



Contract No. 028545-2

QUING

Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies

Integrated Project

Priority 7 – Citizens and Governance in a knowledge based Society
7.1.2. Gender and Citizenship in a Multicultural Context

Deliverable No. 47/49: Series of explanatory country and thematic comparative reports in WHY

Paper Title: Norms and silences in gender equality policies: an analysis of policy debates on domestic services in Spain and Sweden

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Due date of deliverable: 30.06.2009

Actual submission date: 29.06.2009

Start date of project: 01.10.2006

Duration: 54 Months

IWM Vienna

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)		
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission	X
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Introduction

The aim of this article is to compare ways of framing ‘paid domestic work’ in policy debates in Sweden and Spain, aspiring to reveal normative assumptions and silences surrounding gender (in)equality. The comparison between Swedish and Spanish policy debates on paid domestic work serves to shed light on some problems embedded in the theorization of gender and welfare states as well as in gender equality policies. The analysis situates the debates on paid domestic work in relation to feminist welfare state studies and compares the articulation of paid domestic work within two very different welfare state models. The comparison is helpful, on the one hand, in pointing at hegemonic gender discourses that reinforce certain privileges at the expense of ‘other’ women and, on the other hand, in indicating what is not getting problematized in each context. We aspire to contest uniform notions of “women” and “gender”. Through applying a comparative frame analysis and an intersectional perspective on state policies on domestic services, it is possible to visualize the gender, class and race privileges that these policies reinforce. Within this vein, we also intend to contextualize and problematize some normative assumptions on gender often embedded in feminist welfare state studies.

The article will first briefly examine how feminists have framed domestic work as an issue of gender inequality. Secondly, we situate the analysis of domestic service within feminist welfare state studies, arguing that the analysis of state discourses surrounding domestic service can help us to reveal some of the challenges of gender and welfare state studies in a globalized by means of an examination of the way certain groups are privileged and/or excluded. Thirdly, we present the methodological approach adopted in this article, a comparative policy frame analysis paying attention to ‘intersectionality’. Then we present the frames found surrounding the issue of domestic service in each of the two case studies. Finally we discuss and compare the frames in the two case studies in terms of normative assumptions and silences.

Feminists framing domestic work

As a backdrop, we will first briefly see how some feminist debates have framed domestic work. Feminist debates on domestic work are not at all new. In the 1970s, the issue of a salary

for domestic work was intensely debated by feminists all over Europe (Lutz 2007). Feminist demands argued that unpaid household work, performed mainly by women, should be recognized as an essential part of the economy. At the same time, it was argued that the gendered divisions of public and private spheres, where productive and reproductive work are differentiated along gendered lines, should be questioned. Since then, some of the key themes of feminist debate have been the redistribution of house and care work between women and men, the upgrading of the status of this work, and the importance of women's labor market participation. Nevertheless, while gendered divisions of paid work declined due to women's entrance into the formal labor market, the gendered divisions of unpaid work remained just about the same (Lewis 1992).

Overall, feminists have often considered domestic work to be a common burden of all women imposed by patriarchy. However, some feminist welfare state researchers have questioned the idea of domestic work as a "common burden". Julia O'Connor et al. (1999) argue that public policies have encouraged mothering in the home and breadwinning for men for a privileged race/ethnicity or class, while rejecting other groups such support. Fiona Williams's (1995) analysis of the welfare state shows how, in the context of the hegemony of the 'white breadwinner model', certain groups get constructed as 'other' on the basis of a supposed racial, ethnic or cultural difference. Post-colonial theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1994) argues that the concept of sexual division of labour is often used without specification of geographic and historical context. The concept has been used by feminists to provide explanations for women's subordination, apparently assuming universal applicability. She argues the meanings and value of the content of the sexual division of labor differs widely in different contexts (1997: 210).

