# PLACING CARE WORK
# IN THE FUTURE OF WORK DISCOURSE

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*Abstract*: In this paper, we argue that the importance of care work and migration is undervalued and undertheorized in current understandings of the future of work. Discussions of the future of work are predominantly technocentric. Focus tends toward speculative predictions and the implications of supposedly inevitable technological advances that will lead to evolving adaptation skills and job loss. This prevailing discourse prioritises economic development and productivity, which is reinforced by institutional support at the global scale, influencing policy and practice. Although the demand for care work continues to grow globally, its meaningful inclusion in the future of work discourse is limited, and arguably effaced. We emphasise that the definition of care work is expansive, is difficult to quantify, and it cannot be easily automated. Similarly, high-income countries increasingly rely on migration flows to meet their care work needs, and in turn middle- and low-income countries rely on remittances to sustain their development and people's livelihoods. In this paper, we offer a conceptual corrective to better situate the dense context of care work. In doing so, we draw on valuable perspectives on diverse economies, decent work and sustainable livelihoods, global care chains, and glocalisation. Incorporating well established insights from within these foci will lead to more effective discussion and a policy agenda for the future of work that takes socially just care work into consideration.

*Keywords*: care work, future of work, labour, migration, sustainable livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound and rapid impact on workers worldwide. However, this impact was unevenly distributed socially and spatially. Certain workers were affected more than others because of the different nature of their work and the uneven geographies of social difference, which existed before the pandemic and were magnified by it (Rose-Redwood et al. 2020). In particular, the pandemic placed enormous strain on migration systems and on the mobility and livelihoods of migrant workers (Foley, Piper 2020; Guadagno 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women, families, and people with significant care burdens (Power 2020), and intensified a "crisis of care". Nations struggled with structural weaknesses in the provision of health and care, including high-income nations disproportionately dependent on migrants and racialised women (Camilletti, Nesbitt-Ahmed 2022; Schilliger et al. 2022).

The ongoing impact of the pandemic overlaps with the increasing prominence of technological advancement, innovation, and discussions about the "future of work" in global economic policy debates (Balliester, Elsheikhi 2018; Lund et al. 2021). This dominant framing encompasses incomplete narratives, whereby far-reaching changes have been decided, and the thick context of work, and the workers most likely to be affected, lack representation. In other words, predictions are not value-neutral, but shape possible futures by creating "collectively held, institutionally stabilised, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through and supportive of, advances in science and technology" (Jassanoff 2015: 4). The discourse on the future of work is socially contingent and a palimpsest of beliefs and assumptions about work. Care work and how it fits into the future of work exemplifies this challenge. While some research has identified the future of work as a "critical public health concern" (Jetha et al. 2021: 658), there is less explicit policy and scholarly interest in connecting the future of work to critical discussions of health and

care (MacLeavy 2021; Schlogl et al. 2021). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 would require a near doubling of current investment in the care economy, i.e., an increase from the currently projected 152 million new care jobs to 269 million by 2030 (Addati 2021; ILO 2019). To effectively address future challenges, connections between critical research in the health and care sectors must be integrated with broader discussions about the future of work.

In response to this special issue on new technologies, migration, and the future of work, this paper addresses the insufficient consideration of care work in the future of work discussions. Given the underlying marginalisation of care work, particularly through its unpaid forms, feminisation, and reliance on migrant flows, it is only logical that care work is often undertheorized or left out of these automation discourses. We argue a more comprehensive understanding of care work is needed to recognise its diversity and understand how it fits into current future of work debates. Our analysis underscores the importance of situating the understanding of care work in transnational contexts and within social, cultural, economic, and political structures. Although indispensable to society, care work is widely seen as a personal responsibility, performed primarily by women, rather than a public good that supports sustainable development. Similarly, the provision of care work is highly dependent on migration. Neglecting broader conceptualisations of care work in discussions about the future of work and technological change risks exacerbating the existing crisis in care. While it is impossible to predict the future, we know that care work and migration are critical to the future of work, despite their marginalisation in much of the current discourse. Therefore, it is important and urgent to fully include care work in discussions about the future of work to imagine, plan, and realise a better future for care recipients and care workers.

To do justice to our stance we begin with a brief overview of the main elements of care work and the current context. We especially consider the concepts of decent work and sustainable care livelihoods to expand our vision of where care is situated in the future of work. Second, we discuss the future of work

discourse as an incomplete narrative that effaces appropriate consideration of care work. Finally, as a conceptual corrective, we point to the complex nature of care and care work using the lens of global care chains (GCCs), building on the previous explanations of decent work, sustainable livelihoods, and their intersection with glocal perspectives to better incorporate care work into the future of work discourse.

