Gender, vulnerabilities and resilience: a critical approach to the Spanish case

Género, vulnerabilidades y resiliencia: una aproximación crítica al caso español

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ABSTRACT

Vulnerability and resilience are two concepts currently present in most social policies, which have been positioned in the main discourses regarding the reduction of gender inequality. Current actions to mitigate vulnerability are focused on the search for resilience and the public policies are guided under this paradigm.

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Through a literature review methodology, this article performs a critical analysis of the dimensions of vulnerability and resilience, currently present in social and development policies in Spain that engage gender inequality and permeate to the social welfare system. The evolution of the treatment towards women in Spanish policies shows a change in the treatment of women, from being seen as a single subject (vulnerable group) to being seen as women with agency in situations of vulnerability. But this fact causes only few changes in the structures that generate inequality and situations of vulnerability and coexisted with the transfer of responsibility present in resilience approaches.

Key words: *Gender, women, vulnerability, resilience, Spanish policies.*

RESUMEN

La vulnerabilidad y la resiliencia son dos conceptos actualmente presentes en la mayoría de las políticas sociales, que se han posicionado en los principales discursos en torno a la reducción de la desigualdad de género. Las acciones actuales para mitigar la vulnerabilidad se enfocan en la búsqueda de resiliencia y las políticas públicas se orientan bajo este paradigma.

A través de una metodología de revisión bibliográfica, este artículo, realiza un análisis crítico de las dimensiones de la vulnerabilidad y la resiliencia presentes actualmente en las políticas sociales y de desarrollo en España que abordan la desigualdad de género y permean al sistema de bienestar social. La evolución de las políticas españolas muestra un cambio en el tratamiento de las mujeres, pasando de ser vistas como un sujeto individual (grupo vulnerable) a ser vistas como mujeres con agencia en situaciones de vulnerabilidad. No obstante, este hecho provoca pocos cambios en las estructuras que generan desigualdad y situaciones de vulnerabilidad y coexiste con la transferencia de responsabilidad presente en los enfoques actuales de resiliencia.

Palabras clave: *Género, mujeres, vulnerabilidad, resiliencia, políticas españolas.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Vulnerability and resilience are two concepts currently present in most social, development and equality policies in Spain, which have been positioned in the main discourses regarding the reduction of gender inequality. When talking about women´s vulnerability we must consider that it is not innate, but rather that gender discrimination places them in a position of vulnerability. According to their social, economic, political and cultural condition, women are positioned in different degrees of vulnerability.

Opposite is the idea of resilience[1], which refers to the ability of women to recover from the inequalities experienced due to their gender (Derickson, 2016; Flynn, Sotirin and Brady, 2012; Mc Robbie, 2020). Resilience, like vulnerability, is linked to structural factors and depends on the historical, social, economic, political and cultural conditions of each woman. In this work we address resilience and its connections with vulnerability. Likewise, we analyze the use of such approach from an individual prism in accordance with the development of patriarchal neoliberal policies that are altering and modifying the responsibilities of the State (Brown, 2015, 2019).

The promotion of resilience in the application of policies towards women implies a change of perspective; policies should no longer consider women as a "collective with problems" but rather focus on their potential and agency. The problem arises when the individual is transferred the responsibility to overcome the situations of vulnerability (Cannon and Muller-Mahn, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Duit, Eckerberg, Galaz and Ebbeson, 2010). Women are expected to resist vulnerable situations and overcome them empowered. Categorizing women as a

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[1] We will only address resilience and its individual approaches since, for the study of equality policies and the interventions that have been developed, we are especially interested in the individual approach.

vulnerable population without considering the sources of their vulnerability is part of the strategy of the neoliberal patriarchal policies that seek not to alter the structural inequalities causing these situations of vulnerability (Smyth & Sweetman, 2015; Wakefield & Zimmerman, 2020).

