EMPLOYMENT OF FILIPINAS AS NANNIES IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-SOCIALIST CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract: ***During the post-socialist development in the Czech Republic, many official and informal socio-cultural institutions have been reorganized: from the political and economical systems to gender and family relationships. The society became engaged in global processes, including migration and the global care market. Commodification and commercialization of domestic work have developed. Employment of Filipinas as nannies and housekeepers – although not statistically significant yet – represents a symptomatic example of the transformations and current development and a re-definition of a widespread social practice realized in many foreign countries.***

This paper presents an analysis of commodification of care. Specifically, I look at the ways intermediary agencies operate and how they approach potential customers offering care services of live-in Filipina nannies as a specific product with certain characteristics. I also focus on how the agencies construct the domestic work itself in order to examine whether it is recognized like any other work. The second part of the text deals with the working conditions as they are perceived by the nannies and with the nannies' position in the family, considered within the broader gender relations. The article is based both on qualitative interviews with agency representatives and with nannies and on an analysis of websites of intermediary agencies. Although the text is rather descriptive, it seeks to connect the Filipina domestic workers' employment with current socio-economic changes.

Keywords: ***care commodification; Czech Republic; Filipinas; intermediary agencies; post-socialism***

„We want to provide the women and mothers who build our homes with it [energy and strength]. And to provide more time for leisure activities and hobbies without remorse for men and fathers." It means energy and strength which are actually provided and personalized by nannies and housekeepers from the Philippines – even thought they are missing in this text. On the same agency website, the nannies are marketed through a more specific representation: "*A housekeeper from the Philippines can become a particularly discrete member of your family for a period of time and help you in the household without you having to fear a loss of privacy. Filipina women are hard-working, loyal, accommodating and careful, patient and reliable in caring for children and seniors, as well as vigorous when it comes to household tasks*." These two fragments of a Czech intermediary agency website demonstrate three important issues concerning the employment and living conditions of migrant domestic workers: the gender relations in the employer family, the position of the nanny or housekeeper within these relationships, and the way Filipina nannies and the domestic work are portrayed. All these issues will be discussed in this article, based on findings from my qualitative ethnographic research[1].

The article will focus on the phenomenon of Filipinas employed as domestic workers in the broader context of globalisation and care migration, and an analysis will be provided of the ways in which commercialisation and commodification of care are being accomplished. Specifically, I will look at the way intermediary agencies operate and how they approach offering nanny and housekeeper services as a product with defined characteristics, designed for certain customers. I will also describe the ways in which agencies define domestic work. The second part of the text will focus on the working conditions as they are perceived by the nannies and on their position in the family within the broader gender relations. The broader macro-social framework of public policies will also be considered.

This article is based both on qualitative interviews with agency representatives and with nannies and on an analysis of websites of intermediary agencies. Findings will be compared with existing research on the employment of migrant domestic workers in Western Europe and the USA. I consider the employment of

1 The text is based on my research realized in Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Humanities, Institute of General Anthropology with financial support of the Charles University Grant Agency (projects *Ethnicity, gender and care: care commodification and analysis of the work conditions of Filipina domestic workers in the Czech Republic,* No. 618912 and *Filipina nannies in Czech households: negotiating working rights and conditions and the role of (transnational) networks,* No. 418213) and of the university resources for specific research (SVV No. 265701).

Filipina nannies in the Czech Republic symptomatic of some social and economical changes. Although the text is rather descriptive, the aim is to relate the events and processes to transformations that have occurred in the Czech Republic, i.e. in the post-socialistic country.

The globalisation of care and the role the Czech Republic plays in it

Global cities are places not only of highly qualified work but also of the *dead-end jobs* (Hondagneu Sotelo 2001: 6) which also include some service sector jobs. The demand for care services in the – especially Euro-American – global cities is on the rise due to a combination of many social, demographic and economic factors: On the one hand, the employment of women has been steadily increasing; on the other hand, the support network of extended families has been diminishing in recent decades. The pressure to work longer hours is constantly growing. In addition, the ways of spending leisure time has changed; many families no longer want to devote their spare time to household tasks. The demand for domestic workers is further stimulated by a lack of care services, both in scale and quality, offered by the state, both for children and the elderly. As our society grows older, an even higher demand for professional personal carers is to be expected.

Sociologist Fiona Williams (2012) describes six trends which she has observed within the care systems of European welfare states. These six convergences are less connected with the nature of the care system as such, but rather are influenced by the standing of these countries in the global care and health market. One such trend is increased commodification and commercialisation of care. Both state and individual family care are being supplemented or even replaced by commercial services. Care has become a product of exchange. The extent of automatisation and modernisation that took place in the 20th century led to the idea that most domestic tasks would be performed by machines. However, reality has shown that this assumption is false and commercialized domestic work as a share of the labour market has been expanding.

According to official statistics from the International Labour Organisation (ILO 2013: 19), there are at least 52.6 million domestic workers all over the world, the majority of them (93%) being women, and especially migrants. These numbers are based on official data from individual country registers; the actual numbers may well be much higher: it is estimated that there are approximately 100 million domestic workers on the global market (ILO 2008: 13). Sociologist

Saskia Sassen further clarifies the context: "it seems reasonable to assume that there are significant links between globalisation and women' s migration, whether voluntary or forced, for jobs that used to be part of the First World women's domestic role" (Zimmerman 2006: 10).

In a world of growing inequalities, both in economic and political terms, the "servants of globalisation" – as Rhacel Parreñas (2001) calls them – are heading mostly from the global South and East to the global North or West. "As care is made into a commodity, women with greater resources in the global economy can afford the best-quality care for their family", says Parreñas (2001: 73). She describes the international situation as a global division of reproductive work.

The above outlined situation can also be observed in the Czech Republic and especially in the global city of Prague with its surroundings. It is related to the processes and changes that have occurred during the socio-economic transformation after 1989. During this time, many official and social institutions, from the political and economical systems to gender and family relationships and roles, were reorganized.

> "...[T]he transitions in Central and Eastern Europe have involved transformations in masculine and feminine gender identities that have been accelerated by globalisation and mediated by local norms. (Those local norms are themselves the result of past social and political practices.) Consequently, gender relations between men and women shape the way global forces impact former socialist societies. But these global forces, in turn, reshape gender relations." (True 2003: 2)

Before 1989, the official communist ideology stressed equality of women and men especially in the labour market and the state created facilities to provide care for children and the elderly, so that full employment of all people could be reached. Nevertheless, the traditional gender regime persisted in society as household tasks and care work were still considered part of the role of women, and women were also expected to produce or procure consumer goods which were scarce in socialist Czechoslovakia.[2]

The transformation process after 1989 brought with it a discreditation of previous equality-based approaches as well as an end to full employment, amongst others through giving mothers incentives to return to the home and

[2] See e.g. Verdery 1996, True 2003, Křížková 2009 for more details on the gender issue during and after socialism.

to care for the children (True 2003). However, this did not happen on a larger scale. But, despite working, women were supposed to take care of the family and household: the traditional gender regime was maintained. According to research by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, "the current division of work still resembles the traditional model. Men hardly share domestic tasks and they do not carry responsibility for the family life" (Čermáková 1997: 71).