## CARE WORK AND THE CURRENT CONTEXT

The nature and meaning of work are always in flux. To support our critique of the discourse on the future of work, we provide a brief introduction to the concepts and practices of work and care work, and their relationship to the capitalist economy. Work has been conceptualised in different ways throughout history and in different geographies. Instead of understanding work through the jobs we find in today's market-based economies, we see work as the activities we all engage in for "naked survival" (Komlosy 2018: 8). Survival, wellbeing, and livelihoods are the essences of work, all with different dimensions and meanings. Work is a complex activity shaped by social, economic, and historical processes and is often personal (Blustein 2019). The "economy" is the dominant register into which work is typically placed under capitalism. We share in the critical perspective that the economy is a contested sociotechnical and performative practice of representing social relations, not a thing that can be captured, studied, quantified, or simplified in rationalist terms (Miller 2013; Mitchell 2009). This view is important for questioning what gets included or excluded in economic thinking and what kinds of work take centre stage in economic discourses, which influence policy and practice.

Despite this critical perspective, there is a prevailing capitalocentric logic in how work is constituted and valued. This logic was originally introduced by Gibson-Graham (1995) to account for the marginalisation of noncapitalist economies. Some forms of economic activity, like care work, are devalued, marginalised, or made less visible. Gibson-Graham (2006: 6)

astutely explained, "most economic discourse is capitalocentric [and] other forms of economy (not to mention noneconomic aspects of social life) are often understood primarily with reference to capitalism; as fundamentally the same as (or modelled upon) capitalism, or as being the complement of capitalism; as existing in capitalism's space or orbit". Capitalist economies are composed of various elements, including paid and unpaid labour, household work and volunteering, reciprocal exchange, wage labour, market and nonmarket exchange, slave labour, theft, and indentured servitude. Capitalocentrism has become an important concept within feminist economic theory to highlight how socioeconomic well-being is regularly challenged by the ways in which people are alienated within capitalism (see Alhojärvi 2020). The separation between workers and their labour predominantly manifests in a sense of powerlessness, limiting the potential and agency of workers and distorting relationships between people (Zitcher 2021). Conceptualising this as "diverse economies" counters capitalocentrism recognising some forms of working life that might be beneficial and generative, while others are harmful and oppressive (Gibson-Graham 2008). Re-positioning the characteristics of work and the economy as diverse and context-specific is critical to how we define care work and consider the sustainability of people's livelihoods.

Care, both as a concept and a practice, requires its own definitions to understand its relationship to the overall meaning and value of work in capitalist society. We draw on important feminist theories of care, especially considering care in a context-specific way that challenges capitalocentric logics. Tronto and Fisher's (1990: 40) work is certainly one of the most widely used formulations of care, understood as a kind of "species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so we can live in it as well as possible". This formulation of care encompasses bodies, identities, communities, and the environment (Tronto, Fisher 1990). Tronto (1993) has built on this work by discussing what constitutes an ethic of care as attention to the needs of others, a clear collective responsibility for said needs, the competence required to meet those needs, and the reciprocal relationships between those

who receive care and those who give care. For Tronto (1993: 121), such an ethic of care and caring relationships, means that our analyses of care are attuned to difference and work to uncover "the mechanism[s] by which ignorance serves to prevent the relatively privileged from noticing the needs of others". Care work thus refers to the diverse practices of care, the provision of care, and the web of relations between caregivers and those receiving care.

Folbre (2006a) has notably categorised care work into four different areas: unpaid work, unpaid work that primarily contributes to subsistence, informal work, and paid formal employment. These four categories are further divided into direct care or indirect care. The former being the explicit "process of personal and emotional engagement" and the latter being the "care activities that provide support for direct care" as well as considerations of whom these care activities are provided to (children, the elderly, the sick or disabled, other adults, or oneself) (Folbre 2006a: 187). Recent research and policy from the International Labour Organization (ILO) have adopted a similar definition of care work:

> care work consists of two overlapping and complementary activities: direct, personal and relational care activities, such as feeding a baby or nursing an ill partner; and indirect care activities, such as cooking and cleaning. Care work can be unpaid and provided without a monetary reward by unpaid careers or can be performed for pay or profit (care employment). The global care workforce includes care workers for pay or profit in care sectors (education, health and social work), care workers in other sectors, and domestic workers. It also includes non-care workers in care sectors as they support the provision of care services (Addati 2021: 150).

These broad definitions of care work expand its meaning and hold it in tension with many forms of work and other economic activities. Care work can be described as social reproduction or "the processes by which a social system reproduces itself" (Federici 2019: 55). It includes looking after people's physical, psychological, emotional, and developmental needs (Standing 2001: 17). Following Bhattacharya (2017), care work is the life-making work and practices that sustain all forms of

production and consumption in society. Crucially, care work, whether paid/unpaid or direct/indirect, is not subordinate to the economy or other forms of work, but tightly woven together. However, the prevailing conceptualisation of care and our interdependence on caring for each other has been deeply "pathologized, rather than recognised as part of our human condition" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 23). We argue for a conceptualisation of care beyond narrowly defined work in healthcare markets and instead position care as part of the wider infrastructures of all social life (Saltiel, Strüver, 2022).

