

Home, domestic work and the state: The spatial politics of domestic workers' activism

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Abstract

This article explores the spatialities associated with the recent emergence of a social movement of domestic workers in the United States. Domestic work is rendered invisible, not only as a form of 'real work', but also because it is hidden in other people's homes. The article unpacks the home as a private space beyond government intervention, and as domestic worker activists argue, when homes are workplaces workers should be protected from exploitation. Domestic workers have become active and visible in campaigns to gain coverage under labour legislation at the state and federal government levels. An analysis of the success of their campaigns reveals a set of strategies and tactics that draw on feminist care ethics in a range of different locations, and that thinking spatially has been pivotal in the emergence and continued growth of their social movement.

Key words

care ethics, labour rights, legislation, social movements, spatialities

Recently domestic workers have gained important legal rights and remarkable visibility – significant for an occupation with a history of being devalued and hidden behind the doors of private homes. Domestic workers have come

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together to create a new round of worker movements and sustained organising within the United States and elsewhere. Their activism is behind the recent wave of Domestic Workers Bill of Rights laws in several states and the 2013 US Department of Labor regulation changes that expanded wage entitlements for home care workers. Internationally, domestic worker activism led to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2011 adoption of Convention No. 189 and Recommendation No. 201 on domestic workers' rights (ILO, 2011). As Michelle Chen (2013) argues, "around the world, private homes are becoming labor's latest battleground as domestic workers stake out their rights".

The transnational migration of thousands of women criss-crossing the globe for jobs as nannies, home care aides, personal care aides, maids and housekeepers has received a great deal of academic attention. While such migration is not new, global level statistics indicate a remarkable uptick in the last 20 years. For instance, the ILO (2013) estimates that globally there are 53 million domestic workers, up from 34 million in the mid-1990s. The globalisation of paid domestic work spatially, socially and politically links together the transnational flows of women who 'service' the global economy, a range of jobs that are frequently underpaid, undervalued and often invisible, with the intimate spaces of a multitude of homes scattered across the world. Exploring the working conditions experienced by domestic workers, whether US citizens or immigrants, requires a consideration of the spaces, relations and practices of the state, as well as those in other sites, notably homes in the erstwhile private sphere. Using a range of strategies and tactics, or what Tilly and Wood (2013) term the 'social movement repertoire', such as public rallies and demonstrations, letter-writing and online petitions, domestic worker activists have succeeded in achieving important legal gains in recent years.

This article explores the recent emergence of campaigns associated with domestic work in the US. Such activism problematises the invisibility and continued devaluation of domestic work by explicitly calling for respect and recognition for domestic workers, many of whom are racialised and/or immigrant women. Often experiencing exploitative wages and poor working conditions, and more vulnerable than employees in conventional workplaces, domestic workers have become active and visible in the various efforts to gain coverage under labour legislation at the state and federal government levels. I argue that the activism of domestic workers is spatial, their geographically attuned strategies draw on a range of spatially embedded cultural, legal and political resources with the goal of discursively and materially re-valuing paid domestic work and domestic workers in a range of places. My analysis of their activism draws from three broad literatures which speak to their politics and practices: unpacking what is meant by domestic work; theorising the state and how employing feminist care ethics offers alternatives for political life; and social movements with their associated transformative, participatory politics. The last major section of the article offers an examination of how these

three sets of ideas are put into action by domestic worker activists in the US as they develop spatial politics and strategies based on care ethics.

Domestic work and the home

Making domestic work visible has a long history in feminist scholarship, dating back to at least the Marxist-feminist domestic labour debates of the 1970s. At first domestic work was analysed in terms of its role in capitalist modes of production, deepening understandings of social reproduction, and analysing its relationship to patriarchy. By highlighting the significance of *unpaid* domestic labour occurring in the homes of workers, social reproductive labour became theorised as a vital component of capitalism, necessary for the daily and intergenerational reproduction and maintenance of 'productive' labourers and their families (e.g. Rowbotham, 1973; Rubin, 1975).

