

Links between trade, gender and equity. An analysis of six Latin American countries¹

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Introduction

The way in which countries participate in international trade influences domestic resource allocation and it creates “winners” and “losers” among productive sectors and actors. The economic shifts and processes that international trade sets in motion interact with the system of gender relations present in every society. As a result, they are assimilated differently by men and women and have different effects on their well-being. Thus, even if neither trade policies nor international trade development constitute by themselves agents of gender inequalities, the latter can be modified by the former.

Feminist economists, such as Diane Elson, Irene van Staveren, Marzia Fontana, Nilufer Çağatay and Mariama Williams, have proposed different approaches and methodologies to show the existence of these differential effects, as well as their scope and relevance. In their studies, frequently carried out within analytical frameworks alternative to conventional economic analyses, they have explicitly remarked the possible costs of transference and the “burden of adjustment” that trade reforms may produce on household economy, unpaid work, and global economic empowerment of men and women (UNCTAD, 2004). They have also pointed out the feedback effects between gender inequalities and economic shifts promoted by trade liberalization in labour market (Fontana, Joeke y Masika, 1998).

In Latin America, advancements in the analysis of trade considered from this perspective are rather recent but certainly growing. In particular, since 2001 the International Gender and Trade Network, whose research work hinges specifically on this issue, has developed diverse approaches to progress in this field². The information gathered in the present paper is a product of such efforts.

Since the late seventies, in a general context of market liberalization policies, trade has been considered as the “engine of growth”. In Dany Rodrik’s words: *“trade became the lens through which development is perceived, instead of the other way around”*.

¹ This paper is based upon research reports elaborated by the teams of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay, in the frame of the project “Trade, gender and equity in Latin America: Generating knowledge for political action”, of the Latin American Chapter of the International Gender and Trade Network. It has counted on the funding support of the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC-CIID), Canada.

² Its various researches can be read at www.generoycomercio.org.

However, years have passed and reality did not turn out as expected. It has not been proved that trade liberalization leads automatically to economic growth, nor that it leads to fair trade exchanges between countries. Regarding gender inequalities, trade liberalization has not resulted in the reduction of the gender wage gap, nor to shifts in the patterns of occupation sex segregation. It has neither led to significant changes in access to technology or in better work conditions, both for men and women workers.

The present paper will look for providing inputs to discussing the channels through which international trade can alter gender inequalities, and thus bear on social equity. This comes from acknowledging the relative disadvantages of women in relation to men in terms of wealth distribution, access to public goods and decision-making positions (due in part to the prevailing distribution of labour). For these reasons, conceiving impacts on gender by focusing only on linkages between trade and labour market neglects a whole set of restrictions that hinder women's performance on an equality basis regarding men. Considering that a great deal of these obstacles arise from responsibilities undertaken by women as part of their role in social reproduction, the purpose of this study is to provide evidence to integrate the reproductive domain in the general analyses framework.

This study examines the content of employment associated to foreign trade by sex and by educational level, together with the institutions and family arrangements that made up the care economy in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay, in 2005. It is based on the approach proposed by D. Elson who remarks the existence of links between the "macro-meso-micro" levels in the economy. Through this analytical framework we aim at making evident that trade is not a macroeconomic phenomenon that is separated from institutions and the individual behaviours on which it impacts and with which it interacts.

Section I introduces the analytical framework and the methodological approach applied. Section II reviews the outcomes regarding the content of employment of international trade, by sex and by trade partners, for the group of economies under examination. Section III collects the findings on care services provision for each country. Finally, Section IV presents the main conclusions of this work.

I. Analytical framework and methodological approach

Gender is a very powerful analytical category when explaining inequalities among individuals, but it is just a part of a complex social construct of identity, hierarchy, and difference. Race, ethnic group, social class, and sexuality, are other socially constructed categories that intersect with gender to determine the social situation of individuals. Gender relations are established following the norms and conventions through which societies define the rights, the expected behaviours, and the identities that identify men and women. This identity stems, basically, from the sexual division of work between the productive and the reproductive spheres of the economy.

The productive sphere, traditionally a male domain, is where goods and services are produced for the market, where they carry a price tag. The reproductive area, where

women prevail, concerns the biological reproduction of life, of the labour force and of the social system as a whole. Work performed in that domain is invisible, because it is not assigned an economic value, even though it is indispensable for the workings of the economic system. Moreover, the term “care economy”, which is explained later, places the emphasis precisely on the fact that it also has a productive meaning, although the required work remains unpaid.

Historically, the rigid sexual division of work has hampered the possibilities of women to take part in the productive sphere and, in general, to participate in the “public” domain. Also, it has kept men apart from reproductive activities. These patterns of behaviour are conveyed through rules, some of them formal (such as juridical, political or economic rules, like property rights or contracts) and some other informal (habits, practices, religion). They secure an institutional background that reflects the “gender order”. By this logic, roles and social position of men and women are subject to different assessments and show strong asymmetries of power, reproducing inequalities among the persons.

This “gender order” interacts with the rest of the institutions, particularly with those belonging to the economic system, determining an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among persons. This inequality is one of the more notorious flanks of the asymmetrical relations between men and women.

Conventional economics has frequently excluded the social power relations –among which are gender relations– from its analytical frameworks. Due to the assumptions of the methodological individualism upon which it is built, this theory doesn’t address the difficulties that arise when individual behaviours, which are subject to different opportunities and restrictions, have to be made compatible with the aggregated results of an economy. The “representative agent”, moved by a rational and maximizing logic, is supposed capable of accounting for the heterogeneity of motivations, conditionings and behaviours of persons. Macroeconomic phenomena are explained by the sum of actions at a micro level, mediated –according to some trends– by institutions or institutional arrangements³. The individual is not conceived as an institution-maker that, at the same time, is shaped by these institutions.

Therefore, this theory faces difficulties to acknowledge the possibilities of transformation of the institutional order, as well as to accept the seesawing relations between economic processes and the particular characteristics of the persons or groups of persons that are affected by them.

