

CARE WORK IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY: THE CASE OF LATIN AMERICAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN SPAIN

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to observe how transformations across society, economy and politics, consequence of global capitalism, didn't help to overcome gender inequality but, on the contrary, have added stratification to the inequalities between women. In order to do so, this essay offers first a general overview of the literature and concepts related to the position of women within the global political economy. Following that, the processes of feminisation of migration and the changes in the provision of care will be analysed including examples from the experiences of women in Spain in relation to Latin American migration. The research will conclude that while the role of the woman is not only carer anymore but also income provider, men's workload has remained almost unchanged, as they have continued to fulfil their traditional role as [main] providers and keep playing a small – if any – part in the reproductive sphere. Institutions like global markets and governments have strongly contributed to the creation and permanence of the so called double – and sometimes triple – burden. Despite the socioeconomic progress that entering the formal labour force meant for women's empowerment, the consequences of such phenomenon have been not only perverse but also unequal among women of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Keywords: global care chains, Spain, Latin America, migration, feminist political economy.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional market economies have fostered a certain invisibility to the unpaid work carried out within the household. However, the way in which care and domestic labour is socially organised is key to understanding the international division of labour and its consequences on global migration trends. In this sense, the globalised neoliberal policies implemented across poor and rich countries alike have had different effects, depending first on gender but also on ethnicity and social sta-

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tus. The middle class's achievement of women's rights to conciliate professional and family life in developed economies seems often to involve outsourcing domestic work to migrant women from developing countries.

Before moving onto the next point, it is important to clarify how some concepts will be used. The subjects and families involved in the processes described in this essay are heterogeneous and constantly changing. On one hand, some authors have claimed that the literature should move beyond heteronormative families and relations (Fitzgerald 2014). On the other hand, authors like Yeates have suggested widening the scope of care to include the health, educational, sexual and religious spheres (Yeates 2009). Despite acknowledging these claims and only due to space limitations, this essay will focus on heterosexual families and the care related to the domestic sphere, encompassing tasks such as cleaning and looking after dependants – mainly children and the elderly.

The invisibility of women's unpaid labour as an economic contribution represents a challenging subject for a gendered study of globalisation (Safri, Graham 2010). This is due to the consideration given to productive and reproductive work under conventional economic theories. In this sense, productive paid work, exchanged on the labour market, is considered the only form of labour as it generates a surplus which can be monetised. On the other hand, reproductive work includes all housework activities - from transforming wages into usable goods at home raising children - that maintain the use value of already existing things and are therefore considered consumption. In consequence, women play a largely unrecognised key role within the range of activities in the household, which involve not only the reproduction of the social and material conditions that sustain this structural organisation but also the reproduction and maintenance of the actual labour power (Meillassoux 1972).

This distinction has been central in feminist literature, as it traditionally confined women to reproductive work and the private sphere while excluding them from a recognised role in the production process. After the second World War, men were no longer needed by the military but as breadwinners in-



stead, stimulating the economic machine, while women were needed to fuel demography (Friedan 1963). However, this situation began to change during the 1970s, when women's incorporation into formal labour markets started to become commonplace in the Global North. In the Global South, women's entrance into the formal labour market was influenced by the nascent trends of exportation and the beginning of delocalisation. In both cases, female workers were considered less qualified, received lower wages and were expected to be more flexible and less unionised than the traditional male workers (Galvez, Torres 2010).

The global economy demanded for women to step up into the productive sphere and sustain the family income without neglecting their mothering duties (Marchand, Runyan 2000). On this matter, feminist authors presented a powerful critique of the leading social policies of the Thatcher-Reagan era, whose contradictory rhetoric pushed women into the paid labour force whilst, at the same time, increasing their care responsibilities (Bedford, Rai 2010).