Over time, as women increased their labour force participation, providing all this unpaid, yet vital domestic labour in their own homes (or indeed in other homes) became less tenable. At the same time, demographic pressures associated with ageing populations and increasing numbers of frailer, older people have expanded the need for daily care (as both direct care and as assistance with household tasks). These trends help explain the current 'care deficit' in homes, exacerbated by the limited availability of public provision. For wealthier households 'outsourcing' domestic work is a solution to the private (in their homes) and public (the state) care deficit and is even touted as a way to achieve work–life balance (Das Gupta, 2006; Estévez-Abe and Hobson, 2015; Folbre, 2001; McDowell, 2008). Together these socio-economic changes prompt a rethink of domestic labour as an analytical tool (see for example, Anderson, 2000; Duffy, 2011; Meehan and Strauss, 2015). Whereas domestic work was first conceptualised as unremunerated activities occurring in the family home, given the tremendous amount of commodification and globalisation of domestic work, it is now more commonly conceptualised as spanning unpaid and paid work.

The significance of locating domestic work in homes is critical to the ILO's ongoing efforts to document the working conditions of domestic workers around the globe. The ILO estimates that of the 52.6 million domestic workers worldwide, 83 percent are women, 30 percent are completely excluded from national labour regulations, and only about half earn the minimum wage (ILO, 2013). To arrive at these estimates, the ILO first had to define 'domestic worker'. In the past the ILO attempted to define 'domestic helpers and cleaners' by developing a list of specific tasks, including washing dishes and preparing, cooking and servicing meals (Anderson, 2000). However, more recently in considering a variety of methods for counting, the ILO recognised the shifting heterogeneity of the specific tasks performed by domestic workers

over space and time, and settled on an explicitly *spatial* definition: “domestic work” is “work performed in or for a household or households” and a “domestic worker” is “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship” (ILO, 2013: 8). In landing on this definition, “[t]he simple, but very distinctive feature of being employed by and providing services for a private household became the heart of the Convention’s definition” (ILO, 2013: 8). The home, then, is central to their definition of a domestic worker.

The increase in the numbers of migrant domestic workers and the efforts to count them, as suggested by the ILO’s estimates for example, point to the growing visibility of the home as a workplace. Several issues flow from the workplace of domestic workers (whether migrants or not) being someone else’s home (Anderson, 2000; Arat-Koç, 2006; England and Stiell, 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Lan, 2006; Parreñas, 2001). It is a ‘private’ workplace (often with a ‘private arrangement’ instead of a formal contract), rather than the more conventional ‘public’ workspaces where work relations and working conditions are more visible and subject to some regulation. The home as a workplace and domestic work as an employment relation are steeped in discourses about intimacy, affective labour, families and caregiving. Thus, in their workplaces domestic workers must manage the boundaries between ‘home’ and ‘work’, and ‘public’ and ‘private’, which are too easily blurred and confound their work relation with their employer. Particularly when domestic workers are migrants, the employment relations are further complicated because as Pei-Chia Lan (2006: 19) notes, “for both employers and workers, home becomes a ‘meeting place’ that articulates a network of social relations and cultural understandings linking with the global world”.

Care and the state

The double invisibility of domestic work as not ‘real’ work and as hidden inside homes, is reinforced by the long-standing exclusion of domestic work from many labour protections such as overtime, rest breaks and appropriate wage rates (Alcorn and England, 2017). The ILO’s adoption of the convention and recommendations concerning decent work for domestic workers increases the visibility of domestic workers’ issues. Moreover, the recent activism of domestic workers can be seen as reworking their relations with the state in light of labour rights and the power that comes from their growing numbers (which in turn is a response to care deficits in homes and in government provision). Feminist theorising about the state, especially from political economy perspectives, underscores the consequences of the retreat of the state (at least in the global North) from funding and directly providing public services associated with social reproduction (which was already paltry in the US context) (Folbre, 2001; Folbre et al., 2012; Piven, 2015). Inspired by the fiscal

cost-saving promises of neoliberalised policy, service provision shifted towards market-oriented, for-profit delivery mechanisms, with additional rebalancing of the mix between state-provided (or supported) services, community-based offerings and familial and individual responsibility (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015; Piven, 2015).