To a great extent, these properties and analytical methods of the prevailing view explain why economics has been one of the latest social sciences in developing a feminist trend. May (2002) notes that “*understanding why economics has been so unforgiving towards feminist research requires the recognition of the highly political character of the later*

³ Such as the proposals of the New Institutional Economics, outlined in North, D. C. (1981): *Structure and Change in Economic History*. W. W. Norton & Co., New York; North, D.C. (1990): *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press, New York; Williamson, O. E. (1989): *Las instituciones económicas del capitalismo*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México.

together with its intimate association with the rationalization of a certain system of power and status distribution that, in a pecuniary society, translates often in a particular distribution of wealth and income” (p. 59).

Contrary to the conventional theory (or “mainstream”), feminist economics poses that macroeconomics stands on a set of distributive relations among different social groups, among which those differences that constitute gender (Elson, D. y Çağatay, N. 2000). Individuals are no longer “representative”: they become part of a ranked order that is rendered on institutions of a variety of natures that, in turn, give shape to individual behaviours. These institutions are also subject to modifications in that process. Therefore, feminist economics shares with neo-keynesian, new institutionalists, marxists and evolutionists the interest in conceiving some of the principles of the theoretical body of conventional economics on new foundations (Lawson, T., 2003; Agarwal, B., 2004, Van Staveren, I., 2005).

The “mainstream” analysis of the gender impacts of international trade has focused on the domain of employment. The relative advantages of trade liberalization, in terms of reduction of the wage gap and gains of employment (following Hecksher-Ohlin’s theory and Stolper-Samuelson’s theorem)⁴ and of the retreat of discrimination (G. Becker’s theory)⁵ are emphasized. However, empirical research outcomes have been rarely aligned with theoretical predictions (Wood, A., 1991; Joeques, S., 1995; Fontana, M. et. al., 1998; Kucera, D. y Millberg, W., 2000; Seguino, S., 2000; Çağatay, N. 2001; Artecona, R. y Cunningham, W., 2002; Osterreich, S., 2002).

Consequently, neither diagnosis nor policies derived from the conventional theoretical framework seem to have led to the achievement of remarkable changes on women’s status regarding a precise contribution to gender equity. That calls for the search of new approaches that allow understanding other dimensions of the relations between economic and gender orders.

Following proposals from feminist economics, this paper attempts an analysis that conforms to D. Elson’s approach (1995, 1998). According to this, economic phenomena produce simultaneous impacts on three domains; the macro- meso- and micro-economic ones. Connections among them are set by macroeconomic policies that interact with the mesoeconomic level (factorial markets –fundamentally, the labour market; welfare

⁴ According to Hecksher-Ohlin’s theorem, a country will tend to be more efficient in producing goods that make intensive use of its abundant resources. Also, following Stolper-Samuelson’s theorem, the productive factors that are relatively scant in a country will be relatively expensive when there’s no trade, and abundant resources will be relatively cheap. Trade will make that salary structure and other factors’ related prices tend to be alike among countries. Hence, when countries specialize in exporting of unqualified labour intensive goods, it is expected that this translates into an increase of the relative salary of those workers, and vice versa. Based on these theorems, is hypothesized that trade liberalization will tend to increase female jobs, because it is assimilated to low qualification and low wages.

⁵ According to G. Becker’s hypothesis (1971), the increase of concurrence generated by international trade reduces the employer’s incentive to discriminate against women, particularly in sectors in which employers, prior to the opening, made use of their greater profits in order to cover the costs of discriminating.

regimes; related institutions; property rights; public policies) and with the microeconomic level, where households are part. There is a link then, between the micro and the macro levels, a back and forth movement, at the same time that the existence of gender biases on all three levels is acknowledged.

In the present work, connections between these levels are explored, on the one hand, through the relationship between trade and labour market (macro- and mesoeconomic levels), and on the other hand, through revisiting the care economy and distribution of responsibilities within households (meso- and micro-economic levels). It is assumed that the latter make up a restrictive framework that strongly affects women's access to the labour market on equal conditions with men.

At the macroeconomic level, trade and its instruments explain part of the revenues obtained from each country production. To achieve this, the productive units placed in various sectors, make use of the work of men and women, and combine it with other productive factors. The fact that men and women have access to the labour market in different extents and under different conditions, shows that the gender order reflects on this meso-economic domain. Labour markets absorb the impact of trade policies and have not shown full employment, they have remained highly segmented, have verified occupational segregation by sex (a concentrate of women on certain activities and certain kinds of employment) and wage discrimination (the gap between average remuneration of men and women, due in part to the own segregation).

Equally, the dynamics of the labour market stands on the action of other institutions, such as those that ensure the reproduction of the labour force and the social fabric. Some of these institutions belong to the "care economy", conceived as the domain of goods, services, activities, relations and values that allow meeting the basic needs for the existence and reproduction of persons. Even though a considerable part of these services are provided within households and rely on the unpaid work of women, they are also supplied by the public sector and the market. The use of the term "care economy" puts an emphasis on the fact that these goods and services generate, or contribute in generating, economic value (Espino, A., 2007).

The way in which the provision of care is organized has important implications in terms of gender equity. As female insertion in labour market increases, women add up the time used in paid work to the time devoted to housework and community services. In the majority of cases, this adjustment has entailed a reduction of their hours of rest and their leisure time, together with limitations to de opportunities of participating in political and social events. Because of that, this doubled (or tripled) workday has meant the reduction of women's quality of life (Rodríguez- Enríquez, 2005).

The existence of public and private institutions that provide coverage for caring tasks contributes to placing its performance outside the household realm. Nevertheless, individuals have differential access to these services depending on the degree and conditions of its commodification, and besides, as far as their development becomes internalized by public policies as social responsibility and a key piece for welfare.

Several studies show that progress on female participation in labour has not had a correlation in the allocation of men to care activities nor in the enlargement of institutions devoted to cover those needs (CEPAL, 2007).