In recent years, researchers have emphasized the asymmetrical race and class relations involved in paid domestic work or "domestic service" (Bakan and Stasiulis 1995; Mohanty 2003; Anderson 2000; Hochschild 2000). Global migration processes involve people leaving their poor home countries in search for decent work opportunities and a better life (ILO 2008). Half of these migrants are women and many of them end up working with domestic services in private households, caring for elderly and children, cleaning, cooking and ironing. These migrant women are often not protected by the destination country's labor legislation, and are thereby vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The increasing demand for paid domestic services in the European households in the last decade can be understood as due to

the increasing amount of female migrants from impoverished countries, disposed to perform this work for low wages (Lutz 2007). The growing demand for paid domestic services has also been interpreted as due to the decline of welfare states, the ageing populations and the increasing amount of dual-earner families. We will look more into this issue in the next section.

Gender, welfare states and domestic (care) work

We situate the analysis of domestic service within the context of feminist welfare state studies. While analyses on gender and welfare states largely ignore issues related to domestic service, we argue that putting this issue in the centre of analysis can help us to reveal some of the challenges of gender and welfare state studies in a globalized context. It is important to analyze the ways in which the states articulate domestic service as a policy problem/solution within ongoing debates related to gender and welfare. Through this analysis we will be able to examine hegemonic discourses and to challenge the normalized and socially historical constructed inequalities such as class, gender and race that permeate these societies. We highlight the ways in which the Swedish and the Spanish welfare states have been characterized in recent welfare state literature since the characteristics of the welfare states are important in order to contextualize the interpretations of paid domestic work in the two countries.

As welfare states, Spain and Sweden are generally considered as disparate, and maybe the differences are the most striking in policies on care for children and elderly. In Sweden the state and local governments provide generous and flexible leave policies and good availability of childcare services (Boje and Leira 2000). Elderly care has also been provided through extended public care provisions (Szebehely 2005). Women have a high labour market activity level, even though it is common that women work part-time. Women's official labor market activity rate is much lower in Spain than in Sweden, but there is a high quota of women working in the informal labor market in Spain (Boje and Leira 2000). In Spain there is a high reliance on family for supporting individual and household needs, both in terms of childcare and elderly care. Spain is one of the countries in the European Union that spends the least on support to families and infancy, dedicating only 0.7% of GDP, while the average of the EU

member states is 2.1%. Public spending in the area of care provision and support for elderly is also low, 8.5% of GDP while the EU average is 12.0% (Eurostat 2005). However, important changes are taking place that challenge the Spanish welfare state, among which we can mention the ageing population, the fall in birth-rates, and the increasing participation of women in the formal labour market. Among the recent developments in social policy there is a law from 2006 that laid the foundations of a *System of Autonomy and Attention to Dependent People* (mainly focusing on elderly care) which was defined as the fourth pillar of the Spanish welfare state. In both Sweden and Spain, though, paid domestic work in private households has become more and more common during the last decade (ILO 2008). The growing demand for domestic services has often been interpreted as related to the context of the decline of welfare states, the ageing populations and the increasing amount of dual-earner families. Public policies in the two countries interpret differently what the problem of domestic service is and to what extent domestic service can be considered a solution to policy problems. In Sweden, paid domestic work appeared as a policy problem in the so called ‘maid debate’, on the introduction of a tax-deduction for domestic services. This has been an ongoing debate during more than a decade and it comprises controversies related to gender, class and race (Platzer 2007). In Spain, domestic services have not been interpreted as a controversial policy problem, but have emerged as a solution to policy problems, mainly within the context of a dominating discourse regarding the ‘reconciliation of work and family life’ (Peterson 2007).

Feminists have challenged mainstream welfare state analyses, pointing out its gender blindness. Researchers have criticized that welfare state studies have been concerned with paid work and income-maintenance programs, and have largely ignored issues such as care and provision of services (Hobson, Lewis, and Siim 2002; Towns 2002). The post-war established male breadwinner model built on an assumption of regular and full male employment and stable, heterosexual families in which women would be provided for via their husbands. Changes in women’s labor market participation and family structures have, to a certain extent, undermined this model and dual-earner families have challenged existing mechanisms for delivering social programs (Lewis 2001).

