

# Late-career international migration and reproductive work. A comparison between Peruvian and Ukrainian women in the Southern Europe

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## ABSTRACT

Research on the relationship between reproductive work and women's life trajectories including the experience of labour migration has mainly focused on the case of relatively young mothers who leave behind, or later re-join, their children. While it is true that most women migrate at a younger age, there are a significant number of cases of men and women who move abroad for labour purposes at a more advanced stage, undertaking a late-career migration. This is still an under-estimated and under-researched sub-field that uncovers a varied range of issues, including the global organization of reproductive work and the employment of migrant women as domestic workers late in their lives. By pooling the findings of two qualitative studies, this article focuses on Peruvian and Ukrainian women who seek employment in Spain and Italy when they are well into their forties, or older. A commonality the two groups of women share is that, independently of their level of education and professional experience, more often than not they end up as domestic and care workers. The article initially discusses the reasons for late-career female migration, taking into consideration the structural and personal determinants that have affected Peruvian and Ukrainian women's careers in their countries of origin and settlement. After this, the focus is set on the characteristics of domestic employment at later life, on the impact on their current lives, including the transnational family organization, and on future labour and retirement prospects. Apart from an evaluation of objective working and living conditions, we discuss women's personal impressions of being domestic workers in the context of their occupational experiences and family commitments. In this regard, women report varying levels of personal and professional satisfaction, as well as different patterns of continuity-discontinuity in their work and family lives, and of optimism towards the future. Divergences could be, to some extent, explained by the effect of migrants' transnational social practices and policies of states.

**Keywords:** Mature workers, Female Status, Occupational mobility, Family Commitments, Retirement.

*Migraciones internacionales y trabajo reproductivo en etapas avanzadas de las carreras personales. Un análisis comparado del caso de las mujeres peruanas y ucranianas en el sur de Europa*

## RESUMEN

La investigación sobre la relación entre el trabajo reproductivo y las trayectorias vitales de las mujeres, incluyendo sus experiencias de migración laboral, se ha centrado principalmente en los casos de madres relativamente jóvenes que dejan atrás o después reagrupan a sus hijos. Si bien es cierto que la mayoría de las mujeres que migran lo hace a una menor edad, es significativo el número de casos de hombres y mujeres que migran por razones de trabajo a edad más avanzada. La migración en un estadio tardío de las carreras personales es un tema poco reconocido y estudiado que despliega una variada gama de cuestiones, incluyendo la organización global del trabajo reproductivo y el empleo como trabajadoras domésticas de mujeres inmigradas a edad avanzada. Este artículo se basa en los resultados obtenidos de dos estudios cualitativos sobre mujeres peruanas y ucranianas que buscan empleo en España e Italia respectivamente cuando migran con cuarenta o más años de edad. Los dos grupos de mujeres comparten la experiencia habitual de terminar trabajando como empleadas domésticas y cuidadoras, independientemente de su nivel educativo y experiencia profesional. En primer lugar, el artículo analiza las razones que llevan a estas mujeres a emigrar en un estadio avanzado de sus carreras, teniendo en cuenta los factores personales y estructurales que condicionan las carreras de las mujeres peruanas y ucranianas en sus países de origen y asentamiento. A continuación, se detallan las características del empleo doméstico a estas edades, el impacto que el empleo doméstico provoca en sus vidas actuales, considerando la organización de la familia transnacional, y las perspectivas de trabajo y jubilación futuras. Además de evaluar las condiciones objetivas de vida y trabajo, se consideran las impresiones personales de las mujeres sobre su trabajo como domésticas y cuidadoras en el contexto de sus experiencias ocupacionales previas y sus responsabilidades familiares. En este respecto las mujeres muestran niveles diversos de satisfacción personal y profesional, así como patrones diferentes de continuidad-discontinuidad en sus carreras y vidas familiares, y de optimismo hacia el futuro. Las divergencias pueden explicarse en parte por el efecto de las prácticas sociales transnacionales de las migrantes y de las políticas de los estados.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajadores mayores, estatus de las mujeres, movilidad ocupacional, obligaciones familiares, jubilación.

## INTRODUCTION

“Birds of passage are also women”, defended Mirjana Morokvasic back in 1984, and “also women in the second half of their lives” might well be added today. International migration is indeed gaining heterogeneity in terms of gender, age, and ethnic composition, as statistics reveal. Yet, as Russell King (2016) notes, migration research has paid relatively less attention to the study of people who seek employment or extra income in a different country when they are well into their forties, or even older.

Few published studies focus on the case of mature and young-old age women that

migrate to south-west Europe for work purposes, holding the required work permit or not (Vianello, 2009; Solari, 2010; Cvajner, 2011; Marchetti and Venturini, 2013; Escrivá, 2013). These studies reveal that a number of such migrant women are moderately well educated and have already worked for twenty years or more in their own country as technicians and professionals, while others have lower levels of formal education and have been formally or informally employed to do manual work, including domestic chores. Regardless of their educational and employment background, migrants' careers abroad often entail changes in the type of work they do and in their social status. They may be offered jobs that require lesser or different qualifications; they may find full-time, official employment for the first time; or they may start to work from home due to changes in their marital or legal status.

This international occupational mobility is analyzed here within the framework of what we generically label as "late-career migration", which we define as the labour migration undertaken by middle age and young-old people (45-70 years old) who had previous labour trajectories in their origin country. In particular, we compare two female migratory flows that occurred in two different decades – the 1990s for Peruvians moving to Spain and the 2000s for Ukrainians moving to Italy – that are composed of a high share of late-career migrants. Thus, the first aim of this article is to explain the reasons why late-career migration is more popular among citizens belonging to specific cohorts and coming from countries that experienced particular socio-economic and political circumstances.

Furthermore, using the opportunity of accessing two different sets of data coming from two studies – one, conducted by Angeles Escrivá from the early 1990s onwards, on Peruvians settling in Spain, and the other, conducted by Francesca Alice Vianello in the beginning of the 21st century, on Ukrainians moving to Italy– we aim to show differences and similarities between late-migration careers that are deeply embedded within the global organization of reproduction. Hence, we are in the position not only to highlight the significance of these flows within a complex global scenario, but also to explore some questions with regard to the consequences and implications of domestic employment abroad for these young-old age women.

