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Thematic Issue

GENDER AND FAMILY IN MIGRATION

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SEEING GENDER IN MIGRATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Heidi Bludau, Petra Ezzeddine

"*Gender is deeply embedded in determining who moves, how those moves take place, and the resultant futures of migrant women and families.*"
(Boyd and Grieco 2013)

It is well known that, for a long time, gender was absent from studies of migration. Migrants were men and any mention of women or children was in the context of trailing spouses and other dependents or unskilled and often exploited and/or sexual workers. In general, women were, and to much extent still are, absent from economic data since much of women's labour is done within the domestic sphere and is not perceived as economic activity. Even when this labour is done outside of the woman's own home it is invisible to public view. It was only recently that women even entered the public migration narrative. When the "feminization of migration" coincided with feminist and post-modernist movements in social sciences, including anthropology, gender became a primary subject of migration studies.

Over the last fifty years, we have seen two dramatic shifts in women as part of the global labour and consequently migration market. First, globalization ignited the feminization of migrant labour by simultaneously demanding low-wage labour of Third World women from the export processing zones of developing countries and in the manufacturing and service sectors in developed, capitalist countries (Sassen-Koob 1984; Sassen 1998). Although low-wage labour includes productive manual labour, women often find work in the reproductive labour sphere as hotel housekeepers, nursing aides, and domestic workers, replicating gendered power structures through division of labour. As Bridget Anderson (2000: 113) argues, "Paid domestic workers reproduce people and social relations not just in what they do (polishing silver, ironing), but also in the very doing of it (the foil to the household manager). In this respect the paid domestic worker is herself, in her very essence, a means of reproduction." Feminization of the labour market not only means an increase in women in that market but also an increased commodification of reproductive labour (Parrenas 2012) which leads to the second phenomenon.

In the 1970s, an historically significant global shift occurred in the ways in which women gained access to the professional labour force (Hawthorne 2001: 214). Women in wealthy countries, usually in the global north and west, shifted from the feminized domestic and "pink collar" labour spheres into the "formerly male-only terrain" of the labour market (Howe 1977: 12). Essentially, the increase in women's rights, including education and contraception, led to a broader employment market for women in economically advanced countries. Consequently, as new opportunities began to open for Western women outside the traditionally feminized labour sector and more women began to enter the general work population, they left space in the traditional female labour sectors (both publically and domestically) and began to rely on women from the global south to move in and take over the "women's work" that they no longer wanted or were able to do (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003: 3). Wealthy women who work in the public sphere can "hire a wife" to take over their physical and emotional domestic labours (Enloe 2000; Romero 2002).[1] The globalization of labour, specifically wage and reproductive labour, has given rise to the "global care chain" which refers to "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (Hochschild 2000: 131). A typical chain consists of an older daughter from a poor family caring for her siblings while her mother goes abroad to work as a nanny or domestic worker for a woman in a richer country. This chain has become increasingly global in the past forty years, resting on advances of women in wealthy countries.

As women have become more mobile in global labour, "an increasing proportion of women have sought employment throughout Asia, the Middle East, and a select range of Western countries as 'nurses, doctors, teachers, and secretaries – the feminized occupations' – despite the persistent image of women as unskilled workers or 'trailing spouses'" (Hawthorne 2001: 214). Although much of migrant women's labour takes place in private homes and is somewhat invisible, women have become increasingly visible across the broader global economy (Sassen 1998: 82) and migration studies.

It is not surprising that much of the research on gender and migration privileges care work. While Mahler and Pessar (2006) questioned the privileging of gender, or giving gender attention above that which is deserved, we question the apparent privilege of care work in gendered migration studies. Three of the five

[1] Much of the literature on migration of domestic workers concerns the racial division of reproductive labor (Nakano Glenn 1992; Parrenas 2012; Romero 2002).

articles in this special issue concern care work. Although it is the area of our own research interests, we cannot ignore the profusion of research on care workers. One reason is that because women have been segregated into and have found opportunities in the particular caring occupations, as described above, it is the area where a large proportion of women work. Secondly, migrant women take part in large scale institutionalized global movements for care work which has become visible to public perception, especially in countries such as the Philippines that have broad foreign worker "export" programs. It is estimated that, at any one point in time, over 250,000 Filipino women are working in care work somewhere around the world. In order to understand gender, we must see it operating it (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 29) and we see gender blatantly in the care arena.

Mirjana Morokvasic (1984), in an early review of women migrants, stated that examining gender illustrates the variety of ways that women are not merely dependent or exploited sojourners but agents. Twenty years later, another special issue of the International Migration Review (Donato, et al. 2006), a compilation of the Gender and Migration Working Group of the International Migration Program of the Social Science Research Council, demonstrated that women-centred research has shifted toward a more gendered analysis in recent decades. While we agree with this analysis, we also know that gender is still marginalized (Mahler and Pessar 2006) and, more interestingly, that men have become marginalized in gendered analyses of migration. Like in much of gender studies, masculinity has been left out of the conversation. Unfortunately, this special issue follows that trend, despite specifically stating an interest in articles concerning masculinities in migration. However, we feel that our contribution of this issue does help us to better understand the migrant struggle to perform expectations of gendered behaviour (Donato et al. 2006). The articles in this issue work together as a reflection of gender power in the process of migration. First, the theme of patriarchy and the hierarchy of power and male domination of social resources affect where and when migration takes place (Boyd and Grieco 2013). Secondly, many of the articles in this issue explore interactions between female migrants and their male counterparts and other family members. In other words, how are gender roles and family relations reconstructed through migration processes?

Although limited in quantity, the European university-based contributors to this issue cover a wide range of geographical locations and ties. Central Europe, Southeast Asia, and east Africa provide the backdrops of migrant behaviour. The authors in this issue use these locales as settings in which they explore historical, colonial and post-socialist legacies. Although care work is privileged as a topic

here, the articles in this issue examine the migrant decision-making process, cultural flows of ideologies and migration as forms of agency. The contributors represent the fields of social anthropology, sociology, psychology and political science. An interdisciplinary approach is typical for migration studies. All of the articles share a qualitative methodological paradigm including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and group interviews.

Pavla Redlová gives us a classic example of Filipina domestic workers but with the twist of a post-socialist context in which they represent a newfound symbol of cosmopolitanism and wealth. In an environment where state services once provided child care, individuals now must find ways to take care of themselves and do so in a way that draws on their socialist past of working around the system. The commodification of care is at the centre of her analysis of transnational domestic workers. Similarly, Martina Sekulová examines the ways Slovakian women try to fulfil their roles as mothers while commuting to Austria for brief work sojourns as domestic caregivers to elderly individuals. Sekulová broadens the migrant narrative through her discussion of the "transnational family." She illustrates the decision-making that takes place in the family as well as different ways that gender roles shift and change with the short-term regular presence and absence of the mother. In her article, Sekulová links gender to age, specifically the age of the migrant's children as a variable in family dynamics. We also see a different form of migration in this piece, where migrants return home and leave at regular and somewhat brief interludes allowing women to maintain care for the family. Sekulová maintains a paradox of care migration – women look for self-expression and self-realization through gendered work in an environment of asymmetric power relations – families in Austria. This problem of negotiating gender power is also the central argument in Julten Abdelhalim's article on the representation of religiosity and identity through forms of dress (*pardha*) in Kerala, India. This article represents the continued linkages that earlier migrants and migration chains have on the contemporary, as well as the ways that present migration patterns create agency for women. Abdelhalim argues that *pardha* was enforced as a marker of identity, but at the same time created emancipatory tools in traditional patriarchal society in the Keralite society.

To round out our trio of care work studies, Adéla Souralová provides not only a twist on the construction of family but on the paradigm of care worker and migrant. When colonial migrants and other wealthy Westerners travelled to other places it was not uncommon to hire local people as servants and care givers. Today, we see that it is also very common for people from less wealthy

nations to travel to wealthier nations to find work as care workers. In her article, Souralová describes the mixture of old and new practices when Vietnamese immigrant families hire local women in the Czech Republic to work as nannies. At the core of this study is the role that the nannies play within the family, such as "grandmother" or "aunt." The role of fictive kin is a different perspective of the commodification of care than we have seen in recent studies. Positioning the nanny as part of the migrant family relies on the cultural "ideal of relatives in family life" and flow of ideologies of childcare and family dynamics which links this article to the remaining two in this issue.

Finally, rural to urban migration is represented by Stefania Giada Meda's work in Nairobi, Kenya. Her article leads us to the discussion of migration as a form of and result of modernization and colonialism. Whether left in rural areas and filling necessary roles left by migrant men or migrating to the urban areas, women must find new ways to negotiate family. Those in the urban areas find a Western ideology that is based more on the individual and often find themselves single mothers. This weakens the traditional role played by the extended families in socialising and strengthens the role of other agents-peers, formal education and the media. According to Meda's article this migration implies a loss for the cultural patrimony and social cohesion in the Kenyan society.

We conclude this issue with a number of book and conference reviews to further demonstrate the direction of gender and migration research – focus on care migration, transnational flows, influence of postcolonial studies and the impact of cultural and social ideologies on gender agency. On its own, this special issue is itself a representation of transnationalism and gendered perspectives. Countless on-line chats and e-mails drove the transatlantic academic collaboration not only between the co-editors of this issue but among the contributors as well. Over the past few months, as we have negotiated our own gendered and professional roles to edit this special issue, it has been impossible not to see our own reflections in the work presented here.

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

Pavla Redlová

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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TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CONTEXT OF FEMALE MIGRATION FROM SLOVAKIA TO AUSTRIA

Martina Sekulová

Abstract: ***The article concentrates on transnational care-giving practises of Slovak women providing home elder care in Austria related to production and consumption in their families in Slovakia. The article focuses on how trans-border migration influences care-giving, organisation of the household and family practises in domestic workers' families in Slovakia. My argument is that in order to understand deeper contexts and consequences of transnational migration of domestic workers in private households we must consider gender as a complex multi-dimensional category. The emphasis of the article is put on how women reflect and manifest their gender identity and how "ways of doing family" are gendered in transnational families of Slovak elder care providers. Theoretical starting points for analysis are a transnational approach and gender perspective.***

Keywords: ***migration; gender; transnational family; care-giving practises***

Introduction

The household as a basic unit of economic and social production has been facing significant challenges in the contemporary changing world, which Castles and Miller (Castles and Miller 20013) metaphorically portrayed as the "age of migration". Practises of the families are deeply embedded in the movements and mobilities of the world. The large body of scholarship admits that transnational, trans-local families are increasingly common. A transnational family, a family whose members are living in different countries and maintaining active family ties and practises across borders (Parrenas 2001; Haidinger 2008) are challenged to restructure ways of production and consumption. Especially the absence of

women who are key providers of reproductive labour within the families has far-reaching consequences. One of the new migration types emerging recently in the area of Central Europe is labour migration of domestic workers who provide care for family dependants (children, ill or disabled persons or seniors) in Western European countries such as Austria, Germany, Switzerland or the United Kingdom. Slovakia has recorded a remarkable extent of migration of women providing home elder care in Austria. Slovakia had traditionally been following the men breadwinner model; female elder care migration from Slovakia is in line with broader global migration patterns and the feminisation of migration. The aim of the article is to contribute to the debates about the new international division of reproductive labour in the area of Central Europe both theoretically and empirically. Most of the anthropological literature during the last two decades has concentrated on the home care provided to those at the beginning of the life circle – child care, while elder care has not been sufficiently elaborated. At the same time the article poses the argument that for deeper understanding of transnational domestic care migration it is important to take more than gender into account for analysis of the intersection – social identities of gender and age which significantly determines contexts and consequences of female labour migration related to home care.

A few remarks to research methodology

The article brings empirical findings from anthropological research. The central focus was on female perceptions, life-stories and experiences, personal reflections on gender identity. The spouses/men were not included in the research as my main research interest was given to female reflections on gender identity and their transnational care-giving practises. The research methodology consisted of a combination of methods – ethnographic interviews, participant observation and secondary analysis of theoretical literature, secondary analysis of statistical sources, legislation and other relevant documentation. The key research method was semi-structured in-depth ethnographic interviews with female elder care providers from Slovakia working in Austria. In order to collect sensitive data about experiences with domestic care, reflexions on gender in the process of transnational migration (often very emotional), I put particular emphasis on confidentiality. Except for a pilot informant there was no personal tie between me and the informants. I decided to enter a virtual forum for elder care providers with a request for women to participate in the research. I approached selected women

according to the region they came from, their age, family status and structure. Therefore the research sample was purposive. The research sample consisted of 18 women from all parts of Slovakia between 28 and 71 years old. The time spent in elder care was between of 2 and 10 years. I analytically divided the whole group of informants into two separate groups – younger women (or women with dependent children) and older women (or women with adult children)[1]. Twelve informants were married; two were divorced; two widows (one of them living alone with children); one was single. Six women had children over 15 years old. The data were collected during the period between May 2011 and June 2012. The mutual dynamics of the relationship between the informants and me differed. The number of informants was too high to have deeper interconnections with more of them. I met repeatedly with a core of the group; besides personal meetings we stayed in touch and also exchanged information, experiences and progress in life through e-mail, telephone and social networks. An additional source of information was participant observation. During the fieldwork I attended meetings of the women where they shared their own experiences with work, troubles, emotional demands of being a transnational parent and partner. I also participated in shopping before going abroad.

Elder care migration from Slovakia – new migration pattern

Women[2] from the whole Slovakia commute every two or three weeks to different parts of Austria in order to take care of elder people in Austrian families – in private households. In most cases they do not have a professional healthcare license; they are retained as elder care providers after completing a special course and after completing a German language course at least on the basic level. The work of elder care providers in private households in Austria is legal. The domestic work service sector in Austria was regularised[3] in January 2008; care providers from EU member states may work freely on the basis of a trade license (see also Bachinger 2008). Besides legal status stability many elder care providers benefit

1 I use the division only analytically in order to differentiate contexts for women with dependent children (children under 18 years old who are in the full responsibility of the migrant) and women with adult children who either are or are not living in the same household (in the case of the research sample women over 45).

2 Men are also a small proportion of Slovak migrants providing paid elder care in Austrian private households. The main reason for employing men is clients who need physical strength. The small proportion of men choose this type of work for economic purposes.

3 The Act on Domestic Work Service (*Hausbetreuungsgesetz (HbeG)*).

from the social welfare system and, in the future, after meeting the criteria of Austrian legislation, receive a retirement pension. The key specific of their work is that all of them provide *live-in* eldercare in private households consisting of 24-hour service for fourteen days[4]. After two weeks they change shift with other care providers (mainly care providers from Slovakia) and commute back to their families in Slovakia for another 14 days. They are circular migrants regularly returning to their home country after two weeks with very active transnational social behaviour during the time spent abroad. They are transmigrants as their activities are performed across wide transnational space; their social practises are present in two localities. The very nature and framework for elder care providers sets them in constant "motion", crossing borders as a long-term strategy. Thus, elder care migration is in line with contemporary debates about migrations in social sciences which emphasize changing migration modes and patterns in comparison to the previous era. Specifically, new modes of migrations arise, as Morokvasic points out; many people use migration and commuting as a long-term strategy – they are settled in mobility (Morokvasic 2009).

Gender and age in the context of a transnational household

The concept of the household, as the basic social unit of economic production, faces challenges in the transnational context. The concept as such is considered rather problematic from the perspective of anthropology (Wilk 1991). However, for the purpose of the article the household is understood as a person or group of persons with mutual economic production (Švecová 1997). The transnational household is understood as a household where material, emotional and social ties among household members are upheld across the states (Haidinger 2008). Transnational households develop alternatives of reproduction and organisation within and between households which typically involve different and/or more persons than the classical nuclear family as household members must cope with economic and social reproduction strategies that transcend national labour markets (Haidinger 2008: 140). Although the primary purpose of the household is economic production of the household members, the forces pushing household transformation onto transnational are not exclusively economical. The importance of non-economic factors is in correlation with the age of migration actor. As Wilk argues, in order to understand transformations and change in the

4 Private households provide domestic workers accommodation and food besides daily wages.

production and consumption within the household it is crucial that the household is a part of larger social units, contexts and economic forces (Wilk 1991: 2). Several forces meet in the fast emergence of Slovak female migration to Austria: wider demographic trends related to ageing in the society, the increasing presence of two-career families, the increasing number of nuclear families and the consequent "care deficit" in Austria and, last but not least, labour market policies. The regularisation of domestic work from 1st January 2008 encouraged many Slovak women to migrate. Bachinger points out that 24-hour elder care simply fills in the gap which emerged due to the demographic and social changes in Austrian society (Bachinger 2009: 8). An important influence, on the part of Slovakia, was the economic downturn, increasing unemployment and worsening life situation. The maintenance of the household in Slovakia was a key expressed push factor among the informants' life-stories[5]. Being an elder care provider is an easy way to achieve. At the same it promises a solution to the lack of employment opportunities and higher wage in comparison to wages in Slovakia. Young women with dependent children perceived working as an elderly care provider abroad rather as "forced" migration. Most of the interviewees before starting migrating abroad experienced unemployment, too low wages in Slovakia which simply do not correspond with needs of the household and its expenditures. In many cases the complicated situation of the household was strengthened by the unemployment of the partner/husband and the impossibility of finding a job. Wages from providing care abroad make a noticeable contribution to the household budget[6].

> *"I started seven years ago. I was forced because of the lack of money. We did not have money for basic household expenditures. I did not have money to buy the kids bread or sweets. My husband was unemployed at that time. I was forced to look after the kids during the day and learn German at nights whether I liked it or not."* (Zora, 37, married, 3 children)

5 The research findings are similar to previous surveys showing that elder care migration from Slovakia was boosted by increasing unemployment and worsening economic conditions (Bahna 2011). The analysis by Bahna shows growth of elder care providers from 6588 in 2008 to 15,937 in 2011. The "jump" in data happened after the economic downturn.

6 The research identified wages most often varying from 50 Euros per day up to 65 Euros per day either with or without social security and health insurance. Some employers pay social security and health insurance, others not, based on the negotiations between care providers and family.

However, on the level of society in Slovakia there have been other structural (macro) and individual (micro) non-economical factors influencing the decision of women to go abroad. Firstly, the structural non-economic influences I see in the social structure of a particular society and the social construction of particular categories of differences. The average age of an elder care provider is about 43 years old (Bahna 2012) and women over 45 have the predominant share. Only the social construction of reproductive work (either paid in Austria or unpaid at home) as gendered does not explain the diversity of elder care providers from Slovakia and the high proportion of women over 45 years. Gender inequalities and gender discrimination are important components of "push" factors, "gender regimes" (Lutz 2007) as boosters of domestic work migration on both sides – sending and receiving countries. Because of gender discrimination in Slovakia women face far-reaching negative consequences. The research scholarship indicates that females are over-represented in low security jobs; they cope with threats of career discontinuity due to motherhood, and more specifically for elder care providers, women face age discrimination to a much higher extent than men (Filadelfiová 2007; Bútorová 2008; Sekulová – Gyárfášová 2009). Scholars employing an intersectional approach towards migration argue that, in order to fully comprehend the migration process and the position of female migrants within society, it is important to analyse the intersection of more social categories than just gender. To take only gender into account does not fully explain the heterogeneity of the society (Knudsen 2006; Sekulová 2011). Thus also the "predisposition" to migration, to become a migration actor, not only the position of a migrant in the host society, is shaped by the interaction of social categories of difference, as the intersectionality theory suggests.

Secondly, the narratives with informants suggest that age, as a category of difference, has much wider importance in the context of domestic care migration, as previous scholarship elaborated. Women over 45 years old emphasised in narratives the need to change their life, to experience something new, to try to be independent, to gain fresh breath in life, to experience something new after years of an unsatisfactory career and look for new dimensions for life before retirement. The decision to go was therefore the result of a combination of individual, personal or psychological reasons and the promise of improvement of the economic situation.

> "*I was not forced to take this job. I did not have a problem with unemployment; I had a full-time job in a company where I had been working for many years. I decided to change because I had been working with administration and papers for almost my*

whole life... I simply needed a change. I had burn-out. I felt depressed so I decided. And indeed, there was also financial motivation because, in those times, at the time when I started, it was very financially attractive in comparison to salaries here." (Zuzana, 59 years, married, childless)

Once women become elder care providers in Austria, they become circular transmigrants, active in transnational households. As transmigrants they are "acting, deciding and caring and identifying themselves as members of networks which tie them to two or more societies at the same time" (Heidinger 2008:128). The social categories of difference, gender and age have a further differentiating influence on transnational social practises. What kind of transnational social practises and strategies do Slovak women develop for transnational households and their own transnational families? The next chapter concentrates on looking for answers.

Ways of "doing a household"

The circular "settling in mobility" creates a specific framework for transnational practises. Slovak domestic workers have to overcome a relatively close distance for a relatively short time, in comparison to domestic care providers in other part of the world. The large body of scholarship argues that the long absence of women at home has a significant influence on migrants themselves and their families in the home country, such as Latin Americans domestic workers in the US (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007) or Filipino domestic workers in Europe (Parrenas 2001). Although they are absent from their own families they still have two weeks of the month to adopt their position in their family in Slovakia. Similarly to other domestic workers, they "leave home in order to stay at home, which results in pendular transnational migration rather than emigration" (Lutz 2007: 234). None of the informants expressed the intention of staying and integrating into Austrian society regardless of the time spent working as elder care providers.

"We established our own mode of existence" – responsibility for a household remains on the woman's shoulders

The absence during half of the month may have the potential for a change in the division of labour within a household. It seems it is not applicable to Slovak women providing elder care. The household maintenance strategies are gendered

and transnational family practises of women are one of the manifestations of their gender identity. Women were confronted with their gender identity of being an appropriate mother, daughter or wife. They preferred to be mainly responsible for the needs of the household such as cleaning or nutrition. Their main strategy put emphasis on care "in advance" and care "afterwards". The need to assign housework had different forms – to clean up the space, do laundry, iron for all the family members, buy food to refrigerate or stock or to cook and freeze several main courses in order to make the nutrition of the family as easy as possible. The food was frozen afterwards and ready for easy consumption – to be put in the microwave oven, for instance.

> *"I really hate the time before my departure. I think every female has it. I must clean up everything, water the flowers, fill the fridge, freeze cooked meals. Of course, I also leave money for my daughter; she can also access my account… I do the ironing. I really hate those two-three days prior to my departure. I always say it should not count as a day off."* (Julia, 56 years, widow, 1 child, Western Slovakia)

The "leaving ritual" is very similar to the one after the return. Females in accordance with criteria of the social role of women do what should be done and was "missed":

> *"After my return everything is waiting for me. For four days I do laundry, tidy up, iron… Oh my God… It is too much sometimes. My husband simply cannot do it. But I think that the most important thing is that he is able to eat, that he cooks for himself and only housework waits for me."* (Mirka, 59 years, married, childless)

Spouses/male partners of elder care providers took over household responsibilities less often; the everyday tasks were more often taken over by female family members – daughters or grandmothers.