From this perspective, we must think about the theoretical-methodological challenges that link the gender approach to development policies within the framework of the Welfare State and the definition of public policies. Public policies should help to erode the structures that cause gender inequality and should integrated in its designs other oppressive elements such as ethnicity, nationality, race, disabilities, etc. In this sense, the concept of intersectionality contribute to integrate different intersections and oppressions from theory and praxis. Crenshaw (1989) define Intersectionality as a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking.

Given the current context of threat to the pillars of the Spanish Welfare State, it is pertinent to reflect on vulnerability and resilience in order to avoid general considerations that perpetuate simplistic and patriarchal epistemological constructions[2].

The methodological approach in this article is based on a documentary review of several sources including bibliographic and legislative sources, legal texts, analysis of national and regional policies, including development cooperation policies and diverse scientific literature, books and magazine primarily. The main limitation of this article is linked to the deficiencies posed by the very concept of

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[2] We refer to epistemological constructions as those that aim to take a tour of the history of the subject with respect to the construction of scientific knowledge and the way in which it has been objectified (Jaramillo, 2003, p. 175).

resilience and its incorporation into the gender perspective. Although the concept of resilience is still in a limited integration process, either due to its lack of definition, or due to the lack of true political will to address it from a feminist transformative approach. We hope that this work can open new lines of discussion and reflection about it.

Firstly, this article aims to carry out a conceptual review and a critical analysis of the dimensions of vulnerability and resilience, currently present in social and equality policies that engage with gender inequality and permeate the social system. Secondly, we present an analysis of the concept of resilience in the global development agenda, and we tackle the evolution of this concept in the development and equality policies in the international arena. Thirdly we present the development and context of this concept in the social policies in Spain, even in the cooperation and equity policies. And next, we tackle the evolution of the policies and the transformation of how they understand women from a vulnerable collective to women in situations of vulnerability. Finally, we present some conclusions that contribute to understanding, from the Spanish case in particular, how necessary it is to take a global view that frames the trends in the international community which, regardless of the contexts or variables, are influencing girls' and women's lives through equality policies.

2. VULNERABILITY DIMENSIONS AND RESILIENCE APPROACH

The concept of vulnerability is complex (Fineman, 2008) and multifaceted (Bunce and Ford, 2015). In fact, it has been approached from different disciplines over the past several decades (Alwang, Siegel and Jorgersen, 2001; Cardona, 2004; Hannigan, 1995; Hoffman and Smith, 1999; Thywissen, 2006). Although environmental studies were the first to discuss this idea, it has since expanded to include different dimensions –natural and ecological, physical, economic, social, educational, cultural, and ideological, political and institutional, scientific and

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technological–, associated with group and individual conditions as well as environmental conditions. This concept converges in a multidimensional consideration of vulnerability linked to a situation or process (i) where exposure to risk (both endogenous and exogenous); (ii), the inability to respond; (iii) and the adaptation/recovery; (iv) of groups, individuals, households, communities, etc. exposed to external and internal situations that affect their lives, capacities, and their ability to exercise rights (Busso, 2001). The notions of risk, inability to respond, and adaptation have an inherently structural, situational, and relational nature (Virokannas, Liuski, and Kuronen, 2018). Exposure to risk (i) refers to how certain events or incidents lead to consequences for individuals or groups whereas the inability of each individual or group to respond; (ii) refers to three different aspects: the availability and access to resources or assets (quantity, quality, and variety), the strategies, and the means for coping with these events. Assets or resources can be categorised as physical, financial, human, social or social capital, and environmental assets (Busso, 2001). The idea of process is associated with something mobile meaning that temporality is intrinsic to the vulnerability concept, so it can thus be inferred that vulnerability is not static.

The sex/gender system as a pervasive structure of inequality affects the way women and men are exposed to risk, their inability to respond and their adaptive capacity; it also structures the internal and external conditions that impact both men and women's lives, capacities and the ability to exercise their rights (Butler, 1990; Flynn, Sotirin and Brady, 2012; Rubin, 1975; Wittig, 1980). Men and women's exposure to situations of vulnerability is different and therefore how each are affected by these situations also differs (Enarson and Morrow, 1998, Kabeer, 2008). Risk itself is experienced and perceived differently by women, men, girls and boys (Alston, 2009; Ariyabandu, 2009; Dasgupta, Siriner and Partha, 2010).

