Relations industrielles
Industrial Relations

The Invisibilization and Denial of Work in Argentinian Garment Homework
L'invisibilité et le déni de l'emploi à domicile dans l'industrie du vêtement en Argentine
La invisibilización y la negación del trabajo de costura de ropa a domicilio en Argentina

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Volume 71, Number 3, Summer 2016

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1037661ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1037661ar

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Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)
1703-8138 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Burchielli, R. & Delaney, A. (2016). The Invisibilization and Denial of Work in Argentinian Garment Homework. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, *71*(3), 468–493. https://doi.org/10.7202/1037661ar

Article abstract

Homeworkers are a globally significant part of the informal workforce, commonly regarded as invisible because their work is not recognized (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008; Prugl, 1999). In this qualitative study, we examine homeworker invisibility in the case of Argentinian garment homework using the concepts of work invisibilization and work denial.

The work invisibilization concept (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012), referring to devalorized work resulting from the neoliberal agenda, is used to understand recent global trends away from standard work arrangements/protections. Arising from the social relations of domination, invisibilized work is precarious, with irregular/ non-existent employment contracts and relationships. Invisibilization thus provides a valuable lens for analysing homework, which shares key characteristics with emerging forms of invisibilized employment. Homework however, has not transformed but has always been informal, characterized by inferior standards. To account for this, we articulate a concept of denial of work.

Cohen's (2001) concept of denial describes broad dimensions, including different forms, strategies and levels of denial. Adapting these, we construct a framework to analyze the denial of Argentinian garment homework, enabling a detailed examination of the specific social actors and processes involved in casting homework as non-work.

In considering the denial of homework in relation to invisibilization, we argue that these are related but distinct concepts. Used together, they help explain the low-power condition of two types of garment homeworkers in Argentina while also accounting for their differences: the mostly male, migrant workers employed in clandestine workshops (such as the Bolivians interviewed in our study), and the traditional, mostly female, Argentinian garment homeworkers.

Our findings suggest that Bolivian immigrant homeworkers are partially visibilized due to NGO advocacy. However, as there are no improvements to their working conditions, they remained largely invisibilized through the effects of capitalism. By contrast, traditional women homeworkers have no representation and internalize their condition: their invisibilization is explained by the cumulative effects of capitalism and patriarchy.

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The Invisibilization and Denial of Work in Argentinian Garment Homework

Rosaria Burchielli and Annie Delaney

In this paper we examine the invisibilization of Argentinian garment homework using insights from the invisibilization literature (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012) and applying a framework of denial (Cohen, 2001) to theorize the low-power position of two categories of garment homeworkers: individual local women who work from their homes and mostly male Bolivian migrants working in clandestine workshops. We argue that the processes of invisibilization and denial of their work pose critical obstacles to homeworker collective action, to access protection and rights. There is limited potential for both groups of homeworkers to draw on associational power to improve their working conditions, but we find that the invisibilization of women homeworkers is more profound. We attribute this to the social and power relations of patriarchy and capitalism and their discourses which perpetuate inequality.

KEYWORDS: homework; Argentina; garment industry; invisible work; women's work.

Introduction and literature review

Garment homework has a historical association with "sweated labour" and women's work: it is an "old" form of work that has survived as a contemporary work arrangement because it benefits capital (Boris and Daniels, 1989). For the most part, homework is located in labour intensive supply chains such as garments, where women predominate in the production of goods. In general, homeworkers experience marginalization linked to gender, labour rights and social protection. Homeworkers work from their own or other people's homes, for an employer or intermediary, usually on a piece-work basis. Homeworkers are a globally significant part of the informal workforce, commonly regarded as invisible because they are not recognized as workers (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008;

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Acknowledgments: The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of editors and the anonymous reviewers that resulted in an infinitely better paper. We are also deeply grateful to Caroline Lafargue who translated key "invisibilization" papers from French, enabling us to access this important literature.

Prugl, 1999) and homework is not regarded as work. In this paper we examine this non-work/non-worker attribution to homework/ers by analyzing the case of Argentinian garment homework using two distinct but closely related concepts: work invisibilization and work denial.

The work invisibilization literature refers to precarious and devalorized work, where workers have little or no power or collective identity (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012). The concept of invisibilization is useful to understand recent trends away from standard work arrangements and protections. Invisibilization has parallels with the precariousness literature (Burchielli *et al.*, 2014; Kalleberg, 2009) that attributes work and employment deviations to changed structural and institutional arrangements, such as reduced labour regulation and union decline. Invisibilization primarily focuses on social and power relations achieved via political, economic, psychological, and regulatory processes (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012; Renault, 2012; Ainsworth, 2001; Thornton, 1991).

Work invisibilization draws from specific instances of emerging job categories and employment modes, exemplifying diminished and devalorized work, to explain the growth of forms of work that push many workers into a blurred middle ground towards a type of work which is paid but not correctly; is unpaid; is neither professional nor manual; is not properly protected and ultimately affects whether the workers are deemed as workers (Krinsky, 2012). The invisibilization concept describes macro political and economic trends and discourses that have justified or otherwise brought about changes in standard employment resulting in diminished work conditions, but has not been applied to homework. In this paper, we argue that invisibilization is a valuable lens through which to analyse homework for two reasons. First, homework has similar key characteristics as the forms of invisibilized employment described in the invisibilization literature: both feature irregular and insecure work, irregular/non-existent employment contracts, and irregular/non-existent employment relationships, i.e. workers are not counted as employees. Second, in line with the invisibilization literature, we argue that these conditions are brought about by the social relations of domination.

Despite the similarities between homework and emerging types of devalorized employment, homework has an important difference. Unlike any other type of formal employment, homework has not transformed: it has continuously been informal work characterized by inferior standards compared to formal employment. Our desire to account for this important feature of homework led us to look beyond the invisibilization concept, to established areas of homework analysis, such as gender research. Moreover, to account for the consistently informal nature of homework, we introduce and articulate a concept of denial of work. This notion is suggested by the work invisibilization literature, where the concept

of work invisibilization leans heavily on the term "denial of work" (Krinski and Simonet, 2012) but which is not tackled conceptually. Critically, therefore, we adapt a specific concept of denial (Cohen, 2001) that enables the bridging of homework with other types of invisibilized work.

We employ the denial concept applied in sociology to analyze instances of state denial of human rights (Cohen, 2001). This describes broad dimensions of denial, such as different forms and levels of denial, and distinguishes key strategies to achieve denial, which are transferrable to a concept of the denial of work. Using these general dimensions, we construct a framework adapted from Cohen (2001), and operationalize it in our analysis of the denial of work in relation to Argentinian garment homework. We use this framework to catalogue the forms, strategies and levels of the denial of Argentinian homework, enabling a detailed examination of the specific means, social actors and processes involved in denying homework, making it appear as non-work. We also consider the denial of homework in relation to invisibilization, and argue that these are related but distinct concepts that together help to explain the low-power position of two types of garment homeworkers in Argentina.