Nordic welfare states has been characterized as a “dual breadwinner model”, were both women and men have been entitled to be carers and earners, and that the aim has been to enable women to become workers and men to become caregivers (Sainsbury 2000; Lewis

2001). Distinguishing for the Nordic welfare state model is claimed to be an extensive social policy directed at more or less all sections of the population, based on citizenship (Bergqvist et al. 1999). Probably due to Sweden's tradition of extended public care provisions, domestic services have in the debate been predominately associated with housework and cleaning. But domestic services have also been argued as a way of compensating for the shortcomings of the public care system. Since the recession in the 1990s more care responsibilities has been redirected towards the households, as due to the decline of the welfare states (Calleman 2007; Szebehely 2005). The Nordic states have been defined as potentially women-friendly, due to the fact that women's political and social empowerment has been made possible through the state and with the support of social policy (Hernes 1987). Within this vein, the Nordic welfare state model has often set the norm for comparative welfare state research while the Mediterranean welfare states have been seen as 'lagging behind'. In Sweden, gender equality has been constructed as part of the national identity, wanting to set example for other countries and the EU (Towns 2002; Hobson, Lewis, and Siim 2002). Nevertheless, the term 'women-friendly welfare state' has been criticized for not taking into consideration differences *among women*. According to the critics, this notion is based upon a normative assumption of a homogeneous category of women, where gender equality predominantly means equality for white heterosexual working mothers (Kantola 2006; Kantola and Dahl 2005; Staunæs 2003; Holli, Magnusson, and Rönnblom 2005).

The Euro-Mediterranean welfare states traditionally attribute a key role to women's unpaid work within the family, which has been the focus of criticism of feminist scholars (Threlfall and Cousins 2005; Carrasco 1997). The Spanish welfare state has been characterized as linked to the 'strong male breadwinner model' with a strong ideology of sexual division of labour according to the norm of male breadwinner/female caretaker. Nevertheless, studies indicate that the expectations of women's unpaid work within the family can no longer sustain the weight placed upon it (Stark and Regnér 2002; Martínez Buján 2005; Anttonen 2005). Spain can be interpreted as moving towards a 'dual breadwinner model' in the context of an increasing participation of women in the labor market, an ageing population and new migration patterns. There have been some tendencies to look at the Nordic countries, as well as European Union policies, as good examples. However, research indicates that rather than public care provision, 'private' solutions are still dominant although shifting in character. For instance, some studies emphasize the role of 'superwomen', referring to women who have to manage what appears to be an impossible situation, that is to face paid and unpaid work

without sufficient public support for care services (Moreno and Salido 2005). Other studies emphasize the central role of grandmothers in childcare. Additionally, studies have underlined the increasing role of female migrant domestic workers in child and elderly care work (Tobío and Soler 2005; Cerdón and Soler 2005). Following from this, we can say that theories on 'global care chains' have a special relevance in the Spanish context. Specific to the Spanish context, in comparison to the Swedish context, is that in the absence of public care provision, 'domestic service' most often involves care work and that is why some researchers prefer to use the concept of 'domestic care service' (Martínez Buján 2007).

Comparative policy frame analysis

As welfare models Spain and Sweden has been described as disparate, but within both models paid domestic work is beginning to surface as a important social phenomenon. To be able to compare how paid domestic work has been articulated within state discourses we are applying a comparative policy frame analysis. The frame analysis used in this article is inspired by Carol Bacchi's *'What's the problem approach'* (1999). We focus on competing representations of the policy problem of 'domestic service' to unravel the different frames that emerge in the debates. This frame analysis is based on a constructivist approach that rest on the presumption that there are no objective policy problems and that discourses, by means of constructing "truths", have important material and immaterial impacts. Absences in the political agenda are considered significant for the analysis because they provide indications for what is getting excluded or marginalized. The way people talk about a problem is always an interpretation of that problem, among other possible interpretations. The problem representation will determine the proposals put forward to change the situation, that is - what solutions that are seen as feasible or acceptable in a given context. Using this approach, competing ideas about what the problem is can be discovered, asking questions about who is regarded as responsible for the problem, what causes and effects the problem is believed to have, and what solutions are proposed to solve the problems (Bacchi 2005). The analysis is also inspired by recent work on gender equality policies using policy frame analysis (see Verloo 2005; Verloo 2007; Lombardo et. al. 2009). Policy frame analysis starts from the assumption of multiple interpretations in policy making and seeks to address the different interpretations of a policy problem by focusing on socio-political actors' representations of

