

The value of work through the eyes of Latin American domestic workers in The Netherlands

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01 Research problem and question

Academic conceptualisations of the value of work are insufficient to explain the multiple dimensions and praxis of the subject in relation to the process of life sustainability (Agenjo-Calderon, 2021, p.38).

What is the value of domestic work for Latin American domestic workers in the Netherlands?

02 Feminist epistemologies and research methodologies in feminist economics

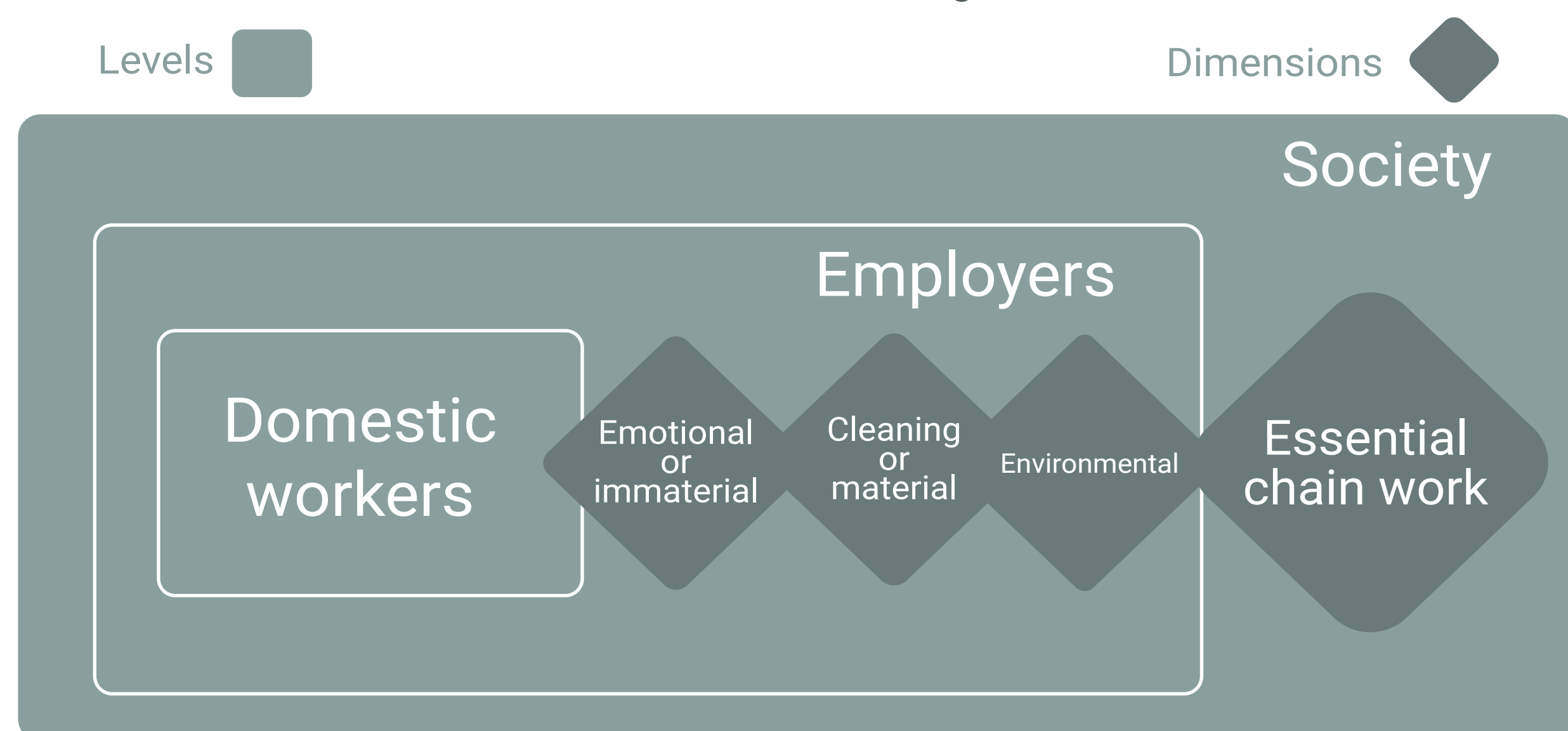
Informed by the feminist standpoint view epistemology (Harding, 2005; Intemann, 2010), I applied qualitative research methodologies to explore meanings around the value of work based on Latin American domestic workers' thoughts and life experiences. There were 2 focus groups and 13 qualitative interviews applied in August 2022.



13 domestic workers from Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba participated

03 Results

For domestic workers the value of their work is organized in levels and dimensions.



3.1 For domestic workers: the embodied value of work

"We, who work in cleaning or housewives, or whatever you want to call it, are the ones who must give ourselves 'the value'. If we do not set our limits, people trample on one and that is what we should not allowed" Martha.

• The value is not given by the market. It is not something they obtain automatically. Rather, they must pursue it to give that characteristic to their work.

• The value of the work is embodied. They can feel it in their body. The negative corporeal effect on domestic workers is one of the expressions of the devaluation of domestic work ((Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010).

"Domestic work is very hard and when you do it many times, it takes a toll on your body. That could cause me the disease "freeze shoulder". I cannot move my shoulder" Cecilia.

3.2 For the employers: a contradiction

• Domestic work as needed fundamental labour in the Netherlands and at the same time as unwanted work to be done by the employers.

"We are a fundamental piece because when they hire you here, it is because they don't have time to do anything, or they don't like it" Ana Celia.

"They make it clear where you belong to. I mean, a Latino is very affectionate, but they're like, yes, we're happy with you, but this is your place, I mean, don't cross that line".

• Specific experiences as being considered as "latinas" and weak association between the value placed by employers and the close relationships built with the household members.

3.3 For the society: essential chain work

• Domestic workers elucidated the indissolubility of the unmaterial, material and environmental dimensions and recognized from their experiences the location of their work within the household as the base of the Dutch economy

"People who have children would not be able to go to work. That would affect them economically and socially, because if teachers don't go to work, it's a mess. If doctors don't go to work, it's a mess. So, it would be a big problem (...), if someone doesn't help someone who is sick, it would be a mess. From what saw in my work, if it was a month or more without [domestic] workers, it would be a chaos" Alicia



04 Conclusions

1. The value is relational, contextual-dependent and contradictory.
2. It is a key job for employers because it contributes to the material, unmaterial, and environmental dimensions.
3. The value of domestic work to society has to do with being the bridge that allows other work to take place, to sustain other lives.
4. There are different expressions of the devaluation of domestic work. Devaluation is also experienced by domestic workers.
5. Migrant Latin American domestic workers profoundly know what the value of their work is.
6. Some dimensions of the value of domestic work emerged collectively that were not visible at the individual level.



Domestic workers are the ones who make it possible for society to function.

To see the video:



"This video was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC 2014-2020). The content of this meeting represents only the views of the researcher and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains".