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DOUBLE TIME-BIND IN PAID DOMESTIC WORK:  
(MIGRANT) WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS  
IN ITALY AND POLAND\*\*

INTRODUCTION—THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUE OF TIME

The time dimension of paid domestic work, discussed in this paper from the perspectives of workers and employers, reflects larger debates on relationships between work time and free time, public and private divide and general pace of contemporary living. Some of these debates have a long social history. For example, the work–life distinction and later calls for work–life balance are part of a historical phenomenon that debuted with the struggle for shorter working hours of factory workers in XIX c. In his book on social acceleration, Hartmut Rosa (2013) skillfully argues that the quickening pace of life, technological advancements and fast social changes require increased flexibility in managing different spheres of one's life (see also Sharma 2014). This acceleration is especially evident in the difficulties related to maintaining a distinction between

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work and private life, the public and private self (Zerubavel 1981), as well as between weekdays and weekends, and ordinary days from holidays.

All individuals conform to various temporal orders: some are self-determined, some are imposed, some have a linear structure (e.g. biography, career, surrounding world time) and others a cyclical structure (e.g. daily routines). Temporal stratification (Van den Scott 2014) involves negotiating (and prioritising) between self, family and institutional commitments. Flaherty (2003) and Zerubavel (1981) go as far as discussing “temporal intelligence,” which relates to mastering the tools that help to customise the qualities of time (e.g. doing time in various ways: controlling the frequency and duration of how things occur, altering the sequence, making time for some things instead of others). Failure to synchronise or coordinate timetables can lead to the experience of either a scarcity of time or of “time squeeze” (Boersma 2016; Southerton 2003).

In terms of welfare, time is increasingly a proxy for quality of life, and thus a legal value of time is emerging. There is also a growing tendency to conceive of time as a scarce resource, a commodified good and a source of inequalities. For the privileged, time tends to be linear: the wealthy can buy time or buy the time of others to free up their own time. Being able to autonomously choose when to work and the ability to maintain a balance between work and private life seems to be the prerogative of higher occupational groups (Dex 2003 quoted in Chatzitheochari, Arber 2012), which enables them to keep their weekends work-free and to impose more clear-cut work-life boundaries that are considered beneficial for rest and leisure. On the other hand, low-skilled workers are more likely to be shift workers and, as part of their contract, to work non-standard hours (e.g. during nighttime or weekends) in order to gain extra income.

Time poverty can thus be defined as long hours spent at the workplace, unpaid work and little leisure time, against one’s will. Importantly, by identifying the work week as the ideal reference point for understanding time allocation, studies have shown that free-time inequalities are gendered (Bittman, Wajcman 2000), and that it is the educated and high-income workers in dual-earner families that are most likely to be “leisure stricken” in today’s post-industrial societies (Robinson, Godbey 1999 quoted in Chatzitheochari, Arber 2012).

On the other hand, time shortage seems to affect all social strata in the current productivity-driven culture, in which being busy and having action-packed lives is increasingly valorized (Wajcman 2015). The labour market of the privileged often also involves higher risk and insecurity, as well as expectations for flexible availability (Fleming 2014; Crary 2014). The precariat has been conceptualised as a category that transcends the blue/white collar worker distinction and includes also service workers and lower level white-collar workers (Standing 2011). Thus, contrary to commonly held assumptions about the privilege of domestic employers, some might also be viewed as the precariat in this wider understanding. Moreover, intensiveness is valorized positively not

only in regard to working lives, but also to spheres of private life, such as free time, family life (“intensive mothering”; Hays 1998), and even sleep (Crary 2014), all of which are rationalized, intensified and adapted to regimes of efficiency. This phenomenon has been dubbed “fast life,” as busyness at the tops of society, and as a “culture of overwork.”<sup>1</sup>

One can hypothesize that, despite economic disparities and differences in social status, employers (often themselves workers) and household workers share some aspects of how they experience time and that their time regimes have some common characteristics. This is due to the embeddedness of both parties in late capitalism. In this paper, we confront the temporal experiences of time of two social categories, bound by the domestic contract: domestic workers and their employers. We hope this approach inspires future research into cross-cutting social and cultural issues such as time, through a comprehensive analysis that includes both domestic workers and domestic employers, and, more generally, that grasps different, sometimes disparate, social categories.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW—WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT TIME IN PAID DOMESTIC WORK

When approaching the topic of time experience and time welfare in paid domestic and care work, we noticed that, first of all, there is a plethora of studies from the vantage point of the workers, which indicates that workers’ migrant status and the specific nature of domestic employment affects wellbeing. There is a particular emphasis on the live-in model of domestic work, in which the worker shares a living space with the employer. We briefly recount the key findings from this literature. We also address the live-out model as we believe it to be particularly relevant for the comparison of time regimes between workers and employers, which is our central interest here. We open the discussion with some more general remarks regarding migrant paid domestic and care workers as part of the low skilled and secondary labour market. We pay special attention to the condition of migrancy as an important factor affecting domestic contract contexts. This migration focus is also embedded in our respective field studies: all of the domestic workers studied by Cojocaru were migrants, whilst the Polish employers in Rosinska’s studies hired local Polish women and migrant Ukrainian women (Kordasiewicz 2016).

Employers are an under-researched category within the topic of paid domestic and care work (see Triandafyllidou, Marchetti 2015), so our aim is to bring attention to what has been written so far in scholarship about the employers’ perspective on paid domestic work. We also draw from a separate strand of

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/03/busyness-status-symbol/518178/>; <https://thecaregovernnetwork.ca/busy-new/>; <http://www.businessinsider.com/working-all-the-time-is-a-status-symbol-2015-6?IR=T> [access date: 03.10.2018].

literature, which Boersma (2016) has dubbed “fast life” scholarship, concerned with the privileged middle and upper classes under late capitalistic pressure. In this indirect way we hope to approximate the experiences of employers of domestic and care workers, especially of those with busy professional lives. By doing so, we aim to bridge the hitherto separate lines of scholarship—the classic domestic work literature and studies on late capitalism—in order to better contextualize and illuminate the domestic labour contract from the perspective of both workers and employers. We thus go beyond what Boersma (2016) achieved in her study by using the analytical categories worked out in studies of the tops of society to study the experience of “fast life” at the margins. We seek to: (1) show how employers too might be portrayed as time poor and identify common patterns underlying the lives of both workers and employers; and (2) capture the interactions between the busy lives of these two social groups, sometimes living and working under the same roof.

### *Migrant status and the precariousness of paid domestic and care workers*

Time disjuncture (Cwerner 2001) is experienced when individuals share a physical space but not the same temporalities. Some groups, such as marginalized individuals, are prone to feel temporally disconnected from mainstream society (including, to some extent, newcomers to a given society). Migrants may experience asynchronies when they are confronted with an unfamiliar temporality in the host country (e.g. new rhythms, patterns of work and leisure) and have to adjust to an alien pace of life as well as set up new routines in their everyday life (for a comprehensive review of time and migration literature, see Cojocaru 2016).