Drawing from a literature review, some questions are posed for analysis in sections 1 and 2. Then, after setting the theoretical scene, we present our research method and data sources in section 3. In section 4, we address the structural and personal determinants of late-career female migration. In section 5, we shed light on the interplay between women's reproductive work and domestic employment abroad, including the consequences on their professional status, transnational family practices, and retirement prospects. Some conclusions are put forward at the end.

## **1. PROBLEMATIZING LATE-CAREER MIGRATION**

In its more orthodox sense, "career" generally refers to a clearly-defined, lifelong occupation, including the completion of a coherent and successful occupational trajectory. Some authors have been even more precise, conceptualizing a career as a progression through a series of occupations, or as permanence in a single occupation

over a lengthy period of time, as a result of conscious and resolute attitudes (Slocum, 1974). This approach has given priority to studying workers' will and agency in the development of their careers, putting the influence of contextual and structural factors in second place. To be able to use the term "career" under current labour market conditions and policy trends, however, it is appropriate to abandon a post-war functionalist perspective that predicted people would be working for most of their lives in the same organization or promising environment, where they would rise through the ranks to better and better jobs, in terms of pay and working conditions. While such careers were grounded in core industries and male working environments, they have failed in the long run to describe the experience of most of the world's flexible workers, which includes much of the female population (Castells, 1996). Indeed, voices have been raised arguing that the supposedly gender-blind concept of career has persistently, more or less, ignored the situation of women, using men as the ideal worker type and assigning women to a secondary role (Dex, 1987; Wilson, 1998).

In addition to gender-blindness in research on careers, studies focusing on the last third of people's working lives have only been attempted since the 1990s. It was in the field of organizational studies that a body of economic, sociological and psychological research began to concentrate on late careers, namely "the work-related choices and reactions of people from 50 to 70 years of age and the economic, social, and organizational factors that influence them" (Greller and Simpson, 1999: 310). Here again, such studies mainly investigated (male) workers' productivity, training and satisfaction with a view to prolonging the labour force's participation in the labour market. Little was said about the difficulties and challenges of extending a career in the context of an increasingly flexible labour market. More recently, fortunately, a new body of literature has discussed older workers' vulnerability and difficulties from an inter-sectional viewpoint (Chamberlayne et al., 2002; Moore, 2009), including the consequences of unemployment, insufficient welfare state support, and compulsory early retirement on the working lives of people as they grow old (Holzer et al., 2011).

To sum up, the characteristics of today's globalized economies and labour markets make it difficult for both young and mature people to follow linear career paths (López, 2002). These days, the idea of a series of steps involving education, apprenticeship, expertise, and retirement at an officially-established age is becoming inappropriate for describing the experiences of many workers, not only in the peripheral, but also in the core countries of the economic system (D'Amours, 2009). At any time in their working lives, individuals may nowadays need to retrain or seek further training in order to find a new job or keep the one they have in a given organization or sector. Even after they have gained some considerable expertise in a particular area, many mature workers have to re-invent their professional roles and make a new start (Johnson et al., 2009).

While this research area is still in its infancy and focuses solely on settled or native populations, there is hardly any evidence of discussion on the impact of the previous factors on the dynamics of international migration (Escrivá and Skinner, 2006). Such approach will necessarily have to address the interplay between socio-economic and demographic risks that, around the world, are imposing the task of

intensifying the labour strategies of older cohorts of men and women in a global market, in the absence of better options at the local level.

## **2. FEMALE LATE-CAREER MIGRATION AND REPRODUCTIVE WORK**

Nowadays mature and older migrant women play a crucial role in international migration. According to the United Nations, “Europe hosted the highest share of females among older international migrants (58 percent), followed by North America (57 percent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (53 percent)” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2013: 9). Many of these mature and older female migrants have played, and may be still playing, an important contribution to both productive and reproductive roles throughout their lives. Therefore, their life-long trajectories need to be evaluated as a sum of two activities, a domestic and reproductive career, in addition to a public and “official” career as labourers.

With regard to women’s reproductive role, female late-career migration may be producing two different impacts. On the one hand, it challenges conventional gender roles, because women, rather than men, are those who migrate. On the other hand, it allows for the continuation of the gendered division of labour both in the destination countries where they are employed in the reproductive labour sector and in their own families by means of committing their sons and daughters to fulfil conventional gender roles (Fedyuk, 2011). Furthermore, when women are abroad they usually continue their roles as the person responsible for the well-being of those family members who stay behind, for the unpaid reproductive work in the family (Díaz-Gorfinkiel and Escrivá, 2012) while, at the same time, they are often employed as domestic or care workers of older people. This multiple reproductive role as paid and unpaid caregivers in a transnational care chain is exacerbated among women of an older age in that, with time, they may become in charge not only of their own children and grandchildren, but also of their ailing, elderly parents while they are still alive (Deneva, 2012; Vianello, 2015).

With regard to their productive role, according to some studies, female migration often entails a radical process of downward occupational mobility – one which is even harder than that experienced by their male co-nationals. More specifically, these studies show that highly and moderately-skilled migrants experience a dramatic downturn in terms of their job opportunities when they migrate; this is due to labour market discrimination, or to their adopted countries’ failure to recognize their qualifications (Cuban, 2009; Liversage, 2009; Vidal-Coso and Miret-Gamundi, 2014; Vianello, 2014). Indeed, in the destination countries, migrant women tend to concentrate in jobs that are less prestigious than the ones they were trained for. In the European Union, they work mainly in highly gendered and racialized sectors – such as sales and elementary service occupations, and personal and protective services – that are considered to require fewer skills or understood as part of the innate female knowledge (Parreñas, 2001), and that are characterized by low wages and low opportunities for career progression (Rubin et al., 2008). Many of these feminised

occupations are indeed understood as paid reproductive work, therefore of a lesser market value than the rest of “productive” activities.