> Being a women is not in itself what leads to vulnerability. Vulnerability lies with the lack of access to the resources that allow people to cope with hazardous

events and this access may be gendered, in that women in general tend to have less access to or control over assets (Bradshaw, 2013, p.10).

Gender inequalities and discrimination play a role in many social aspects of life ranging from access to resources, to opportunities or decision making, which is evidence of how the above-mentioned components that make up the concept of vulnerability are intersected by gender inequalities and unequal power relations[3]. The origin of situations of vulnerability that affect women and girls is therefore rooted in the structural power inequality present in all sectors – economic, social, political, cultural–, norms and practices (Kabeer, 2008).

The approach to vulnerability as a negative reality that identifies and labels individuals or groups has led to the widespread praxis of viewing vulnerability through the lens of the individual's or the group's deficiencies and inadequacies, favouring situations that limit their autonomy and agency and create dependence (Brown, 2015). We can thus see how this concept has gradually been incorporated into regulations and public policy, building on this negative and dependent premise of individuals and groups, who are considered vulnerable as a homogenised whole. When vulnerability is seen as a characteristic that only pertains to specific groups or populations, or as an instrument of cohesion revolving around shared characteristics based on identity (race or gender) or condition (people with disabilities, poor people, drug addicts, prisoners, immigrants), it creates stigmatising exclusionary social categories –the vulnerable subject– (Fineman, 2013). This vulnerable subject replaces the autonomous and independent subject born out of the liberal tradition (Fineman, 2008).

There is a connection between the vulnerable subject and the State as the

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[3] Gender, race, age, income, migrant status, etc., are seen as characteristics of vulnerability although they do not define it. They are outcomes of other processes of discrimination and marginalization (Bradshaw, 2013).

guarantor of an egalitarian society whose institutions, though social programmes and policies, must attempt to mediate, compensate and lesson situations of vulnerability (Fineman, 2008, p. 33). Social institutions and their actions provide resources, capacities or assets for coping with disasters, situations of violence, misfortunes, etc., and these events are linked the development of resilience. Therefore, resilience arises as a counterweight to non-vulnerability, as an idea of resistance and recovery to address complex situations.

Proposals aimed at addressing vulnerability in terms of situations (Virokannas, Liuski and Kuronen, 2018), rather than the idea of vulnerability associated with individuals or groups, would facilitate developing measures that address gender inequality by identifying the situation. The visualization of the structural nature of gender inequality in the recognition and approach to vulnerability is key for building capacities and not aggravating the situation of vulnerability itself. This premise is essential for building up resilience, which is understood as the ability to respond, adapt, and reconstruct/learn in certain situations. Recovery and reconstruction, both aspects of vulnerability, have traditionally been associated with resilience and are the backbone of this concept.

Although the concept of resilience has traditionally been linked to ecology (Holling, 1973, 2001), natural disasters, economy (Hayek, 1967) and humanitarian crises, it has progressively crossed over into other disciplines and social realities (Dagdeviren, Donoghue and Promberger, 2015; Mc Robbie, 2020; Meerow, Newell and Stults, 2016; Picket, Cadenasso and Grove, 2004; Smyth and Sweetman, 2015; Walker and Cooper, 2011). Over the past decade we have been able to observe how this term has become popularised and at times misused by political leaders and International Organisations (OECD, 2014; UN Women, 2015; WB, 2013[4]). Misidentification of resilience and even treating it as a continuum

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[4] Also seen in the 2030 Agenda, specifically Target 1.5 - by 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related

without acknowledging its intermittent nature has led to situations of excessive or transferred responsibility.