We make some important contributions in this paper. Employing both the invisibilization and denial concepts to the analysis of homework shines somewhat different lights on and highlights different features of this form of work. Our application of invisibilization and denial is original and useful to theorizing key specificities of homework. Moreover, the use of the two concepts enables our reflection on the nuances of each and, subsequently, aids in extending the invisibilization literature.

The paper begins with a discussion of invisibilization, its processes and a framework of denial, and then outlines features of the Argentinian garment industry, followed by the method. The remaining sections analyze and compare two categories of homework using the processes of invisibilization and the forms, strategies and levels of denial, and draw together our analysis around the denial and invisibilization of garment homework in Argentina.

Conceptual framework

Invisibilization of work

The concept of work invisibilization arises from the examination of current global employment trends. Invisibilization (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012) refers to work categories, employment arrangements and labour standards that represent diminished employment rights, agency and social protections compared to standard work. Focusing on changed institutional arrangements producing shifts in power, invisibilization offers a sociological perspective on the phe-

nomenon of reduced employment standards and relationships, resulting in the devalorization of work. Invisibilization is shaped by social and economic forces such as neoliberalism and globalization (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012) that have given ascendancy to capitalism's market-driven urges for increased privatization, greater flexibility, reduced regulation and a decline in worker protection (Harvey, 2006).

The concept of invisibilization goes beyond categorizing and describing specific conditions of work, to take into account the power relations that produce it. Invisibilization refers to the processes by which certain jobs/occupations, such as caring and service work, and certain employment modes—such as casual, temporary or voluntary—are diminished, renamed and recast such that work (which is paid and regulated) is *denied* and made to look like non-work (which may be unpaid, poorly paid, and less regulated) (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012). There is a sense in the invisibilization literature that the denial of work is accomplished via invisibilization. Beyond this, however, the denial of work has only an assumed meaning in the invisibilization literature: no definition is offered, nor any explicit accounting for the use of both terms, nor any attempts to delineate the nuances of the denial/invisibilization.

The invisibilization literature examines work arrangements that include full-time workers alongside labour-hire, casual, volunteers, workers recruited through welfare schemes; all doing similar work with different conditions and rights (Krinsky, 2012). Examples include volunteer firefighters in France, working for a small allowance alongside full-time firefighters and New York park workers, consisting of full-time workers, workers on welfare schemes, and volunteers. The full-time firefighters and park workers are employed under standard work arrangements, protected by standard labour laws and unions, while the other worker categories have varying levels of remuneration, conditions, rights and representation. These trends blur paid and unpaid work arrangements and worker identity, with the effect for many workers of not being recognized or invisibilized as workers (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012).

Invisibilization also contemplates visibilization and partial visibilization: visibilization refers to the complete valorization of work, including worker rights and recognition, whereas partial visibilization falls somewhere in between invisibilization and visibilization. The case of domestic work in Brazil provides an example of partial visibilization (Georges and Vidal, 2012). This case argues that some work visibilization has been achieved via regulation, worker representation and recognition through government policy (Rodriguez, 2007). However, there continue to be a range of inequalities in terms of pay, relationship to employer, working conditions, rights and protections and has greater similarities with invisibilization (Georges and Vidal, 2012).

The processes of work invisibilization

Work invisibilization is brought about via various, inter-related social processes embedded within current socio-political, economic, organizational and regulatory environments (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012). The invisibilization literature describes processes relating to forms of non-recognition, such as legal constructions of the worker that may exclude some workers or limit the value of their work. A further process is the formation of discourses that "rename" work as non-work, such as in the designation of voluntary work, resulting in institutionalizing devalorized work (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012). The invisibilization processes, including enabling discourses, resonate in the broader literature on worker/work invisibility, from authors adopting gender, class and race perspectives within employment and labour relations (Fraser, 2013; Nakano Glen, 2014; Ainsworth, 2002; Thornton, 1991).

For example, women workers' invisibility is accomplished through organizational discourses that do not recognize or mis-recognize and, thus, diminish women's work contribution and status (Ainsworth, 2002). A philosophy of work perspective proposes that workers internalize institutional and social messages. When workers accept a devalued perspective of their work and themselves, this affects their ability to associate and collectivize (Renault, 2012). Simultaneously limited by lack of agency and associational power traditionally gained through unions (Wright, 2000), they are less likely to join together with colleagues to act on feelings of injustice (Renault, 2012). The devaluing of certain forms of work perpetuates lack of recognition (Fraser, 2013) via the effect of diminishing worker's capacity to form collective structures and support (Renault, 2012).

The links between non-recognition, renaming discourses and invisibilization are illustrated in the case of domestic work discussed in the invisibilization literature. Recent recognition via the International Labour Organization (ILO) *Convention on Domestic Work* (ILO, 2010) has contributed to improvements in legal protection and establishment of new domestic worker organizations in countries such as Brazil. However, the fact that domestic work takes place within the private sphere, constructed as the female domain, has contributed to the failure to address the inequalities entrenched by class, gender and race identities, and perpetuated by the master-servant relationship inherent in domestic work (Georges and Vidal, 2012). Such socially constructed boundaries limit workers' capacity to identify and be recognized as workers. Rather than being acknowledged as workers, they are renamed as the help, the babysitter, the nanny or the dog walker (Georges and Vidal, 2012), all of which devalue the work, misrepresenting it as the innate work of women and, further, diminish women's capacity to seek support, to recognize their own status as workers and to assert their legal rights (Rodriguez, 2007).

The discourses and processes of invisibilization are further illustrated in the most fundamental forms of worker protection, enshrined within labour laws

and contracts. These legal instruments include key definitions, such as who is a worker, and reflect dominant discourses and their constructions (Vosko, 2002). Laws construct the notion of the workplace/non-workplace, as demonstrated through the public/private dichotomy (Fraser, 2013; Thornton, 1991). The concept of work, as described in legislation, refers to "paid labour emanating from the contract of employment" (Thornton, 1991: 453) and excludes myriad forms of unpaid labour performed by women in the home (Vosko, 2010; Fudge and Owens, 2006; Mohanty, 2006; Nakano Glenn, 2014). Interrelated factors, including class, race and gender, link the notion of invisibility to the private sphere; to unpaid work largely performed by women in the home, and to inadequate legal representation and protections. Non-recognized, mis-recognized and invisibilized work discriminates against women, since they are more likely to be engaged in precarious and informal work arrangements. The non-recognition of work in the private sphere, ultimately, constitutes a political tool used to benefit the state and capital (Nakano Glenn, 2014; Thornton, 1991).