Besides the gender regime, it is important to consider the economic context, specifically with regard to the labour market and the role of the state. "Contrary to government and societal expectations, young Czech women have chosen to keep their jobs and pursue new career opportunities in the market system rather than fulfilling traditional mothering roles and "reproduce the nation", states Erlanger (2000; in True 2003: 67). The keeping of jobs also stems from the economic necessity of two incomes in the family.

Nevertheless, the number of women in employment is lower than that of men. The employment rate of women has decreased and since 1993; it fluctuates between 45 and 50% (with a tendency to decrease slightly), while the rate of unemployed women has stayed within the band of 5 to approximately 10%[3]. Considering the availability of flexible and part-time jobs (especially important for women wishing to return to work after maternity leave), it is surprising to see that only 4% of the Czech population (6.5% of Czech women) work in this way (Formánková et al. 2011). There is a significant segmentation in the labour market: half of all women are employed in only 10 different types of careers (out of 107) and, at the same time, eight of these categories are predominantly performed by women (Křížková – Sloboda 2009). This can be narrowed down further: more than 90% of all women are employed in the following professions: nurses and caregivers, housekeepers and cleaners, and shop assistants (Křížková – Sloboda 2009: 23).

In conjunction with these economic changes, the transformation towards a capitalistic economy impacts on the social welfare state. Significant cuts to services the state used to provide have been made. Currently, the strong demand for places in nursery schools and other pre-school facilities cannot be met, which has led to an increased interest in nannies, housekeepers or other domestic workers. Tens of intermediary agencies offering such services have been established,

3 This data was supplied by the Czech Statistical Office, table "Employment and unemployment from the 1993". This table and current updates of (un)employment statistics may be found online at www.czso.cz/csu/redakce.nsf/i/zam_cr.

marking the beginning of the commodification of care. Many Czech citizens offer care services, but at the same time, the number of migrants working in Czech households has been increasing. The Czech Republic has become a destination for migrant domestic workers and has also become integrated into the global migration of care workers.

There are no reliable data indicating the number of migrant domestic workers yet. The Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs registers merely 49 (Sněmovní tisk 708/0, 2012), while official ILO statistics count around 3,000 domestic workers (Schwenken 2011: 52). However, according to the experience of NGO social workers, one in two female migrant workers has at least once completed some type of domestic work during her stay in the Czech Republic (Faltová 2012). In general, the migrant domestic workers originate from Eastern European countries such as Ukraine, Russia or Moldavia, but some of them also come from the Philippines. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, there were 296 Filipinos (of them 214 women) with work permits and 18 who did not require one in 2011[4]. However, only 19 women and one[5] man have been officially registered as domestic workers. However, considering that many contracts of domestic workers state a different type of work, such as administration, teaching or education, it can be assumed that there could be as many as 120 Filipina domestic workers living in the Czech Republic.

Thus, although Filipinas in the Czech Republic do not yet represent an important immigrant group in statistical terms, their employment is an interesting phenomenon both from the global perspective (considering the role in the global care market) and as a symptom of the changes (or even stagnations) in post-socialist Czech society in the context of neoliberal reforms and norms, a weakening welfare state as well as the persistence of the traditional gender regime.

4 The classification system used is called NACE. It found that in 2011, 214 women of a total of 314 persons were employed in the following areas: S – various: 107 persons (of those, 54 were women), P – education: 34 persons (33 women), T – domestic work 20 (19 women), J – work in the sector of information and communication: 25 persons (21 women).

5 Performance of domestic tasks is very gendered; the majority of the nannies or housekeepers are women. One of the agencies mentioned two men; however, they performed more "male tasks" in households such as janitor work, taking care of dogs or washing cars.

Research methodology

The issues of globalisation, migration of care and socio-economic changes in the post-socialist Czech Republic have been briefly introduced and, in this context, the employment of Filipina nannies has been discussed. This will be followed by further relevant concepts and theories such as the commodification of care, discourse and representation, and triple invisibility in the labour market and its segmentation.

The commodification of care consists in transforming care services, including emotional services, into objects of economic exchange and – as described in the previous chapter – it is also currently an important process interconnected with globalisation. The sociologists Zimmerman, Litt and Bose (2006) conceptualize four types of care crises, which all are linked to global dimensions of care and gender. Care commodification is one of them:

> "Commodification in the context of globalisation and in terms of gender issues can be considered a crisis because, as Sassen has suggested, the idea of service sector jobs as empowering for women who otherwise would not have employment possibilities is attenuated in the context of global care chains and survival circuits. Women and migrants may end up located in harsh conditions from which it is not easy to exit. Rather than economic security and independence, these jobs often bring low wages, unregulated work conditions, and even vulnerability and sexual abuse." (Zimmerman – Litt – Bose 2006: 21).

Within the analytical concept of care commodification, the role of intermediary agencies and the redefinition of use and hiring of Filipina domestic workers will be examined. First, I will analyse how Filipina nannies and their services are presented by intermediary agencies in the Czech language. Concepts of discourse and representation are crucial here: Representations do not reflect real things and real people but rather contribute to a creation of their significance. Such meaning is never fixed. On the contrary, it is always re-created and transformed. Discourse, then, is a system of representations which contains both language and social practices. "[Discourse] defines and produces the objects of our knowledge" (Wetherell 2001: 72). Social actors either confirm a discourse or change it over time; it is historically specific. It is through representational practices that actors aim to fix and enforce a specific meaning (Hall 2002: 325).

We can study discourses on different levels: as social action (i.e. how they are modified or confirmed during social interactions), from the point of view of social actors (i.e. how people identify themselves within or beyond a specific discourse) and from the perspective of politics of representation – i.e. how the others are defined, what they represent, how different representations relate to and interfere with power distribution (Wetherell 2011: 14pp). The third approach is the one used here.

Currently, there are three agencies specializing in procuring the work of Filipina nannies in the Czech Republic. For my research, I have analysed their websites and interviewed representatives of these agencies. I have examined the ways in which agencies present the nannies to potential customers and how they define domestic work. The latter issue is significant as the agencies are influential in shaping the public perception of domestic work. We will also touch upon the issue of how agencies represent households and families who would (potentially) employ Filipina nannies and housekeepers as it reveals information both about gender relations as well as about the significance of Filipina nannies for them.

