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## Far from the Factory? Investigating how women travel to work in rural Cote d'Ivoire

By Rijak Grover<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Sociologists have long argued that spatial mismatch, or costs for workers associated with the distance from home to work, determines the extensive margin of labour supply of urban areas in developed countries (Kain 1968; Wilson, 1987). But what about in rural contexts where labour supply vastly exceeds demand? Using data from fieldwork in Findon<sup>2</sup>, Cote d'Ivoire, this article examines an unexplored aspect of spatial mismatch theory, namely, its application to a rural context in the developing world. Sociological research has suggested the best way to correct spatial mismatch is by either bringing people to jobs or jobs to people. The cashew processing firms of CAFAC<sup>3</sup> have brought jobs to people by locating their factories in secondary towns and cities around Cote d'Ivoire, hiring workers from the surrounding rural areas. An estimated ninety-five percent of these workers are women. Qualitative evidence from interviews provides new insights into how far these women travel to work in an attempt to see if the spatial mismatch has been corrected by CAFAC. Policymakers and private sector actors are urged to take into account the spatial-determinants of work-related arrangements when creating more, and better, agro-processing jobs for women in rural areas.

*Keywords:* West Africa, female employment, spatial mismatch, Cote d'Ivoire, rural women

### Introduction

Due to rapid urbanisation across Africa, workers are leaving rural areas in search of jobs in cities. Urbanisation rates in Africa are expected to double in the next few decades, from 36 percent in 2010 to 60 percent by 2050 (AfDB, 2012)<sup>4</sup>. This leads to urgent questions about available economic opportunities for rural workers and the distances they travel to access jobs. Off-farm employment opportunities such as formal jobs in labour-intensive agro-processing may offer remunerative low-skill alternatives to subsistence farming in rural areas. Research by Adam et al. (2016) in Tanzania shows how movement of rural workers out of quasi-subsistence agriculture into higher-productivity jobs in other sectors and locations resulted in welfare gains for households. Though more jobs – and more research on the quality of these jobs – is needed, with a special eye towards the gendered aspects of these urbanisation trends across Africa.

Efforts have been made by multilateral institutions and local statistical agencies across Africa to capture sex-disaggregated survey data. But rural women in developing countries are often

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<sup>2</sup> Name of town has been changed.

<sup>3</sup> Name of company has been changed.

<sup>4</sup> No doubt part of this will be due to in-situ population growth

invisible in policy discussions due to paucity of qualitative data from the field. This research intends to fill this gap in qualitative data by looking specifically at how women workers differ in their ability to overcome social and spatial constraints to access formal jobs in rural areas.

The aim of this article is threefold. Firstly, this research aims to better understand the lived experiences of rural female workers beyond labour market data. Secondly, it hopes to investigate the extent of the 'spatial mismatch', or the costs workers incur (in terms of time, money, and personal safety) due to distance between their homes and their workplace and how this interacts with other constraints. This research takes a case study approach using data from fieldwork in Findon<sup>5</sup>, Cote d'Ivoire where the cashew processing firms of CAFAC<sup>6</sup> have brought jobs to people by locating one of their seven factories, hiring workers from the surrounding rural areas. Thirdly, the article seeks to understand if CAFAC have been successful in using one solution to address spatial mismatch, that is 'bringing jobs to people' and reducing costs associated with distance to work by locating their factories close to rural women workers and employing them in formal wage work for the first time in their lives.

### **Spatial mismatch theory may offer an explanation and solutions**

The 'spatial mismatch hypothesis' was originally conceived by John F. Kain (1968) in his paper "Housing Segregation, Negro Employment, and Metropolitan Decentralization". The theory is understood as the broad set of geographical barriers to employment for racially disadvantaged and vulnerable workers in urban areas. 'Spatial mismatch' refers to the cost workers bear due to the distance between home and work, or available economic activities. The basic underlying premise is that for the working poor, geography matters. I argue that geography matters not only for the urban poor in developed countries like the U.S. (Kasarda, 1985; Wilson, 1987) but for rural workers in developing countries, too.