At the micro-level, it is households that provide the workforce –basically through unpaid female work– for the productive structures, as well as they provide the workforce with the values, supports and social models that allow it to perform as such. As Picchio (2001:4) remarks: “... *daily practices connect with the labour market and the other ways of accessing income that regulate job mobility, working times and work conditions. Unpaid work performed in the domestic and family domains acts as an aid for the selection that takes place in the labour market of individuals and individual capacities that are effectively used by productive processes, helping –materially and psychologically- the adaptation processes required, or else absorbing the tensions they produce*”.

Applying an analytical framework that contemplates the dynamics of the mentioned domains is an attempt to show that even though trade policies are not necessarily based on the requirements of care economy, nor are designed to be compatible with equality goals regarding access to resources they have differential consequences on the participation of individuals in the productive or reproductive spheres and therefore, on gender equity.

Methodological aspects

In the first part of this study the “employment content of foreign trade” is estimated. That is, the workforce employed in jobs generated by total exports of services and goods, or potentially displaced by imports (Castilho, M., 2005 y 2006). Data were classified by activity sector (according to the International Standard Industrial Classification), sex and education level.

In short, the estimate was made following this matrix calculation:

$$E_{jx1} = N_{jxj} * (A_{jxj} \cdot X_{jx1}), \text{ where}$$

E_{jx1} : employed in the j sectors of activity

A_{jxj} : Leontief’s matrix of technical coefficients

$N_{jxj} = n_{jx1} \times I_{jxj}$ where N_{jxj} is a diagonal matrix, which terms correspond to the direct coefficients of sectoral jobs (n =employment/product). These coefficients can be calculated for the total workforce, for employed men and women and by education time (in years) of the workforce.

As can be seen, an intermediate result of the proposed estimate is the so called “direct coefficient” (n). It indicates the number of persons employed in production with respect to the total production of the various activities. Therefore, it constitutes an indicator of the intensity of employment in each activity.

The calculation was performed for the total of services and goods exported and imported (X, M), as well as for those associated with the main trade partners of the studied countries. Only in the case of Mexico the analysis of trade partners was restricted to the signatories of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), which accounts for more than 80% of that country's foreign trade.

It must be underlined that this procedure estimates the impact on the sectoral employment of imports and exports of services and goods. This means that it allows to ascertain "how much of an employer" it is, for each country, the current pattern of international insertion. It does not show the separate effect on employment of a given sector's exports in its own activity and in the rest of the sectors.

In the case of Chile a different estimation methodology was applied, albeit the results can be compared across countries. First, the Net Value of Production required to meet export demand by sector was calculated; secondly, the total amount of remunerations (of salaried workers) within the Aggregated Value was determined; and finally, the total paid employment by sector was determined, using the exogenous data of average wages per sector. Employment estimates related to exports took into account the total exports vector of the Input Product Matrix and then, using the inverse matrices, the level of paid employment required was determined. In this case, "direct employment" refers to the jobs associated to the exported goods, whereas indirect employment is associated to the prior productive linkages of each exported good.

The application of described methodology presents several limitations. Among them it has been pointed out its static character (Leamer, 1996), and it has been stated that it does not reflect the effects that the competitive "threat" of trade can exert upon labour market. (Borjas, Freeman y Katz, 1992 y 1996). According to Cortes, Jean y Pisani-Ferry (1996), indicators are calculated by industry, following the international classification of matrices of input-product, and international competition is given in a product scale. That entails not only a bias when estimating the number of lost employments, but it also neglects the movements of manpower that can take place inside a sector⁶. Nevertheless, it constitutes a simple tool and, as has been stated in various analyses, it is a good starting point.

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⁶ For a detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the methodological tools, see Castilho, M. (2006).

As a result of the proposed estimation, it is possible to arrange the productive sectors according to the content of employment of external trade, by sex and qualification level, and make visible different situations depending on the trade partners. It is the macro-meso link of the analytical scheme.

The second part of the study reviews the supply of care services during the last decade. Data on legislation and regulations is systematized, as well as information on access to services and on the actions undertaken by specific institutions. Available data on roles distribution within households and on informal aids among households, or from the community to help meet care needs, were also integrated into the analysis.

On the basis of this inquiry, it is possible to account for the meso-micro link of the analytical frame. Collected data allows showing to what extent, and in which sense, economic liberalization has affected the supply of care services and therefore, to which degree female participation in the labour market was accompanied by the development of an institutional background that would enable the coverage of care needs. It also allows to recognize the institutional restraints and limitation of resources that the functioning of the care economy imposes upon gender equality.

II. Foreign trade and employment

Recent history of the region shows an accelerated economic opening, with an increase of international trade flows that registers a greater growth of imports than of exports. It also results in the restructuring of the regional productive structures, centred in deepening static comparative advantages which are present in the production of raw materials and in the processing industries of natural resources, mainly in Southern Cone countries. Whereas in Mexico and Central American-Caribbean countries, production has developed under the *maquila* regime, making intense use of low-skilled labour force (CEPAL, 2002; Cimoli, 2005).

In terms of employment, all countries share the increase of both the rate of female activity and employment. They also show an improvement in the educational level of the labour force led by women's participation (as female labour force is, generally, more educated than male).

These changes have been connected to shifts in both the female labour demand and supply. The latter have been induced by a combination of the improvement in women's educational attainments, the fluctuations in the household's income through the economic cycle, cultural changes like the increasing number of divorces and the drop of the fertility rates, among others. Consequently, it is possible to detect a notorious increase of the proportion of households with both spouses employed and of monoparental households headed by employed women.

From the demand side, the greater female presence in the labour market is related to an increase in the diversity of new jobs available, and to the type of productive activities that are being developed or that tend to disappear. The structural reforms which were applied

in the region during the past 25 years, together with the conditions imposed by the economic and financial globalization process, had contributed to these changes.