Understanding specific features of care work assists us to consider its place in future of work debates. For example, care work is defined as being high-touch and hard to automate (Reid 2021). The care sector is highly gendered, in that women make up 65 per cent of the global care workforce (Addati et al. 2018). This profound feminisation of care work is itself embedded in socially constructed gender norms that view caregiving as a "natural" attribute of women, rather than a skill or competency, which adds to its devaluation as "work". The care sector and care demands are growing globally and how this need for care will be met is uncertain, but the inclusion of migrant workers is and will remain an important feature (Addati et al. 2021; Farris, Bergfeld 2022; Walton-Roberts 2022). Likewise, the global care economy as it has developed perpetuates differences between the Global North and South through migration processes that represent a "care drain" that exploits feminised and racialised migrant care labour (López Hernán 2019). In this sense, we consider care vital to all social life, but unequally distributed geographically, and inadequately conceptualised in much policy and practice. With the current context in mind, we consider decent work and sustainable care livelihoods.

## DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE CARE LIVELIHOODS

Care work, and any discussion on the future of work, must be situated within the broader international discussion on work and development. The International Labour Organisation

(ILO) (n.d.d) defines work as "human activities, paid or unpaid, that produce the goods or services in an economy, or supply the needs of a community, or provide a person's accustomed means of livelihood". Livelihood is central to this definition, yet its meaning is unclearly articulated. The concept is widely understood within development scholarship and practice at various scales (local, national, global) to encompass more than human capital and an accustomed means of living. Discussing work and livelihood simplistically is insufficient. Decent work, a universal objective central to numerous UN Resolutions and conference outcome documents since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (ILO n.d.a), must be considered:

> decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO n.d.a).
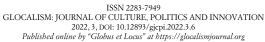
The four pillars of decent work (employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue) were adopted in 2015 as integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Goals. Goal 8 emphasises decent work and economic growth, promoting inclusivity, sustainability, productive employment, and "decent work for all" (United Nations 2015b). Additionally, the ILO constitution includes a mandate for gender-based labour equality supported by institutional tools and policies that support an integrative sectoral approach with the decent work agenda (ILO n.d.c). Strikingly the future of work discourse, supported by the ILO, fails to adequately incorporate the decent work agenda. The disconnect between the future of work and decent work debates is concerning. Additionally, the absence of explicit mention of sustainable development is problematic. The ILO is one global institution that has contributed path breaking work toward cooperation for decent work (including tackling forced labour, informal labour, and

modern slave labour, ILO n.d.b) and a sustainable development agenda globally and nationally (Zitcher 2021).

Most commonly, sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987b: 16). The sustainability concept has evolved to explicitly include the "triple bottom line" (see Sachs 2012): economic development, social development, and environmental protection. There is a significant "planetary network of practices and relations that continually produce and affirm this triple distinction; the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the World Bank place 'economic, social, and environmental' concerns at the core of their policy articulations" (Miller 2019: 5). However, economics is prioritised within sustainability initiatives and discourse, and this is also true of future of work debates (Beckerman 1994; Kanbur 2002; Lélé 1991). This resonates with the neoliberal perspective (WCED 1987b; United Nations 1992), which argues that unsustainable development is caused by chronic poverty and inappropriate technology, and thus solutions centre on structural economic changes and technological innovations. These ideas do not operate in silos; they have a long history of shaping social and economic change, and thus labour markets, labour relations, and the divisions of labour globally.

Countering the neoliberal discourse, the social justice perspective (for example, Hove 2004; Redclift 1987; 2005; 2018; Smith et al. 2007) blames our inequitable global capitalist system for unsustainable development. A social justice informed discourse is intertwined with sustainable livelihoods, seen as a precondition for human stability, equity, and sustainability (WCED 1987a). Simply, a livelihood is a "means of gaining a living" (Chambers, Conway 1992: 8). More comprehensively, livelihoods may be understood as "the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities (strategies used), and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household" (Ellis 2000: 10). The aim of a sustainable livelihoods approach, emphasised since the 1990s, is to put people into the centre of the development process, recognising their

agency over decision making, seeing them as actors not victims, and focusing on what they have rather than what they do not have (Chambers, Conway 1992; Chambers 1995). This conceptual trajectory is associated with a geographical relational perspective, emphasising "a power-laden field of relations in which lives are made and unmade" (Miller 2019: 160). A livelihoods approach provides a way to link macro-level processes to micro-level outcomes and responses and is a useful way to study glocalisation (de Haan 2000; Oberhauser et al. 2004; Rankin 2003). This is because a livelihood approach counters unilinear macro-economic perspectives (Scoones 2009; 2015) to pursue complex analyses at the micro-level, including individuals, households, families, and local communities, who may derive a part of their livelihood across multiple scales.

