


Beyond the 2008 crisis? Recent Chances in Ageing Migrant Domestic Workers' Access to transnational social protection.

Maria Vivas Romero
PhD Candidate
FRESH-FNRS
University of Liege
Center for Ethnic and Migration Studies





“They keep talking about a crisis that’s going to change everything in Belgium. I want for them to explain to me which, crisis? I mean as far as I remember we have been through ongoing crises in Colombia. This is never ending... We have been through and know how it is. We are used to it, flexibility at the work place, seeking for jobs here and there. There is nothing new for us.”

(Maria, 51 year-old migrant domestic worker, interviewed in Brussels, August 2013).



Research Questions

- How do and through which practices do ageing Andean domestic workers that are currently based in Brussels access social protection in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis?
- Which new and old intersecting inequalities in their access to social protection were reproduced or produce through this period?
- And did the 2008 financial breakdown increase their need to seek for transnational options to socially protect themselves?



Argument

- New intersecting inequalities were created in migrants' access to social protection. This inequalities affected particularly migrant women's efforts to support themselves socially.
- The economic crisis context also increased migrants strategies to protect themselves transnationally not only informally but also formally.



A Transnational Social Protection Approach

A transnational social protection perspective is used to trace migrants' efforts to socially protect themselves in the areas of: health, long-term care, pensions or unemployment, that combine entitlements to host and home-state based public welfare policies and market-family and community based practices (Bargloswski, Bilecen et al. 2015, Sabates-Wheeler 2011).



Theoretical tools

- Situate their practices within the welfare, working, gender and care regime of sending and receiving states (Kilkey and Merla 2013).
- Situate their practices in the in between transnational social space (Faist 2001) where their family lives take place on a daily basis and where they also negotiate their access to informal and formal social protection.
- Use an intersectional (Anthias 2008) perspective to depict the new and old inequalities that are reproduce through such dynamics.



Methods and data collection

- 22 life-story interviews (Sommers 1994) with ageing Colombian and Peruvian domestic workers in the city of Brussels.
- 45 in-depth interviews (Legard et al. 2003) with their transnational family networks in various geographical locations.
- 21 in-depth interviews with key civil society actors in sending and destination countries.
- Analysis of official documents regarding recent changes in their access to social protection in sending in destination countries.



Situating their efforts to protect
themselves within the Belgian Migration
Regime




Andean Domestic Workers in the Belgian Migratory Regime

- Female led migration that began in the 1990s to North America and continental Europe due to political, social and economic dynamics both in sending and receiving regions (Carlier 2008, Freitas and Godin 2012).
- Mostly employed in the care and domestic sectors of Europe's and North America's global cities. They have very little social protection rights both in their sending and receiving regions.
- In Belgium there are part of a small minority 22.000 Latin Americans out of which 5,000 are Colombians, 1,015 Peruvians and 59% of each are women (DEM 2013, Martiniello et al. 2013).
- They come from different socio-economic universes in their countries of origin but share the paradoxical position of being providers of social protection for their families and the families the work for in Belgium and ageing individuals in need for a social protection that's not covered but either society.



The Belgian Migration Regime

- Belgium has since the times of the labor agreements with other European countries maintained a zero immigration policy (Rea 2006).
- Historically two approaches to immigration took place in the Wallonia and Flemish side of the country, either laissez faire or integrations and multicultural approaches to migration (Rea 2006).
- The zero migration approach has been maintained after the crisis but it legitimize itself under new policies and the creation of a new Ministry of Immigration and Integration, that dictated the new policies to reduce the number of “unproductive” migrants and restrict their access to the Belgian welfare state (Lafleur and Stanek forthcoming, Gsir et al. forthcoming).
- The new policies created under the new Ministry of Immigration and Integration approaches affected directly ageing migrant domestic efforts to socially protect themselves, since it restricted paths for family reunification, aimed at the expulsion of non-productive migrants even those of E.U nationality and made compulsory changes in the law of nationality.



Family reunification reforms in 2011: their effect on entrance paths and access to informal social protection

“ I had plans to bring my sister over to take care of newborn grandchild, now this is just impossible. It’s too expensive to bring her over the cost for reunifications is just too much and the housing requirements are simply impossible to meet. You have seen how we all live and work. Now I have to work myself to death. I even got sick lately and was in the hospital for a few days. I have to do this so she can study.”

(Maria, 51 years old, migrant domestic worker, informal conversation on whatasp, November 2015).



Re-interpreting E.U mobility directive and categorizing: Migrants are a burden

“ No one ever told me I would get nothing in Belgium. I came here and had to look for a job with the help of my friends. They told me if I didn't have a job I would have to leave back to Colombia or Spain. I didn't speak French so this was almost impossible. I heard rumors that if I didn't find a job I would have to leave.”

(Valeria, 55 years old Colombian Domestic Worker)



Changing the nationality laws in 2012 and restricting access to permanent stay

“It’s the second time they denied me access to the citizenship. I have tried everything but after 12 years of working with Spanish speaking people inside a house, how I’m I suppose to learn French or even worst Dutch? How I’m I supposed to go to school and attend those courses if I work 24 under the voucher-scheme regime and the rest informally?”

(Laura 51 year old Peruvian domestic worker, interviewed in Brussels december 2014).



Andean domestic workers in the Gendered Working and Welfare Regime



Gendered Working Regime

- Employed in the recently created voucher schemes they are part of the 77.0% of non E.U and E.U non Belgian nationals employed in the regime (Maarten, Neyens et al. 2012).
- Their rights are restricted and unequal because employment in the sector are usually part time and temporary contracts. Inequalities in such rights increased through the aftermath of the financial break down.