Migrant workers in domestic and care sectors are more likely to be part of the so-called “secondary labour market” (Piore 1979), characterised by low paid jobs and limited access to career development. Scholars began to talk about the emergence of *the new global precariat* due to the outsourcing of precarious jobs and the attribution of precarious citizenship status to migrants. Precarious work generally offers no opportunities for career progression, and is usually not consistent with workers’ skills and experience. Such jobs are precarious also in terms of time use as they often involve working non-standard hours and rigid schedules that give little, if any, time off. In addition, migrants’ legal status and their position as newcomers, who are not fully integrated and whose presence might be temporary, contribute to a socially marginalised position. When discussing migrant welfare, it is therefore essential to take into account time constraints that are imposed through migration policies, including such issues as: the period of legal stay, work permits and visa regimes.

Precarious work-time arrangements are often sustained by labour migration policies that produce “institutional uncertainty” (Anderson 2007), “waiting zones” (Mezzadra, Neilson 2012 quoted in Axelsson et al. 2015) or tem-

porariness (Robertson 2014), which hinder migrants from making longer term plans for settlement. According to Axelsson, Malmberg, Zhang (2015), precarious work-life situations are produced by three interrelated temporal processes: work-time arrangements (e.g. working hours, pace, intensity, and flexibility of work), spatio-temporal “waiting zones” indirectly produced by immigration policies, and migrant workers’ imagined futures for the sake of which they accept this temporary precarity. Although maintaining precarity might appear non-agentic, waiting for certain opportunities, to return home or to apply for residency can be viewed as a long-term strategy to achieve a better future, in the sense of “projective agency” (Embirkbayer, Mische 1998: 984).

### *The experience of time in paid domestic and care work*

In addition to the characteristics of migrants’ lives in general, domestic and care work has peculiarities, which have been extensively documented in the literature. The tedium of housework (paid or unpaid) has been famously denounced by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) for involving repetitive or unpredictable tasks that lead to feelings of boredom or work fatigue (Hepworth 2015; Näre 2009; Hochschild 2003; Brach-Czaina 1999). The globalisation of domestic and care work has attracted growing academic research interest in recent years (Andall 2000; Anderson 2000; Cox 2004; Gamburd 2002; Lutz 2008; Parreñas 2001; Marchetti 2013; Näre 2007, 2009; Vianello 2009). Paid and unpaid domestic work is often referred to as dull, never-ending and oppressive, especially in the live-in model (see Anderson 2000). Domestic work that includes care tasks, also called care work, is described as a “job without boundaries” (Degiuli 2007), which requires “permanent availability” (Anderson 2000: 4) with a weak division between personal and work time, if any. Sassen (2001) describes paid domestic and care work as the return of the servant class. Already portrayed in literature as “servants of globalisation” (Parreñas 2001), migrant domestic workers seem to compensate the global time deficit by fulfilling the temporal needs of the middle and high-income classes (Boersma 2016). Reports on migrant health indicate that the domestic labour sector involves longer working days than the average: 31.8% of migrants employed in domestic or care work have over 12-hour work days with an average of 12.6 hour/day, and 43% work the whole week with no weekends (OIM 2010).

Some of the harshest temporal peculiarities of paid domestic work are epitomised in what is called live-in work. For example, in the Italy work of Polish domestic workers is tellingly referred to as “24 hour” or “for day and night” (Kordasiewicz 2014). Being “on call” all the time, never-ending addition of new tasks, and long unregulated working hours as well as the difficulty to obtain paid or unpaid leave are some of the discomforts most commonly pointed to in the case of live-in domestic workers (Boersma 2016; Anderson 2000; Momsen 1999; Kordasiewicz 2014). These issues have been analysed under labels such

as “domestic oppression” (Anderson 2000; Momsen 1999) and likened to the Goffmanian “total institution” (Goffman 1961) because of the total control of the workers’ time and the conflation of work, rest, sleep, and eating spaces (Motsei 1990; Rosińska-Kordasiewicz 2005, 2008). Cases of forced domestic labour and domestic slavery are still commonly reported within the privacy of households (Bales 2012). In addition to household duties, live-in caregivers must attend to the needs of the cared-for person, often working non-standard hours (e.g. during nighttime or weekends) at the cost of their own daily routine, cutting back on sleep or skipping meals. Care work in general is recognized as particularly psychically and emotionally demanding as it involves constant relational work (Browne 2010; Thomas 1993).<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the live-in domestic work model, which can prove to be oppressive and constraining also temporally, the live-out model, with accommodation outside of the household-workplace, has been portrayed as providing a degree of control and independence from the employer (Anderson 2000: 28; Momsen 1999: 13–14). This is certainly the case when comparing some of the most oppressive domestic arrangements with the situation of the most self-reliant and industrious free-lance cleaners working for several households throughout the week. Still, it is important to bear in mind that live-out workers are also constrained by migration regimes and oftentimes by the efficiency drive to earn more to meet the needs of their family back home. As a consequence, these relatively independent workers sometimes self-impose what seems to be an overburdening work regime that is harmful to their physical wellbeing: sometimes working with no rest during the day or week, not taking holidays, and skillfully managing an extended network of households-clients (Kindler 2011, 2008; Kordasiewicz 2014, 2016). As most of the contemporary domestic work scholarship focuses on migrant employment, it can be difficult to distinguish what in this intersectional situation is a consequence of the migrant status and what is specific to the dynamic of the domestic contract, which would affect local workers in the same way as migrant workers. Following Kordasiewicz (2016), we hold that there is a need to compare local and migrant workers, although such an analysis is beyond the scope of this particular paper (see also a more general call to include both migrants and non-migrants: Dahinden 2016).

### *Domestic employers and time*

As noted above, previous studies have neglected, to a large extent, the perspective of employers of domestic workers and their role in the creation and perpetuation of gender, class and ethnic regimes of inequalities. Only a handful

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<sup>2</sup> Also institutional care work has been analysed in terms of marginality and precariousness (Sahroui 2016).

of studies have included the employers' perspective in recent years (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Rollins 1985; Lan 2006, and especially a collected volume by Triandafyllidou and Marchetti (2015) focused exclusively on the employers' perspective). Like Rollins' famous book *Between Women* (1985), most of the recent studies focus on women employers.

What can be learned from these scattered studies? First, that there is a diversity of employers' experiences, depending on their socioeconomic status and professional activity or lack thereof. Several studies investigated a "class guilt" syndrome among employers for whom it is difficult to embrace the class inequalities intrinsic to the domestic contract (Goñalons-Pons 2015; Lan 2006; Kordasiewicz 2015). This syndrome, however, can be seen as specific to middle class employers. Gdula and Sadura's (2012) study of class lifestyles in Poland revealed specific patterns of employing domestic workers relevant to the class status of the employers: the upper and lower classes adopt a more relaxed approach whilst the new middle classes have a tense, uneasy and insecure approach.

Interestingly, while the topic of time was not an explicit interest in the bulk of literature on paid domestic work, time-related issues appear throughout and are often present also in participants' responses (the same is valid for studies on workers). Most of these studies, like our paper here, focus on the perspective of working employers. We found two publications that were particularly useful for our discussion: a book by Pei-Chia Lan (2006) and a chapter by Goñalons-Pons (2015).