The second part of the text deals with the labour market and specifically with the perception of working conditions of the nannies. According to the theory of triple invisibility (Brettell – Hollifield 2000), the position of migrant women in the labour market is characterized by such conditions as low wages, the label of unqualified work, and a lack of regulation. This is due to invisibility of migrant women in three dimensions: their class, ethnicity and gender. In addition, it is connected with segmentation of the labour market, which means a different allocation of women and men to different careers, regardless of whether it is a personal choice or a result of external pressure (Křížková 2009: 31). Feminist theories explain the segmentation as a result of patriarchy and the inferior position of women both in society and in the family. Being responsible for family and household, they have fewer opportunities in the labour market.

The research thus touches upon broader issues of power and status inequalities and on resistance. At the same time, the macro-social framework imposed by the state's social and migration policies is taken into account, since the residence status and the employment situation of domestic workers are seen – among others by sociologist Bridget Anderson (2000) – as factors with a crucial influence on the working conditions.

Methodologically, I have carried out qualitative, gender-based research which combines thematic interviews and discursive text analysis. My findings are based on comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann 2010), carried out away from

the workers' place of employment due to limited access to the private households. I have interviewed representatives from all three agencies and have repeatedly interviewed six Filipinas working as nannies and housekeepers. I have also attempted to get in touch with employers, which I have succeeded in twice so far[6]. The names of all research participants have been changed to protect their identities.

To give readers a better idea of the research participants, I would like to briefly describe their motivation, family situation and previous working experience. All workers have been living in the Czech Republic for between one and 16 years and all of them have worked or still do work as live-in nannies. To be more specific, Carla (30)[7] and Sophia (25) are single with no children. They both migrated to the Czech Republic with the help of intermediary agencies, and after one year or less of working as live-in nannies, they both opted not to live with their employer (one on her own initiative, the other one through the agency). It is their first time living abroad and their original motivation was primarily to gain experience. However, they are also financing the education of their siblings or other relatives' children back in the Philippines. Carla used to work for an international company, whereas Sophia studied to be a nurse.

On the other hand, Maria (45), Barbara (40), Bituin (40) and Theresa (60) all have children and first came to the Czech Republic to assure their livelihood. Only Barbara has a husband; the other workers are either single mothers or widows. Their relatives took care of their children in the past; some of them still do. While Maria and Barbara first came to the Czech Republic through agencies, Bituin and Theresa did not. They all started as live-in nannies, but none of the women live with their employers anymore. They were or are sending money to the Philippines to financially support their children and other relatives, either to fund education or – in some cases – to build a house. They all have lived in other foreign countries before.

They are in different social, economic and family situations and they all have different personalities. While some of the nannies were more cautious about practical procedures and descriptions, other women were – for example – very sensitive about displays of inequality and power tripping.

Even though my research was located primarily in the Czech Republic, it is important to state that many relations and processes are transnational. In addition

6 It is quite difficult to interview employers, since they are keen on protecting their own privacy.

7 I always state only an approximate age.

to maintaining relationships with families and friends in the Philippines, "Czech Filipinas" do also stay in contact and exchange information with fellow citizens living in other countries of the world and of the EU. This is illustrated by organized visits to Vienna that Filipinas living in Southern Moravia participate in or visiting family members working in different EU states.

Agency employment of Filipina nannies

The aim of this section is to present a (short) history and the role of an intermediary agency in the relationship between an employed nanny and her employer, taking into account the Czech context. First, I will investigate motivations for creating an agency specialized in intermediating work for Filipina nannies, as well as the cultural redefinition of this practise. Second, I will focus on the role and impact of such agencies which will also be compared with the situation abroad (mostly the USA and Canada), described by other academics. Although the Czech agencies place both live-in as well as live-out nannies and housekeepers, initial positions are usually as live-in workers (since agencies explicitly recommend that the customers hire a live-in nanny).

Many Filipinas carry out domestic work all over the world, which has given them the reputation of being hard-working and caring, practically born nannies. Even the Czech intermediary agencies usually remind us that "*the Philippines are a traditional country of origin for nannies*" (so one agency webpage). It was primarily the reputation and experience from abroad that inspired local entrepreneurs to sell their services to families in the Czech Republic. *"My friend living in Qatar used to have ... a Filipina nanny, so I could see that it could work well even in Czech families. I had the impression that the families there were more relaxed, especially the women. Because women here are always stressed, trying to manage work, do the shopping, take care of their children and the household and in addition, trying to muster enough energy to also keep their husbands happy*," says one of the agency owners, Jana, also reflecting on the gendered division of labour and the two shifts of women. Other agency representatives and employers presented a very similar story. The diffusion of an internationally important sociocultural practice and phenomenon paired with an entrepreneurial opportunity to cover a gap in the market were among the most important motivations of all the agency representatives.

However, I argue together with Igor Kopytoff that the significance lies not in the fact of the adoption of alien practice but rather in "the way they are culturally

redefined and put in use" (Kopytoff 1986: 67). To understand the specificities of the local cultural context, I will contrast the situation in the Czech Republic with California as described by Pierrette Hondagneu Sotelo.

The first difference lies in the fact that in California, having a nanny or a housekeeper has become a widespread phenomenon: "...demand is no longer confined to elite enclaves but instead spans a wider range of class and geography in Southern California" (Hondagneu Sotelo 2001: 8). By contrast, in the Czech Republic it is still largely limited to upper-class families disposing of high economic capital. This will be discussed later in more detail.

According to Sotelo, the position and predominance of women of different ethnicities in domestic employment depends on level of education, family structure, language proficiency and also on racial stereotypes (2001: 54). I think that, in the Czech context, it is also the language and partly even the family structure and stereotypes which matter. While knowledge of English enables Filipinas in the USA to find more qualified work than for instance Latinas do, in the Czech Republic it has two different implications: first, it is one reason why they are considered more luxurious as they may teach the children they nurse English, thereby helping the family to become bilingual, and thus more global and modern; second, not knowing the official language (Czech) makes them desirable for families who fear exposure and are concerned about their privacy, but at the same time it makes the Filipinas more vulnerable and less oriented in society. As the Filipinas usually come without their families (who remain in the Philippines), they are considered more flexible and adaptable to family needs than women from Eastern Europe who are more likely to have relatives in the Czech Republic or to be able to visit their family abroad. Last but not least, the idea of exoticism and of an Asian submissiveness may play a role in the case of Filipinas.

In other words, in addition to the reputation of being hard-working and caring, and the potential to enable a more relaxed life for families, Filipinas are also preferred because they can add prestige and cultural capital to the family without necessarily affecting privacy.