the problem. Hence, the starting point is that there are multiple ways of framing gender inequality as a policy problem and, thus, that there are multiple ways of framing the underlying vision of gender equality that sustains particular policy representations. According to Lombardo, Meier and Verloo, a frame on gender equality can be defined as a configuration of positions on dimensions of diagnosis and prognosis, including positions on roles, on location, on norms, on causality and mechanisms, on gender and intersectionality (Lombardo et. al. 2009: 11). In this article, we emphasize that policy frame analysis examine normative assumptions that inform the interpretation of policy problems.

The comparison between Swedish and Spanish policy debates on paid domestic work serves to illuminate the phenomenon of gender (in)equality policies in the context of changing welfare states, and helps us to reveal both normative assumptions and silences. The comparison is thus helpful in pointing at dominating discourse and at what is not getting problematized in each context. The article focuses on analyzing recent debates in Sweden and Spain, and the documents used for the analysis presented in this article are laws, law proposals, parliamentary debates and policy plans¹. The text analysis takes the questions of “what is the problem represented to be?” and “what are the solutions represented to be?” as the point of departure as we analyze the underlying normative assumptions that inform the understanding of the policy problems in the different policy texts. Within these underlying norms, we also focus especially on the way gender is represented in the texts, and how different social categories are privileged and/or excluded (intersectionality) in the representation of the policy problem.

Intersectional analysis

¹ The documents selected for analysis coincide to a large extent with the material selected for analysis in the European Research project QUING, in which both authors have been participating. The documents that are analyzed in Sweden are the governmental bill on tax deduction on domestic services (prop. 2006/07:94), the Parliamentary debate following the bill (Parliamentary debate records 2006/07:116, 30th of May 2007) and a finance policy report preceding the center right wing alliance election manifesto 2006 (En politik för arbete och trygghet, Alliance for Sweden 2006). The documents that are analyzed in the Spanish case are a parliamentary bill on the improvement of the social protection of the special regime of domestic service presented by the Mixed Parliamentarian Group (Proposición de ley 122/000109) and the parliamentary debate following the bill (27th of June 2005). Additionally, the case study includes an analysis of the Organic Law 3/2007, of the 22nd of March, for de Facto Equality between Women and Men and Law 39/2006 for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention to Persons in Situation of Dependency. These laws mainly contribute to highlight the silences surrounding domestic service on the agenda.

Since the mid 1970s black feminists have criticized white feminist for ignoring black and third world women's experiences within mainstream feminist theory. Feminist theory has been accused of focusing on a homogenized womanhood and ignoring differences between women (Ludvig 2006). To move away from this narrow constructions of 'Gender' and 'Women' that has been dominating within the field of mainstream feminist research, we will in this article use an intersectional approach in our policy analysis. According to this approach it is not possible to single out different dimensions of social life and therefore it is necessary to analyze the intersecting power dimensions together (Carbin and Tornhill 2004; Brah and Phoenix 2004). In this article we see categories such as race, class, sexuality and gender as mutually constitutive, interrelated and multifaceted (Williams 1995; Carbin and Tornhill 2004). Hence, it is important to underline that there are no separate structures of oppression. The concept of intersectionality, as we see it, is a way of understanding the variety of structured divisions that constitutes everyday life and its power relations (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006). The social phenomenon of paid domestic work could easily function as an illustration of intersectional power relations, as it is predominantly performed by racialised groups of women within private homes, and enables middle-class women and men to avoid the conflicts around household tasks (Anderson 2000). That domestic work encompasses categories of gender, class and race/ethnicity is not a new phenomenon, which post-colonial feminist theories reveal (Lewis, 2006). Yet, the global migration of women from 'the South' performing the often invisibilized house and care work in 'the North' reinforces the need for feminist analysis with an intersectional approach to paid domestic work. A shift in focus from women's unpaid care and domestic work, dominating in feminist welfare state research, towards domestic service can unveil how inequalities linked to gender, class and race/ethnicity are entwined with the meanings and value attributed to house- and care work (Graham 1991).