According to the study by Lan on "newly rich employers" in Taiwan, live-in domestic workers are instrumental to reconciling work and family life and to preventing chaos and conflicts over domestic chores between spouses who both work. Resorting to the help of migrant domestic care workers is related to the fact that the hours of operation of local childcare services are not compatible with parents' working hours (e.g. one of Lan's participants said, "I am not working nine to five—how can I accommodate this kind of schedule?", meaning that childcare institutions operate shorter hours than the respondent has to work in her business; 2006: 960). The analysis of small business owners in Taiwan shows how the schedules of workers and employers are interwoven and how employers often exploit domestic personnel by engaging them in their shops in addition to the work they do in the home, which is often located nearby. In the case of some homemaking women employers, hiring a domestic worker allows them to be more involved in the "spiritual" side of domestic sphere (e.g. child-care) or to free up time for leisure, charity work and/or hobbies.

Goñalons-Pons (2015) focuses exclusively on working women who employ domestic workers in Spain. In her study she stresses that hiring domestic workers allows her participants to stay active on the labour market, which they consider to be desirable. This arrangement coproduces what she calls "modern

domesticity,” which incorporates elements of professional femininity but also preserves the traditional model of home care. Goñalons-Pons points to lack of part time and flexible working hours in Spain, with many jobs extending to as late as 8 p.m., and quotes one of her participant who calls herself a “9 a.m. to 6 p.m. manager.”

Based on these studies, we observe that some of the characteristics of time attributed to workers in domestic jobs are also valid for their employers, who are themselves workers (e.g. the efficiency drive, lack of free time, time poverty, constant availability, “fast lives”). In fact, the situation might be still more complex. In her study of working professionals who have children, Arlie Russel Hochschild (1997) portrayed a paradox among individuals who do not take advantage of “family friendly” solutions even if they overtly put family first (a “time-bind”). As it turns out, for such individuals, work becomes a familiar and cosy environment, while the home sphere can be associated with conflicts and tension over gender roles and domestic and care chores. With this in mind, we also look at the experience of time within the paid domestic contract and, specifically, at the context of a household that is also a workplace, in which the employers of domestic workers are simultaneously employees outside of the household and thus experience a two-way time-bind: toward their own workplace and toward the household, which is a workplace for others. This analysis is presented from the perspective of workers and employers. We attempt to draw general conclusions about what we refer to as the “double time-bind” and make suggestions for future scholarship in this field.

#### THE METHODS APPLIED IN THE TWO STUDIES, AND THE ITALIAN AND POLISH CONTEXT

In this paper the reconstruction of time management strategies on the part of workers is based on Cojocaru’s ethnographic fieldwork in an Italian city with a large concentration of Eastern European migrants working in the domestic sector. For the analysis of the perspective of employers and the intertwining of workers’ and employers’ time regimes, we use materials gathered by Rosińska in her project on employers and workers in paid household work in post-war Poland (Kordasiewicz 2016).

The idea to write this paper stems from frequent discussions between Cojocaru and Rosińska regarding Cojocaru’s work on Moldovan domestic workers in Italy, within the framework of her PhD project based at the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw, carried out under the supervision of Iza-bela Wagner as primary supervisor and Rosińska as second supervisor.<sup>3</sup> Work-

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<sup>3</sup> Cojocaru’s doctoral work “Migrant Temporalities: Processuality and Qualities of Time. The case of Moldovans in Italy” has been funded by a Marie Curie Early Career Doctoral Fellowship (2014–2018) in association with the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme

ing closely on the topic of domestic work in the Polish and Italian contexts, we noted recurrent similarities in the time characteristics between Moldovan workers in Italy and domestic employers in Poland. These patterns prompted us to undertake an analysis of the systematic mechanisms that underlie the lives of both workers and employers in these two countries, and which point to particular time regimes as characteristic of late capitalism. However different, Poland and Italy have similarities that allow for an interesting comparison: both countries have a family-centered care culture, both have a history of emigration (including Polish migration to Italy), whilst the role of migrants in the domestic and care sector is prominent (Italy) or intensifying (Poland). Finally, both societies are aging rapidly, although, Italy is more advanced in this process. Below we describe briefly our respective research projects and these two geographical contexts.

### *The Italian context and research*

The Italian context presents a family-oriented welfare system with a well-grounded tradition of outsourcing domestic work (Farris, Marchetti 2017). In the last decades, the ageing population and women's increased participation in the labour market have led to a growing gap in elderly care provision in Italy's welfare system, which has been filled by migrant labour. More and more families make arrangements for home-based care provision for elderly dependents, most often by hiring migrant women (Degiuli 2016). The new term *badante*,<sup>4</sup> which refers to individuals who provide elderly care (and who are often live-in), has entered Italian colloquial vocabulary. As many as 900 000 domestic and care workers are officially registered in Italy, the majority are foreign nationals, mostly from Eastern European countries.<sup>5</sup> There have been noteworthy efforts to regulate the domestic labour sector in Italy, including collective bargaining agreements. Italy also ratified the ILO C189 Convention on decent domestic work in 2013.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, associations of workers, including mass trade unions and associations of employers, are very active.

Moldovan migration to Italy is a recent phenomenon, which began around 20 years ago and steadily grew in scale, making Italy the main EU destina-

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Marie Curie Action Initial Training Networks (ITN) and is part of the project: 'Transnational Migration, Citizenship and the Circulation of Rights and Responsibilities' (TRANSMIC).

<sup>4</sup> The terms that are used to address domestic or care jobs, such as "domestic workers," "badante," "COLF" (*collaboratore familiare* in the Italian context) are often problematic and considered contentious because they can be viewed as derogatory or as referring to servanthood (Andall 2000; Weintraub, Kumar 1997). Still, the term *badante* is used colloquially by both employers and employees.

<sup>5</sup> Date is drawn from the Italian Social Security Services Institute, available here: <https://www.inps.it/webidentity/banchedatistatistiche/domestici/index.jsp> [access date: 03.10.2018].

<sup>6</sup> See: [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C189](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189) [access date: 03.10.2018].

tion for Moldovans. Currently, there are about 150 000 Moldovans (iSTAT), of which 67% are women, and at least half of them are employed in the domestic sector. Data for this paper is based on in-depth interviews<sup>7</sup> with Moldovan migrants and ethnographic fieldwork over the course of six months, between 2015 and 2017, in the regions of Veneto and Emilia Romagna, both of which have the highest concentration of Moldovan migrants in Italy. The interviews were carried out for the purpose of Cojocaru's ongoing PhD research, which examines how migrants with precarious jobs experience time welfare, qualities of time and prolonged temporariness, with reference to the case of Moldovan domestic workers in Italy.

The sample of 30 participants included women ranging from 27 to 65 years of age who were of mixed marital status, working both as live-in and live-out domestic workers. Meetings would take place mostly in public spaces, but often also in the households where the women worked, usually on Sundays (their days off) or while they took their dependent for a walk in the park. These meetings were often conditioned by their limited free time. Observation was also conducted in a Moldovan travel agency in Padua, managed by a sociable Moldovan woman, a dynamic place that served as a hub for fellow Moldovan workers who would drop in, usually during lunch breaks in-between appointments, to say "hi" and share a meal. The limited spare time prompted Cojocaru's interest in these workers' leisure possibilities: outside of their working hours, how do domestic workers make room for their own personal care and well-being, and renegotiate autonomous control over their time?