The state is co-constituted with socio-spatial relations. Thus, the redrawing, rescaling and reorganisation of the state's social infrastructure produces spatially uneven outcomes and differential lived experiences according to the specificity of economic, political and social relations operating at different scales and in particular locations (Fincher, 2004; Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). The difference that space makes to the analysis of social policy has been taken up by various scholars. For instance, Fiona Williams (2011) calls for macro, meso and micro levels of analysis to deepen a transnational analysis of the political economy of care. Rianna Mahon (2006) suggests using scale theory, primarily developed by geographers, to rethink social politics in ways that "draw attention to the transfer of state-policy responsibilities upward and downward and the implications of, and for, women's movements" (p. 457).

The home is one site where state policy becomes an embodied experience and where state control, practices and procedures are materially enacted and reproduced. Most obviously, this includes regulations around building codes and zoning, as well as laws on 'private' intimate matters such as reproductive rights. However, state intervention (including protections as well as regulations) is remarkably absent when it comes to paid domestic work within homes.

Hidden from public view, domestic workers are too easily forgotten by legislators and others besides (Lin, 2013; May, 2011). More broadly there has been, and remains a deep resistance to intruding into the inner workings of 'private' homes – or more notably middle class homes. In historical and even contemporary government documents and in public discourse, arrangements in the domestic sphere are repeatedly represented as personal, about private family decision-making and normatively positioned as appropriately beyond the reach of state intervention. Feminist scholars challenge this rendition of the home in the context of, for example, the counter evidence demonstrated by regulations regarding employment law and family leave (Anthony, 2008), as well as domestic violence laws and 'decency' laws about same-sex consensual sex (Lin, 2013). Yet the state's reluctance, even refusal to regulate the working conditions of domestic workers in homes stubbornly remains (Boris and Nadasen, 2008; Lin, 2013). A lack of political will plays a role in this, especially in relation to migrant domestic workers. Perhaps, as Sedef Arat-Koç (2006: 88) puts it, "migrant domestic workers, who often lack citizenship rights, are the ideal subjects of a neoliberal state since they are workers whose social reproduction is not just privatized in the home, but totally hidden, with the economic, social and psychic costs transferred to a different location and state".

Even in its diminished neoliberalised form, the welfare state provides and regulates some social programmes aimed at collective well-being. Some time ago, Mary Daly and Jane Lewis (2000: 281) argued “care is a concept that is used increasingly as a category of analysis in relation to the welfare state” and they pushed for deeper, more critical considerations of the various ways care is translated into social policy and has been deployed in welfare state restructuring. Given that directly and indirectly, domestic work provides individual and collective benefits, there are also renewed calls to (re)establish care work as a public good. Folbre et al. (2012: 183) point out “[c]are work contributes to the development and maintenance of human capabilities that represent a ‘public good.’ Human capabilities have intrinsic value and also yield important positive spill overs for living standards, quality of life and sustainable economic development”. Care work then has broad social value, and rethinking care as a public good is a central aim of scholarship on feminist care ethics. Reading social policy through care ethics shifts the focus away from a strongly economistic, neoliberal interpretation towards framings that value interdependence, reciprocity and connection.

At the core of feminist care ethics is a relational ontology of connection that positions people as embodied, interdependent beings. The focus on *embodiment* underscores that we are all vulnerable and dependent on others at numerous points throughout our lives. “We are care receivers, all” as Joan Tronto (2013: 146) has it. The emphasis on *interdependence* as central to the human condition is a reminder that we are each enmeshed in networks of care relations (Barnes, 2012; Tronto, 2005, 2013). Marian Barnes (2012: 1) points out that “[c]are is fundamental to the human condition and necessary both to survival and flourishing”. This strongly contrasts with the autonomous, independent, individualistic neoliberal subject who discursively inhabits the policy documents of neoliberal capitalism.