The hiring of Filipina nannies is a rather recent phenomenon, closely related to post-socialist transformations and to prioritized economic development. The creation of intermediary agencies occurred approximately four years ago. Today, there are three Czech agencies specialized in hiring Filipina housekeepers and nannies. They differ slightly with regard to their target customer, and hence in their appearance; while one website advertises services of Filipina nannies as a luxurious product, the other two present it as something rather conventional,

with a broader range of customers in mind. They said that they had found Filipinas for, collectively, approximately fifty families in 2012 alone. There are also individual families who hire nannies on their own initiative, as well as other agencies that do not specialize in Filipina nanny services but nonetheless can arrange them. In addition, nannies can be procured through foreign agencies.

Since agencies operate in a free market environment, their aim is to maximize profits, which in this area means bringing together the most suitable pairs. Sociologists Hondagneu Sotelo (2001) and Bakan and Stasilius (1995) described in their work, based in the USA and Canada respectively, the services local agencies offer as their unique selling point; they inquire into (or make assumptions about) the employers' needs, check references, match the nannies with the families according to their requirements, and act as a mediator in potential conflicts. This description applies to countries like the US and Canada, where the nannies concerned already live in the given country prior to employment. By contrast, the situation in the Czech Republic differs, due to very limited experience with immigration and globalized care. Here, agencies often hire women still living in the Philippines and predominantly offer the services of live-in nannies. As a consequence, compared to their counterparts in North America, Czech agencies practically tend to offer a narrower range of services. This will now be discussed in more detail.

Czech agencies maintain that they procure employment under fair conditions, partially as a reaction to what happened after the economic boom when many problematic and even exploitative practises of some of intermediary agencies came to light. According to the websites analysed for this research, the agencies put forward minimal requirements: a valid working permit ("corresponding to their working position" or defining their duties of a nanny), a net salary above a certain minimum, the payment of taxes, social and health insurance charges, and in some instances insurance against liability for damage to third parties. They also provide (or expect the employing family to do so) free accommodation, a return ticket to the Philippines, in some cases free boarding, four weeks of paid holidays, access to the Internet and a mobile phone for the nanny to be able to communicate with the employer. To guarantee these promises, agencies will have to do more than merely act as an intermediary. They will have to examine the nannies' references and monitor the working conditions in the households.

I will now compare the services offered by the agencies and relate them to the Czech context. As for the first task, checking the references of the Filipina applicants is difficult for Czech agencies, given the distance and limited contact

with their country of origin (although one claimed to work with a local there). Agency representatives usually interview applicants via Skype; however ultimately, they leave the decision of whom to hire to the families. This is partly due to the fact that personality and English language skills are more important to most employers than formal education.

Secondly, agencies collect information from prospective employers, such as the extent of work required, the size of their house and family. However, the type of accommodation offered and the extent of privacy provided can rarely be established reliably by the agency, as they are dealing with private households. As one of the agency owners confirmed, "*I don't have the right to interfere with their privacy."* She did add that, of course, it was only a question of time until she could convince the family to invite agency representatives into their home. However, verification does depend on the willingness of the families to cooperate.

The third task of the agency is to mediate conflicts between employers and employees. The agencies I interviewed confirmed that this happens, both on the agency's initiative as well as after a request by the nanny or the employer. Nevertheless, agencies cannot be considered a neutral party, given that it is the employers who finance them. In this respect, the experiences of nannies differ widely.

Fourthly, agencies process visas as well as work and residence permits, which is the primary reason for families to approach agencies. Such work is carried out even after a legal ban on agency direct employment (since 2012). Immigration policies were of utmost concern for all the agency representatives. In the interviews, all agencies complained about a lack of transparency and ad-hoc changes in public policies, which, in their view, pose a threat to entrepreneurship. The constant changes of regulations concerning intermediary agencies and the employment of foreigners, contradictory decisions by various official institutions, corruption and a lack of up-to-date information were mentioned as the main barriers in hiring migrant workers. A new regulation limiting any issuing or prolongation of visas or residences which was introduced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs led agency owner Jana to reconsider running her business:

> *"I thought everything would be dealt with by 1st July [when the regulation will start to apply]... and that after that, I would only need to update the permits ... But I am not so sure now.... the rules are not clear, I do not know if I can ever manage the process without new documents that will be impossible for me to obtain... It is like fighting against windmills."* (Jana)

For this reason, an employer without sufficient knowledge about the procedure could quickly feel demotivated and might give up. If changes are unpredictable and not transparent, this will render the direct employment of migrant domestic workers without the help from an agency complicated. One employer, Zdena, criticized the immigration policies as well, and she felt that there was a lack of sensitivity to questions of gender:

> *"[Employing nannies] mostly helps women. But again, it is men who make the decisions. Men like Drábek [the ex-Minister of Employment] and others. They have no idea how much time it takes to keep up with household tasks. And for a woman to have equal standing in the family, she needs to work."* (Zdena)

Filipina nannies represented by the agencies[8]

The main concepts examined in this section are representation and discourses as systems of representation. First, I will discuss textual (including visual) representations of Filipinas working as nannies and housekeepers, created by the agencies. The aim of this section is to examine how they and their services are commodified. Representational practices regarding domestic work are of relevance as they show whether and how domestic work is considered and presented as a type of work (again, from the point of view of the agencies who are an important actor in building the public image of the profession). Furthermore, the representation of Filipinas will be compared with women of other nationalities. While the first two issues were analysed primarily from the web site texts, this latter part was based on personal discussions with the agency representatives. Last but not least, I will attempt to trace implicit discourses about family (more specifically a family with a Filipina nanny which is usually a two-breadwinner family with high economic capital).

Local agencies represent care services by Filipina nannies as a product with distinct features. They offer English-speaking women who are quiet and hard-working, who do not complain and who are able to perform all the necessary tasks. I recall here the quote from the introduction of this text in which one agency lists many positive and desirable features of nannies: "*Filipina women are*

[8] This chapter sums up findings of the analysis of Filipina nannies' representation in the Czech Republic, described in the article "Nannies by Birth? The Representation of Filipino Maids by Employment Agencies and in the Media in the Czech Republic" (Redlová 2012). A more detailed analysis can be found there.

hard-working, loyal, accommodating and careful, patient and reliable in caring for children and seniors, vigorous in housekeeping"; the other two agencies focus on the abilities necessary for combining all required tasks; a Filipina is described as "*an all-round housekeeper who can even take care of children*" or "*not just an English speaking housekeeper, but also a home governess who teaches the children as the parents would do...*". They are further conveyed as discrete members of the household, who do not interfere with the family's privacy but who help expand the options the families have. This is a critical point when analysing different discourses of family and about what a nanny brings to them.

