

FEMALE LABOUR PARTICIPATION AND GENDER RELATIONSHIPS. ANALYSIS OF RURAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

M. Carmen Diez Mintegui

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Desde la perspectiva de las relaciones de género y del mundo laboral, se analizan dos zonas diferenciadas de Euskal Herria —comarcas Donostialdea y Ribera del Ebro—, viendo como los procesos económicos interactúan de forma dinámica con las distintas variables existentes en los contextos concretos donde viven las personas.

Jenero eta langile munduaren harremanen ikuspegia hartuta, Euskal Herriko bi ingurune ezberdin astertzen dira: Donostialdea eta Ebro.ko Erribera. Helburua, prozesu ekonomikoak eta tokiko aukera esberdinak dinamikoki nola jokatzen duten ikustea da.

Starting from gender and labour world relations, to analyse two differentiated areas of Euskal Herria —the regions of Donostialdea and Ribera del Ebro—, looking how economic processes interact dynamically with the different variables of the specific context in which people live.

Introduction

In Euskal Herria (The Basque Country), we have a long anthropological tradition; Telesforo de Aranzadi, José Miguel Barandiarán y Julio Caro Baroja are the most outstanding names in the development of Basque anthropology.

However, their work, carried out along the lines of the Vienna Historical School —although Julio Caro Baroja, who is still active, has been incorporating the newer tendencies— has focussed on traditional Basque rural society, which it has idealized and presented in contrast to the new industrial society which began to develop towards the middle of the XIX century¹. It was not until the Seventies, within a Basque society totally affected by the changes introduced by economic growth, when a different kind of anthropological study was begun, more in accord with current anthropological thinking.

These new studies have shown both the economic and social diversity of the Basque people, as well as the complexity, contradictions and conflicts that are met with in the rural world. The pioneers in this work are the American anthropologists William A. Douglass and Davydd J. Greenwood.

In 1979, with the opening in Donostia² of the Faculty of Philosophy and Educational Sciences of the UPV/EHU³, Social Anthropology was first taught as part of the curriculum of some BA courses. It was then that a group formed around Professor Teresa del Valle —of which the author of this paper was a member—which was interested in studying both the view given of Basque women

1. Catalonia and the Basque Country are the most industrialised regions of the Spanish State. In the Basque Country (i.e., in the four historical Basque territories which are on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees), the first industrial centres emerged in the foral province of Biscay, based on the exploitation of the coal/iron mines near its capital, Bilbao. This meant the development of heavy industry, contrary to what later happened in Guipuzcoa where industrialisation took the shape of light engineering industry spread over many small companies. Alava and Navarre, the remaining two historical territories, became industrialised at a much later date, well into the XX century. Women did not participate as significant groups in the labour market —with the exception of the 1936-39 Civil War years— until the process of reindustrialisation started towards the end of the Fifties. When the war ended with the victory of the Franco Regime, specific labour legislation was enacted forbidding married women to work, thus aiming indirectly to turn them into "good wives" and "loving and fecund mothers". A firm alliance was established between the Church and Francoism to achieve these goals. The so-called Stabilisation Plan started in 1959 resulted in considerable economic development from the Sixties to the mid Seventies. The economic crisis which started then has been a more or less permanent feature affecting heavy industries in particular. This deindustrialisation process continues today in the Basque Country where companies are constantly being closed down with unemployment in the surrounding districts reaching figures as high as 50%.

2. Donostia-San Sebastian is the capital of Guipúzcoa, one of the historical territories of the Basque Country.

3. University of the Basque Country.

in previous studies as well as investigating more deeply into the diverse realities of women in this Basque context⁴.

From 1981 to 84 a comparative study of the rural, fishing and urban environments was carried out in 11 municipal districts. This work, carried out by a team of 10 people (plus specific collaborators), was directed by Professor del Valle (1985) using various qualitative techniques (participant and focal observation, in-depth interviews, biographies, gathering of "oral popular production" and audiovisual methods) as well as quantitative ones (a wide survey poll was carried out on a representative sample of 300 women).

