

# Global Care Economies are Shaped by Social Reproduction

# Sisters Uncut Protest Closure Of Women's Refuges



# It's Big: Definitions of Social Repro

- Creating and sustaining life (can be biological + social)
- All the labour that goes into survival/maintenance/servicing of life
- It can be paid (eg care work) and unpaid (eg socialising children, feeding families) Social repro and care often conflated and gendered (as women's work!)
- Always treading a careful line between empirical facts (eg women do most social repro) v ideological reproduction (all the systems in place to ensure that women do social repro eg patriarchy, religion, welfare, family, biological essentialism)
- Care is often structured into paid “women’s work” eg service work and/or emotional labour (providing support)

# It's Big: Definitions of Social Repro continued...

- Can be useful to distinguish between “caring for” (work) and “caring about” (emotional) BUT...usually hinged and we want to think about CARING WITH
- In trad economics this is often divided into paid = productive for the economy and unpaid = unproductive. This is far too narrow as the “unproductive” is precisely what enables “productive”.
- These trad definitions detach values from value- but values are always built in: a great econ mythology
- What is crucial is that social repro intervenes in every economic act of exchange because it enables it.
- Social repro is the lubricant that enables the economy to exist and continue (reproduce itself) eg birthing labour, feeding, socialising and servicing labour, labouring for labour and capital

# To Understand Social Repro We Need To Understand Gender, Class, Race & Sexuality

- Histories of colonialism and imperialism are significant in shaping the present relations and women's value/s as breeders, property, and specific types of labour
- It is the gendered politics of patriarchy (eg structures and institutions) that maintain and institutionalise male power – the family, law, welfare, religion, bio repro eg control of fertility, control of women's bodies
- And the power of gendered ideologies of propriety, respectability, responsibility, care and the meagre moral value that women can gain from tradition
- We always need to ask “in whose interests?” and understand the history of the systems that creates a spurious divide between carers and non-carers
- Our investigations begin with the belief that “All political economy is moral economy”
- All politics is reproductive politics eg life and value/s

# Understanding Intersectional Capitalism

- A new sexual division of labour was developed through industrialisation which subjugated women's labour and women's reproductive functions to the reproduction of the work-force
- The body of women is transformed into a machine for the production of new workers.
- After the destruction of the commons people had very few sustainable sources to survive without work – they were forced to work and had to find ways to do this with no contraception (nb: giving birth was a dangerous activity for most women)
- The control of women's fertility is central to women's control of their own lives
- Ideas of private/public become crucial to newly forming middle-classes. Patriarchs show their moral value by “keeping women” (in the home)
- Slavery (of different kinds) brings different class, gender, race relation into play - women's economic value lies in both doing labour and breeding future labour as extension of property/value.

# Capitalism and Labour?

- Without biological reproduction there is no labour force
- Without socialisation of children the labour force is unlikely to be prepared to labour
- Without family care the “non-productive” eg children and the elderly would die
- Without social reproduction the labour force is not serviced and ready for work daily
- Without emotional labour the family household and workplace is likely to fall apart

So how do we understand the role of gender in social reproduction?

**WHO CARES?**

# Economic Activity (LFS, ONS 2018)

- Overall, parents in a couple were more likely to be in employment than single parents, for both men and women.
- The employment rate for mothers in a couple was 75.8%, compared with an employment rate of 66.9% for single mothers.
- Single mothers were least likely to be employed when their youngest dependent child was aged between zero and two years – less than half of this group were in employment (44.6%).
- 67.2% of mothers and 24.3% of fathers who were not in work stated that they were economically inactive because they were looking after the family or home
- In the US on average do 16 hrs household tasks per week
- Women do 26
- Western states: the majority of the welfare spending is on child and elderly care.