International migration of women for performing domestic cleaning and care jobs in more affluent societies is becoming a common sign of our era and there is a vast body of literature, since the 1990s, touching on these issues (Escrivá and Díaz-Gorfinkiel, 2011). It can be argued, however, that there must be particular traits in mature and older women’s new careers as domestic workers after a previous professional trajectory elsewhere. Reassuming and reinforcing a main traditional, undervalued female role at a later stage in a professional life may not be an easy process for anyone, not least for citizens coming from developing and transition economies. These women are specially affected by social stereotypes, job insecurity and lack of workers’ social protection that have led them to both resistance and subjugation. The existing evidence on this issue applied to older migrant women is very limited.

Thus, considering all the cons, it seems relevant to question whether migrant women’s age and expertise make a difference in the way they experience their careers abroad or not, and in what direction. This inquiry would require evaluating the kind of capital women may have accumulated over time and be able to use for good in their new labour roles (Moser and Horn, 2015). In addition, bringing women’s experiences back into the picture urges one to consider reproductive work performed by women (unpaid domestic and family work) as steps in people’s careers, or even as types of career, but not as inactivity (Dex, 1987; Dalla Costa M. and Dalla Costa G., 1999; Federici, 2012). That offers a renewed perspective on the topic, because it allows the inclusion of activities performed for a salary or not, simultaneously or in a succession of comings and goings from the home to the host country, as part of a migrant woman’s career.

Since research, in general, has shown that (later-life labour) experiences may vary significantly for different people and groups, depending on the circumstances and personal conditions, we put forward two case studies of late-career migration, to see how women of two different nationalities respond to working in Spain and Italy in similar roles and occupations. It is a chance to observe how these processes may be affecting Latin American and Eastern European women who migrated to Southern Europe in their material conditions, but more importantly, how occupational mobility is individually experienced, and will determine the future options of migrant women, including their family commitments, career paths and retirement plans from a renewed transnational awareness.

### **3. METHOD, DATA AND SOURCES**

This article discusses data collected by means of two studies conducted at different times that report on a similar phenomenon of late-career migration. For both studies, basically, a qualitative method was adopted, involving the use of semi-structured interviews, open conversations, observation and multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995).

The first study concerns Peruvian migration towards Spain and started in the early 1990s. Over the course of two decades of empirical research on Peruvian migration<sup>1</sup>, Angeles Escrivá conducted a hundred interviews with migrant women and returnees. Some of them migrated at a young age, others migrated being older, independently or regrouped by their families, and a few had returned to their country of origin. Additional interviews were conducted with non-migrant older parents remaining in Peru. In most cases, domestic and care work had been the entrance door to employment in Spain.

The second study concerns Ukrainian migration towards Italy, and was conducted by Francesca Alice Vianello from 2005 to 2013. It started with Francesca's PhD investigation and finished with her post-doc research<sup>2</sup>. During these years of fieldwork in Italy and Ukraine, Francesca has collected 60 in-depth interviews with women who migrated, and many other interviews with migrant women's relatives (children, parents and husbands) and key informants. The majority of migrant women interviewed were mothers in their forties and fifties, with experience of working in Italy as domestic and care workers.

According to Angeles and Francesca, the comparison of the cases of Ukrainian and Peruvian migrant women is particularly fertile for investigating female late-career migration to south-west Europe because both flows include a significant proportion of mature migrants as much in Italy as in Spain. Indeed, the comparison of these two national groups with other numerically important Non-EU female nationals – such as Albanians, Moroccans, Moldovans and Filipinos in Italy, and Moroccans and Filipinos in Spain – shows in tables 1 and 2 that, together with Filipinos in both countries and Moldovans in Italy, Ukrainians and Peruvians are actually, from an early stage, the groups with higher percentages of women with ages 40 and older. More specifically, in Spain the quota of Peruvian women belonging to the age group 40-59 was already around 22% in 1995, and it reached 30.6% in 2014. In this last year, the quota of Peruvian women aged 60 or older amounted to 8.4%. In Italy, the quota of Ukrainian women belonging to the age group 40-59 was even higher from the beginning, amounting to 60% in 2005 and 68% in 2011. Likewise, the quota of Ukrainian women aged 60 or older reached 10.5% in 2011.

The analysis presented here is based on the whole body of empirical material gathered by Angeles and Francesca, but draws examples from a few emblematic cases of women who migrated to Spain and Italy at the age of forty or more, and had full or some experience of employment as domestic and care workers. Their experiences add contrasting and complementary insights into women's interwoven reproductive and professional roles.

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<sup>1</sup> Angeles Escrivá's first publication on the matter dates back to 1997.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on these researches see: Vianello, 2009; Vianello, 2013 a/b; Vianello, 2015.

Table 1. Mature and Senior Migrant Women in Spain, selected nationalities, by year and age group (%)

| Foreign resident women in Spain by citizenship | 1995 <sup>3</sup> |        |      | 2005 <sup>4</sup> |        |      | 2014    |        |      |
|--|-------------------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|---------|--------|------|
|  | TOT.              | %40-59 | %60+ | TOT.              | %45-59 | %65+ | TOT.    | %40-59 | %60+ |
| Peru   | 9,658             | 22     | 8    | 43,143            | 18     | 4    | 45,388  | 30.6   | 8,4  |
| Ukraine  | -                 | -      | -    | 25,724            | 26     | 0,6  | 46,612  | 47     | 7    |
| Morocco  | 32,095            | 14.8   | 3.7  | 170,49            | 9.6    | 2    | 331,071 | 18.8   | 3    |
| Philippines                                    | 6,389             | -      | 2    | 10,773            | 25.4   | 3,6  | 18,158  | 34.4   | 7    |