Regulation and labour laws may favour or confer power to some social actors over others, for example, corporations and business entities. Regulatory environments may be weaker in different national contexts, and firms choose the most favourable regulatory environment for business purposes at the expense of working conditions and worker rights (Krinsky, 2012). Regulatory environments implicate key actors/institutions as instruments of invisibilization, depending on whether these institutions maintain or change inequitable constructions. The public/private dichotomy becomes a political mechanism that enables the state to reduce the number of domains of its responsibility (Fraser, 2013; Thornton, 1991), and it allows capital to act without facing regulatory consequences, thus safeguarding the dominant interests of both the state and business (Stone and Arthurs, 2013; Thornton, 1991).

Invisibilization has parallels with the literature examining precariousness, which is similarly attributed to neoliberalism and globalization, and results in reduced regulation and a decline in worker protection (Kalleberg, 2009). Neoliberal globalization provides firms with opportunities to access new product and labour markets and creates greater vulnerabilities for workers. Outsourcing and subcontracting is a key feature of global supply chains (Barrientos, 2012). The practices associated with outsourcing and subcontracting, mingled with narrow constructions of work and workers, frequently result in marginalizing informal workers.

The invisibilization literature clearly describes the broad socio-political and economic trends, and discourses that have justified or otherwise brought about changes in standard employment resulting in diminished work conditions, but has not been applied to homework (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012). We propose that homework is like other invisibilized work in its association with sub-standard

conditions. Yet, it is unlike emerging forms of work in that it has not undergone a transformation of work conditions. Due to its associations with the home and the predominance of women, it is informal work; it was originally and has continuously been devalorized work, described as invisible, and associated with sub-standard conditions (Boris and Daniels, 1989). In order to apply the insights of invisibilization to the analysis of homework, while still accounting for homework's unique characteristics, we introduce a concept of denial from sociology.

A framework of denial

A concept of denial is proposed by Cohen (2001), in the context of state denial of violations of human rights. In this work, the author argues that denial is the key process that enables or justifies violations, which would otherwise be deemed criminal or morally reprehensible. Denial is defined as 'repressing, disavowing, or reinterpreting' events (2001: 1), with the effect of changing their meaning. To illustrate simply, the denial of a human rights violation proposes it is a non-violation. Denial is discussed from various perspectives. First, the "forms of denial" identify and describe distinct types of denial: "literal, interpretive or implicatory" denial (2001: 1-7). Forms of denial refer to a spectrum of denial pronouncements: from outright denial (literal) through to other nuances. Second, various strategies are used to accomplish denial (2001: 51-68). The strategies refer to rationalizing techniques used in discourse or behaviours that have a denying effect, including "normalizing, renaming and justifying" denial (2001: xi). Third, there are distinct levels of denial (2001: xiv; 9-20) that refer to various social actors that participate in denial or broad cultural institutions or processes that support it. These forms, strategies and levels, are represented in Table 1, which we propose as a generic framework of denial.

TABLE 1
A framework of denial

Denial category	Sub-category	
Forms	Literal:	assertion that something did not happen or is untrue.
	Interpretive:	giving a different meaning from what seems apparent to others
	Implicatory:	not taking responsibility; "justifications, rationalizations, and evasions" to deal with human rights violations
Strategies	Normalizing:	an event or occurrence is unremarkable
	Justifying:	"everyone does it"
	Renaming:	euphemizing, greenwashing
Levels	Personal	
	Cultural / Organizational / Institutional	

Source: Adapted from Cohen (2001) *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering.*

This generic framework, focusing on denial itself, may be transferred to a work and employment context, to explore the denial of work. Following Cohen's (2001) definition, which focuses on the re-interpretative effect of denial, we define denial of work as reinterpreting work as non-work. The denial of work concept is better suited to accounting for the intrinsically informal dimension of homework described in the literature: rather than devalued work resulting from transformed conditions, homework has always been denied as work (Boris and Daniels, 1989).

Denial of work and work invisibilization are distinct concepts. Invisibilization suggests a rendering of invisibility, while denial implies a negation. Invisibilization refers to diminished work standards, while the denial of work removes the work attribution altogether, obviating the need for standards. These are subtle but crucial distinctions. Importantly however, the concepts are closely related: both rely on non-recognition or misrecognition and other social processes, such as re-naming or rationalizations; both rely on social actors (business organizations, the state) to accomplish similar ends: devalorized, insecure work, which is poorly paid and scarcely protected. In both the means and the ends, there is a critical similarity. We contend that applying the framework of denial to the analysis of Argentinian garment homework enables a detailed examination of the specific means, social actors and processes that are implicated in the denial of homework as work. Moreover, the denial framework can be overlaid on the invisibilization concept and processes to establish denial and invisibilization as complements. We thus extend the original work invisibilization literature, which uses the two terms without distinction, by discussing and determining their links. In this paper, we use the framework adapted from Cohen (2001), in conjunction with concepts from invisibilization to catalogue the forms, strategies and levels of the denial and invisibilization of Argentinian homework, and to analyze the multiple inequalities and power imbalances in this form of work, and the implications for homeworkers.

Garment homework in Argentina background

Garment homework is one of the largest categories of homework and is one of the better documented. We chose Argentina as the case for this article as it offers some unique characteristics. First, there are two distinct groups of garment homeworkers in Argentina (Pascucci, 2011). Second, although women generally constitute the majority of homeworkers around the world (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008), one of the Argentinian groups is dominated by men (Pascucci, 2011). Third, of these two groups, the male-dominated group appears to have greater visibility than the female-dominated group.

Recent economic hardship in Argentina has led to high unemployment, increased informal work and strategies by employers to circumvent the standard employment arrangements with little regard to being held to account (Vieta, 2014).

The garment industry typifies this trend: data from the *Household Survey* for 2012 (INDEC, 2012) indicate that the garment sector has one of the highest rates of informal work. For example, in 2008, informal employment in the garment sector had reached 78% (La Nacion, 2008; Pagina, 2008, cited in Lieutier, 2009).

In Argentina, informal garment production began with immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century (Lieutier, 2009). Garment homework was carried out by both the individual seamstress and small workshops/sweatshops, subcontracted via an intermediary. These employment relationships were characterized by "brutal conditions imposed on workers" (Lieutier, 2009: 44). Since the early 1900s, garment homework continued to grow in Argentina (Olmedo and Murray, 2002; Whitson, 2007). The small body of existing literature describes two types of Argentinian garment homework. The first is known as occurring in the "clandestine" garment sweatshops, that employ mostly male, Bolivian migrant workers, referred to as homeworkers, who have received considerable attention from the media and NGO activists (Gardetti and Torres, 2012; Lieutier, 2009; Bastia, 2007). In contrast, there are scant empirical studies on the second group: Argentinian traditional garment homeworkers, mostly female (Pascucci, 2011).