> *"When I am abroad my mother cooks for the children; my husband eats at work. I buy a lot of food before I leave… And regarding household cleaning, my 16-year-old daughter took over that responsibility. But of course, when I come back home, I do everything once again my way (laugh). And regarding the laundry, for instance, my mother comes and does it. At first my daughter did it, but she is too young. She does not have the appropriate skills for it. So my mother does it also."* (Veronika, 37 years, married, 2 children)

Another example is the story of 47-year-old Eva. A key care provider is her daughter who cooks and takes care of her smaller brothers and sisters. The husband remains rather aside in terms of the housework:

> *"My husband never sweeps, hoovers or washes the floor. He just puts his clothes into the washing machine and that is it and the kids do the dishes... I buy frozen food; it is easier for my daughter to prepare the food. Occasionally they go out for lunch to granny's place or our granny comes over to cook. We try every possibility."* (Eva, 47 years, married, 5 children)

The same woman, Eva, is also an example of how migration might influence the change of perception of gender roles ascribed to women and men in Slovakian society. Experience with Austria and a family with different social norms applied to gender may "open the eyes" of women. Some informants have started to perceive their husbands and the husbands' contribution to their families and households from a new angle after 5 years of working abroad:

> *"I can see many differences...And the husband of my patient can really stand a lot. She is very rude to him. He comes home and she starts to yell at him; she tries to send him on a guilt trip. A Slovak man would be really angry with her immediately. I know that's not true of every man, but many females I know complain how choleric their men are... And Austrians are much more hard working. This one, in the family where I work, comes home from work and then works here around the house... My husband comes from work tired and he doesn't want to do anything. I know that he is a car-mechanic and works hard. But the Austrian man is much older. And I really can't tell this to my husband; he would be really angry that I was criticizing him."* (Eva, 47 years, married, 5 children)

The researchers in other geographic areas argue that migration has the potential of influencing the gender division of labour in households (Mahler – Pessar 2006; Tostorkorova 2012). Tolstokorova argues that female migration leads to a "migration paradox". The example of Ukrainian women migrants shows that migration has empowering effects on women in terms of their self-awareness. Migration does not lead to economic or gender equality in the family in spite of the economic independence of the women. Also Uhde, who developed the concept of "deformed emancipation", argues that inequalities in society persist in spite of the economic independence of female migrants. Self-realisation of the women

did not lead to more equal division of labour, in the context of the transnational family to more equal division of labour in the family (Uhde 2012).

Who cares for whom? Strategies to cope with a "care deficit" in family

Elder care providers with a circular presence in their own family in Slovakia and a family in Austria, with no intention of staying in Austria for a longer time are active across the national borders and maintain close ties with their family at home – they are members of the transnational family. They are absent and the missing care, or "care deficit" as Hochschild (1995) metaphorically portrays it, must be filled. Transnational families are essentially those that "reside in different countries but which sustain active, regular links and connections with one another across state borders; they develop new ways of "doing" family care – the ways in which organisational arrangements, relations and practices of family care-giving are structured across long distances and national borders" (Yeates 2009: 23). Transnational family practises have widely been studied; however Orozco warns of generalisation of typical transnational family patterns (Orozco 2006) as migrating actors and remitters are diverse migrating men and women from different age groups, social statuses, cultural and social contexts. In particular, in Slovakia, time spent at work is important. The shorter time spent abroad set specific framework and patterns of "doing family" in the case of Slovakia in comparison to other transnational families of domestic workers.

The strategies of women in providing care depended upon the family life-circle. Missing effective social mechanisms related to welfare, care of children or seniors on the part of the state deepened "problems". Strategies of elder care providers were determined by the type of family (nuclear, two generational family), marital status, children and their age as well as the (un)presence of broader family/kinship networks in the near area. Like the argument of Heidinger (2008), the transnational families of Slovak women included more members than the nuclear family. An important aspect of the family practises of elder care providers is the emergence of global care chains. The entrance of Slovak women into the new international division of reproductive labour to "sell" care while absence creates a care deficit at home means that Slovakia has become part of the global care chain. Global care chains are "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (Hochschild in Yeates 2009:40). The global care chains concept defines such social practise

when a woman takes paid domestic care abroad and her absence is substituted with another either informal/unpaid or paid person, a woman, often a migrant (Yeates 2009). The analysis of life-stories of females revealed several types of substitute care in Slovakian families – informal, unpaid, provided by nuclear or wider family members or paid care.

"Everyone helps; we try every possibility"

The most common pattern to fill in missing reproductive care most often takes the shape of informal, unpaid care provided by closest kinship (family members such as a spouse, parents, brothers and sisters of the parents, often also the children themselves). In this context Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997: 567) argue that transnational motherhood erodes the traditional notion of the family, the family which is present in one household and one common place. Women are pushed to improvise parenthood in the context of new structures in order to provide care for children. The narratives reflect that the burdens of everyday care are most often taken over by closest family during the absence of women. Spouses/husbands/fathers were primarily responsible for those tasks according to informants; among others were older children or grandparents. The higher activity of men in providing care for family members rather than doing household tasks indicates the way reproductive work is gendered:

> *"...My son had too many ties to me; he was 10. Those beginnings were difficult. Always before my departure he said that he was feeling bad, he was ill; there was always something wrong with him. Luckily their grandparents are there. At least there is someone for them because my husband works hard as well, from early morning to the late evening. He doesn't have time and space to study with them. My son and daughter have to be self-reliant and now I can see that there is also something positive in this – my son stopped being dependent on me; it is better now."* (Veronika, 37 years, married, 2 children)

From a theoretical point of view unpaid care cannot be perceived as "full-value". The delegation of the reproductive care duties in informants' families was only short term, until the time of return. Women tend to delegate reproductive work only partially, while woman put a lot of emphasize on doing as much as possible "in advance" and "afterwards". This pattern lasts even if commuting continues for several years. According to the family type and the presence/absence

of wider kinship relations, the spouse also takes over certain responsibilities. These are mainly related to providing care for children and parents, but exclude most of the tasks traditionally attributed to women (such as laundry, ironing, cleaning of the house, etc.).

If you need to pay someone else

Hiring an external person to provide paid care during the absence of a woman is done in Slovak families as well. Paying for reproductive care seems to be the last solution which women employ due to financial demands. Even though they earn more in Austria than in Slovakia, the earnings are still too low to pay another person. Zora, a 37-year-old mother of three children below 15 years of age, hired a nanny as her husband also worked abroad and none of the relatives could help her. At the time of the interview, it was the first month when she quit her domestic work in Austria, as she could not bear the situation:

> *"At the beginning I had a grandma here, but then she passed away so I hired a nanny. I pay another person here and Austrians pay me there. I used to say it is simply the irony of fortune because I have to take care of someone and some stranger is taking care of my kids."* (Zora, 37, married, 3 children)

She employed a similar strategy to what she had been experiencing in Austria – to provide food and accommodation for a nanny for 14 days. She expected a 24-hour job which consisted of care for children, cooking and basic cleaning. She did not expect the nanny to do housework. The nanny she hired was an unemployed woman before retirement from a city near her village (25 kilometres). The widow lived alone; her children were adults; however social security benefits did not allowed her to survive with dignity so she was forced to work:

> *"The nanny spent the whole two weeks with the kids; she slept and ate at my place. I did not want her to tidy up, except in the kitchen after cooking. Mostly, I wanted her to pay attention to the children, so they wouldn't feel alone. I wanted her to play with them, to study with them because I noticed that when I was at home they had better results in school. When I was away they had much worse grades. It was clear how important their psychological health was to them. But later when they got used to the nanny, they became friends and it was much better."* (Zora, 37 years, married, 3 children)

The relationship of Zora with the nanny was, according to her reflections, satisfactory. Unsatisfactory was leaving the children alone regularly for two weeks as a long-term strategy. Due to the emotionally demanding situation Zora quit work in Austria.

> *"I was very satisfied with her. But as I say, those times were extremely difficult for me and for the kids and I cried a lot in Austria. It was simply difficult and this led to some psychological problems for the children. They have some traumas because they were without me. Well, I must say, now it is better after those years; they have already coped with it because they are older now. But still, I think that this will never disappear from their memory."* (Zora, 37, married, 3 children)

The analysis of narratives indicates that age is an important differentiating factor having great influence on how women reflect on their gender identity. Although women with no exception felt responsible for reproductive work for their household, women with dependent children expressed great pressure arising from social norms. The "care deficit" at home and missing "mother" were intensified with feelings of guilt, sadness and pressure arising from the social norms defining the role of "appropriate mother".

Reflections on family separation in the context of gender and age

The separation of women migrants from the family creates various emotions and emotional demands on family members. The most intensive feelings are experienced by transnational mothers who have to leave their children. As Parrenas points out (Parrenas 2001: 116), the pain of family separation creates various feelings, including helplessness, regret, and guilt for mothers, and loneliness, vulnerability, and insecurity for children.

Informants with dependent children reflected on the strongest feelings of the separation experience. They expressed huge difficulties emerging from their separation despite the temporality. The narratives include feelings of failure to provide care for the children – moral care (meaning the provision of discipline and socialisation), emotional care (meaning the provision of emotional security) and material care (provision of the physical needs of dependents). Domestic workers also are used to be labelled as "labourers of love" or "labourers of sorrow" due to the fact that their sole motivating force for seeking domestic work is their love

for their children; migrant mothers seek every opportunity to maximize their earnings in order to bring money to their children (Parrenas 2001: 120).

> *"I have cried many times. God, what a life do I have? But, many women live like me. Do we need such a life? But the kids are the reason. A person simply has to go. Kids need clothes, bread, this and that, a new jacket or shoes... I do it for them."* (Zora, 37 years, married, 3 children)

Women employ several strategies to balance their absence. In order to remain "virtually present" in the everyday life of their children they emphasize communication. Although their earnings are not very high and communication is expensive, keeping in touch with the family is worth more than money. A mother of the three dependent children explains that she figures she can afford to call every second day for five minutes and it is worth it to her:

> *"I try to call every two days because calling to Slovakia is pretty expensive. But if you don't hear them it is even worse and I know that I can't go without staying in touch with the kids for two weeks. They are my kids; I don't care how expensive calling is then and call them every two days. I don't mind the money I spend. I need to talk to my children but it hurts when they are happy that they hear me. I call every two days but don't speak more than five minutes."* (Maria, 37 years, married, 3 children)

The strategies to balance the absence include substitution of missing moral and emotional care for the kids with material goods, gifts:

> *"I always try to bring them something. They expect it, some biscuits or chocolate, etc. When I worked in the city I also used to buy clothes, shoes. They were really happy to have something from Austria..."* (Eva, 47 years, married, 5 children)

> *"He has become pampered, I have to admit, because I have started to buy him many things, gifts. And it was my fault because I tried to give him everything that I had not been able to give him before. I bought him clothes, toys, I don't know whatever, a bicycle, a really good one which cost 200 euros. It was his first year at school; the other children had bicycles from their early childhood. Even though my mum tried hard I had very great difficult periods of life."* (Jarmila, 27 years, divorced, 1 child)

Other women established "return rituals". In order to make up for their absence, after their return home some women would always take their children out to dinner, cook a special dinner, go to an amusement park or cinema or go out and buy the children a present they wished for. The pain of transnational parenting was excused by the precarious situation. Informants emphasized their efforts to explain to the children the reasons for their absence, that they couldn't return because of the family's dependence on their earnings:

> *"To be honest with you, the beginnings were very hard for me. I was used to spending a lot of time with my small children. We used to study together; I did everything with them. I felt guilty. But now I think they understand that this is not my free choice; it is a must. Because of the financial situation, the purchase of the house and a loan and house reconstruction. It was very hard, terrible for me. But now (after two years) it is much better."* (Veronika, 37 years, married, 2 children)

"I take care of strangers and my mother needs help"

Women with adult children and dependant parents expressed different reflections on gender identity. The women in the upper-end of the family life circle, women with adult children and senior parents, were confronted with the role of "daughter". How to substitute missing care for their own parents, who are of the age of their "clients" in Austria for whom they care for a wage while their own parents are dependent? None of the informants have parents in nursing homes. However almost every day work experience with seniors and dependent adults in Austria push women to reflect on how to handle own parents, how to provide care for them if they are absent. The women with self-reliant parents were worried about the future, about the health of their parents, their needs which they may not be able to fulfil by themselves soon. They expressed worries about which strategy would be the best? Who will take over the responsibility? They repeatedly expressed the view that the strategy consisted of either plans to stop working abroad or to manage somehow, including paying for care, necessary care while commuting.

> *"My mum has some health problems. She was in hospital and now she feels better. I take care of strangers and it would be better if I could take care of my mum... What I would like best is to care for my mum even for free. But it is simply impossible. However, if she really becomes immobile, my mum, maybe I really will stop doing this work. I want to be with her up to her death. I hope she will never need such support but one never knows."* (Eva, 47 years old, married, 5 children)

Transnational partnership: reflections on spouse/partner

The relationship between a migrant woman and her spouse/partner faces a challenge as well. The absence of the woman, an "isolated life", puts new demands on the couple. The reflection on marriage/partnership by women, the subjective view on how absence influences a relationship, significantly challenges previous patterns in the family. Long-term absence, in several cases, also reinforced by the migration of the husband/partner, causes various negative impacts, most likely alienation of the partners. The strongest feelings of alienation were expressed mainly by younger women with dependent children – they expressed regret and sadness over their situation:

> *"My husband works abroad and he commutes on a monthly basis. It is terrible and not ideal at all as we rarely see each other. The children don't get to see him as well. We are too far from each other... Under such circumstances a lot of couples get divorced; people do not understand each other any more. They are no longer man and wife. One is here, the other is there; they are not a family... When we meet after a certain time, we are alienated and do not have any common topics to talk about. Unfortunately, after a few days together, when it becomes better, he or I have to go abroad."* (Zora, 37 years, married, 3 children)

Other women consider the separation as a challenge – a challenge for strength. As separation is only temporary, relationships might discover new levels of closeness based on the rareness of being together. Again, research has shown a different perception and impact on those families with small children and young couples from among those of an older age.

> *"My absence definitely has some influence on the relationship. When I was married my ex-husband migrated to work abroad. I stayed at home and it was hardly bearable because of jealousy. But in this relationship we have been together for two years; it is always like at the beginning... And we always look forward to each other. We discuss everything; we have very long talks. And maybe because of all those problems which we have – with finances, health problems which I have, nerves, the problems with the kid, it empowers us. My boyfriend really is concerned about me...when he sees how sad I am sad because I have to leave and go abroad."* (Jarmila, 27 years, divorced, 1 child)

Age influences reflection on the partnership among women working in Austria. Women with adult children felt less concerned about household and family as such. The work abroad meant for some of them space for personal self-expression, looking for a new experience, a chance for personal growth or financial independence. Feelings of self-realisation may have a positive influence on a relationship. Also absence and separation – the informants perceived it as a good "lesson" for husbands on how important they are. Until their separation, some informants had not realized how much they and their husbands valued each other:

> "*I perceive this time without being with my husband (laugh), as being good because he is now aware of my value and who I am for him. He values me when I come back home. I can see that he appreciates me, that he likes me more now than at the times of being together every day. If we are separated for a while, it strengthens our love and our relationship. I know it is not always like that in my family and I know some couples who divorced – divorced because the woman went to work in Austria.*" (Petra, 53 years, married, 3 children)

Migration might be a strategy to escape unfavourable social relations with a spouse or wider family relations. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) found out that in the case of Mexican domestic workers in the US women embarked on migratory projects in order to change their relationships with their spouses or other relatives who oppressed them back home. The narratives of some Slovak women indicate that being a transmigrant separated from the family and relationship might be a strategy to escape from an unfavourable partner relationship.

> *"My husband works on a three-weekly basis. Sometimes we meet only for one day; he came on Monday evening and I left on Tuesday. We have an ideal marriage... I think that my husband did not expect us to end up this way – living separately because of my work... You know... We (women) had eyes for the children when they were small. We overlooked our husbands. The children were everything. Then they grew up; only empty space was left. And then... we started to fight with our husbands somehow; we started to blame each other and the relationship became quite difficult. Then it is better to leave..."* (Katarína, 53 years, married, 2 children)

In such cases migration of elder care providers is paradoxical – women look for self-expression and self-realisation in the gendered work and in the environment with asymmetric power relations – in families in Austria.

Conclusion

The increase in migration undoubtedly challenges families in Slovakia nowadays, especially if a woman leaves her family, children, spouse or parents behind. She must overcome the difficulty in adapting to a foreign country and a new job and she must negotiate a position in the private household where she works. Besides this there are other specifics differentiating female migration from male migration. The migrating male continues the previous strategy of being a socially constructed male-breadwinner model – he only changes country of work and the family must overcome his absence. On the contrary, the migrating woman acts against social norms defining her gender identity of mother, wife or daughter. She leaves her family and the social and psychological aspects of this act make the situation very demanding. Anthropological scholarship elaborates a wide range of different strategies concerning how females perceive the transnational family or motherhood. The Slovakian case of elder providers in Austria has several specifics – time (the absence of women for two, rarely three weeks) and distance (they work in a relatively close foreign country). This setting "allows" persistence of the social norms and gender division of labour in the families.

Households in Slovakia under the pressure of the missing females develop alternative strategies. The housework tasks are taken over by close family or kin; the spouse/partner exceptionally, female family members in particular. The "care deficit", the need to take care of dependent family members is most often taken over by a partner/spouse or another family member. Hiring a paid care provider from outside, such as a nanny for the children, is present as well, but rather an exception due to the financial demands. Women remain responsible for reproductive labour in the households in spite of their absence during half of the month. The reflection on gender identity in life-stories shows that gender is a multidimensional category. Female migrants reflect on their gender identity and manifest it different ways – in close correlation to age. Women with dependent children have difficulties with overcoming the paradox that they leave their children in order to provide them with complex care (material, emotional). They confront their social role of mother. Women with adult children and parents who may need their help are confronted with different roles and gender contexts. At the same time gender also influences motivation to work and the perception of work as such. To be an elder care provider means self-realisation for them – they are paid for the work they understand as "their area", they gain new experiences with a foreign country, they learn a language and, what is specifically important, they

gain financial independence and self-confidence. Reflection on gender identity in this context is intensified by the fact that women with adult children provide paid care to people of the age of their parents while their own parents may need them. While manifestation of gender identity is oriented towards family left in Slovakia for females with dependent children, women with adult children manifest their identity through elder care. Migration of Slovak females to Austria strengthens gender norms in society in several ways. Women provide care-giving (for a wage), work socially constructed and ascribed to females, and the way women act in relation to a transnational household also tends to follow social norms related to gender.

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PARADOXES OF *PARDHA* AND AGENCY AMONG MUSLIM WOMEN IN KERALA*

Julten Abdelhalim

Abstract: ***Following the oil boom of the 1970s in the Arabian Gulf, the region witnessed massive labour migration waves from the Southwestern Indian state of Kerala. The impact of the migration on the Arabian Gulf countries led to unprecedented advancements in the human development index of Kerala, especially among Muslims who were most affected by the tremendous social change. In this paper, I focus on only one sign of this socio-cultural change that was reflected in the adoption of the female Arab black attire, termed*** *pardha* ***in Kerala. What I will be arguing through the coming pages is the paradoxical formula where*** *pardha* ***was enforced as a marker of identity, but had nevertheless created emancipatory tools out of the confining frameworks of traditional patriarchy as characteristic of much of Keralite society. This paper seeks to convey the different debates surrounding this phenomenon and what women themselves have to say about it. This paper focuses on fieldwork undertaken in two districts of northern Kerala or what is known as Malabar, namely Malappuram and Kozhikode.***

Keywords: ***Kerala, pardha, Muslim women, gulf migration***

Contextual introduction

Kerala, being the most south western region in India, had direct access to the Arab world via the Arabian Sea. The six northern districts of what is known today as Kerala comprise the historical area named Malabar, which had been involved in a trade-based history that goes back, in certain accounts, to even before the

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time of the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century.[1] Whereas the Arab World was historically dependent on the trade with Malabar, contemporarily, the cultural and economic ties are reversed.

Since the oil boom in the 1970s, the economical links between India and the Arab World became dependent on labour migration to build up the newly developing Gulf States. Kerala is considered the main source of Indian labour to the Gulf, where six million Indians reside (Government of UPA Report 2013), hence Kerala's economy has become reliant on remittances from Gulf migration.

In Malabar region, Malappuram is the district with the highest Muslim population amounting to 68.5 percent. Emigration to the Gulf states plays a major role in shaping the Malabari society, especially that Malappuram district is considered to outnumber the rest of the districts of Kerala in emigration (17.5 percent of emigrants from Kerala are from Malappuram) but not in return emigration. In Kerala, 52.5 percent of Muslim households have one or more non-resident Keralite. In Malappuram alone, 71 percent of the households have in them either an emigrant or a return emigrant each. The largest amount of remittances in 2007 was received by Malappuram district, which amounted to 19 percent of the total remittances for the state. Around 50 percent of the remittances to the state were received by the Muslim community, which forms less than 25 percent of the total population of the state. Malayalee Muslim residents in the Gulf amount to 1.6 millions. 22.9 percent of married Muslim women are Gulf wives (whose husbands live and work in the Gulf) (Zachariah andRajan 2007).[2] Due to the rising numbers of Keralites in the Gulf states, both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates decided to open consulates in Kerala to accommodate for the demands of the large (largest in the case of the UAE) Indian workforce community and to encourage business (Times of India, 12/10/2011; 6/01/2013).

Since job opportunities are scarce in Kerala due to the low industrial level and the rural nature of the state, emigration seems to be the main option. However, emigration is heavily directed towards the Gulf and not towards other states of India. High levels of income that match the high consumption levels of Keralites are not the only reason for this orientation. Another major factor is the cheap daily direct flights to the Gulf implying it is more accessible than going to Delhi (almost everyone who was living in the Gulf whom I spoke with has never been to Delhi).

1 Malabar also features in Indian history records pertaining to the Independence struggle on the part of Muslims and the Malabar rebellion of 1921-22.

2 Leela Gulati in her book *In the Absence of their Men: The Impact of Male Migration on Women* showcases narratives of Gulf wives covering different demographical and economical situations.

This led to cultural attachments especially among Muslim Malayalees (known as Mappilas) to the Arabs and a strong sense of emulation in food and dress habits.

In today's Kerala, especially Malabar or the Northern part, the majority of Muslims, who are known as the *Mappila* Muslims of Malabar, one can see the prevalence of the traditional Gulf female attire called *'Abbayyah* in Arabic, which was introduced in the Keralite setting as *pardha* and as a word does not have any resonance in Arabic. It should be noted that the term *pardha* or *pardah* has a different connotation in the Indian context. Historically, it referred to female seclusion from the public space in general and contemporarily it refers to mainly the act of hiding the female face in public spaces with the shawl or the end of the *saree*, regardless of religious affiliation as it was a practice (and still is in some rural areas) common among both Hindus and Muslims (de Souza 2004; Gabriel and Hannan 2011). However, in Kerala it denotes the black long dress worn by the Arab Gulf women. And in the North Indian context, the black attire is called *burqa*, which is actually an Arabic word. How the word *pardha* traveled to the Keralite context remains an undiscovered linguistic domain.[3]

The discourses concerning *pardha* have been raging for about a decade. The arguments are manifested on multiple levels: everyday life, the media and intellectual circles. The forces of contention are concentrated among two groups; those who call themselves the secularists and those labeled as Islamic feminists. They stand against the Muslim orthodox voices, sided by the common woman who in the majority of cases does not hold a specifically apparent sociopolitical orientation to the question of *pardha*. After 2005, with the conversion of the Malayalam poet Kamala Das (later Kamala Surayya) and her propagation of *pardha* as a means of a sense of liberation, the perception of *pardha* as an oppressive veiling instrument was entirely absent from the psyche of the common Keralite woman, who as I would be showing dealt with it in a manner different from the intellectuals.

The opponent camp's argument coincides with the rejection of the de-traditionalization of the Keralite society and the adoption of contemporary foreign Arabic cultural icons, especially consumerist and hegemonic ones. In a society characterized by a strong ability to accommodate foreign elements, this case of

[3] According to Osella & Osella (2007) the Malayalees use the word *'abayya* to denote the expensive imported *pardha* that carries rich symbolic capital since it is originally worn by the wealthy Arab Women of the Gulf. However, during my stay in Kerala, I did not encounter anyone who says '*abayya*. Eventually the differences came down to how much embroidery or "work" on it that gives it its value, and whether it is locally produced or imported.

adoption of the *pardha* dress is associated with other phenomena such as the introduction of Egyptian, Saudi and Yemeni popular food in all restaurants in and around Kerala. The cultural flow is mixed with strong economic incentives that led to successful business enterprises in manufacturing and selling these Arab popular lifestyles. Male-based cults conspired with market mechanisms to create trends that dislocated the agency of women in deciding or 'coding' their dressing style. During the last ten years, the consequent forces of social change and globalization have led to an interesting alteration in conceptions of fashion, especially in a society characterized by strong traditional rural values.