Starting from this survey, some members of the group have gone to further investigate specific themes such as rituals, education, evolution of family size as well as undertaking the field work which is the basework for the present paper⁵.

That first team study, while taking into account variables such as age, geographical area and relation to economic activities⁶, it centred basically on the behaviour and value systems of the wider female collective. This group seemed to be represented by the female figure dedicated exclusively to taking care of her husband and children, that is to say, focussed on the private world of family relationships with some differences relating to geographical environment. Thus, women from an urban environment who worked exclusively in the domestic area showed greater atomisation and discontent with their situation. On the other hand, women of the same environment active in the labour market showed characteristics of greater personal autonomy (del Valle et al, 1985: 287-289).

This autonomy is defined as the capacity to take and implement decisions that range from the simplest such as leaving the home to carry out personal activities (related to a profession, go for a walk, to a meeting or to a public place, etc), to such complex ones as leading a life independent of the domestic group or proposing matrimonial separation,

In the present study we have gone deeper into the analysis of groups of women who have been introducing changes to traditional patterns; at all times we have taken into account differences relating to age, social class, educational level and, occasionally, those relating to their place of origin, as conditioning factors in obtaining and remaining in a paid job. Methodologically, within the general context of the changes that have taken place in the Basque Country in the last two decades, we have concentrated on observation units made up by groups or individual women who are in the labour market; all were between 25 and 45 years of age and belong to lower, middle and high socio-economic groups.

General framework of the study

As pointed out at the beginning, traditionally Basque anthropology has centered on the rural world; this study, on the other hand, takes a different approach by analysing the meaning that paid work can have for women and studying under which conditions and within which contexts this work makes possible changes to their value system and general attitudes and the possible repercussion of those changes on the social systems these women belong to.

4. The Seminary for Studies of Women of the UPV/EHU emerged from this group, which is at the moment in the process of becoming a university institute, with its own premises, documentation center, various knowledge areas and more that thirty members of staff.
5. This is a PhD thesis which analyses gender relationships in two different areas of the Basque Country, based on the study of the intake of women and men into the labour market.

I start from the general and basic premise that in Western, and specifically in European culture, women do not participate as subjects in their own right in the making of the social contract which started under the Illustration in the XVIII century; this meant that when the industrial class society was established in the XIX century women were relegated, as a collective, to the space where domestic/private activities take place and were nominated guardians of that space, whilst at the same time the male collective took over the labour/public space. I understand that these two spaces do not have a mutually symmetrical relationship but instead a hierarchical one with public space enjoying greater symbolic and social recognition and, consequently, conveying greater prestige to activities carried out there.

However, despite this general premise, we also know, from the general theory of conflict, that "every society can be understood as a field of forces in which different sectors interact in mutual opposition", and that this opposition is not only one of class but also involves collectives such as ethnic groups, women, old people, youth, etc (Juliano, 1992). Thus, we understand systems and gender relationships as dynamical constructs that result from the interplay of different factors and, as such, they must be analysed within concrete context of time and place: "macro, middle and micro levels of social process and structures are interlinked to produce gender systems" (Chafetz, 1990:35); therefore, together with the most general social trends, these domestic and family relationships, as well as those coming from specific groups and communities, must be analysed in the concreteness of a specific context, including, at the same time the history and background that have shaped them.

Likewise, together with that complex and dynamical concept of gender relationships, I have adopted the new viewpoints that come from feminist anthropology, which have abandoned attempts to find those universal theoretical constructs that explain women's "condition" which were used as guides for research in the Sixties. It will be shown that women's condition is multidimensional and that it must be analysed taking into account the different variables that surround their lives: "age, family role (sister, wife, mother-in-law, sister-in-law), class and race are all variables which, throughout life's cycle and social identity, affect the various dimensions of female status. While the complexity of the "condition" hypothesis grows, discoveries dehomogenise the "woman" category and put in doubt the existence of uniform stereotypes in female lives" (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins, 1988:466).