Table 2. Mature and Senior Migrant Women in Italy, selected nationalities, by year and age group (%)

| Foreign resident women in Italy by citizenship | 1995   |        |      | 2005    |        |      | 2011 <sup>5</sup> |        |      |
|--|--------|--------|------|---------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|
|  | TOT.   | %40-59 | %60+ | TOT.    | %40-59 | %60+ | TOT.              | %40-59 | %60+ |
| Peru   | 5,762  | 23     | 2    | 31,205  | 37     | 4    | 62,326            | 42,5   | 5,5  |
| Ukraine <sup>6</sup>                           | -      | -      | -    | 93,991  | 60     | 2,5  | 176,968           | 68     | 10,5 |
| Morocco  | 17,606 | 12     | 1    | 79,130  | 21     | 5    | 210,054           | 20     | 5    |
| Albania  | 9,882  | 15     | 2    | 101,833 | 21.5   | 7,5  | 220,448           | 20     | 22   |
| Moldova  | -      | -      | -    | 27,911  | 42     | 1    | 96,975            | 40     | 3.5  |
| Philippines                                    | 5,522  | 33     | 1    | 47,773  | 47,5   | 3,5  | 80,153            | 50     | 7    |

Source: Authors' elaboration with data of the Spanish and Italian National Institute of Statistics (INE and ISTAT respectively) on Non-EU legal residents in Spain and Italy by age class, citizenship, sex.

The Peruvian cases are as follows:

1. Lily, a single woman in her early forties at the point of migration, and her 56-year-old mother Isabel, a divorcee. Lily had worked for many years as a nurse in Peru, where her mother was a seamstress in her youth, then a housewife, and was later occupied with several informal income-generating activities. Both women were employed as domestic workers in Spain. Nowadays, Lily works at an old people's

<sup>3</sup> For 1995, percentages by age were obtained from Consulates, given that the data offered by the Spanish DGPMI did not have such disaggregated level.

<sup>4</sup> For 2005, age ranges offered by the Spanish INE are different.

<sup>5</sup> Data disaggregated by gender, age class and citizenship are no longer available in Italy after 2011.

<sup>6</sup> No data are available on the number of Ukrainian women with a stay permit in Italy and Spain in 1995, probably because Ukrainian immigration started later.

home and Isabel is retired with a disability pension.

2. Rosa, moved abroad as a divorced woman at the age of 54. She and her 7 mature children and a teenage granddaughter migrated in different phases to Spain. She belongs to a four-living-generations family. In Peru, she worked as a school teacher and headmistress, in addition to her household duties. When she retired on a pension, she moved with her children to Spain, where she worked as a domestic worker and companion to old people. Now she is retired, on a means-tested pension.

3. Zoila, a single woman who migrated at the age of 44. She gained secretarial/management experience in Peru, where she worked for many years. Then she moved to Spain in the 1990s to work as a live-in domestic caretaker. Now she is retired and living in Spain.

4. Doris, aged 47, migrated with two children after her husband. After a long occupational trajectory in Peru, where she did many jobs, from secretary to retailer, she worked in Spain as an elderly caretaker for a few years and then she moved to other type of temporary jobs in the service sector.

The Ukrainian cases are as follows:

1. Alexandra, a 55-year-old married woman who emigrated alone when she was 48 in order to pay for her daughter's university education. She has a degree in music and in Ukraine she worked as a music teacher for 20 years. When she arrived in Italy, the only job she was able to find was as a live-in carer. She currently shares her job with a friend, spending 3 months in Italy and 3 in Ukraine, but when she goes home, her work as a caregiver does not stop because she has to look after her 80-year-old mother-in-law.

2. Tania, a 58-year-old married woman who emigrated alone when she was 44 in order to provide for her family, which now comprises: her husband, two children, a nephew and a daughter-in-law. She is a qualified nursing technician and she worked as a nurse for 23 years in Ukraine, where she is now a pensioner, while in Italy she is employed as a live-in carer.

3. Olha is a 56-year-old divorced woman. She emigrated alone when she was 40 in order to become separated from her husband, to earn enough money to buy a house in Ukraine and start a new life with her son. Once she had obtained her residence permit (after four years), she was joined in Italy by her son. In Ukraine, she was a journalist. In Italy, she worked as elderly caretaker for few years and after that she got a job as a concierge.

4. Victoria, a 59-year-old divorced woman, who in her fifties had moved abroad. After having lost her job in a big factory, she worked for some years as an international taxi driver between Ukraine and Poland. She decided to emigrate because that job was too hard for her and because she wanted to distance herself from the husband. In Italy, she worked two years as a live-in domestic caretaker and then, after some training, she started working as care assistant in a nursing home. With her remittances she supports her daughter and her 89-year-old mother.

#### **4. DETERMINANTS OF LATE-CAREER FEMALE MIGRATION: A TWO-COUNTRY COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY**

Peru and Ukraine are very distant and different countries, one situated in the mid-to-eastern part of Europe, the other on the South American Pacific rim. The distances separating these two countries from the European West have not only been geographical, but also political over the latter half of the 20th century. While Ukraine was assimilated into the Soviet Union from the end of the Second World War to 1991, Peru experienced a succession of more or less leftist, paternalistic and authoritative regimes and governments that led to high economic and social instability. Meanwhile, the fall of the Communist system in all the Eastern European nations by the beginning of the 1990s, the implementation of structural adjustment programs in developing countries, and the victory of neo-liberal forms of economic and social organization worldwide meant impoverishment and insecurity for the populations of Eastern Europe and Latin America, ultimately prompting a hitherto unusual international migration from these countries (Massey and Capoferro, 2006; Frejka et al., 1999).

During the periods considered, both countries were suffering from high inflation rates that were whittling away the purchasing power of their people's earnings, pensions and savings, with rising unemployment and severe delays in the payment of wages (Plaza and Stromquist, 2006; Mikhalev, 2003). Millions of working men and women in the middle of their careers suddenly found themselves unemployed or unable to make ends meet.