The South Indian society witnessed massive social changes linked with women's forms of dress. Though they were not conceived as agents in setting mainstream rules of decency, women, especially Muslims, were the most evident subjects of social change. Inherent and traditional conceptions of decency and sexuality in the South Indian society were reshaped through different phases often trespassing the barriers of caste and religion (Jones 1989; Kertzer 1988; Devika 2007). These phases started with the Breast Cloth controversy of the early nineteenth century that culminated in wiping out the ban on low caste Hindu women to cover their bosoms (Hardgrave 1968), to the adoption of the originally Brahminical North Indian attire, known as the *saree*, then the switching to the *salwarqameez*, and lastly the *pardha*.

Should we hence regard the *pardha* trend as a Gramscian phenomenon of hegemony since there is some implied consensual internal acceptance, or should we borrow Bourdieu's (1977) hybrid concept of symbolic violence that refers to the contradictory or double reality of conduct that is intrinsically equivocal? The case of the Keralite Muslim women illustrates these interwoven questions of agency, consumerism and fashion. This paper attempts at demonstrating these different arguments and showing the paradoxes of the symbolic meaning of agency, self-image and domination. One observation is the irony of how in a society where women outnumber men and hence control the outcome of the political process through the electoral ballots, their agency is continually denied and manipulated. However, the picture is more complex, once we employ the feminist outlook of situated knowledge (Haraway 1998) and take account of the absent narratives of the common woman. As I would be showing, dress in many cases appears as a political tool and not merely a reflection of a consumerist attitude (though this is also taken into consideration).

This paper relates to ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the state of Kerala from December 2010 until April 2011 in the two districts of Malappuram and

Kozhikode. The observations and the narratives that are evident in this paper came as a byproduct of my initial fieldwork on Indian Muslims and citizenship, which formed my doctoral thesis topic. Data obtained for this paper stem from participant observation and semi-structured interviews, conducted in Malayalam with housewives, and in English with students and professionals such as lawyers and medical doctors. Having stayed for five months in a village in Malappuram district, the relations I built with the family I resided with in addition to my own identity as a Muslim Arab female facilitated my entry into the field especially as I adopted the same lifestyle comprised of specific dress code, food, travel limitations and curfew time. Throughout my travels for interviews, this research covered eight constituencies (five municipalities and seven panchayaths) in Malappuram district with the predominant Muslim population (68.5%) and Kozhikode district (37.4%) (Cenus of India 2001).

Consumerist trends as a result of migration and the enlargement of the middle class

The city of Kozhikode, formerly known as Calicut, has a rich history of trade with the Arab world. By the twelfth century it became a commercial center between the Arab World, Southeast Asia and South Asia (Narayanan 2006). Historically, trade relations did not only result in an exchange of material goods of spices and wood. In fact, the impact of trade was witnessed in the cultural goods that came in a dualistic form; artistically and literarily (hybrid language and folklore); and socially (inter-religious marriages, conversions and later on women's education and their dress code) (Karassery 1995; Dale 1980; Kurup 2006; Kunju 1989).

To briefly showcase the cultural goods resulting from this migration, there was the innovation of a hybrid language known as *Arabi-malayalam*, which is basically Malayalam written in Arabic script, with a vocabulary emerging from Malayalam, Arabic, Tamil, Urdu and Persian. It was initially used as an educational and anti-colonial method of teaching Muslims without resorting to either English or the Hindu-associated sanskritized Malayalam (Miller 1976).

Malabar's folklore is composed of hybrid art forms in which indigenous dancing and poetry were fused with Arabic themes. *Duffmuttu*, for example, is an art form using the traditional Arabian *duff* (an Arabian drum). Contemporarily, Muslims stand in a circle singing an Islamic song in Malayalam while playing the *duff*. *Kolkali* is another performing art from Malabar, which is taken from the traditional *Kalarippayatt* (a form of Dravidian martial art using small sticks or

swords). The change to the original 'Hindu' form is that Islamic songs accompany it, the boys are not bare-chested, and their heads are covered with a piece of cloth. One of the almost vanishing art forms now is the *oppana,* which is a form of singing and dancing presented by females during a wedding ceremony. The singing is of folk Mappila (Malabar's Muslim) songs. The Mappila songs themselves (in Malayalam: *Mappillapattu*) also represent another hybrid form of art.[4]

These art forms now are almost exclusively existent in Islamic schools' celebrations or in TV programs. Whenever I attended a wedding, I was surprised with how void it is of any music, dancing, or celebration sight apart from the incredible amounts of biryani and beef curry. Nowadays since the oil boom, this cultural exchange is not only one-sided but also consumerist to a great extent. As I noticed during my stay, goods, dressing and eating styles came in to replace and suppress the artistic forms of exchange.

Migration led to many results, among which is the enlargement of the middle class in Kerala. Many of the housewives I interviewed or just chatted with, especially the elderly, stressed how Kerala fifty years ago was a very different place. Hunger, poverty and modesty were major features of everyday life. These were transformed by 'Gulf money.' According to a survey conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research, Kerala's Muslim households average earnings was 29,991 INR/year in comparison with Hindus households' average of 26,344/year (Iype 2004).

One recurrent narrative in the interviews pointed to the increased rate of food consumption, especially among the Muslims. Connected to this is the observation that Muslims do a thriving business in restaurants all around the state usually serving the same menu. The appearance of Arab diners is a notable feature. Several restaurants in Kozhikode carry names such as: *Arabian Diner*, *Arabian food,* and *Albake* (a famous fast food chain for fried chicken in Saudi Arabia). Their almost identical menus are comprised of Saudi and Yemeni meat dishes.

Another Gulf-influenced trend is apparent in the shops selling what Malayalees call "Gulf Products". These products are not all manufactured in the Gulf, but are usually imported. Examples of these durable and non-durable goods are mobile phones, computers, kitchen and cooking devices, blankets and a specific washing liquid called Fairy.

[4] A version of Arabi-Malayalam is found in the Muslim Mappila Songs sang in Malabar. These songs are divided in various categories. Of these categories are the weddings songs (*kalyanapaatu*), praising prophets and saints (*madhpattu*), and war songs. See: Karassery, M.N. 1995.

The prevalence of a strong consumer culture is linked to an established purchasing power of women. This is not only attributed to consumer goods, but also to the common goal of directing remittances towards building or renovating houses – a goal that ended up as a trend. Perhaps what is most significant about this trend is that women's agency and autonomy appear here particularly strongly. Usually it is the women who are the recipients of money that their husbands send through bank transfers or *Western Union*, and hence are often solely responsible for all the paperwork concerning obtaining construction permits from the municipality, choosing a design for the house and managing all construction-related steps. In a survey conducted by Zachariah and Rajan in 2007, the role of the wife in managing the finances of the household was very apparent; 60 percent of respondents manage on their own and 69 percent have their own bank accounts. Whereas this strong agency in using the money is observable, there is limited labor mobility for Muslim women in Kerala. It is often inconceivable for a Muslim woman to decide to travel for work purposes on her own. However, the emphasis on education is slowly changing this mind-set since traveling for educational purposes has been socially sanctioned, although still limited to Kerala.

Minor reference here should be noted regarding the legacy of matriliny in Kerala. Although it started as a tradition among the Nair Hindu caste, matriliny was adopted by many Muslims, however, it was restricted in the Cannanore region (now Kannur district) north of Malappuram and Kozhikode where I conducted my study. Matriliny does not refer to matriarchy; as it was restricted to the idea that the husband moves to the wife's house upon marriage, however, the decision-making capacity still resides with him (Lindberg 2009; Jeffrey 2004). This had some positive impacts nonetheless, especially on the presence of women in the public sphere through mobility, education and the job market.

Appearance of *pardha* and different dressing styles

Traditionally, Muslim women used to wear a long skirt with a long-sleeved blouse on top of it and a headscarf. Now this style is limited to old ladies and has been replaced by the North Indian attire called *salwar-qameez* that is made of three pieces: a knee-long blouse, a shawl and a pair of trousers. In addition to this, the *saree* is usually worn but mainly among the elder and married women. The most recent variation of what Muslim women wear is the black *pardha*. Analyzing the trend of wearing a standardized dress as the black *pardha* collides with the reality of how religion and fashion cults operate in a rural society that is increasingly

globalized and witnessing massive cultural cross-border interactions. These dynamics are manifested through the empirical examples demonstrated in this paper. According to a survey conducted in Calicut, there was a notable increase in *pardha* usage[5] from 3.5 percent in 1990 to 32.5 percent by 2000 in the northern regions of Kerala (Basheer 2002). Osella and Osella (2007) observed an even higher percentage while conducting their research in 2002–2004: around 50 percent, with 90 percent usage in the old Muslim area of the city, Thekkepuram. This is also obvious from the increase in the sales of the major *pardha* manufacturing company (Hoorulyn) in Kerala since its inception in 1992 from 100 dresses to 10,000 by 2002 (De Jong, quoted in Osella and Osella 2007).

During my fieldwork, I observed the hegemony of the North Indian Salwar-Qameez (referred to as *churidaar* in Kerala) in Calicut University and its affiliated non-religious colleges, as well as in the city itself. This is contrast to the dominance of *pardha* in Islamic colleges and in its outdoor usage in the villages of Northern Kerala.[6] As opposed to the reason of practicality that led to the dispersion of *pardha* among housewives (being a quick dress as opposed to the *saree*), the stipulation of *pardha* as a compulsory uniform in educational institutions carries symbolic significance, which will be further investigated.

Although some studies have pointed out the difference in the appearance of women in the public space,[7] the Keralite case offers an exception to the common narratives on India that focus on the Northern states. In fact, Muslim and non-Muslim Keralites appear to be concerned with an obsession with decency in public spaces (or to be more precise with the male-dominated conception of decency).[8] Not only are Muslim women constrained in their dresses, but Hindus as well. You would rarely see a Hindu woman wearing jeans or a T-shirt, especially

5 Defining 'usage' is a problematic issue since there is a noted flexibility in the decision to wear a *pardha*. Basheer (2002) himself in his article does not specify what he means by using the *pardha* and whether it is an exclusive choice of dress or as it is in Kerala, one of the options women adopt besides the *saree* and the *salwar-qameez*.

6 For those women working in field, the commonly used dress is the "maxi" or the house long cotton dress or the traditional Keralite dress formed of a blouse and a skirt (here the religious differences will dictate the form of the blouse).

7 Examples are J. Abu Lughod (1987), who touches upon this difference, yet in a reductionist manner focusing only on North India, in her article the Islamic city, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, pp. 160–161. Otherwise, C. Gupta (2002), *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. New York: Palgrave, discusses general gender identity formations in colonial India.

8 This was obvious to me during their everyday conversations and their remarks on my dress (both in India and in Egypt), in addition to what is being dispersed through the written media.

in Calicut. This leaves Christians as the most liberal in their choice of 'Western' clothing, especially in the districts of Ernakulam and Thrissur, where they are concentrated.

Interviews showed the expected conformity to concepts of modesty and decency. "The *saree* shows every single part of the woman's body, but with the *pardha* it is impossible, but of course you can still see the shape, but not like the *saree,*" a female student in Calicut informed me. The definition of modesty, however, varies from the Muslim perspective to the non-Muslim one. For the non-Muslim and especially the Hindu, modesty revolves around wrapping, restraining, and binding: clothes are tight, wound around the body, and jewelry such as anklets and bangles contain the bodily extremities. There is an emphasis on binding, sealing, and restraining. (Osella and Osella 2007: 4)

Islamic texts clearly stress avoiding any tight and thus revealing forms of clothing. Hence, for Muslim women, the *saree* would still be appropriate if the blouse underneath is full-sleeved and covering her midriff or stomach and back. Not to mention wrapping a scarf on her head or using the end of the *saree* to cover her head. Consequently, Muslim women could be easily identified from non-Muslim ones by looking at the way they wrap their *sarees*. Muslims never show their stomach, and thus the *saree* end is always loose enabling them to wrap it over their heads in case they are not wearing a headscarf, whereas the Hindu style is what Muslims call 'steps', because the end of the *saree* is multiply folded and pinned allowing the midriff or at least part of it to be shown. Still, some elements in the mentality of decency remained common between communities, and this is of tight sleeves. While non-Muslims prefer tight short sleeves, Muslims differ only in the fact that their sleeves are long. But they still stitch them tightly. I had a personal encounter on this matter when I tried to convince a lady tailor to make my blouse that she had just stitched a bit looser, and she kept looking at me puzzled and not understanding why I would wear it loose.

This proves that there is a constant puzzle when it comes to being practical and being fashion-conscious. In an extremely hot place like Kerala, one would guess that women would automatically opt for cotton headscarves. However, wherever I searched for one, I could never find any cotton *mafta* (Malayalam for head scarf). These *maftas* were always made of the same polyester material and found in exactly three colors: black, beige, and white. They were always in the same shape. This gave a clue on how standardized the society is, not to mention the strong tendency to conformity. I wondered how that the range of what could be called fashionable scarves was very limited. When comparing with Egypt or

Turkey, where there is a widespread custom of covering the hair, there is always a huge array of scarves. Interestingly, you can find very colorful headscarves that are made in India and sold in Egypt. However, throughout my trips all over India, I never found these *maftas* (which have a specific size rendering them easy for wrapping on the head).

The fascination with fashion is linked to a trend in boutique business in Kerala among the upper class Muslim women. Opening a boutique is a popular option for women without a professional degree, allowing them to work. During my stay in Kerala, I encountered a recently divorced woman who decided to open a boutique. She traveled with some members of her family to Mumbai to get fabrics for *salwar-qameez* suits and *sarees* and sold them at higher prices to gain profit. They were elegant yet simple fabrics, which symbolized upper class taste.

There is a noticeable attentiveness in asking for the price of what one wears. In addition to this, whereas there is rarely a discussion over the fabric, there is great interest in buying clothes with heavy embroidery or appliqués (what they call 'work') and a trendy color and design. This means that if someone wears polyester clothes in extremely hot weather, their mentality is highly fashion-blinded and practicality does not play a significant role in their choice of clothes, especially that there was a witnessed disregard for cotton suits which were looked upon as a form of cheap house dress. This is not limited to women, but extends to men also. Since skinny tight jeans were trendy (according to what they see in Gulf markets and TV) they became a cult among young men. However, those who are still studying at *madrasas*[9] would refrain from going to the *madrasa* with these trousers because they know such attire is not accepted by the religious people. Young men also have an allure towards what they call a *jubba*, which is simply the North Indian *Kurta* (long Indian shirt). This could be translated as an attempt to copy the North Indian political elite image and to break the stereotypical image of a South Indian man. These empirical examples are meant to show the clash resulting from the interaction between urban values and rural societies. Kerala is a fascinating example to show how globalization managed to penetrate the rural society and inject in it urban trends and fascinations. A culture of appropriated consumption was inherently related to a negotiated space of women's agency and empowerment, which was reflected in small-scale boutique and beauty parlour businesses.

[9] Madrasas are Islamic schools in which children are taught the basic principles of Islam and the Quranic teachings. In Kerala, most Muslim children go to a Madrasa either from sunrise till eight in the morning and then head to the modern school, or they go in the evening once they finish school.

Coming to the usage of *pardha*, the case of Kerala presents us with a different scenario than the already studied one of Egypt, Northern India, and Western European societies (for example Bullock 2002; Ahmad 2011). In some societies, the shift to wearing a *pardha* is an ideological decision based on a conviction that it is the exclusively Muslim and decent dress. A woman in Egypt who chooses to wear a *pardha* (or *'Abayya* to be contextually correct) would not easily return to wearing standard clothes (skirt and blouse, or blouse and trousers) and, most definitely, would not be switching her dressing styles in the public sphere. In Kerala, it is a matter of context and convenience. Most women in villages would wear one on her house dress (the maxi: a long loose half or full-sleeved simple dress). The same woman when going to a wedding would wear a *saree*, and perhaps when going shopping for clothes or when visiting some relatives would wear a *salwar-qameez* suit. Apart from female students of Islamic or Arabic Studies, the use of *pardha* in public is never compulsory, not even from the family. The Northern Indian context gives us another contradictory image, since the decision to wear a *pardha* comes out of compulsion and not a free choice. In this case, it is associated with covering the face most of the time. In Kerala, however, it is a rare case to see a woman with her face covered and, if this happens, then she would be often labeled by other *pardha*-clad women as an extremist or belonging to a *tablighijama'at* family.[10] Interestingly, the spaces for a public discourse on *pardha* functions in a Lefebvrian manner, as they appear not only to serve as a tool of action, but also as a means of production, social control and domination (Lefebvre 1991) as I will show in the next section.

These discourses concerning the usage of *pardha* are entangled within a matrix of multiple identities in Kerala; the Pan-Islamic identity meets the South Indian Malayalee's customs and directs her through a Gulf-centered lens. Osella and Osella (2007) appropriately capture the reasons Muslims attribute their use of *pardha* in addition to the above-mentioned reason of convenience. The first emerges from the role of social and religious reformist organizations such as the Kerala Nadwatul Mujahideen. The second is the growing sense of marginalization and insecurity of the Muslims as a minority community due to rising Hindu chauvinistic nationalism. This is particularly obvious in northern parts of the country, but not in Kerala. The feeling of being a threatened minority does not

10 The *TabligihJama'at* is one of the several Muslim organizations in India that has an international network and is basically focusing on preaching and proselytizing principles of Islam. For more information on this organization, see: Sikand, Y. (2002). *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920–2000): A cross-country comparative study*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

find fertile soil in Kerala, especially in the heavily populated Muslim areas. This is why I will focus more on the role of reformist organizations in the "religious marketing" of the *pardha*.

Discourses on *pardha* (secularists versus islamists) versus what women themselves say

The Muslim community in Kerala is far from homogenous. In general, there are three major Islamic groups in Kerala. The first is the most widely spread Sufi group, or *Ahlu-Sunnatwal-jamaat*, which are called *Sunnis*. It is claimed that around 70% of the Muslim community in Kerala follow this group. In popularity, Kerala Nadwatul Mujahideen (KNM) or the *Mujahids* follow with around 20%. The third small, yet powerful group is the Jamaati Islami-Hind's Kerala chapter, with just below 10% of the Muslim population.[11] There is also a small fraction of the Tablighi Jamaat and the Ahmadiyya sect.

Since the early nineteenth century, reformist movements started appearing in Kerala among the different communities. For the Muslim community, reformist organizations emerged in the early twentieth century after the Malabar Rebellion when religious leaders (*ulema)* started facing the deteriorated conditions of Muslims, particularly in the educational field. Apart from Nadwatul Mujahideen, or the *Islahi* (Reformist) Movement in Kerala, *Jamaati Islami-i-hind*'s Kerala chapter is gaining increasing ground in the social spectrum.

In addition to educational and economic uplifting of the community, these reformists assumed a role of the responsibility in policing women's moral conduct. They considered themselves responsible in front of God, not just to educate women and be financially responsible for them, but also to ensure their decency and their compliance with their own version of divine rules of decency. In an article published in the Jamaati Islami Women's wing magazine (*Aaraaman*), the editor had referred to *pardha* as "a modern dress for moral women" (Basheer 2002).

Interestingly, not only Muslim women were subject to this mentality, but all Malayalee women in general (the upper caste Namboodiri Brahmins or the

[11] These data are obtained from an interview with Prof. Hafiz Mohamed from Feroke College, Kerala. The percentages are obtained through calculating the number of *madrasas* affiliated to each group. Faith-wise, Muslims would be actually divided into four groups, including the Ahmadiyyas who have their own mosques and act like a clan and are considered by non-Ahmadiyyas to be untrue Muslims. Politics-wise, Muslims would be divided into three groups. The majority are the Muslim Leaguers, followed by the JamaatiIslami, and finally the NDF supporters (SDPI and PDP).

lower caste Ezhavas). Devika and Husain (2010) share my opinion by calling this process 're-forming women.' They point to two constant and contemporary pressures on Muslim women in Kerala: the pressure on the young woman to "conform to norms of dressing found desirable by certain elements claiming to represent community interest", and the pressure of the threat to life in some cases.[12]

A great paradox of the reformist agenda appears. Not only do the reformist *ulema* allow women to go to mosques, but they also encourage them to do so, unlike the prevalent and dominant attitude of the Sufi (called Sunni in Kerala) trend to ban women from entering mosques. Mujahids and Jamaati Islami reformers stress education for girls and women (both secular and religious). Their social, cultural and educational activities are always intermingled (both sexes are in same classrooms and same conference venues) without any physical barrier separating them. Girls are given spaces to voice their opinions through GIO (the Jamaati Islami Girls Islamic Organization) and MGM (The Mujahid Girls Movement). However, all this is performed while a strict dress code is being inscribed.

Choosing what to teach, choosing which experience to write about, and choosing whom to talk about are all in the hands of men (especially through media). It was interesting for me to see that the role of women in anti-colonial struggles of the Arab world was totally invisible in any of the publications, curricula, and topics of research (many girls had the same topic of studying Bint Alshati',[13] but none dealt with political feminist figures). There was a perplexing and noticeable gap between women's roles in the Middle East in deploying charity organizations as spaces for assertion of their public role, and the nonexistence of this in a developed state like Kerala. GIO and MGM's activities remain limited to a great extent and ends with the marriage of students. Of the established social realities in Kerala are the hurdles put in the path of a married Muslim woman inhibiting her from venturing into public action affairs (with few individual exceptions).

Despite the high index of human development that Kerala witnesses and the advanced progress the Muslim-dominated district records, another gender

12 By showing the In the case of Rayana (a Muslim college student in her twenties who received death threats in 2010 to shift to wearing the *pardha*), Devika and Hussain (2010) explain how it was obvious that there was inadequate support from media, religious and feminist organizations, as well as the police to seriously condemn the pressure to conformity.

13 Bintalshati' (the Arabic for the Daughter of the Riverbank) was the pen name used by one of the most famous Arabic literary figures. Her real name was Ayesha Abd El-Rahman and she was an Egyptian writer who lived from 1913 until 1998. She specialized in writing the biographies of early Muslim women.

paradox remains. Educated and employed women are strong victims of violence (whether physical through sexual harassment or getting threat letters, or symbolic through rumors). They easily become victims of individuation, stress and depression (mental illnesses). Individuation is a serious problem that resulted from education (Devika – Mukherjee 2007). No matter how the society tried to solve this problem through molding girls' minds into the utter belief of their indispensible domestic function; they end up suffering from depression. The role of reformist organizations enters in the dynamics by offering a public space through which these individuated spaces of seclusion could be overcome. However, this space is controlled by the adherence to the *pardha* as a code of entry.

The increasing appearance of *pardha* in Kerala's public spaces triggered an incredible volume of debate within the Malayalee society. These debates emerge on a spectrum encompassing the liberal secularists on the one hand and the Islamist Secularists[14] on the other. Women as subaltern individuals or agents remain somehow outside this spectrum. The dilemma that this classification poses is being trapped in reductionist analysis of the reality of *pardha* in Kerala. The liberal secularist intellectuals perceive it as an enforced adoption of an alien Arab oppressive tool and thus a threat to the communally harmonious nature of Kerala, while the Islamists perceive it as an indicative expression of freedom of belief and practice guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Both interpretations ignore the perspective of women either as agents or as subjects to the phenomenon.

Some intellectuals who do not align themselves in any exclusive category signaled their concern over the increasing critique of *pardha* since it might be strongly related to Hindu nationalistic forces. They often exclaim as to why only Muslim women appear as subjects of contention in media. In a family magazine published by the Mujahid organization, the following comment was noted in one of the letters of readers as a response to an article on *pardha*. In his letter titled "Should we fear *pardha*?" he ridiculed modern dresses showing the body and the women who wear them. According to him, people have no problem if Sister Maria (any Christian lady) or Devi Kumari (any Hindu Lady) wears *pardha* or any dress. People have a problem only when one Khadija wears it (*Putare* 2011).