Under these premises, I have compared two different areas of the Basque Country, within the same historical period, assigning special importance to the specific environment where people are "active subjects in the field of social relationships" (Juliano, 1992:16) and understanding this environment as: "a set of opportunities and limiting factors present when facing human actions" (Martinez Veiga, 1985:11).

When studying the specific situation of women, their family, work and social responsibilities, it is desirable to establish the relation between the symbolic universe that they have formed and the existing social structure which is a reflection of a specific economic and socio-political context. The relation of these two levels establishes, in my opinion, a reference point from which people in general, and women in particular, will adopt an attitude, a specific behaviour —rational behaviour—, when facing the constraints or possibilities offered by the surrounding environment. From this perspective I aim to distance ourselves from recurrent victimist points-of-view when analysing the situation of women - views which I believe do not help in capturing either the diversity of models proposed by women themselves, or the fight-back and survival strategies which they develop in the different situation in which they find themselves. I have given special importance to the social reality in which people have grown up and have adopted a concept of socialisation which places emphasis on the "processes of familiarisation-acquisition of those characteristics

(norms, values, symbols) about which there is agreement as to their being necessary in order to develop within a determined cultural frame. It is developed throughout the whole life cycle although there are differentiated stages which are signposted by age, needs and acquisition of new status criteria" (del Valle and Sanz, 1991:87), and in so doing we work with a dynamic socialisation concept capable of integrating changes and of building new possibilities and life projects.

Taking into account both this concept of socialisation and the process and situational changes that affect social and individual life, particularly that of women, in the period and context proposed for this investigation, a high degree of points of conflict was to be foreseen in the external relationships that make up their environment as well as in their own value systems when they started designing their own changes. I have analysed these points of conflict both from a public perspective, in the case of the struggle that some women have had to defend their "workplace" or in other labour conflicts, and from the private aspect such as in their day-to-day lives in their intimate environments, be they domestic, labour or social.

The study of these different points of conflict has also implied a parallel study of the strategies that have been developed to overcome, personally or collectively, the various conflicts. When analysing these strategies I have tried to discover new interaction and valuation patterns for both public and social environments; I think that this has an echo in the remaking of the symbolic universe and system of values which contribute to giving a different, more global dimension, to the relation of women with their environment.

When the field of responsibilities and the decisions taken by women in respect to their out of home paid work are analysed from a holistic point-of-view, we must take into account the needs of the capitalist system itself in different contexts and the social gender construction made by the said system. It is very important to discover the value relationship that underlies the way in which women take part in the labour world, starting with the symbolisation they make of the concept of work, power, hierarchy and subordination.

Situation and characteristics of the two areas studied

Both these areas are in the southern part of the Basque Country, which politically and administratively belongs to the Spanish State (see map). The Donostialdea region is at the Northeast corner of Guipuzcoa and the Ribera del Ebro (Ebro riverside) to the south of Navarre. As the space we have here does not allow us to go into great detail, I shall only give a brief description of these regions emphasising the details we think of interest to this study.

For some authors, the division of physical spaces into regions is due to functionality criteria and thus a specific region can be defined as "a spatial frame inhabited by people who have a set of very varied common interests" (Ardaiz, 1980:154).

In our case, we have two markedly different regions, one, Donostialdea, structured around the capital of Guipuzcoa —Donostia— which has a strong centralising influence both on the local area and on the province as a whole. The area of the Navarrese Ribera chosen, on the other hand, is made up of very similar municipalities, as far as economic activity until quite recently is concerned, with populations ranging from one to five thousand inhabitants.

I define the Donostialdea region as urban industrial, with industrialisation characteristics as pointed out at the beginning of the paper (page footnote (1)). Different migratory movements have produced great environment and structural changes in this area, specially in some of the capital's peripheral municipalities and neighbourhoods, where the bulk of immigrants has tended to concentrate. In the following table, we can appreciate the evolution of population from 1900 to date in the various municipalities which make up this region.



