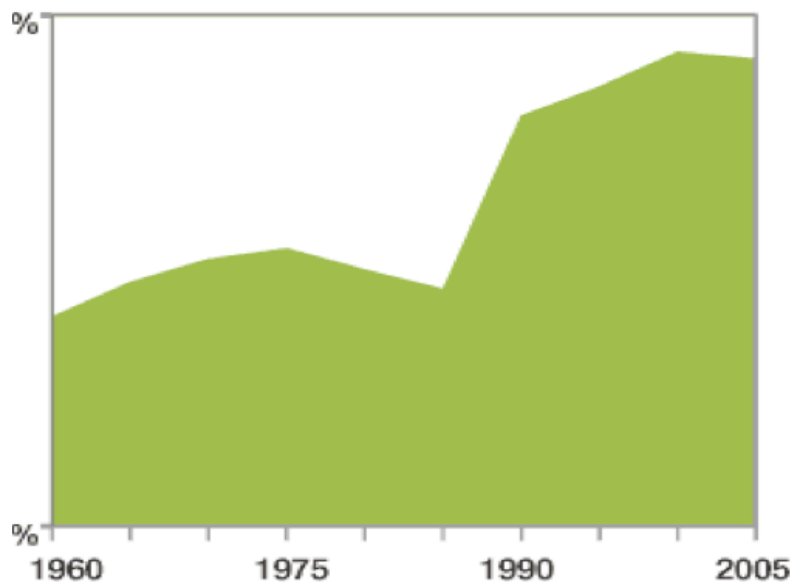


**Who cares for those who cared?  
An ethnography of transnational  
negotiations for social protection.**

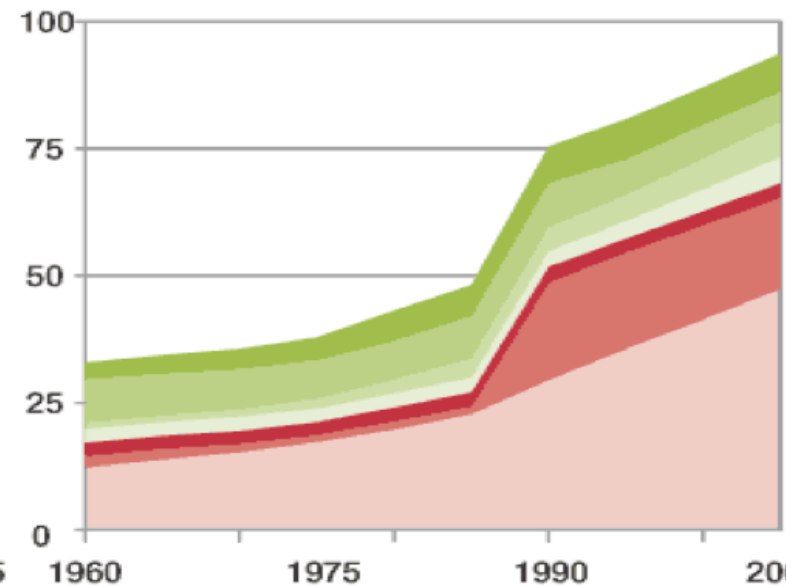
**Maria Vivas**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year PhD Student  
FRESH research fellow

# The feminization and transnationalisation of social protection needs

Female migration  
(as % of total international migrants)



Female migration distribution  
by regions in millions



- Sub Saharan Africa
- Middle East & North Africa
- Latin America & Caribbean
- Developed Regions
- South Asia
- East Asia & Pacific
- CEE/CIS

Source: UN Population Division database

# About Migrant Domestic Worker's Social Protection needs.

- Three lines of research have dealt with the social protection needs of migrant domestic worker's in terms of their homebound commitments and obligations as transnational mothers:

1- The Global Care Chain Literature (Parrenas, 2001, Hochschild 2000)

2- Transnational Care Literature (Baldassar and Merla 2014)

3- Upcoming literature on Transnational Social Protection arrangements (Faist 2012, Boccagni 2014, 2015).

# Research Questions

- How and through which practices do ageing MDWs negotiate their social protection transnationally?
- How are these negotiations affected by their transnational engagements and by other makers of heterogeneity such gender, class and ethnic origin?
- What are the inequalities that are reproduced through these dynamics?

# Case Study: Peruvian-Colombian MDWs and their TFN.

- 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 they work for in Belgium and ageing individuals in need for a social protection that's not covered by either society.