[14] Since the Islamists emphasize secularism as a domain giving them freedom to work and thus opting for it as an ideal system, it would be unfair and contextually incorrect to override their opinion by juxtaposing them against the Liberals. Mainstream theorization on this matter portray Islamists as inherently anti-secular forces, whereas liberals as carrying the secularist torch. For matters of precision, I decided to refer to both as secularists.

Figure 1 on the right: Malayalam Newspaper Advertising of Parda shop depicting the Muslim Woman as a modern one. Figure 2 on the left: an advertisement in front of a shopping complex in Calicut city assigning the pardha as "only for the enterprising woman" and characterizing the brand as India's first ISO ceritifed *pardha*. Source: From Author's Collection.

Haraway (1998) and the feminist standpoint of situated knowledge affirm the need to avoid a doctrine of transcendence-based objectivity or a theory of "innocent powers" and instead to seek "an earth wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledge among very different- and power-differentiated communities" (580). To Haraway, the position of the subjugated is preferred because they promise more "adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world" (584). Hence, power and resistance need not operate exclusively in dualistic forms. Domination is always attributed to a distinction between persuading and coercing, as Mitchell (1990) argues, and this dualistic conception fails to capture several analytic aspects. I see it most fitting to apply this logic to the debates on *pardha*. The emergence of the trend of *pardha* is not about women being forced to adopt it, but it is more complicated. *Pardha* spreading is about a trend that acquired a wide base of legitimacy. On the one hand there is the authority of the *ulema*, which acts as the power that persuades the Muslim mind (both male and female) of the requirement of the

pardha. On the other hand, there is the wealth and luxurious lifestyles of the Gulf Arabs convincing the female of being modern, fashionable and prosperous.

When interviewing students, it was obvious that their recourse to *pardha* comes out of it being the school or college uniform, but they will hardly wear it in any non-school related activity. As for school teachers, interestingly, they also had to abide by a certain dress code; in some schools it was exclusively the *pardha*, and in another schools, some teachers told me that the *churidaar* was banned and that only *saree* with an overcoat or *pardha* were permitted as the uniform.

One day I went to a municipality in Kerala with a predominantly Muslim population, and I interviewed a middle-class Muslim lawyer. I had lunch with his family in his house, which was another big mansion (his father lived all his life in Saudi Arabia). His wife, who was also a lawyer, was wearing a half sleeved suit and not covering her hair. I enquired if this was her normal dressing style. She told me that she had come originally from Trivandrum, and that there was no culture of *pardha* or covering the hair over there. But, when she went to work where she was living, she was compelled to wear a *saree* and use its end to cover her head. With a sarcastic smile on her face, she told me: "Otherwise, I just wear half sleeves like now and look like a Hindu. But I do not mind it."

One of the novelties about the Keralite case, in my opinion, is that the decision to conform is seen as a rational decision in many cases. Weighing the consequences of nonconformity to the *pardha* as a moral dress would only mean more contentions, whereas the conformity leads women, especially those belonging to orthodox families, to spaces otherwise denied to them. Education and work, classically seen as women-free zones, became zones in which a woman can appear and intermingle with the other sex freely as long as she is conforming to the uniform of the *pardha*. In addition to this, *pardha* signifies upward mobility, and especially in a caste-based society, affluence is linked to the desire to be fashionable. Thus, the decision to wear a *pardha* is not just about conformity, but also about being fashion-blinded and desiring to be looked to as a higher class person. Here it should be noted that although caste and class are profoundly linked, they are not identical social categories.

There is also an interesting fascination with the black color; some would attribute it to being modest, and thus avoiding flamboyant colors, which explains the prevalence of the black model of the *pardha*. However, my ethnographic work revealed that this fascination is not restricted to the Gulf-imported *pardha* color, but also when it came to henna that women apply to their hands. Black not only makes you look fashionable (because it is related to the Gulf), but also white,

meaning not so dark-skinned (because of the perception that white skin is more beautiful and thus there is some contrast once black is worn or applied to one's hands).

Gifts, from a woman to another, are usually a *pardha*, especially from those arriving from the Gulf. I was also told that when someone brings some fabric to a tailor to be stitched into a simple *pardha*, the tailor would charge more, although logically it is easier than stitching a *salwar-qameez* suit.

Conclusion

This paper sought to demonstrate the different discourses around *pardha* and how agency is reflected in a paradoxical manner. The concept of agency is often trapped between conformity (as a pragmatic solution) and domestic agency (as a realistic manifestation of the conceptual boundaries). However, with education and class or caste differences, the employment of the concept deeply varies. Consciousness forms an integral aspect of women's agency and their decision-making capacity. With the rising role and significance of revivalist Muslim organizations, it becomes obvious how women's agency incorporates Islam as a clear ingredient of the plot for social change. Educated girls prove their ability to make rational compromises and decisions. When I asked female informants if they follow *fatwas* issued by *'ulama*, 37.5% confirmed they always do, 40.3% said they do not necessarily always follow them, and it is up to them to choose what sounds rational and acceptable and what is not, and 22.2% said they do not specifically follow *fatwas* of *'ulama*, but they resort to what they conceive as right or wrong.

There are certain factors affecting and shaping the Keralite society and thus the formation of the *Pardha* Cult. The first is the growing consumerism as a result of Gulf migration and the aspirational values linked to a desire to copy the affluent Gulf lifestyles. The second is the disruption of older social and individual values that happened due to Islamic reformist movements, migration and elevated standard of living. Third, the influence of media in promoting *pardha* through editorial pieces or through advertisements is easily discernible. Finally, the increasing crime rate and violence against women (Malappuram district being the highest[15]) led women to easily adopt a dress that is perceived by everyone as a safety-inducer.

15 Kerala Police's Reported cases of Crimes against Women in 2009/2010, retrieved April 30, 2011 from: http://www.keralapolice.org/newsite/crime_against_women_2009.html

Kerala is considered to be the land of contradictions. On the one hand, it has the highest levels of literacy, human development, life expectancy, and income in India. And, on the other hand, it suffers from the highest levels of alcoholism, suicide, crimes, and dowry in comparison with other states of India. The state of contradictions extends to the topic of this paper. In the Muslim dominated state district where female voters outnumber the males, and thus they determine political destinies, their lives are heavily designed by the males.

What is witnessed in Kerala is the constant regulation of the public space of freedom of choice within a secular democratic state. An interview respondent spoke to me about how she perceives the relationship between the dress-code and freedom on the one hand and building a model on the other hand. To her, an important question was in whose hands does legitimacy lie?

Why should we not follow the Arabs, but why should we follow the upper caste Hindus? The *saree* was never a south Indian dress. It is a northern Brahminical dress. We all know that the women in the south were allowed to wear only a piece of cloth from her waist onwards to the knee. So is this what we are supposed to go back to wearing? (Calicut University Mphil Student, January 2011)

For her, the *saree* appeared as an imposed national dress with an upper class Hindu identity (the cream and gold embroidered handloom *saree*).[16] Resisting this enforced image of the Keralite woman was an important task in her non-religious fight against casteism. While a girl like her was fighting the caste battle, others were fighting another identity battle, of the cultural infringement of the Saudi version of Islam on Kerala's harmonious society. But this is one side of the story – a story often narrated by the intellectuals.

By demonstrating everyday accounts of the common Malayalee women and her position from these discourses, I showed how, unlike the heavily studied cases of *burqa* or *hijab* or *niqab* in the Middle East and Europe, the Keralite case is one of complexity and flexibility. The paradoxical situation resulting from the entanglement of the private sphere with the public one was a major factor contributing to this complexity. To some, *pardha* gave an opportunity to be fast and spontaneous and in many cases the housewife found in the *pardha* a tool to temporarily escape the traditional confines of class and fashion. For others, *pardha* was their access key to education and employment and while some were

16 The national image included other ornamental additions that were considered non-Muslim in the Keralite context (there was the *bindi* (which only non-Muslims apply), and the jasmine garland on the hair (which Muslims put only in their own weddings and is usually covered with the end of their *saree*).

obliged to wear as a uniform, they still had the option to shift to any dress of their choice. "Hurry up, put on your *pardha* and let us go to have ice-cream," was a statement I often heard from the Malayalee lady I was living with.

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"SHE GAVE US FAMILY LIFE": VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND THEIR CZECH NANNIES REDEFINING RELATEDNESS[1]

Adéla Souralová

Abstract: ***Vietnamese families in the Czech Republic often recruit Czech women to look after their children. Put in the context of the dominant scholarship, this is quite a unique case of care work in which the employers are immigrants, while the employees are women of the host country. At the same time, it is an exceptional child care solution in the context of the Czech Republic, where only 1–2% of the population seek individual private child care. Drawing upon qualitative research conducted with Czech nannies, Vietnamese mothers, and their children, the article interprets the experience of Vietnamese immigrants with paid child care as an outcome of the post-migratory redefinition of family relations. In so doing, the paper demonstrates how family ties and child care arrangements are negotiated vis-à-vis the new life in the host country, where the different "normal caring biographies" are supported by the common-sense understanding of what care and/or mothering should be, by social policies, and by everyday practice. I argue that recruitment of the nannies is an essential part of these negotiations. I respond to the following questions: What is the role of delegated child care in post-migratory family arrangements? What are the motivations for and consequences of recruiting Czech nannies in the context of Vietnamese immigrants' family lives? In my paper I put forward the thesis that the post-migratory challenges of family life lead to the recruitment of nannies, which further challenges the family lives of both nannies and immigrants. The article focuses both on the negotiations which result in hiring the nanny and the negotiations originating in the recruitment of Czech nannies.***

Keywords: ***nanny; family ties; Vietnamese immigrants; Czech Republic***

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"It is these creative possibilities that lend kinship its very great symbolic force – a power that is all the more salient because it emanates from the emotional and practical circumstances of people's everyday lives – from the things they hold most dear, and with which they are, in every sense, most familiar."

Janet Carsten (2004: 153)

Introduction

Ms. Pham[2] is a 25-year-old woman with a Vietnamese passport who has one three-year-old child. She came to the Czech Republic eight years ago and now works in the immigrant economy as an entrepreneur. She started working ten hours per day when her daughter was eight months old. Because of her incorporation into the labour market she had to look for another woman to care for her child. Ms. Brhlíková is a 55 year-old Czech woman. She has adult children of her own with whom she spent twelve years on parental leave. Now she is a pensioner informally working for Ms. Pham. These two women are part of a *common* model of delegated child care which can be found in the Czech Republic (and is *unique* vis-à-vis the international division of reproductive labour) – a model where immigrant families hire national women to look after their children. These two women are both part of the global division of reproductive labour, but their situation differs from that of Filipina domestic workers in the USA, Polish domestic workers in Germany, or Czech au pairs in the UK. The Czech nannies are called "grandmothers" or "aunts" by the Vietnamese children and their parents, and this name is indicative of the nature of the relationship which will be addressed in this article.

During the past three decades, research interest in care/domestic workers has been increasing. Since in the 1970s in the United States "the earning power of most men has declined" (Ehrenreich – Hochschild 2003: 3) and fewer households have been able to rely solely on a male breadwinner. In fact we have been dealing with a so-called worldwide gender revolution. Delegated care work is an important factor that made this revolution possible. At the same time, delegated child care has become one of the most prominent issues in feminist research (Parreñas 2001, Anderson 2000, Momsen 1999, Lutz 2008, 2011, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Macdonald 2010). In examining the new international division of reproductive labour, scholars have focused on migrant women working in

2 All names were changed.

domestic services in Western countries. They have demonstrated the inequalities between Western working mothers and migrant mother workers based on race/ethnicity, class, and citizenship. In addition, they have elaborated the framework in which domestic work should be understood. This framework relied on the dichotomy between national women (white, middle class, educated) who hire the migrant women (of colour, working class, uneducated). However, what happens when the logic between hiring and being hired is reversed? What if the migrant woman (Vietnamese) hires national woman (Czech) to care for her child?

Vietnamese immigration to the Czech Republic (and to the former Czechoslovakia) has a long history dating back to the state-socialist era, and more than 20 years after the fall of communism the number of newcomers from Vietnam continues to increase (with a small decrease caused by the economic crisis). Today, Vietnamese immigrants are the third largest group in the Czech Republic (altogether 60 000 persons, ČSÚ 2009). At the same time, they are also one of the most intensively-researched groups (Nekorjak – Hofírek 2009, Kocourek 2008, Brouček 2003, Gabal 2007, etc., for Slovakia see Williams – Baláž 2005, 2007). Generally, scholars have focused on the economic motives of migration, inclusion/exclusion in the labour market, ethnic niches and immigrant economies. They have demonstrated that Vietnamese immigrants are very often stall keepers working on their own as entrepreneurs, whose work life outweighs their private life; while they worked eight hours a day in Vietnam, in the Czech Republic some of them spend at least 11 hours at work, including weekends and most national holidays. Incorporation into the public sphere of work is imperative for both men and women, young and old, parents and childless persons. Private family life is minimized, and Vietnamese parents must hire Czech nannies to be with their children while they work, whether to care for them if they are a few months old or to do homework with them when they are older.

This article addresses a lacuna in local research on Vietnamese immigrants in the labour market and in international research that focuses exclusively on migrant domestic/care workers. It brings together these two frameworks and discusses the delegated child care in post-migratory family settlement. Several studies have documented how migratory experience affects family constellations, including gender and generational relations in the host country (Kibria 1993, Foner 1997, Song 1999, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Nazli Kibria, in her study on Vietnamese immigrants in the USA, shows how immigrants live their family lives under the new structural conditions and how their responses to these conditions are affected by the "cultural baggage, or experience and understanding about the

world, that they bring with them to the new society" (Kibria 1993: 22). Ideas about child care and gendered/generational division of reproductive labour are inherent part of this cultural baggage. These ideas may conflict with the gendered normative expectations about child care and family arrangements in the host country, or they may be unrealizable because of the profound changes in family structure. Nancy Foner (1997: 969) describes how "the absence of immigrants' close kin in the new setting creates the need to improvise new arrangements, a reason why 'fictive kin' are common in immigrant communities and why men sometimes find themselves filling in as helpmates to their wives in child care and other household tasks." As I will argue further, the Czech nannies in Vietnamese families are perfect example of such "improvisation of new arrangements".

Inherent in such improvisation is the kinning process accomplished by care giving. The modern anthropological theory of kinship emphasizes the formative role of care in the maintenance and reproduction of kinship/family ties: in defining what a family is, who is included in it, and who is not. Ever since the 1970's, when the definition of kinship was unbiologicized (Schneider 1984), scholarship on the issue has shown that ideas about the family are formed not on the basis of what is given, but what is done. It was especially the contribution of the anthropologists of adoption which illuminated the process of *becoming* relatives. Above all, I am inspired by Signe Howell (2003) who has developed the concept of kinning to describe the way an adopted child is becoming part of adopting parents' kin. More accurately, based on empirical material obtained from a study of transnational adoption in Norway, she defines kinning as "the process by which a foetus or new-born child (or a previously unconnected person) is brought into a significant and permanent relationship with a group of people that is expressed in a kin idiom" (Howell 2003: 465). In her view, the kinship is "something that is necessarily achieved in and through relationships with others" (*ibid*: 468).[3] In her article she discusses the practices which lead to both the incorporation of adopted children as the adoptive parents' kin, and their transformation into parents.

Drawing upon existing analytical frameworks, the article addresses the following questions: What is the role of delegated child care in post-migratory family arrangements? What are the consequences of recruiting Czech nannies for the

[3] Howell rejects the notion of "fictive" or "artificial" kinship because they seem to privilege biology. Her main conclusion is that the case of adoption – when addressed by the concept of kinning – demonstrate the negation of "the separation between the social and the biological that is encountered elsewhere in society" (*ibid:* 468).

cared-for children's family life and for the Czech nannies' lives? In the following text I put forward the thesis that the post-migratory stresses on family lives lead to the recruitment of nannies, which in turn brings further challenges to the family lives of both nannies and immigrants. I focus on the way that the families in my study find themselves in a double process of negotiations over family ties – first after coming to a new country and unpacking the cultural baggage, and second when a nanny is hired to perform the very intimate task of child care. My analysis starts with the challenges to family ties that are experienced in the post-migratory family settlement. Hiring a nanny plays an important role in post-migratory family re-definition. An important part of this re-definition that will be focused on here is the process of knitting the kinship ties between the child and the nanny. I will address caring – both in the sense of *care for* ("the varied activities of providing for the needs or well-being of another person") and care about ("thought and feeling, including awareness and attentiveness, concern about and feelings of responsibility for meeting another's needs") as acknowledged by Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2000: 86–87) – as one of the crucial practice of kinning and as a bonding activity which leads to the constitution of strong kinship ties between the carer and the cared-for. The article aims to contribute to feminist discussions on gender and family relationships after migration, as well as delegated child care, and generally the role of care in the establishment of kinship ties.

Study design

The data for this paper was collected from spring 2010 to autumn 2012 as a part of my broader research on Vietnamese families, children and their nannies. I conducted in-depth interviews with diverse individuals involved in the practice of caregiving in some of the largest Czech cities (Brno, Prague, Opava, Zlín), as well as in the Czech-German and Czech-Austrian border regions, where the concentration of Vietnamese population is traditionally greater. Altogether I conducted more than fifty in-depth interviews with nannies (15), mothers (15), children (20, age of 16–25), and their friends and relatives (7). In her prominent article about the "nanny question in feminism" Joan Tronto emphasizes three differing perspectives through which we can approach the nanny question: the perspectives of the families (mothers), the children, and the nannies (Tronto 2002). My methodological strategy was to cover all three of these perspectives in order to capture the complexity of the entire relationship, as well as the contradictions contained within it.

The *families* I met during the research varied widely, both in their experience of immigration, as well as (to a lesser extent) their current situation (employment and type of residence). The parents arrived between the 1980s (the era of socialist cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam; see below) and 2005. The status of the parents depends on when they arrived: most of them permanent residence; temporary residence is an exception. None of my informants (or their parents) had Czech citizenship, the reason being that they did not want it, and assumed they would return to Vietnam after the children are grown and are financially secure. In selecting *children* interviewees I took into account two criteria. First was their age, which I limited to 16–25 years in view of the data collection method – in-depth interviews – and the nature of the research, as I was interested in capturing the *long-term* aspect of the entire relationship. The interviews focused on recollections of childhood and a description of their current relationship to the nanny. In doing this I am not working with "children" as an age category, but as a role in the relationship mother-nanny-child. A second criterion was place of birth. My goal was to carry out interviews with children who were born in the Czech Republic (first-generation nationals; a total of 10 of my subjects), as well as with children who came with or to their parents to the CR at the age of 6 or before (when mandatory schooling begins; altogether 10 of my subjects). All of the *nannies* I interviewed shared one basic characteristic: they were dependent on the welfare state. The majority (nine) of the nannies were retirees receiving pension, two were on disability, two more were unemployed, and one was on maternity leave. These characteristics are key to understanding the entire relationship between the Vietnamese families and the Czech nannies.

I used the snowball technique to recruit my informants. All of the interviews were recorded with the agreement of my informants, and transcribed. All names used in this text are changed in order to preserve anonymity. When recruiting the informants, it was necessary to rely on gatekeepers willing not only to recommend me the family/nanny, but also recommend me *to* the family/nanny. This recommendation was very helpful in overcoming the a priori mistrust of my informants. This mistrust originates not only in the fact that care is considered a private matter hidden from the eyes of public (and from researchers), but also in the basic nature of the care arrangement – the fact that caring is accomplished on the irregular labour market. This was the first but not last obstacle I had to deal with when contacting my informants. In searching for Vietnamese parents who pay Czech nannies, I encountered the problem of their intensive labour market

participation. Paradoxically, without doing any interviews I stumbled across one of the main features of their life, and the very reason why they hire Czech nannies. A third obstacle also tells a lot about Vietnamese immigrants' lives: the language barrier. Since I do not speak Vietnamese, I wanted to conduct all the interviews in Czech. However, even though some parents would be willing to talk with me, their poor knowledge of the Czech language (and my zero knowledge of Vietnamese language) made it impossible. Therefore some of the interviews with parents were conducted with an interpreter, and hence were affected by what Bogusia Temple and Rosalind Edwards (2002) call the so-called triple subjectivity; the interaction between three actors: subject, interpreter, and researcher. Paradoxically, all these obstacles in a sense served me as research data that rounded out the information found during the conducted interviews.

My research focused only on Vietnamese families who hire Czech nannies, not on all Vietnamese families. The study thus reveals the patterns of family life in *this* type of family, where the parents are first-generation immigrants, and children are second-generation. My analysis consequently focuses only on care arrangements related to paid child care. During my research, I also interviewed people – children and parents – who had never personally had a nanny. There were various reasons for that: the family could afford to rely on one salary and the mother could remain on maternity and parental leave; the families came to the Czech Republic when the children were older and started attending elementary school; or they simply did not want to have a nanny because for them having a Czech nanny was a threat to their "Vietnameseness".[4] However, these informants and their stories are not included in this article. My sample therefore has the limitations which have an impact on the results of the analysis. This article focuses on a particular group of Vietnamese immigrants that employs a specific model of child care, and this must be kept in mind when reading the research findings presented in the following text.

[4] One informant told me: "I didn't want my sister to have a Czech nanny because I do not want her to forget about her roots as most of Vietnamese children who live here do."

Family life contestations and constellations: becoming a family with Czech nanny

The historical specificity of Vietnamese immigration to Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic has shaped the character of the Vietnamese diaspora in CEE (see e. g. Williams – Baláž 2005). Two features of Vietnamese diaspora in the Czech Republic are crucial for this paper. First is the demographic structure of the Vietnamese population. Compared to other groups of immigrants, the demographic structure of Vietnamese immigration is progressive, with a high percentage of women and children. According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2005 21 % of the Vietnamese population were children 0–14 years old (in the Czech population 15 %). 78 % of population are of productive age (age of 15–64), and only 1 % were people older than 65 years old. Second, the employment structure of the Vietnamese population is characterized by high occupational concentration. As Williams and Baláž (2005) have noted, the greater part of Vietnamese immigrants are entrepreneurs in wholesaling and retailing, i.e. owners of small shops and/or open-air markets. Self-employment is thus the crucial aspect of their work life in the Czech Republic. In 2009 around 88 000 (63 000 men and 25 000 women) foreigners in the Czech Republic held a valid trade licence, of which 36 000 were Vietnamese (25 000 men and 11 000 women). The roots of such occupational concentration can be found in the early 1990s, when obtaining a business license was a way to formalize and legalize residence for immigrants who had come under the former agreements (Brouček 2003, Nekorjak – Hofírek 2009).

Vietnamese immigrants are thus an example of the typical demanders of paid child care: the dual-earner couples. However, it would be misleading to see the creation of dual-earner household as just one of the achievements of migration. In what follows I will demonstrate that the patterns of work life play a crucial role in defining and learning the care ideologies in the country of origin, and that they gain a new importance in the host country.

First step: bringing the cultural baggage

> *"Generally, the Vietnamese are taught that people of productive age must work, and being on maternity leave is not work. Everybody must work, parents, grandparents, and older children and kids have all done it since childhood."* (Ms. Veselá, born Nguyen, interpreter between the Czech and Vietnamese languages and mother seeking paid child care)

I have already noted that all of my parent-interviewees were first generation immigrants, and that half of my children-interviewees were born in Vietnam, half in the Czech Republic. In other words, all of my parent-interviewees were brought up in Vietnam, and some of them had experience with early child care there. At the same time, all of my informants are part of what Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) called a transnational social field. Watching Vietnamese television, calling and chatting with friends and relatives who stayed in Vietnam, remittances sent to the homeland, and home visits and idea of return, all shape their transnational lives. Vietnamese parents consequently have more frames of reference at their disposal (Khayati 2008), and these frames equip them with multiple sources of ideas about what the family is and how care is performed. That is to say, child care is ideologically organized around the model from Vietnam, but it is geographically bounded by the Czech Republic where the care is performed. Therefore, understanding the care arrangements in the host country begins with understanding of the child care ideologies in Vietnam, which are a significant part of the cultural baggage that the Vietnamese immigrants bring from the country of origin.