In this study I have taken into account the general regional context and certain characteristics of each of the 10 municipalities, placing particular emphasis on Donostia and Renteria. As can be seen, municipalities such as Hernani, Lasarte, Pasajes and specially Renteria, have grown from small population centres to densely populated areas adjacent to the industrial centres which called for large numbers of workers. This fact is a clear example of the theory of the Sincretic Model of the Work Market proposed by Storper and Walker, which demonstrates that market logic is not enough to reproduce the work force: "work reproduction carries with itself clear geographic and spatial characteristics as far as concerns the communities which grow around industries" (Martinez-Veiga, 1990:70).

The economic crisis undergone since 1975 has produced a high unemployment rate which, together with the political problems that the country is experiencing, has turned it into a conflictive region with important political and social movements.

The region called La Ribera del Ebro consists of a series of urban nuclei which present a combination of characteristic rural elements combined with urbanising elements and agricultural processing industries; these industries are at the moment undergoing a process of change, expansion and diversification.

The hard post-war years, the Forties and Fifties, held back emigration in this region (a phenomenon also seen in other regions of Navarre and, as a whole, in the Spanish State). In Navarre, emigration was seen, practically until the Seventies, as a "regulatory formula" to balance out an unstable situation as there were not enough industries to absorb the population surplus in rural areas. In the following table the population movements for the same period of time as Donostialdea can be seen.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN THE DONOSTIALDEA REGION

	1900	1920	1940	1960	1970	1981	1986
ANDOAIN	-	-	-	-	-	16.330	15.961
DONOSTIA	37.812	61.774	103.979	134.085	165.829	172.303	175.138
HERNANI	3.672	5.405	7.093	13.080	23.080	30.450	19.096*
LASARTE	600		2.485	3.935	12.455	-	18.589*
LEZO	1.198	1.423	2.143	3.296	4.057	5.405	5.659
OIARTZUN	3.960	4.200	5.579	5.346	6.704	7.732	8.042
PASAJES	2.856	4.772	10.024	15.036	21.130	20.756	19.552
RENERIA	4.081	6.956	10.106	18.642	34.367	46.496	43.676
URNIETA	2.084	2.097	2.368	3.548	10.286	12.520	4.440*
USURBIL	1.831	1.925	2.032	3.122	5.519	5.871	5.606
TOTAL	58.094	88.552	145.809	200.090	283.427	317.863	315.759

Sources. Gómez Piñero and the 1981 and 1986 Census, (Our own classification)

* Municipalities affected by the unification of Lasarte.

As in the case of Donostialdea I have taken into account the general regional context, centring ourselves in the Cárcar and San Adrian municipalities. As can be appreciated, it is noticeable that, with the exception of San Adrian, in the majority of the towns the population has remained stable or has decreased only marginally; San Adrian, on the other hand has had and still maintains a steady growth in population (in 1990-91 when we were carrying out field work, it had just topped the five thousand mark). The causes for this growth lie in its strategic position and its quick adaptation to new economic situations.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN THE RIBERA DEL EBRO REGION

	1900	1920	1940	1960	1970	1981	1986
ANDOSILLA	1.750	2.046	2.312	2.263	2.540	2.396	2.475
AZAGRA	1.797	2.389	2.697	2.925	3.100	3.069	3.172
CARCAR	1.548	1.770	1.627	1.591	1.408	1.287	1.165
LERIN	2.315	3.040	3.303	2.927	2.531	2.138	2.015
LODOSA	3.115	3.797	4.130	4.292	4.270	4.455	4.412
MENDAVIA	2.442	3.018	3.483	3.152	3.344	3.378	3.397
SANADRIAN	959	1.337	2.619	3.496	4.111	4.362	4.603
SARTAGUDA	785	1.113	1.317	1.449	1.441	1.386	1.431
SESMA	1.322	1.955	1.881	1.889	1.828	1.588	1.419
TOTAL	16.033	20.265	23.369	23.984	24.573	24.059	24.089

Source: Población de los Ayuntamientos y Concejos de Navarrede 1990 a 1986. Gobierno de Navarra. (Population in Municipalities and Councils of Navarre. Government of Navarre). Our own Classification.