Peru and Ukraine share certain features of their profile regarding a segment of their pioneering migrants: from the Peru of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the Ukraine of the late 1990s and early 21st century, not all the women who migrated to Spain and Italy were young, they were often at least in their forties (see tables 1 and 2; Durand, 2010; IOM, 2003, 2011). Many of these older migrants had been employed in their countries of origin in the private and public sectors and had resigned, retired or been dismissed from their jobs; these women had medium to high levels of formal education and work experience as nurses, teachers, and in other professional capacities, but in jobs that were amongst the least well paid in their home countries (Yakushko, 2007; Escrivá, 1999). Some other migrant women, mainly Peruvians, had focused on unpaid roles, e.g. housework for their families and communities, or in various types of informal jobs, as vendors, domestic workers and manufacturers (Bunster and Chaney, 1985); precariousness prevailed in their activities, which afforded little gratification other than enabling day-to-day survival.

Family determinants of late-career female migration show some similarities and some differences between the two groups. Initially, the main reasons these mature Peruvian and Ukrainian women migrated were that they wanted to guarantee their children material comforts and the chance of a decent higher education. In the case of women who had no children or were not in need, they contributed to the well-being of other loved ones back home, be they ageing parents, siblings, etc., especially if ailing or disabled. Secondly, they sought to improve their present and future lifestyles by obtaining more money to spend on consumer goods and to build up some savings

(Escrivá, 2013). In quite a few cases, husbands were not the main beneficiaries, possibly because the difficult economic conditions had exacerbated pre-existing marital issues concerning gender roles and money management. The women who emigrated were often angry at their menfolk, accusing their husbands of behaving badly, of being selfish, lazy, and incapable of supporting their families. Be that as it may, whether for the sake of their children, for their own, or for other significant relatives, these migrant women have been strong money remitters, especially in the years soon after leaving home (Vianello, 2013a).

The form and timing of late-career female migration differs from one case to another. Mature Ukrainian women have been arriving in Italy alone, without their families, and with the plan to return home soon. The dominant profile of these migrant mature women has been a divorcee or widow with dependent teenage children left behind. Thus, they are the main breadwinner in their households. Many Peruvian late-career women migrants share this profile, but many others are married or single women involved in fast family chain migration processes. From the very early 1990s onwards, mature and older Peruvian women were migrating to Spain, often with some or all of their children (especially daughters), or with other female kin. They sometimes travelled together, but more often did so in stages, as the first to arrive had to find the means to finance the journey and secure a domestic job for the next incomer. With time, Peruvian migration to Spain became a settlement migration with many extended families fully relocated, and few relatives staying in Peru or in other destination countries like Italy, Argentina or the United States (Escrivá, 2005). As a result of these two different scenarios, the Ukrainian community in Italy now comprises 219,050 people, mostly women between 40 and 50 years old (ISTAT, 2013; Marchetti and Venturini, 2013). By contrast, the Peruvian nationals registered in Spain amount to 84,235 people, equally distributed between both sexes, and 12,400 of them are women aged 45 and older (INE, 2013). There are also at least as many Peruvian women who have become naturalized as Spaniards.

The fact is that Ukrainians are among the communities with the highest female incidence in Italy nowadays, and most of these women are employed in the care and domestic sector (DGIPI, 2012), whereas the Peruvian gender ratio in Spain today is more balanced and only a (substantial) minority of them officially work as home helpers and carers (MESS, 2013).

To understand what generated these different demographic and occupational developments around the phenomenon of late-career migration, we have to consider external conditioning influences. First, there is the longer, harder and more costly journey that Peruvian migrants have to make to reach Spain in comparison with the shorter distance between Italy and the Ukraine. Second, Spanish legislation has generally favoured Latin American immigration, periodically allowing domestic workers to be regularized, family reunion processes (even for parents), and a relatively quick procedure for obtaining Spanish nationality. Third, the huge demand for construction labourers and technical professionals during Spain's decade of 1998-2008 also attracted Latin American men, whose immigration was almost as high as for women. On the contrary, Italy has not attracted Ukrainian migrant men, who usually go

to Russia, Poland and Portugal.

As for the economic pull factors promoting late-career female migration, the Spanish and Italian societies have both unquestionably been active in opening their labour market's secondary segment to immigrants, and the domestic and care market in particular (especially in 'live-in' posts) to certain types of immigrant women. During the 1990s, the emergence of Eastern European and Latin American migratory flows towards Italy and Spain met the native families' demand for a cheap, flexible and, to some extent, also expert cleaning and care-giving workforce (Ambrosini, 2013; Näre, 2013; Escrivá and Díaz-Gorfinkiel, 2011). Mature Ukrainian and Peruvian women were considered ideal as carers because they were Christian, well educated, and had apparently few or no commitments to their own families' care; their own children had already grown up. In other words, their age, family situation, expertise and higher education (often in medical and social sciences) covered the growing demand of domestic and care workers that arose from Western Europe and, in particular, from the Southern European countries during the 1990s and 2000s (Bettio, Simonazzi, Villa, 2006; Williams, 2012).

## **5. PERUVIAN AND UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE WORK IN LATE-CAREER MIGRATION TO SOUTHERN EUROPE**

As outlined in the above-described profiles, our research on Peruvian and Ukrainian migration led us to meet a number of women in their forties and older who took part, purposely or otherwise, in new domestic careers in Spain and Italy. These positions were the most readily available, especially for migrant women without an official residence permit, enabling them to apply for a regularization of their status, as well as to save part of their earnings if they lived-in (because food and accommodation were provided). These women have a variety of different educational, family and lifestyle profiles, which explain the different ways in which they have settled into their new occupations and social lives.

### **5.1 EXPERIENCES INVOLVING DOMESTIC JOBS**

Domestic jobs abroad generally involve continuing in the same paid and unpaid work of cleaning, cooking and caring for others that, as women, they had done before they emigrated. Some Peruvian and Ukrainian mature women experienced a commodification of the care and domestic work that they had previously done for free, only for their own families. Others had already worked in the reproductive sphere, but in a professional status, as nurses, social workers or teachers. Only a few migrant women had been employed as domestic workers before.