Homeworker protection is outlined in the *Argentinian Homework Law (12.713)*, proclaimed in 1941. The intention of this law was to protect homeworkers (both home-based and workshop) from the "excessive exploitation to which they were subjected in garment workshops or in their homes" (Lieutier, 2009). Simultaneously, it sought equivalent conditions for homeworkers as factory workers. Currently, there are pressures contesting the *Homework Law*. Manufacturers want their workshop employees to be considered as their suppliers, rather than employees (Pascucci, 2011). This effectively would exonerate them of any responsibility for conditions in the workshops and would reduce piece-rates. While no proposed amendments have been passed, there have been very few prosecutions based on this law in recent years, and all attempts relate to Bolivian or other immigrant sweatshop workers (Lieutier, 2009; Pascucci, 2011).

SOIVA is the registered clothing workers' union in Argentina, but it neither represents nor advocates for homeworkers, in sweatshops or home-based (Pascucci, 2011). Due to the lack of collective representation for homeworkers, an alternative, unregistered union has emerged, *Union de Trabajadores Costureros* (UTC-Alameda) which is linked to the NGO *La Alameda* (Pascucci, 2011). This union represents the Bolivian migrant sweatshop workers, and does not do any kind of work with individual Argentinian women garment homeworkers (*La Alameda*, 2015). The specific focus of this NGO is to expose the worst forms of labour exploitation, such as Argentinian business activities that are linked to human trafficking, prostitution, child labour and forced labour (*La Alameda*, 2015; Pascucci, 2011).

Method

Primary data were collected in September and October 2012 in Buenos Aires, Argentina and augmented during 2013-2014 via personal communication or using secondary sources. The principal aim of data collection was part of a broader project to document garment homework around the world. Primary data consisted of 22 interviews, researcher field notes and personal communications. Secondary data included organizational documents, industry and government reports, and various media reports, totalling 29 distinct data sources. Initial contact was made with an academic, the Ministry of Labour, the non-government organization (NGO) *La Alameda*; and the garment union SOIVA. The garment union SOIVA did not respond to our correspondence, which we speculate may be due to the fact that this union does not currently cover homeworkers in the garment industry. Initial informants provided introductions to other possible informants. For example, the initial academic contact facilitated the meeting leading to the subsequent interview at the union peak body: CTA. Subsequently, the union peak body informant facilitated the meetings with individual women garment homeworkers.

Formal interviews were conducted with the NGO *La Alameda*; Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (*Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social*, MTEySS); Argentinian academics; a union peak body (*Central de Trabajadores Argentinos*, CTA); factory workers and union delegates (*Commercial Workers Union* and *Cutters Union*); a garment brand-owner; a government sponsored, model garment and textile hub (INTI-CDI), and both Bolivian and Argentinian garment homeworkers. Organizational documents and reports were obtained or accessed following interviews, and field-notes were taken over the duration of the fieldwork.

Interviews were semi-structured, based on open, general questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994) such as: "What can you tell me about the garment industry and homework in Argentina?"; "What can you tell me about Argentinian laws governing garment homework?"; "Who is a homeworker?" Other more specific questions followed respondents' answers, in order to probe more deeply into an issue (Miles and Huberman, 1994), such as: "What are the conditions of the garment sweatshops?", "Are there any women doing garment homework?" and "What is your experience of garment homework?"

Responses were subsequently analyzed thematically and organized into broad categories (Richards, 2009) responding to the aims of the research to understand garment homework in the Argentinian context. Broad coding categories included: Argentinian garment industry (features); Argentinian garment homework and homeworkers (characteristics); social and institutional actors, behaviours and

discourses in the industry. In line with the aims of this paper, we subsequently reorganized the data, making use of Cohen's (2001) dimensions of denial. Accordingly, we re-cast the original categories into three broad categories; forms, strategies and levels of denial, as presented in Table 1. Names and identities of informants and homeworkers have been changed in accordance with ethical requirements for privacy and confidentiality.

Structure of the Argentinian Garment Industry

> The [Argentinian] clothing industry is really complex because there are many actors, various manners of commercialization and production... every case is a different story. (Fernando, INTI-CDI representative).

Our data suggest the garment industry is structured into three levels. The first level is a registered first-tier factory that may also have retail outlets or supply international and national brands. Formal factories employ full-time workers but may also employ others under informal arrangements. For example, some factory workers may be paid 4 hours work at the legal rate, but work for another 8 hours informally, at a reduced rate, which is not recorded in factory accounting. In addition to the registered factory, there are worker cooperatives: these are often 'reclaimed' factories by groups of workers. Cooperatives are self-managed and aim to pay workers according to the *Law of Work Contracts 20.744 (1974)*.

A significant proportion of factories subcontract work to small informal workshops. According to the ILO, informal economic activities are those that operate outside the formal reach of the law, or where the law is not applied or not enforced (ILO, 2014). An informal garment workshop (differently to a formal workshop) thus operates outside the formal reach of the law. To illustrate within the garment industry, similar clothing may be produced in both formal and informal enterprises, regardless of size. The principal difference between them is their registration with bodies of governance, such as fiscal and labour inspectorates. In Argentina, informal workshops constitute the second level of the industry. They do not register their workers with labour inspectorates and engage them for low piece-rates, at around half, or less, of the legal rate of pay. Both the formal factories and informal workshops further sub-contract work to individual homeworkers—the third level—whom are unregistered, receive low piece-rates, work to tight deadlines and work from their homes.

Informal (unregulated and unprotected) work has a substantial presence in the Argentinian garment industry, as it may be found in all three industry levels. According to NGO *La Alameda* and INTI-CDI, eighty percent of garment production occurs through various forms of subcontracting. These informants estimated that informal garment production is split fairly equally between

Bolivian migrant workers in sweatshops and traditional Argentinian women homeworkers. Furthermore, they estimate there are some 500,000 women garment homeworkers. Various informants, including NGO *La Alameda*, INTI-CDI (government sponsored, model garment and textile hub) and the Ministry of Labour (MTEySS), suggest that informal work is linked to both national and international garment brands. The NGO *La Alameda* website names over 100 clothing brands, including such international brands as Adidas, Le Coq Sportif, Puma, Fila, Lacoste, Levis and Zara (*La Alameda*, 2013). Government statistics suggest that the garment industry is highly fragmented with many small to medium manufacturers (Ministry of Industry, 2013).