This overuse of the term presents a lack of focus on the social characteristics of the resilience, in favour of an autonomous individual approach, which avoids the structural dimensions of it. According to Chandler (2013) resilience at the individual level is inherently linked to broader structural frameworks and historical developments, rather than being a unique behavioral attribute of individuals or households. This means that resilience should not be isolated of its social conditions, because by doing so resilience discourses "makeup" the reality to legitimize either the *statu quo* or regressive changes in the formulation of broader policies (Dagdeviren, Donoghue and Promberger, 2015; MacLeavy, Fannin and Larner, 2021). Authors like Harrison argue that the term resilience "... depoliticizes and shifts responsibility for dealing with the crisis away from those in power. It also creates an expectation that people should 'bounce back'" (2013, p. 99).

The agent-centric conceptualisation of the term has fostered the idea that in the face of negative circumstances, experiences and deficits, responsibility falls on the individual and the communities (Dagdeviren, Donoghue and Promberger, 2015). However, it is not always applied negatively; focus on resilience in social praxis can be seen in the mental health field where it is implemented as a primary care method (therapy) for traumatic situations suffered by veterans and prisoners of war, holocaust survivors, refugees, hostages, natural disaster survivors, etc. For example, in the field of Social Work, we can highlight the work of Fraser,

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extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters; Target 13.1 - strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries -; resilience is fully incorporated in the work of the UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNISDR, FAO, UNHCR, IOM, etc. UNDP speaks of resilient countries whose institutional capacity is high to absorb higher expenditures and orient them to "vulnerable groups"; UN-HABITAT lead the UN Climate Resilience Initiative and introduces the concept of resilient cities; FAO introduces the idea of resilient livelihoods in its programmes, etc.

Richman and Galinsky (1999), and Fraser (2004) to define the concept of resilience as a basic approach to professional practice, as well as Greene's work (2002), as a complete approach to practice, policy and research.

> The term "resilience" is reserved for unpredicted or markedly successful adaptations to negative life events, trauma, stress, and other forms of risk. If we can understand what helps some people to function well in the context of high adversity, we may be able to incorporate this knowledge into new practice strategies (Fraser, Richman and Galinsky, 1999, p. 136).

Resilience is not exclusively focused on survival, but rather on reconstructing and learning from adverse situations (Panter-Brick, 2014; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick and Yehuda, 2014). This maxim is not initially incorrect for certain situations; however, it could be troublesome if the application of or search for resilience revolves around the individual agency, while ignoring the structure and the impact it has on it. If this is the case, situations of vulnerability will continue to occur and capacities/needs will not be fully developed (Carballo and Leyra, 2017). Institutions, in their attempt to create and provide assets for subjects experiencing situations of vulnerability, are diluting subjects' individuality in favour of universality and homogenisation while overlooking the fact that subjects' experiences are influenced by their different intersections (Williams, 2018). These subjects are also constrained by their access to, management of, and the quality and quantity of the resources they have or can obtain, which directly affects the accumulation of these assets. Parallel to this conceptual homogenization an overemphasize in the resilience discourse of the role of agency is occurring "while neglecting the role of structural influences such class status, operation of markets and the role of the state for the ways individuals and households respond to hardship and crises" (Dagdeviren, Donoghue and Promberger, 2015, p.13).

Structure (norms, traditions, class, gender, ethic divisions, power relations, colonial influence and their economic and political manifestations) shapes

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individual behaviour and social relations (Dagdeviren, Donoghue and Promberger, 2015). Therefore, if we take a closer look at the structure/agency debate (Dolfsma and Verburg, 2008) surrounding resilience, we must acknowledge key aspects such as the fact that groups and individuals are unequal (consider gender, class, race/ethnicity). The existence of hierarchies, power relations and inequalities affect whether or not a person can be more or less resilient on an individual and systemic level (Cote and Nightingale, 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). The conditions that lead both to a situation of vulnerability and to a person's response to adversity with resilience cannot be separated from the structural components that shape them.

The accumulation of assets allocated and provided by the State and its institutions, which are aimed at building individual resiliency capacities as a tool or strategy for addressing vulnerability, transfers the Government's responsibility directly to the individual, thus weakening the former's role and responsibility as a guarantor.