In general terms applicable to the whole region, the main check to rural exodus and the creation of local wealth have been due to both its agricultural wealth and the long tradition of the food processing industries which started in San Adrian—the first two canning factories were established there as early as 1875 and 1880—and later spread to the other towns with a flush of new ones in the Sixties. A study carried out in 1978 by the Urban Planning Team⁶ points out that the growth and wealth generated in this region is not due to any coherent planning (in the sense that it could have been due to specific planning on behalf of Navarrese institutions) but to the enterprise of its inhabitants, who have been able to complement the natural resources of the region with their subsequent processing in what they call “rosary-type development”.

In La Ribera there have not been, until recently, important labour conflicts, a fact due, in my opinion, to a concept different from that generally held in Donostialdea, as to the meaning of being a “worker”.

Characteristics of women's labour participation

The economic growth undergone in the Basque Country in the Sixties made it possible for many women to obtain a job. This situation was not contemplated under traditionally held views, although it is mentioned in Douglass and Greenwood's studies. An important change in women's attitude to paid work, from the Sixties onwards, was that of remaining employed after getting married. I shall briefly explain the situation women occupy in the work market of the regions studied.

It must be stated that in both regions we found a clearly marked segmentation as to the places men and women occupy in the work space. In general terms, in our society, labour activities are still conceived as “women's” or “men's work”. These concepts can be defined and redefined according to many factors whose analysis is an important means to understanding the values and concepts that underlie such definitions.

The types of linkage between the various work spaces is another important aspect which, in our opinion, determines the construction of gender systems and the relations that women in the regions under study maintain with the world of work.

6. This study belongs to the Municipal Corporation of San Adrian, who very kindly allowed us to use it in our study.

In general terms, in Donostialdea (and in other regions of the Basque Country) keeping the same job has been a job market characteristic until very recently; it has been normal for a person to work all her/his working life within the same company. The majority of women studied in Donostialdea, both as groups and as individuals, reflected that model. At the same time, their activity takes place regularly throughout the year and it is seen as something that will continue over many years. This allows for the establishment of a certain type of relationship with that activity which affects the perception they have of themselves as workwomen.

In contrast to this, in the Navarrese Ribera, the situation is very different: work is done by "campaigns" (i.e. it is seasonal) and until 1985 when labour contracting laws were changed, there was no legalised contractual relation with the employer and it is relatively normal to work at different factories, depending on the crop or on the season. This contributes, in my opinion, to the failure to establish a stable employment relationship, in the sense that the women would consider themselves as "salaried workwomen" and the "job" as something that gives identity and independence.

The Donostialdea region is, with its female labour segmentation, more complex than the Ribera. The female participation rate, in 1986, for the region as a whole, was 23.43 % and the male 54.56 %. There are marked differences between municipalities; in Donostia, capital, the female rate was 27.33 % and in Lezo 21.12 %. Inversely, the male rate is lowest in Donostia capital, 52.02 %, and highest in Lezo, 55.76 %.

As far as segmentation is concerned, both in Donostia and in Rentería, 65 % of employed women are classified, according to official statistics as belonging to the "administrative, commercial and sales, auxiliary staff and other service personnel" category. However, the case of men is very different in each of these municipalities; in Rentería, an industrial focal point, 66 % are classified under the following trades: "metallurgical workmen, foundrymen, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, etc"; in Donostia, only 37 % are classified under those trades, whereas a similar percentage, 32 %, is in the "administrative, etc" category where women are a majority in both municipalities. The specific characteristics of both these environments condition labour expectations; Donostia, as a service city, offers more job opportunities in the service sector. Because of its central position, it has many more educational establishments than Rentería and, in global terms, the educational level achieved is higher in Donostia than in Rentería. Although its population does have higher economic possibilities than Rentería's, this is not the only factor that determines access to middle or higher education.