Taking inspiration from the work of Preston and McLafferty (1999), this article defines spatial mismatch as "the geographical barriers to employment for rural women workers in Cote d'Ivoire". Not being physically close to available jobs, particularly high-value added activities in manufacturing (as the economy undergoes structural transformation), is said to reduce employment opportunities for workers who are already disadvantaged by employer discrimination and low levels of education (ibid.). Distance to work can further disincentivise vulnerable workers when compounded with commuting difficulties (Houston, 2001; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1990) or lack of access to information about job opportunities (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998; Hellerstein, et al., 2008). In general, effects of the mismatch lead either to unemployment or low-waged, unskilled, residentially isolated workforces as discussed by Gobillion, et al. (2007). To study the extent of these effects on vulnerable workers, it is critical to consider the experiences of rural woman in developing countries who are arguably among the most disadvantaged workers in the world and who face a variety of constraints to labour force participation.

### **Constraints to women's employment**

Work on spatial mismatch theory by Kain (1968) and Kasarda (1985) has recognised that space is connected to, and embedded in, social structures, cultural realities and labour market processes. In this way we can see how spatial constraints interact with other barriers working

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<sup>5</sup> Name of town has been changed.

<sup>6</sup> Name of company has been changed.

women may face. Work by Kluggman and Twigg (2015) provides a good review of the literature on barriers to formal employment for women in developing countries which may include age, geographical location, culture, access to finance and markets, number of children (dependency ratios), household composition and size, and gender of household head. Women in developing countries face physical as well as non-physical constraints when entering the formal labour force (please see Table 1). The physical constraint of distance, which has not received enough attention by scholars thus far, is at the heart of this discussion.

**Table 1: Constraints to women's access to economic activities and inputs**

Constraints → Limited access to	
Non-physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Markets</li> <li>- Financial services</li> <li>- Land and assets</li> <li>- Jobs</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Legislative</li> <li>2. Cultural</li> <li>3. Education/skills</li> <li>4. Family duties</li> <li>5. Access to finance and capital</li> </ol>	
Physical	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Distance</li> <li>7. Manual labour</li> </ol>	

Source: Author's own illustration

Legislative constraints directly affect levels of female labour force participation in Cote d'Ivoire, due to restrictions on working hours and the types of industries women can work in (Hallward-Driemeier and Hasan, 2012). According to the *Women, Business and the Law* database (2016), Cote d'Ivoire has five legal differentiations in the treatment of women and men. Examples can be found in the Civil Code of Cote d'Ivoire (1964) which dictates that men should hold the status of 'head of the family' (Article 58) and have the right to decide what happens to marital property (Article 81). Article 67 says women can only be employed if such work does not clash with 'the interests of the family'. Even with such legal restrictions, Cote d'Ivoire has been recognised in the literature as making great advances in its post-civil war reconstruction period by creating entry points for increased women's participation in a shifting socio-political landscape (Croke and Smith, 2013).<sup>7</sup>

### The Ivorian context

In reality, these constraints affect each woman differently and they often change over her lifetime depending on her age and level of education. One constraint that is true for most women is the lack of available jobs in the economy. Cote d'Ivoire's overall macro-economic environment is characterised by job-scarcity. The National Employment Strategy of Cote d'Ivoire (République

<sup>7</sup> Even if laws are important in equalising access to rights, they are only directly relevant to waged employees, who are a very small minority of working women or men in Cote d'Ivoire. Despite their limitations in practice, progressive laws do represent an important step forward and may translate into societal shifts and behavioural change.

la de Côte d'Ivoire, 2012) acknowledges the broad scope of employment challenges, including agricultural and non-agricultural self-employment in the informal sector where most people are employed. These jobs are typically characterised by relatively low-productivity and earnings. However, there is lively academic debate on this by scholars like La Porta and Schleifer (2011) and Rodrik (2014) who associate low productivity and low product quality to informal firms, while others like Mbaye et al. (2014) recognise there are real barriers to securing better protected, more productive jobs and therefore work to provide realistic policy prescriptions (Fields, 2014). In Cote d'Ivoire, the issues of reducing unemployment and creating jobs have not been adequately addressed at the national level, though it is clear that growing the modern wage sector is necessary in the long term (Premand, 2017).