In the past care was positioned as outside the reach of political life. Several scholars suggest extending care ethics beyond something restricted to the domestic sphere among intimates to thinking more broadly about bringing feminist care ethics into public debates in order to reframe political issues (Barnes, 2012; Held, 2006; Tronto, 2005, 2013; Williams, 2011). For example, Williams (2011) takes care ethics global in her transnational analysis of the political economy of care. She addresses the transnational consequences of state actions, such as using the international recruitment of care workers as a ‘solution’ to care labour shortages. Williams argues for a political ethics of care that recognises interdependences linking care practices in one nation-state with the cultural, social and policy discourses in other nation-states. Tronto (2013) proposes bringing care into the public domain through what she calls a feminist democratic ethic of care that starts from the assumption of the relationality of human life. She argues for revising political values around care as a set of concrete practices and a deep commitment to equality and

justice with the goal of producing a caring democracy with equal access to good care for everyone. Tronto offers the hopeful message that “changing the value of care in democratic societies permits us to recast issues of inclusion, dependency, and creating more just democratic societies” (2013: 12).

Social movements

Social movements in the US have been crucial in bringing about important cultural, social and political changes in a range of institutions, be they governmental, corporate, or associated with civil society. The historical and contemporary significance of different forms of collective action and popular protest in challenging prevailing structures and conditions cannot be underestimated (Tilly and Wood, 2013). Collective contestations and the associated claims-making are often aimed at the state; and in turn state action – and inaction – play key roles in the formation, growth and trajectory of social movements (Tilly and Wood, 2013). Domestic workers have built coalitions and alliances that actively engage the state at the local, state and federal levels. They are making political demands in relation to inclusion into the polity, and pressing for legal and legislative changes regarding their working conditions.

Conceptualisations of social movements in relation to the formal political process emphasise their interactions with the state and the role of political opportunities that intermittently emerge when broader political conditions shift and possibilities of a more favourable reception to a group’s position emerge (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015). Activists look for political opportunities by, for example, monitoring shifts in political alignments, the emergence of influential allies, and evidence of receptiveness to particular sorts of claims-making. These are moments when social movements can potentially institutionalise their agenda, and they organise action accordingly (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015). Tilly and Wood (2013: 4) observe that there are three fundamental elements of social movements: (1) a “campaign”: sustained organising around collective claims; (2) a “social movement repertoire”: an ensemble of political action including petition drives, pamphleteering, public meetings, rallies, demonstrations and statements to public media; and (3) “concerted public representations”: public displays of “worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituents”. Even a cursory analysis of domestic workers’ activism demonstrates they are running campaigns around collective claims, making concerted public representations and have adapted a social movement repertoire to achieve those results (Bapat, 2014; Boris and Nadasen, 2008; Goldberg, 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Nadasen, 2015).

Thinking spatially adds a further analytic dimension to understanding social movements. As Nicholls (2007: 610) notes, in studies of social movements

“most contributors have conceived social movements as developing on the head of a pin”. There is a growing body of scholarship that explicitly addresses the pivotal roles of spatial relations in understanding social movements (e.g. Leitner and Strunk, 2014; Nicholls et al., 2013). While geographers dominate this agenda, the ‘spatial turn’ in the analysis of social movements is evident in other disciplines even if it is not named as such (e.g. Escobar, 2008; Castells, 2012). Geographical concepts such as scale, network, place and assemblage are put to use in conceptualising social movements as spatial formations (see Nicholls et al., 2013 for an overview).

In arguing that “geography matters in contentious politics”, Leitner et al. (2008: 158) suggest that “multiple spatialities are co-implicated and co-constitutive in complex ways during social movement struggles, with unpredictable consequences” (p. 166). Looking at on-the-ground practices associated with specific social movements shows that different entanglements of sites, spaces and scales are important at different moments in the trajectory of that social movement (Nicholls et al., 2013). The various ways spatialities shape, and are shaped by social movements impact the resources and mobilisation capacities that become available to the social movement. In turn, paying attention to the spatial dynamics and materialities of social movements brings into sharper view activists’ agency which is expressed as particular practices are made concrete in place.