The analytical frameworks of resilience and vulnerability present dichotomies, among others, we will highlight the one in which vulnerability is considered bad and should be reduced and resilience is considered positive and should be encouraged and improved (Tschakert and Tuana, 2013). This analytical framework will help us understand some of the shifts on the equity, social and development policies, which recognize in the potential resilient subjects their recourses and their agency (for example women who are facing different situations of vulnerability).

3. RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The use of resilience in development policies is noteworthy. Thus, resilience is understood as associated with risk and disaster management, establishing a direct causality with development processes. In the development agenda

resilience is defined as the ability of the system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform, and recover. However, depending on the specific sector that addresses resilience, it will have different approaches. For example, risk reduction resilience is going to differ from urban resilience or migratory resilience.

The arise of the "resilience" concept in development politics is intertwined with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), as seeing in Hyogo International Summit (2005). This approach understands resilience as part of the ability of any system to respond to external shocks, adapt, evolve, etc. Including complex systemic thinking that is encompassed in the main idea of development. Although the need to integrate disaster risk, -reduction policies into national development strategies- is contemplated in the Hyogo Framework for Action, it will not be until ten years later at the III DRR Summit in Sendai (2015), when the concepts of sustainability and resilience are linked in development policies. In this scenario, climate change appears directly associated with the origin of current disasters, establishing an analytical and action framework that will be assumed in the subsequent 2030 Agenda. This Agenda will promote changes in the modes of production and consumption of the entire population to move towards a fairer and more sustainable world.

Table 1. Global Resilience Agenda

2005, Hyogo, Japón	**Second UN World Conference on the Reduction of Disaster Risk**	International Strategy of the United Nations on Disaster Risk (UNISDR)
2015, Sendai, Japón	**Third UN World Conference on DRR**	United Nations International Strategy on Disaster Risk (UNISDR)
2015, Nueva York	**UN Summit for the approval of the post-development agenda 2015, 69th session UNGA.**	UN General Assembly

2015, Paris	**Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, COP21**	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
2016, Marrakech	**COP22**	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
2016, Estambul, Turquia	**1st World Humanitarian Summit "One Humanity: A Shared Responsibility"**	United Nations General Secretariat
2016, Quito, Ecuador	**Habitat III - United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development**	UN-HABITAT

Source: DGPOLDES, 2018.

In 2017 the UN signed the Declaration of the New Urban Agenda that proposes to guarantee environmental sustainability and strengthen urban resilience. This declaration understood resilience and sustainability as cross-cutting concepts. If the concept of sustainability is a result, an ideal state, resilience brings our attention to the process of the system and its changes (Marchese *et al.*, 2018), it is a supplement of the concept of sustainable development (Liang and Li, 2020).

But despite linkages and the recognition of them between disaster risk, resilience and development, there is a lack of definition in the international development agenda, as seeing, for example in the concretion of the SDGs and the early post 2015 development agenda. The world has clear evidence and projections related to climate change and its consequences, potential pandemics, as the one that humanity recently faced with COVID 19, or vulnerability situations provoked by conflicts and wars (Afganistan, Syria, Ukraine, etc.). But this does not seem enough to change the development model or to design policies for the entire population and communities to assure their lives with dignity, avoid increasing upcoming situations of vulnerability.

It seems clear that all the efforts of the last decades on monitoring, predicting and forecasting is really important to help policy makers[5] to assist their decisions and reduce potential risk. But the problem is the system itself, the model of development that enables in the first instance the situations for which measures must be developed in this regard. Also, there is another reflection we can made about the type of development it is being generated and the increased of vulnerability that its created and the circle of poverty and inequality.