Alongside the variety of formal/informal arrangements, the garment industry is characterized as a low-wage industry, regardless of the employment mode. The extensive use of subcontracting to smaller formal and informal workshops, and to individual homeworkers is attributed to brands and employers who wish to "minimize costs", and are "reluctant to invest" and "opportunist" (Hernan, MTEySS informant).

Invisibilization and denial of garment homework in Argentina

In Argentina, the term "homework" within the garment industry is mainly understood as the work performed by male Bolivian immigrant workers, often referred to as "slave labour", working in sweatshops, known locally as "clandestine workshops". More specifically, when the researcher put statements such as "Tell me about garment homeworkers in Argentina" or "Who are the garment homeworkers?", respondents invariably made reference to the Bolivian workers. The identification of Bolivian immigrant workers as *the* garment homeworkers is pervasive in both popular and official discourses in Argentina. For example, print and television media regularly run reports about the Bolivian "clandestine workshops" and "slave labour" (Giambartolomei, 2016). Interviews conducted at the Ministry of Labour (MTEySS), NGOs and among academic and industry representatives indicated a similar interpretation, attributing the phenomenon of the informal "clandestine workshops" and the Bolivian "slave labour" to idiosyncratic features of the local garment industry. Dominant Argentinian discourses represent the terms homework and homeworker as meaning the work activity of mostly male Bolivian immigrant workers.

Further probing about the presence of women homeworkers in the industry, as a global feature of garment supply chains, was met with lack of knowledge, confusion and resistance. Although most informants eventually agreed or admitted to these women workers' existence, there was initial resistance to seeing these women as homeworkers, based on claims that they had "always existed"

(*La Alameda*; MTEySS). The absolute reliance of the Argentinian garment industry on informal women's work is reconfirmed by the existence of concentrated informal garment retail and production localities, such as *La Salada* (*The Economist*, 2014). Eventually, it was possible to contact and interview Argentinian women homeworkers for this research. However, the collective focus on Bolivian immigrants as *the* garment homeworkers, coupled with a general ignorance in relation to local women homeworkers, suggests the "non-recognition" (Fraser, 2013; Ainsworth, 2002) of women homeworkers by key institutions, accomplishing both their invisibilization and denial of their work.

All sources reported that conditions in the clandestine workshops were dire: long working hours; span of working hours over the full 24-hour day; overcrowded housing in the garment workshop with poor amenities; and the regular practice of "hot-bedding", where one bed is used for more than one worker, so that work can continue over the 24-hour day. These conditions were confirmed in interviews with Bolivian migrants who had worked in informal garment workshops, one Bolivian homeworker commented:

> The family workshops were the worst: I was paid the least money there and had to work the longest hours, and the work was so exhausting. (David)

Despite Bolivian homeworkers having gained some public recognition, this has had no positive impact on their labour conditions, suggesting that their situation has a level of acceptance, and is thus normalized. Conversely, local women homeworkers are absent from popular and formal discourses. Like other instances of homework around the world, such as India and Chile (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008), there is evidence that Argentinian women's garment homework is trivialized and euphemized—invisibilization terminology—and ignored, normalized and renamed—denial terminology—through discourses, social relations and conditions that render it as non-work.

Interviews and conversations with the local women garment homeworkers indicated that they work arduously for very significant periods of their lives. Their work was described as highly precarious and had all the characteristics of being unregulated: working conditions included long working hours, low piece-rates; difficult/heavy work affecting worker health; high employer expectations, and tight deadlines. A homeworker interviewee commented:

> I worked for a company that made top quality men's shirts… I left it because of the mistreatment and the low pay. They paid me 30 cents for an hour. For a shirt-cuff with double seam: three cents a piece. I could make ten in one hour: it was like begging (Tamara).

Consistent with globally documented evidence about homework (Burchielli *et al.*, 2014), the Argentinian homeworkers highlighted that sewing from home

was a survival strategy, i.e. they had no other employment choices, and homework was combined with the unpaid caring work performed in the home, and thus bound up with women's traditional, unpaid role as carers. Due to the precarious nature of the homework, underpayment and isolation, it was sometimes combined with other types of paid work, such as paid domestic work in other people's houses. A homeworker stated:

> I do all kinds of work to survive: sewing, selling, and domestic work. Actually, I raised my kids on my sewing income, and then started to do domestic work because I needed to spend some time out of home. I raised seven children on my sewing (Maria).

A recognized feature of informal work is that women may engage in multiple forms of income generation and do not fit neatly into the socially constructed boundaries associated with workers on standard employment contracts and conditions (Vosko, 2010). Due to the economic imperatives to earn sufficient income to survive, homeworkers may not identify as part of the garment workforce (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008). They do what they can to get by and *normalize* their situation. Despite living within a few blocks of each other, these women were unaware of each other's work; they didn't know about their labour rights or where they could make complaints, and they were unaware of any groups or programs providing advocacy, assistance, or information on work/employment issues. While they talked about their garment production as work, they did not identify with the garment workforce or any labour collective, nor did they question or resist their conditions of work, or their status quo. This calls into question whether they identify as workers and, at the very least, suggests that they do not identify as "standard workers", indicating internalization and unwitting co-option and collaboration with external discourses about homeworkers.

Normalizing women's work at home devalorizes their work (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012), results in work denial and can be attributed to the cultural construct of patriarchy (Mohanty, 2006). The fact that homework is undertaken by women inside the socially constructed, private sphere of the home, alongside their unpaid work, allows the unpaid and unrecognized features of caring to flow to their paid work.

Consistent with the invisibilization literature (Krinksy and Simonet, 2012; Georges and Vidal, 2012), the conditions of precariousness, isolation, home location, class and gender all contribute to distinguishing homework from traditional "standard" work, justifying the sub-standard conditions of homework and the exploitation of homeworkers. A key contribution of the invisibilization literature is explaining this as a political project that serves the dominant interests of business and governments at the expense of workers. As we shall see in the next section, despite the fact that garment homeworkers may engage in this type of work for their entire lives, the seasonal and precarious nature of this work enables invisi-

bilization by *trivializing*, *euphemizing* and ultimately denying homework as work and leads to workers internalizing external attitudes (Renault, 2012). Employers and other groups *deny* women's status as workers and employees, preferring to *rename* homeworkers as part-time or seasonal workers, or housewives.