Some characteristic features of the new reality are related to the reduction of the State's apparatus, the flexibilization of labour regulations, the privatization of public services, the growing presence of transnational corporations –particularly in the services sector; and the gradual loss of competitiveness of traditional manufacture industries, such as textile and clothing. As a consequence, in the manufacture industry the proportion of job with respect to the total has decreased, whereas the services sector has increased its share, encouraging female employment both in care economy-related activities and in more modern sectors, that prefer female abilities or high educational levels (financial sector, information technologies, telecommunications).

In particular, female employment associated to the countries' foreign trade pattern has been influenced by the gender biases of the labour market, but also by the degree of specialization or diversification of its productive structures, and the trade policies that have been implemented. These later can enhance the characteristic sectors of the traditional export pattern of each economy, or else lead to changes in specialization and productive diversification that stimulate job creation, particularly in better quality jobs. Trade policies can condition the industrial innovation and the access to technical change; the development and transfer of knowledge as well as the kind of qualification required for the labour force.

The next pages present evidence regarding some of these issues for the studied countries, based on the methodology described in Section II.

The content of employment of foreign trade and its characteristics

The share of female employment affected by foreign trade of services and goods is small in relation to the total female labour force, in both sectors of imports and exports. For Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, the balance of employment (the difference between the content of employment in exports and in imports) is positive, allowing the characterization of these countries as net-exporters of labour force, whereas, in the case of Colombia the balance of employment is negative.

Besides, the comparison of female and male contents of employment in foreign trade shows that in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, about a quarter of the exports' content of employment is female, whereas in Chile this percentage is smaller. This proportion raises to almost 31% in the case of Mexico. The imports sector shows similar figures. The Colombian case differs from the former two, because the proportion is slightly smaller than the female share in the total employment of the economy (Table 1).

Table 1. Content of female employment in exports and imports. In percentages. 2005

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Mexico	Uruguay
Female Employment – Trade/ Female Employment-Total						
Exports	10,0	6,1	12,6	12,0	5,0	6,2
Imports	4,7	2,6	7,3	18,0	4,5	3,1
Female Employment – Trade/ Total Employment- Trade						
Exports	27,4	26,6	21,6	42,6	30,7	27,1
Imports	24,0	30,0	24,0	41,5	28,4	24,2
Female Employment / Total Employment	42,0	40,7	25,8	43,7	35,2	43,0

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on research reports for Argentina- Rodríguez Enríquez, C. Kennedy, D. y Soltz, H. (2007); Brazil- Castilho. M. (2007); Chile- Riffo, L. y Todaro, R. (2007); Colombia- Buitrago, L. (2007); Mexico- Deschamps, J. y Hernández, R. (2007); Uruguay- Azar, P. (2007).

The low female employment content of exports compared with that of the average in the economy results from the interactions among productive and trade specializations, and gender-based segregation in labour. Except for Mexico, these economies specialize in the production of primary goods, and of goods with scarce in-country manufacturing, in sectors that in turn, male employment prevails.

For instance, of the value of Argentina's exports, 52% comes from four sectors: Crops and seed production; vegetables and fruit processing; oil refining; automotive industry. In Brazil, the main export sectors are food, transport and steel and metal goods. For Chile, more than 50% of its sales come from metal extraction, forestry, fishing and fish processing, agriculture and hunting. Colombia shows the same pattern, in which almost half of the exports are traditional products: coffee, coal, oil, oil derivatives, ferronickel, flowers and bananas. Finally, Uruguay's exports are mainly in raw materials and manufactured products with low added value (food and beverages, agricultural and livestock products).

Therefore, these countries' exports are concentrated in a limited range of sectors. In relation to the content of female employment, a relative concentration in few sectors (of the set of the ones studied) has also been found, which could be explained by the segregation within trade-related employment. For instance, in Brazil, four sectors account for 60% of the content of female employment, and three of them employ mainly men. These later are mining, steel, and transport equipment. Regarding imports, of the seven sectors that make up the highest content of female employment, these consist mainly of commerce, business services and clothing. The percentage of women in imports is relatively greater due to the importance of electrical and electronic material.

In Chile, 62% of female jobs affected by exports belong to mining; fishing and agriculture-livestock-hunting. For Colombia, 84% of the female employment content in exports concentrates in services, clothing, furnitures and food and beverages manufacture. For imports, almost 85% belongs to clothing, services, machinery, equipment and furniture. In this last case there is a remarkable presence of sectors that are particularly female-labour intensive (clothing end services).

The sectors that concentrate female employment in Mexico's foreign trade (imports and exports) are: electrical and electronic equipment and goods; agriculture; machinery; plastics and its manufacture; clothing. More than 60% of the female employment is concentrated in six sectors. Women's participation is a little higher than men's because a great part of exports comes from *maquila* manufacturing, which has few linkages with the rest of the economic activity and where jobs show a strong female presence. In addition, it presents a variation: the prevailing female labour related to exports in the sector "Electrical and electronic equipment and goods, which is not the classical "female" sector in the rest of the countries.

Lastly, in Uruguay four activity sectors (Food and beverages; Agriculture, livestock breeding, hunting and related activities; Clothing and fur dying; Entrepreneurial services; Textile products manufacturing; Leather products and footwear) account for 72% of female jobs impacted by exports, and more than three quarters of that total correspond to Food and beverages; Agriculture and livestock breeding, and Clothing. Female participation is really very high in only two of the six sectors (clothing and textiles: 90% of the workforce employed in the first sector and 64% in the second). Regarding imports, the jobs in jeopardy are fundamentally those of females, and they belong to the same sectors that are affected by exports.

In terms of job quality, a great proportion of women employed in the export sector of the Southern countries lack social security coverage. In Uruguay, for instance, the situation is similar in the industrial and agricultural sectors, due primarily to the women's condition as unpaid family workers. Brazil presents the same picture, where the high precariousness of female employment in the export sector results from the high incidence of the agricultural sector, which has 62% of its women workers as unpaid workforce. Also in Chile the precariousness of both men and women employed in the agro-export sector is high, with a third of the workers lacking a work contract, and working seasonally.