In the following years, the demonization of public debt continued to gain widespread global support, leaving everyday activities of maintaining life and reproducing the next generation largely in the hands of paid and unpaid women (Ezquerria 2011). As governments continued withdrawing from public provisioning and increasing the marketization of care, the resources available to cope with the rise in the population in need of care were limited, a situation accentuated by the fall in the number of women able and willing to provide such care (Bakker 2007).

GLOBALISATION AND THE FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION

Traditionally, family and markets have often been studied as almost unrelated, even though family structures and market models deeply influence and determine one another (Tobío 1997). In this sense, as the structure of the so-called traditional family – composed by care-supplying women and income-

providing men – started to change, the global market adapted to the needs emerging from such change by offering a low-priced labour force. The reduction in national care supply resulted in an increased demand for domestic and care workers, directly affecting transnational flows and which resulted in a feminisation of migration. Therefore, the need for filling such gaps is generating push and pull forces inducing women to migrate from South to North. For this reason, recent feminist research started focusing on the role that models of intensified globalisation have been playing in the persistence and mutations of inequalities in social reproduction (Fudge 2012).

In the late XX century, Structural Adjustment Programmes sought to foster growth by liberalising the economy of developing countries by borrowing money, which implied the elimination of state subsidies, the opening to foreign investment and entering the global market. In the words of Cynthia Enloe in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*:

[Structural adjustment programmes] combine cuts in a debtor government's expenditures on 'nonproductive' public services (transport and food subsidies, health services, and education) with the expansion of exports: locally mined raw materials, locally grown plantation crops, or locally manufactured goods. Unless they remain globally competitive, many of these indebted governments cannot pay off their international debts (Enloe 2014: 278).

The consequences brought by the implementation of such policies were a reduction in employment and profit-making opportunities, due mainly to the introduction of foreign companies and the sudden obsolescence of traditional industries and business models. Because of this loss, together with the smaller part the state was playing in the economy, Government revenues decreased drastically while having a growing exposure to debt servicing as a borrowing country. Eventually, these conditions greatly influenced the importance, and difficulty, of finding alternative means of employment, generating profit and Government revenue (Sassen 2000). In this sense, women's labour is being stretched to compensate for Structural Adjustments in economies, which instead of meeting



domestic subsistence needs are pushing people to seek income wherever they can.

On one hand, women have been disproportionately mobilised to work in offshore manufacturing and assembling, which influenced national and regional migration circuits. Women have been preferred as low-cost workforce not only based on the stereotypical complementarity of their salary – men are considered the breadwinners, who need their income to sustain a family, while women are not – but also by the concept of “nimble fingers”, which undervalues their skills as just being natural abilities (Elson, Pearson 1981).

On the other hand, the overrepresentation of foreigners among the care and domestic sector presents a historical continuity that was already studied by Isaac Max Rubinow in the early XX century (Rubinow 1906). Therefore, as global markets and migration intensified, so did the global flows of women seeking to work in a traditionally foreignized and feminised sector. The global economy has not only strengthened some of the existing migration circuits and created new ones, but it has also provided a sort of institutional framework for them (Sassen 2008). In this sense, it is important to keep in mind that female domestic workers outnumber men in virtually every country in the world, according to data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO 2013). As can be observed, care labour is distributed according to power relationships based on gender, ethnicity and social class (Herranz Muelas 2015).

Historically, people in the higher segments of society have seen their needs for care and domestic labour covered by women from less advantaged groups, whose own needs had been, in turn, set aside (Razavi 2007). For this reason, being able to outsource the family’s housework has been considered as a symbol of social mobility, especially in newly modernising countries whose governments were eager to prove they had overcome an excessively traditional past and could finally offer women a wider range of professional choices (Enloe 2014). The situation described above represents the richer side of household internationalisation strategies, while on the poorer side this takes the shape of a woman leaving her own family to



emigrate and provide such outsourcing, creating an international network of families.