Summarising the situation in Donostialdea it can be said that there is a correlation between: higher female labour participation with a higher socio-economic level, a higher educational level and a higher rate of single females. Spatially, the groups that present these characteristics are centred in Donostia capital and more specifically in some of its city districts. Within these groups it is found that there is less gender related labour division which leads, together with other factors of change, to more equalitarian gender relations.

However, from the point of view of the meaning that paid work may have for women to adopt changes in their life projects, I have verified that even women of the lower social strata, with monotonous and low paid jobs, have undergone a process of self valuation and of the valuation of their jobs. This process is based both on the economic autonomy and the opportunity of relating to other people and of social participation which come with working out of home.

7. We refer, of course, to what is called formal work. The economic crisis has increased participation in the informal sector of the economy which we have come across during our research but have not been able to obtain firm data which would support this.

In the analysis of these changes and processes I have taken into account the environment—in its widest sense—in which the subjects live. Thus, in this environment where changes are taking place in relation to employment, political and social struggles must also be taken into account, as must be the increase of the Feminist Movement which started in the mid Seventies. All these factors influence the transformations of the social and symbolic construction of the meaning of work, which changes for many women from being an end to being a means.

The principal characteristic in the Ribera del Ebro region is a certain homogeneity. Even when taking into account that, as the saying goes, “there have always been rich and poor”, on a general level, there are not apparent great distinctions, neither in the spatial distribution nor in the access to what could be defined as an acceptable standard of living. According to the study quoted above, in this region there is an “excessive subordination to work with high consumption levels, representative of a high level of family income available for disposal”. From approximately the mid Seventies to the mid Eighties there were no problems in relation to the access to those resources.

Despite the explicit acknowledgement of the female work contribution in this area, this work had not been “officially” recognised until very recently. Even now female “help” with agricultural jobs such as the sowing and collecting of irrigated produce and fruit is still not recognised. Only males, as head of the family, appear in the census as “agricultural enterprise directors”. But even in the processing factories, a large part of the work was not recognised by the official statistics till after 1985. As we have already pointed out, in this same context, in that year labour legislation changed and a new contractual category called “fixed-discontinuous” was introduced which incorporated the types of jobs previously ignored. 68 % of female work in the region comes under this category. This type of contract has another advantage: it entitles the contractee to claim unemployment payment if she/he has worked at least 180 days in the year. This fact has changed, to a certain degree, both self and social perception of the woman as a “workwoman”⁸.

Women who choose to stay in the region have two work options: agricultural work or processing work in a factory. Work is dependent on the annual cycle of different crop harvests. Sowing is done both on unirrigated land (cereals and vines) and on irrigated land, this latter producing high-value crops such as “pimientos del piquillo” (a variety of hot red peppers) and asparagus which has been christened the “miracle product”. A good asparagus crop meant that the family’s basic yearly expenses were covered. If the crop was good, the processing plants would have work and women would do a lot of overtime thus earning high wage packets. The same could be said for peppers, tomatoes and fruit (peaches, apricots, etc).

I have used past reference because recently the situation has been changing radically. Within the relative homogeneity mentioned earlier, we find that there are now certain differences between some municipalities. In this region, which traditionally depended on agricultural produce, the pattern of industrialisation in becoming centralised in some cases. Cárcar, in 1990-91, saw the closing down of two of its three processing plants, which had been in operation for the last twenty years; in Andosilla eight have disappeared over a period of seven years and the same is seen to be happening in other places. However, in Azagra new produce freezing plants have opened and the female workforce there has increased.

In San Adrian, the town that is growing most and is becoming the regional centre, the small canning factories are disappearing or—in the case of the stronger ones—are modernising, so

8. This situation has recently changed with the introduction by the Government of new legislation which will invalidate this possibility. This new decree, known as the “Decretazo”, was passed by the government a few months ago.

requiring fewer workers and at the same time becoming more dependent on multinational companies. Nearby, an industrial zone is being developed for auxiliary industries that employ almost exclusively male workers. The building trades, which is an expanding sector in this municipality, generates, almost exclusively "men's jobs". Even some jobs which traditionally have been considered as "women's", i.e. secretarial ones, are, in this area taken up by men. The explanation lies in the fact that these jobs entail a degree of personnel control and direction and therefore males are preferred.