The structure of the female content of employment of exports by years of education shows a prevalence of medium schooling (8 to 11 years of education), followed by low schooling (less than 8 years). The highest percentage of women with medium schooling is found in Uruguay, whereas Brazil stands out for employing a 60% of women of lower educational level in the exports sector. On the other hand, in Argentina and Colombia, the higher educational level shows a greater relative weight than in the rest of the countries (Table 2).

Table 2 Content of female employment in exports and imports by years of education. In percentages. 2005

	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Mexico	Uruguay
Female Employment in Exports by years of education					
Low (until 6 years)	37,4	60,4	32,2	38,9	23,4
Medium (between 7 and 12 years)	35,9	32,2	45,5	53,3	58,6
High (more than 12 years)	26,6	7,4	21,8	7,9	18,0
Female Employment in Imports by years of education					
Low (until 6 years)	20,9	49,7	30,5	39,9	19,7
Medium (between 7 and 12 years)	39,7	39,9	46,1	51,0	56,8
High (more than 12 years)	39,5	10,4	22,9	9,1	23,5
Total Female Employment by years of education					
Low (until 6 years)	25,0	38,9	32,1	40,6	21,9
Medium (between 7 and 12 years)	35,0	43,6	39,3	33,3	51,9
High (more than 12 years)	39,0	17,5	28,1	26,0	26,2

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on research reports of Argentina- Rodríguez Enríquez, C. Kennedy, D. y Soltz, H. (2007); Brazil- Castilho, M. (2007); Chile- Riffo, L. y Todaro, R. (2007); Colombia- Buitrago, L. (2007); Mexico- Deschamps, J. y Hernández, R. (2007); Uruguay- Azar, P. (2007). The total is not 100 due to a 0.1% corresponding to unspecific age.)

In Mexico, female employment associated with exports in the NAFTA domain is predominantly of a medium educational level, whereas the proportion of tertiary education is very small and has decreased between 1994 and 2004, having as reference the period of time previous to the signature of the agreement. Meanwhile, the participation of less educated men has increased. In the case of imports, female employment shows a medium and low educational level. During the period in which the comparison was made, the profile of the labour force related to imports has changed, both for men and for women, but the former case shows a greater increase for those with low educational level.

In sum, the content of female employment in foreign trade in these countries is relatively small. Basically, women's low incorporation of employment in sectors related directly or indirectly to foreign trade as well as to the occupational segregation by sex that employs women in non tradable sectors account for this fact. This is clearly verified in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, where female participation in the total employment is substantially greater than the share linked directly or indirectly to international trade.

The educational levels that characterize these jobs are lower than the average, even though this situation is relatively different when jobs associated to imports are considered, since they are characterized by somehow higher educational levels. This outcome is related also to the pattern of productive specialization of these countries that are frequently net importers of goods which, such as capital goods, require the intervention of highly qualified workers for their production. It should also be taken into account that those sectors that employ relatively higher qualified workers are also the less labour-intensive sectors.

Content of employment by trade partners

The importance of the content of female employment in trade by partner is related to the traded volumes: the greater the interchange, the greater the employment content. In general, the amount of female employment does not show relevant differences that could be explained by the profile of the export pattern with each trade partner.

In Argentina, the female employment associated to exports is primarily concentrated in trade with the European Union (less qualified manpower) and secondly with the MERCOSUR. The other trade partners that follow in importance are United States of America (USA) and Chile, involving employments that require people with a higher educational profile. By its part, the job posts threatened by imports would receive a greater impact from trade with MERCOSUR, the European Union and the USA. Again, this last partner, together with the European Union (contrarily to what happens in the exports case), constitute the regions where the affected content of employment is of higher educational level. Andean countries and Chile are the regions with an employment content of lower educational level, differently to what has been said about exports.

Table 3 Argentina: distribution of exports, imports and content of female employment by trade partners. In percentages.

	United States	European Union	MERCOSUR	Chile	Andean Community of Nations (ACN) (including Venezuela)	Rest of the world	Total
Exports	11,0	16,0	19,3	11,4	5,3	37,0	100,0
Female employment	7,4	19,9	15,1	7,4	5,1	45,1	100,0
Imports	14,3	16,7	38,7	2,0	1,7	26,7	100,0
Female employment	14,6	16,6	38,0	2,2	1,6	27,0	100,0

Source: Based on research reports for Argentina- Rodríguez Enríquez, C. Kennedy, D. y Soltz, H. (2007).

In terms of female employment, the most important trade partners for Brazil are the European Union (EU) and USA. The content of employment in exports to the EU and China shows the lowest educational level (65% of low level of education in the total female employment). These outcomes are basically explained by the specialization of the Brazilian economy vis-a-vis these partners, characterized by the exports of agricultural and mineral goods. Regarding exports to the USA, the educational level of the female labour force shows a configuration more like the other Latin American countries, which is explained by the greater weight of manufactured products among their exports. Regarding imports, the EU and the USA are the regions where the threatened female jobs show higher educational levels. In the other end of the scale, the weight of jobs requiring medium and high educational levels in imports to MERCOSUR, Andean Community of Nations (ACN), Chile and Mexico is relatively smaller (because it includes the import of less elaborated goods) (Table 4).

Even though in this case we lack data about the number of jobs by exported R\$, the applied methodology allows to determine the number of jobs by produced R\$, in total and by years of education, for the year 2003⁷. The average value, 20.8 workers by million of R\$ produced, reflects rather diverse features among the different sectors. The agricultural sector, which is the most labour-intensive (a coefficient of 49.8), shows mainly low qualification and prevails among exports to the EU; for instance, the industrial sector, which presents the lowest labour intensity (6.1 workers by each million of R\$ produced), has a greater presence in trade with the USA. Coefficients corresponding to low and medium qualifications are identical, whereas the coefficient of high qualification is much lower. The services sector shows an intermediate coefficient compared with the two former sectors: 29.8. Of the three sectors, industry is the one that generates relatively fewer jobs, considering all levels of qualification.