Moving beyond unilinear, macro-economic thinking, technologically deterministic change should not be upheld as an inevitability and thoughtful consideration of people's agency, vulnerability, and lived realities must be actively incorporated into future of work discussions. This is imperative to ensure sustainable outcomes and a socially just future. The livelihoods approach captures the dynamic, historical, and relational processes that inform "the diverse ways people make a living and build their worlds" (Bebbington 1999: 2021), accounting for diverse economies. It is a valuable way to determine whether people are engaged in decent work and whether their work and well-being are resilient to stresses and shocks (wherever they may originate), and secure in the short and long term. Research has illuminated some key trends, including household decomposition with enhanced individuality, diversification of livelihoods (De Haan, Zoomers 2003), and growing multi-local livelihoods such as those articulated with migration options (De Haan 2000).

The context of care, decent work, and sustainable livelihoods brings together the multilocal realities of people that have engendered a rethinking of dichotomies such as urban-rural and global-local. Such rethinking recognises that "peoples' lives [are becoming] increasingly interconnected via inter-local networks, at different spatial scales", with a "high spatial variability of migration impact" (de Haan, Zoomers 2003: 358). Within the care

economy, gendered livelihoods are of particular importance because "[they] encompass the material realities and ideological processes that shape and are shaped by economic strategies in diverse geographical locations" (Oberhauser et al. 2004: 205). This is particularly important to acknowledge in any consideration of the future of work, technological change, and how they may relate to care work. Keeping these conceptualisations of decent work, care work, and sustainable livelihoods in mind, we turn to the future of work discourse and its relationship to the care economy.

## THE FUTURE OF WORK AND POLICING CARE WORK

### *The future of work discourse*

At its core, the future of work is a thematic discourse that encompasses a broad range of research and policy concerns and responses to rapid changes in forms of employment, workplace organisation, and livelihoods. The future of work discourse is technocentric. Significant technological innovations and the ways in which they drive these changes are the central feature. Because the future of work is a broad phrase, it is often applied to many different contexts or used in different research areas. As such, we do not claim that our discussion of the prevailing discourse on the future of work is exhaustive. Our discussion is not in the style of a systematic review (Cf. Santana, Corbo 2020). Our approach was integrative to combine perspectives and insights from different fields and actors, especially in relation to an emerging theme that is underexplored: care and the future of work. This integrative approach led us to an analysis of the disconnected perspectives on the future of work and care. Rectifying this oversight is necessary since "the future of work" is over and above one of the most popular phrases used by consultancies, international organisations, and academics[1], and thus may manifest in unsustainable development and enhanced labour vulnerability.

As an illustrative example, a simple search query for the exact term "future of work" in abstracts, titles, or keywords

yielded 935 publications in Web of Science and 1,253 publications in SCOPUS. However, adding "care" to these search parameters yielded only 24 results in the Web of Science and 65 in SCOPUS[2]. These results of the initial search, while far from being a complete evaluation, raise an important question: why is care not more explicitly linked to the future of work? Especially given that health occupations are among the sectors marked for labour force growth in most OECD nations (Addati, 2021). This search excluded several terms such as artificial intelligence, automation, the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), and the fourth agricultural revolution, that are often closely associated with research and policy on the future of work. For the scope of this article, we focused on literature that provides definitions or semantic overviews of the future of work. To examine what the future of work means, and the ways in which care work is incorporated, we must better understand how it is discursively mediated and defined as an emerging topic.

According to one summary, "technologies that consistently double in processing speed, power, or capability per unit of time", and the decreasing cost of said technologies, are key drivers of the future of work (Clauson 2020: 557). A wide range of technologies such as genomics, nanotechnology, 3D printing, artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain, and quantum computing are important examples of exponential technologies (Clauson 2020). It is argued that while all these technologies will impact the future of work, automation enabled by artificial intelligence and robotics technologies is particularly important. For example, in their working paper originally published in 2013, Frey and Osborne (2017) estimated that 47 per cent of all jobs in the United States are at high risk of automation. This incredible statement has continued to attract significant attention in the media and academia, including editorialised headlines stating half of all jobs will be automated (for example, see Rundle 2014). With over 11,000 citations in Google Scholar, Frey and Osborne's (2017) analysis is one of the most cited studies on automation and the future of work. However, this research has been challenged and re-examined. While Frey and Osborne (2017) used an occupation-based approach to calculate potential job

losses from automation, OECD research used a task-based approach (Arntz et al. 2016). Focusing on tasks at risk of automation, rather than entire occupations provided a more moderate estimate that 9 percent of jobs in OECD countries are at risk (Arntz et al. 2016).