When talking about the differences between Vietnam and the Czech Republic regarding child care and state support, my informants brought up two issues. These issues shape the child care ideologies that (future) parents pack up and take along with them as an important frame of reference for their future decisions. First was the issue of the "normal caring biographies", above all the question of when the mother returns to labour market. In Vietnam, the total time for paid maternal leave varies from four months (for normal types of employment), through five months (for types of employment involving dangerous environments or difficult shifts, etc. such as policewomen or soldiers) to six months (when a woman is disabled). Women are paid 100 % of their salary during these four months; thereafter employees can request unpaid maternal leave (Nguyen 2012: 7). As my interviewees state, only rich families can afford unpaid maternal leave because two salaries are a necessity, especially in poorer regions.

Second, maternal leave arrangements create the demand for both formal and informal child care facilities. Formal child care is provided in public and private schools and centres – nursery schools (for children aged 3 months – 3 years), kindergarten (3–5 years) and pre-primary schools (5–6 years). Nevertheless, despite this net of institutions, most families with children under 3 rely on informal child care (Nguyen 2012). My question of how the Vietnamese parents would have managed child care if they had stayed in Vietnam was answered by almost all interviewees to the effect that the mother returning to the workplace would be either replaced by the grandmother or by institutional care, or in richer families by private nannies or maids. Grandmothers, therefore, play an important role in nuclear-family life, and in the harmonization of work and family life. This importance was articulated in many interviews – both as memories (how it was when we were in Vietnam) and as imagination (how it would be if we were there or how our relatives do it). For instance Nguyet, a twenty-year-old university student, came to the Czech Republic when she was 4 years old. Before they moved to the Czech Republic, Nguyet's mother went to work immediately after a four-month maternity leave. Four-month-old Nguyet was taken care of by her grandmother, her mother's mother.

To sum up, my informants (as well as parents/employers of my informants) left their country of origin with a set of ideas and experiences of how the child care should be and is performed. But what happens to these ideas when they cross borders and start unpacking their cultural baggage?

Second step: unpacking the cultural baggage with Czech nannies

> *"We are foreigners here and it will be difficult for them [children] to prove they are not worse than others. We want them to have better life than we currently have."* (Ms. Ho, mother of two children)

I was often told by my parent informants that there is only one *real* reason why they recruit nannies: parents have to work. With one salary they cannot survive in the host country, and the woman must return to work (either help her husband in his shop or take care of her own) as soon as possible. On the other hand, the nanny informants shared with me their own opinion about this issue, stating that the mother *could* have stayed at home longer (the father's breadwinning activity covers all family expenses) but *did not want* to. Mothers were often criticized by the nannies, who applied what Uttal and Tuominen (1999)

call "moral hierarchies" – the nannies' judgement about the appropriateness and correctness of their employers' mothering strategies. The sources of these tensions and contradictory points of view on the part of mothers and nannies can be found in the radically different strategies for reconciliation of work and family life. It is the Vietnamese parents who balance between these two strategies, trying to "do their best"; it means accommodating their cultural baggage to the new living conditions in a host country.

The model of dual-earner household created in Vietnam is maintained in the host country as well; however, working life goes through both qualitative and quantitative changes. The qualitative changes in work biographies occur when immigrants shift from their previous professions (whether skilled or unskilled) and become entrepreneurs concentrated in the immigrant economy. In addition, the new occupational position requires quantitative changes in work life and leads to its intensification at the expense of private life. The interviewees experience what Wall and José (2004) called pressures *to* work – as the migration project aims at maximizing the income – and pressures *from* work such as atypical or long hours, along with the pressure not to miss work. Because they had struggled to come to a new country and build their position in a very competitive segment of economy, women were aware of the fragility of their job positions. Six months after giving birth to her daughter, Ms. Pham faced the dilemma whether to hire a shop assistant or a nanny. Her husband had found a place for a new shop where Ms. Pham could sell clothes, and she had to make a very quick decision. So she decided to hire a nanny for her seven-month-old daughter.

In the Czech Republic, only 1–2 % of families choose individual private paid care (Hašková 2008); the model of delegated child care, therefore, is not very common. This may be partly caused by the reintroduction of the traditional familization regime in state family policies (Sirovátka – Saxonberg 2006, Lister et al 2007). Sirovátka and Saxonberg (2006: 186) analyze three key areas that "influence the ability for women and men to balance work and family: child care leave schemes, access to day care, and labour market policies". The first and the second of these are crucial for my interviewees. In the Czech Republic, as well as in other CEE countries, there are two kinds of paid family leave. The first is maternity leave, the benefits of which have not changed during transformation; they are now available for 28 weeks, with a replacement rate of 69 % in the Czech Republic (Sirovátka – Saxonberg 2006). Parental leave is available for a longer period of up to four years, and it is up to the parents (most often the mother) to choose its length and hence the height of the replacement rate, as the amount

of money offered for four years is 220 000 CZK (around 8800 Euro). This means that a parent can draw money from 19 months (at almost 12 000 CZK/480 Euro a month) up to 45 months (at around 5100 CZK/204 Euro). The mothers I interviewed regard parental leave as "too long", and for them inappropriate – both in terms of the big "ideological" discrepancy between the models in Vietnam and the Czech Republic, and in regard to the financial cost of such a long break in their work life. Simply put, even though they agreed that they would *surely* like to stay home with the children longer, a period of four years (the maximum of parental leave) meant for them an unimaginable gap in their working lives.

The explicit re-familization policy, which "promotes separate gender roles for men and women, since few men will be willing to utilize their right to parental leave under these conditions" (*ibid:* 189) is further reflected in the reduction of state aid of nursery schools for children 0–3 years of age. This reduction was accompanied by an attack on the mythologies of collective day care for children under 3. Nursery schools were declared to be a "communist invention" (Hašková – Dudová 2010), and collective care for 0–3 aged children in general was claimed "unhealthy" and/or "unnecessary" (see also Hašková – Saxonberg 2012). The lack of nursery schools is not the only factor that shapes Vietnamese parents' child care decisions. Even in districts where the child care facilities are available, the lack of flexibility creates an important barrier. Generally nursery schools are open till 5 pm, which is not sufficient for the parents who work till 8 or 9 pm. Even if they managed to place the children in nursery school, parents would need a person who would pick them up and stay with them till they come from work. It seems, then, that the current day care arrangements are not convenient for Vietnamese working parents.

State support for a work-family balance which is often policy used in Vietnam, is thus unavailable in the context of the Czech Republic and its family policy. And so is the final option that can be turned to in Vietnam: support of kin, notably grandmothers. I have already noted that the percentage of the immigrant population over age of 65 is only 1 %. It means that only a few families (in whole my sample only 1 family) have their grandparents here. Moreover, if the grandparents are here they are also economically active, so that few of them can take care of their grandchildren. The absence of a network of relatives is mentioned in every interview with parents, and it is spoken of in terms of a lack of economic and emotional support, including the child care.

So far the discussion has focused on the demand for paid child care on the part of Vietnamese immigrants. Now it is important to look into how this demand and the needs of Vietnamese families are met in a particular type of

Czech women. In doing so we must start with a basic description of the relationship, which is that the nanny in the Vietnamese family *supplements* the mother and *supplants* the grandmother (Nelson 1990). This fundamental logic implies the *potential* for further development of kinship ties. This potential, however, is not fulfilled in all families, and not all families or nannies want it to be fulfilled. What are the factors that influence the further direction of the relationship between nanny and family? The first and fundamental pre-condition is the age of the nanny; meaning that the nanny must be a generation older then the child's mother. Second is the age of child at the time the caregiving relationship starts. In July 2011 I visited Ms. Dudková and her partner. At the beginning of the interview I asked all my informants to tell me something about themselves. Ms. Dudková started talking about her job, her hobbies; then she came to the topic of the family:

> *"I have two children. One of them is already 46 years old and the younger is 36 years old. And I had three granddaughters – one is at university, Jana is in seventh grade and Lucka in fourth. But my biggest darling is my little Thuy, the biggest darling. I love all of them but I have had her since she was seven weeks old."*

For Ms. Dudková, Thuy's age at the beginning of caring not only played a fundamental role in establishing the ties between her and the girl, and serves as the significant marker of the differences between her children's children and cared children. However, as became apparent during the interview, besides the age of Thuy, it was day-to-day contact with her and lack of contact with her own children's children that shapes her perception of the relationship with Vietnamese girl. This leads us to a third factor, the nanny's caregiving biography: her relationship with her children and grandchildren, her experience with paid child care, and the meaning of child care in her life. Depicting their daily routine, she talked about the many small things she likes about having the responsibility for a little girl. For instance, every day when Ms. Brhlíková comes to the apartment where Than and her parent live, the little girl greets her and waits for some candies which her nanny brings every day. The nanny describes the scene:

> *"She comes and calls 'granny, granny'. And I cannot help myself, I would give her anything. Well and I have this complex that I do not have my own grandchildren so that I have to come here to snuggle. She is our baby."*

Like Ms. Brhlíková, many women decide to become nannies because they long to be needed, they experienced the absence of grandmothering. Ms. Brhlíková was not mothering any longer nor grandmothering; Ms. Dudková's grandchildren were grown up and did not need her care; while other women were not in regular contact with their grandchildren. Simply put, for various reasons in their caring biographies, there was an empty place that could be filled by a Vietnamese child.

Third step: from nanny to granny

> *"And then he once told me: 'Granny, I know you are not my own granny, but aren't we happy we met?' He completely destroyed me by saying this."* (Ms. Havranová, nanny of a Vietnamese boy)

In this section, I describe the last step in establishing kinship ties. If the first step concerned the pre-migration roots of the child care and the family constellation, and second explained post-migratory child care and family challenges, the third step looks at the re-negotiation of family ties through child care arrangements. Here I address the process of kinning by dealing with those aspects of the nanny-child relationship that both nannies and children in my sample cited as tie-establishing, and where they discussed the roles that are played on the basis of the kin idiom. Despite the diversity of both the children's and nannies' experiences, their accounts of what lies beyond the formation of ties were surprisingly very similar among my interviewees. The nannies and children enumerated many aspects of everyday life, and all of them had a common denominator: intensive physical contact and shared memories. In the following, I will elaborate three kinds of activities which were significant for the children's understanding of the role of granny in their lives and *vice versa*. I classify these into three groups, as such classification is useful for illustrating the distinct ontological nature of these activities in the context of family life and the parent-nanny sharing of child care.

The first set of activities can be labelled as the **"parent-responsibility substitute activities"**. These are activities that a nanny performs because she is the nanny. The nannies in my sample as well as nannies of my children-informants were recruited for very distinct tasks which are done within very distinct timetables for children of very specific ages. Regarding the last factor, on one end of the age continuum are children who started being cared for by nanny when they were a few months old, and on the other children who had her first nanny when they started attending elementary school. Timetables of care, consequently,

varied between 24 hours per day, 7 days a week (when they lived with nannies and their parents came to see them typically for Sunday lunch), through 12 hours per day, 6 days a week, down to 4 hours per day, 5 days a week (in the case of school children who spend time with nannies between the end of school and the end of parents' working hours). It is obvious that these responsibilities vary over the course of time. Sometimes it is the nanny who, literally, teaches the child to go to potty in early childhood, as well as to count and write in early school years. On the other hand, there were nannies whose only responsibility was to get child ready for school (only three in my sample, including one in the sample of nannies); the majority of nannies had almost all the responsibilities related to child care delegated to them. Nurturing, cultural and social capital transmission, decision-making about daily issues, doctors' visits, parent-teacher meetings – all these could be found on the list of nannies' everyday tasks.

From this logic of relationship, it is already apparent that there is a huge quantitative and above all qualitative discrepancy between the time that children spend with their nannies and with their parents. As Minh (a seventeen-year-old boy) concluded, "I spent time for learning with granny and time for sleeping with mum". Mia was the youngest of my interviewees: when we met in 2010, she was sixteen years old. When talking about her grandma, I asked her whether she could imagine her life without her grandma, and what would be different. Without any hesitation she told me: "I think I would have been most of the time alone; the parents had to be at work. And if I was not with granny, I would be simply alone." The intensity of the physical contact between child and nanny and the lack of time spent with parents meant the women went from being mere nannies to becoming the primary care-givers. "My granny taught me everything," was very often echoed in interviews with children who recalled their early childhood. The influence of parents is temporarily overshadowed, and the nanny becomes a solid point in the life of child, the person who is always there for a child to listen, help, and give advice, and with whom a relationship filled with intimacy, trust, and emotion is spontaneously created.

Intensive contact between nanny and child also leads to a transformation in the perceptions of grandmotherhood on the part of nannies who had already experienced "grandmothering" with their children's children. Ms. Dudková contrasted the experiences in terms of intensity of contact, stating that "while their children wanted to be with their children when they came home, Thuy [the Vietnamese girl] was with us all time – days, nights, when she was ill, always". As Ms. Orlová, the nanny of two Vietnamese children (14 years old girl and

12 years old boy), reflects on her experience with caring for their Vietnamese grandchildren:

> *"I would say that I feel more like a granny with them because I could not be with my own grandchildren when they were small (...) I was not here the whole day, I was working in the city and they were here. When I came home from work, I went to them, of course, but I was not in daylong touch."*

Ms. Orlová's account suggests that while for their children's children they are so called "Sunday/holiday grannies", for Vietnamese children, they are "full-time grannies". The process establishing kinship ties dialectical, and enrols all actors in the process of re-thinking their understanding of what kinship is. As has become evident, the cornerstone on which these ties are built is everyday physical contact and the performance of the little daily interactions within the space of intimacy, mutual responsibility, and reciprocity where the codex of the family relationship is the main rule.

"Family ritual activities" is the second umbrella category in which I placed the activities which my informants saw as separate from everyday life, and which had special meaning for them and for their family. Generally, there are two kinds of activities which I have labelled as "ritual". First are what I call "liminal moments" in the life of a cared-for child in which the nanny participates: events such as enrolment in kindergarten/primary school, or the first day at school. For instance, Hanh and Bui recalled their first day at school, where they went with mother, father, and nanny. Hanh related how nice it was to be on such an important day with both her parents and her nanny. Bui added that her parents wanted her nanny to go with them not only because they were afraid that they would not understand the teacher, but also as a gesture signifying their gratitude and the confirmation of the importance of her role in the family. This logic also works in the opposite direction – that is, the child (and her/his family) is present at the important, liminal moments of nanny's life. For example, Michal told me that when the partner of his nanny, Ms. Orlová, passed away and they went to his funeral, they stood together with Ms. Orlová's family and received condolences together.

Secondly, there are festive days in the course of the year or in one's life, such as Christmas and birthday celebrations, or school performances for parents and relatives. These are perfect examples of the "family building" activities that strengthen the sense of familial belonging and emotional ties.

Bui (a twenty-years-old girl) who lived in a border area densely inhabited by Vietnamese immigrants, told me it was common for school performances to be attended by three people for each Vietnamese child: mother, father, and nanny. She also remembers that while the parents alternated in the audience (one year there was the father, another year mother), her nanny was there *every time*. During the interviews, the presence of the nanny at these events was mentioned as an important characteristic of an event itself. For instance, Mia told me that she cannot imagine spending Christmas without her nanny:

> Mia: *We are always with them on Christmas and have carp and potato salad [a typical Czech Christmas meal].*
> Adéla: *So right on Christmas Eve?*
> Mia: *Yes.*
> Adéla: *So there are many of you there...*
> Mia: *Grandmother, our family, this is five people, and then her daughter with husband and two kids. Ten people together. Besides they take the dogs...*
> Adéla: *It must be awesome, with a big tree. And so it is since childhood?*
> Mia: *Since childhood, we spent Christmas there with my granny. To be honest, I cannot imagine the Christmas atmosphere at home because in Vietnam Christmas is not celebrated much, so...*

Only a few children in my sample (used to) spend Christmas with their nannies, however, all of them exchanged gifts with them. Gift-giving (not only for Christmas or birthday but also small gifts like candies, ice-cream, or toys from nannies or special Vietnamese food for nannies during the year) played an essential role in dealing with the contradictory status of child care which is paid[5] but at the same time generates such strong ties. All of my children-interviewees strongly emphasised that "nanny does not do it for money", while nannies accentuated that "you cannot do it for the money" referring to both to the size of salary and to the emotional requirements of the "job". Consequently, in the interviews gift-giving was mentioned by all interested actors (and especially by the nannies and children) as a proof that the relationship between them is more than just utilitarian and based upon the market rules of employment. It has a symbolic

[5] In 2012, the average salary in the Czech Republic was little bit more than 24 000 CZK (960 Euro). Minimum wage during the same period was 8 000 CZK (320 Euro) per month. The average wage of the nannies in my sample was 7000 CZK (280 Euro), while the most frequent amount was 6000 CZK (240 Euro) per month.

power to transcend the employer-employee relationship and highlight the altruism and emotionality (when Ms. Brhlíková gives little Than candies, while commenting "I would give her anything", see above) between nanny and child/family.

Third were what I call **"exclusive (Czech) granny activities"**, meaning the set of activities in the children narratives coded as the activities they can only do with their Czech grannies. In other words, unlike the first group where the activities are done by the nanny *instead of* the parents, and second unit where they are performed *with* parents, the children marked some activities as "granny only" and hence done *without* parents. There are two sources of this "exclusivity", the first springing from the nanny's ethnic background (exclusive *Czech* granny activities), and second being activities that are "normally done" in the Czech Republic with grannies (and which because of the physical distance the children cannot do with the mother's mother or father's mother; that is, exclusively *granny* activities). The first example provides children with what we can call "window to the majority" (drawing upon Rollins' "window to exotica"; Rollins 1985). The nanny as a mediator of the "Czech culture" offers and teaches children the Czech habits and traditions (they mentioned above all Advent, Easter, but also events like pig-slaughtering). The children in my sample put a huge accent on this role of nanny, as their direct and personal contact with the Czech environment was interpreted as one of the most important aspects of their childhood which allowed them to "learn to adapt". Many of them concluded that they would surely *know* about Czech culture and traditions from school and from friends, but thanks to their nannies they could *live* these traditions.

A typical example of the latter type here is holiday at granny's, which has a special status in the children's narratives. Tuyet explained that when she was little, parents let her go to her nanny for holiday as a reward for doing well at school. She, as well as other children, reported how the granny always gave them a lot of food for them to bring home ("she packed the a lot of food, as the grannies do it"), how she prepared meals they love especially for them, etc. Many children spent holiday at nanny's together with nanny's grandchildren and other members of her family, with whom the ties of friendship were knitted. The children connected holidays with many summer activities that came into their mind when the word "granny" was said. For instance, Mia reported:

> *"The granny has a garden and with beds so we watered it. They had strawberries and raspberries, currants, tomatoes. So we made fruit syrup each summer. Or the granny made cakes so we helped her."*

Besides the list of particular activities the children were ready to enumerate, there was also another – seemingly even more important – aspect in the nanny-child relationship: the symbolic need to have a granny. As Minh put it: "It is, you know, that you just can say 'I have a granny', just the word."

Concluding remarks

"Migration uproots, and replanting takes time," wrote Charles Tilly and C. Harold Brown in 1967 (Tilly – Brown 1967: 139). After coming to the Czech Republic and starting the families here, Vietnamese parents deal with how to replant their child care and family ideologies in the new context. While being part of a transnational social field enables them keeping in touch with mothering strategies in Vietnam (through their relatives or friends, by following the situation there, etc.), living in the Czech Republic throws them into a different setting where different *"normal" caring biographies* are supported. The changes in family structure after migration (uprooting from the extensive kinship networks that the care can be delegated to) lead families to find a "substitute" grandmother for their children, and to the development of kinship ties with her and her family.

I have argued that when recruiting a Czech nanny, the Vietnamese family simulates the familiar family/child care arrangements intimately known from Vietnam. Simply put, hiring a nanny *fulfils the ideal of relatives in family life*. I am brought to this conclusion by the following two findings: First, in regard to the "unpacking of cultural baggage" (i.e. ideas about the family and child care), we can observe how Vietnamese migrants in the CR "simply do what they would do at home in Vietnam". The formation of the dual-earner household is not caused by the migration project, nor is delegating child rearing to a third person – both of these customs are established long before migration. Finding a Czech nanny is thus a simulation of the existing family model, adapted to the post-migration reality. In other words, the game does not change (in both the pre-migration and post-migration context with these families, the mother and father both work, and the children are looked after by someone else). Under the new rules (life in the new country) only the players are changed (instead of a grandma, the nanny comes in). Secondly, the relationship that arises between the family (mainly the children) and the nanny is such that the nanny replaces the Vietnamese grandma not only in looking after the kids, but can become their "real grandmother".

Analysis of the interviews conducted with Czech nannies and the Vietnamese children they looked after indicates the decisive role of *care* in the formation of

kinship ties. Hence, I analysed caring as an essential part of the kinning process (Howell 2003), arguing that intensive daily caregiving lays the groundwork for the knitting of kinship relations between nannies (grandmothers) and children (grandchildren). For many children of Vietnamese parents, the Czech grandma has become the main anchor in the new society, the main caregiver and teacher, and simply the person who is called "grandma" with whom it is possible to experience "typical grandma things" that cannot be experienced with their birth grandparents due to the separation of distance. The testimonies of interviewees suggest that there is a thick line between a Czech grandmothers who daily care for and about the children, and Vietnamese grandmothers who have never cared for them, and their capacity to care about them was limited because of physical distance. Although the children admitted that their grandmothers in Vietnam surely love them and care about them at a distance (by being interested in their lives and supporting their success, etc.), it was their Czech grannies who have daily cared for them and with whom they have the shared memories: from small events such as preparing food, to special events like Christmas or school performances. In many cases, the shared memories counterweighted or even overrode the role of blood and common origin in their conception of kinship ties and belonging to a kinship trajectory.

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SINGLE MOTHERS OF NAIROBI: RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER ROLES AND FAMILY RELATIONS IN KENYA

Stefania Giada Meda

Abstract: ***The paper delineates the changes in gender roles and family relations brought about by rural-urban migration in Kenya by discussing the findings of empirical qualitative research carried out in Kenya in September 2011 on the single mothers of Nairobi, an emerging family form in Kenyan society, widespread yet unspoken and still in search for recognition. The theoretical framework makes reference to the relational sociology and takes into account how the family stakeholders relate to one another and how changes in reciprocal relations (i.e., inter-gender relations) may produce further changes in the whole family. The idea is to show how the emergence of this new form of family is: i) strongly linked to the migration from the countryside to the city of Nairobi and the cultural and social transition that this brings about (a transition from tradition to modernity); and to cast light on ii) the characteristics of the new role played by women within their families and the communities; iii) elements of novelty and discontinuity compared to the tradition; iv) challenges and resources of the single mothers. Various tools of investigation were used (participant observation, structured data sheets, in-depth interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, group interviews, individual structured questionnaires) on a number of Nairobi single mothers and key informants.***

Keywords: ***migration; single parenthood; African family; African women; Kenya***

Town-ward migration and family transformation in Kenya: an introduction

Projections based on Kenya's 1989 population and housing census indicate profound changes in rural to urban migration: the concentration of rural population has reduced from a level of 82% in 1990 to 77% in 2000. It is projected that the level will be 64% by the year 2020. The rate of urbanization was projected to grow at an approximate annual rate of 3.5% resulting in the proportion of urban to rural population of 21% in 1990, 27% in 2000 and 42% in 2020.

As is the case in many other African countries, income from labour migration contributes critically to the livelihoods of many households in rural Kenya (see Black et al. 2006 and Gould 1995 for an overview). Evidence shows that rural-urban migration is a key source of economic growth in Kenya, having accounted for 4.6 percentage points of per capita income growth over a period of 10 years between 1970/72 and 1980/82 compared to 4% experienced in the case of technical change over the same period.