These data, together with the profile of the Brazilian trade pattern, suggest that Brazil does not fit in the group of countries which comparative advantages are based on the labour factor: together, the four more intensive sectors with respect to labour cited above, amounted to 15% of the total exports in 2003 –that is, they do not have a relevant weight in the Brazilian export pattern. On the other hand, of the three heavier sectors of the Brazilian exports pattern, two of them –food products and siderurgy/metal works (33% of exports in 2003)– show coefficients of a middle value. The third sector –transport material (13.6% of total exports in 2003)– shows a very low coefficient. In the imports side there is a strong concentration in products with a low labour content: 60% of imports belong to sectors which employment coefficient is lower than 10. Therefore, both the employment intensity in relation with each trade partner and the corresponding qualification level are linked to the prevalence of one or the other kind of products.

Table 4 Brazil: distribution of exports, imports and female employment content by trade partners. In percentages.

	Mercosur	CAN	Chile	Mexico	USA	UE	China	Rest of the world	Total
Exports	10,1	5,0	3,1	3,5	19,3	22,8	5,9	30,4	100,0
Female employment	7,3	3,8	2,2	2,4	17,5	27,4	17,5	32,7	100,0
Imports	9,7	2,6	2,4	1,1	17,2	24,7	7,3	35,0	100,0
Female employment	12,6	1,8	2,5	1,0	15,9	24,5	10,3	31,5	100,0

Source: Based on a research report for Brazil: Castilho, M. (2007).

Regarding Colombia, the distribution of female employment by partner (both in imports and in exports) is strongly concentrated in commerce with USA, followed by trade with the EU. The employment content of exports is of low qualification, whereas in the imports sector jobs require medium to high educational level. The particular feature of Colombia with respect to the other countries is that female jobs compared with male have a relatively high share: 44.3% in sales and 34.2% in purchases. These facts respond to the relevance of the clothing sector in the trade pattern with this partner.

⁷ Direct coefficient that is disregarding employment of input providers sectors, due to the impossibility of compatibilizing Leontief's matrix data with PNAD employment data.

The direct coefficient of employment by million of Colombian pesos produced is low in the case of activities that represent a high share of exports, such as oil extraction (0.6); food and beverages (8.7); coal and lignite extraction (0.6). The coefficient improves for export activities of the basic metalworks sector (1.8), agriculture and related activities (12.5).

Table 5 Colombia: distribution of exports, imports and content of female employment by trade partners. In percentages.

	United States	European Union	CAN	Mercosur	Rest of the world	Total
Exports	45,5	13,3	19,7	0,9	20,5	100,0
Female employment	35,5	10,5	25,9	0,7	48,7	100,0
Imports	39,0	13,6	9,4	7,1	31,8	100,0
Female employment	26,9	15,8	7,9	7,5	42,0	100,0

Source: Based on a research report for Colombia- Buitrago, L. (2007).

For Chile, exports to the UE and the USA have the highest impact. In the case of imports, China is the most remarkable, concentrating a 29.5% of the total (Table 6).

The first relevant remark is that the content of female employment is higher for exports than for imports. Indeed, in 2003 this content raised to 8.1 individuals in the exports total, versus the 4.9 registered for imports. Also, for all trade partners except China, the content of female employment of exports exceeds that of imports. Inversely, in the case of China the female content of exports reached 6 persons and that of imports, 18.9. This can be related to the relevance of the clothing imports regarding the total imports (25% of the total). Considering the regions, exports with the highest employment intensity are those to USA (10.5) followed by those to Mexico.

Table 6 Chile: distribution of exports, imports and content of female employment by trade partners. In percentages.

	Canada	Southern Corea	Mexico	European Union	USA	China	Rest of the world	Total
Exports	2,1	5,1	4,5	24,9	18,3	9,3	35,7	100,0
Female employment	1,9	3,5	5,0	22,0	23,9	6,9	36,8	100,0
Imports	1,9	3,1	2,7	18,5	14,5	7,7	51,6	100,0
Female employment	2,0	0,9	1,1	11,8	7,7	29,5	47,0	100,0

Source: Based on a research report for Chile- Riffo, L. y Todaro, R. (2007).

Lastly, in Uruguay, the exports vector that impacts the most on female employment is the United States, MERCOSUR+Venezuela and the European Union, the three showing similar figures. Due to the nature of products imported by Uruguay, the pattern that potentially displaces more female employment corresponds to MERCOSUR+Venezuela followed by India+China and Southafrica.

Regions that present a higher educational level in exports employment are MERCOSUR and Venezuela, followed by the United States and the EU. Again, this last factor reflects the characteristic pattern of trade North-South, with some specialization in primary

goods. From the side of imports, higher education is represented mostly in activities that compete to products from the United States and Mexico, followed by Mercosur+Venezuela (Table 7).

Food production, agriculture and livestock show a direct employment coefficient similar to the average of tradable products. If the focus is set in women employment only, the tradable sectors that present a greater coefficient (Clothing and fur dying sector has a coefficient of 3, and Furniture and unspecified manufacture industry, a coefficient of 1) give account of only 3.5% of the whole exports of 2005. The coefficient in Food and beverages is 0.4, and in Agriculture and livestock breeding, 0.3.

Table 7 Uruguay: distribution of exports, imports and the content of female employment by trade partners. In percentages.

	UE	MCS+ Venezuela	USA	Mexico	India, China, Southafrica	Rest of the world	Total
Exports	17,2	23,9	22,4	4,1	4,3	28,0	100,0
Female employment	19,6	20,2	21,9	5,8	4,7	27,7	100,0
Imports	10,3	48,3	6,7	1,3	7,4	26,0	100,0
Female employment	8,5	57,2	4,1	0,8	12,5	16,9	100,0

Source: Based on a research report for Uruguay- Azar, P. (2007).