Doing the work that makes all work possible

Domestic workers care for the things we value the most: our families and our homes. They care for our children, provide essential support for seniors and people with disabilities to live with dignity at home, and perform the work that makes all other work possible. They are skilled and caring professionals, but for many years, they have labored in the shadows, and their work has not been valued. These workers deserve respect, dignity and basic labor protections. (National Domestic Workers’ Alliance, 2016)

This is the National Domestic Workers’ Alliance’s (NDWA) mandate. Their activism, and that of other domestic worker organisations, mobilises care ethics as practice, politics and discourse as they press for legislative and policy change regarding domestic workers’ rights in cities, states and at the federal level. Accounts of the years leading up to the emergence of the NDWA record that when domestic workers and their advocates were campaigning they “learned that just about everyone is connected – in one way or another – to someone who works as a domestic worker. ... The personal connections that everyday people of all walks of life had to this workforce became one of the key mobilizing forces throughout the campaign” (Poo and DWU,

2010: 9). In other words, they mobilised around care ethics, and that our interdependence and existence in networks of care are central to the human condition. This is apparent in their frequently repeated axiom that domestic workers do 'the work that makes all other work possible'.

To be successful, domestic worker organisations determined that their care ethics flavoured strategy should be not only to build their membership base, but to grow a broad-based coalition that in addition to domestic workers welcomed and included other labour groups, justice groups, students and even employers (Bapat, 2014; Boris and Nadasen, 2008; Goldberg, 2015; Poo and DWU, 2010). A broad appeal meant fighting for employment protections for domestic workers but also locating that within a broader framing of structural inequalities. Ai-jen Poo, director of the NDWA explains this framing was based on "our analysis of the root causes of the problems facing domestic workers including the devaluing of 'women's work' in the home, the legacy of slavery in the United States, and the lack of a social safety net in the United States and internationally" (Poo and DWU, 2010: 11). A strategy built around the ethics of care means that domestic workers are hoping to shift the discourse around valuing domestic work.

Domestic workers have long been represented as 'unorganisable'. They have been legally excluded from collective bargaining and basic labour rights, and thus the traditional organising methods of unions are not obviously applicable. They are geographically scattered across individual houses, with no common employer to unite against and no obvious meeting place to congregate such as canteens or factory gates which have been the typical location of union organising (Boris and Nadasen, 2008; Nadasen, 2015; Rhee and Zabin, 2009). The particularity of their workplace, their isolation from other workers, and their personal, often intimate relationship with their employers (and one domestic worker often has multiple employers) are seen as additional obstacles to unionising.

Nevertheless, domestic workers have a long history of organising in the US (Nadasen, 2015). In their occupation, rather than join unions domestic workers have tended to gather in associations and other less formal organisations, and create alternative pathways to collective action. The growing presence of migrants as domestic workers adds a further layer of complexity, as migrant workers in general usually come together in ethnically-based workers' centres and neighbourhood associations. Many such centres have opened across the US over the last two decades, especially in cities with high immigrant populations, such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles where several organisations have emerged (Goldberg, 2015). As Boris and Nadasen (2008: 425) note, "[b]ecause of the distrust or lack of familiarity with American culture and politics, and as well as the frequency with which workers changed occupations and employers, neighborhood associations proved to be a more viable and effective organizing strategy". Such centres are independent of a particular

employer or even occupation, and domestic workers can step over the border of the home of their employers and of their occupation to find common concerns facing other low-wage immigrant workers. These centres are examples of community rather than workplace organising efforts, and have created new strategies and tactics to include in the 'social movement repertoire'. Moreover, the success of domestic workers has prompted some contemporary unions to revise their approaches to attracting workers, especially women, immigrants and people of colour (see Rhee and Zabin, 2009, for analysis of how this has unfolded in California).

Domestic Workers United (DWU) emerged in the Bronx in 2000 around concerns about working conditions for a variety of immigrant groups employed as domestic workers. Elsewhere, during the 1990s and 2000s other worker centres opened; most began by addressing the living and working conditions of immigrant groups in general, and later took on domestic workers' concerns. For example, *Mujeres Unidas y Activas* (MUA) in the San Francisco Bay area dates back to 1989, and it aims to build a community for social and economic justice. The Brazilian Worker Center in Boston supports and organises the Brazilian and wider immigrant community to advocate for their rights as workers and residents of Massachusetts and the US. While in Seattle, *Casa Latina* began in 1994 to address the issues of homeless Latinos and now has a workers' centre (which includes domestic workers), an education programme, and a workers' defence committee that deals with wage theft and other violations of labour rights.