We argue that the frame analysis approach used in this article enables an analysis of underlying normative assumptions and silences on gender inequality and this reveals the perpetuation of certain privileges and power positions of certain groups over others. By focusing on language and the processes by which meanings and categories are constituted in the specific historical contexts in Sweden and Spain, our article raises questions about what 'women' are the subject of gender equality policies, what visions of gender equality are dominant, and who is excluded or marginalized in policy discourses.

Policy debates surrounding domestic service in Sweden and Spain

In Sweden, the ‘maid debate’ on the introduction of a tax-deduction for domestic services, has been a morally and ideological charged issue causing controversies articulated in parliamentary debates, the media and civil society for more than a decade (Platzer 2007). The reform in Sweden was initiated by a well-known female economist arguing that a tax deduction on domestic services would enable a transformation of unpaid house work to paid work, allowing for the households to become part of the market (Pålsson and Norrman 1994). At the time Sweden was governed by a centre- right wing coalition with contesting opinions regarding the question. The coalition decided to appoint an official report, which was presented in 1994. The liberal-conservative Moderate Party was positive to the suggestion, while the Liberal Party was doubtful in the beginning. In 1998 the Moderate Party, Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party agreed upon a proposal about tax deduction on domestic services. They promised to introduce the reform if they were elected into government, but the Social Democrats won the 1998 elections. In 2002 the Centre Party joined the right wing agreement and in 2007 a tax deduction on domestic services was introduced by the centre right wing government.

In Spain, domestic services have not been interpreted as a controversial policy problem and debates that frame paid domestic work as a problem are clearly marginal on the political agenda. In the last decade, the issue of domestic services has appeared as a solution, accepted by both left and right wing parties in the context of welfare state (re)construction and modernization, particularly in relation to the problems of ‘reconciliation of work and family/personal life’ and ‘dependency’ (Peterson 2007). However, in 2005, domestic service was also debated as a policy problem in terms of improving the rights and conditions of domestic workers. The existence of a *Special Regime of Domestic Workers* established in law 1424/1985² provides an important background to this debate. Since 1985, this social security regime regulates employment in domestic service providing far less protection than the General Regime of the social security system. Researchers have emphasized that the social

² Real Decreto 1424/1985, de 1 de agosto, por el que se regula la relación laboral de carácter especial del servicio del hogar familiar (Royal Decree Law 1424/1985, of the 1st of August, that regulates the special labour relation of home work).

security system thus constructs paid domestic work as ‘different’³ from ‘normal’ types of work (Colectivo IOÉ, 2001). Improving domestic workers’ rights constituted the target of a parliamentary bill presented by the Galician Nationalist Party and debated in 2005. The proposal involved equalizing the social protection of the Special Regime of Domestic Workers with the protection provided by the General Regime of the social security system. There was a general agreement among all political parties on that the Special Regime is obsolete and yet the majority voted against taking the proposal into further consideration, including both the Socialist Party and the Conservative Party *Partido Popular*, mainly referring to economic reasons. In 2007, the Socialist government promised to improve the conditions of domestic workers by reforming the Special Regime and eventually incorporating it in the General Regime. The government also stated that it planned to take measures in order to professionalize the work, most likely referring to the care work dimension of domestic service. The main trade unions, the General Workers’ Union (UGT) and Workers’ Commissions (CCOO) supported the initiative to integrate domestic work in the general regime. However, no steps have been taken to actually integrate the regime into the General Regime and by the time of writing the government had stopped the negotiations surrounding this issue.

Framing domestic service in Sweden

In the Swedish policy debate regarding tax deduction on domestic services three competing representations of the policy problem was articulated. The proponents of the suggestion, the centre-right wing government, articulated the reform of tax deduction on domestic services as economical rational, but also as a way to improving possibilities to reconcile work and family. The opponents of the suggestion, the social democratic, left party and green party parliament members mainly argued along the line of equality, emphasizing the social inequalities involved in domestic services in relation to class, gender, education and marital status. Both

³ The Special Regime of Domestic Workers does not include unemployment benefits, written contracts are only required when the job exceeds 80 hours a month, professional illnesses and accidents are not recognized, part of the salary can be paid in kind, working hours are ‘flexible’, etc. The parliamentary bill involved, among other things, introducing unemployment benefits, recognizing the right to benefits due to professional illnesses and work accidents and compensating for the lack of social security contributions in the pensions system.

opponents and proponents of the reform framed the problem of domestic services in relation to workers rights, but from basically opposite positions.

Economic rationality frame

In the governmental bill and the parliamentary debate on tax deduction on domestic services the dominant frame was economical rationality. The centre right wing government's main argument was that a tax reform that would enable private households to make tax deduction for domestic services would provide more opportunities for households to buy domestic services. This reform was argued to be rational from an economical point of view, both for the households and for the society. For households it would be rational in terms of reducing unpaid work in the home in order to increase the time spent in paid employment. For society in general it would be rational in the sense that the tax deduction on domestic services would provide a chance for legal companies in the domestic service sector to gain market from the illegal work that is performed within this sector, replacing black work with white work. The tax reform would also create job opportunities for low educated persons and the domestic service sector could provide a possibility to enter the labor market for unemployed and especially groups with low employment opportunities.

Work and family reconciliation frame

Domestic services were also framed as a way of facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life. Among the right wing parties a common argument was that domestic services were a way of reducing families double burden of domestic work and paid employment. Through subsidizing domestic services unpaid work could be replaced with paid work. This frame also articulated the reconciliation of work and family life as a gender equality question. Domestic services were represented as a way of improving women's possibilities to participate in the labor market on equal terms with men. As women perform most of the unpaid household work, a tax deduction on domestic work would provide the opportunities for women to perform more work on the paid labor market. This in turn would improve women's positions as professionals and increase their economic independence.

Equality frame / workers rights frame

The main frame argued by the opposition to the reform was the equality frame, in which the unequal consequences of the tax reform were discussed. Social democrats, left party and green party parliament members argued that the tax reform was a redistributive problem due to the fact that it favors high income earners. Another prominent aspect of the equality frame was that the tax reform affects in terms of gender equality. With references to the uneven distribution of power and resources between women and men and the gender power system, the gender equality gains and economical rationality of the tax reform was questioned. The opponent's suggested that men should be encouraged to take responsibility for their part of the house work instead of reinforcing the gender based separation of domestic work through tax deductions. The equality frame is multifaceted and brings to the agenda different, mutually constitutive power relations, such as class, gender and education. The social democrats, left party and green party speakers claimed that the tax deduction on domestic services mainly meets the needs of the privileged classes on behalf of the working class and that men should take their part of the household shares instead of raising the tax burden on low income women, through this suggested tax deductions on domestic services. Workers rights were also called upon by both opponents and proponents to the reform. Opponents to the reform fear the sort of work and work conditions that this tax reform will create namely another female dominated labor market sector with low wages, part-time work and insecure employments with few opportunities to skill development and career opportunities. On the other hand the proponents also calls upon workers rights as they emphasizes the importance of transforming the already existing illegal sector of domestic work into a legal work to guarantee those workers to be protected by labor laws and be entitled to pensions, parental leave and other insurances.

Framing domestic service in Spain

Economic rationality frame

Domestic service was situated in a dominant frame stressing economic growth and stability and increasing employment opportunities, emphasized by both the Socialist party in government and the Conservative Party, the main opposition party. Above all, improving the rights of domestic workers should by no means put state finances in danger. The financial viability of the social security system was a primary concern, referring to the European Commission's argument that Spain need to revise the system in order to be able to face an

ageing population. Granting domestic workers the right to unemployment benefits would affect the sustainability of the system. There was also a fear that improving the rights of domestic workers would make their services too expensive and that this would lead to a decrease in regular work and an increase of the submerged economy. The Conservative Party argued in favor of subsidies to ‘big families’⁴ (*familia numerosa*) for employing domestic workers, above all because it would turn black jobs into regular work and create new employment opportunities. Within this frame, women’s massive incorporation in the labor market was considered a great advance; women’s paid work (in domestic work or any other sector) was considered good for society because it increases ‘women’s equality’, but also because it generates economic growth. Women’s enhanced ‘employability’, that is, women’s adaptation to labor market rules and conditions, was an objective put forward in the Organic Law for De Facto Equality between Women and Men.