The privatisation of social reproduction ties into globalisation and migrant care work, generating what has been designated as the new domestic world order (Handagneu-Sotelo 2002), the new international division of reproductive labour (Parreñas 2015) and the transnational economy of domestic labour (Young 2003). On one side, the reduction of social services in developed economies disproportionately hurts deprived communities, and more so women and immigrants (Peterson 2005). Moreover, as Lourdes Beneria indicates, “the employment of migrant women from the South sometimes contributes to a vicious circle in the host country, where collective efforts to seek appropriate policies are delayed by the implementation of private solutions” (Benería 2008: 11). On the other side, in the migrants’ home country, the need to balance paid and unpaid care labour shifts from the women who migrate to those who take up their roles within the family, and who are then left with a growing need for conciliation policies (Hassim 2008).

“Global care chains” is a theoretical concept describing the growing trend of women migrating to a richer country to perform care and socially reproductive work (FitzGerald 2014). Globalisation has also had a transformative impact on women’s position and contribution to economy, particularly through the feminisation of migrations and the changes in the provision of care. Such processes will be contextualised in the next part of this essay through the situations faced by women involved in the Latin American migration to Spain.

LATIN AMERICAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE SPANISH CARE AND DOMESTIC SECTOR

After the end of a 40-year long dictatorship, it wasn’t until the 1980s that Spain began consolidating as a democracy and became part of the transnational economic sphere, which culminated in the country joining the European Economic Community in 1986. The dynamics of the – formal and infor-

mal – labour market have been transformed by the mass incorporation of women into paid labour and by becoming a country of immigration (Gil Araujo, González-Fernández 2014). These two processes would eventually have an important connection in terms of the effects of the sexual division of labour on national and non-national women in Spain. Women's role in the Latin American migratory flows to Spain exemplifies a process of feminisation of migration, which in this case is linked to what has been denominated the "care drain". All these concepts will be explored below, focusing on those Latin American women who migrate to Spain and provide care and domestic work.

Latin American migration flows to Spain

Latin America presents an increasing flow of intraregional migrations, with Argentina, Costa Rica and Chile as the main receiving countries (SICREMI 2015). In this sense, between 2012 and 2015, 34 per cent of Latin Americans leaving their countries were migrating to another country in the region, with almost every country in Latin America and the Caribbean experiencing a rise in their intraregional migratory movements (SICREMI 2017).

The region moved from one of immigration to one of emigration after the 1970s, with Spain being the second most popular destination – after the USA – since the 1990s. The increase in the numbers of Latin Americans moving to Spain has been consistent, with their presence in the country rising from 210,000 people in 1991 to 2.5 million in 2012 (Unzueta Sesumaga et al. 2013). In the late 1970s and 1980s, the main groups were coming from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, due mainly to the deterioration of the socioeconomic and political situation. Later in the 1990s, economic migrants from Dominican Republic and Peru, in addition to the Colombians, Bolivians and Ecuadorians from the 2000s would join the migratory flows to Spain. Argentines continued migrating, although due to financial reasons after the financial crisis of 2001. Honduras and Paraguay eventually showed an important increase to-

gether with Venezuela and Cuba as countries of origin for the migrants moving to Spain. Only between 2002 and 2016, over 3 million of Latin Americans leaving their countries migrated to Spain. If the USA had received the same proportion of Latin American migrants in relation to their population, they would have received more than 3 times the number of Latin American migrants that moved to the USA in that period (SICREMI 2017).

The global rise of economic inequality, the precarization of employment, the regional effects of the increase of violence, as well as the cuts on public services and social policies are the main reasons for Latin Americans to migrate. Because of the aforementioned Structural Adjustment Programmes and consecutive economic crises, poverty levels increased in many Latin American countries during the 1980s and 1990s (Rodgers 2009). Families were compelled to readjust their income-seeking strategies, which were influenced by the labour needs and opportunities in other countries and the potential of each member – whether male or female – of the family to fulfil them. Consequently, there has been an important increase within the last decades in the number of women migrating independently to seek employment instead of moving as dependents part of a reunification strategy. Therefore, women have played an essential role within the flow of migration from Latin America to Spain, usually as heads of their family's migration plans. This is due to the high demand for traditionally "feminine" jobs existing in the Spanish labour market: domestic and care work.