### *The context of Poland and Polish research on domestic employers (and workers)*

Poland is a Central Eastern European country with a re-emerging system of paid domestic work that is characterised by scarce institutionalisation of domestic services and large participation of local Polish workers, often internal migrants (e.g. rural to urban migrants) (Kindler, Kordasiewicz, Szulecka 2016). In the years 2001 and 2007, respectively 7% and 15% of households employed an individual from outside the household, now categorised broadly as domestic, agricultural and construction work. In these years, these hired workers were 10% and 4% foreigners, respectively. However, in 2007 only 3% of studied households employed a domestic worker (Domaradzka, Morecka 2004; Grabowska-Lusińska, Żylicz 2008). The rising ratio of households that employ domestic workers is attributed to an economic polarisation of society, ageing processes, and growing expectations towards all kinds of workers when it comes to working long hours and flexibility in late capitalistic Poland, which

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<sup>7</sup> Interviews were originally conducted mostly in Romanian and partly in Russian, and have been transcribed and translated into English by the author. All names are pseudonyms and other personal details have been obscured to avoid identification.

leaves limited time for domestic chores. In 2014, Polish workers came in third in terms of average working hours in the EU (Eurostat 2015).<sup>8</sup>

The majority of foreign domestic workers in Poland are Ukrainian migrants. The patterns of migration changed over the years as a consequence of changing migration regimes, which included the introduction in 1998 of a number of entry restrictions and culminated in 2003 with the reintroduction of a visa regime and the imposition of Schengen visa requirements in 2007 (Kindler et al. 2016).<sup>9</sup> The Schengen visa regime had a powerful impact both on workers and employers: in order to keep in-line with the available residency permits, it forced migrants into a circular pattern of migration (i.e. leaving Poland every three months), whilst for employers it meant that (mostly Ukrainian) cleaners or care workers would likely leave shortly after establishing contact so the employment lacked stability. The strategy that was devised in response to this situation was a rotation system, which involved two migrants changing shifts every 3 months (Kindler 2011). The resulting paradox of the domestic sector in Poland is that Ukrainian domestic and care workers seem to be more often able to formalise their employment than their Polish counterparts because employers want to avoid the rotation system that results from the 3-month limit on residency permits (Kindler et al. 2016).

In this paper, we analyse selected cases of Polish employers of domestic workers, collected by Rosińska between 2007–2015, mainly within the framework of the project “Domestic service/ants: Changing asymmetrical social relations.”<sup>10</sup> The project focused on social relations in paid household and care work in post-war Poland. In-depth qualitative interviews with a narrative opening were collected from 58 participants, including 21 workers and 37 employers, as well as recorded and transcribed. Of the 37 employers, 22 had a family history of employing domestic workers and 15 did not. Seven of the employers were male and 30 were female. Among 21 workers (all women), 14 were Polish and seven were Ukrainian.

While Cojocarú’s research project was centred analytically on the issue of time regimes from the beginning, Rosińska’s research was not specifically about time. We therefore decided to treat Cojocarú’s data as primary source and to carry out a secondary analysis of Rosińska’s data for illustrative and comparative purposes. We are aware of the limitations of such an approach, but by presenting the results of our analysis we want to encourage more sys-

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<sup>8</sup> See: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=lfsq\\_ewhun2](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=lfsq_ewhun2), [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AVE\\_HRS](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AVE_HRS) [access date: 03.10.2018].

<sup>9</sup> As of June 2017, biometric passport holders are no longer required to have a visa for a 3-month stay.

<sup>10</sup> This research project was partly financed by a doctoral grant from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for the project: *Asymmetrical Social Relations in the Field of Domestic Services on the Basis of the Example of Ukrainian Women Working as Household Workers in Poland* directed by Professor Antoni Sulek.

tematic inclusion of employers and workers in prospective cross-cutting topical research.

## DISCUSSION—TIME FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS AND DOMESTIC EMPLOYERS

### *Workers' perspective*

As noted above, domestic workers carry out a type of job that can have specific consequences in terms of temporal well-being: constant availability, repetitive tasks, limited control over one's work and private time. The significance of such temporal limitations is even more acute when the work experience is coupled with migrancy and transnational separation from family. When looking at migrant domestic workers' temporal experiences, two major areas of life come to the fore: work time and leisure time. We analyse these comparatively below.

### *In- or out- of the household? Live-in care workers*

As indicated in interviews, sharing accommodation with the employer and/or the care receiver (e.g. an elderly person) has significant implications for the sense of privacy and time autonomy of the care worker. Care needs cannot be regulated by working hours, therefore regardless of contractual agreements, the live-in status often forces care workers into constant availability (see also Anderson 2000; Boccagni 2016). In addition to household duties, live-in paid care workers are expected to constantly cater to the needs of the cared-for person, often also working non-standard hours (e.g. during the night) at the cost of their own daily routine, cutting back on sleep or skipping meals. Private time often seems to be only when the cared-for person is asleep. As one respondent put it: *We are paid for 8–9 hours but the contract does not say that we wake up at nights* (Elena, 65yo).<sup>11</sup> For this reason, respondents described the conflation of the domestic realm and their workplace as a “house arrest.” For example, Iulia (45yo) prefers to run the whole workload in four hours even if she is paid less so that she can free up the rest of the day and spend it outdoors.

Care workers need to follow a strict routine dictated by the patient's needs and habits. Workers often report feelings of boredom due to the repetitive nature of the tasks. Even if they might have relative autonomy in deciding about the sequence of tasks, the workload does not change and they need to finish their chores in the appointed time. Usually, in order to manage the workload more easily and to avoid delays, care workers prefer to follow a fixed order of tasks. However, because of the endless nature of domestic work, new unfore-

<sup>11</sup> All names were changed to protect participants' confidentiality.

seen household tasks can arise, which can lead to exhaustion. In some cases, even if the domestic worker is done with the assigned tasks, they need to remain active during the working hours they are paid for. For instance, Iulia is not allowed to sit down, so she sometimes invents new tasks to keep herself busy.

Being *de facto* constantly “on duty” leads to feelings of autonomy deprivation or personal time dispossession. Studies on Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong have shown that one strategy to reclaim control over time is to “squeeze” in time for oneself whenever possible. For instance, toilet texting is one way of “stealing” time from employers, as if employers owned the domestic worker’s time (Boersma 2016). Spending time indefinitely with a dependent also involves being pro-active about finding “something to do,” to “fill time,” overcome boredom, and to keep company in a creative way. One respondent said: *Every evening I had to spend time with her in some way. Playing cards, a game lasted 3 minutes. Continuously* (Olia, 35yo).

Sharing time and accommodation with the employer shapes workers’ everydayness into an in oppressive experience. As evidenced by respondents’ accounts, some workers adopt various strategies to cope with these temporal issues and so to overcome boredom or even to opt for arrangements that would reduce the amount of time spent in the household.