Work and family reconciliation frame

Domestic service was framed as issue related to problems surrounding the reconciliation of work and family life, by both left wing and right wing parties. Domestic service was then represented as an important aspect of solving middle-class families’ reconciliation problems and of promoting families’ interests and life quality. In other words, domestic workers were debated in terms of providing solutions for Spanish families. These ‘private solutions’ to the problem of reconciling work and family life were also expected to be a key solutions in the future. How to satisfy the demands of middle-class families where both men and women work was framed as a central issue. Any reform of the Special Regime should by no means imply making the services more expensive for the middle class. The task of a potential reform of the Special Regime was generally seen as twofold: The reform of domestic service should improve the rights to equality of the workers and the rights of families to access a support in domestic (care) work. The reform should not penalize families’ possibilities of development and particularly their possibilities of reconciling work and family life. Domestic service was also related to women’s possibilities of reconciling work and family life. When domestic service was discussed in terms of relieving women’s double burden of paid and unpaid work, domestic workers were rendered invisible. They were represented as a solution to women’s double workday, although accessible only to more economically privileged women. The Socialist party used this idea to argue for more generous social policies.

⁴ As established in *Ley 40/2003, de 18 de noviembre, de Protección a las Familias Numerosas*

Equality frame / workers rights frame

When domestic service was framed in relation to equality as norm it was mainly in terms of workers' equal rights. This frame was articulated mainly by the Left Party and both left and right wing nationalist parties. The law proposal formulated by the small Galician Nationalist Party to improve the rights of domestic workers highlighted the notion of dignified work and the need to achieve basic rights. This would involve the right to unemployment benefits, and new rules on sick leaves and work related accidents. In the parliamentary debate following from the parliamentary bill, the problem of the servitude historically inherent and still present in domestic service was addressed by the Basque Nationalist Party. At the same time, this party argued that given the positive social changes towards a dual breadwinner family domestic work has changed in nature which increasingly involves child care. The changing character of the work should then involve a higher recognition of this kind of work. The shift from Spanish women working in domestic service, as a complement to the male breadwinner, towards migrant women working to maintain their families served as an argument why there is a need for improved social protection. Migrant women were expected to be more 'needy'. Domestic workers rights were also associated with women's' equal rights. The Left Party argued that improving the conditions of domestic work is about justice for the many women working in the sector and equality between domestic workers and other workers. This party also underlined that the Special Regime represented an unequal treatment of women in the Spanish economy. The augmentation of migrant women in the sector of domestic work was creating a new kind of social and economic inequality in Spain and this would affect the integration of these women and their families in a negative way.

COMPARING SWEDISH AND SPANISH POLICY DEBATES SURROUNDING DOMESTIC SERVICE AND GENDER (IN)EQUALITY

To conclude, we will address especially the dimensions of normative assumptions and silences, gender and intersectionality. When it comes to *normative assumptions*, in both Sweden and Spain the debates operated within the premise of women's labor market participation as the key to gender equality. Consequently, gender inequality was strongly linked to the problem of 'reconciliation of work and family life'. Women's place was then considered to be in the labor market. The policy debates tended to enhance the 'dual earner

family' as norm, emphasizing that today both men and women work outside of home. In this sense, the policy debates indicated a shift away from the norm of the 'male breadwinner model' in the Spanish case. The main vision of gender equality was thus a liberal vision of inclusion; women should participate in the labor market in the same way as men do. When women's subordinate role in paid labor markets appeared it was most often seen as due to women's primary role in unpaid care and domestic work. Hence the shift of decreasing unpaid work in the home and to increase paid work in the formal labor market was considered a good thing, both in terms of economic rationality and in terms of gender equality.