Foundational work, such as that of Frey and Osborne (2017) and Arntz et al. (2016), emphasised the centripetal role of technology in the future of work. For example, Reid-Musson et al. (2020) argued that technological change in the workplace is often treated as a neutral backdrop when discussing the future of work, rather than how it might deepen existing inequalities among workers. Similarly, Samers (2021) examined a range of academic research, grey literature, and popular media to show how different conceptions of the age of artificial intelligence and robotics are embedded into common genres (e.g., optimism or doomsday). Different speculative accounts of the future of work have the potential to shape political and policy responses to new technologies, but also risk perpetuating the notion that technological change cannot be slowed or stopped, or that its benefits are always greater than its risks (Reid-Musson et al. 2020; Sammers 2021). The reality is more complex than some narratives about the future of work suggest.

For instance, it is important to remember that "just because a task can be automated doesn't mean that it will be; new technologies often require costly and time-consuming organisational changes" (Anthes 2017: 317), and may not improve efficiency (Menchik 2022). Menchik's (2022) research on medical technology automation highlighted the need to understand the relationship between tasks, types of work ("expert" versus "unskilled"), the body and workplace divisions of labour. The discourse on the prediction of automation and the associated loss of jobs has had polarising social implications, with some fearing the mass loss of jobs through automation will be ruinous, while others argue that it could mean a complete and total liberation from work (Bastani 2019). Spencer (2018), however, argues that the reality is more nuanced, and the main concern should be that technology is not associated with less work overall, but with impacts on the quality of work, such as increased surveillance and monitoring of workers, an increasing shift to precarious contracts or gig

work, and greater concentration of ownership of production. This is consistent with Benanav's (2020) analysis that the discourse on automation often mistakenly assumes that jobs are already being replaced by automation and that this is *inevitable*. In examining economic trends, Benanav (2020) argued that capitalism is in a strong phase of low demand for labour, which is accompanied by the phenomenon of secular stagnation (low growth and low capital investment) that can be observed globally. Given the former trends, Benanav (2020) argued that continued efforts to lower wages, shrink the labour force, and intensify work are a more likely scenario than widespread capital-intensive investment in automation that eliminates workers altogether.

Despite these nuances, the narrative of impending mass job loss due to supposedly uninterrupted technological change has permeated policy. In a recent discourse analysis of 195 policy documents addressing the future of work, Schlogl et al. (2021: 17) found that regardless of the interests represented, a "rhetoric of inevitabilism" prevails when discussing the likelihood of technologically induced job loss. In response, key proposals focus on the urgent need for new skills and upskilling or retraining workers. For example, a McKinsey Global Institute report (2021) on the future of work, after Covid-19, suggested that demand is increasing not only for technological skills but for social and emotional skills (Lund et al. 2021), which are centrally important in care work. However, upskilling programs and policies tend to be broad measures that do not consider workers' everyday practices or who in society has the economic or social means to upgrade their skills (Jetha et al. 2021; Richardson, Bissel 2019). The burden is placed on workers to upskill, but we know little about why workers and the public have or have not engaged with automation discourses (Samers 2021). In one survey of adults in the United Kingdom, Jeffery (2021) described how using rhetoric that portrays the threat of automation as explicitly unfair, increased respondents' preference for supportive policies for those disadvantaged by automation. In short, how the future of work is framed matters greatly.

Others have argued that projections of the future of work do not fully consider work in the Global South and technological change in countries that are not yet post-industrialised

(Pierce et al. 2019). In the Global North inequality and precarity are rising with an accentuated polarisation of the job market (Stiglitz 2012). For example, research on immigration and platform work in Canada suggested that segmented labour markets and racial capitalism precondition the emergence of platform economies that further constrain workers' agency and provide greater flexibility to capital, not labour (Lam, Triandafyllidou 2022). Investigating the relationships between automation, growing inequality, and the implications for decent and dignified work is imperative (Blustein 2019). Others argue that we need more research to understand how the future of work will overlay existing gender and racial inequalities, both of which are currently underrepresented in discussions of automation (MacLeavy, Lapworth, 2020; Whitehouse, Brady 2019). Automation is also a geographically situated phenomenon that occurs in different places and at different times. Automation's significance is often discussed on a larger scale without considering the more intimate everyday experiences and well-being of people or its uneven impacts along lines of socioeconomic difference (Bissell 2021; Attoh et al. 2021).

Discourse on the future of work tends to silo different actors, such as economists, those in technical roles developing technologies (e.g., engineers, computer scientists), companies deploying automation, and workers whose livelihoods are affected by new technologies. These actors are rarely brought into conversation with each other to explore active stakeholder engagement, their level of agency and vulnerability, and how the adoption of new technologies can be effectively negotiated across time and space. More is required to consider how workers' perspectives and lived realities compare with industrial, international, and academic debates about the future of work. By ignoring these contexts, research and policy on the future of work and its popular discourse largely focus on cases where workers or work tasks could theoretically be replaced by AI or automated decision-making systems, seemingly without social consequence. The more crucial focus is the reality that digital technologies are currently shaping work in new ways faster than the creation of effective policy to manage it (Shestakofsky 2017).