Another feature that points to the change that is taking place in that town is the creation of the "Asociacion de Amas de Casa" (Housewives' Association) the first in the region. Although initially it was the idea of the local social worker (who works in the Town Hall as the social and cultural animator), the acceptance it has had shows the degree of change the town has undergone. The idea originated in 1990 as the result of a talk organised to celebrate the 8th of March and by September that year it already had more than 150 members.

The Association's main promoting group consists of ten to fifteen members whose average age is about forty and who are exclusively housewives. The impact which followed the starting of this association has been important. It was insinuated that it had political motivation and criticism was focussed on the most active group: "Haven't women got enough work at home, without going out and getting mixed up in other people's business!"; it was also said that as a result "women will spend more time outside their homes and less inside them" and a very significant question was asked: these women, what more freedom do they want for themselves?. When we asked the organisers group about the kind of women that had joined it, the answer was: "all kinds, from newlyweds to retired women". The objectives of the Association are clear: "to motivate women to go out of their homes, get rid of their depressions and of all those things that we women get when we have had enough of washing up".

These last few years the situation in the agricultural sector has been getting worse and the EEC⁹ legislation, together with the ever more complicated labour laws, as well as imports of agricultural produce from other regions, countries and even continents (in 1991, asparagus were imported from Peru) has meant a change in strategies. During the last three years many fields dedicated to asparagus have disappeared with the subsequent loss of work opportunities" because farmers have not been able to negotiate a price per kilo that would guarantee them what they consider to be a minimal profit. More fruit trees have been planted and it is quite possible that new produce will be introduced but, meanwhile young people prefer to work in factories or in building or trades that have been traditionally regarded as "for men".

The analysis of the present reality and of the future in this ecological frame must be undertaken from the point-of-view of "dependency/rupture" with agriculture. The economic strategies of the family group rely on more or less fixed incomes depending on whether one is a "formal" salaried worker or on whether there is still a dependency on agriculture either as a direct producer or as a worker in the processing industries. These changes are transforming both the working and the family systems as well as their mutual interlinking.

9. European Common Market.

10. Asparagus harvesting lasts from April to June. Traditionally workers from other regions of the Spanish State, specially from Andalusia, are contracted and they go "halfers", that is, half the produce goes to the farmer and the other half to the collectors.

Maintenance and change in the gender systems

By means of this quick overview of the different labour situations that the industrialisation process has introduced in the areas under study we would like to emphasise the influence that these processes have in the maintenance or change of the gender relationships in both regions. On the purely quantitative level we find very similar labour participation and unemployment rates; however, when one goes deeper into the meaning of work both as a means of understanding the couple relationship, and above all, as a means of obtaining personal autonomy, we find important differences.

For women of Donostialdea economic independence and the possibility of relating with other people are the most valued aspects of extradomestic work. Sometimes, the self realisation concept appears and always as a counterpoint to the keeper of the domestic environment role which until very recently was still being allocated to women. An aspect which seems of special interest to us is the way in which women who have been at the same job for many years are now experiencing a situation of unemployment; we have called this situation "liminal" a name we have derived from the definitions and metaphors women themselves use to define it.

This situation is perceived as something transitory from which they will soon emerge; the only possible way out is by finding new paths, new ways of reaching the work space; when defining the domestic space to which they find themselves relegated they constantly use metaphors such as "cage", "jail" and "lock-up".

Together with these perceptions we have found conflicts within the couple, generally related to the distribution of domestic work. On the other hand, those couple relationships are not conceived of as "for life" and keeping or losing a job, i.e. economic independence, generally appears to be related to changes in the mentioned affective situation. What some authors (Comas, 1990) have named as the "individual ethic" is found in this relationship with paid work. Likewise, the development of different strategies in relation to maternity can also be observed; these strategies are designed to lighten the weight of maternity which falls exclusively on the biological mother and which produces contradictions in women who are mothers-to-be while holding a job.