A modern wage sector means diversifying economic activity sectorally and spatially. There is interest by policymakers to promote the development of secondary towns and cities outside of the economic capital of Abidjan on the Atlantic coast. The cashew processing factories of CAFAC were chosen as a case study for this research because they have located their seven factories in secondary towns and cities around Cote d'Ivoire, hiring workers from the surrounding rural areas. During interviews, women expressed the sentiment of not having other alternative employment opportunities by using the phrase "*il n'y a rien*" (there's nothing to do/no opportunities for us). Yannick at the local employment agency in Findon confirmed that the CAFAC was the major formal employer in the town, and that he and his team spend all their time recruiting for the factory. Felicite also said '*il n'y a rien*' but later in the interview said "*c'est meilleur de rien*" / "atleast it is better than nothing". This theme was very prominent in many interviews:

"il y a plus d'autres choses a faire"/ there's nothing else to do - Marcie

"t'as pas l'opportunité"/you don't have any other opportunities - Sylvie

"y a rien"/there is nothing - Hannah

"y a rien a faire/there is nothing to do – Celine

"il y a rien a faire"/there is nothing to do – Alice

Official unemployment rates are relatively low in Cote d'Ivoire (6.7 percent of the total workforce as of February 2014), which is quite characteristic of low-income countries with a large proportion of working poor. More illustrative markers of the Ivorian labour market are the high rates of under-employment (from earnings, not hours worked) and self-employment (47.5 percent of the workforce) (Premand, 2017). As in many other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, such rates are alarming due to demographic pressures that will require rapid absorption of young workers into the labour market over the coming decades. Current rates of job creation are struggling to keep pace with population growth, and country officials are looking for innovative ways to boost job creation levels – especially in rural areas. As such, the theory of 'spatial mismatch' (bringing jobs to people) is being explored in this article as a potential way to boost low employment levels in disadvantaged areas by bringing workers to jobs, or jobs to workers (Gobillion et al., 2007).

This article focuses on the cashew sector, even though Cote d'Ivoire's economy is dominated by cocoa as the largest producer and exporter of cocoa in the world. The untold story is that Cote d'Ivoire is also the world's largest producer of cashews per capita, and the world's fourth largest overall, yet less than 10 percent of Cote d'Ivoire's production is processed domestically (FAO, 2012). The remaining 90 percent is exported raw for processing overseas (mainly to Vietnam and India). This means the country, and the local workers, lose out on the gains from value-addition that happens overseas. The context of the Ivorian cashew processing

sector is important to mention because in Cote d'Ivoire it is a national development priority to increase the share of cashew crop processed domestically, making this research particularly pertinent and relevant.<sup>8</sup>

### **Why labour force participation matters for rural women in low-income settings**

A large number of academic studies have provided empirical evidence from rigorous evaluations to illustrate the positive effects of boosting female labour force participation in developing countries. Increasing female labour force participation has been shown to advance macro-economic development (Carter and Barrett, 2006; Doss, 2002), reduce poverty levels (Duflo, 2012; Breza, 2005; Agarwal, 1997), and increase welfare maximisation for the household (Udry, 1995).

Questions about boosting labour force participation are inextricably connected to efforts to reduce poverty at the household level. Sixty-thousand people living in poverty were interviewed for the *Voices of the Poor* report (World Bank, 2000). These workers, from all over the world, identified jobs as their pathway out of poverty. A study in Turkey that economically modelled a slight rise in female labour force participation from 23 to 29 percent found that it could help reduce poverty by 15 percent if women took full-time positions, or eight percent if they had part-time jobs (Turkey's State Planning Organization, 2009). Such significant effects on poverty reduction are due in part to the redistribution of labour income by women workers. For example, Borges (2007) found that globally female-headed households reinvest as much as 90 percent of their income into their families compared to 30 to 40 percent contributed by men. Other studies have found women's economic empowerment within families increases women's access to assets (Guyer, 1997) and impacts child nutrition and education levels (ILO, 2009), potentially forming a virtuous cycle of poverty alleviation.