Forms, strategies, and levels of denial of homework

The *normalizing* of women's garment homework seen in workers' self-perceptions, above, is also observed in the discourses of key institutional actors, such as the state and worker advocates. The Ministry of Labour constructed the *normality* of the extensive presence of women homeworkers in the garment sector. The Ministry representative would not be drawn into reflections about local women garment homeworkers, a literal denial, preferring to focus instead on the aberrant features of the garment industry, and its predilection for cheap, "low-road" approaches "over which the regulatory capacity of the state … has great difficulty in making regulatory advances" (Hernan, MTEySS informant). At the time of data collection, there was no official discussion, nor any programs or policies focused on homework. The features of garment production are known to facilitate labour abuses, however, regulation, which is a critical redress mechanism, is not being invoked at all for the local women homeworkers and has only rarely been invoked for the Bolivians (Pascucci, 2011). In fact, the state clearly ignores these workers, as seen in the lack of any policy on the issue, and its discourse illustrates the process of *justifying* as it rationalizes not doing anything because it is too "difficult". The state's position illustrates the *literal and implicatory type* of forms of denial, justifying its inaction to address labour violations or injustices and enabling the status quo in relation to Argentinian homework (see Table 2).

Similarly, the NGO *La Alameda* reluctantly acknowledged that women homeworkers historically existed in the national garment industry and were, in fact, the backbone of the sector:

> The industry has always depended largely on seamstresses working at home. (Nelson: INTI-CDI representative and *La Alameda* member).

Despite *La Alameda* speculating the presence of around 500,000 women homeworkers, their historical prevalence was constructed as so commonplace as to be completely "normal" and unremarkable. According to the framework of denial, if an event is normal, then inaction is justified (Cohen, 2001). *La Alameda* only advocates on behalf of the Bolivian sweatshop workers and has neither contact nor any advocacy role with the local women homeworkers. Through its exclusive focus, the NGO is *renaming* the Bolivians as *the* homeworkers. We represent this in Table 2, as an example of the strategies of denial from our empirical evidence.

TABLE 2

Dimensions of invisibilization and denial of Argentinian garment homework

Denial / Invisibilization Category	Sub category	Example
Forms	Literal : ignoring, outright denial / invisibilization	Government officials refuse to discuss the existence of the women homeworkers
	Interpretive : giving a different meaning from what seems apparent	The Bolivian immigrants are the only homeworkers.
	Implicatory : not taking responsibility; "justifications, rationalizations, and evasions" to deal with difficult external events	The State inaction on labour rights abuses, attributed to problems in garment sector.
Strategies	Normalizing	"500,000 Argentinian women garment homeworkers' is unremarkable".
	Justifying	The State is "incapable" of regulating the aberrant garment sector.
	Renaming	The meaning of homeworker as Bolivian sweatshop workers. Women homeworkers renamed as "just housewives".
Levels	Personal	Individual women homeworkers internalize the domination and lack of recognitio
	Cultural / Organizational / institutional	Capitalism; Patriarchy ; Neo-liberal globalization. The State's failure to use its powers. Employer "low road" strategies : - Recruiting vulnerable migrants - Women homeworkers, insecure & irregular work on low piece-rates
Socio-Political Forces	Politically motivated actions to implement neoliberal agenda :	
	Partial visibilization	Bolivian migrant workers- low levels of recognition and representation, sweatshop work conditions.
	Invisibilization	Women homeworkers made invisible via no recognition or representation and poor work conditions.

The *levels of denial* in the framework refer to all the participants in the processes of denial including the dominant cultural elements (patriarchy and capitalism/neoliberalism). As noted in the scarce literature on informal Argentinian garment production (Pascucci, 2011; Burchielli *et al.*, 2014), a generalized lack of knowledge/awareness was encountered in relation to women garment homeworkers and their labour issues. There are scant reports or evidence on the subject and no targeted activism, nor government policy, indicating their non-recognition:

> There are no specific initiatives. Individual women garment homeworkers are not a recognized labour collective, protected by the state as a subject of policies. I know of no research into the matter, and if there is some [local women's garment] homework, it is quite invisible (*Women's Policy Advocate:* Central de Trabajadores Argentinos).

The failure to recognize women garment homeworkers contributes to and perpetuates their invisibilization. Non-recognition has an impact on different forms of labour protection, such as labour collectives and government policies and programs, all of which contribute to the invisibilization process (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012; Georges and Vidal, 2012; Krinsky, 2012).

The data suggest that a range of *institutional and social actors* are implicated in participating in the denial of homework. First, the state and its powers, including its regulatory and social policy capabilities and responsibilities. Despite existing homework laws specifically naming individual women garment homeworkers, and the state's responsibility for providing a functional labour inspectorate (Lieutier, 2009), no-one invokes the legislation on their behalf. Moreover, *La Alameda* and INTI CDI state that inspections do not occur: "They simply don't do that" (Fernando: INTI-CDI Coordinator). Second, employers who recruit vulnerable workers from Bolivia to work in sweatshops and who depend on individual local women garment homeworkers for production are not meeting minimum labour standards. This results in both groups of homeworkers experiencing poor conditions that invisibilize them as workers. Third, the registered garment union, SOIVA, participates in the denial of work of both groups of homeworkers by proposing to ban informal work and refusing to represent homeworkers (Pascucci, 2011). Similarly, the NGO *La Alameda*, that only recognizes and campaigns for Bolivian homeworker rights, also participates in the denial of work of local homeworkers. Fourth, the Argentinian media only reports on Bolivian migrant homework, and thus denies the existence of and invisibilizes local women garment homeworkers.

The institutions and social actors participating in homework denial are represented in Table 2, under *levels* of denial. Both groups of homeworkers are invisibilized via social relations, however the invisibilization of local women homeworkers is more profound: they have no representation; they are not the subject of any public policy initiatives; they do not enter any form of public consciousness. Being situated in the private sphere, combining paid work with their unpaid reproductive roles, the invisibilization of the women homeworkers is exemplified and accomplished through the ingrained inequalities due to class and gender. As suggested earlier, *individuals* are co-opted and unwittingly collaborate in the denial and invisibilization of their work, as they internalize their domination and exploitation (Renault, 2012). This is demonstrated in the women homeworkers' discourses reflecting a lack of knowledge about their rights, as well as the lack of

resistance regarding their isolation and powerlessness. The denial and invisibilization of the women homeworkers and their working conditions is partly explained by the social relations of patriarchy and capitalism/neoliberalism, reproducing women's domination and exploitation.

The interconnected forms, strategies and levels of denial provide a lens to reinterpret the realities of Argentinian homework and demonstrate how the state and powerful business actors abrogate their responsibilities. The invisibilization literature supports this argument by proposing that the denial of work and work invisibilization are politically motivated: a cheap, flexible and informal labour force, such as that provided by homeworkers, coupled with weakened collectives and regulatory environments fulfill the aims of neoliberalism that "increasingly depends on invisibilized workers to function" (Krinski and Simonet, 2012: 18). This insight can be integrated into the work denial framework as a new dimension: Socio-political forces of denial (see Table 2).