The following tables show the official flow of immigrants in Spain by region and gender between 2008 and 2011. In the tables, the prevalence of Latin Americans among the migrants coming to Spain can be observed, who are only surpassed by those from the EU between 2010 and 2014, when unemployment rates in the country reached historical proportions. Nevertheless, Latin Americans accounted for the majority of those in need of a valid permit to live and work in Spain. On the other hand, the predominance of female migrants over male remains consistent over the decade within that particular flow, a phenomenon that will be analysed in the following point.

Tab. 1.1. *Official flow of immigrants in Spain by region and gender between 2015 and 2018*

		2018	2017	2016	2015
EU	M	65,346	64,046	55,283	50,942
	F	59,347	58,467	49,852	46,852
AFRICA	M	58,266	38,172	30,512	25,753
	F	34,925	25,670	20,779	17,849
LAC	M	129,883	97,584	67,337	45,388
	F	168,278	129,000	89,100	60,478
ASIA	M	26,021	21,647	18,177	15,522
	F	20,236	17,907	15,653	13,591

Source: *Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE: Flujo de inmigración procedente del extranjero por año, sexo y país de nacimiento)*. M= Male; F= Female

Feminisation of migration and care chains

The demand for foreign domestic and care is fuelled by various factors, particularly the incorporation of native women into the paid labour market, together with the inability of social services to deal with the needs of dependant relatives – like kindergartens or retirement houses. In this sense, it is important to highlight the still generalised sexual division of the domestic sphere within the heterosexual families together with the decreasing availability of native domestic and care workers following social and economic changes (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008).

Tab. 1.2. *Official flow of immigrants in Spain by region and gender between 2011 and 2014*

		2014	2013	2012	2011
EU	M	48,401	43,236	47,088	61,025
	F	45,128	41,802	47,398	61,443
AFRICA	M	23,361	23,281	24,230	27,907
	F	15,374	15,927	17,079	20,293
LAC	M	37,609	33,222	36,553	45,878
	F	50,184	44,145	50,413	65,330
ASIA	M	15,003	15,944	18,456	21,415
	F	12,873	13,017	13,089	14,756

Source: *Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE: Flujo de inmigración procedente del extranjero por año, sexo y país de nacimiento)*. M= Male; F= Female

In Spain, the economic development of the late 1970s not only heralded the mass incorporation of women into paid positions in the 1980s, but also decelerated the rural exodus, which used to be the main source of native care and domestic workers. For these reasons, the Spanish immigration regulations during the 1990s favoured the inflows of migrant women by facilitating the entrance of workers for the domestic and care sector (Oso 2007). In other words, the need to traditional feminine duties within the private sphere of the household resulted in a feminisation of the immigration. In this sense, as Nicola Yeates puts it, “women in a rich country – *in this case*

Tab. 1.3. *Official flow of immigrants in Spain by region and gender between 2008 and 2010*

		2010	2009	2008
EU	M	60,675	58,558	82,856
	F	60,840	58,837	76,190
AFRICA	M	29,436	40,540	69,619
	F	20,829	29,873	41,943
LAC	M	43,696	53,777	105,307
	F	61,863	73,975	123,592
ASIA	M	21,894	18,302	27,204
	F	15,475	13,744	18,647

Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE: *Flujo de inmigración procedente del extranjero por año, sexo y país de nacimiento*). M= Male; F= Female

Spain – find themselves unable to fulfil their ‘domestic duties’ of child care and house cleaning without working a double day. To free themselves from that double burden, they purchase another woman’s labour – *in this case a Latin American migrant women’s labour* – who tends to be from a poorer household” (Yeates 2005: 2). The woman who migrated seeking income in exchange for her domestic labour may as well have had her own domestic duties towards her dependent children, elder and sick relatives, whose care needs will now have to be covered by another woman. Therefore, a care chain is created, where labour’s assigned value decreases with each



subsequential link, eventually becoming unpaid towards the end of the chain, where the most vulnerable lie – usually the elder daughter. The process described is the aforementioned “global care chain”, a concept first used by Arlie Hochschild to refer to a series of “links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring” (Hochschild 2000: 131).

