Morokvašić, 2010; Pavlov, Volarević, Petronijević, 2006; Pešić, 2013; Poleti, 2016), the female experience, the contribution given by women in the migration processes, as well as their influence on these processes, are completely left out. In almost all research, gender is defined through binary categories in which women are defined versus men. Even then, the data is analysed by gender, not interpreted through a gender dimension. Under the veil of gender neutrality, the ignorance of gender perspectives is being hidden. Moreover, the dominant, quantitative methodological approach cannot evidence all forms of female mobilities. Namely, the unavailability of comprehensive statistics that would give correct data on the number of women has partially been caused by the impossibility of recording irregular work migrations that reflect work in the informal sector. If we could add the interdisciplinary approach to an observation written 35 years ago, it would perfectly describe the production of gender knowledge in the migration studies at the semi-periphery – “the research on women as a special group of migrant populations was, mainly, the topic of Yugoslav sociologists working exclusively abroad” (Mežnarić, 1985:87). Empirical research forms the basis for offering insights into the paths and mechanisms that lead to migration, its method of realization and the effects of migration on women, their families and community. Although inductive approaches to migration research are still in their infancy, we hope that this research will get well deserved attention in the future.

**In Lieu of Conclusion**

Whilst statistics on international migration shows the number of women and girls migrating doubled on a global scale between 1960 and 2005, statistics concerning international migration by gender remain uneven across countries. It is not biological difference or sex that drives variations in migrant gender composition over time and space, but it is interaction of gender relations and gender ideologies in sending and receiving countries in historically changing structures of global inequality that drives these variations. The greater challenge facing migration researchers is to understand the causes and consequences of the migration gender balance, which shifts over time and varies considerably across cultures and nations. One of the biggest problems with quantitative approaches is that most surveys underestimate the undocumented population as well as those entering countries in an irregular manner. The undervaluing of women’s labour and restrictions on their right to work makes many women invisible. The problem of overlooking these types of female migrants is partly due to different understandings of who migrants are and the different ways in which nation-states define migrants. However, the bigger issue at play relates to disagreements abroad (Predojević Despić, 2010), and that this increased to as much as 50% in the last census (Nikitović, 2017). Therefore, the demographic picture has to be obtained by combining local and foreign sources of data. Besides the availability and accuracy, the comparability of data is also a significant problem.
about what theory is (is it prediction, explanation, or interpretation?), and what methodologies are most likely to advance theory itself (are they quantitative, qualitative, rigorous, and/or eclectic?). Positivist and theory-driven disciplines (that is, those hoping to predict as well as to understand human behaviour) have difficulty accepting gender analysis precisely because gender is too often theorized as relational and contextual, thus complicating its operationalization. Scholars trained in positivist and quantitative methodologies are especially likely to respond to calls for gender analysis or reviews such as ours with the “so what” question. As long as gender analysis draws on the theories and methods of their own disciplines, they will be able to see little evidence that gender analysis matters and that research on gender adds theoretical value.

To improve our understanding of gender and migration, we should start conducting qualitative research in mobility and migration studies over multiple locations (so-called “multi-site research”) which in turn bring together the core and the semi-periphery. This is a salient methodological imperative when it comes to the phenomenon of post-national migration whereby people live their lives in multiple countries. Yet, to carry out such research projects applying mixed methods could prove expensive, and it is not difficult to conceive financiers and funding bodies being reluctant unless they match the political and ideological agendas of national institutions or international organizations. Ultimately, the future of research in gender migration is underpinned by the general direction of literature and the dominance of paradigms within different disciplines. The importance of the geographical, political, social and cultural contextualisation of the production of knowledge and the relevance of problematizing the connection between knowledge from the semi-periphery and that from the core are crucial for the description and deeper understanding of the countless varieties of migrant positions, situations and experiences.

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