Most of these centres primarily advocate for and support domestic workers in their local area, and focus on offering legal advice, educating their members about their legal and labour rights, and providing English language skills and job training. In the last 15 years, many have also been involved in direct action, rallies and protests. An early example is Domestic Workers United's 2003 success in getting municipal legislation in New York City to improve the working conditions of domestic workers. As part of their campaign they created posters demanding, "How do you benefit from my labor. Rights, respect, recognition, dignity for domestic workers" and "Tell dem slavery done". Language, that while grounded in care ethics, also demonstrates their grasp of power relations and root causes. The New York City legislation requires employment agencies to inform, in writing, employers about their responsibilities and domestic workers about their labour rights, and employers are encouraged to follow guidelines prepared by DWU (Mercado and Poo, 2008).

As such centres flourished across the US, it became clear that an important next step in growing the domestic workers' social movement was to coordinate these efforts. In 2007, about 50 domestic workers and organisers from across the US gathered in Atlanta, Georgia to share ideas for a call to action. They formed the National Domestic Workers' Alliance (NDWA), which has

become a powerful voice for domestic workers across the US and internationally (Bapat, 2014; Boris and Nadasen, 2008; Goldberg, 2015). As their mandate quoted above indicates, the NDWA works to bring respect and dignity to their occupation, and to improve labour protections and the quality of their jobs. The NDWA began with a handful of domestic worker associations in a few cities, and now has over 45 local affiliate organisations with over 10,000 nannies, house cleaners and caregivers in about 30 cities and 16 states around the country. As a social movement, their organising connects people across different geographies of language, national origin and race, while also connecting people at local, national and even transnational levels.

A pivotal theme for domestic worker activists is making visible the work they do in homes across the country. One vehicle for making this evident is using statistics. However, reliable statistics on the numbers of domestic workers are elusive, as the ILO's international benchmarking efforts demonstrate. In the absence of 'official statistics', domestic workers have produced their own. The first instances of this sort of data gathering occurred at the local level, through community organisations (Shah and Seville, 2012). Domestic Workers United in New York City (2006), the San Francisco based *Mujeres Unidas y Activas* (2007), and the *Damayan Migrant Workers Association* also in the New York area (2010) each paired with progressive research organisations that collaborate with grass-roots groups to produce community-based participatory research. The resultant surveys captured statistical profiles of the living and working conditions of domestic workers, especially those who are immigrants in those cities. This enables domestic workers to show with 'hard numbers' that domestic workers' jobs continue to reproduce historically raced and gendered patterns and they provide statistical evidence of how this plays out in everyday spaces.

Building on these local research initiatives, the National Domestic Workers' Alliance conducted a national level survey of domestic workers in 14 cities across the country: four in California (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and San Jose), two in Texas (Houston and San Antonio), and Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Miami, New York, Seattle and Washington, DC (NDWA, Burnham and Theodore, 2012). These cities were picked to represent every region of the country, and as locations with sizeable concentrations of domestic workers. The NDWA survey also showed that domestic work is racialised and heavily gendered. They found that the median hourly wage for white nannies was about \$3 higher than for Latinas. In addition to race and ethnicity, immigrant status plays a huge role in working conditions: 35 percent of the respondents were not citizens and among them, undocumented workers were the lowest paid and the most financially and physically vulnerable. As hoped, these surveys received a tremendous amount of press, locally and nationally. The organisers knew that "[d]ata would be essential to any legislative effort to change the existing exclusions of domestic workers from the law" (Shah and

Seville, 2012: 435). These surveys (and subsequent ones undertaken in other cities) help make domestic workers and their work visible and have enabled domestic worker activists and their advocates to gain serious traction in their bid to gain respect, decent working conditions and legislative rights.

Domestic workers are also building a social movement around a range of political resources with the goal of re-valuing domestic work and bringing about legislative change to improve their working conditions. They engage with a multi-scalar set of laws, policies and recommendations including municipal ordinances, federal labour laws, and United Nations and ILO guidelines about the rights of migrants and domestic workers. In short, they draw on laws and regulations protecting labour rights framed at one geographical scale to challenge exclusionary laws and policies at other scales (Bapat, 2014; Das Gupta, 2006).