The concept of care chain captures various processes. First, the outsourcing of domestic labour, which occurs at a national and international level by mobilising labour supply through informal networks as well as the market (Yeates 2005). In Spain, such externalisation has led to a foreignization of the care work by which the suppliers of domestic care are mostly migrants. On the other hand, there are household internationalisation strategies, which involve the creation of transnational families through the emigration of a mother to provide care overseas – on the poorer side – and the overseas labour recruitment – on the richer household side (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002). Therefore, the gender divisions existing in the sending country are decisive for the organisation of such transnational families. For example, Latin American migrant women tend not only to send a higher proportion of their salaries as remittances than men, but they are also expected to maintain strict labour strategies to guarantee such remittances even when that involves giving up on their personal preferences or career (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008). For this reason, the live-in domestic work in Spain fits the needs of single Latin American migrants who pursue quick and stable savings, as the accommodation is supplied, usually at the price of a restricted time for leisure, a lack of institutional supervision on workplace regulations and social security (Oso 2007). The precariousness of such positions is therefore consequence of the low value that a receiving country like Spain is recognising to the care and domestic work.

Both the feminisation of migration and the global care chains are centred around female paid and unpaid labour. However, it is important to highlight the apparent absence of men in this process in both the sending and receiving countries, as well as its effects on gendered divisions of labour

(Yeates 2005). In the sending country, other women have been undertaking paid or unpaid care work not simply to replace the migrant mother's labour but to cover for the male non-migrant's failure to do so (Parreñas 2015). Women in Spain are still in charge of the domestic and care labour, not only from the side of the paid immigrant workers but also from the side of those native women who employ them being the ones responsible for the outsourcing.

As there hasn't been enough improvement on gender equality, the value given to women's work by society, the state and the markets continues to be low. As a consequence, care work is still considered women's responsibility, but such ascription now contributes to intensify the differences between women in the global economy. The sexual division of labour that designates care to women is more and more determined by other axes of power and inequality like class or migratory status (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008), as will be analysed in the following point.

Care and domestic labour in Spain

In Spain, as in most of the world, an artificial idea of gender equality within heterosexual family structures has been built upon a reduction of the costs associated with social reproduction through the use female migrants' labour, which, in truth, has only intensified inequality among women (Gil Araujo and Gonzalez-Fernandez 2014). This is a consequence of multiple factors that must be analysed through a gender perspective, which are mainly the economic segregation between production and reproduction, the regulation of the care and domestic sector, the effects of globalisation on labour markets and the Spanish migration law and policies.

The traditional economic segregation of the public and the private by different jobs, logics and responsibilities has pushed women to the private and domestic sphere. Production and the public are usually considered to be male's territory, while reproduction and the private to be female's realm (Molyneux 1979). In Spain, the mass incorporation of women

into production coincides with the end of the dictatorship and the entrance into the global capitalist economy. Despite that, according to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, women continue to do twice as much unpaid work as men, with little variations regarding their employment situation (INE 2015). Women have consistently presented higher unemployment and lower activity participation rates than men because women remain responsible for sustaining life, which is considered as a voluntary projection of their nature (Pérez Orozco 2011). Such unwaged labour and its contribution to the household income has been underestimated since it is hardly measurable using a definition of labour that only considers production (Paltasingh, Lingam 2014). In consequence, there is an undervaluation and unrecognition of domestic labour even when this is a paid and formalised market activity.