### *In- or out- of the household? Live-out cleaners and care workers*

Workers who opt for live-out arrangements deliver in-home care or cleaning services to multiple households on a freelance basis. The live-out model involves separate lodging and potentially more (time) autonomy, but also a demanding and often hectic schedule, frequent commuting, all of which require good time management skills. Typically, a live-out domestic worker’s daily round starts early in the morning and involves commuting from household to household according to a set pattern. No reminders are needed, nor planning agendas, as repetition means workers’ embody their schedule with no need for improvisation. It is not uncommon for the workweek to extend into Saturdays and/or Sundays, depending on appointments and demand.

Viorica’s case is illustrative of the engaging work rhythm of a freelance live-out worker and the flexibility required to manage jobs in multiple households on a weekly basis. She delivers cleaning services to a network of 17 families, which she included in her portfolio of clients over time through good recommendations. Asked how she manages her weekly workload, Viorica recites her schedule, learned by heart, in an instant:

*On Monday I go to 2 families. I work 8 hours during the day; in the evening I iron for 3 hours. On Tuesday I go to 3 families, 11 hours, this is the physical time that I spend inside the house, without the time spent in transport, while commuting.*

*On Wednesday I start at 7.20 and likewise I spend 11 hours working for 3 families.*

*On Thursday I start at 8, the same schedule.*

*On Friday I start at 7.30, 11 hours as well [laughs]  
Saturday all day long, as well. On Sunday I only work 3 hours. That's it. (Viorica, 50yo)*

We can see that Viorica works on average at least 11 hours per day, exclusive of the time spent commuting. Her workweek also includes Saturday and Sunday. This is in line with the ILO's latest report (2016) on the average number of working hours of migrant women.

In most respondents' accounts, workers describe a demanding work schedule from which it is hard to escape:

*But look, once you enter this rhythm...it's like a drug. [...] I have been working in this rhythm for 5 years. When I go home [to Moldova], I stay for a week or two and quickly return. I have 17 families to cater to. They keep calling me asking when I'll be back and I try to please them, not to offend them, I don't want to lose my job. (Viorica, 50yo)*

Just as in Viorica's description above, Lina's schedule—a single 35-year-old mother working in cleaning—is rigid and does not allow for spontaneity or delays: *I start at 8 and work for 4 hours. If at 12am I am late by 10 minutes, everything is upside down. My time from A to B is strictly measured, 40 minutes.* The same intensive work rhythm was recounted by Iulia (in her forties) to justify her almost nonexistent leisure time: *I am here [in Padua] for 7 years and still I haven't been to Venice... [less than one hour by train].*

The dynamics of employer–employee relations are crucial to deciding the number of tasks, establishing boundaries, and negotiating working conditions. Viorica feels especially flattered that her employer, “a very busy woman,” always finds time to have coffee and a little chat with her in the morning before leaving for work. Some respondents are keen to point out that they have free access to the household and move about with a sense of empowerment and relative ownership—“I enter the house as if it were mine”—which speaks also to a capital of trust which might have been difficult to achieve. However, inherent asymmetric relations with employers do not leave much room for negotiation, also because of high competition on the job market (on personal asymmetrical relationships within “maternalism” see also Rollins 1985). Olia does not take her time off and works a bit extra just because the “patron is kind” and they have lax agreements. By the same token, after her employer offered help during a health emergency, Zoe's sense of gratitude limited her ability to maneuver and negotiate her terms of employment. After a long period when she did not take any time off, Zoe announced to her employers that she needs to be away for a few days. She was saddened when they seemed to have forgotten her well-deserved annual leave and, in response, asked her when she would recover those days (for strategies of migrant domestic workers in Italy to counteract the perceived emotional manipulation by employers see Kordasiewicz 2014).

Despite complaints of feeling overworked and time-deprived, it was evident that respondents made efforts to normalise their situation. Despite the tedious work, Viorica is grateful for having a job in the first place. She admits,

nonetheless, that one of her dreams is to spend an entire day in bed and referred to the 10 years spent in Italy with a certain regret (half of the period as a live-in caregiver and half as a cleaner): as “time wasted” in terms of private life and personal development since a large part of her lifetime was devoted to the needs of others (her family on the one hand, and employers on the other). Boccagni (2016) likewise found minimalist constructions of wellbeing amongst migrant domestic workers in Italy, along with a lack of concern about their own needs and social marginality. Their accounts were marked by a sense of resignation or defeat, health and maintaining a job were cited as the main factors of well-being.

### *Leisure time*

According to the employment contract,<sup>12</sup> domestic workers in Italy are entitled to two hours off per day and one day and a half off per week while cleaners manage time on a freelance basis. Migrant status correlates with a specific outlook on what leisure time means and how significantly it defines their life. Generally, economic migrants, as in the case of Moldovan domestic workers in Italy, try to maximise work time and minimise free time. Respondents repeatedly pointed out that leading an active social life is not part of their aspirations or migration goals. They mostly regard their stay as an intermediary period during which they live for a future plan, which usually entails a return to the home country. Leisure is thus not among their interests and priorities because it implies consumption of time, energy and money. Meaningful time for economic migrants is time spent in a way that yields a concrete gain: *I came here to work, not to relax, I have responsibilities, mouths to feed, I cannot break away from my family duties* (Lena, 50yo).

The active working lives of domestic workers do not leave much room for non-work activities or leisure. Moreover, their migrant condition marked by temporariness as well as the type of work they do, preclude them from engaging in an active social life. It is not exceptional that a typical domestic workers' workweek includes Saturdays and sometimes Sundays as well. Commonly, such a limited amount of time off is divided between volunteering work at church and required shopping for the packages they send home almost every week. Zoe's workweek (in her early thirties) is packed with providing cleaning services to a network of families, including on Saturdays. Her lifestyle does not allow for much entertainment and she mentioned that, at times, she felt she had limited chances to “behave in a feminine way,” such as to dress up, go out and wear makeup. By the same token, in Lina's case, personal care or feminine

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<sup>12</sup> National Collective Labour Agreement on Domestic Work (Contratto collettivo nazionale di lavoro sulla disciplina del rapporto di lavoro domestico), FIDALDO, DOMINA, Federcolf, Filcams-CGIL, Fisascat-CISL, Uiltucs-UIL, 2013 ([www.cassacolf.it](http://www.cassacolf.it) [access date: 03.10.2018]).

concerns were secondary. *Often I don't even change my outfit, I am too tired to change clothes [in-between rounds]. I don't spend time looking in the mirror. Sometimes I feel beautiful, I feel appreciated, but not all the time* (Lina, 35yo). To save time spent on daily make-up, Zoe even travelled to her home country to have a permanent cosmetic procedure done, a service she thought was not available in Italy.

Most of their private activities are temporally squeezed into holidays (in the home country) and spatially forced into public spaces in the country where they live (see also Wuo 2010). In order to care for their own personal needs or changes in schedule, some women employ a help network in which they take turns replacing each other at the workplace. Elvira (65yo) juggles cleaning work in multiple households in the first part of the day while during the afternoons she looks after an elderly person. With her whole day busy, Elvira can only free up time to take care of her own personal needs or to run her own errands by finding someone to replace her in the domestic work.