Recent estimates suggest that about a third of all Kenyan households divide their members between urban and rural homes (Agesa 2004).

The rural-urban migration is often framed as a powerful process of change, able to impact on a society's structure, culture and relationships. When people in the rural areas move into cities it is not simply "human mobility" or "social mobility" (as they move in search of jobs and opportunities to improve their lives and create a better future for their children). What is at stake is a deeper social change, whose meaning and repercussions are not merely structural, physical, spatial, geographical, and environmental. Town-ward mobility in fact brings about crucial changes also at a symbolic, cultural, and relational level, thus impacting primarily on the basic social unit, e.g., the family and the relationships between their components – gender and generations.

The movement from the countryside into the cities is highly connected with the development of societies. Historians link together the three processes of modernization, urbanization and industrialisation: as Kendall (2007: 11) notes, "urbanization accompanied modernization and the rapid process of industrialization". Yet in sociological critical theory, modernization is also linked to an overarching process of rationalisation. When modernization increases within a society, the individual becomes that much more important, eventually replacing the family or community as the fundamental unit of society (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/387301/modernization). Another

way of looking at modernization is the increase in reflexivity (see Donati and Archer 2010).

In this paper, I shall delineate the changes in terms of gender roles and family relations brought about by rural-urban migration in Kenya and I'll do that by analysing the single mothers of Nairobi, an emerging family form in Kenyan society, widespread yet unspoken and still in search for a recognition.

Families in transition: conceptualising the family-migration link

Starting from the late '80s and early '90s (Boyd 1989), the link between migration and family gained momentum in the scientific debate thanks to approaches framing migration in a pluralist, hybrid, and non-deterministic way (De Haas 2008). Classical approaches – analysing either macro or micro aspects, i.e., either migrations or migrants – were overcome by a meso perspective (Faist 1997) focused on the social ties and networks. A specific viewpoint is expressed by the relational theory elaborated by Italian sociologist Pierpaolo Donati (2011). This specific meso approach conceptualises migration flows in terms of relationships (e.g., between migrants and non-migrants; migrants and host population; among migrants themselves; and so on) and combines the viewpoints by relating such relationships. The relational approach to migration focuses on the ties before/after/during the migration. In this way the analysis is not merely carried out on the structural aspects of the social networks, but both structural and cultural elements are taken into consideration and put in relation: the outcome of such process is the valorisation of the unpredictable emerging effect called relational exceeding. This gives rise to a generative semantic (Donati 2006) that accounts for morphogenetic a/o morphostatic elements of the social relation (Archer 1997). In addition, the time variable is taken into consideration in such a relational approach.

The relational perspective includes the new economics of labour migration (see Stark and Bloom 1985) and the analysis of migration as a livelihood strategy (see Mc Dowell and De Haan 1997). Research from the pluralist perspective, blended with network analysis and relational approaches, conceives migration as the outcome of a household decision and as a strategy to diversify resources and minimize risk (Bigsten 1996). It also focuses on the short and long-term consequences of migration on the households and domestic relationships both in the place of origin (e.g. the family left behind) and in the host society (Meda 2012).

As for the African context, Agesa (2004), for example, focuses on rural–urban linkages sustained through multi-locality of households and analyses the determinants of split households (those that permanently maintain homes in both urban and rural areas). High cost of living in urban areas and low educational status of the migrants appear to be the determinants of this type of migration in Kenya.

When applying the relational approach to the family-migration link, one can talk about families in transition from a dual perspective. One the one hand, families are in transition in the sense that family members spatially move from one place to another; on the other hand they are in transition in the sense that migration produces family and social change, e.g., profound effect on family formation in Africa. Thus the rural to urban migration in Africa, which is now documented in many ways and by many agencies (ILO, UN, etc.) and which is part of the larger phenomenon of urbanisation, represents a metaphoric passage from traditional to modern differentiated societies and becomes an interesting subject of study as it takes place on a continent where the notion of modernity is still blurred and in search for an identity.

Inter-gender, intergenerational relations and family life in Kenya: traditional patterns

As in many other parts of the world (Beier et al. 2010; OECD 2009), in the recent past, family life in the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi, has undergone some major transformations as a result of the changes in the wider socio-cultural-economic system (CAFS 2002). Urban Kenyan families are in transition from the traditional structures that tended to favour large families living together to the modern trend towards smaller nuclear family units.

Traditionally, marriage and family life in Africa were held in high esteem. It was in the family that life was passed on and people (members of the family) worked together to provide the necessary conditions and material goods needed for a good life. According to the East African tradition, family was intended as the broader extended family comprising children, parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

Traditionally, female marriage was universal and ensured through the widespread institution of polygyny. In case of widowhood, pressure was exerted on widows of reproductive age to remarry soon (and immediate conception was hugely emphasized). The cultural practice of levirate was common in a few tribes of central and western Kenya whereby a widow, upon her husband's death, was

expected to agree to be married to another man -usually a relative of her husband or someone selected by her in-laws – in order for her to be able to remain on the piece of land and house left behind by her husband. Refusal to do this means the widow would lose her customary rights to retain her property and home. Today, many women seek refuge in the city as a way to run away from wife inheritance in the rural areas (COHRE 2008).

In Kenya, family is considered as the basic social unit (Suda 2002) and in the past it used to be relatively stable with a wide network of relatives to support the raising of children. Procreation was the marriage's main aim, intending with this not only the responsibility of bearing children but also that of rearing them in order to extend the family kin. For this reason, in some African communities a marriage was sealed only upon the birth of the first child. Such was the importance of childbearing that in case of infertility a marriage could even be invalidated. In other cases, people would go for second or third wives.

A religious approach to the African marriage and family life explained procreation as co-creation, in other words, as fostering God's work of creation in the world. In this perspective, in traditional Africa, those unable to procreate were not at peace with the creator.

Family life in Africa was basically a social thing rather than a private business. Marriage, even though a union of two persons in companionship, did not confine the couple in a world of their own. In fact, the spouses were in company of each other only at night, while during the day they were in company of other members of society. This element is explained also on the basis of the kinship ties where entire groups were related to each other in some way or the other: since the person was married to all those who were related to the partner, it was necessary to be in relationship with all these people. On this ground, therefore, while the two formed an intimate basic unit of society, they were conscious of needing the other members of society and of being needed by the society as well. The union of a man and a woman was thus not only an affair of the two but more likely a community (extended family) affair. Since it was a (extended) family affair, the family wished that the wife or the husband should be from a family understood as good in order to create friendship between the two families.

In some communities, courtship between boys and girls was allowed (when they felt ready for marriage) after informing their parents who would carry out the negotiations. The family, however, could reject the choice of a daughter or a son if they didn't like the family they were marrying into/from. Traditionally, the marriage contract between the two families was sealed upon dowry payment.

To reinforce the idea that the marriage was a strong bond between two families, traditionally the newly-weds would be considered daughters/sons to their in-laws. Conflicts arising in the nuclear family were then solved at the level of the extended family and issues of individual family members were a concern of the entire family (e.g., marriage of a daughter). Rights and responsibilities of each member were clearly spelt out but also the responsibility to give aid to those in need. Finally, kinship was traditionally associated with inheritance of land or other material goods or even with succession of roles.

Families, and specifically parents, have traditionally played a key role in socialising the youth. However, as the family structure changes in sub-Saharan Africa, this appears to be shifting towards a more powerful role being played by other agents, especially the peers, formal education institutions and the media (Nyanjui 1994). Atekyereza (2001) notes that, in the traditional African family, socialisation meant definition, allocation and reproduction of social responsibilities, which ultimately reproduced society. At the social and cultural level, the extended family was the first institution for socialisation of new members into society. It was a moulding and punishing institutional framework with collective responsibility that made parents become parents to all children (and vice versa) in the interest of family stability and security. Socialisation, which was usually done by older family members, introduced children early and gradually to the physical, economic, social and religious lives of their families – both traditional cultural norms and artefacts right from childhood. Education was informal. Girls were prepared to be future mothers by their parents and relatives, particularly by paternal aunts (Kilbride and Kilbride 1990).

The rural-urban migration in Kenya: repercussions on family relations and forms

Like the rest of Africa, Kenya is still predominantly rural but it is rapidly urbanizing. Today, almost 30% of Kenyans live in cities. From now on, most of Kenya's population growth will be urban. While total population will double by 2045, the urban population will more than quadruple. By 2033 the country will reach a "spatial tipping point", when half of Kenya will be residing in the urban areas (http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/why-do-kenyans-want-to-live-in-cities).

The creation and rapid growth of towns has been the most easily perceived expression of 20th century social change in East Africa, as in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Certainly, trading centres on the coast and royal capitals inland had

existed before, but the opening up of the country by commerce, the activities of missions, and the imposition of colonial administration led either to the complete transformation of existing centres or to their being soon overshadowed by new towns. Already before the Second World War Kenya was the most urbanized of the three countries of East Africa (Tanzania and Uganda). In 1962, 6.9% of its population lived in urban centres of 10,000 inhabitants and over, as against about 3.8% for Tanzania in 1967 and 3.0% for Uganda in 1959. Not surprisingly then we find East Africa's biggest town Nairobi in Kenya (Gugler 1968).

In Kenya, the fast process of urbanization is mainly due to the poverty and underdevelopment characterizing rural areas in the absence of adequate policies and agricultural development, which led to massive movements from rural to urban areas (Kopoka 2002; Lugalla, Kibassa 2003).

The relocation of the economy from rural to urban areas has resulted, since the colonial period, in direct and deeply felt influences on the local population, originally predominantly rural. From the colonial times, land becomes scarce as a result of foreign encroachments, and this triggers massive migration flows to the towns.

This migration trend was triggered voluntarily at the beginning of the 20th century: colonial policies in fact depended largely on the massive use of the local workforce to build new cities and railways. New taxes were introduced to facilitate the flow of migrants, including Hut Tax that led men to move into urban areas in search of work to raise money to pay the tax. At the end of the Second World War, the increasing acceleration in population growth has led to a worsening of the economic situation. The growing scarcity of arable land, (even as a direct result of the excessive power of the multinationals on plantations and agricultural crops) has further contributed to damage the small local farmers. This migration process has had drastic effects on rural and social life, particularly on the economic structure and traditional family.

Kayera (1980) illustrates the influence of male migration on the social role of women in traditional rural Kenya. The study outlines the profile of those who leave the countryside to seek employment in cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa in the early eighties of the 20th century: "Migrants are typically young adult males with a minimum level of education, on the contrary those who are left behind are mostly women, children and the elderly with almost no formal education or skills. Therefore it is estimated that one-third of rural households are headed by women in Kenya". The study also shows that in the rural areas the prevailing idea is that women should first play the role of daughters, wives and mothers,

and only under special conditions such as the absence of their husbands, may directly take care of the land, which however remains the property of men (the husbands or their families).

The process of urbanization, which has affected Nairobi from as early as the colonial period, involving large masses of outcasts, refugees and work migrants soon joined by their family members, has taken the name of de-tribalization and has long been considered a threat to the social order by the colonial authorities. This fear has continued after the independence (in 1963), with Kenyatta's government trying to control the migration from rural areas to the city by building new residential areas on the outskirts of Nairobi. In subsequent years, the Moi regime (1978–2002) preferred to ignore the city's explosive growth until 1990, when, in the Rift Valley, it was decided to play the card of tribalism (Ranger 1993: 95), by pitting the so-called native tribes (Masais and Kalenjins) against internal migrants (Kikuyus and Luos). Expropriated of their land and forced to flee following the ethnic clashes, these communities have found refuge in Nairobi, swelling the ranks of the homeless vagrants. Urban de-tribalization is therefore the paradoxical result of political tribalism.

In the '80s, massive migration from the countryside and subsequent rapid urbanization (Kilbride et al. 2000) were also favoured by the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). They led to big spending cuts in education and health, the introduction of cost-sharing measures and the implementation of user fee initiatives (Mutuku – Mutiso 1994; Stephens 2004) that have had disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable categories, especially women: "If the burden of survival [on families] is huge, it is even greater on women" (Kalpagam 1985: 18). In face of the decrease in the possibility of formal employment for men and cuts in public spending (education, health and social services) determined by SAPs, women have had to work harder both at home and outside (Chant 2004); at the same time, their opportunities to access education and health have declined. The SAPs and the resulting processes of deindustrialization, as well as the decimation in male employment in the formal sector, were followed by a massive migration of men and drove women to improvise new sources of survival such as selling illicit brews, doing petty trades on the streets, working as beauticians and hair-saloonists, street cleaners, cleaning ladies, rags, nurses and prostitutes (Davis 2006: 143–144). "In principle, the revenue generated by these small scale businesses, which are run mostly by women, usually fail to provide even a minimum level of income and involve little capital investment, virtually no specialized training and only limited prospects for expansion in cost- functional

activity" (Rogerson 1997: 347). Women increasingly have to separate from their children and send them upcountry, while tens of thousands of older children were forced to leave school to go to work or pick up garbage, with little hope of ever being able to resume studies. Under the weight of endless pressure, family solidarity collapsed (Davis 2006: 146). According to a group of scholars, the family that "once might have been a unit that served as support and push for its members now has become an entity in which members compete for survival" (Rwezaura et al. 2003: 416–417). The social capital of families and communities ended up eroded and the networks of mutual aid and solidarity essential to the survival of the poorest were soon dissolved: the burden that has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of women reduces their capacity to take action, and there are no more untapped reserves to fall back (Chant 2004: 212–214).

It is now widely accepted that urbanization is as much a social process as it is an economic and territorial process. It transforms societal organizations, the role of the family, demographic structures, the nature of work, and the way we choose to live and with whom. It also modifies domestic roles and relations within the family, and redefines concepts of individual and social responsibility (cf. http://family.jrank.org/pages/1732/Urbanization-Social-Impacts-Urbanization.html#ixzz2RZxjGb2g).

First of all, urbanization tends to reduce the birth rate and, as a result, families become smaller relatively quickly, not only because parents have fewer children on average, but also because the extended family typical of rural settings is much less common in urban areas. In urban settlements, children are no longer seen as useful units of labour and producers, and are more expensive to house and feed.

The evolution to an urban society goes frequently hand in hand with a decline in the status of the family and with a proliferation of non-traditional family forms and new types of households. By non-traditional we mean those families without two parents and/or without children. This trend partly reflects an increasing diversity in "choices of living arrangements" following from marriage or from any other association of individuals within the housing system whether relatedness is by marriage or blood, or non-existing. In the past few years, Nairobi has witnessed an explosion in rates of household formation and a sharp increase in the diversity of household and family types, including single-parent household types, where "one parent lives with his / her children but without any partner (the household can however include other adults living in the same dwelling – i.e., the parents of a sole mother)" (OECD 2009: 1).

The increase in single-parent households is due to an increase in marital instability caused by the impact of social change – as it has been demonstrated, for instance, within the Luo community of Kenya (Suda 1991). Socio-economic factors can impact power structures and religion, both of which further affect change within the family. According to Suda (2002), non-traditional marriages, especially in economically successful areas (as the city), tend to be less stable than more traditional marriages and this is likely to foster single parent households (see also Hakansson 1994).

Marital instability is also fostered by alcoholism, polygamy and poverty. In the countryside, these very same factors often result in family breakups and force the youth to migrate to urban areas (Ssengendo n.d.).

In sub-Saharan Africa, urbanisation has often occurred along with westernisation, as cities have in many ways emulated cities of the developed world, especially those of the former colonial powers, and become hubs for the spread of Western culture and ways of living, including increasing individualisation. Western influence (together with Christian missionary education) has had repercussions on the African family formation (Sorobea 1993). For instance, Nabudere-Magomu (1991) notes that contact with Western culture has weakened Ugandan traditional values and norms related to marriage and increased cases of single mothers, cohabitation, divorce and separation.

Urbanisation, Western culture's influence and modernisation introduce several changes within the structure of marriage and the stability of the family. Many factors contribute to determining age at first marriage for a woman, including education, employment, place of residence, and pressure from family. In rural and underdeveloped areas, the extended family plays a critical role (Lupilya 1992). However, nowadays children and adolescents no longer receive sufficient care and support from their parents. Due to economic pressures, the role parents and the extended family play in socializing the youth has changed and traditional means of transferring sexual education are disappearing (Iga – Basalirwa 1992). Marriage decisions for the youth have become largely personal (Sendagi 1997), thus exposing them to the risk of early parenthood, multiple partnering and frequent breakups. Without adequate supervision and sexual education, teenage girls are likely to incur into early pregnancies and, as their partners do not take responsibility over it, they tend to drop off from school and rear their children alone.

Ntozi and Nakanaabi (2001) attribute, albeit in part, the increase in separation and divorce to HIV/AIDS which spreads also through practices such as widow inheritance and multiple marriages (Adeokun – Nalwodda 1997). According to

some, HIV/AIDS are among the main reasons as to why in East Africa many new forms of families emerge, particularly single-headed families. They may be headed by a grandparent, a single-parent, or in the absence of an adult, by a child. Without adequate resources, many of these families live in despair and may turn to violence (Mugisha 1995).

Many female headed households in rural areas of Kenya are *de facto* units whose male "heads" have migrated to urban areas or overseas in search of employment and business opportunities.

According to Sylvia Chant (1998), "female-headed household that owe their origins to male migration (de facto female headed households) may be in a very different situation to de jure female headed households i.e., those whose routes into female household headship have occurred through widowhood, conjugal separation or non-marriage. Although male out-migration can enhance the economic situation of households left behind, it can also lead to greater impoverishment, especially where remittances are small and variable. [...] At the other end of the spectrum, de jure female-headed households [...] may be in a stronger position to make their own choices over migration insofar as they do not have to make reference to a male partner. At the same time, the dominance of male household headship in ideological and, in practical, terms means that many women [...] may have little choice but to migrate to urban areas if they seek to maintain economic and residential independence" (Chant 1998: 14).

The decline in family wealth and economic collaboration has meant that people only help where they can and not necessarily out of kinship obligation. Additionally, as a result of AIDS, the number of non-productive members of society is outnumbering the productive ones. Unemployment continues to escalate and has negative effects (emotional, financial and economic) on family breadwinners (UCRNN 1998). This affects accessibility to valued resources for survival. There is need for mobilisation of adequate resources to particularly support the extended family networks (Hunter 1990; Gilborn et al. 2001).

Discussions of resources within the family often focus on gender relations and bias. This bias may originate from a variety of factors. Marriage patterns and practices can impact resource allocation by way of polygamy, with resources distributed according to the rank of the wife as well as through widow inheritance (Ssennyonga 1997). From a historical perspective, unequal gender relations often originated from patrilineal societies, with increased burden placed on women under colonial rule (Nasimiyu 1997). The traditional division of labour tends to overburden women, who also suffer a skewed distribution of resources such as

land and credit that favours men (Ayako – Musambayi n.d.). As these trends are carried on to the present, the lack of acknowledgement of, information about, and monetary value placed on the products and services of women lead to the neglect of women in thinking about national development (Aderanti 1994). Gendered division of labour tends to favour men and overburden and exploit women. For example, among the Maasai, men are dominant in economic, social and political spheres. While education could potentially aid in breaking down the skewed division of labour that women experience, the demands of herding preclude education. Additionally, educating girls is considered a poor investment because they will leave home when they are married (Maghimbi – Manda 1997).

Land accessibility and ownership is directly related to marriage and family structures. These tend to be heavily dominated by men (Nalwanga Sebina-Zziwa 1998).

The compounding situations produced by all these factors that influence accessibility to resources have strong implications for family health, nutrition, income, etc. Involvement of women in work outside the home has made them access resources and improve family welfare, although this sometimes exposes them to new forms of oppression and exploitation hence further undermining familial relations that they are trying to support. AIDS has also aggravated resource accessibility. Due to changes in the society that have improved women's education, skills and social positioning, some women have decision-making powers, and the gap between them and men is reducing. However, even where women have acquired this emancipation or power, such gains have been perceived as disrupting stable family life especially from men's point of view.

In general, widows experience unequal rights within the family[1]. For instance, it is common in Uganda for widows, whose husbands die as a result of HIV/AIDS, to lose property to their husbands' families and other members of the extended family (UNAIDS 2000). ISIS-WICCE (1999) report shows that widows lack access to land and are denied their property rights. In traditional African society, widows were absorbed into their husband's family through inheritance. However, the current shift is towards individuality, monogamy and remaining single after losing one's spouse. Therefore, widows may not receive the familial

[1] Mhando (1994) explored the historical development of gender relations in Tanzania, particularly among the Wachaga, and found that the position of the woman at the household level and in society was and remains very poor. Women tend to be stuck in low-paying and unskilled jobs. Women are not addressed by programmes in which their expertise could be utilised, even in areas in which they play key roles, such as in management of biodiversity (Kaiza-Boshe 1994).

support they once did. It is important to note the role of policies as well as families in shaping the status of women and their subsequent control over sexuality and fertility, equality in production, establishing a political voice, and achieving equity in the household (Royal Netherlands Embassy, Nairobi, 1994).

Suda (2002) observes that single-parent households, as a new family structure, are weak and much less capable of child support. Female-headed families are extremely vulnerable with highly negative potential repercussions: they make women more vulnerable and isolated, and give rise to an entire generation of boys and girls exposed to statelessness, poverty and marginalization, including the risk of ending up in the street as street children. Moreover, being children of a single mother may increase their risk of becoming in turn a single parent. In relation to this, Olumu and Chege (1994) found that the marital status of a youth's parents might impact rates of pregnancy as well as abortion among adolescent girls. Furthermore, the weakening of family ties also weakens local communities and society in general, which end up more insecure, violent, eroded in their social capitals made of trust and collaborative relationships.

Literature review thus outlines a substantial transformation of family structures in East Africa, towards a progressive nuclearization of the families, individualisation of society, and weakening of community ties. In the same vein, single motherhood poses a challenge to relationships and resources (i.e., land), especially in what concerns their rural homes. In a society based on the collective identification on the "nyumba" (home) because of its genealogical construction in terms of blood, terms, and descent (Roosens 1994) a large number of single mothers becomes a threat as it restructures the relationships between wealth and identity which has shaped rural societies across time and space.

The fieldwork: rationale of the research and methods

Through an empirical qualitative research carried out in Nairobi in September 2011, it is meant to cast light on the single-mother family as a specific family form that emerges from the rural-urban migration and evidences the transformation of gender roles and family relations in contemporary Kenya. The approach is relational (Donati 2011) and takes into account how the family stakeholders relate to one another and how changes in reciprocal relations (i.e., inter-gender relations) may produce further changes on the whole family.

This basically means that the situation of women and their changing roles within the family are investigated in the light of the transformations that other

family members (intended as relations, i.e., husbands/fathers and children) are experiencing within a society which is also in transition. In this way, we intend to go beyond an individualistic perspective (which would focus mainly on women) and a structural standpoint (which would in turn frame changes in terms of repercussions of macro events).The relational perspective poses itself at a meso level of analysis and interpretation and is particularly adequate to investigate African societies, which are so much based on family (clan) and community relationships.

To be truly compliant with such a relational perspective, the research design should have taken into consideration all the family stakeholders' viewpoints (mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, other significant key informants). However, since the research project is still in progress, only single mothers, children of single mothers and key informants have been so far interviewed. Here only the single mothers' and key informants' narratives analysis will be presented. Interviews with fathers and grandparents will be hopefully done in the near future. The single mothers scrutinized are of different ages, ethnicities (though mainly Kikuyus), socio-economic and educational statuses, yet they all live in Nairobi or surroundings with their offspring (without a husband or partner).

The idea is to show how the emergence of this new form of family is: i) strongly linked to the migration from the countryside to the city of Nairobi and the cultural and social transition that this brings about (a transition from tradition to modernity). Other crucial aspects tackled by the field research are: ii) characteristics of the new role played by women within their families and the communities; iii) elements of novelty and discontinuity compared to the tradition; iv) challenges and resources of the single mothers.