It is not that women are economically inactive. Globally, the majority of women do work informally in household or small enterprises.<sup>9</sup> According to UN Women (2019) the share of women in informal employment in developing countries was 4.6 percentage points higher than that of men, when including agricultural workers. However, for the purposes of our discussion it is important to acknowledge that the formal gender employment gap is quite large.<sup>10</sup> Women comprise half of the world's population but make up only 40.9 percent of the formal global labour market (IFC, 2013). This means that almost half of women's productive potential is not accounted for in the formal labour market, compared to only 22 percent of men's labour not utilised (ILO, 2010), which directly affects economic growth and social equity.

Women in Cote d'Ivoire may benefit from new opportunities as the country takes initial steps up the value chain in export crops like cashew. According to CAFAC records, an estimated ninety-five percent of these workers are women. Looking to the future, there is great potential in agro-processing in the cashew sector, especially for women who have traditionally been excluded from cash crop cultivation for cultural reasons. There does not seem to be the same stigma for

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<sup>8</sup> Côte d'Ivoire's National Development Plan (NDP) focuses on a number of sectors with high value-added potential, among which cashew figures prominently. Explicitly, the government target is to increase the share of the cashew harvest processed domestically to 100 per cent.

<sup>9</sup> . The International Labour Organization (ILO) generally defines 'informality' by firm size and lack of legal registration, effectively confining their sample to household and small enterprises.

<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, the scope is restricted to employment in the formal sector, though there is extensive literature on the working poor in Africa who are informal workers in agriculture; up to 82 percent according to Beegle, et al. (2016).

women's employment further up the value chain as agro-processors for work inside a factory rather than hard labour on a farm. Private companies are only just beginning to take advantage of the potential of setting up processing plants in Cote d'Ivoire. These formal jobs have less gender 'cultural baggage' and agro-processing firms have shown an increasing demand for female employees (World Bank, 2015). Yannick, the head of the local employment agency who recruits women for the factory, told me female employment rates in these factories was high because "women peel the cashews more delicately than men". Whole cashew nuts peeled by hand are sold on the international market at a higher price per kilogram than pieces of cashews that have been damaged during processing.

In this way, cashew processing can be seen an example of how higher value-added economic opportunities for rural women in secondary towns may have the potential to create systemic change at both the macro and micro level: from sector-specific GDP growth<sup>11</sup>, increased firm productivity and improved wellbeing in the community and household. However, most importantly perhaps, are the potential empowerment effects for women workers themselves.

### **Data collection in rural Cote d'Ivoire**

Access to women workers was dependent on having local contacts in Findon. I was able to establish a relationship of trust with respondents because I had been 'adopted' by a local family who were well-respected in the community. Many hours were spent on their family compound sitting under the shade and greeting passersby. Word spread quickly in the town that I was visiting from a university in England and I was interested in talking to factory workers.

In terms of selecting a sample, employed women were chosen for the study in order to measure whether the spatial mismatch had been corrected in rural areas, and to see how far they travelled to get to work. The importance of distance to work is explored through qualitative interviews with two trait categories of employed workers: employed women who live close to the factory and those who live far away. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of workers (n= 11) who work in peeling and grading tasks in in the CAFAC factory, which employs a total of 593 workers in Findon.

This research used snowball sampling to identify respondents, taking inspiration from Atkinson and Flint (2001) who used this methodology to access hard-to-reach populations when looking at spatial distribution and individual experiences of social exclusion. This approach identifies subjects who then refer researchers to other respondents (Vogt, 1999). The factory workers were considered a hard-to-reach population due to the sensitivity of talking about their work on factory premises. The shifts at CAFAC are from 6 AM to 2 PM with an hour-long lunch break and from 2 PM to 10 PM with an hour-long dinner break. It was not clear whether workers commute together in groups or alone, but given that it is shift-work, it is unlikely that the same groups of workers go to work together regularly.