The context of the Swedish and Spanish welfare state is important in order to understand the policy debates. In Sweden the controversy that the suggestion of a tax deduction on domestic services raised could be interpreted in relation to the changes within the welfare sector. Sweden has had a tradition of extended public care provision, but since the recession in the 1990th the public care sector has declined and more care responsibilities have been redirected toward private households (Szebehely 2005). For many left wing debaters the expansion of a private domestic service sector and other private care providers is viewed as an acceptance of this welfare transitions and the dismantling of the Swedish welfare model. The refusal to accept private care solutions had interesting consequences in terms of the debate on worker's rights. Left wing voices pay little or none attention to the already existing often female workers performing low paid mostly unregulated domestic work in "the world's most gender equal country". In this particular policy debate an ideological interesting situation is created where the right wing debater's emphasizes the importance of domestic workers to be included in the labor laws, and the left wing debaters ignoring the rights of those already working in this area. The norm behind this view is that this kind of work should not exist. On the other hand, the left wing debaters claim that the social problems of an increasing unregulated labor market in Sweden will not be solved through tax deduction on domestic services. In Spain, the welfare state has been extended and developed in some issues during the last decade; for instance in the issues of elderly care and maternity and paternity leaves. However, 'private' and individual solutions for care and domestic work remained generally unquestioned, in a sense reinforcing the legitimacy of limited social policies. For both left and right wing parties, domestic (care) service was a taken for granted work sector and source of welfare. Recognizing Spanish families' right to have access to (cheap female migrant) domestic workers can be seen as justifying limited state responsibility in care for children and elderly. Nevertheless, left wing voices raised the issue of class inequalities, in the sense of 'not ell

women can afford domestic services', in their call for more resources to invest in the welfare state and especially in public childcare. Additionally, the Left party and some nationalist parties underlines the importance of improved workers' rights.

There are clearly different views on how, and to what extent, domestic service is linked to gender (in)equality. In Sweden, the right wing parties argued that domestic service increase women's equality since women are then able to participate in the labor market in an equal foot with men. The Left wing parties argued that domestic service decreases women's equality due to precarious work in domestic service sector. In Spain, there was less controversy over this issue; the general argument was that domestic service is necessary to make family and work life feasible, since women are increasingly participating in the formal labor market. And since the general idea, promoted by both Socialists and Conservatives, was that women's labor market participation increases gender equality it can be argued that the dominating vision was that domestic service contributes to gender equality, both in terms of helping women reconcile the different spheres of life and by providing job opportunities for women in the particular sector of domestic work. Critical voices from the Left Party questioned this view, emphasizing that the precarious working conditions effects especially migrant women.

The frame analysis attributes importance to the silences in the agenda. The above presented normative assumptions can be examined in terms of what they do not problematize. As Carol Bacchi (1999) argues, the association of paid work with success and emancipation can be seen as overshadowing problems of precarious working conditions among women workers as well as devaluing unpaid domestic and care work. In the case of Spain, the dominant policy frames on economic rationality and reconciliation of work and family life take the working mother/parent combining care and formal employment as a norm in a way that overshadows the way the system, due to lack of public services, often rely on precarious paid work of (mainly female migrant) domestic workers. These categories are not included in the vision of gender equality. Domestic service was generally not debates as a policy problem but as a solution to families care and domestic work responsibilities. The perpetuation of the sexual division of labor, along divisions of class, race and nationality, by transferring care and domestic work from one woman to another was not at all questioned, as was the case in Swedish debates. Within the controversial debate on domestic services in Sweden a deafening silence appeared. While the right wing debaters consequently ignored gender, class and race

relations involvement in paid domestic work. They claimed similar to the Spanish policy debate that women's labor market participation is the key to gender equality, for both women as buyers and as sellers of domestic services. The left wing debaters on the other hand recognized the asymmetric power relations involved in paid domestic work in the homes, and calls on gender, class, education and marital status as to be considered when introducing a tax deduction on domestic services. As mentioned above, and in contrast to Spain, there was a striking silence among left wing voices about how to improve the work conditions for those already working unregulated within the domestic service sector in Swedish homes. The silences obscure the work conditions of those working within domestic services. Workers that are covering up for the shortcomings of the welfare state, the dismantling of which is thereby rendered less inconvenient for white men and women of the privileged classes.

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