Summarising, we find that there is an important correlation between paid work and the emergence of new attitudes and values in women, although for it to happen a series of circumstances must occur in a specific context. Access to and staying in a job in the labour space in Donostialdea coincides with the reappearance of feminism and the 1968 social movements, all of which help produce an important social change and generate different life models for women who were opposed to the one-and-only model which reigned supreme during the Franco Dictatorship.

The economic crisis with its ever increasing unemployment rate has slowed the incorporation of women into the labour market. A study on Basque youth carried out in 1991 reports that only male employment has been created for young people.

The proportion of women at University is 50 % and although there is bias in the choosing of careers, the percentage of women in technical careers is growing constantly. In Donostialdea deindustrialisation goes on and an increase in the service sector is foreseen which, although in principle, does not go against a continuity of the access of women to work resources it is still too early to make predictions in relation even to the near future.

On the other hand, in the Navarrese Ribera, the fact that women participate in the labour market and bring an important contribution to their domestic economies, has not introduced, in our opinion, big changes in gender relationships which we can define as traditional in the sense of the hierarchical and dominating role man holds. Women continue doing their domestic chores (without complaining

too much and still considering them as something “natural”, something than “one carries in the blood”); day-to-day life also appears to belong to specific spaces without great mobility when compared with that of urban women of the same age group.

This situation is still very apparent in the smaller rural towns such as Cárcar but it is beginning to change in San Adrian, where both growth and the introduction of new patterns of behaviour are more obvious.

However, we have found that it is very important not to take situations out of their context and in particular not to apply urban parameters in this rural context. We were surprised by these women's lack of knowledge about politics and the feminist movement although the world they live in is a direct consequence of the social changes derived from those beliefs which have been long assumed by society as a whole. This change in general attitudes becomes evident in the desire to obtain egalitarian education for boys and girls and, specially, in the motivation instilled in girls to study in order to have a good job.

Since at the moment male employment is more feasible, either in continuing with agricultural work or in the new factories that are being established in the area, the number of girls who go on studying is much larger than that of boys.

Speaking in terms of strategies, it is very interesting to distinguish between feminist and female claims. The former presuppose a complete political change to a system that is considered unjust, while the latter must be taken into account, as pointed out by Dolores Juliano (1992) “when they take a defensive position which tends to maintain and widen some spaces without confronting the power structures directly.” (ibid, 21).

In this Navarrese region, it has been necessary, and in many cases it is still necessary, to maintain the solidarity of the domestic group to achieve income levels that are in accordance with today's consumer society. An interesting statistic shows that 90 % of people above thirty are married. From the late Sixties to date, when the situation is changing, we can speak of a stable period when access to economic goods was possible. The more or less conscious decision to remain in the area has meant subjection to the predominant gender models although it is common knowledge that in environments such as urban ones other models are in use.

The predominance of a model which can be clearly defined as “machista” does not mean that women are isolated, atomized and unhappy in their role as housewives. Their significant participation in the economic activities of the domestic group and the maintenance of networks of female solidarity “which deteriorate in the passage from a rural to an urban world and from traditional patterns of life to modern ones” (Juliano, 1992:21), together with a greater possibility for establishing personal and group contacts have to be taken into account as important factors in the analysis of that situation.

It is not pure chance that it is in San Adrian, where the domestic model is changing towards that of the male as the only economic purveyor, that the first female association with characteristics similar to those in urban areas has sprung up.

What is to happen to female employment is an unknown at the moment. The growth and concentration of the population around San Adrian will mean that the service sector will also grow and this could mean that job opportunities for women would also grow. If the pattern towards the creation of only male employment and the maintaining of great inequalities continues it is conceivable that women might start to leave the region.

The analysis of gender relationships starting from the way in which both men and women are present in the work space, allows us to know how economic processes, in a complex society

that is undergoing profound changes, interact dynamically with the different variables of the specific context in which people live.

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