I met workers in the garden across from the factory during their lunch break, and asked those workers to refer me to colleagues who lived both far and close to the factory in order to capture two trait categories of interviewed workers. In addition, I also interviewed women who did not work in the factory (n=7) and men from the factory and the local community (n=4) in order to build a wider contextual framework in which I could situate my research. Fieldwork was conducted during two rounds: from 8 – 11 December, 2016, when I visited Findon for the first

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<sup>11</sup> The extent to which a sector of the economy contributes to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is the total value of goods produced and services provided in a country during one year.

time to deduce the research feasibility, and again from 28 March – 7 April, 2017 when I conducted interviews in French which were recorded by hand in a notebook, and as voice notes on an iPhone. Environmental variables affected my productivity: with temperatures reaching nearly 45°C it was only possible to conduct interviews for a few hours a day.

### **How far from the factory?**

Eight of the interviewed workers from both factory sites reported that they walk to work. Three women take taxis occasionally, such as Marcie,<sup>12</sup> who reported taking taxis at night. The distribution of time travelled from home to work ranges from 5 minutes to 45 minutes, with an average travel time of 21 minutes. Workers also told me it was difficult to give an average because sometimes they slow down or speed up when walking to work, which highlighted the value of qualitative data as this is a variability margin that cannot be captured in large-scale quantitative survey data.

When asked the binary question (yes/no) of whether distance is a constraint to their labour force participation, all interviewed workers (n=11) said that distance is not a constraint for them to do formal work in the factory. After six interviews, or saturation, I rephrased the question slightly to ask whether the location of the factory played a role in whether they could work or not – both categories of women (those who lived far and those who live close) said it was not.<sup>13</sup>

How far are these women willing to travel to work? The limit for one-way trips by foot was 4 km (n=1) or 5 km (n=3) with one worker giving a range of 5-7 km. Two respondents gave me the distance in time and said their limit would be 1.5 to 2 hours. This illustrates how factory workers perceive their commute, in either distance travelled or time spent. Respondents mentioned that 5 km is approximately the same distance that women from the neighbouring village travel every Wednesday to come to the market and sell their products. This was an interesting comparison for them to make, as market women only make the journey once a week but often carry heavy loads back and forth to neighbouring villages around Findon.

When Claude, a manager at the cashew factory, was asked what he expected the limit might be for workers he said 5 km, and when Yannick, the head of the local employment agency, was asked he said 3.5 km. I asked them this question in order to triangulate the data I was receiving from factory workers, and it provides some insight into how men in the community perceive women workers. Claude's response was in the same range as workers and Yannick's was much lower, indicating that he may not be aware of worker realities as Claude who works in the factory and speaks with workers regularly. In interviews with Claude he recognised that women worked long hours at the factory and that they often left their children at home; he said the education of the children was a woman's responsibility. Yannick mentioned there were more candidates than available jobs because it was the only formal employment available to them in the town.

Five interviewed workers expressed willingness to travel more than four times longer than their current average travel time for Findon. This could be due to a scarcity of jobs, as workers kept repeating to me "il n'ya rien a faire" ("there's nothing here to do"). Women acknowledged that there are costs (time and money) to traveling longer distances but appeared willing to spend the time if there was an opportunity to earn income, as long as the transport costs were not so high

<sup>12</sup> All worker names have been changed for confidentiality.

<sup>13</sup> By virtue of already working at the factory, these are women have either (i) not faced the barrier of distance or (ii) have overcome distance as a constraint. However, it was still possible that workers would express unwillingness to travel long distances.



as to substantially subtract from her daily earnings. Sylvie, for example, said that if the factory was far away from her home she could not spend the majority of her income traveling to work – there would be hardly anything left to spend on herself and her family. This illustrates a type of cost-benefit analysis on the part of the worker, and highlights a very important point: even if they are very eager to work there may be a point where work becomes more expensive than staying at home.