In summary, the future of work discourse is, at least for the time being, associated with technologically deterministic viewpoints that take for granted widespread technologically induced social change. A recent ILO paper shows that major consulting firms have published competing calculations of job loss due to automation (Balliester, Elsheikhi 2018). The institutions or individuals that offer solutions to this far-reaching change are the same ones who see this change as inevitable. Notably, workers' perspectives (and nuanced field studies) are often missing from discussions of the future of work (Reid-Musson et al. 2020). For example, Blustein (2019: 193) recounted his experience at a workshop sponsored by the ILO's Future of Work initiative:

the helicopter view of many of the economists at this meeting was important and, in many ways, quite alarming, touching on the growth of precarious work and the palpable anxiety about the impact of automation on the availability and quality of jobs currently and in the future…missing from the dialogue and debates at this workshop were the voices from people on the ground.

Contra to this, there are some examples of debates about the future of work with an alternative outlook eschewing technological doom and gloom, including an Oxfam report on youth and the future of work (Faith et al. 2022), gender-sensitive responses to Covid-19, manifestos for decent work, and new inclusive definitions of work (Addati et al. 2018; Schwiter, Steiner 2020). But these contributions are outliers in the predominantly technocentric narratives of the future of work situated within a capitalocentric logic.

Identifying the clear push coming from the public sector, international organisations, non-for-profits, and the private sector in anticipating or generating foresight on the future of work is important since these debates and discourses present a form of power in and of themselves. As Hong (2022: 20) notes, predictions or articulations of a knowable future are "the means by which certain kinds of subjects dictate the space of the possible and deny this agency to others". Current future of work discourses frame technological change in the workplace as inevitable and excludes the possibility of alternatives, including

whether certain technologies should be developed. These studies have already impacted how policymakers, academics, corporations, and investors devote resources and attention to a hypothetical and imagined future of automation and job loss (Jeffery 2021; Schlogl et al. 2021). In the next section, we review how discussions about the future of work often have an impoverished framing of care work.

*Incomplete narratives: Care work and the future of work*

As mentioned above, explicit links between the future of work and care work are lacking in academic research and discussions led by international organisations and consulting firms. At first glance, this may be since care work is generally difficult to automate and therefore less suitable as a prime example for communicating the impact of AI and robotics (Samers 2021). Many discussions of the future of work lack a broader understanding of care work and social reproduction (Islam 2022), and policy actors in health and social protection have written the fewest documents addressing the future of work (Schlogl et al. 2021). Feminist analyses of care work versus those focused on the future of work reveal its masculinist tendencies (Reid-Musson et al. 2020; Rubery 2018; Wajcman 2017). This certainly creates an intellectual oversight since caregiving has been called both the "last human job" (Weingarten 2017), yet is also not immune to technological innovation.
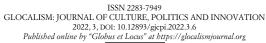
For instance, Frey and Osborne's (2017) analysis included care work in their assessment of jobs with the highest risk of automation; registered nurses were not at risk of automation, while healthcare support workers and personal care aides faced more significant automation risk. Even with increased automation and robotisation, skilled care labour will continue to be essential, especially given the diversity of places where care is delivered (Walton-Roberts 2023). Likewise, the methodologies employed in predictive analysis like Frey and Osborne (2017) or Artnz et al. (2016) considered only paid work, not unpaid work, which excludes a significant amount of care work glob-

ally (Lehdonvirta et al. 2023). This risks neglect of certain workers and their livelihoods in planning for the future of work (Gilbert 2023).

We are concerned with how automation in the current context over-commodifies care work by reducing it to a limited number of job categories and paid work. This reduction can degrade the overall quality of care by neglecting its deeply relational dimensions. This poses a serious challenge both to those in need of care and to the intensification of delivering care (Folbre 2006b). Even in Japan, a country that has invested significantly in robotics, there is no clear evidence that robots are replacing care workers, rather what appears to be happening is that robots complement care work and free human workers to take on other tasks (Wright 2019). As Lynch et al. (2021) emphasised, robots are transforming care settings by reshaping social interactions between caregivers and care recipients. The authors contended that caregiving involves empathy and intimacy and that robots, despite their ability to perform some caregiving tasks, cannot fully replace human empathy and the emotional elements of caregiving (Lynch et al. 2021). Instead, robots will work with humans in providing care.

New technologies can facilitate access to care (e.g., telemedicine services) or provide reassurance to those responsible for care (e.g., digital monitoring of a loved one). However, these technologies are not yet widely available and have the potential to standardise care or reorganise the scope of high-touch and affective care work (MacLeavy 2021). In addition to robots and automation, care platforms, such as Care.com, are an emerging phenomenon. But how care platforms differ from their offline or non-digital counterparts, such as agencies, is yet to be fully assessed. These platforms will create new dynamics for how caregivers enter the workforce, how caregivers are compensated, who does care work, who receives care, and how it takes place (Mateescu, Ticona 2020). Thus, it is imperative to explicitly consider care-based labour relations and differential access to care. Much care work takes place at home, and the introduction of robotics, digital monitoring, and care platforms must

carefully consider the current diverse reality of household configurations and what the future of home care can look like (Schwiter, Stiner 2020).