Women who have prior experience of domestic chores (whether they were paid to do them or not) have acquired an amount of expertise over the years. While this expertise was normally underestimated in housewives, considered as non-productive and non-monetised, in times of crisis it became a useful resource to exploit abroad in order to help increase the family income. The Peruvian women that Angeles Escrivá encountered who had had earlier experiences of employment as domestic workers,

sometimes not only in Peru but also in previous migrations (especially to neighboring Latin American countries), could, in Spain, make good use of the assets they had accumulated as a result, including their expertise, their savings and their knowledge of the field.

The receiving society as well as the migrant women, especially those of an older age, reproduces the gender stereotype of the good housewife and caring mother that the migrant women themselves are keen to exploit (Tamagno, 2002). For instance, Tania explains that women are more versatile than men, because they have an “innate” knowledge of the domestic realm that can easily be converted into a paid occupation. That is why many women believe that they have better chances of being employed than men in immigration countries such as Spain and Italy. Yet, the receiving society translates “innate” female capacities into a reason for underestimating of domestic expertise, arguing that tasks that women handle so “naturally” require no specific training, so seniority is not an added value to reward.

There are, nonetheless, some specific traits of older candidates for domestic positions that employers appreciate, and that give them an advantage over younger women. Employers consider them more reliable workers, more patient and better able to understand elderly people’s social and inner worlds. Likewise, because of their age, there is the important assumption that older workers are less likely to change jobs, or seek more qualified and better-paid positions (Escrivá and Skinner, 2006). But the fact remains that older age tends to play against the monetary value attributed to workers, because employers are well aware of the older labour force’s lower employability. Older workers are, likewise, in an inferior position when it comes to competing with younger people for positions that demand physical strength. Given a patient who is older and weaker, women may also be substituted by migrant men who can lift heavy ailing bodies more easily (Sarti, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010).

Similar undervaluation of their qualifications may affect professionals in the medical and social fields such as Tania and Lily who, being trained as nurses, continue to do in foreign private households much the same things as they did in their previous jobs at home. There is no doubt that their professional skills, their caring attitude, social sensitivity, and orientation towards supporting the emotional and physical well-being of others portrayed them as the best option for many families. Thus, a highly skilled yet cheap labour force is available to employers, since migrants’ previous qualifications and professional experiences are often not recognized in the destination countries. The main difference vis-à-vis their previous work settings lies in that they now serve a much more limited number of people – often only one in the common case of eldercare – and work alone, whereas previously, teamwork was the norm. By contrast, in private households they are in charge of a much broader range of activities, including cleaning or cooking. It is also impossible for home carers to keep their relational distance from the people in their care, as would be the typical case of a hospital labour relationship that ends when the working day is over.

This change might be rewarding for workers who prefer close, informal relationships with their patients and employers, making them feel more comfortable in a more family-like environment, where labour relations are diluted. Leaving these pros

aside, there are naturally other reasons why not all migrant women accept their new domestic assignments abroad with pleasure. As Olha and Doris, a journalist and a secretary respectively, tell us, the transition from their more prestigious or independent roles to their new occupations came as a shock, even to the point of making them suffer from depression.

Apart from the change of status, the women felt their health had deteriorated owing to the tough working conditions. The overlap between the workplace and their private domestic space that is characteristic of the living conditions of live-in home help and carers tends to erode their time off. They have to develop both technical and relational skills and be available around the clock, which is a heavy physical and emotional burden to bear. As a consequence, if caring and domestic work is done continuously, without shifts and in solitude (as most such forms of employment demand), it can become very harmful and workers seriously risk suffering from burnout syndrome. Unfortunately, because of the longer distance between countries, Peruvians do not usually have the opportunity – like Ukrainians such as Alexandra – to share their job with a friend, and go home every few months (Vianello, 2013b). When mature Peruvian women suffer from unbearable working conditions they have to quit their jobs and seek an alternative.

After the first and most difficult working weeks or months have passed, a more common way to combat their job dissatisfaction is for these women to reassess their position: after all, their new jobs give them an opportunity to earn more money by doing what they have always done, or would be expected to do for free for their own families. They come to readjust their priorities, being aware that their previous occupations, be they professional or otherwise, were unable to guarantee an acceptable standard of living for themselves and their families in their countries of origin.

In light of all the above advantages and disadvantages, older migrant women tend to resign themselves to accepting the domestic occupations they can access and to keeping them for as long as possible, especially if they see themselves as nearing the end of their working lives.

When we ask Zoila, “Do you think that you could do this job for ever or would you like to change?”, her answer is:

“Well, no. The fact is that I do not hope to achieve anything more, because I have already worked a lot in my life. I have worked in companies. Now I will take care of these old people for the short time I still have to continue working. It won’t be that long”.

The change in professional status is accepted on the condition that the new occupation will be only temporary, be it: a) as part of a short-term migration project, after which the worker will return home; b) as a stepping stone towards another professional occupation; or c) specifically among older Peruvian women, with the final aim of being reunited with other members of their family and retiring in the host country. No less importantly, the difference in the wage levels and other economic advantages justify such a decision and lend a sense to the devaluation process characteristic of migration. Alexandra, Olha, Tania and Victoria accept a downward

mobility in the belief that this sacrifice will improve their economic well-being, and their children's (and possibly grandchildren's) class mobility. Every summer, when she visits Ukraine, Tania organizes and pays for a little trip for the whole, extended family. At the time of her interview, she was also financing her son's wedding at a mansion near Kiev. Olha paid for her son's university studies in Italy and she is now supporting him during the difficult process of finding work in Italy. Alexandra and Victoria paid for their children's university education. Mature and older women also appreciate that the good money they earn in their more or less satisfying jobs has an important role in improving the living conditions of elderly parents and frail relatives that are still alive in their home country. In addition to contributing to the well-being of the children, Rosa in Spain, as well as Victoria in Italy, also periodically send a sum of money to their old mothers living in Peru and in Ukraine.

Our informants' testimonies thus corroborate Parreñas' theory that the extra money gained thanks to the wage differential justifies the migrants' "contradictory class mobility", in the sense of "a simultaneous experience of upward and downward mobility in migration, more specifically it refers to their decline in social status and increase in financial status" (Parreñas, 2001:150). Their professional status as individuals is diminished, but their female status around their role as the figure who is responsible for the well-being of the family is enhanced. Migrants' better financial status is displayed by their spending money on their children's higher education, private health care, and conspicuous consumptions (Veblen, 1899).