A way of reclaiming time for live-in paid caregivers is going out on their day off. Because the household is also their workplace, they turn to using public spaces for rest, transforming the public realm into a semi-private one. One of the central parks in Padua has been jokingly dubbed as the “Moldovans’ park.” It is here that Moldovan women meet at least once a week to exchange news, discuss daily issues, meet peers from their home country, share updates about what has happened at home, have a chat, and search for a place to stay or a new job. Conversations alternate between Italian and Romanian. Zoe recounted jokingly that when she first arrived in Italy, the park felt like the Central Market in Chisinau, the capital city of Moldova. Hence parks are indicative of migrants’ daily rhythms (see also Fedjuk 2011): on Sundays (the usual day off) the parks buzz with people and during workdays mostly those searching for jobs or accommodation are there.

“Time is money” is a capitalistic dictum that appears to govern lives at the margins of society as well (Boersma 2016). Time is precious for migrant workers, especially considering that their main aim abroad is to work hard and earn as much as possible. Their transnational dislocation (and separation from family) is translated into earnings: the more they work, the more they will be able to put aside and remit to their families. Time and hard work are their main currency, which they trade for monetary gains. As a valuable resource, time needs to be managed efficiently, and work time needs to be maximised to increase productivity and earnings.

### *Domestic employers’ perspective*

Scholars have noted a general tendency to conduct “fast lives,” especially in the context of the labour market in late capitalism and among those at the “tops of society,” i.e. the privileged who can often afford to outsource household chores to domestic and care workers. Although in comparison to work-

ers, the employers may be in a more favourable socioeconomic position, it is also true that this group is varied. Employers are diverse in terms of class, age, gender, ethnicity, lifestyle, and their position on the labour market—they might be workers themselves or professionally inactive. It is generally assumed that those who have active professional lives (especially within couples who live in a dual-career model) employ domestic workers primarily for practical reasons, while those who are not involved in professional activities (one or both are homemakers, usually woman), employing domestic workers is linked more to upholding social status (Anderson 2000). It is true, however, that in both situations each of these motivations plays a role. As noted earlier, our focus in this paper is on employers of domestic workers who are themselves employees, so it remains an open matter to what degree our analysis is also relevant for the situation of non-working employers of domestic and care workers. The upper classes, who make a living as rentiers or households with non-working housewives seem time-privileged, although one could argue their lives are also fully packed and busy with elite networking, charity endeavours and elaborate household management. Anecdotal evidence from situations of non-working employers of domestic workers<sup>13</sup> show that they consider themselves to have busy lives, which is sometimes mocked by the domestic workers they employ. Even if busy, their lives are probably less prone to the direct pressures related to late capitalism in contrast to their dual-career counterparts, who are the focus in this paper (for the perspective of non-working Taiwanese employers of domestic workers see also Lan 2006).

Among the 37 employers in Rosińska's study, 22 respondents employed a nanny/housekeeper, four employed a care worker for an elderly parent, and 24 employed a cleaner. 19 participants were born in the 1960s or later and 18 in the preceding decades. Only 6 domestic employers were not active on the labour market at the moment of interview, mainly due to retirement. We are aware that people are pressured to make their lives more intense and efficient also outside the labour market (see the literature review section above), but the following case selection focuses on employers who are working people and we highlight the narratives that illustrate how employers are prone to a fast paced life, characteristic to late capitalism. Our selected cases include mostly younger couples, in which both individuals work long hours in demanding managerial positions. By analysing these examples we want to: (a) engage with scholarship on the time poverty of domestic workers, which generally assumes that employers are privileged in this respect, and (b) probe to what extent employers might also be affected by time poverty and what is the scope of their possible time privilege. As in the case of domestic workers, discussed above, we illustrate how employers of domestic workers experience their work time

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<sup>13</sup> See for example migrants' memoirs, such as: 'Slavinette' ([http://www.ekologiasztuka.pl/think.tank.feministyczny/articles.php?article\\_id=104](http://www.ekologiasztuka.pl/think.tank.feministyczny/articles.php?article_id=104) [access date: 03.10.2018]).

regimes, what leisure time means for them, and the impact these have on their decision to employ domestic and care workers.

### *Employers' work time regimes*

Domestic employers' lives are also conditioned by the time demands of late capitalism (Harvey 1990) and social acceleration (Rosa 2013). It has been documented that professionals use self-exploitative practices. For example, within the work-life distinction, professionals may take time resources from the personal sphere and apply them to benefit their work (Fleming 2014). Sabina's case (in her 40s at the time of interview in 2008) is a good illustration of these practices. Sabina is married to her husband, who also works in the same big company as she does, and with a 2-year-old child. When she was single and childless, her domestic life can be divided into the period before and after delegating the domestic chores. Prior to hiring a cleaner, she was living by herself and considered herself over-worked because her daily routine was to work from morning until midnight as she developed a Polish company from scratch, and she felt she was losing touch with reality. She recounted that her flat was always dirty and that she had lost control over her domestic space (e.g. it happened that she stored the keys in the fridge or that there were no clean plates).

*And so I really deal with cleaning ladies for quite some time now, around 5 years, since I moved to Warsaw, I always had such a lady, because I worked very intensively, as a non-mother, even more intensively than now. Often I came home only to sleep, so basically it was a place where I had my bed and somebody had to take care of doing the laundry, ironing, and so these ladies were necessary. [...] I simply could not make it, I was coming back at 10, 11 p.m. completely exhausted, directly from the desk in my office, and it happened that I put the shopping in the fridge along with the keys to my flat and next morning I was looking all over for them [laughter] because it was already midnight or 2 or 3 am when I returned home the night before. That was a long time ago, 7 years, back then my company had only 15 or 20 employees [...] it was the very beginning when we had to prove that a Polish company can meet Western standards. We knew, we had it in our job contracts, that we would work this much, and that we have to devote ourselves completely to the work. (Sabina, 40+ yo)*

It is not formally possible for such a clause to be included in an employment contract, but Sabina's account underlines that her intensive professional life was the result of a deliberate individual as well as collective (among managers of the company) strategy. It affected her home life to such an extent that she was no longer productive (as a worker). She thus decided to hire a cleaner and was able to regain control over her domestic space, or her domestic space became as well managed as her professional life.

*And from the moment when this [cleaning] person came to me, she took this whole weight off my shoulders. Finally my home was clean and I could function normally on Saturday and Sunday with clean dishes, and not with everything out and dirty, including special Christmas tableware [laughter] [...] I showed her around, where the detergents are, where the*

*money would be left for her [...] we agreed that I wouldn't do the cleaning shopping or go to TESCO at midnight, she'd provide the detergents and display the bills. It simplifies things, somebody else takes care of these things, I don't have to think about it and that makes such a difference to me. (Sabina, 40+ yo)*

For Sabina, hiring the cleaner was about delegating these unwanted and tedious tasks to somebody else, it was a liberation from the everyday burden. She then married and became a mother and her professional and personal life became better balanced as she worked shorter hours and employed a nanny for 10 hours every workday.