Job loss or change caused by new technologies tends to assume both homogeneous configurations of the household (Reid 2021) and static gender dynamics in the labour market (Rubery 2018). Gendered assumptions proclaim women may be better off in the future of work, especially if they dominate sectors that have traditionally been less affected by automation. However, in times of economic decline, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the Great Recession (2008-2009), a disproportionate amount of women experienced declines in the quality and quantity of employment. Women are more vulnerable than men because they predominantly work in affected sectors (manufacturing and services), work informally, engage in unpaid care work, lack adequate social protection, and experience more violence, health risks, and precarity. For example, between 2019-2020, women experienced a 4.2 per cent employment decline (54 million jobs), while men experienced a 3 per cent employment decline (60 million jobs) with some world regions fairing worse than others (ILO 2021). Thus, a gendered and intersectional approach is needed on the future of work in general. Especially needed is a focus on the current and evolving gender dynamics of work in society, which might undermine any potential future of care work envisioned. A broader concern is whether we see care work as drudgery to be relieved of (through automation or outsourcing) or something to be elevated since it strengthens social bonds and generates community solidarity (Stephens 2015). The future of work tends to imply newness or unique conditions (Reid-Musson et al. 2020). However, new technologies will not undo the fundamental contradiction that care is essential to social, economic, and political systems, yet consistently undervalued and precarious.

To do justice to this contradiction the dominant discourse on the future of work must be further queried. We cannot move backwards, prioritising capitalocentrism and technocentric inevitability. But what is to be done to enhance the future of care work discussions? Drawing from feminist perspectives and broader gender and development approaches, including Global

Care Chains (GCCs), decent work, and sustainable livelihoods, we argue that we can connect with the future of work debates. These existing paradigms already view care as a diverse activity and approach technological change and migration with a critical lens. As with our previous discussion of decent work and livelihoods, considering GCCs and glocalism bolsters our conceptualisation of care work and migration and asserts its relevance to future of work debates.

## CARE AND MIGRATION: GLOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON CARE WORK

GCCs conceptualise the intersection of globalisation, feminised migration, and care. Hochschild (2001) and Parreñas (2000) exposed the tendency of women in higher income countries to outsource care labour to feminised and racialised immigrant women, whose own care responsibilities are then assumed by others along the care chain. The concept was further developed by Yeates' (2004, 2009) who extended the original schema from domestic care labour to include health care, education, sexual, religious, and other social care. This extended GCCs to consider different levels of skill, occupational hierarchies, family types and structures, sexual identities, and institutional settings beyond households. The glocal nature of care is emphasised in these approaches by focusing on services as "geographically dispersed by coordinated actors" (Yeates 2012: 150). GCC analysis effectively de-centres the nation-state or rigidly containerized concepts of 'local' and 'global' to understand how care occurs across spatially complex sites, who provides it, and which actors take precedence in its organisation (Huang et al. 2012; Yeates 2012). Incorporating Roudometof's (2015, 2016) reviews of the glocal turn also nicely encapsulated the value of a geographic relational care perspective that moved beyond purely hierarchical scalar representations (local, regional, national, global), resulting in scholarly critiques of the organisational logic of capitalist enterprises. This glocal perspective centres local agency to understand place-based articulations of macro-level processes (see Roudometof 2015).

The local and global are not mutually exclusive and thus a more horizontal, relational framing is valuable to understand how seemingly distant transnational connections and heterogeneous articulations of globalisation across space can produce intimate care relations on the ground (e.g., Pieterse 1995; Robertson 1995). Furthering more nuanced spatial analysis of care, Raghuram (2012: 156) argued for more attention to how care is organised and understood in diverse geographical contexts. This would improve insight on the diverse organisation of care and provide valuable insight on its future orientation. Furthermore, Hillman et al. (2022: 15) focused on how glocal urban assemblages structure the mobility of nurses in three urban contexts and demonstrated "the urban is a staging ground for the glocal assemblage that filters and distributes the care labour across and beyond the urban…with the help of migration industries". This glocal conceptualisation highlights the ways in which care migration is articulated by actors operating both above and below the national scale, be they migrant intermediaries, educational institutions, employers, personal networks, or various levels of government, all of which are pertinent to future of work debates. This requires understanding both transnational networks, or "transnational stretch" (Raghuram 2012: 168), across space and the ways in which care is locally embedded (Ortiga et al. 2021). Such research is important for both the future of work and care policy debates: "taking the locational specificities of the genealogies of care as a concept, and observing how care is organised, can help us to enrich global analyses of care conceptually and improve policy making around the responsibility and rewards for caring" (Raghuram 2012: 156).