Text analysis is not limited to written texts but includes pictures as well. The agencies also put an emphasis on the visual aspects of the services they offer. The portrayed Filipinas seem to be relaxed and make eye contact either with the children they care for or with the viewer. While one agency presents passport photos of Filipinas waiting to be selected, another agency shows women in the process of carrying out different household tasks and thus presenting a whole spectrum of work (ranging from care to professional cooking, serving, cleaning or shopping – obviously bio products and healthy food), the third agency moreover emphasizes the typical, exotic food that Filipinas are able to prepare. In all three cases, the Filipina nannies are portrayed as neat and friendly, always smiling.

As a next step, the representation of the work itself was examined, because – as Pierrette Hondagneu Sotelo argues – "[p]aid domestic work is distinctive not in being the worst job of all but in being regarded as something other than employment" (2001: 9). Mostly, agencies use words "employees" and "workers" as synonyms for Filipina housekeepers and nannies. Based on this, it can be assumed that they present the work performed in households as employment (at least in external communications, that is to say when speaking to outsiders and people like me, researchers also working in the NGO-sector). This approach is understandable if we look at their legal obligations and standing: Until recently, the legal contract between migrant workers and agencies was one of employment[9]. At the same time, agencies appear to try to distance themselves from stigmatized agencies that make money by importing cheap labour. This is also the reason why the agencies emphasize that they fulfil all their legal obligations.

[9] In 2012, new employment legislation came into vigor which prohibits employment of non-EU citizens by agencies. This was a reaction to previous, vast exploitations realized through unregulated intermediary agencies (see Krebs et al. 2009 for more details about agency employment of Vietnamese migrants). Since then, agencies can only intermediate the work itself. In the case of domestic workers it means that families need to be direct employers of the nannies and housekeepers.

On the other hand, the agencies describe Filipina nannies as always being at the employers' disposal[10]: "*24 hours a day, Filipina nanny is ready in the next room, willing to help any time. ... Her help is due to her permanent presence incomparable with cleaners and babysitters as we know them in our country*". The agencies consider permanent presence as a core of their service, maybe even a synonym of live-in domestic work, as an extract from another website demonstrates: "*The quintessence of this service is that a housekeeper-nanny lives with you and she is therefore always at your disposal*". In numerous countries, requiring nannies to live with the families is considered problematic for the employees' rights. The anthropologist Hondagneu Sotelo (2001) confirms that there are migrants from Latin America living in Los Angeles households who are in fact on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Through their websites, Czech agencies construct and thus confirm this way of working as usual. They describe the work situation with phrases such as "*she does what needs to be done in the course of the day*" and "*[does] everything according to your instructions*". This shows very clearly that domestic work has become a service that is commodified; it is directed by a buyer.

In brief, the websites characterize household work in two conflicting ways: on the one hand, it is presented as an eight-hour job, in agreement with the requirements imposed by the Czech legal system, on the other hand, as a 24-hour service, which is potentially what agencies anticipate their customers to expect. In addition, they transfer the responsibility onto the Filipina workers themselves, because it is they who are prepared to work 24 hours a day and six days a week. This dubious representation of domestic work suggests that the representation of domestic work varies and its broader public perception[11] is still partly underestimated and unclear despite the fact that domestic work falls under the Labour Code like any other employment.

Ethnic-based differences between Filipinas, Ukrainian or Russian and Czech nannies were almost missing in the websites (except for one mention that Filipinas would bring a new quality into the household due to their constant presence, i.e. live-in service), but agency representatives talked about it personally. They explained the differences on the grounds of language knowledge, privacy and level

10 It is important to add that, when the topic of domestic labor and its risks became a highly discussed subject in the media, one of the agencies removed this information from its website.

11 Of course, agencies are not a unique source of the discourse; however, they are very much present in the media. Another discourse is that of human rights which is represented by NGOs and sometimes even by state administration representatives.

of emancipation. The advantages of being a native English speaker was already discussed in the previous chapter. A significant point related to privacy is provided again by one agency website: "*She does not interfere in your conversations until you start speaking in English*". The third point – emancipation – was negatively seen among Czechs as well as Russian and Ukrainians: they were considered too self-confident and with higher demands regarding spare time, in addition to not being willing to live with the respective family. The question of whether her own family had a strong presence in the nanny's life was also very relevant, as agency owner Hana comments: "*[employers] want a person who has no bonds to family here, who does not need to run unexpectedly to a sick child. [They want] someone who has a clear head*". The "clear head" stands for flexibility and adaptability which are – in conjunction with hard work and a good command of the English language – welcomed features in a time of post-modern, flexible capitalism.

Last, I will focus on the language used for speaking about families who (potentially hire a Filipina nanny, with the aim to describe gender roles reflected in the way agencies address their clients. Families are portrayed as traditional and post-modern at the same time (Hochschild 2003: 213). Traditional in the sense that the tasks are separated according to gender and post-modern in the sense that there is a strong need to attain satisfaction on a professional and personal level and a feeling that combining their personal, family and professional lives is becoming increasingly difficult. In this discourse, the nanny supplements the mother's limited capacities as a "supporter" or "discrete member of the family", since the mother cannot fulfil both roles at the same time (i.e. work and family, plus personal life), but they primarily take over their household and routine tasks. While women take care of the household and the children, men prioritize work and their hobbies. Here we may recall the agency quote from the beginning of this article.

A new member of the household? Gender relations in the family

A new person in the household also means a reconfiguration of relationships. In this section, I will analyse these changing and emerging relations, considered especially in relation to power and gender, within which the concept of reciprocity is highly relevant as well the role of emotions and emotional work. Last but not least, I will consider what the new member of the household brings to the family.

As to who within the family deals with the nanny, it is mostly the women who hire them and communicate about the required work. Also, most conflicts take place between the woman and the nanny. The fathers, according to verbal feedback by some nannies, often acted as mediators. Barbara gave one such example:

> *"The father is very good. He is very understanding. ... Sometimes, when the mother gets mad at me, the father will talk to her in český words [Czech words], so I will not understand. ... After the conversation, he will come to me and talk to me – you need to understand [my wife] because sometimes she is like that but her attitude is good."* (Barbara)

The majority of nannies perceived the situation similarly. Carla added that the worst possible situation in a family is to be faced with an English-speaking mother and a father who does not speak English, because then the father cannot judge the nanny's situation. This separation of roles reflects the way households are traditionally organized, with women being responsible for household tasks and children (and in this case also for the nanny who performs the domestic work). Agency representatives confirmed that males are usually only involved in the decision-making part of the process, in other words, when the family decides to hire the nanny and when the contract with the agency is signed, and later on, as I mentioned, when helping to solve conflicts. What is more, traditional gender roles are also reflected in the way agencies address their clients, as described before.