# The Gendered and Raced Impact of Austerity in the UK

Austerity affects women disproportionately. The Women's Budget Group's cumulative impact assessment<sup>2</sup> of changes to tax, benefits and spending since 2010 shows that:

- BAME women, and the poorest families lose the most.
- Asian women in the poorest third of households stand to lose 19% (a cut of £2250 per year) of their annual net individual income by 2020 compared to white women in the same income group who would lose 12% and Asian men who would lose 10%.
- Families with both a disabled adult and a child with disabilities stand to lose 20% of their household annual living standard in 2020-21.
- Cuts to public sector employment are gendered too. More women are employed in the public sector than men. In 2017, civil service employees were 54% female. (ONS)



# Issues eg: Living Gender in the UK: Who Bears the Brunt of Austerity

1. Rapidly changing conditions due to the violence of austerity policies – disproportionate burden on women
2. Increased debt – downward spiral
3. Cuts to the NHS make child/elderly care more difficult
4. Cuts to housing/housing benefit : protect the wealth, punish single parent young families
5. Feeding families: foodbanks
6. Protecting women's bodies against austerity cuts eg cuts to refuges/rape crisis centres

# Global Economies of Care

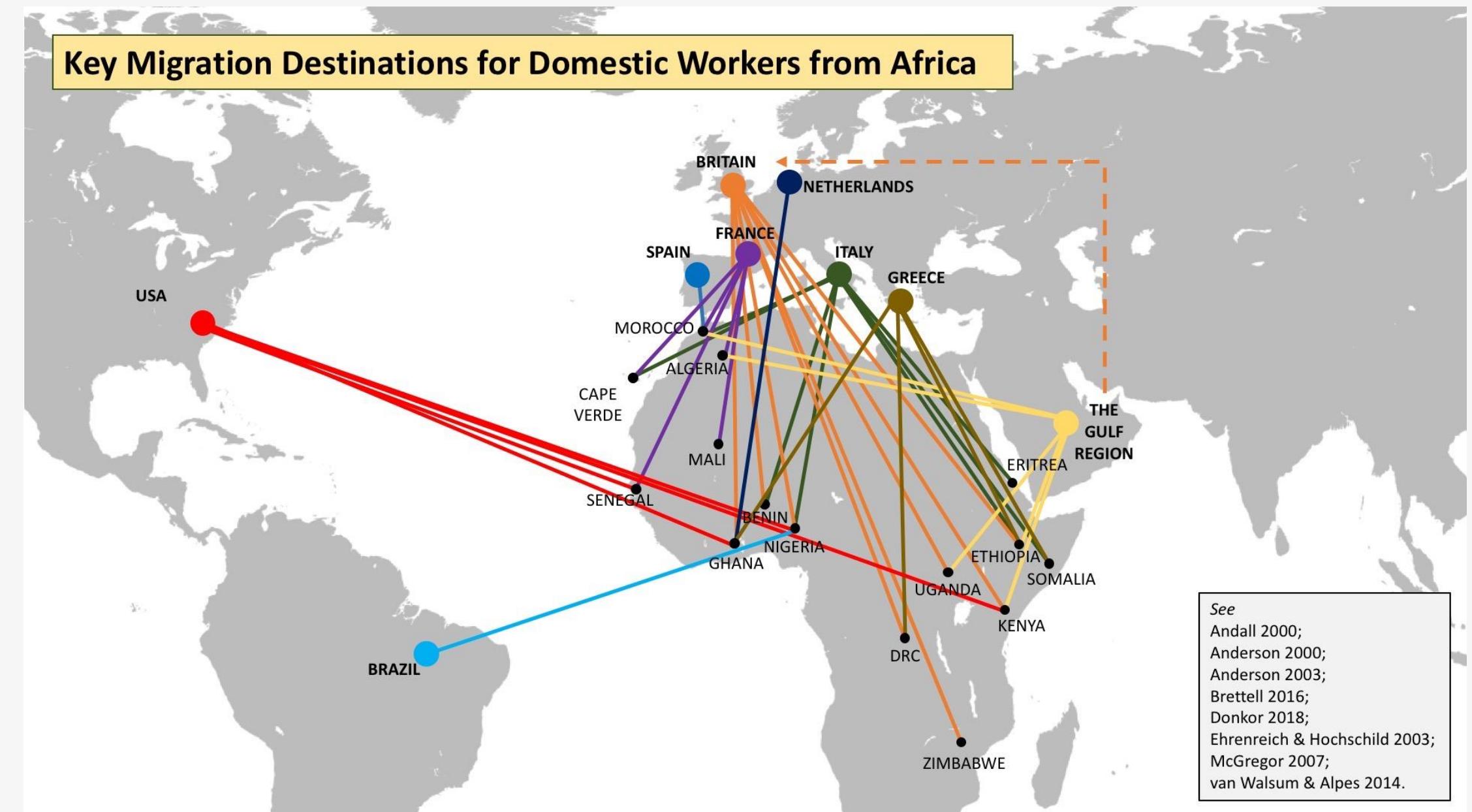
---

- Structural adjustment policies (SAPs) introduced by the IMF and World Bank during the 1990s cut all public spending in the Global South
- In order to survive people had to leave their countries to find work
- For women this usually meant leaving the GS to find work in the GNorth
- This path to survival is so significant for local economies that remittances from care work and the export of women have now been included in nations GDP returns (ie exporting women to care is a national asset)
- SAPs are to the Global South what austerity is to the Global North: those who care suffer

# Interesting Colonial Histories

Source: Saida Aaliyah, Atlantic Fellow (2017-18)

Also: Grace Ghang “Disposable Domestics”, Parrenas’ global care chain analysis and all of Bridget Anderson’s research



# A Political Economy: Punishing the “Unproductive” (Remember the Productive/Unproductive Division?)

- Through austerity 40 people per day die in the UK due to lack of care provision
- Through austerity cuts of £18billion in funds to the ‘unproductive’ (e.g. 15 disability welfare reforms).
- By 2020, in the UK men will have borne just 14% of the total burden of austerity welfare cuts, compared with 86% for women
- As a result of austerity 33% families lack basic resources

# London E15 Young Mum's Protests Against Eviction For Gentrification: Class, Race Cleansing



# SURVIVING THROUGH DEBT, Connection to Other Themes: Financialisation and Debt

---