In sum, Argentina and Brazil show similar features regarding the educational level of female employment content in exports: it is low in the case of trade with the EU and higher in the case of USA. Imports from both commercial partners impact on female jobs of medium and high educational levels. In the case of Chile, regarding these two partners (USA and UE) with which trade is greater, the female employment content of exports is much higher than the one of imports.

Colombia concentrates its trade with the United States, and the educational level of the content of female employment in sales is low, whereas it is higher in jobs “threatened” by purchases. Lastly, in Uruguay the female employment affected by exports is relatively similar for the cases of demand from the United States, Mercosur and EU; but the regional block promotes jobs that require a higher level of education. This block affects a greater amount of jobs related to imports, but in terms of educational level, purchases from Mexico and USA affect female jobs with a greater level of education.

As a conclusion, as the trade pattern does not show great differences by partner, achieved results are very similar when trade relations with one or another furthers. In any case, the focus of the argument is that trade per se has not generated enough employment for women. Then, the achievement of welfare through trade liberalization is difficult without complementary policies.

III. Care economy⁸

As it was noted in Section I the dynamics of the labour market stands on the action of institutions, such as those that ensure the reproduction of the labour force and the social fabric. They constitute a restrictive framework to women's access to the labour market on equal conditions with men. Whereas our evidence is not enough to learn up to what extent these limits have operated in the case of activities directly or indirectly linked to trade, the study of how the care economy works in the different countries allows to capture another set of meso-economic rules that affect the opportunities to gain gender equality in the productive sphere.

Just as the patterns of productive specialization and occupational segregation by sex have played its part on the explanation of the rather low impact of international trade on women's labour participation, the organization of the care economy can help to detect other aspects that prevent a gender equal involvement in market activities (included those favoured by trade).

The increase of paid female employment requires considering how societies continue to address care related obligations. As stated by Marinakis (1999), women with higher education levels and better labour insertion, even when they can count on economic resources and/or family strategies to meet their care needs, tend to delay maternity and reduce the number of children, in order to ensure themselves a fuller insertion in the labour market. Whereas, women with low education levels and low economic resources display a higher and earlier fecundity, enter labour market by cycles because they are less prepared, the jobs they are offered are of bad quality, and receive low wages.

Maintaining or removing these conditions have important consequences on gender equality, since it can result in the better development of options and capacities for men and women, or else perpetuate the prevailing sexual division of labour.

So, for example, the way in which care services for dependent persons were designed in the countries under analysis, is based on the assumption that some member of the family takes care of the daily needs of those individuals: infant population, seniors and the disabled. In general, it can be stated that public policies have not addressed society's responsibility in care matters.

It was possible to verify that in all the countries the private supply of care services for dependents has found niches where the public sector leaves unsolved problems, leading to differential access to services based upon family income.

Regarding child-care, public services for children between 0 and 3 years of age are part of poverty alleviation programs, whose goal is to provide assistance to children with their mother's participation. In these cases, the opportunity to provide mothers with options for

⁸ This chapter is based upon information presented in the following research reports: Argentina- Sanchís, N. (2007); Brasil- Guedes, M. (2007); De Melo, H. y Castilho, M. (2007); Chile- Reyes, N. y Paz, C (2007); Colombia- Castro, V. (2007); Mexico- Salazar, R. (2007) y Uruguay- Salvador, S. (2007).

labour preparation and labour insertion are neglected. Chile is the only exception as since the last two *Concertación* governments measures for addressing and promoting a greater labour insertion of women have been implemented. The strategy has consisted in providing child care services during eight hours (or longer) workdays for low income women that are currently employed or seeking work, or that are heads of households or adolescent mothers. Specific measures have also been taken to meet child care needs for children of women workers in the agroexports sector, whose working season occurs during school holidays.

Available information on child-care services use in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay allows demonstrating that the use of these services correlates with a higher labour insertion of mothers. Therefore, access imbalances to these services condition women's options and job opportunities.

The extension of the schoolday is another important subject, since the public sector has characteristically provided half-day services while the private sector provides full-day services. Only in Chile the government is promoting the extension of the schoolday in all educational centres. In the other countries, such as Uruguay, Colombia and Argentina, efforts were directed to make compulsory the attendance to pre-elementary school levels. Full-time elementary schools were instituted in Uruguay, but only for the poorest sectors of the population, aiming at improving the performance of school children.

Regarding coverage, reforms implemented in Colombia and Uruguay achieved a better coverage of the lowest income strata, but in Argentina the decentralization process started in 1994 resulted in the deterioration of the quality of services and a greater segmentation of the supply by income level of the population. In 2007, a new education law was enacted, aiming at overcoming those differences.

Money benefits for child-care are also associated to other health-care benefits for children or to the legislation that compels firms to establish infant nurseries- the benefits are limited to women workers with formal employment. This formality requisite was kept and, in addition, access to benefits was focused on certain income level limits, even though a process of deterioration of job security could be verified.

The aging of the population is a serious problem, particularly in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, since it increases the burden of dependency, and public policies do not take actions to alleviate it.

In terms of traditional care services directed to this population, health services are the most relevant. In this case, the public sector is a relevant actor both as a provider and as funding agent, through the social security system. In Brazil, the public system provides services to 70% of the population over 65. In the rest of the countries, the participation of the public sector is lower and depends on each particular health care system. In Argentina, this participation rose from 22% to 28% between 1998 and 2001. The increase is greater in the poorer regions. In Mexico, 20% of this population receives health care in the public sector and approximately 45% in social security institutions. In Uruguay,

28.2% of the population older than 60 is covered by the public sector and 58.6% in subsidized private health care institutions (*mutualistas*) (through social security or private subscription).

In these services, the private sector finds market niches in terms of quality of service when the supply from the public sector or the social security system is insufficient. This includes issues such as waiting-time and length of hospitalization times.

Other services, such as private duty nursing or private duty companions have also been developed. In addition, there are daytime centres, old-age homes or senior-citizen residences, generally in the private sector, the public supply being very small.