Since it is the nanny who fulfils the "dirty work" (Anderson 2000) in the family and thus enables the family members to choose their own preferred activities more freely, the economic inequalities of the global world are essentially transferred into the family setting. An important aspect of such a relation is connected to the humanitarian discourse, which is used by some employers as well as agency representatives to justify hiring a nanny and asking for extra work as an expression of gratitude. This was confirmed repeatedly by agency representatives and it was also perceived in this way by some nannies. Carla, sensitive to signs of power inequality, points it out:

> *"They think the conception that, in the Philippines, there is nothing to eat... without me, you have nothing ... We are good, we want to hire you, so you have to do extra things besides your contract. But you know that this is not stated directly, but rather... how to say, it is thrown at you little by little..."* (Carla)

The relationships between nannies and families are also affected by the fact that caring involves emotional work. As a consequence, there is a higher probability of relationship tensions, for instance jealousy towards both the children (or seniors) and the husband, as nannies confirmed. The sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) has carried out long-term studies of emotional types of work and the way emotions are commodified when they are exchanged in market-based relations. She described how vital smiling, being pleasant and controlling their emotions was for flight attendants. Similarly, nannies have to manage their emotions, especially when looking after children, but likewise with other types of domestic work; agency representatives and employers expect Filipinas to smile and not complain while cleaning. In other words, they demand a quality service for their money. Besides improvised ways of controlling their emotions, nannies also develop strategies for moving about the household in a discrete way and without disturbing their employer. This behaviour was identified by Judith Rollins as deference and integrating behaviour:

> "Domestic workers must act with deference – they cannot talk to but must be spoken to by employers, they must engage in 'ingratiating behaviour', and they must perform tasks in a lively manner. An employer's control penetrates into the bodily movements of domestic workers in myriad ways, including pattern of speech, gestures, spatial movements, and 'the attitude and manner with which the individual performs tasks.'" (Rollins 1985: 157, according to Parreñas 2000: 170).

From the nanny's position, the relationships within the household can be seen as running along a continuum with the effort to separate one's private and professional life on one end and (sub)consciously supporting mutual dependencies on the other. Some women, for example Bituin and Sophia, preferred to become rather involved in family life, which for them was a sign of respect. When they were given a gift by the family or received help from them, they felt personally obligated to be thankful. Bituin described such a reciprocal relationship between her and the family she worked for:

> *"Actually, it is stated in my contract that I have to work eight hours but you know, there is this kind attitude that Filipinos have: we call it utang na loob, debt of gratitude in English ... for example, she helped me a lot ... she is very nice to me, so there is a feeling in me that I need to return the favour to her. Like for example, my boss ... helped me also with my sister and even other Filipinos before. ... That is why*

I should say it is not because I just developed this feeling of being a family with them but I have to return this favour they granted me." (Bituin)

By contrast, Carla was afraid that taking a friendly approach with the family would also bring the risk of the employer taking her extra services for granted and coming to expect them without paying extra. At the same time, she was convinced and had had the experience that the family used personal information and gifts against the nanny at a later point in time. For her, opening herself to the family would mean losing her freedom and a certain kind of defense system. Choosing what to say and what not is for her was *"the only thing I can give to myself"*. The sociologist Bridget Anderson makes a similar point; she argues that being a member of the family is a disadvantage for the nanny by making her vulnerable, which can be used against her rather than enhancing her relationship with the family. She believes that the work relationship ought to remain professional and not turn personal.

Having briefly touched upon what a Filipina nanny brings to a family, I will now expand on this. As the example of Sophia and the webpages showed, nannies introduce more flexibility to the family who, as a consequence, will have more time for their preferred activities. Besides the work they carry out, Filipinas bring cultural capital (Bourdieu 1998) to the family through their knowledge of English and thanks to the experience of communicating with someone from a different cultural background. Since they do not speak Czech, the family's privacy is safeguarded as well. Hiring a Filipina nanny is thus a distinctive feature within society; the employers tend to be individuals or families with higher economic capital (Bourdieu 1998). The families gain prestige as the services by Filipinas are considered scarce and luxurious by the general public. All these aspects make the families appear more post-modern and global.

Contract vs. reality: working conditions perceived by nannies

Since the beginning of my research, I have often been told that employers are good, but at the same time that they do not live up to conditions set out in contracts; this was accompanied by remarks such as that contract was merely a useless piece of paper. Such practices contribute to distrust towards the legal state in which the migrants live. Therefore, I have focused here on the perception of working conditions among Filipina nannies and housekeepers. Besides these perceptions, I will also examine (declared) reactions and possible acts of

resistance by the nannies, as well as social networks which provide them with support.

"It is not part of the culture to have a nanny here, so you cannot really be working as a nanny," Bituin and Sophia heard from their employers when they looked at their work contracts as office workers. All the nannies said their contracts did not state their real position; instead, these women were officially employed as secretaries[12], English teachers or even as sewers. Symbolically, this confirms that the practice of hiring a (migrant, live-in) nanny by a family is still rather rare in the Czech Republic. The non-recognition is also economically advantageous for the families-enterpreneurs as they can pay lower taxes due to higher costs of their entrepreneurial activities. At the same time, this practice negatively impacts on the nannies and their careers.

For some nannies it will mean that they will not be able to prove their work experience later on. This concerned Sophia, who studied to be a nurse:

> *"Sometimes it is hard for us because, if you want to move forward, you would like to put in your CV that you worked as a nanny. But you don't have a contract that says you worked as a nanny. Your contract says you are an office worker."*

Meanwhile, many migrant workers experience a de-qualification as they had been working in more prestigious jobs in the Philippines. These findings confirm what previous studies about migrants in the Czech labour market have described (e.g. Gabal 2007): there is both professional segmentation of the labour market as well as downward socio-professional mobility affecting some migrant women. Nevertheless, it is important to note that one woman managed to change her position. In other words, there is a certain extent of mobility.

A wrong job title in their contract was not the only contradictory piece of information that the nannies were given. All the women I interviewed described the range of tasks as broader than what was originally advertised. One of them not only had to cook and clean but also to look after a child and a sick elderly person. Another nanny had to look after the house, garden, children and a dog. The women who took care of small children said that their de-facto on-duty time amounted to 24 hours a day. Bituin is one such example. "*I work long hours. I stay with them*.

12 One lawyer told me a story of a domestic worker who was officially hired by a private company owned by the father of the family where she really worked. He instructed all his employees to confirm – in case of any labour inspection as well as to the lawyer – that the nanny was employed as an office worker. In this example, there was an elaborate attempt to cover up.

I am a live-in nanny, so that means that I am staying with them and, if the children wake up, I have to be awake as well." Another one of the women, Sophia, was not on duty all day, but her usual ten-hour day was split according to the needs of her employer. "*I have to be flexible ... I work until 12 and if they go out in the evening, I work in the evening. If they don't need me... my afternoon is free. Or sometimes, if you have to work longer, maybe the next day you can finish earlier."* Flexibility in the labour market represents a vital component of the late capitalist system.