Invisibilization/visibilization and denial of work

Combining the insights of invisibilization with the denial framework results in an expanded framework of denial and invisibilization. Table 2 suggests that invisibilization and the denial of homework are socially constructed and accomplished by individuals, various social actors and institutions, and the dominant cultural and political processes (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012; Georges and Vidal, 2012), which they serve. In Argentina, as in other parts of the world, there is a trend towards reduction of the state's labour inspectorate role and a reluctance to implement labour laws in regard to informal work, which contributes to invisibilization (Krinsky, 2012; Krinsky and Simonet, 2012; Georges and Vidal, 2012). Similarly, we can observe the effects of patriarchy and capitalism in the Argentinian garment industry, that profits from the use of invisibilized women working in the private sphere, from their homes, to combine productive and reproductive roles, as described earlier. These are concrete manifestations of the social relations that produce invisibilization while also highlighting the critical roles of key institutional/social actors, such as the state, and NGOs, unions and the media.

Invisibilization and visibilization are two sides of the same coin and are similarly produced. The Bolivian homeworkers are partially visibilized due to the facts that *La Alameda* has taken up their struggle within their broad, organizational charter to fight against extreme forms of exploitation, such as human trafficking, prostitution, child labour and forced labour. A small, informal union was formed (UTC), giving the mostly male, Bolivian homeworkers a collective identity and a common purpose and voice. By making it their role to expose the living and working conditions of the Bolivian immigrants, the NGO engaged the media in

their campaign to inform the general population about their plight. In the face of a non-functional labour inspectorate, the NGO conducted and documented reports of labour violations, which in turn were used (albeit a small number of times) to invoke the *Homework Law 12.713*. All of this resulted in Bolivian homeworkers entering the public consciousness, eventually forcing the state to prosecute a small number of employers for violations of the *Homework Law 12.713*. However, conditions for Bolivian homeworkers have not improved.

Visibilization, as defined earlier, has never been achieved for Bolivian homeworkers. Our informants stated that employers subject to prosecutions quickly closed operations and fled, reopening elsewhere (*La Alameda*). This is a common strategy in the garment industry internationally, leaving the homeworkers without work and without recourse to wages recovery (HWW, 2004). While the Bolivians' immigration status is unresolved, they are forced to work informally in sweatshop conditions, remaining largely invisibilized. Moreover, our evidence suggests that the Bolivians leave the garment industry as soon as their migration status is formalized, which means that the NGO is constantly organizing newly arrived Bolivian homeworkers, and the small informal 'union' has limited potential to grow in size or capabilities, resulting in limited power. At best, Bolivian homeworkers achieve *partial visibilization*, which, as noted in the literature, shares greater similarity with invisibilization and the denial of work (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012; Georges and Vidal, 2012).

Visibilization, occurs when workers are employed under standard employment contracts and are not coerced into informal arrangements. This enables collective organizing and bargaining. As the opposite of denial, visibilization (or recognition) of work can arguably be catalogued using the same dimensions shown in our framework of denial (Table 2). Visibilization thus involves the engagement of institutional and social actors together with individual workers, to define, determine and acknowledge instances of work regardless of where it sits in the formal/informal continuum. Similarly, visibilization relies on social relations and processes that support recognition, such as regimes that promote worker representation and rights, including state policies in favour of worker advocacy, and representation by active unions, functional legislation and monitoring regimes, together with aligned business behaviours.

There are very clear implications from our discussion above for the many thousands of unacknowledged and politically neglected Argentinian garment homeworkers. Like the millions of informal garment workers around the world (ILO, 2014), their visibilization, if it is ever to come about, requires concerted efforts from the state, employers, unions and other civil society actors. This could start simply with a union or worker advocacy group taking an active interest in homeworkers and their working conditions. Although not without complexities,

homeworker organising efforts (HWW, 2004) can assist the process of visibilization and recognizing homework as a valid form of work. *La Alameda*, with its high national profile, informal garment union and advocacy expertise, could play a significant role in Argentina.

Conclusion

In this paper, we analysed the invisibilization and denial of work of Argentinian garment homework using insights from the invisibilization literature (Krinski and Simonet, 2012) and applying a separate framework of denial (Cohen, 2001) to theorize the position and power of two categories of homeworkers. In our analysis, we argued that Bolivian immigrant homeworkers were partially visibilized, due to NGO advocacy that led to public awareness and limited associational power. However, we noted that as there were no improvements to their working conditions, they remained largely invisibilized, which can be explained by current social relations, as manifested in business practices, the reluctance of the state to monitor and control the garment industry, the lack of a strong union presence, and the effects of capitalism.

We further argued that the work of individual women homeworkers was denied and they were invisibilized: they had no representation; they were not the subject of any public policy initiatives; they did not enter any form of public consciousness; they internalized their own invisibilization; and they were unable to draw on any associational power. The same social relations that explain the denial of their work explains their invisibilization, but they are additionally invisiblized through the effects of the patriarchy.

We extend the invisibilization literature by adapting Cohen's (2001) concept of denial and applying it with invisibilization to theorize homework. Drawing on invisibilization and the denial of work as key insights, we extend both concepts. We thus contribute to deepening understanding of homework invisibilization, highlighting its links to inequality that impact on women and other informal workers, and the obstacles they face for accessing rights to improve their work and economic well-being. By documenting the Argentinian instance of homework, we are contributing to the general knowledge of homework, which is still an under-researched area. Whereas our data set conveys a broad picture of key actors within the Argentinian garment industry, we acknowledge that the number of homeworker interviews in this research is limited. Given the estimated size and the lack of public policy on garment homework in Argentina, more research about homeworkers is required to support social advances for homeworkers.

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SUMMARY

The Invisibilization and Denial of Work in Argentinian Garment Homework

Homeworkers are a globally significant part of the informal workforce, commonly regarded as invisible because their work is not recognized (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008; Prugl, 1999). In this qualitative study, we examine homeworker invisibility in the case of Argentinian garment homework using the concepts of work invisibilization and work denial.

The work invisibilization concept (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012), referring to devalorized work resulting from the neoliberal agenda, is used to understand recent global trends away from standard work arrangements/protections. Arising from the social relations of domination, invisibilized work is precarious, with irregular/non-existent employment contracts and relationships. Invisibilization thus provides a valuable lens for analysing homework, which shares key characteristics with emerging forms of invisibilized employment. Homework however, has not transformed but has always been informal, characterized by inferior standards. To account for this, we articulate a concept of denial of work.

Cohen's (2001) concept of denial describes broad dimensions, including different forms, strategies and levels of denial. Adapting these, we construct a framework to analyze the denial of Argentinian garment homework, enabling a detailed examination of the specific social actors and processes involved in casting homework as non-work.