Resilience, with its institutional, social, economic and environmental dimensions, it is trying to integrate into sustainable development taking into consideration the complexity of the actual system. The resilience approach must bring together development, policy, investment and humanitarian actors in order to address multi-hazard risks and underly causes of vulnerability in a holistic, complex and systemic way. This expanded approach must integrate a Human Rights, Gender and Intersectional approach, where empowerment of people who suffer situations of greater discrimination and violation of rights is a central issue. In this sense, the role of women as active subjects in the construction of the sought-after "resilient societies 2.0" has been recognized and its crucial.

Disasters, current crises, conflicts, etc. affect men and women unequally, with women and girls being the most affected by structural gender inequalities associated with access to resources, power, participation, etc. These inequalities are exacerbated by crises, increasing the risks for women and girls and the situations of vulnerability they face.

The responsibilities and roles traditionally assigned to men and women will

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[5] Incheon Roadmap for Asia, Hyogo Framework for Action, Sendai Framework risk reduction, Agenda 2030, The Paris Agreement, national measures as seeing in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Peru or Philippines, etc.

determine how differently they experience the effects of crises, conflicts or disasters, including the effects of climate change. It seems that the inclusion of resilient approaches can favor the transformation and elimination of these inequalities from processes of empowerment and change.

4. FROM WOMEN AS A "VULNERABLE COLLECTIVE" TO SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY AND WOMEN'S INEQUALITY: SOME NOTES TO THE SPANISH CASE.

The Spanish welfare system provides collective structures to address certain needs (education, health, pensions and social services), leaving others uncovered that have to be met by private structures: households (Pérez Orozco, 2014). In accordance with the distinctive features of the Mediterranean welfare model, this welfare system is characterised by strong family/household participation, which acts as a social structure and an additional resource to those provided by the State (Moreno, 2002). This characteristic, which could be interpreted as a consequence of the lack of care provided through State intervention, has led to necessary basic care[6] being carried out in the home, mainly assumed by women.

As shown by data from the National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística - INE) on domestic caregiving and household chores, in Spain, women devote on average 20 hours per week to household chores, compared to

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[6] The term "care" refers to the activities related to social reproduction such as childcare, elder care, care for the sick and people with disabilities. In this article it is used a broad meaning of care, including all activities and actions needed to live, such as cleaning or food preparing. By using this broad definition, the authors intend to make visible not only the white women experiencing relational face to face caring practices, but also the experience of many women oppressed by other factors such as social class, ethnicity or nationality (Mahon and Robinson, 2011).

The concept of productive work refers to work intended to produce goods and services to be exchanged in the market in exchange for remuneration; unlike reproduction work, which is carried out for the family, without obtaining remuneration and outside the labor market, and which, when carried out outside the labor market, is made invisible and is not recognized as "work" (Benería, 2006).

an average of 11 hours for men. Similarly, women devote on average 38 hours per week to childcare while the average for men sits at 23 (INE[7]).

The unequal burden of care work, places women at a disadvantage when compared to men given that they must balance this work with paid employment as well as with any other activities (such as social or community participation). The household`s strategies for managing care tasks vary depending on factors such as social class, ethnicity or nationality. Those households that can afford it, have commodified the care work, which has become a job opportunity for migrant and/or lower classes women, while more privileged women have moved to other work sectors (Pastor, 2019). As privileged men do not assume their part on care provisions, the privileged women`s "freedom" requires the poorest working class women subordination (Hooks, 2000a).

Oppressive factors such as class, ethnicity, nationality, or race contribute to women's varying degrees of vulnerability[8], which is not an inherent trait, but rather a consequence of gender inequality. The consideration of the intersection of different oppressive elements, contributes to the design of more inclusive public policies, with an impact on a greater number of women.