The 2003 victory of Domestic Workers United in achieving municipal legislation in New York City galvanised a campaign to take their demands to the state level. They knew that to be successful required connections with domestic workers and their allies in other parts of the state. Through connections to community-based organisations in locations across New York state, numerous domestic worker organisations came together to form the New York Justice Coalition to press for change. In November 2010, after a six-year campaign, New York state's Governor David Paterson signed the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, the first of its kind in the US. It covers an estimated 200,000 domestic workers and gives them recognition under the law. It includes basic labour regulations such as a right to days off for rest, paid days off, and protection from discrimination. Already entitled to minimum wage in the state of New York, domestic workers are now also covered by New York state's Workers Compensation Insurance and Disability Benefits and protected from racial, sexual and religious harassment under the state's Human Rights law (Poo and DWU, 2010).

Plans were also unfolding for a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in California. Several organisations came together to form the California Domestic Workers Coalition and after much grass-roots organising, multiple visits to Sacramento (the state capital), and even Hollywood celebrities making videos in support, it passed the state Senate and Assembly. But in September 2012, the Bill was unexpectedly vetoed by Governor Jerry Brown. Domestic workers recovered from the surprise and disappointment, then sprang into further action. By now they had vast and varied networks of support across the state (and beyond), they went to their networks and made effective use of social media to spread the news of the veto. They started a postcard and letter-writing campaign and planned several public events. One such occasion happened six months later, on the eve of International Women's Day in March 2013. Domestic workers, many of them undocumented migrants, utilised some of the standard tactics from the 'social movement repertoire'. They gathered

outside the state building in downtown Los Angeles, banging pots and pans, in support of the Bill. Organisers from other states were also there and future weekly and monthly actions were announced. Governor Brown signed the revised Bill later in 2013, and it went into effect in January 2014.

The 2013 Los Angeles protest also demonstrates the spatialities of social movements. The protest itself is an example of embodied protest, domestic workers occupying public space, making their bodies visible and audible. Their selection of the location of the protest – in front of the state building (while not the state capital, a local architectural representation of its power) – was a material and discursive engagement with the state. Moreover, their choice, not only of the eve of International Women's Day, but to bang pots and pans, a protest tactic frequently deployed by women in Latin America (the *cacerolazo*) (e.g. Eltantawy, 2008), is also a display of domestic workers' growing globe-spanning networks and links to activists in other places.

The surprise veto in California meant Hawaii became the second state to enact a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in 2013: it covers basic labour rights, as well as protections from harassment. In this instance, the state legislature moved quickly on the Bill. Meanwhile in Massachusetts, the staff of Boston's Brazilian Immigrant Center had visited New York to meet with Domestic Workers United members to seek advice on how to organise for a Massachusetts Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. After that they co-founded the Mass Coalition for Domestic Workers and began mobilising. In 2014, Massachusetts became the fourth state to have a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. In 2015, Oregon and Connecticut passed similar bills. In May 2016, Illinois's Senate unanimously passed the Illinois Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (it had passed the House earlier) after four years of lobbying. In all these instances, local community-based centres were important sites in the process. Magdalena Zylinska, a Polish house cleaner and board member of the Arise Chicago Worker Center remarked: "After many trips to Springfield to lobby for the Illinois Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, I am so happy that today domestic workers have been recognized under the law", and followed that with the familiar "We do the work that makes all other work possible" (International Domestic Workers Federation, 2016).

At the federal level, action has been aimed at the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Introduced in 1938, its goal was to promote basic standards of living and labour protections for American workers. The law required employers to provide minimum wage and overtime protection coverage. However, domestic workers (and farm workers) were left out, denying them access to basic labour protections. In 1974, Congress amended the FLSA to cover domestic workers, but added a new exemption for home care workers: many were reclassified as 'companions' and still excluded from wage and overtime protections. This 'companion' category was supposed to only cover babysitters and companions of the elderly and disabled (i.e. those not providing 'medical' services), but in

practice it excluded the many people employed as home health aides, attendants and personal care aides, who even in the mid-1970s were a fast-growing segment of the care labour force (Glenn, 2010; Nadasen, 2015).