Various tools of investigation were used: in particular, information was gathered through:

- participant observation and structured data sheets administration in No.10 different projects for women in different areas of Nairobi and surroundings;
- semi-structured individual interviews with No.8 key informants (mainly project managers of NGOs in support of women and single mothers);
- No.5 group interviews and No.14 individual in-depth interviews with single mothers of different ages, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, coming from different parts of Nairobi and enrolled in the above mentioned projects;
- individual structured questionnaires administered to No. 32 single mothers from the slum of Kawangware (west Nairobi).

All interviews were written *verbatim* and underwent inferential interpretation. Texts were analysed with a technique meant to enhance the relevance of each interviewee's narrative account by highlighting the major themes and comparing facts and opinions. This comparison was made in order to cast light on the meanings attributed to the condition of a single mother and highlight possible discrepancies or consistencies between different individuals and groups.

Access to the fieldwork was gained through the help of a field assistant appointed by a local university, that is Tangaza College – Catholic university of Eastern Africa in Nairobi. Field visits were accurately prepared and appointments were made in advance in order to meet the people in charge of every project surveyed and their beneficiaries (i.e., single mothers). The field assistant also operated as a cultural and linguistic mediator when it was necessary to interpret local languages and cultural settings.

Single mothers of Nairobi: findings from the fieldwork

i) Single mothers: elements of novelty and discontinuity compared to the tradition

The empirical research has shown that single mothers emanate from various circumstances and situations in life: they are of different social and economic statuses, ethnic communities, and degree of literacy and education. In particular, single parenthood does not concern solely a) the younger generations and b) women from deprived, poor backgrounds. On the contrary, it includes women of different ages and diversified backgrounds.

Considering the traditional family where every woman was provided with a husband – even widows were customarily inherited by their dead husbands' male relatives – one may think that single parenthood is a recent phenomenon, mainly widespread amongst the young generation. On the contrary, in the course of the study, the researcher met a number of women in their advanced age living with their children (and often their grandchildren, too) as single mothers.

> *"I was born in 1960. I've come a long way."* (single mother No. 1 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco in Dagoretti Market, Nairobi)

These are either urbanised widows who refused the practice of levirate or women (from poor urban neighbourhoods) who were abandoned by their

husbands/partners and opted for remaining single. This suggests that urbanisation acts as a catalyst for changes that loosen up the traditional culture as well as family ties and loyalties (Meda 2011).

The literature reports a mode of being a single mother connected with labor migration, i.e., the wives 'left-behind'. These are *de facto* single mothers inasmuch their migrant husbands are absent for extended periods. The best-supported wives left behind are those whose migrant husbands send back remittances on a steady basis. But for many mother and children, the benefits of male migration are illusory: men may initially leave home to earn wages for the family's benefit but their commitment sometimes fades and they tend to loosen their loyalty to the family left behind. Migrant husbands often constitute new families in the place where they migrate without formally breaking the ties with their first families.

> *"I'm married but single. My husband went abroad and married there. He left me with three children."* (single mother no. 2 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco in Dagoretti Market, Nairobi)

Also, thinking of single motherhood as common only among women from socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds is incorrect. There are also single mothers among urban women from the middle and upper classes.

> *"I would have wanted you to meet other single parents who are from affluent backgrounds... Ladies who by circumstances became single parents* [...] *they form their own solidarity group."* (Project Manager, Jesuit Refugees Service, Eistleigh)

ii) Macro Factors contributing to the emergence of the single-mother family

Poverty, the migration flows from the rural areas to the city, as well as the rapid urbanisation – not supported by real development – constitute the *main macro factors* that at a *structural level* increase the number of lone-parent households. In particular, poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas cause many people to migrate to the city.

> *"There are those* [women] *who came from village to town and they ended up by neither being married or they were married as they came visit their husband here, their husband disappeared."* (Project Manager, Jesuit Refugees Service, Eistleigh, Nairobi)

"The rural-urban migration has contributed particularly to young girls who had to drop out of school and come to the city centre for prostitution or domestic works or for whatever reasons and then they become single parents." (Project Manager, Jesuit Refugees Service, Eistleigh, Nairobi)

Among the interviewed single mothers roughly 70% are aged between 35 and 50 and have had at least one experience of migration in their lives. The rest are younger (mean age 26 years) and were born in Nairobi.

"When my mother left my dad, she was 7 months pregnant and so after two months my brother was born. After my brother was born, we all stayed at my grandparent for 1 year and 7 months. Then my mother left us there and went to look for a job." (single mother no. 3 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco in Dagoretti Market, Nairobi)

"My husband passed away, leaving me with three children and then I was chased away from my home in Kakamega by the brothers to my husband together with other people because there, when your husband dies, you are chased away... It's not like these days you are able to stay because you are included in your husband's will. [...] *In the '70s I had a lot of problems with the children; sometimes I would sleep hungry and I earned as low as 15 Ksh in a month. So I came to Nairobi by train with my children and here I earned 30 Ksh per month for the rent and the little I would get is what I would buy food with."* (single mother, working in the Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery project, Karen-Nairobi)

"I am a tailor by profession. I decided to do my work and brought up my children. So I also came here to Nairobi." (single mother No. 2, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

At a *symbolic level*, the process of modernisation – in the shape of "westernisation" – leads to a progressive individualisation and introduces phenomena previously unknown to the African societies, such as divorce and separation (at a *micro level*), as well as a generic loosening of community ties and loyalties (at a *meso level*).

"A single parent as a girl who finds herself stranded with a child [...] that is relatively new. It was there before and there were mechanisms within the culture on how to cope with it. Of course the penalties were very stiff but now [...] the dynamic has

changed where our cultural way of life has been influenced by a bit of Western culture and cultures from other regions... Education is taking more prominence, you know, getting a job, those things were not of great emphasis before. They were not important to us before." (Key Informant, Tangaza College, Nairobi)

Poverty also entails an erosion of social capital at a meso and micro level, thus challenging the family in Africa, as in any other part of the world.

"My parents also are struggling with their life. They can't help out. And also you can't expect assistance from other women because they also have their problems they are dealing with." (single mother No. 4 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco, Nairobi)

"My husband ran away with everything... I don't have anything... I just stay there and then I called my brother and then he came and gave me a little money and brought a mattress and a bed and told me to start my life again. So I started taking them to school. He was paying for me school fees and rent." (single mother No. 3, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

The process of modernization that is sweeping the African continent – together with some positive trends such as the emergence of the middle class and technological development – brings the depletion of relational resource and the risk of increasing social isolation. Moreover, modernisation introduces a new element in the daily life of the people: the possibility to choose by oneself, reducing any reference to the clan, the family, and the community in general. This is why today some widows can refuse to practice the levirate and end up living as single mothers with their children, and young girls are exposed to pre-marital sex (courtship and partnering are no longer a family business!) thus risking early, unplanned, out-of-wedlock pregnancies. With modernization the degrees of individual freedom grow while the control exerted by the parents and the clan over the lifestyles and choices diminishes, thus decreasing the level of social protection and leaving the individual increasingly alone. This process becomes even more problematic in a communitarian context – such as the African, where the idea of 'individual' is somehow alien to the local culture and social organisation, and – consequently – there are not yet adequate conceptual tools to master the transition to 'Western-like' modernisation.

iii) Micro and Meso Factors contributing to the emergence of the single-mother family

All these factors at the macro level have repercussions *at micro and meso levels*. Poverty and migration – as macro-structural factors – challenge people in their contexts of ordinary life, make them prone to stress (uncertainty about the future) and lead to violent and dysfunctional practices within intimate relationships. Domestic violence and mistreatments contribute to family breakups and thus increase the number of single mothers in Nairobi.

> *"I got pregnant… again I got a baby girl. The first one I got was a baby boy. The second one is a baby girl. So when this girl was nine months he started drinking a lot, coming home when he was very drunk. He started beating me… life goes bad like that…"* (single mother No. 3, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

> *"When I was a child my father started treating me very badly. He would physically abuse me. He would beat me up without any reason whatsoever. So my mum couldn't take it anymore, so she walked out of the marriage and took me along with her."* (single mother no. 5 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco, Nairobi)

At the meso level, illiteracy and lack of sexual education also make girls prone to become single mothers.

iv) Being a single mother: meaning making and attitudes toward singlehood and motherhood

The interviewed women show opposite attitudes towards their being single but they never question their maternity, which is valued as a priority, even when they are unable to care or provide financially for their children. Some women (especially victims of violence) do not want a stable partner as – in their views – it is a 'stress'; while some others want to (re)marry to improve their physical and economic security. In fact, despite dysfunctional inter-gender relationships, the presence of a man in the house is highly desirable.

> *"And at the same time, in African culture, men are the security of the home. Men are the security. Whether the man works and provides the house with food, clothing,*

he does or does not, that house has a man. That house is fully secured. It will be respected." (single mother No. 1 from the for-profit project "Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery", Karen, Nairobi)

"Even if the man is a cripple and doesn't do anything and so long as that house has a man it will be respected. But for single ladies and single mothers we are in danger, always in danger." (single mother No. 2 from the for-profit project "Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery", Karen, Nairobi)

Mothers of girls are more likely to (re)marry as girls are not entitled to inherit the step-father's assets; while mothers of boys are often compelled by the new partner to chase their boy children away. This is why many boy children end up on the streets as street children.

v) Inter-gender relationships: fading partners and absent fathers

The social desirability linked to the presence of a man in the house often leads women to welcome any new partners in their homes in the hope that they will be better than the previous ones. This "serial partnering" often proves to be a problem rather than a solution: as soon as the woman gets pregnant, the man disappears leaving her again in the position of being a single mother.

"You see all this time since my son was born he never looked for us, he never got in touch." (single mother from the support group organised at the Don Bosco Parish in Upper Hill, Nairobi – affluent neighbourhood)

The problem seems therefore to reside in the crisis of the male, at a crossroad in what concerns his identity and role in the family and in society, at least as much as in the crisis of women. African men – as much as African women and perhaps more – are at a crossroads: they are strained by poverty, migration from the countryside to the cities, rapid urbanization, modernity, subversion of traditional values and culture. Perhaps more than women they are struggling to find a new dimension and their identity. They cling to traditional practices (polygamy), now stripped of the original values (the survival of the group) and make use of "macho" ways (physical strength) to find their place in a rapidly changing society, but the only thing they are able to put in practice is dysfunctional and destructive behaviours.

"You know [...] *men are very weak, a man to abandon the family it takes a day, but a woman will think twice."* (Project Manager, Jesuit Refugees Service, Eistleigh, Nairobi)

"They [men] *want to spread family everywhere. They don't take responsibility."* (single mother from the slum of Korogocho)

"For me the past generation men were good because they were polygamy but nowadays they don't want polygamy, they are skipping everywhere. They don't want to belong in one place but today I will be with this person next day he will maybe found maybe in industrial area... maybe upcountry but in the past they were in polygamy of which I can say they were good they were accepting nowadays they don't accept." (single mother from the slum of Korogocho)

"Men nowadays don't want to wear the button trousers. Men now they want to be with women without supporting them. Just to use them and that will make them to continue to have children or be infected." (single mother No. 2, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

vi) Major challenges and resources

The single mothers met during the research have different experiences of life and lone parenting. Despite the variety in individual biographies and backgrounds, there are some common features that make the single mother condition rather homogeneous – without diminishing the significance of their personal stories. In particular, these common elements are risk and vulnerability. One major aspect of vulnerability – in the absence of father figures – is that the single mothers face alone the challenge to raise and socialize the new generations.

"Like me, I am a father and a mother in one person." (single mother No. 2, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

"I use to try to teach them [my children] *according to what I observe fathers doing with their children so I use to try talk to them and inform them accordingly."* (single mother No. 1 from the for-profit project "Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery", Karen, Nairobi)

> *"It is very hard to rise a child on your own because kids have so many needs (school fees, clothes, etc.) plus things like rent, food and you have to struggle for all that on your own."* (single mother no. 1 from the project "Mama Margareth", run by the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco, Nairobi)

From the symbolic point of view, the absence of the father – in particular at the Kikuyu community – is a serious loss: Kikuyus believe that each new generation replaces their grandparents, who are then free to become ancestors. The grandparents' replacement occurs through child naming: the first born son is always given the same name as his paternal grandfather and, in the same vein, the first daughter is given the name of her paternal grandmother, the second son is named after his maternal grandfather and the second daughter after her maternal grandmother. The need to replace four grandparents is an important reason for having a minimum of four children, and more children gives honour to the parents' siblings. If the mother of the child comes from a single parent home, this may represent a problem but she may name him after her own grandfather. However, this does not solve the problem: children of a single mother are denied access to their paternal lineage both in cultural and practical terms, and this leads to a state of distress with the belief and not being at peace with the ancestors.

From a different point of view, most children of single mothers undergo abusive situations (stigma) that lead them to run to the streets and become *street* children. Similarly, the daughters of single mothers are likely to become single mothers themselves at an early stage of their lives.

In terms of human and civil rights, the most striking consequence of being a single mother, however, lies in the risk of statelessness: the majority of single mothers in the slums of Nairobi have no identity documents and it is difficult for them to get their ID cards. They and their children are thus condemned to perpetual exclusion from any form of rights and participation in the political life of the country (unhcr.org/4f58aee79.html).

The uncertain and unsecure life in the slums and the status of newcomers often result in a poor/absent social capital to count on in case of need. This makes the lives of the Nairobi single mothers even more complex and challenged, depriving them of an adequate network of material and relational resources.

> *"Whenever a husband dies, single mothers are not considered like people and there is no way in society that they can stand up and say they can be heard like the couples*

can be heard." (single mother No. 1 from the for-profit project "Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery", Karen, Nairobi)

"When your husband dies, the community will start to think that now you are a prostitute, a wife who will not care for her family. So long as you know what she wants to be and the children know what they want to be... she decided to be alone so that she becomes a good example for her children." (single mother from the slum of Korogocho, Nairobi)

"Being a single mother is very challenging, very difficult and vulnerable. The people in the community are always scrutinizing you. They are always on the lookout at for you. Therefore you find many people will want to provoke you or try you. So that you become a friend to them hence putting your life at risk or you are lost forever. This is because if you join them you will get into a lifestyle of drugs and alcohol, prostitution and many bad things and your life is destroyed." (single mother No. 1 from the for-profit project "Kazuri 2000 Beads and Pottery", Karen, Nairobi)

"Myself I see when I talk to this man, the wife doesn't feel well so I say... when I say 'morning' it is enough... not adding anything else 'Are you going to job?' or 'Are you coming from job?' ... no... maybe that one I can ask the wife. They are good, just sitting together but not with their husbands. As a single, people talk a lot about you." (single mother No. 3, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

"Even when your brother comes into the house they [the neighbours] *think it is your boyfriend... Even when you talk to your neighbour's husband it is bad... you must keep quiet. You can't greet your neighbour. You just ignore him because the wife will make noise at you. So you just seat lonely. So we make friends from outside. So they come to visit you but here it is difficult. When you talk to someone... it is their husband."* (single mother No. 3, self-managed non-profit project for single mothers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, next to Kibera slum, Nairobi)

The living conditions of single mothers from affluent backgrounds (included their capability to provide for the children in terms of basic needs – food, school fees, etc.) and their resources (i.e., resilience and received support) are more significant compared to those of the women from the slums. Yet they experience the very same difficulties in nurturing their children alone, being stigmatized by the community and so on. So distinctions in status and generation do not make a big difference. Yet an elder widow with adult children (who can support her)

is less vulnerable than a teen single mother with a dependent baby, as the latter is more prone to stigmatization and less likely to receive aid. Moreover, an aged woman will be mature enough to accept her single mother status and cope with stressful events in her life. Similarly, an urban, educated, single mother from an affluent background will have more relational and material tools to cope with her possible vulnerability.

The women of the slums met in the course of the research are poorly aware of their rights and often unable to fight against gender inequality, especially when it comes to the land inheritance issue. Land accessibility and ownership is directly related to marriage and family structures and these tend to be heavily dominated by men.

The majority of the services meant to support these women operate for their economic empowerment (merry-go-round, microcredit, vocational training, etc.) or to create networks of solidarity (support groups) but there is no effective, integrated policy to tackle the issue from a family perspective (i.e., involving men or elder single mothers as mentors for the youths).

Single mothers: lost in transition?

The research has tested most of the issues found in the literature: Kenyan families are in transition in a plurality of ways. Families are in transition in the sense that they move from the countryside to the city and are in the sense that they are facing a radical change in their forms, roles and identities – as a result of this mobility. The study of the single mothers of Nairobi is an emblematic case of this transition.

In accordance with the literature, in Nairobi I have met different types of single mothers: widows, separated / divorced mothers, unmarried mothers, teen moms, and wives "left behind"; while single mothers by choice were not found on the field.

I have discovered multiple factors that contribute to the emerging of female-headed families: macro structural and symbolic factors at the macro, meso, and micro levels. Townward migration and rapid urbanisation are the main causes for cultural change and redefinition of gender roles and family relationships. Other connected factors, such as alcoholism, "serial partnering", unfaithfulness, family disputes and deaths from HIV/AIDS, along with the continuation of practices such as widow inheritance, have led to multiple unions and the further spread of HIV infection, thus determining an increase in the number of single parent-headed households.

Fathers and husbands who left or died leave their families deprived of both intergenerational and gender relations and prone to financial hardship. This emergent family configuration compels to reorganizing family roles, such as that of the breadwinner: women get casual, low-paid jobs such as washerwomen, vegetables sellers, beauticians, or even prostitutes. In the interviewees' accounts, topics concerning lack of material and relational resources often occur together, thus converging in the area of risk. However, there emerges the potentially counterbalancing factor of creativity, in terms of both the structural and the relational strategies implemented in order to survive. The interviewees, in fact, show a clear tendency to work out coping strategies: some examples are their occupation in the informal sector to counterbalance the lack of formal employment or a stable income, and the reorganisation of kinship ties by resorting to the multigenerational extended family, heavily unbalanced on the female gender axis (grandmothers), to make up for the absence of men.

Female-headed families hardly fulfill their care-giving tasks, along vertical intergenerational ties as well as horizontal inter-gender relations. The great number of (dependent) family members (especially children) does not match their ability for mutual support in hardships, as family ties are too heavily challenged by personal loss (especially the disappearance of male figures) and by poverty. So a huge family network turns into a burden where challenges accumulate, offering no protection to the most vulnerable members, i.e., children. Single mothers in fact are often hardly able to provide for their children and look after them. Even working mothers are hardly able to pay their children's school fees and carry out educational and care-giving tasks. In this way, their unsupervised offspring tend to run to the streets, where they can find alternative means to survive poverty and be socialised: they are prone to become "street children".

The older generation of single mothers is mainly made up of widows, most of whom choose not to re-marry (and reject levirate), while the younger generation is basically composed of girls who get their offspring from occasional partners in circumstances of poverty and distance from the family of origin (which was traditionally in charge of the youth's marriage choices and sexual education), what remains as a common trait is the distance – symbolic or physical – from the family of origin and its traditional culture. This often translates into lack of family support, which goes together with the absence of governmental policies and services for single mothers, and puts these mothers at risk of social isolation.

Single mothers, in fact, not only are prone to physical and psychological abuse and exploitation, both within their households and outside – including

beatings, prostitution, illicit brewing, overwork, etc. – they are also highly stigmatised by other community members. Women from the upper class are less likely to incur in such forms of physical mistreatments, yet they are as stigmatized as the women from poor backgrounds for the simple fact that they do not have a stable partner, which is simply unthinkable in traditional Africa.

My study shows that the transition from rural to urban areas, from traditional to individualised setups implies a loss for the cultural patrimony of the Kenyan society but also a loss in terms of social cohesion and integration. In the course of this transition, marriage decisions for the youth – which once were a family practice – have become largely personal, thus leaving the youth exposed to the risk of multiple breakups and single parenthood. Also, the traditional role played by the extended families in socialising the youth and determining age at first marriage for a woman is fading in favour of a more powerful role being played by other agents, especially the peers, formal education institutions and the media. Traditional means of transferring sexual education are also disappearing, thus linking poverty and urbanisation to marital instability.

In this transition, which comes very close to the Western ways of life (individual freedom, agency, individualism, social segmentation, loss of solidarity and social capital), women, men and children in Kenya are subjected to great stress. They are right now in a phase of great confusion in what concerns their roles, identities and practices. The old is no longer good, but the new does not yet exist. Perhaps this transition can be transformed into an enrichment and not a loss if Kenyan men and women together, supported by civil society organizations, will be more reflexive about the transitions they are experiencing. And this will surely be facilitated when the lack of justice and poverty will no longer be the main problem they face every day.

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Deborah A. Boehm: *Intimate Migrations. Gender, Family, and Illegality among Transnational Mexicans.*

New York and London: New York University Press 2012, 188 pp.

"Intimate Migrations. Gender, Family, and Illegality among Transnational Mexicans" is the first monograph of Deborah A. Boehm, assistant professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies at the University of Nevada. It is a rich ethnographic study of the lives "neither here, nor there", or maybe more accurately "half here, half there" and their daily negotiations in the transnational US-Mexican space. The author writes: "In my work with transnational Mexicans, I have often asked individuals to imagine a scenario in which there are no barriers to movement between Mexico and the United States, and then I asked them where they would choose to live. Almost always, Mexican (im)migrants tell me they would prefer the freedom to 'go and come [ir y venir],' that ideally they would like to be in both countries and to create the lives that are (...) 'from both sides'" (p. 3). Such statements of her interviewees led Boehm to address the issues of family lives, gendered selves, generational relations and their emic understandings emerging under the state-regulated migration. She traces how "the legal production of migrant 'illegality'" shapes what she calls "intimate migrations", "the gendered and familial actions and interactions" (p. 4).

In three parts (and six chapters respectively), the author subsequently deals with the issues of transborder families (Part I), gendered migrations (Part II) and the migrant children (Part III). All these parts are organically integrated in the book to portray intimate life marked by the migration process, fluidity of family ties and kinship formations, negotiations of gendered selves and gendered relations, and transnational/migrant childhood. Throughout the book, Boehm strongly argues that the lives of transnational migrants are full of contradictions which should be understood as emerging at the intersection of intimacy and production of illegality. The cases of family reunifications or masculinised deportations are pure examples of how illegality is shaped and shaping the very intimate lives of migrants as well as generally the gendered migration flows (as the masculinisation of deportation results in emergent feminised migrations and new configurations of family, p. 146). This book is an ethnographic study which sheds new light on the migratory process, as being shaped and structuring the gendered and familial interactions under the influence of the U.S. state. From my reading of "Intimate Migrations", there are particularly three crucial points which I would appreciate and which make her book exceptional. Boehm comes up with new issues in feminist research on migration, with new perspectives that she employs in the research field which has been under focus for a long time – the U.S.-Mexican borders.

First, it is the depth of Boehm's **analysis of family lives**. After describing her conceptual and methodological background in Chapter 1, in Part I she deals with how "Mexican (im)migrants build relationships and construct home and family in a manner that transcends nation-states" (p. 31).

The contradictory processes of continuity and fragmentation lie in the core of transborder family and kinship ties negotiations. The author builds her argument on the particular case studies which not only make the text more pleasant for readers, but also illuminate the nuances in transnational experiences. Drawing upon the anthropological studies on kinship, Boehm strongly accentuates the fluidity and diversity of the notion of family. Such diversity and fluidity become even more apparent in the migratory context when the migrants "continuously maintain, reassert, reconfigure, and transform family" (p. 33). The author connects the migrants' construction of family and domestic space with their understanding of home. Her analysis uncovers different emic meanings of what home is as her interviewees express home along three (sometimes parallel and intersecting) axes: home as nation, home as place and home as family. This distinction sheds light on how the home is imagined across state borders and how family networks are a constitutive dimension of home. She writes that "as family extends across borders, home is characterised by new forms. Transmigrants construct home as a mobile, building home through translocal rituals and family events, transnational communication and travel, and perceptions of connectedness despite distance and over time" (p. 51). In her analysis of family ties Boehm moves beyond the sole agency of migrants-family members, showing that transmigrants are repeatedly shaped and constrained by state policies. In Chapter 3, the constructions of legality and illegality and their impact on the family lives become the main issue. "It is difficult to celebrate migrant agency in this context," Boehm cites the anthropologist Susan Bibler Coutin (p. 66) referring to how the families construct their lives not in a vacuum but in a restrictive climate of U.S. immigration policies. The bureaucratic process of family reunification with its disciplinary effect illustrates how the state penetrates intimate life. The author concludes that "the study of 'family reunification' brings to the fore the power of the U.S. state to determine how people within – and indeed beyond – its borders construct family, highlighting the persistence of state presence in transnational family life" (p. 67).