## 5.2 ELUDING THE DOMESTIC NICHE THROUGH OCCUPATIONAL PROGRESS

Measuring how women might progress in the domestic work sector through their achieving officially recognized higher qualifications paints a joyless picture. In the Spanish and Italian domestic and care sector, no career advancement is really considered, even though the European Union and the International Labour Organization are promoting the adoption of qualification levels in the sector<sup>7</sup>. At least there is a national collective labour agreement for domestic workers in Italy that defines different occupational grades with different wage levels, rewarding workers with higher qualifications and greater responsibilities. This legal document recognizes the workers' right to participate in training courses. There is nothing of the sort in Spanish legislation, and so no such collective agreement for the domestic sector.

In the Spanish, as well as in the legally better-developed Italian context, however, the recognition of workers' qualifications comes up against two main obstacles. The first concerns the native families' real economic capacity to employ a qualified (migrant) worker to meet their needs, and what the law stipulates in such situations (in more detail in Italy than in Spain). Due to insufficient welfare services for the elderly

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<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, the European Care Certificate, and the ILO's Report "Decent work for domestic workers" (2010).

and a shortage of family income – especially in times of an economic downturn – qualified workers are unaffordable for many middle-class families. The second obstacle concerns the migrant women's attitude to further education and training: the older the interviewed women, the less inclined they are to try and improve their qualifications. Often migrant women do not consider it necessary to improve their capacities in this new employment sector, for a number of reasons: 1) they may not see care and domestic work as a real job, assuming that their "innate" knowledge and lengthy experience of these activities will suffice; 2) they often initially intend to emigrate only for a brief period of time, so they see the job as being temporary; 3) they may feel they are too old to learn a new profession; 4) their retirement age is approaching, so there might not be enough time to obtain an adequate return on their investment; 5) they do not have time to invest in their education because there are strong demands from home on their remittances; 6) they were already qualified professionals in their origin country and they do not want to start studying again.

Tania, who already holds an Ukrainian nursing degree, explains that she thought a lot about studying for an Italian nursing degree, but she could not stop working and leave her family without remittances for the two years it would take her to do so. This sacrifice would only make sense if the family planned to be reunited and settle in Italy, but her husband had decided to stay in Ukraine because of his age (he is sixty years old), so Tania did not consider it a viable option.

More often than not, the only real progress that migrant women could experience in their jobs involved having the chance of finding a more satisfactory post, a subjective condition that might include: working during the day but living-out; a less demanding range of tasks; better personal relations with the employer or the person being cared for; or better contractual terms and wages. This last aspect was often mentioned in terms of the women's desire to be officially registered as a domestic worker, which is a necessary step for those wishing to pay their social security contributions and accrue a pension.

Despite the sacrifices it costs them, some mature and older migrant women less constrained by the previously mentioned reasons do undertake some kind of formal or informal training (self-taught, on the job, imparted by relatives), in the event of an opportunity arising for them to take on another occupation, either as an employee or in a self-employed role. This may involve learning new technical, social or even language skills with a view to working, for example like Lily and Victoria, as a health and social care operator in the public or private care system. It may also entail improving their accounting and management skills when they engage in entrepreneurial adventures in areas such as trade, restaurant-keeping, recreational activities and tourism, or in an activity that was common before the building industry slumped in 2008, as estate agents like Doris. When Angeles Escrivá met Doris in Spain, she was in her late forties and, after some initial years in Spain working as a live-in eldercare she began working on a commission basis as a beauty counsellor for a multinational cosmetics company. A few years after their encounter, Doris had become involved in the real estate business and she subsequently opened her own agency for the placement of domestic workers and cleaners – demonstrating a remarkable enterprising spirit, as well as an

eye for exploiting her previous experience as a care worker.

Older-aged self-employed migrant women tend to opt, therefore, for the so-called ethnic businesses, for which they feel better qualified, because they can exploit the experience they have accumulated in years of formal and informal occupations. In addition, the voluntary sector and, in particular, ethnic associations are a way for Ukrainians to exit domestic work and undertake an upward social mobility (Vianello, 2014; Näre, 2014).

It is not only the so-called “highly-skilled” migrant women (as researched by Liversage, 2009), but also older women with no university degree and a more erratic labour trajectory, but with the will and opportunity to prosper, who may find a way out of the domestic work sector, moving at least into low-qualified and semi-formal occupations as concierges, shop assistants or food makers for their ethnic communities (Escrivá, 2003). Even in these jobs, which may sometimes seem to be an extension of women’s typical chores, or be a far cry from what they were doing before, women can make use of the know-how that they already possess, as the following case demonstrates.

When Olha talks about her current occupation, as concierge in an elegant building in the city centre, she says that her degree in journalism has not been completely wasted because she discusses politics with the residents (who are lawyers, professors, notaries, etc.). Contrary to expectations, her former occupation as a journalist enables her to stay intellectually active and her exchanges of ideas make her feel more highly respected by, or even on an equal standing with the professionals living in the building where she works. This is a good example of how migrants usually find a way to cast their circumstances in a positive light, that is, by taking a particular approach to their new job as in Olha’s case. In so doing, they reduce the distance between the content and social status attached to the tasks involved in their previous and present jobs, and this enables the migrant workers to experience more satisfaction with their lot.

### 5.3. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY LIVING AND RETIREMENT PROSPECTS

The late-career migration analysed here as a phenomenon based on fieldwork conducted at a given point in time is not necessarily the last step in a person’s occupational and migratory history. Looking back at our interviewees’ past, we found that first live-in domestic positions were, in several cases, followed by the chance to move towards new occupations and other working conditions (even in a professional capacity), or to establish, or work for, a family business. In recent times, an individual’s predictable working life has grown longer, now that the prospects of retirement are nebulous. Increasing unemployment levels also affect migrant women in their new occupations; their businesses may fail due to insolvency, and an insufficient number of years of contributions to a pension scheme may oblige some of these mature women to turn to domestic employment once again as a last resort.