Spanish public policies have undergone a series of transformations, including concepts such as vulnerability and resilience. In that sense, it is important to demonstrate how these concepts are applied within the public policy framework, especially in equality policies. The resilient capacity of women has traditionally been considered only for public policies in terms of capacity. This reality ignores other potential complexities such as resistance and process, as Trujillo (2011) explains:

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[7] Data obtain from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (accessed May 25, 2023). https://www.ine.es/ss/Satellite?L=es_ES&c=INESeccion_C&cid=1259950772779&p=1254735110672&pagename=ProductosYServicios%2FPYSLayout&param1=PYSDetalle&param3=1259924822888

[8] We must keep in mind that women are not a homogenous group and that the degree of vulnerability inflicted on them by gender inequality differs in comparison to other oppressive factors that intersect gender, such as social class, ethnicity, functional diversity/disability or age.

a procedural view of resilience allows us to overcome essentialist, timeless understandings, paving the way for future approaches, making room for complex, historic, dynamic, existentialist understandings, including ontogenetic development, without the need to set aside structuralist considerations of the elements, qualities, or relations that comprise resilience, which can be subsumed and organised amongst themselves (p. 16).

Simultaneously, equality policies and social policies have advanced parallelly feeding off each other and enriching their respective areas of action. We cannot consider the advances of one without considering the progress of the other, and this has had a direct impact on the population overall and on women in particular. A prime example of this is the progress of the Social Services Catalogue[9] itself, where we can find services and specific assistance for work-life balance, gender-based violence, and care programmes for dependants and the elderly; in addition, other factors, such as rest for female caregivers and co-responsibility (sometimes called "family respite" or "care for the caregivers" programmes), are addressed. Violence, in the broadest sense of the word, or sexism in different areas of everyday life are also specifically mentioned.

In parallel, we find that the resilience policies of Spanish cooperation seek to strengthen the capacity of countries to face the impacts of crises and disasters, through the development of comprehensive and sustainable strategies that involve all relevant sectors and actors. The approach focuses on risk prevention and management, adaptation to climate change, social protection and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development (DGPOLDES, 2018).

In the field of development, for Spanish Cooperation, resilience can be conceived in three different ways: as a "property" of a community or one of its elements, as

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[9] The Social Services Catalogue is prepared by the Government and is the instrument which determines the range of services and benefits guaranteed through the Public Care Social Services network, whether these benefits are economical and/or technological or in the form of services from the public social services system; this document serves as a model for the Autonomous Communities and establishes quality and best practice principles for benefits. It was last updated in 2013.

a "capacity" of the actors to face unexpected changes in the environment, and as a dynamic capacity-building "process" focused on maintaining the livelihoods of populations (DGPOLDES, 2018). In addition, these categories must substantively include the gender approach as well as other intersectional approaches.

A key policy of Spanish cooperation regarding women's resilience is the focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in all interventions, including the promotion of active and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes and the strengthening of their capacities to face difficult situations.

In the last few years, the Spanish Cooperation (DGPOLDES, 2018) has incorporated a strategic plan called "The Construction of Resilience for Well-being" (CRB). This plan is supported by the concepts and approaches of resilient thinking in a holistic way, analyzing the relationship between vulnerability and inequality, under the mandate of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind". This Plan highlights the role of women as main contributors to human well-being, emphasizing within the interdependence between human and natural systems and the generation and management of threats. Building Resilience for Well-being contributes to the empowerment of women, facilitating their access to all kinds of resources, including training and technologies, and encouraging their participation in decision-making. This situation of vulnerability has nothing to do with the physical or mental capacities of women, it is a matter of gender inequality. It is the gender roles and responsibilities assigned by society and culture that determine how men and women differently experience the effects of crises, conflicts or disasters, including the effects of climate change. It is therefore essential to analyze these roles to promote empowerment measures that contribute to a transformation of society (Jost, Ferdous and Spicer, 2014).

Despite the progress made since the inception of the Spanish welfare system, it is still easy to find policies directed at different "vulnerable collectives" that do not take into consideration the framework of inequalities within those collectives.

It is also common to see how social services continue to prioritise personalised attention to "cases" and "families" (understood from a homogenising point of view). Thus, they continue without thoroughly developing a concept of community development that further explores broadening approaches to resilience, including other concepts such as "governance", "agency", or "empowerment," which feminists have historically demanded. All these concepts associated with resilience (in a broad sense) are being gradually blurred in favour of political and economic interests, as the anthropologist Kate Young rightly pointed out more than two decades ago:

> This individualistic approach to empowerment fits together with the belief in entrepreneurial capitalism and market forces as the main saviours of sickly or backward economies, and with the current trend for limiting state provision of welfare, services and employment (1993, p. 153).