- RSA report (2018) 2.9m experiencing serious financial debt. Economic insecurity has become the “new normal” with 70% of the working population “chronically broke”. Only 30% reported “living comfortably”
- Women bear the burden of debt especially those with dependent children, divorced, widowed or private renting; (JM report 2015)
- NB: difference between “good debt” – an investment in the future eg students/mortgages, or bank debt underwritten by national states and “bad debt” –digital loan sharks with over 1000% interest, used to simply survive in the present.
- Why so much debt? Drop in income 32.5%; change in circumstances 28.55%; increased outgoings 20%; overspending 15%
- Cuts to benefits lead directly to debt take up (Social Justice and Community Action 2013)
- Punitive “austerity” welfare reforms Bedroom tax led to take up of debt (Ipsos/MORI 2013)

# Anti-Austerity March, 2017



# A Global Political Economy of Care

If we put into a global frame we can see:

**Global South:** The structural adjustment policies (SAP's)

**Global North:** austerity in GN lead to transnationalisation of care services

and a **race to the bottom** re global competition for wages (Lutz, eg Kevin Lucas above), likely working for under the living wage (between £4-7 per hour)

- Forced migration – illegal domestic labour widespread (at least 25% estimate of UK domestic labour workforce)
- In both cases: who looks after the family/children in export nations?
- Who benefits – middle-class women in the global north, who if privileged, can avoid “endless variety and monotonous similarity” of patriarchal informal care structures through transnationalisation of services.
- Forced/exported/disposable populations = double care burden; paid care to survive (if lucky!) own care to provide for family.
- There is a gendered, racial and class division of reproductive labour – but this is not straightforward (eg intra African, Middle-Eastern)

# III Care Themes: to Date

## **How to understand the big picture**

Concept definition: issues: how to decolonise, de-re-queer, include bio without essentialism, family without patriarchy

Sites of care:

1. What type of social contract – where- the role of the state – or collapse in EU
2. Environmental care – basic resources, infrastructures of survival eg water, food, planet
3. Paid-unpaid traffic eg digital platforms, “self-care” as necessary to the “enterprising subject”
4. Unpaid-paid eg affective economies, diverse forms of value
5. The valuing of care
6. Who is caring? Where? Migrations of carers
7. Caring – solidarity, support, different social relations

# Public Events

## **Ai-Jen Poo insert**

- <http://www.lse.ac.uk/International-Inequalities/Videos-Podcasts/The-Labour-of-Care-work-law-and-finance>

# This is a Huge Topic that has Been Given Scant Attention by Trad Economics

---

We need to make it impossible to ignore by providing:

1. The evidence
2. Making the case
3. Suggesting alternatives

**This is a global issue that will not go away**