In some cases, the next move will be to return home. With their savings and

investments, sometimes even with a pension, older women may be able to live on the profits of rented properties or engage in a small business somewhere close to their loved ones and original communities. This can happen but, although most Ukrainians left their country with a short-term migratory project in mind, year after year they have often postponed their return with a view to securing sufficient economic means before betting on a good life back in Ukraine. Ukrainians and Peruvians are all too aware that there is little chance of a mature woman being economically independent in origin countries, where national pensions are still very low and gender- and age-related discrimination in the labour market is widespread (Ilo, 2010). To give an example, after working for 23 years as a nurse in Ukraine, Tania receives a monthly pension of 100 Euro, a sum that is not enough to maintain a decent standard of living even in an Eastern European country. That is why, after paying for their children to complete their education, many migrants like Tania decide to carry on working in Italy as long as they can to earn enough to avoid having to worry about money once they finally move back to Ukraine. On the other hand, migrants well into the forties or older who have settled in Italy or Spain, like Alexandra, will still have to work for many years before retiring<sup>8</sup>.

Peruvian women in Spain may too find themselves having to work for more years, but in a rather more complicated situation with regard to returning home after retirement because, although the conditions back home are similar to those in the Ukraine, there are three important differences: 1) most Peruvians acquire Spanish citizenship after a relatively short period of legal residence in Spain; 2) given the difficulty of accruing a contributory (portable) pension, after 10 years of legal residence they may be entitled to a means-tested (non-portable) pension; and 3) their return home may mean becoming separated from the many relatives who had settled in Spain like themselves. Taken separately and all together, these conditions actually restrain many older Peruvian women from migrating again, unless they are accompanied by their partners and/or at least some of their offspring.

Finally, the working lives of older women do not end with retirement or the termination of their income-generating activities. Regardless of whether they stay in Spain or Italy, or return to Peru or Ukraine, they will have to keep performing those women's duties of cleaning, cooking and caring for their families, also possibly having to lend a hand with the raising of their grandchildren. Indeed, Tania's plans to return home are strongly linked to the birth of her second grandchild, since she plans to help her daughter-in-law look after the child, while Alexandra and Victoria have to take care of their elderly relatives every time they return to Ukraine. Mature migrant women engage in new careers as transnational grandmothers and daughters, going back and forth between their countries of origin and destination where their children or parents live for special occasions and at times when they are most needed (Deneva, 2012).

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<sup>8</sup> According to new pension schemes since 2013, in order to accrue a state retirement pension, workers have to contribute for at least 20 or 15 years to the social security systems in Italy or Spain, respectively. Alternatively, foreigners and nationals who are over 65 years of age, and have been living regularly in the country for the last 10 years may be entitled to a means-tested (non-portable) pension.

They will be busy working and travelling until the day their health fails, and then they themselves will need to be cared for by others (Díaz-Gorfinkiel and Escrivá, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

This article contributes to the discussion surrounding the gendered nature of migration, with a focus on the late-career migration of mature and young-old migrant women. To the Peruvian and Ukrainian women who were interviewed in Italy and Spain, migration at an advanced age often meant an exposition to harsh life and work constraints. On the one hand, it means a reinforcement of their traditional female role as the sole person in charge of domestic and care work, at the expense of their previous professional lives. On the other hand, it means the obligation to attend to new family situations that require engaging in continuous support strategies and care arrangements in a transnational setting, while also keeping an eye on their own needs as they approach retirement and old age.

Late-career migration in the two cases studied here was possible under a series of personal, family and structural determinants. The latter include “push and pull” factors, such as female discrimination and ageism in society, or the international division of reproductive labour (Parreñas, 2001), as well as historical links between the origin (Peru) and destination (Spain) country, or the geographical proximity between Italy and Ukraine.

While most studies emphasise the difficulties that people of a more advanced age may encounter in engaging in international labour migration (Zaiceva, 2014), this article shows that these flows are ongoing and they will continue or intensify in the near future if certain socio-economic conditions persist or even become worse (Escrivá and Skinner, 2006). The fact is that in many families neither the younger nor the older experience enough economic and social security to build their future lives, no matter how short or long they will last. Consequently, those kin members who are able and available to migrate for economic reasons do so - sometimes they are young and single, other times they are married, separated or widowed, in both cases often with dependent (grand) parents, (grand) children, siblings or spouses. Young-old women are good candidates for migration as well because of the high chance they have of finding a suitable job in the destination countries, given that the demand for domestic and care workers has been increasing over the last few decades, and it does not seem to diminish even during economic crisis (Farris, 2014).

With such strong family constraints, that generally affect women more than men, the possibilities of enhancing migrant workers' current situations and future prospects are not only dependent on women's own decisions, as shown in the selected cases, but are also heavily tied to community action, as well as to state policies of destination and origin countries, such as family reunion laws. In contexts where welfare states draw back, the capacity of migrants for exercising activism or cooperation with social movements and trade unionism is even more imperative. Two realities prevent from advancing in this arena. First of all, societies continue to diminish the labour status of domestic workers, and many women have interiorized this as well (Escrivá and Díaz-

Gorfinkiel, 2011). In addition, some cases show that those with other qualifications that were learned or exercised before or after migration do not see their labour identities fit in with their current (and often thought of as temporary) work activities as domestic workers. In doing so, they restrain from joining unions and other organizations that may provide them with help. Second, the neo-liberal scourge, with the implementation of harsh economic restructuring measures that first affected developing and transition countries in the world, and since 2007 is affecting countries in southern Europe too, offers little room for optimism. Social policies and social aid programmes that had previously included documented as well as undocumented migrant populations have been cut or are more strictly directed towards certain residents. This tendency goes against the call for a more transnational social welfare (see, i.e. Boccagni, 2014). Likewise, countries of origin like Peru and Ukraine – especially now with the military conflict – keep on being inefficient and incapable of offering sufficient social protection to all their residents in the country and nationals abroad.

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