In this campaign, alliances with unions were particularly important. In August 2007, a little over a year before he was elected, then-Senator Obama spent a day with home care worker and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) member Pauline Beck in Chicago as part of SEIU's 'Walk in my Shoes' programme (Dorning, 2007). Under the FLSA, the homes of Beck's clients were not recognised as workplaces and thus she, like other home care workers, lacked basic labour protections. For domestic workers, Obama's election in 2008 offered a major 'political opportunity', in the language of social movement theorising (e.g. Tilly and Tarrow, 2015). In December 2011, President Obama announced his support to amend the FLSA to extend overtime pay protections and a guaranteed minimum wage to home care workers. Various domestic workers' organisations across the country engaged additional tools from the social movement repertoire in an effort to move things along. Domestic workers were trained to engage in organised and disciplined resistance. They reached out and cultivated alliances with other labour groups, faith-based groups and even with 'unlikely allies' such as employers and placement agencies. They held rallies in Washington DC (using social media to spread the word) to urge President Obama and Congress to finalise new regulations. They visited their Senators and Representatives. In September 2013, the White House released new regulations, and the new ruling went into effect in October 2015 and the success was widely celebrated by domestic workers (Alcorn and England, 2017).

Having multiple campaigns at the local, state and national levels gives the NDWA and local domestic worker organisations the opportunity to channel their energy into locations where success is most likely or support is most needed. Their spatialisation of care ethics means campaigns are nurtured simultaneously in different places. Moreover, as Goldberg (2015: 151) points out "[t]hese victories have been significant at both the level of policy and the level of culture. They have brought public attention to the shrouded world of domestic work, and state recognition has validated this often-degraded occupation as 'real work'". This strategy has yielded results and is continuing in other states and cities, and now there is an additional focus on the challenges of enforcement.

Conclusion

Feminist analyses of the contemporary home have shifted away from conceptualising it primarily as a site of unwaged work to one also associated with paid domestic work. Along with that, a variety of new politics of home is

emerging. When a domestic worker is employed, a home becomes a place of work, but continues as a place of residence and as a place of belonging (or not). The experiences of home, already contradictory, are rendered more so by the arrival of domestic workers. Complexities and confusions are plentiful when a workplace is someone else's home.

Geographers see the home as multi-scalar and "intimately connected to sites and relations beyond it" (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 114). This is evident in the myriad ways the homes and families in states that have a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights are being shaped by new developments in labour law and social policy at national and regional scales (this applies to the domestic worker and the employer). The growing reliance on immigrant workers means that the 'global' is entering the 'privacy' of the home and transforming the meanings and practices associated with home. Paid domestic work, even when it is performed by US citizens, connects care deficits resulting from the actions of the state, domestic divisions of labour, and the materiality of actual homes with the increased transnational migration of domestic workers.

In the US, the contemporary spatial politics of domestic work lies at the historical intersection of representations, practices and processes of the home, care and the state, with some of the roots of these politics stretching back to slavery. In the literature about transnational domestic workers, a key focus has been on their 'partial citizenship' (e.g. Glenn, 2010; Parreñas, 2001). This describes their liminal status with curtailed judicial rights and limited coverage under labour law, making them especially vulnerable to precarious work arrangements that are of course, exacerbated by the location of their work in private, domestic spaces. That said, domestic workers have social agency and initiative, and are demanding improved working conditions.

Through practices and tactics in a range of different locations and across a range of scales, domestic worker activists have coalesced as a social movement and achieved important gains. The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, now enacted in seven states, include basic labour regulations for domestic workers such as a right to minimum wage, paid days off, rest breaks and protection from discrimination. The federal government has also amended the Fair Labor Standards Act to give better coverage to home care workers.

Feminist care ethics, especially when in conversation with debates about political values, social policy and citizenship, offer an alternative conceptualisation of society that recognises that care is fundamental for human life. Making paid domestic work visible is a corrective to productivist conceptualisations of work and value, and shifts us towards a more dynamic understanding of the economy and politics that recognises the necessity of care, connection and interdependence. Ai-jen Poo remarks that although "the Bill is called the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, we came to see that ultimately what was at stake was our collective humanity" (Poo and DWU, 2010: 9). For domestic workers and their employers, care ethics in action conveys the message that

domestic workers warrant not only better working conditions, but dignity and respect.

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