To this end, I also asked about how much they would be willing to spend on transportation to work. For Mathilde, the monetary limit was 600 FCFA (USD\$1) on transport a day “in order to go home with some money in your pocket”. Rose said that the limit would be 400 FCFA (USD\$0.70) a day on transport given her wage of 35,000 FCFA (USD\$60) for two weeks. Alice also said 200 FCFA (USD\$0.35) for a one-way trip. Jacqui said that a 400 FCFA (USD\$0.70) round-trip was the amount she was willing to spend but because she was able to get a discount from a taxi driver for being a regular customer she usually spends 150 FCFA (USD\$0.30) to go home. This is not a lot of money for a multinational like CAFAC, and yet these calculations factor into the daily lives of its workers.

Not all workers were able to give a limit of what they were willing to pay in FCFA. Some workers talked about the distance to work not in terms of money, but in terms of safety. Felicite mentioned it is unsafe to take a taxi at night, when the last shift at the factory finishes at 10 PM. In terms of safety, a former worker, Cindy, told me that she knew of women who had been assaulted on the way to work in the morning.

Workers said they would be willing to travel by bus or taxi for two or even three hours each way if the cost for such transport was provided. Colette said she would travel to work on a bus for free for up to four hours a day, and Rose reported she would travel on a bus for three to four hours one-way (six to eight hours spent travelling per day to work). Women workers in Findon expressed their desire to work as a symptom of the necessity to do so – reflecting a heightened need in a context of extremely limited availability of formal jobs. Rose emphasised the binding nature of the limited employment choices available to her as a false kind of autonomy to choose: “C’est pas un choix, mais c’est un choix” (it is not a choice, but it is a choice). This may reflect how workers feel it is a false choice due to lack of other available job opportunities.

### **Distance to work as one of many constraints for rural women**

By virtue of being employed at the factory, women workers in the CAFAC cashew factory have already overcome many unique combinations of constraints. So perhaps it is not a question of constraints, but eagerness to work despite the obstacles? In my interviews with women workers at CAFAC, they acknowledged that their level of education qualified them for only low-skilled jobs in the factory as the majority had not completed high school. This hints at a larger trend in Cote d’Ivoire where 43 percent of girls complete primary school (UNESCO, 2015). Low levels of female participation in education can translate into lower self-confidence and career aspirations (Dercon and Singh, 2013). It must be noted that all line managers in the factory without manual tasks were men, most likely due to their level of education. Such findings of a clear gendered division of labour within the factory is reminiscent of discussions by scholars like Mies (1986) about predatory modes of production that are intrinsically patriarchal and based on ‘progress’ that requires the structural separation of subordinates. Only a few female respondents had completed primary education (n=4) whereas Claude, a CAFAC manager had attended university in Abidjan and decided to come back to Findon because “you can breathe better [here]” and “people know

who you are". Indeed, he was known in Findon as 'Claude-CAFAC' which might illustrate how central his job at the factory was to his identity and how he was perceived in the community.

Another important interaction between the topics of education and employment was that the majority of workers I spoke with had school-aged children. One woman told me that she decided to leave the house to work in the factory only once her children were old enough to go to school. During interviews, women often mentioned their responsibilities at home and the extent to which this influences labour market decisions. Of the five non-CAFAC workers I interviewed, only Susanne expressed an interest in working in the factory but was restricted in her ability to do so because of her two young children and the fact that she could rely on the income of her husband to provide for them.

Qualitative data collected for this research with workers at CAFAC suggests that women do consider distance from home as an important factor when choosing to work at the factory when they have children. One worker spoke to me about how the factory is close to her home so she can make arrangements for her child to come and eat lunch with her in the garden at midday. In fact, this is in line with historical evidence of women adapting to their double or triple burden of responsibilities at work and at home for as long as there have been humans. Archaeologists hypothesise that some of the most significant innovations in human history have stemmed from women's requirement to carry and care for young children while doing other work, for example the invention of the hunting net and baby sling which allow women to work while carrying a child. Scholars such as Gottlieb (2002) investigate the extent to which the mobility of women is hampered by pregnancy, nursing or childcare, and he includes examples from traditional West African markets and farms run by women with active work lives who retain their commitment to raising children. Parsons (1943) was one of the earliest sociologists to look at adaptation responses to changing gendered occupational roles in the United States. More recent work in Tanzania by Manzanera-Ruiz et al. (2016) investigates how men and women adapt to the changes in the production of cash crops in relation to household responsibilities, and the effect this has on women's empowerment.