The domestic labour in Spain is regulated by a particular figure within labour law characterised by three main differences in relation with the general labour regulation (Martinez Buján 2014). First, the stipulated salaries are not in line with the intensity of the work and the duration of the shifts, which are recognised to last longer than the general regime (Herranz Muelas 2015). Second, domestic workers do not have the right to unemployment benefits¹ – which in Spain are determined by previous employment. Third, the inviolability of the home, although a fundamental, constitutional and human right, also adds vulnerability to these workers as there are no institutional inspections of their workplace (Anderson 2006). This again gives power to employers to keep salaries low, reducing the employees' access to social protection, reinforcing their position of disadvantage and promoting informality, which in turn plays a role against social mobility. Migrant care and domestic workers face various forms of economic and labour abuse, from unpaid overtime and wage-theft to human trafficking (Romero 2018, FRA 2011). In this sense, live-in domestic and care workers are even more vulnerable than external ones, particularly those paid by the hour. For this reason, the demand for live-in care supply created a niche that became the main channel for Latin women to enter the country, who would later generate the necessary networks for other women

and men to migrate (Oso 2007). Furthermore, the number of live-in workers has been restored after decreasing in the 1990s, due to growing needs for intensive care – mainly for the elderly – that have been covered by the arrival of this new foreign workforce, while Spanish domestic workers tend to work as external cleaners (Martinez Bujan 2014).

The market globalisation demands for a larger, cheaper and more unregulated labour force, calling for migrants to cover those positions with higher levels of precariousness and social devaluation (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008). Consequently, the domestic labour dynamics of inequality that segregate women by class, ethnicity and social status suffered by Latin Americans in their home countries are being transferred to a global scale, in a social regression of the neoliberal globalisation (Herrera 2005 in Perez Orozco et al. 2008). A consequence of such globalisation is the “care drain” that is transferring the crisis of care from North to South, contributing to a sustained increase of economic inequality between rich and poor countries (Hochschild 2002). In the case of Spain, the aging of the population and the demographic changes have suffered from a lack of institutional coverage, magnified by the neoliberal management of the financial crisis (Unzueta Sesumaga et al. 2014). Such economic policies do not recognise any value to the reproductive sphere and are therefore leading to a privatisation of social reproduction through a foreignization of domestic work. Therefore, the feminisation of migration is reproducing the exploitation of gender inequalities of global capitalism as well as perpetuating the sexual division of labour that were already present in the receiving country.

With the massive incorporation of Spanish women into the formal labour market, the State proved to be unprepared to face the consequences of such phenomenon regarding care responsibilities. With the Spanish financial crisis of 2008-2014, the dramatic fall in public investment and budget cuts for social policies had two main consequences: on one hand, those women who relied on public provision of care returned to taking up unpaid care work after such provision vanished, since their household could not afford recurring to the market. On the other hand, those households that could afford outsour-

ing reproductive labour continued to do so, although usually in more precarious conditions (Díaz Gorfinkel, Martínez-Buján 2018). Consequently, the number of care and domestic female workers remained fairly stable when compared to the general state of the labour market during this financial crisis, a number that decreased only in 2011 and 2012 and reached annual variations under -8 per cent (INE 2012, 2013). In this sense, the flow of immigrants coming to Spain declined (as shown in tab. 2) and some established migrant women returned to work in the care and domestic sector after they had already moved into other fields of work with better labour conditions such as hospitality, sales or customer service (Oso 2018).

Spanish immigration policy has traditionally focused on the entry of undocumented migrants who would later be offered regularisation through employment, with the domestic sector having always been one of the main channels of regularisation (Cachón 2002). This is in line with the general global trend by which immigrants find/are offered labour opportunities among the positions that are not desired by the nationals (Acosta 2013). Therefore, immigration regulations combine migratory restrictions with responses to labour force demands, which in Spain – in recent decades – have been focusing on domestic and care work, construction and agriculture. In 2005, 83 per cent of the applicants for regularisation from the domestic sector were women – while construction and agriculture featured 94.9 per cent and 83.1 per cent of male applicants respectively (Ministerio del Trabajo e Inmigración 2006). Moreover, after the global financial crisis, in 2013 over 70 per cent of the non-EU foreigners registered as working in the domestic sector were from Latin American countries and over 65 per cent in 2018, figures that do not include the undocumented migrants and those in situations of informality (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social 2013, 2018). This is a situation that authors like Gil and Gonzalez-Fernandez have described as the “Latin Americanisation of the domestic sector in Spain”, in line with the global care drain and foreignization of care and domestic labour (Gil-Araujo, Gonzalez Fernandez 2014). The persistence of such