*Well I had my child quite late in life, I was over 35, [...] and I was used to a certain rhythm, to the rhythm that I was leaving for work for 9 a.m. and was getting back from work at 7, 8, 9 p.m. Over the weekend I was either in [other big cities in Poland] or in [another European capital], or elsewhere across the world, so my life was very intense, with a very quick pace, and suddenly this small human being appeared, with whom I had the pleasure of spending 6 months, and after those 6 months I had to get back to work suddenly. [...] I got a nanny who was recommended by a colleague [...] will she be able to bring up my son well? Let's face it, I didn't start to work less, nobody will allow such a thing, still I work from 9 am until 6 pm, then one hour commute to get back home. [...] But I see my son is developing well, is able to clap his hands, to waive bye bye [...] Malina calls me only when necessary, she doesn't burden me unnecessarily, for example she calls to say [my son] has a fever [...] and then I don't panic, she even soothes me, saying the situation is under control, I gave him this and I ordered a doctor [...] he will be in two hours. She is very industrious. (Sabina, 40+ yo)*

Sabina's case shows how an employer's life might be far from time privileged, but rather busy and overwhelmed with professional activity. At the same time, in her case, the cleaner was a solution to a life-style colonised by work, a solution that made her domestic space manageable. Still, not much seems to have changed after Sabina gained new and additional responsibilities associated with having a child—her work hours are adjusted but she continues to use outsourcing as a way to balance her professional and private life with the help of a full time nanny for her child (and of a cleaner who continues to work for the household twice a week).

### *Employers' free time, family time or non-work time*

When it comes to leisure or generally non-work time, in many cases the work time regime and how it conditions the family time is presented as a justification for hiring a nanny, a cleaner or a housekeeper. In order to cherish the little time for life (or non-work) outside of working hours, professionals rely on household workers to take over the domestic chores (the quality time rationale; Gregson, Lowe 1994). An illustration of this strategy can be seen in Ewa's account. In her 30s at the time of the interview (2008), Ewa worked in

a multinational company and hired a Polish nanny-housekeeper. She is married and has a kindergarten-age son.

She first hired a nanny to look after her son. As with Sabina, the nanny works full time every workday, and longer when Ewa and her husband work longer hours or on weekends. Ewa describes her day in the following way:

[after being asked whether she noticed any change in her life after hiring a nanny] *I don't reflect upon it. I have a task-oriented approach to it [hiring a nanny or a domestic worker]. If there is a need to find somebody, then somebody is recruited, if the person is working already, she is praised, she is motivated by me to do her work. And if this person is suitable, so you have to manage this human being, and the same at my office [...] I treat my employees similarly. Although at home, because it is my child that's at stake, the person requires much more appreciation and personal verification [...]. I don't need to care about the house because somebody else does that for me. On the other hand, I work much more than I used to, so it's a trade-off. During the week, all of us, we are practically cut out from the home life, we come home late, we have this one hour with the child, and that's it. And in the morning half an hour before we take him to the kindergarten.* (Ewa, 30+ yo)

Ewa reports spending half an hour in the morning with her child and an hour in the evening before the child goes to sleep, the same as her husband. The full-time nanny looks after her son during the week and Ewa emphasized that the concept of a trade-off applies to her situation: she works longer (and better paid) hours, which means she cannot be home at the same time. Her managerial approach to the domestic sphere, which blurs the line between her private life and her professional life, is evident in her choice of words (e.g. “recruited,” “motivated,” “manage”).

Ewa also comments on her weekends: *sacrificing the weekend for cleaning is not a reasonable choice*, because it would further deprive the family of time with the child. As a result, Ewa and her husband decided to keep the nanny for longer hours than were necessary for an already older child precisely to enable her to clean the house twice a week, which liberates the family from the necessity of doing such tasks during the only free days (i.e. the weekends) and makes it possible to spend quality time together.

Another respondent, Aleksandra, had a similar attitude to weekends. Also in her 30s at the time of the interview (2007), Aleksandra was in a relationship and had two children, 6 and 13yo. She was working 5 days a week but shorter hours than Ewa and Sabina. Every day she spent evenings with her children and cleaned the house herself on weekends. She then decided to free herself from the weekend cleaning and hired a cleaner (a Ukrainian).

These examples show that professionally active domestic employers, even if perceived as privileged, are also time poor as discussed in the case of domestic and care workers. Their lives are busy, intensive and sometimes evaluated in terms of efficiency (Ewa). However, among employers, there is a range of time regimes: some have extreme work schedules (e.g. Sabina and Ewa) while others have more moderate regimes (e.g. Aleksandra). In contrast to the domestic

workers, the privilege of the professionally active employers does not lie in “time richness” but rather in their power to outsource some of the chores, which gives them greater control over how to invest their often scarce time resources. Yet again, there is diversity among employers. Those who can be considered “time privileged” already have moderate working hours and can, gain still more leisure time by outsourcing the domestic chores. Those who work “extreme hours” are only able to improve how they juggle their various responsibilities, but they do not actually benefit greatly from outsourcing domestic chores. In fact, it is often the professional sphere that benefits most from delegating domestic and care responsibilities, as was demonstrated by Goñalons-Pons (2015) in the case of professionally active female employers of domestic workers in Spain. This points to gendered time inequalities, as women with intensive work lives have difficulties with managing both household duties and career demands, and that is why they need support. What they gain from hiring domestic help can be different: basic management of household chores, more leisure, more time to dedicate to work/family or other activities, more “space to breathe” etc. Even if they are not able to enjoy more leisure, they might be able to better satisfy the demands of their intensive jobs, and thus gain more on the professional side.

The above accounts of employers offer a general review of the consequences of hiring domestic and care workers for the household. There is another side to the story, however: that unreliable and/or untrustworthy cleaners or caregivers can ruin the careful planning and time management of employers’ busy lives, and that external regimes (like migration regulations) impact not only the migrant but also the employers’ wellbeing. These issues exceed the scope of this paper, but we briefly illustrate their importance with the case of Honorata, aged 70+ at the time of the interview (2008) and an employer of domestic workers since the 1960s. She described the troubles that unreliable housekeepers caused her in the 1970s when she was starting a family and her professional career as “doom and gloom” (in Polish: *rozpacz w kratkę*). Another employer, Renata, aged 60+, in a follow-up interview in 2008 carried out after the introduction of Schengen visa regimes, referred to herself as “a victim of Schengen” in order to emphasize how the restrictions on residency permits impacted her household by preventing the appointed Ukrainian domestic workers to provide the continuous services she was used to. With these two cases we want to underline the mutual dependencies between employers and domestic workers, bound together within the paid domestic contract (see also Coser 1973).

#### CONCLUSIONS: COMMON PATTERNS, SPECIFICITIES AND INTERTWINED TEMPORAL ORDERS

In this paper, we comparatively analysed the impact of work time arrangements on both the employers’ and employees’ welfare. On the one hand, we

examined migrant time inequalities and temporal well-being in the case of precarious jobs; on the other hand, we discussed the time pressures that lead full-time professionals to outsource domestic work. Contrary to popular assumptions in the literature, which suggest that employers are temporally better-off (time privileged), we showed that employers who are middle class and lead busy professional lives of their own, can be comparably “time poor” as the household workers they employ. Their “time poverty” is often the explicit reason they need to delegate domestic tasks to workers. It remains to be confirmed whether this account stands also for non-working members of the upper class and families in which one spouse (typically the woman) is not professionally active.