Overtime and the fact that it is often not paid for is one of the main reason for complaints. All the women I interviewed mentioned that working hours were frequently not respected, especially for the live-in nannies. Agency representatives said that families often employed the nannies for 12, 13 or even 16 hours a day. One of them, Hana, stated: "*They do not make a secret of it. They will say: I don't need someone who will work only eight hours. If the person is living with me, I need them to be at my disposal at all times*". Otherwise, it would not be useful for overworked employers. This is confirmed by the experiences of the nannies: their minimal shift was ten hours a day (more often 12 to 14) from Monday to Friday or Saturday. Sundays were usually free.

Carla argued that this was due to the high demands of the employers as well as the readiness and habit of Filipinas (including herself) to work hard and long hours. Nevertheless, the nannies often did not admit to the high pressure they were under and the problems they had to deal with (for fear of losing their job or residence permit), which the nannies themselves as well as agency representatives and employers confirmed. They instead opted for accepting their situation rather than protesting – even when they felt treated unfairly. A good example of this was what Carla, who usually appeared confident and self-assured, answered when I asked her what she would do if her employer told her that the windows she had just cleaned were still dirty. She said she would cast a big smile and say that she would of course clean them all over again and more thoroughly this time.

When a certain limit is reached (it is assumed that this is very individual), then the acceptance or tolerance is transformed into resistance. Once again Carla described such a moment: "*I worked 16 hours a day during my first six months and, after that, I just stopped! I quit without any explanation. ... After 6 pm, I stopped working and she [the employer] was mad."* She refused to work a double shift and added that working three hours extra without any additional remuneration should be enough for the employer.

Negotiating the conditions depends very much on the position of the migrant-nanny (which I will discuss in the following chapter) as well as on the

information that is at their disposal. The language barrier, social isolation and lack of information are challenges that the majority of migrants face. Official Czech conceptual documents on the issues of migrants integration consider "*the lack of information as a continuous and serious problem*"; a limited knowledge about one's own rights combined with the language barrier will often lead to isolation, dependency on an intermediary agent and to a lower status in the society in general (Aktualizovaná koncepce 2011: 15). The experience of the Filipinas reflected these findings. When there were English speakers available (for example in Prague), it was still impossible to approach official institutions for information regarding the long working hours of the Filipinas (as Carla pointed out); while in other cities, it was hard to receive any official information in English at all. Maria remembers, *"when I was in [another town], I even went to the police and asked... but they could not answer me. Ne anglicky [No English], he told me. ... And I do not bother to ask any more people because they don't really speak English*".

The role of networks is crucial in such situations, as many academic studies confirm. "Everyday ties of friendship and kinship provide few advantages, in and of themselves, for people seeking to migrate abroad. Once someone in a personal network has migrated, however, the ties are transformed into a resource that can be used to gain access to foreign employment. Each act of migration creates social capital among people to whom the new migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration" (Espinosa – Massey 1999: 109). For those who found employment through agencies and did not have any relatives in the Czech Republic (that is to say, the majority of them), the agency was also the first tie in the Czech Republic. However, many did not trust them or were missing regular contacts to the agency representatives. Most often, Filipinas were using other connections, or what Mark Granovetter (1973) named *weak ties* which are based on ethnic and/or religious grounds. Thus, a reliable source of information was other nannies who had been living in the Czech Republic for a longer period of time and the most common opportunity to meet them, at least in Prague, was attending a Sunday church service.

When asked whether they discussed working conditions and how the families treated them, most nannies responded positively.

> *"Yes, always! Always! ... I will share my relationship with my boss and they will also share their relationship with their boss with me. ... Sometimes they will give me advice; sometimes I will give them advice also. ... They are my family here [in the Czech Republic]."* (Barbara)

Often they demanded the same working conditions from their employer as other nannies experienced. The same holds for information exchange amongst employing families. If a family paid their nanny a significantly better wage or gave her presents, they were often criticized by other families for, as they put it, spoiling their nanny. Families frequently agreed on certain standards amongst each other. Using families that employed nannies in Los Angeles as an example, Pierrette Hondagneu Sotelo has described the importance of the information shared, usually concerning earnings – as well as information which was silenced – paid vacation, health insurance and similar issues (Hondagneu Sotelo 2001: 84). Based on the agencies' website information in the Czech Republic, silent issues of such kind included provision of food, length of vacation and additional benefits.

Besides contradictory and excessive demands from members of the family, overtime and lack of its pay, language barriers and misunderstandings, diet was also a critical issue. Sophia said that she was not used to eating hard Czech bread all week. One employer, Zdena, recalled that one of her nannies had complained about a lack of food in her previous employer's household (in contrast with her own behaviour): "*[the nanny] said that she was hungry all day because she was not allowed to touch any food, as it was the employer's. .... [the employer] bought two packs of yoghurt and it was clear that those were for her children and that the nanny was not allowed to eat them*". This is another example of a difficult definition of the working and living conditions, as the practices and expectations can differ widely.

The politics of dependence

The aim of this section is to place the position and experience of nannies/migrants within the context of broader public policies. I will focus on the factors which enhance the dependence and contribute to the vulnerability of those migrant domestic workers. The willingness to endure tough working conditions as described above is often related to the unequal status and to the dependence that migrant workers experience.

The lives of migrants are directly influenced by migration policies, more specifically by the migrants' residence status, and by the relationship to their employer, as several studies into migrants' lives overall reveal[13]. If a woman

[13] For the situation of domestic workers, we could mention for example a publication of Bridget Anderson (2000).

does not have any documents and lives with a family, her situation is unlikely to improve. However, even migrants possessing work contracts and residence permits are frequently afraid to make themselves heard. By law, their residence in the Czech Republic is dependent on their employer, and if the employer decides to fire them, they must find a new position and acquire all the necessary permits within two months (in some cases without any time). If their entire family depends on the earnings from their work in the Czech Republic, they will more often than not be prepared to accept compromises. One such example is Marie, who has three children living in the Philippines.

> *"You know, when we are new here, we cannot go and complain. Because we would like to stay here for a long period of time. They may send us back to the Philippines. This is what we have to keep in mind."* (Marie)

Obtaining permanent residency[14] is a major milestone. Among the Filipinas participating in this research, only Barbara was in possession of permanent residency. As such, she was in a more secure position and was helping other Filipinas to deal with difficulties. Another women, Bituin, looked forward to applying for permanent residency as well. Besides easier access to the labour market, it was going to allow her to bring her daughter to the Czech Republic.