We can see through this analysis how "resilience" itself, as a potentially interesting term to apply in public policies, development policies and social intervention, loses value when applied for economic and capitalist interests, delegating and outsourcing the responsibility for recovery to people in situations of vulnerability (and more specifically women), ignoring the State's own responsibility to provide and guarantee rights and opportunities for all individuals.

The shift from considering women as a vulnerable group to considering women in vulnerable conditions from a perspective of inequality is in line with feminist perspectives that emphasize the importance of addressing structural and cultural inequalities to achieve gender justice (Connell, 2012; hooks, 2000b). This change involves recognizing that women's vulnerability is not an inherent characteristic of their gender, but rather the result of social structures and practices that create and maintain gender inequality (Butler, 1990; Mohanty, 1988). By adopting an intersectional approach that considers how gender intersects with other axes of power and oppression (e.g., race, class, sexuality), it is possible to identify the

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specific conditions of vulnerability that affect different groups of women and develop targeted interventions to address them (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Gender inequalities limit the ability to access, control, use, and enjoy different resources (tangible and intangible) and are embedded in unequal power relations. Situations of vulnerability faced by women and girls are determined by power and privilege, hence intrinsically linked to inequalities and reflected in social norms and behaviour. Consequently, there is a structural dimension, rooted in discriminatory norms and practices in all spheres of society, which will also limit the development of transformative resilience capacities.

The resilience approach present in social and equity policies does not focus on the social or economic transformation of the conditions that generate situations of vulnerability. The structural inequalities and the deficiencies of the public policies system in their coupling with neoliberalism are redirecting the governance of the State and the power of women.

The policies and programmes at a national level that adopt a resilience approach for addressing situations of vulnerability affecting women must acknowledge the inequalities, diversity and intersectionality of women, in order to improve immediate needs (situation) and encourage structural changes (position). The Welfare State and its policies must, in addition to meeting the population's basic needs, support a true and formal principle of equality. As a result, it would avoid fostering situations of dependence when addressing vulnerability or outsourcing the State's responsibility to the resilient individual. This equality will only be achieved by changing the social structure, which is what shapes individual behaviour and social relationships.

The International Agenda, as a facilitator in development and social processes, plays an important role in this shift leading the consideration of discriminatory situations as opportunities to promote gender equality. In resilience approaches, it is necessary to develop interpretive frameworks that help us make visible the political, economic and ideological mechanisms that produce and maintain the structures of inequality, in the specific contexts in which we work and for which vulnerability and resilience must be reinterpreted.

Legislative and political advances in Spain at the macro level have helped to reduce gender gaps and reconsider the role of women. However, at the practical level, the integration of the resilience approach into the policies face great limitations. Resilience public policies still do not address the problem of gender in its object of knowledge and intervention; and it continues to make dichotomous gender assignments in its programs and policies. This reality poses great challenges in the present and future and the need to enrich the analytical frameworks.

In addition to that, Spain still has a lot of progress to make in terms of intersectionality, a concept that considers the diverse factors involved in public policies. In order to be effective at decreasing situations of vulnerability faced by women, they must consider the different oppression factors that affect their lives, given that these factors place them on different levels of vulnerability depending on other factors that intertwine with gender, such as ethnicity, nationality, age, or functional diversity.

Through this paper we have attempted to analyse how the concepts of vulnerability and resilience insofar as they affect women have been applied in social, development and equality policies in Spain. Reconstructing these concepts would help women expand and strengthen their agency. Likewise, this vision

represents a key element of progress in social intervention. Similarly, all of this requires that we in Academia act responsibly and ethically, acknowledging that these challenges and complexities are an opportunity to grow, learn, and build a more fair and just society.

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