By taking both sides of the domestic contract into consideration, we illustrated how time poverty seems to be reproduced hierarchically in a grid of temporal interdependencies. Both categories, domestic workers and their employers, are bound by the domestic work contract and have to deal with packed schedules and active lifestyles. Only employers, however, can exercise autonomy of time-management, by choosing when and how much to work and which tasks to delegate. Hence the notion of “quality time” seems to be a privilege reserved for highly-placed professionals, who are able to opt for a trade-off between more financial or professional gains instead of time spent on domestic chores in their home. Employers deliberately free up their time so that they can dedicate more time to professional demands or engage in activities they value (e.g. time with family). Some rely on time-management techniques that are comparable to those they use in their work environment (e.g. the notion of “saving time” by delegating domestic tasks).

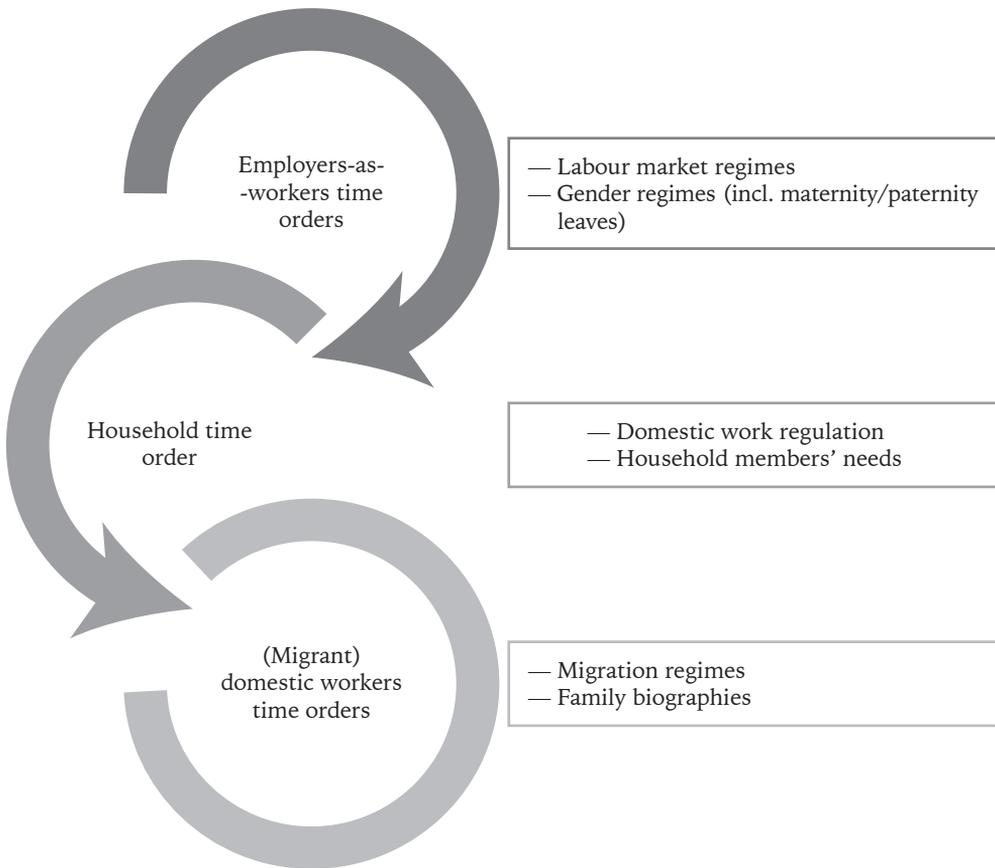
On the other hand, domestic workers meet the temporal needs of busy professionals, compensating their time shortage, yet they are not able to delegate tasks onwards. Their own time deficit cannot be balanced, which makes it difficult for them to fulfill their own needs. In the context of the commodification of time and time shortage, economic migrants seem positioned at the bottom of temporal hierarchies. Their only way to pass on their commitments and responsibilities is to rely on kin and on the resilience of their families in their countries of origin (see the global care chains perspective, Yeates 2012). As shown in the discussion above, in addition to having migrant status and managing transnational households from a distance, domestic workers perform a type of job that has specific characteristics, which negatively impact temporal well-being, including: constant availability, repetitive tasks, little to no private time. This precarious temporal well-being is further impacted by their guest status and unfavourable migration policies.

Against the backdrop of the new international division of labour, we point to inequalities in the social reproductive chain in terms of time resources/use: domestic and care workers to whom domestic tasks are outsourced are not able to delegate tasks in their turn. When migrant domestic and care workers are

seen as a “solution” that enables a better work-life balance among the elite in host societies, the issue of migrant domestic workers’ wellbeing and work-life balance remains overlooked.

Figure 1

Temporal orders in paid domestic work contracts



### *Interacting temporal orders within the paid domestic work contract*

Studies have noted, both in reference to contemporary and historical forms of domestic work, that despite the asymmetry, there is a high level of interdependence between workers and employers (Sassen 2001; Coser 1973). By comparing and contrasting the time regimes of domestic workers and their employers, we are able to demonstrate how these regimes interact and reinforce one another, creating a two-sided or double time-bind (to borrow from

Hoschild's [1997] notion of the time-bind). Domestic workers depend on their domestic employers (Boersma 2016) who, in turn, as employees, depend on the labour market outside the household.

By way of conclusion, we offer a summary of key issues and contexts to take into account when studying the temporal aspects of domestic contracts (Figure 1). There are at least three layers of temporal orders at stake: (1) domestic employers-as-workers; (2) the household internal routines; and (3) domestic workers. The time regimes of domestic workers are embedded in, for example, migration patterns, family responsibilities, migration aims, etc. Moreover, domestic contractual agreements are embedded in acts of law and regulations, which go far beyond the household and impose separate time orders (e.g. regulations regarding time off during the day and night). We believe that by accounting for these embedded and embedding temporal orders, it is possible to grasp the topic of time in paid domestic and care work more comprehensively.

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### *Abstract*

This paper puts forward a two-sided approach to late capitalist time regimes in paid household work by comparing the experience of time of domestic workers and domestic employers. Their time-related strategies are confronted with the aim of revealing common underlying patterns as well as possible divergences. First, migrant domestic workers' strategies to cope with the (time) particularities of domestic work (e.g. asynchronies, free time deficit, long working hours, boredom) are analysed. Second, the experience of time of professionally active domestic employers, who in turn are pressured in their professional lives and employ domestic workers to meet these demands, is examined. The authors argue that domestic employers' and workers' time regimes interact and reinforce one another, creating a double time-bind. The data are drawn from Cojocaru's research project on migrant domestic workers in Italy and Rosińska's research on employers as well as local and migrant workers in Poland.

*Key words:* domestic work, care work, workers, employers, time