A glocalism lens allows us to understand how places and livelihoods exceed national or territorial contexts, with outcomes increasingly structured by multiple, spatially wide-ranging points of contact between actors and scales. Livelihoods, as with cities, "can become disembedded from the national territorial context because their fates depend more on their international contacts than on their national ones" (Roudometof 2015: 7). These realities need to be accounted for in the future of work and related policy discussions. For example, Ortiga et al

(2021) noted the necessity for GCC research to make connections between migrant care labour at the global scale, and place-based national welfare diamonds of care provision and access. Ortiga et al (2021) promoted analysis that connects GCCs with national care diamonds to reveal how states adapt their national policy structures to integrate global migrant care workers into labour markets, which then redefines the care work and responsibilities of citizens. Based on this we encourage deeper integration of GCCs, and glocal care livelihoods research with future of work debates, which will move us beyond abstract notions of de-spatialised work toward more sensitive socio-spatial analysis that take social differences into account.

## CONCLUSION: OPENING FUTURE(S) OF CARE WORK

In this paper we reviewed discussions on the future of work to counter the relative absence of concern about how care work, decent work, and sustainable livelihoods factor into these debates. Scholars who have considered how technological change informs care work emphasise the relevance of human workers to the provision of care services, and how technological change such as automation, robotics, and AI are evident in terms of complementary support for certain care tasks, and the emergence of new ways to organise care work. These developments have not displaced care workers, but they have changed how their work is organised, with research suggesting increased precarity for workers, especially migrant workers whose options and rights are more constrained. These discussions are strengthened by governments, international organisations, non-profits, and the private sector supporting the view of technological inevitability, while decentring people's livelihoods and the complexity of international labour relations. This reality must not be dismissed since the acceptance of the dominant future of work discourse upholds inequitable social relations and risks further marginalising care work. We contend these discussions move backward, effacing valuable advances since the 1990s conceptualising the glocal turn, sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods, and the current context of care work.

Considering the growing number of migrant women involved in GCCs (and by extension their families and communities) we reframe their position through the lens of glocal care livelihoods and connect to the SDGs and decent work agenda. Such a framing reflects the importance of work in this sector and encourages a comprehensive understanding of the intersections between globalisation, care, migration, and work. This will strengthen our ability to understand current livelihood outcomes in a manner that supports informed analysis of the future of work for those engaged in care work. By contextualising glocal forces, while explicitly focusing on the household and the mediating role of informal and formal institutions, a livelihoods approach can address omissions researchers have noted within GCC research (see Yeates 2012), and strengthen the discourse, policy, and implementation of future of work debates in a more sensitive manner. Explicitly asking, "what is the future of livelihoods?", will complement, if not challenge, the current contours of the future of work discourse. The future of work is clearly a transdisciplinary challenge that spans foci like migration, sustainable livelihoods, and care work, and we contribute to the calls to bring synthesis between these diverse fields (Peters et al. 2022; Pickersgill et al. 2022).

Care work, whether paid or unpaid, directly or indirectly provided, is increasingly serviced through international migration in higher income nations. Despite the centrality of care to daily life, the care economy is lightly considered in dominant debates about the future of work. We emphasise the importance of considering care work in future of work debates. The contemporary organisation of care work, particularly in high income nations, involves spatially extended care chains and webs of relations between transnational households that are organised through multiple actors. This reflects glocal connectivity, since the organisation of these care chains involves actors both above and below the nation state, and the nature of work and its organisation intimately connects spatially distant yet socially networked households. We highlighted that care work is deeply relational, but unequally distributed and valued. Care work has a long history of being feminised, undervalued,

and performed by migrant or precarious workers, and it is being actively transformed by the digital economy and new technologies. Drawing together diverse perspectives on care work, global care chains, glocalism, transnational livelihoods, and decent work agendas offers valuable ways to recast the future of work discourse. There is an urgent need to fully include care work in discussions about the future of work in order to imagine, plan, and realise a better and more caring future. While it is impossible to predict the future, we know that care work is critical to the future of work, and more research needs to reflect that reality.

NOTES

[1] Thematic examples of the future of work by consultancies, international organisations, and academics: McKinsey Global Institute (https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-the-future-of-work); Deloitte (https://www2.deloitte.co m/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work.html); Bristol University (https: //futuresofwork.co.uk/); The International Labour Organization (https://www.ilo.org/glob al/topics/future-of-work/lang--en/index.htm); The Centre for Future Work (https://centreforfuturework.ca).

[2] Search queries were completed on 02/26/2023 using expressions ((TI=("future of work")) OR AB=("future of work")) OR AK=("future of work") in addition to (((TI=("future of work")) OR AB=("future of work")) OR AK=("future of work")) AND ((TI=(care) OR AB=(care) OR AK=(care))) for Web of Science and TITLE-ABS-KEY("future of work") in addition to TITLE-ABS-KEY("future of work" AND care) for SCOPUS. These searches were temporally limited to the maximum availability of records in the databases at the time of the search, 1966 (SCOPUS), 1899 (Web of Science).

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