# Theoretical tools

- A **Social Protection (Sabates-Wheeler 2011)** perspective is used to analyze the variety of formal and informal practices through which these women negotiate their social protection.
- I focus on the Social Protection in the are of **Care** (Finch 2007, Baldassar et al., 2007)
- A **Transnationality** (Amelina 2012) and **Intersectional** (Anthias 2001) Perspective is used to analyze how both their transnational family relations and their intersecting positionalities affect such negotiations and the **inequalities** (Tilly 2000) produced through such dynamics.

# Methodology: the moving ethnography

- A moving ethnography that constitutes a narrative of social fields of movement where these women negotiate their social protection needs ( Fog-Olwig, 2007).
- Various complementary methods have been used to collect the data during this ethnography:
  - 1- Life story interviews (Sommers 1994, Fog-Olwig 2007).
  - 2- Participatory objectivations (Bourdieu 2003).
  - 3- In-depth interviews with their transnational family networks and community and state actors (Legard et, al. 2003).

# Difficulties to access the field and self-objectivation strategies.

- Gender, Race and Class asymmetries separated my participants and I.
- Such asymmetries were considerably erased when I began to rely on my experiences as a transnational migrant.
- I objectivize their experiences and the world that made my participants and I, producing research under less asymmetrical power relations.



# Sample Criteria and Snow Ball Selection Strategy

- 40 exploratory interviews from which 8 cases were chosen to be followed closely based on the following criteria:

1- Peruvian-Colombian women between 50 and 70 years old that arrived in Belgium between 1998, and 2005.

2- Different education, social and economic background although employed in the domestic sector in Brussels.

3- Differences in terms of the transnational protection from they received from their family members abroad or in Belgium.

- These criteria was relevant both for the sample selection and will useful as well later for my analysis
- After a 8 month period of follow up life-story interviews the 4 Peruvian MDWs gave me access to their transnational family members both in Belgium and abroad in Lima, Chimbote and some southern European locations.

Catharina: Beyond anything I'm a mother..



Maria: *Who do you think will protect you in the future?*

Catha: *“ I have been an unlucky women but a lucky mother indeed. Marita, You know I had my hip bones replaced. I can't really work all that much now but I'm looking forward to seeing my kids, my papers are coming out soon. I can't wait to go and have them spoil me. I worked hard for them but they kept me going, every time they called me, every time they wrote to me. Everything I have done is for them so they better realize it and respect me and cherish me.”*

Interview in Brussels, August 26<sup>th</sup> 2014.

# Assuring health care needs through the help of her co-nationals/fictive kin



*Maria: “Catha, how did you get to have the surgery?”*

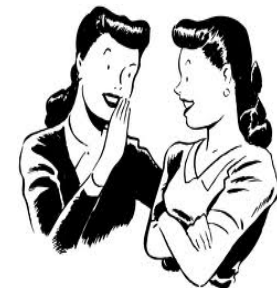
*Catharina: “I knew many Latinos in Brussels, they recommended Dr. Rodriguez and then well Mariana my friend-cousin helped me to fill in all the paper work for the urgent medical help. After the surgery Mariana also came back to the hospital to change my toilet seats and make sure I got to rehab center where I recovered.”*

# Assuring health care needs through the help of her co-nationals/fictive kin

*Maria: “So, how did you meet Catha. How have you helped each other when you were in Belgium? “*

*Mariana: “I can’t remember exactly when I met her is must have been a few months after I moved to Brussels for the first time. Katha is like family to me. We both come from Pisco, Peru. People from the Sea Side in Peru we know each other and we consider each other family. We live according to the same values and I had to help her. I check on her often when I was there and even now that I came back in Lima.”*

Interview in Lima, February 26<sup>th</sup> 2015.



# Assuring social-emotional support

*Maria: “How often do you get in touch with your kids? What will you say was their role in your life?”*

*Catharina: “They are my everything. I call them everyday when they were smaller now it’s once a week because they are all grown up. They have families and jobs. I never told them I was sick, because I’m their mother my job is to protect them. I told them after the surgery and it was big relief. I got through because I heard their voice everyday.”*

Interview with Catharina, Brussels October 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.



# Assuring social-emotional support

*Maria: Mario, how what do you think is your obligation towards your mom? How often do you talk to each other?*

*Mario: “When I have the money to do it I got a cyber cafe and call her. Now that baby Gabriel has gotten sick I have less money and she calls me more often. After the surgery our relationship has strengthen. I realized she needs me more. Luciano thinks differently, he is a bit bitter with her but still loves her. Now that she is coming back you see everything we are doing to find a proper housing for her to be comfortable.”*

Interview with Mario- Catharina’s Son.



# Assuring the proper housing here and there

Maria: Where would you like to live at? Do you have a house in Peru?