## Discussion

Through interviews with women workers, distance to work can be seen as inextricably connected to a variety of other constraints for women including education levels, childcare responsibilities, and the availability of other economic opportunities. By virtue of already working at the factory, interviewed respondents are women who (i) do not experience distance as a constraint or barrier to employment, or (ii) have overcome distance as a constraint. During interviews, there exists a strong bias for respondents to appear as 'motivated workers' who are willing to do anything for a job. However, it is still possible that workers could have expressed an unwillingness to travel long distances, but they did not. Furthermore, it may not be possible for workers to imagine a counterfactual they have not experienced, i.e. working far from home when they live close by or vice-versa. The majority of women said they are willing to travel 5km by foot to get to work, a limit that could be a useful consideration for private sector actors and policymakers, thereby identifying the extensive margin of labour supply which is an important finding.

In trying to understand the question that motivated this research, the theory of spatial mismatch does seem to hold in low-income contexts characterised by job scarcity. If we understand spatial mismatch to be the cost workers bear, then CAFAC factories have reduced costs for workers

by locating their factories closer to where workers live. For example, interviewed workers were able to bear financial costs for transportation by taxi if needed. However, there are costs to her security that do warrant further attention, especially if it is unsafe for her to travel some routes at certain times of the day. Some workers expressed their costs in terms of distance, and others expressed it as a function of time spent commuting. The most pressing constraint that respondents mentioned repeatedly was that of finances, and many workers were willing to travel many hours by bus if it was free.

In general, the puzzled faces of workers gave me the impression that this was the first time they had really thought about distance to work. But this was a specific methodological choice. Questions about distance to work are quite neutral and less sensitive than questions about other constraints, such as whether permission from a male relative is required for her to work in the factory. Indeed, after we had been talking for around 20 minutes a respondent named Celine who was an unmarried 22-year-old woman opened up and said she had to get permission from her father before going to work in the factory. I don't think she would have felt comfortable telling me that if it was the first question I asked immediately upon meeting.

Considerations about a woman's role at home and at work leaves us with more questions about how she is able to balance her responsibilities. Perhaps correcting the spatial mismatch is as much about reducing the costs and information asymmetries for workers as it is about increasing the time that workers can spend on other household and community tasks through a reduction of commuting times. By bringing together the theory of spatial mismatch with considerations of rural women's work inside and outside the household, we see opportunities to reduce her triple time burden in the spheres of the farm, factory, and family.

Oakley (2005) points to the reality that responsibility in the household may either restrict their work to the domain of the home or create a 'second shift problem' of unpaid housework and childcare in addition to waged work. Analysis from across 18 Sub-Saharan African countries, including Cote d'Ivoire,<sup>14</sup> provides more recent evidence that African women on average have less available time to work in the job market because of their responsibility for housework and care work (Arbache et al, 2010). In his analysis of women's situation in the history of different economic modes of production, Engels (1942) identifies the effect capitalism has on the family unit as "progress in a contradictory way for women". On one hand, it draws women into wage labour, but once there, it intensifies her oppression by creating a double burden of economic exploitation and domestic labour (Pollert, 1983).

This potentially contradictory relationship between capitalism and the family<sup>15</sup> in the literature points to the tension between public and private spheres (Gardiner et al., 1975; Gardiner, 1995; Oakley, 2005; Pollert, 1983). According to Mies (1986) the division between public and private spheres historically traces it back to the European bourgeoisie of the late eighteenth century, when family started being considered private compared to the public realm of economic and political activity. That is to say, the responsibility of childcare and housework is seen as the

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<sup>14</sup> The 18 countries covered in this study are: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia.