Tab. 2. *Latin Americanisation of the domestic sector in Spain, 2008-2014*

	2009	2012	2015
LAC	89,499	65,538	35,199
EU	5,173	10,198	2,688
AFRICA	14,583	11,476	4,857
ASIA	9,341	5,500	4,857
TOTAL SECTOR	118,621	92,763	50,635
TOTAL AUTHORISATIONS	373,865	234,707	120,890

Source: *Spanish Ministry of Labour, Migrations and Social Security (Estadística de Autorizaciones de Trabajo a Extranjeros)*

Latin Americanisation during the Spanish financial crisis of 2008-2014 can be observed in table 2, which shows the authorisations granted to immigrants to work in the care, cleaning and domestic sector and their prevalence among the total.

Female workers have consistently amounted to the vast majority of those migrants getting authorisations within the domestic sector (96,141 in 2009, 77,598 in 2012 and 41,037 in 2015), with about a third of them being between the ages of 25 and 34 (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social 2009, 2012, 2015).

All these factors must be observed considering the aforementioned global absence of men and their incomplete assumption of their share of duties within the household. In the current global political economy such consistent absence from

the domestic sphere implies the persistence of a sexual division of labour that in turn increases the differences between women from different backgrounds. Care and domestic work have moved from rich native women to poor non-native women, which accentuates the inequalities based on class and ethnicity as well as those between the Global North and the Global South, while all women's labour continues to be underestimated. Spanish conciliation policies follow an androcentric approach that generates a new segment of secondary households whose conciliation needs are ignored. These are migrant women's households, for which the differences in citizenship statuses act as a structural trap. Therefore, by looking at labour migrant women it is possible to see how gender intersects with other forms of oppression to facilitate economic exploitation, pushing an increasing number of women into a position of servitude.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has reviewed the effects of sexual division of labour in migrations and the provision of care in the global economy. In order to take a more practical approach to the significance of the concepts elaborated by the literature, they have been contextualised by examples from the experience of Latin American migrant women in the Spanish care and domestic sector.

In recent years, the global political economy has transformed the power relationships based on gender, not reducing the inequalities between women and men but adding more stratification among women. In this sense, globalisation has deepened the differences between North and South, either translating crises as in the case of the aforementioned care drain or by stimulating the existence of cheap and informal labour. In addition, migrant women are being imposed multiple burdens determined by their original and host countries, which reduce the empowering effects of paid labour. On the other hand, native middle-class women free themselves from

the private sphere not by overcoming their gender discrimination but by economic means – when available.

Women's incorporation into the formal, local, national or global economy does not necessarily work towards improving the status of women. Furthermore, the impact of economic globalisation on women is frequently negative, as can be observed by the fact that domestic and care service is the first approach to the labour market for global migrant women (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008). This is one of the several aspects of the sexual division of labour markets and the manner in which the new international division of labour reproduces and exploits inequalities between men and women. The undervaluation of unpaid domestic work as an activity of social reproduction and a feminine occupation constitutes the main obstacle, together with the invisibility of those women in paid domestic labour.

A real improvement in gender equality will not come until women's work in social reproduction within the households is revalued, recognising its indispensable contribution to the sustainability of both families and the global economic system.

NOTES

¹ According to the Spanish Royal Decree 8/2015, regulating Social Security, in its article 251.d) "*La acción protectora del Sistema Especial para Empleados de Hogar no comprenderá la correspondiente al desempleo*".

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