Catharina: *“ I’m not stupid and I now that’s getting harder than ever to work here after the surgery. So, I’m together with Gerard an ex-client who is fallen for me. I think I’m going to marry him. I will stay in his house for as long as I can and then buy something there (Peru) to live with my boys and my grandchildren. I have been saving now that I have to send less money for the boys even if the oldest one wants me to keep supporting him, he want to be an engineer.”*

Interview with Catharina, Brussels February 5<sup>th</sup> 2015.



# Assuring the proper housing here and there

*Maria: I spoke to your mom on facebook the other day she says she is coming back? What do you think about that?*

*Luciano: "Well my brother thinks we should look for something big... She is only coming for a couple of months, who is going to pay for all that when she is gone? I'm happy that she is coming but we shouldn't exaggerate. To be honest, I think she should stay there, let me finish my engineering career and come back when I'm able to support her... I need to work hard to provide for her so that she won't be bothering anyone with her needs..."*

*"I owe her everything I'm. She is helped my brother financially since she left and she has helped me mature economic and mentally wise."*

Interview with Luciano March 28<sup>th</sup> 2015





# And what about the future?

Maria: *How are things going?*

Katharina: *“Marita, I have been thinking I don’t want to be a martyr anymore. I think I’m getting married to this old man. I might get a pension from him. I already got my papers and I can move back to Peru later. Although wherever I die I want for my body to get back. Now that I have my papers I’m getting ready to fix all that... I wish we could have met in Lima. I’m sorry that I couldn’t make it before you left.”*

April 29<sup>th</sup>, phone conversation with Katharina over vibe.

# Laura: my needs are covered by my money...



Maria: Who do you think will support you in the future?

Laura: *“ I don’t need anyone. My mother and my siblings have been my only support. We come from a family that has suffered a lot. People like us in Peru suffer a lot. My grandmother, my mother and I we have all worked hard for others. And my daughters have grown up here so I don’t expect much from them. I think my savings, my money and my sacrifice will take care of me. At the end of the story the only unconditional support I will always have is mom’s and she might be gone sooner than we think...”*

Interview with Laura, December 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

# Assuring housing & retirement transnationally

Maria: What are the plans for the future? This apartment is nice but do you always want to live here?

Laura: *“This apartment is nice my boss helps me pay the rent but I know his little girls won’t need me forever.... 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.”*

Interview with Laura October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014



# Assuring housing & retirement transnationally



Maria: “So, this week you have been busy? You’re the one that keeps track of Laura’s account and her building project?”

*Matilde: “I never went to school but for my children I have always been a doctor, an engineer, a psychologist everything a mother needs to be. I told them everything they know. I told them that governments don’t care about people like us so we only have each other. I keep track of everything Laura has here. You were lucky you came before we started up the building otherwise I would’ve been so busy.”*

Interview with Matilde, April 10<sup>th</sup> Pachacamac, Lima.

# Assuring her social-emotional support:



Maria: How often do you communicate with your family in Peru?

*Laura: “I call my mother almost every day. I pay for her fix line there. I tell her everything and she tells me everything. Mom checks on me and knows when I’m not well I can’t hide anything from her not even over the phone. And we take turns to visit each other. She is the only person I talk to not even to my daughters that live here, they have their own lives.”*

Interview with Laura, Brussels December 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

# Assuring her social-emotional support:



*Maria: How often do you communicate with Laura? What do you often talk about ?*

*Matilde: “You see that phone there that’s how we keep in touch. It’s close to the kitchen because I’m always cooking. She calls me everyday and when she can’t call me she tells me she will be away for work. We tell each other everything. I try to be there for her because she experiences a lot of solitude there even if her sister is there and her daughters too.”*

*Interview with Matilde, Laura’s mom February 28<sup>th</sup> 2015.*

# Assuring her formal care needs

Maria: How are you protected health wise since you migrated?

Laura: *“Well the first ambassador I worked for thought it was normal not to pay for my mutual. Until one day I got sick and forced him to pay for it. He said people like didn’t deserve it. He was Peruvian and his wife was Spanish. I left this job, married a Portuguese man got a job with the voucher system. now I’m protected because I’m a permanent resident here. But no one ever told me anything, people are mean to me here. They must think because in Peru they had a bit of class that’s the same here. We all clean toilets here it don’t matter what we were before.”*



# The future...

Maria: So what will the future look like?

*Laura: “Well you see I’m planning things out to move back. Getting that building ready while mom can still help me. I want to be there for family but I also want to rest. I don’t know what the future will look like but I want to be independent. And just in case I die here I want to fix things so that they can take my body back to Pachacamac.”*

Laura, informal conversation over Facebook, April  
30<sup>th</sup> 2015.