Cuts on public integration aids

“Well now you’re punished for working. In fact if I didn’t work I will have more chances to of getting a full salary through social aid. What should I do? Go back to the black market? I mean you tell me...

(Larisa, 52 year old Colombian domestic worker).



New Pension Reforms: seeking for the impossible

“ I see things are getting harder here. I mean in terms of what’s going to happen after my retirement. I have 5 more years but they just augmented the age period and added new requirements. And with all of those migrants come in, you can expect more changes for sure... But I just came back from Colombia and I’m working on getting my pension there it looks like it’s going to work out.”

(Lara 55 year old Colombian domestic worker)



Situating their efforts in the sending country: Emerging form of top-down transnational social protection.



From familialist welfare states to universal welfare states?

- In the 1990s and in the early 2000's Latin American states invested only 10% of their country's budget on efforts to protect their population (Herrera 2010, Martinez-Franzoni 2008).
- Migration emerged as a solution for migrants to find private ways to sustain the social protection of their families (Boccagni 2010).
- New inclusive measures seem to be emerging in the countries of origin, partially because migrants' contribution in terms of remittances couldn't be ignored and both Peru and Colombia have moved on at least discursively to more inclusive approaches in terms of their citizens' access to social protection.



Efforts to transnationalize social protection

- New facilities in terms of accumulation and portability of pension rights with other Iberian nations and new Mercosur alliances (Avato et. al 2010) .
- New Diaspora policies (Gonzales-Gutierrez, 1993) along with the creation of new migratory and return laws along with policy projects:
 - New National Migratory policy and a law to assure the applicability of policy: Law of Migratory Systems 1465, 2011. Both actions formulated on the light of the New Nations' development plans "prosperity for all" created in 2010.
 - The creation of a document with national goals (Compes 3603) to meet in terms of connections to the diaspora abroad and the assurance of their rights as Colombians.
 - Colombia Unites us a platform that facilitates migrants' access to social protection in terms of housing, paying for social family benefits and pensions through private efforts.
 - New Laws of Return incentives in the context of the economic crisis (Colombia 1565, Peru 30.001).



Emerging Practices in Access to Transnational Social Protection



Extended Visits to manage access to Retirement and Pension Rights

“ I worked in Colombia first as a domestic and then in plenty of factories. When I went last time my sisters told me their friends had paid for the years they were missing to obtain a pension. They told me I had close to 300 weeks so I was only missing 100 weeks. I’m working on it because I don’t see myself getting old here. The only reason I stayed is because you know Laura has issues and she needs a kind of schooling that I couldn’t afford in Colombia not even if I got my pension.”

(Larisa 51, years old Colombian domestic worker).


http://www.mintrabajo.gov.co/pensiones.html#abece_seis



Obtaining formal rights through informal ways.

“I had to inform myself to settle things out. When she came back last time I already had most documents ready we were just waiting for her to bring some documents that I couldn’t find here. She found she actually had 400 weeks and was able to pay only 25.000 pesos a month and in a year or two she would get her pension. I told her she also needs to invest in house they told me that was also possible but she hasn’t gotten too serious about that...”

(Larisa’s sister, interviewed in Medellin, November 2015).



Extend visits to manage investment plans when access to formal rights is forbidden

“ I built a house there with my money and my mom’s help. My brother watches after it. I also sent her money to be saved and she kept it safely in an account there. Even when the girls where there I always saved money. I’m now investing in a building for tourist in Miraflores. I’m doing it now before mom gets to old and can’t help me anymore.”

(Laura, Peruvian 51 years old migrant domestic worker, interviewed in Brussels, December 2014).



Investing in housing options through home countries' initiatives

Maria: Did anyone tell you about the housing projects or how did you find out your aunt and uncle could buy a house here?

Yalisa: “Well, they informed me when I went to go pick up the remittances. I wanted for them to have something! I mean after all of the hard work. They just needed for them to open a special account here and to have someone they trust to be the temporary owner and they both choose me. I did the paper work and everything.”

(Interview with a family member in Medellin, November 2015).



Maintaining Informal Care Arrangements and reinforcing them


“ I never worked formally because while I was married to my former husband he forced me to work in the informal sector so he could keep his public aids. I only just recently started working legally because of the whole anti-immigrant climate. Now I have restrained vacation times but I’m still going to Colombia more often than ever. I do this to remind my nieces that I’m getting old and that my poly-arthritis is not getting any better. They need to know I’m coming back sooner than expected maybe. So, I’m looking into buying a house and well the pension I just don’t have enough weeks.”

(Martina, 56 years old, Colombian Domestic Worker, Interviewed for the last time in Medellin November 2015).



Formal Health Care Private Insurance Options and thinking about the Repatriation of their bodies

“When I came back Larisa got me subscribed to her insurance. So, I was able to go to the doctor. If she loses her job I will have to benefit from the public health insurance, the one that’s for everyone and so I won’t be treated as good. That’s why I’m not taking advantage of the fact that she has a job. I have told you I don’t know if this return is forever, but I rather get treated here where they speak Spanish and where I can trust doctors.”
(Valeria, 51 year old former domestic worker, interview in Medellin October 2015).



Beyond the 2008, crisis? New and Old Inequalities emerging in the field of TSP

- The 2008 financial crisis coupled with more ongoing political debates in Belgium enforced class-gender-ethnic inequalities in ageing migrant domestic workers' access to social protection.
- Simultaneously, the crisis in the western world and the context of reduce access to formal protection in receiving countries might create new opportunities for exportation of home country social protection benefits that become alternatives for ageing migrant domestic workers to cope with the socio-economic hardship they experience.
- These new emerging forms of transnational protection created both by migrants informal efforts and their countries of origin policies might also reproduce and produce old and new intersecting inequalities.



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