In considering the denial of homework in relation to invisibilization, we argue that these are related but distinct concepts. Used together, they help explain the low-power condition of two types of garment homeworkers in Argentina while also accounting for their differences: the mostly male, migrant workers employed

in clandestine workshops (such as the Bolivians interviewed in our study), and the traditional, mostly female, Argentinian garment homeworkers.

Our findings suggest that Bolivian immigrant homeworkers are partially visibilized due to NGO advocacy. However, as there are no improvements to their working conditions, they remained largely invisibilized through the effects of capitalism. By contrast, traditional women homeworkers have no representation and internalize their condition: their invisibilization is explained by the cumulative effects of capitalism and patriarchy.

KEYWORDS: home-based work; Argentina; garment industry; invisible work; women's work.

RÉSUMÉ

L'invisibilité et le déni de l'emploi à domicile dans l'industrie du vêtement en Argentine

Globalement, les travailleurs à domicile constituent une partie importante de la main-d'œuvre informelle et ils sont communément considérés invisibles parce que leur travail n'est pas reconnu (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008; Prugl, 1999). Dans cette étude qualitative, nous examinons l'invisibilité du travailleur à domicile dans l'industrie argentine du vêtement à domicile, en recourant aux concepts d'invisibilité et de déni du travail.

Le concept d'invisibilité du travail (Krinsky et Simonet, 2012), lequel réfère à la dévalorisation du travail résultant de l'agenda néolibéral, est utilisé pour comprendre les tendances globales récentes d'éloignement des protections ou des contrats de travail « standard ». Découlant des relations sociales de domination, le travail invisible est précaire, avec des contrats de travail et des relations d'emploi non-existants ou irréguliers. Le processus d'invisibilité procure alors une loupe intéressante pour analyser le travail à domicile, lequel partage certaines caractéristiques clés avec les formes émergentes de l'emploi invisible. L'emploi à domicile, toutefois, ne s'est pas transformé, mais a toujours été de nature informelle, caractérisé par des conditions de travail inférieures. Afin de rendre compte de ce phénomène, nous développons le concept de déni de l'emploi.

Ce concept, emprunté à Cohen (2001), décrit de grandes dimensions, incluant diverses formes, stratégies et niveaux de déni. Adaptant cette réflexion théorique, nous avons construit un cadre d'analyse du déni de l'emploi à domicile dans l'industrie argentine du vêtement, permettant un examen en détail des acteurs sociaux et des processus spécifiques impliqués dans l'édification de ces emplois à domicile comme du non-travail.

En considérant le déni de l'emploi à domicile en relation avec le concept d'invisibilité, nous soutenons qu'il s'agit là de deux concepts reliés, mais distincts. Pris ensemble, ils aident à expliquer les conditions de faible puissance de deux types d'emploi à domicile dans l'industrie du vêtement en Argentine, tout en rendant

compte de leurs différences : d'abord, celui des travailleurs, principalement des hommes et immigrants, employés dans des ateliers clandestins (comme les Boliviens interviewés dans notre étude); et, ensuite, le secteur traditionnel de l'emploi à domicile argentin, composé principalement de femmes.

Nos résultats suggèrent que les travailleurs à domicile immigrants boliviens sont partiellement rendus visibles grâce au travail de défense de leurs intérêts par des organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG). Toutefois, comme il n'y a pas d'améliorations de leurs conditions de travail, ils demeurent largement invisibles sous les effets du capitalisme. En revanche, les travailleuses à domicile traditionnelles ne sont pas représentées et, de ce fait, elles internalisent leurs conditions : leur invisibilité s'explique par les effets cumulatifs du capitalisme et du patriarcat.

MOTS-CLÉS : emploi à domicile, Argentine, industrie du vêtement, travail invisible, travail féminin.

RESUMEN

La invisibilización y la negación del trabajo de costura de ropa a domicilio en Argentina

Globalmente, las trabajadoras a domicilio constituyen una parte significativa de la fuerza laboral informal, consideradas invisibles porque su trabajo no es reconocido (Burchielli *et al.*, 2008; Prugl, 1999). En nuestra investigación cualitativa examinamos esta invisibilidad a través del caso de los costureros argentinos que trabajan a domicilio, utilizando los conceptos de la invisibilización del trabajo y la negación del trabajo.

El concepto invisibilización del trabajo (Krinsky and Simonet, 2012), refiriéndose al trabajo desvalorizado resultante del proyecto neoliberal, se utiliza para entender las tendencias recientes, observadas globalmente, que se alejan de las disposiciones/protecciones laborales normativas. Nacido de las relaciones sociales de dominación, el trabajo invisibilizado es precario y caracterizado por contratos y relaciones laborales irregulares/no-existentes. Por ende, la invisibilización ofrece un enfoque propicio para analizar el trabajo a domicilio pues éste comparte unas características claves con las formas emergentes del trabajo invisibilizado. Sin embargo, el trabajo a domicilio no ha sido objeto de transformación: desde sus orígenes siempre ha sido un trabajo informal, con normas inferiores al resto. Para reflejar este hecho, formulamos un concepto de negación del trabajo.

El concepto de negación de Cohen (2001) traza unas dimensiones generales que incluyen distintas formas, estrategias y niveles de la negación. Nosotras adaptamos estas dimensiones para construir un esquema para analizar la negación del trabajo de los costureros a domicilio en Argentina. Esto nos permite destacar los actores sociales y los procesos que hacen que el trabajo a domicilio aparezca como no-trabajo.

Enfocando la negación del trabajo a domicilio en relación a la invisibilización, argumentamos que éstos son conceptos distintos pero relacionados. Utilizados conjuntamente, nos ayudan a entender la carencia de poder para dos grupos de trabajadores costureros a domicilio en Argentina, a la vez de entender algunas diferencias entre ellos: a- los trabajadores inmigrantes, en su mayoría hombres, empleados en talleres clandestinos (como lo son los bolivianos entrevistados en esta investigación), y b- el grupo tradicionalmente conformado por mujeres, es decir las costureras argentinas que trabajan a domicilio.

Nuestros resultados indican que los trabajadores bolivianos son parcialmente visibilizados por el activismo de una ONG. Sin embargo, como esto no resulta en una mejora de sus condiciones laborales, ellos siguen siendo invisibilizados por los efectos del capitalismo. Por otro lado, las trabajadoras a domicilio tradicionales no tienen defensa alguna; internalizan su condición y su invisibilización se explica por los efectos cumulativos del capitalismo y el patriarcado.

PALABRAS CLAVES: trabajo a domicilio, Argentina, industria de confección, trabajo invisible, trabajo femenino.