Another important factor, however more ambiguous, is whether the nanny lives with her employers. If the role is transformed into a live-out option and from a work contract to a freelance arrangement, on the one hand, the nanny will gain independence by being able to control the amount of work; on the other hand, this will also mean that she have to pay all the taxes, social and health insurance and other fees herself. She will have to file a tax report and provide proof of salary to be able to maintain her residence status in the Czech Republic; she is required to obtain private health insurance, which is more expensive and less secure than being insured through the public health care system. These procedures require a better knowledge of the Czech legal, fiscal and social systems.

As mentioned above, migrants are not only influenced by the relation to their employers but their life is also shaped by larger, institutional powers and factors such as state policies. The current policy of the Ministry of the Interior, which regulates migration and integration policy in the Czech Republic, tends

14 Permanent residency – or long-term residency according to the EU legislation – allows those migrants to enjoy almost the same rights as citizens do, including the right to work freely.

to favour work contracts over small entrepreneurship[15]: for example, in 2011, a new regulation was introduced which allows a change of residence based on employment to that of entrepreneurship only after two years of legal residence in the Czech Republic. In addition, under legislation currently being prepared, a visa for entrepreneurs (applied for from one's country of residence) will "*stem from the principle that foreigners' entrepreneurship is beneficial for the Czech Republic. ... A basic requirement will be to invest certain amount of money"* (EMN 2012). The amount is estimated to be approximately 200.000 euros.

The combination of current public policies, with work contracts for migrants being favoured over entrepreneurship, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (as well as the government as a whole) putting a limit on the number of work permits granted or prolonged (MPSV 2012), shows that domestic workers remain vulnerable. This is acerbated by the fact that the Czech government has refused to sign the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers[16]. Despite paid domestic work being officially perceived as regular employment, government officials refuse to specifically address it and adjust work legislation to reflect the reality. Among the risks that women employed in households encounter are not only excessive working conditions; they may also become victims of physical and mental abuse and degradation. The main problem is not the mere possibility of these risks, but rather the fact that, in their event, these women possess few options to defend themselves. As a consequence, nannies finding themselves working in unbearable conditions often opt to run away. This happened in the case of two nannies whom most of the nannies interviewed for this study knew personally. Both became victims of physical abuse and instead of contacting the police, they returned to the Philippines assisted secretly by their employer so that it would not come to light.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented different aspects of employment of Filipinas as nannies and housekeepers: their representation by intermediary agencies and the commodification of care, as well as working conditions as perceived by the nannies, gender relations in the families and the framework created by migration

15 It was explicitly stated during the meeting between representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and NGOs: Current migration issues, 14th March 2013.

16 Find more details about the Convention and the Czech government decision in Redlová – Heřmanová 2012.

and employment policies. To conclude, I will draft a more abstract link between the hiring of Filipina nannies and various changes in economic, social and gender relations.

As has been stated before, hiring a Filipina or – almost synonymously – a live-in nanny is quite a recent phenomenon related to post-socialist transformations after 1989. Together with the prioritized capitalistic development, there has been an increased stress on work efficiency and intensity and on limiting state interventions and support (including in the care sector). These changes opened possibilities for care commodification and commercialisation. Unlike Western Europe or North America, the Czech Republic has only limited experience with this trend, which entails important consequences in form of an unclear definition and perception of domestic work, ad-hoc and non-transparent regulation as well as exclusivity of this practice.

Despite the fact that in the Czech Republic paid domestic work falls under the labour law and should be considered like any other work, a minimum of three practises evident from my research showed that it is still not fully recognized and acknowledged by the wider public, agencies or even policy makers. The first practise is that of employers who do not state a real position in the contract, and even create (for the nannies) a – very symbolic – story of unawareness of Czech culture about the existence of nannies.

A second finding becomes apparent from discourse analyses of the agency websites and interviews which revealed that domestic work is portrayed in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, it is described as a standard form of employment with eight-hour shifts a day, on the other hand as being on call all day to carry out a wide range of tasks. I assume that this dichotomy is a result of the pressure that is exerted by the nascent legislation reacting to abuses of some agencies, and a result of the needs presented by (often similarly overworked) employers.

The third case of the formal character of domestic work refers to situations and ways more serious conflicts (e.g. physical violence) are dealt with: instead of involving labour inspectorates or police in case of abuses or unbearable conditions, nannies find a solution only by running away from their employers or returning to the Philippines.

The latter example is related to the lack of regulation of domestic work. Although the operations of intermediary agencies have become regulated in the last few years (as a matter of fact, prohibited in the area of direct employment as some activities proved to be abusive during the economic recession), the

government refused to engage in the issue of domestic workers employment, arguing on the grounds of (distorted) statistics that it was not the case of the Czech Republic. Thus, monitoring working conditions in reality proves to be impossible. The same holds for agencies: although they promise to require minimal standards for employment (as a reaction to the stigma of abusive agencies), they are in reality unable to control the conditions in the household, unless the family is open to intervention.

The novelty of Filipinas working in Czech households means that the agencies (or directly families) are mostly looking for nannies still living in the Philippines. At the same time, this renders the services of nannies more exclusive and limited to people with higher economic capital who can afford all the costs. This also distinguishes them from their North American counterparts. Contrary to what the sociologist Hondagneu Sotelo (2001) described in the case of domestic workers in California, Filipinas in the Czech Republic are preferred because of their knowledge of English which brings into the family both bilingualism (thus a more global stance and social capital) and because of their limited emancipation and increased flexibility as their families are mostly left back in the Philippines.

Care commodification is clearly demonstrated on the agency websites by phrases stressing that nannies would do everything according to instructions and that they would be always available. The agencies represent the nannies in such a way that their assumed characteristics correspond to the requirements of post-modern times, of late capitalism: hard-working, accommodating and flexible, never complaining and always with a smile. Supposedly, nannies manage to combine all necessary tasks: from caring and teaching English, to cleaning, cooking, shopping and even walking a dog. Thus, they ensure that women-employers are able to combine their working and private lives and to allow men to enjoy their leisure time "without remorse". The traditional gender regime and gendered work division is thus being confirmed. Moreover, men even take on the role of neutral mediators and judges in the case of conflicts between mothers and nannies. Nannies themselves choose a different strategy for coping with unequal relationships in the household: from the effort to separate one's private and professional life to – on the other end of a continuum – a subconscious support of mutual dependencies.

I have presented the findings of my first inquiries in the practice of Filipina nannies' employment and connected them to changes in the post-socialist Czech Republic. However, there are still many questions open to be answered: starting with what factors influence the position of a nanny while resisting and negotiating

working conditions and what role transnational contacts and knowledge sharing play; on to the impact on gender relations of migrant workers who, on the one hand, gain access to financial resources, but, on the other hand, are restricted in traditional gender relations; to the questions of defining policies and practises that would recognize domestic work as real work and that would decrease the dependence of migrant (domestic) workers on their employers or on any intermediaries.

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