<sup>15</sup> The family has rarely been treated as an economic system with its own form of oppressive labour relations (Delphy and Leonard, 1992 in Oakley, 2005); Chant (1997:33) reminds us that influence occurs on a two-way street, and to not forget 'how the family has influenced capitalism, including the structure of the labour force, and other aspects of society.'

private concern of the family or household<sup>16</sup> where decisions are also made about the sexual division of labour – who does what and how. Yet these decisions are shaped and formed by market forces outside the household. Federici (2012) finds the sexual division of labour between productive and reproductive work makes it possible for women's unpaid work to be exploited (see also Dalla Costa, 1974). Since class and sex oppression overlap<sup>17</sup>, women may experience exploitation from being both women and members of the working class (Chant 1997).

According to interviewed workers, these labour market decisions are often made in tandem with considerations of household welfare and how income can be used for the family. One worker told me she paid for the schooling of her younger sister and medicine for her father in addition to the household expenses for her three children and husband. After all, at its etymological base, *economics* is the “science of managing a household” coming from the Greek word *oikonomia* for *oikos* which means household, house, family (Sedlacek, 2011). Bold transformative ideas by authors such as Federici (2012), among others, call for the uprooting of deep gendered divisions of productive work and the international redistribution of reproductive labour that might have the potential to redefine the sexual division of labour for the benefit – or welfare - of all.

## Conclusion

In undertaking research with rural women in developing countries, this article aims to make these women and their lived experiences more visible. Of course these results from Findon cannot be generalised, but rather taken as illustrative examples of the lived reality of women factory workers in rural Cote d'Ivoire.

In the context of rapid urbanisation, there is potential for private sector firms to capitalise on latent labour supply in rural areas. The aim of this article was to look at the distance women travelled to work at a cashew factory in order to see if the spatial mismatch had been corrected. However, the successful correcting of the mismatch was found to be not so much in the commuting times that women report, which would be evidence that CAFAC has ‘brought jobs to people’ but rather by the extent to which shorter commuting times may potentially allow women to do other things to reduce her ‘triple burden’ of responsibilities: on the farm, in the factory, with the family.

During fieldwork, I spoke to working women who were highly motivated to work hard. For example, Mathilde said “if there was more [work], I would do more [work]. I don't want to do nothing.” Juliette summarised the motivation expressed by all the workers I interviewed, when she said: “you must find a way to use your intelligence, your courage and your ideas.” In job-scarce contexts with high levels of under-employment, agro-processing companies can almost locate their factories anywhere in rural Cote d'Ivoire and be assured a steady supply of low-skilled workers who are willing to work hard.

However, some workers did express limits to how far they are willing to travel to work, which is often related to how much income they are earning and the extent of their responsibilities at home. Appropriate socially - and spatially - informed interventions are needed to assist working

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<sup>16</sup> For our purposes households are defined in the same way they are in population censuses of developing countries, ‘spatial units, where members live in the same dwelling and share basic domestic and/or reproductive activities such as cooking and eating’ (Chant, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> The interconnected between gender inequality and class inequality, though relevant, falls outside the scope of the discussion presently at hand. However, it is important to address here the understanding that ‘inequality in resource allocation hit women the hardest, adding burdens to their powerlessness, but also affect women of other classes...inequalities that transcend barriers of class, race, ethnicity, religion and nationality. [As] recognition of these commonalities is crucial for clear-headed research but also effective action (Papanek, 1990).

women who are taking up formal jobs for the first time in their lives. Transport vouchers or free shuttles could go a long way in connecting low-income workers with jobs in the formal wage sector, and may reduce safety concerns for women who are walking to work. The infrastructure does exist to make this a viable possibility in Cote d'Ivoire due to the highly developed cocoa sector which set up transport corridors that connect most of the country. In addition, private sector actors who are looking to capitalise on the growing cashew sector in Cote d'Ivoire would do well to consider the location of the local labour supply when deciding where to locate agro-processing factories, while offering safe jobs that pay a living wage.

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