Social security systems are fundamentally of the contributive type, and this has led to a lower protection for women than for men. Reforms did not improve coverage and, in some cases, gender-based differences rose because of the promotion of a stronger relation between the contribution efforts and the benefits at the individual level. All countries show a greater dependency of women to non-contributive benefits. Only in Mexico and Chile women keep the privilege of receiving a survival pension without exception. But on average, women perceive lower benefits than men, and despite being the majority of the adult population they are under-represented among the beneficiaries of both contributive and non-contributive pensions.

On the other hand, labour legislation has not been tailored to satisfy the new requirements and demands of care arising in households. It basically covers the situation of women during pregnancy, childbirth and nursing. Paternity leave and sick-child leave are newer and are not widespread. In Argentina and Uruguay, only government workers can enjoy paternity leave (for private sector workers they are only granted when there is a collective agreement). In Brazil, Chile and Colombia paternity leave is granted to all workers, whereas in Mexico they do not exist. Sick-child leaves in Chile are restricted to parents of less than one year old children. In Argentina and Uruguay, workers can apply for a “special leave”, which is unpaid in Argentina and restricted to government workers in Uruguay. In all of the afore mentioned cases, leave is granted to government workers or to workers covered by social security, that is, it is not the whole set of employed persons which enjoy these rights.

Private care provision is supplied through child-care day centres, nurseries, etc.; full time schools; mobile emergency services, at-home medical attention or attention at health-centres, old-age residences or day-care centres for dependent persons. In this case, state regulation and control over the care-services provision sector is fundamental in order to guarantee services of adequate cost and quality.

Finally, at the micro-level, considering the distribution of care responsibilities within households, available data show that a high proportion of them are allocated to women in all studied countries. In Uruguay, 84% of households' heads are women, and even when they have a paid employment, the burden of unpaid work amounts to more than 40 hours a week. In Argentina, 78% of people responsible for care in nuclear families are women,

and they carry out more than half of the domestic workload. In Brazil, 91% of working women are engaged in household chores and devote 20.8 hours a week on average to them; whereas 51% of employed men devote 9 hours a week on average. In Mexico, 95.6% of women that participate actively in labour market engage in household chores, and only 58% of men do. At the same time, unpaid work occupies 31 hours a week in the case of men and it duplicates in the case of women. The existence of two surveys separated in time allows verifying an increase of male participation between 1996 and 2002.

IV. As a conclusion

This paper gathers some clues for a better understanding of the channels through which macro economic processes, like international trade, impact on gender relations. The shown evidence concerns basically to macro- and meso-economic levels (trade-employment-care economy) whose dynamics, as it is proposed, have to be associated. This is a point of view that seldom appears in conventional analyses about trade and its effects.

Exploration was focused, first, on the content of employment of imports and exports, by sex and by educational level. In the countries under consideration, international trade is not directly or indirectly linked to a significant share of the total employment; particularly, it does not regarding women's employment. This conclusion requires precision for the Colombian and Mexican cases, due to the importance of the clothing industry and the *maquila* (assembly plant) system.

The fact that both productive specialization and work segregation are gender biased plays a central role in the proposed explanation. It was also found that the female content of employment in these fields tends to show low schooling or lower education than the average employed women. As long as the regional increase of trade does not reach greater diversification levels, it has not contributed to break down segregation, nor has it profited from the qualification conditions of female work supply.

As shown in the second part of this paper, the adopted measures for covering care demands have proven insufficient. This is a shared feature of the studied countries. The reproduction logics have been ignored by the economic system, even though it has boosted the insertion of women in the labour market. Care-related chores have not been reallocated among household members. The burden of care is still carried by women, whether they are paid or unpaid workers.

Consequently, as long as the labour insertion of women does not come along with changes in the distribution of tasks among household members, and as long as public policies directed at the provisioning of care services are not ranked as important, the workload assumed by women will keep increasing. If policy decisions that impact on the productive sphere (such as international trade policies) keep ignoring these aspects, then the pressure on human and social resources that continuously reinforce gender and social

inequalities will stand. In this sense, this study is relevant not only from a gender perspective but also from a position of fighting against poverty and inequity. The extension of supply of public care services would contribute in diminishing access inequalities that the diverse income strata and/or geographical region generate.

Responsibility regarding care must be taken on by society, acknowledging that paid and unpaid work contribute together as a whole to the maintenance and reproduction of the social and economic systems. To achieve this, a comprehensive vision is required when defining policies, taking into account the society's demands of care, and bearing on the interrelations of care policies with the rest of the system, in order to prevent unwanted side effects.

The study of trade impacts on labour market together with the analysis of the care economy sought to emphasise that without public policies regarding the reproductive sphere, trade policies falls short in obtaining a positive impact in terms of social and gender equality. Even though new jobs were created, they reflect a combination of productive specialization and labour market segregation. As a result, the gender division of labour, resources and decision-making prevails, and exports can not be taking advantage of an important part of human resources available.

Furthermore, a successful strategy of international insertion can, at the same time, maintain or deepen poverty, in two ways. First, because poorer women have lesser employment opportunities. Secondly, because even if these women obtain an employment, the trading of care services and the obstacles for accessing these services would perpetuate these women's –and their families'– social disadvantages.

Then, in order to obtain positive outcomes in terms of well-being, policy decisions in the macroeconomic field must also take into account the mesoeconomic sphere; i.e. the dynamics of labour market and the care economy.

From the feminist perspective, progress in developing new analytical tools as well as progress toward policy making processes engaged with welfare, have to face the challenges raised by the recognition of the fact that the economic system works because both paid and unpaid activities coexist. In this sense, economic approaches such as the adopted in this paper may contribute to the understanding of trade and development as “gendered” processes that take place through “gendered” institutions. Discussing about the existence of gender biases and making them visible in economic analyses, could bring about a transformation, of the agents and places that transfer and reproduce the *status quo*, into agents of change.

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