Eva: “I’m their mother and grandmother what else could I be!”

Maria: How will you be protected in the future?

*Eva: “I have a house in Peru that I used to rent but now I’m going to give it to Rosalina so that’s over. We are all going back... I have a small pension that my husband pays for. I have my kids there Luigi and Rosalina they won’t leave me alone. Here it was perfect because I worked cleaning a few hours had a bit of pocket money and my pension stayed in Peru. I was saving to build up my own house. Now we are all going to have live in the same house because Abu (her husband) has said so...”*

Interview with Eva Brussels, May 2014.



# Assuring housing transnationally

Maria: So what are the plans for the future, now that Mamita Eva is coming back to Lima? Housing wise?

Odylis: *“Well, we are all getting ready. Papa Abu (Eva’s husband) wants for all us to live together. He forced us to buy this house and we are building a room here for them for when they can’t live on their own anymore. Eva is not so happy about all of us living together but Papa Abu always has the last word.”*

Interview with Odylis- Eva’s daughter in Law. May 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.



# Assuring health care transnationally

Maria: So, how about health care ?



*Eva: “Here my daughter Rosalina used to take me to the doctor, she fixed everything so that I could be a citizen. She complains about me always being sick but she takes me. Now over there in Peru, I don’t know I guess since my son is a Doctor he will try to get me to see the best practitioners. I only have a general insurance plan there, who wants that...”*

Interview with Eva, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2015.

# Assuring health care transnationally

Maria: How was mamita Evita protected health wise and pension wise here?

Rosalina: *“In Belgium I did all the paper work to get her on the best mutual possible. I took her to the doctor every single month, she has that kind of disease: hypochondria? Now that she is coming back Luigi will share the task with me. I also came back for that so that he can also take some responsibility over mom. She deserves many things, she has been a martyr that has lived for everyone else but her...”*



# Assuring emotional-support

Maria: How often do you communicate with them?

Eva: *“Everyday, since I bought my smart phone. I talk to Clara my granddaughter everyday. I tell her everything. I call the house as well but I feel like they might not want to talk that much. Clara is the one who is mostly there for me.”*

Interview with Eva over the phone, February 2015



# Assuring emotional support

Maria: Do you feel like you have to respond to Mamita Eva on your smart phone? Why do you do it?

Clara: *“I grew up with her. I owe her many things. I feel awful when I can’t reply... I write her letters, send her videos of the family for her birthday and mother’s day, I coordinate Skype meetings so that she can see us all on special occasions and whenever she comes to visit I spend my summer times with her. I couldn’t think about it other wise (tears) family is everything. By the way could take a letter to her when you go back to Belgium?”*

Interview with Clara, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.



**Zoe: No body needs me there but mom.**

**Maria: So how, do you get socially protected ?**

*Zoe: “Through my work here, because no body gives me everything. My family over there deceived me some many times. I sent money to buy a house and they kept it. They don’t care about me and think I’m a mess because I remarried a man who deceived me... I only talk to Roberto my youngest brother because he is in charge of mom.”*

# The absent emotional and material support

Maria: So how often do you all communicate with Zoe?

Charo: *“Well not much. She left leaving her mother here alone and sick. I’m here doing something I shouldn’t do. The lady has helped me but she not my mother. Is a daughter’s job to take care of her mother. I can guess she will grow old alone, that’s life what you do here you pay it here.”*

Interview with Charo, Zoe’s sister in Law. February 2015.



# Plans for the future:

Maria: So what are the plans for the future?

*Zoe: 'Well I need to go back to care for my mother. I'm also sick and tired of my job. I'm old and don't have the same strength to pick up an old person's body. My brother Roberto is helping me and supervising my project to buy an apartment. I think I will leave once my daughters are in college and live with my mom. Although most of my family lives in Europe, they don't care I'm a shame to them.'*

Interview with Zoe, over facebook March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

# Preliminary conclusions

- The practices examined so far, form an net of transnational welfare that reunites formal and informal resources that are interdependent from each other.
- These women's access to these resources is influenced by their gender condition as mother's, household chiefs and women over all.
- These women's access to such resources is also conditioned by their positioning in the global labor market as domestic workers pertaining to a racialized and exploited working class.
- Transnational family relations have an ambiguous effect. They help to construct instrumental and affective forms of help that concerns movers and stayers equally and are enacted through interpersonal ties (Amelina et al., 2012). They do however produce inequalities based on this women's class, gender, ethnic positioning inside their families.

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