Second is the emphasis on **the gendered nature of migration flows** which pervades in the whole book but becomes most prominent in Part II where the author looks into how gender is performed and gendered subjectivities are constructed in the migration process. What must be accentuated here is her approach to both femininities *and* masculinities. "If you don't go to the United States, you are not a man" sounds the title of one of her chapters (p. 73–80) where she convincingly demonstrates the interplay between men and women which impacts on the redefinitions of femininities as well as masculinities. Migrations impact what it means to be a man; in the case of her research field, the gender order of masculinity is clear: "to be a man, one must migrate" (p. 73). Hence, as she shows, the creation of masculinity is strongly tied to migration and such understanding also has huge implications for men who stay in Mexico. For them, when the expression of masculinity through migration fails, the exaggerated performances of manliness come to front. Because their manhood is

threatened, the men, for instance, turn to violence as a presentation of masculinity. Analysing such cases, Boehm contributes to the less developed agenda in feminist research on migration – the research on gendered migrant masculinities. At the same time, she is interested in the experiences of women which can be summarised in the exclamation of Boehm's interviewee: "I do everything!" (p. 81), meaning that after the men's migration, women become responsible for all the tasks – both those understood as "female" (housework etc.) and those traditionally performed by men. That is also why the title of her chapter – once more using the quotation of her interviewee – is "Now I am man and a woman". The author concludes that "through the interplay of gendered migrations and gendered moves, notions of appropriate gender roles are shifting. Transnational movement, cultural ideologies, the workings of global capital, and the persistence of the nation-state are resulting in a range of new gendered subjectivities: emergent forms of male power and strategies through which women assert themselves, as well as newly defined masculinities and femininities." (p. 89). Boehm offers deep insight into how men and women do gender while living apart and how they understand their gendered subjectivities vis-à-vis the new experiences of family separations and shift in the gendered division of labour.

And third is her **analysis of migrant childhood** which I found a very fruitful and important contribution. Children play many roles in Boehm's analysis: they are at the core of the motivations of parents to migrate (the parents who migrate do it for their children); they are children who migrate as well as children who stay behind. On the one hand Boehm illustrates how the actions of young migrants are enacted in the shadows of adults who are the primary decision makers, and on the other hand she shows the independence of young migrants – predominantly male – in the migratory process. Here again the author accentuates the necessity to acknowledge the formative role of gender in migration projects by illuminating the gender rites emerging around the maturation of male youth. As already elaborated above, for men migration is not an option; it is an obligation. Thus for young men, migration to the USA becomes a patriarchal rite of passage through which boys become men. In this vein, the young women are discouraged from migrating, as their coming of age occurs differently. Female passage to adulthood, she argues, is characterised by staying in one place, becoming a housewife responsible for domestic tasks. Gendering the migrant youth and differences in young men's and women's experiences with mobility is an important step which the author makes to shed light on the agency of migrant children/children of migrants. Boehm moves the discussion even further and deals with the issue of national belonging and exclusion. She shows how children negotiate their belonging under the impact of US state policies and constitution of illegality and legality. She concludes that belonging of migrants is marked by "placement and displacement – as *here* and *not here*" (p. 132) and it is inflexible citizenship and contingent membership which characterise their transborder lives.

Without any doubts, Deborah A. Boehm importantly contributes to migration and

gender studies by illuminating the contradictions and tensions, continuities and ruptures which characterise the daily lives of transmigrants. It is a rich qualitative study of relatedness, kinship ties and gendered relations which successfully profits from the developed feminist scholarship on migration and its synthesis with the modern anthropological theories on kinship and family. It is a must read book for scholars interested in gender analysis of migratory process and provides us with a guide for the gendered research practice which combines policy analysis with deep analysis of intimate daily lives.

Adéla Souralová

Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.): *Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe: Who Cares?*

Aldershot: Ashgate 2013, 256 pp.

Hired domestic and care migrant workers, the form of employment which seemed to be on the verge of disappearance in modern societies, provide today to an increasing degree a private solution to a public problem. Thus social organization of care in late capitalist societies is systematically connected to structures of global economy and social inequalities. Changing family relations, increasing women's participation in the labour market, and changing patterns of family lifestyle meet with demographic trends of ageing of the European population and simultaneously with institutional trends of weakening of the Western model of the welfare state and rising neo-liberal globalisation.

The new book *Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe* focuses on the wide area of research on immigrant domestic workers in an irregular situation: immigrant domestic workers who have no legal residency permits in the countries in which they work and who thus have no proper work contracts or welfare benefits. The chapters cover eight European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland and Spain and cover both genders and all types of domestic work (live-in, live-out, with one or many employers). It is a pity that the book does not cover new EU countries with transforming democracies like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, etc., where an interesting increase in employing migrant domestic workers is being noticed.

The authors looked on the three main aspects of irregular immigrant domestic work: employment conditions, health issues and family life. I believe that the last two topics are the ones that separate this book from others about domestic work. As Triandafyllidou argues: "Domestic work is a heavy job both physically and emotionally and entails particular health hazards. Access to health services is at best limited when immigrant workers are undocumented and the fact that they work in the home makes it even more difficult to access information and/or to refer to NGOs or a trade union that could assist them" (2013: 3). The book shows the specific tension between the absence of rights to a family life for domestic workers themselves while at the same time incorporating into the surrogate family environment of their employers.

The book editor Anna Triandaffyllidou chooses three conceptual advancements:

"1.) the notion of a 'career' for irregular immigrant domestic workers – a concept that has to date only been discussed for legal immigrant domestic workers, 2.) the notion of legality and irregularity highlighting the fuzzy borders between them in immigrant domestic work, 3.) the gender and (transnational) family issues –the right of irregular immigrant domestic workers to have a family life and the difficulty of combining this especially with live-in employment" (2013: 3). I have to maintain that the book works sensitively with multiple dimensions of legality/illegality in the specific situation of irregular domestic workers.

The editor's introduction chapter *Irregular Migration and Domestic Work in Europe: Who Cares?* aims "to place a book in the wider literature on global migration and the 'global care chain' (Hochschild 2000), looking at how domestic work fits the needs and dynamics of developer countries' labour market in the era of post-industrial capitalism and neoliberal globalization" (2013: 4). Triandaffyllidou discusses specifics of the European context and its migration policies. For me, as a social anthropologist, the most interesting part of this chapter is its focus on special attributes of domestic work. She explains how care work transcends the distinction between private and public life: "While traditional paid work like any other it is inherent in the family life and not in the employment system. For instance, qualities that are highly valued in paid work such as speed, effectiveness and efficiency may not be appropriate for domestic work where caring for elderly, sick or children requires patience, flexibility, slowness" (2013: 10).

The second chapter, *Domestic work in Belgium: Crossing Boundaries between Informality and Formality* by Marie Godin, introduces how domestic work is organized in Belgium and it shows the heterogeneity of female migrant trajectories. She explains about the concrete example of migration policy – the 'cheque service system' which "helps many migrant women who used to work irregularly in the domestic work often find, after having been regularized, a first formal job opportunity" (2013: 37). She speaks about positive aspects of the system which has reduced some parts of the informal economy in the domestic sector allowing new regular migrants to enter the formal labour market in Belgium. The system has its weaknesses as well, as Godin writes: "The choice of shifting the work relationship from a classic type ('worker-employer') to a more complex one including a third party ('worker-client-employer') is not always an easy one to make for any parties ('new clients' workers) .....As a result, the affective and symbolic component of such an exploitative relationship between 'master' and 'servant' is 'naturally' being reproduced from the informal to the formal sector" (2013: 38).

Chapter 3, *Migration Careers and Professional Trajectories of Irregular Domestic Workers in France* by Karn Sohler and Florence Lévy, is based on field research and focuses on the female migration trajectories into domestic work. They reflect constant legal and economic insecurity of female migrants: "As long as they have only one employer or have a weak social network that impedes them from finding quickly another job, they remain very dependent and vulnerable to abusive and

exploitative employment relationship. One of the successful career strategies used by the women interviewed was to extend and diversify their employers' networks, thus reducing their dependence" (2013: 64).

In Chapter 4, *Three different Things: Having, Knowing and Claiming Rights: Undocumented Immigrant Domestic Workers in Germany,* Lisa-Marie Heimeshoff and Helen Schwenken argue that "...our research indicates that domestic workers are conscious that by entering into an employment relationship, they are trading rights for employment, because undocumented domestic workers in the situation are not able to claim the rights that they have according to German law" (2013: 90). They specifically explain examples of migrants' exploitation and in founding new family and family reunification and they are not able to defend themselves in this case "and claim their right to physical integrity, because an independent right to residency only manifests itself after three years" (2013: 90).

Chapter 5, *With All the Cares in the World: Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Greece* by Michaela Maroufof, examines the Greek policy framework on domestic work and the experience of irregular domestic workers and civil society actors. When you conduct your work in the same place as your job and that space is not your own personal space, it is difficult to maintain a boundary between work time and private time. The lack of personal space and private and personal life can lead to feelings of social isolation, frustration and feelings of loneliness. Maroufof writes about health related issues – especially mental challenges of domestic care work: "These problems are mainly connected to the long hours of work, the lack of sleep and rest and the fact that they feel 'detached' from the 'outside world'" (2013: 105).

The Irish situation is explored by Sally Daly in Chapter 6, *The Home as a Site of Work*. Her article based on surveys involving 40 domestic workers provided some important indicative data from female migrant domestic workers in Ireland. Her respondents maintained the importance of new technologies for 'up-dating' their transnational parenting. She reflects on the use of mobile phones to help them to manage the notion of everyday parenting, including micro-management of their children's meals. Daly argues that: "This communication allows them to reconstitute their role as effective parents, but there can be more ambivalence in the child's experience of such distance parenting" (2013: 130).

Paola Bonizzoni explains the Italian situation in Chapter 7, *Undocumented Domestic Workers in Italy: Surviving and Regularizing Strategies*. The chapter builds on 11 interviews of female undocumented domestic workers and on five interviews with civil actors that were conducted in Milan. The interviews focused on general conditions of undocumented domestic workers in Italy as well as on the limits and opportunities of the current Italian immigration law and the specific forms of support organization offered. Her informants actively spoke about seeking regularization to improve not just their working conditions, but also their family conditions. But, on the other hand, regularization channels provided by Italian immigration policies can lead to deeper dependency of the worker on the employer.

As Bonizzoni writes, "The (not always realized) prospects of regularization have led several women to accept a worsening of their working condition, as well as bearing the costs associated with the regularizing process... Regularization is seen not as a right, but as an indulgent concession of often reluctant employers, who clearly do not value regularization because they want to avoid the penalties of using undocumented workers" (2013: 156).

Sarah van Walsum in Chapter 8, *Regulating Migrant Domestic Workin the Netherlands: Opportunuties and Pitfalls,* maps diverging interests and possibilities for collaboration and political constrains that mark the current situation of domestic workers in the Netherlands. She introduces a so-called subsidized sphere which refers "to those forms of childcare and home-based care for elderly and the infirm that are either provided via state-financed health car or by independent service providers, and are often mediated through agencies, with the possibility of state funded compensation of costs or tax exemption. In all cases, workers must declare their income in the Dutch tax department and hence must have residence papers" (2013: 162). Sarah van Walsum asks important questions with which immigrant domestic workers will have to contend: "What conditions will have to be met to ensure that they can successfully compete with workers still operating in the shadow economy? To what degree will they, as employees, be able to maintain the degree of autonomy that some at least have attained, as quasi self-employed, in determining whom they will work for, what tasks they will perform, during which hours, under which conditions, for what price, and for how long? And, once admitted as domestic workers with formal employment rights, will they be able to further their careers or will they be racially marked as suited to this form employment and none other?" (2013: 180).

The Spanish situation is presented by Tania González Fernández in Chapter 9, *Globally Interdependent Households: Irregular Migrant Employed in Domestic and Care Work in Spain*. She critically pointed out that: "The irregular migration of women is not only a response to the gender segregation of the labour markets in the countries of origin, nor just the demand for the labour in the destination countries. It is more complex process, multifactorial, and if indeed the feminization of wage labour in the central economies is an important part, we cannot ignore the power relations articulated within the migratory processes, given that capitalism does not just respond to a logic of class, but rather to a system of interconnected cultural, gender, ethnic hierarchies (among others)" (2013: 205).

Books that include a collection of research by different authors from different academic fields may be considered by readers as chaotic and losing their comparative perspective. But Anna Triandaffyllidou has done a good editing job keeping articles theoretically and methodologically homogeneous. The final concluding chapter extends a helping hand in this regard by giving a comprehensive comparative analysis of the final results of particular research results. In concluding (Chapter 10 *Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe*) Anna Triandaffyllidou and Thanos Maroukis argue:

"Policies need to render the domestic services industry viable as regards the sustenance of its labour force and growing social expectations that surround it. The current economic crisis and the overall restructuring of welfare systems both in southern and northern Europe make the need for an affordable and sustainable domestic care labour force all the more necessary and sought after, especially as life expectancy is prolonged and the European population is increasingly ageing. Restructuring this occupation's architecture might eventually lead to the reconstruction of its profile. However, this requires careful interventions that would reverse the social process of reproducing unequal labour relations. And time. Policy changes need time in order to transform to social changes" (2013: 230).

The problems and risks of domestic work are already reflected on the international policy level. In June 2011 the International Work Organisation (ILO) adopted the *Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers,* where for the first time it even applies its rules in the sector of informal economy. Particular attention here is paid to female migrants, because their increased vulnerability and inequality leads to further abuses of rights. Even though states have obligations under international agreements, for example the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,* to adopt procedures in order to ensure the same protection rights for these groups also. In reality the question of the position of female workers in domestic work remains the interest of many developed countries, including some of those mentioned in the book. I suggest that books like the reviewed *Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe* may help to deeply analyse the social situation of those who care about our elderly, ill and children. Now comes the time to start to care about domestic workers themselves.

Petra Ezzeddine

Work in a Globalizing World: Gender, Mobility, Markets. 5th Annual Seminar in History and Sociology of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS)

April 8–10, 2013, Bielefeld University, Germany

Although global labour is not a new phenomenon for the disciplines of social sciences and history, it has recently gained attention due to novel approaches to certain dichotomies, such as work and non-work or translocality and nation state. Furthermore, classic analytical axis of ethnicity, gender and social class, paired with crucial importance of human cross-border mobility have provided new aspects for advanced theoretical and empirical studies of globality, as it pertains to international migration, labour markets, changes brought to employments and beyond-border gender orders. As such, the 5th Annual Seminar of BGHS, held between 8th and 10th of April 2013 brought together experienced scholars as well as doctoral researchers from across disciplines, providing a space for peer-exchange of ideas and inviting contributions on conceptual, analytical and practical levels.

The opening lecture by Marcel van der Linden (IISH, Amsterdam, NL) set a tone for the entire seminar, as the speaker demoted several misconceptions we often have about the "novelty" status of global issues, arguing that a long view across history challenges assumptions we have about working class, often oversimplified within Western definition as waged employees. Van der Linden's talk opened a debate on multiplicity versus accuracy in the conceptual usage of sociological and historical terms, with many definitions and assumptions questioned. The increased human mobility, for instance, was addressed as potentially viewed as such due to visibility of its contemporary occurrences.

The first plenary session included two papers in socio-legal history, making links between labour law and temporal/spatial contexts. Virginia Amorosi compared the emergence of labour law through the analysis of legal acts set in place in various European countries in the early 20th century, while Philipp Reick tackled how a common notion of "eight-hour workday" has been initially constructed. As he showcased visual material that often highlighted unexpected resistance from various groups, he illustrated key links between the two papers as addressing issues of women and children's positions in labour in the past centuries and setting the tone for debates on work and family held later on.

The following morning panels addressed a range of topics broadly related to the globalized labour markets impacting families in various specific localities. Paul Atkinson took on a case of German migrants in the English woollen industry between 1861 and 1914, Charles Dube looked at the crucial role of female cross-border trading for gender relationships in Zimbabwe, Lisa Berntsen presented her findings on the marketization and masculinities in the context of Polish construction workers in the Netherlands and, finally, Junchen Yan illustrated how the meaning of a career is culturally constructed among managers in modern China.

The afternoon presentations focused on contemporary studies, often adopting a comparative or multi-sited approach. Confronting the notions of modernization and typicality of East-West/South-North mobility streams, Heidi Bludau shared her anthropological work on Czech nurses traveling for work to Saudi Arabia. This paper on an unlikely geographical channel contributed to broader debates on a need for terminological specificity, as Heidi coined the term "global nurse" and focused on the role of "intermediaries/recruiters". Paula Pustulka's paper also talked about women, this time on those involved in the 'expected' population flow of Polish women working in Germany and United Kingdom, often finding themselves in employment scenarios that concatenated their 'femininity' and 'professionalism' (i.e. caring positions), but primarily using mobility as means for escaping gender discrimination on the labour market in their country of origin. The two papers both tackled issues of gendered care orders on one hand, yet on the other hand they illuminated female agency as both Polish and Czech females benefited from mobility beyond making economic progress.

Continuing with the transnational focus within gender studies, the last two papers of the day outlined case studies of global men and masculinities. Dani Kranz presented her research on non-Jewish highly-skilled husbands of Israeli women who followed their wives and subsequently struggled to find their place in the unlikely destination country. Young male Muslims in a deprived upcountry area of India were studied by Raphael Susewind, who talked about his analytical personas used for capturing the entanglement of love, longing and aspirations, conflicted by structural conditions on the one hand, but determined by imagined dreams on the other. Both papers highlighted the importance of social capital (i.e. education) and kin networks (family support), which continue to play a vital role in a presumably individualized global era.

The framing of female identities in relation to work once again returned in the afternoon session. Luciana Pontes shed light on the nexus of local, national and transnational, presenting results of the content analysis of female migrants' presence in Catalonian television, usually viewed as a forefront for being progressive and non-normative, but, sadly, continuing to reproduce stereotypical notions of migrant women as dependents. In the same panel Funda Ustek talked about Turkish women who either choose or are forced to be invisible in their informal labour. Building on the notion of non-work, she discussed how cultural and religious components of gendered obligations and identities influence trajectories of women who are not recognized in their labour market activities.

Completing a range of approaches, the final session consisted of two papers with a focus placed on the arts. Seemingly unrelated issues of artists and global labour were discussed in papers by Jacob Diggle, who looked at mobile theatres – touring companies in the British World between 1870 and 1914, and MeLe Yamomo, who examined the process of professionalization affecting musicians in Manila. The figures and stories of 'global artists' once again shifted the scope of what globalization and labour are usually indicative of in

scholarship of predominantly economic prominence.

Issues of theoretical frameworks and their implications, raised in the introductory key note address, resonated throughout the Seminar. They were discussed once again during the final plenary session, raising awareness of still unresolved tensions within approaches structure and agency, globalization and locality, synchronic and diachronic study. The session chaired by BGHS director Thomas Welskopp and including contributions from Ursula Mense-Petermann, Klaus Weinhauer and Marcel van der Linden primarily called for more interdisciplinary links being built across disciplines and institutions. Advice on reaching advanced conceptual clarifications, such as the very meaning of global labour which still lacks a single and all-encompassing definition translatable from sociologists to historian, was given to the participating young researchers. The papers given during the Seminar proved that the concept of work remains indispensable for social scientists representing various approaches and tackling diverse issues. Consequently, discussing multiplicity of intersections and meanings of work globally should be placed in the core area of interest for research projects, even when may oscillate around seemingly unrelated issues.

While the event was not a traditional conference, its format should be commended and encouraged as an excellent set-up for young researchers to gain feedback on their work, network with expert scholars, as well as obtain experience as peer-reviewers. As such, the seminar has resulted in research and writing collaborations on the practical level, while also ensuring a high level of scholarly debate on the key topic in labour market history, anthropology and sociology of labour, as well as various constellations of gender, ethnicity, labour and social class re-framings.

Paula Pustulka

Children migrants & Third Culture Kids. Roots and Routes. International Conference

June 7–9, 2013, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Roots and Routes of children migrants

The period of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is sometimes called "the age of migration" (Castles and Miller 2009). The number of migrants is estimated at 214 million people, which means that they would constitute the fifth most populous country in the world. Stephen Castles and Mark Miller claim that not only the number of migrants is rising, but also new forms of migrations are emerging. Enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and in 2009 resulted in a new wave of migrations from Central-Eastern Europe to Britain, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries. Recently, due to the economic crisis, some migrants decided to return. Among these new tendencies we can also mention feminization of migrations, transnational parenting and blurring the boundaries between traditional categories of home and host country, migration and tourism. Migration studies focusing on these phenomena rarely consider the role of children in the migration

process and the impact of migration on children. The international conference entitled "Children Migrants & Third Culture Kids. Roots and Routes" which took place at the Jagiellonian University (Krakow, Poland) was aimed at filling this gap in migration studies and focused primarily on children. During the three-day conference we could listen to and discuss 65 papers scheduled in 14 parallel sessions as well as three plenary lectures and a panel discussion. Overall nearly 100 people from 12 European countries and the United States, Canada and Japan participated in this event. They represented different academic fields, among which the most prominent were sociology, psychology, religious studies, anthropology, linguistics and different non-governmental organizations dealing with children migrants and refugees. The conference was held under the honorary patronage of Ms. Irina Bokowa, Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Marek Michalak, The Ombudsman for Children in Poland and Prof. Dr. Hab. Maria-Jolanta Flis, Vice-Rector for Jagiellonian University Development.

After the opening of the conference by Prof. Maria Flis, the first speaker, Prof. Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska discussed the need for interdisciplinary research of children's migration and set the tone for the entire conference. She focused on psychological problems of children migrants and particularly on the issues of attachment to space and to people and suggested that psychologists should take a closer look at young migrants from the perspective of the attachment theory (John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth). The second plenary lecture by Prof. Ewa Nowicka was focused on scholarly education of immigrants in Poland. The issue of scholarly education of children migrants was one of the leading topics during the conference. During one of the afternoon parallel sessions religious education in the context of migration was discussed. It turns out that very often (at least in Poland and Belgium) children take part in Catholic religion classes even if they are not from a Catholic family. Adam Anczyk mentioned the lack of information about other (than Catholic) religions in the program of religious education, while Katarzyna Kubin of the Foundation for Social Diversity identified different problems faced by foreign students in the Polish public education system. Marie Campigotto revealed how children manage to negotiate between different religious practices in school, at home and in multicultural peer groups.

Migration is also a challenge from the linguistic point of view. These issues were discussed thoroughly on Saturday morning. Speakers focused mainly on the acquisition of a second language and its consequences for the native language and for cultural identity. Referring to Polish schools Agata Szybura demonstrated the crucial role of additional classes of Polish as a foreign and second language in pupils' adaptation. In the context of the above-mentioned problems the question of how to choose the best school in a particular situation becomes fundamental. Agnieszka Hennel-Brzozowska argued that international schools are the best option for children migrants, because being "foreign" is a norm there, so even newly arrived children are not stereotyped or marginalized and school employees are experienced in dealing with

transition and adaptation issues. Danau Tanu however, basing his ideas on fieldwork in an international school in Jakarta, indicated that international schools are in fact Western or American/British when it comes to the curriculum and teachers' nationalities. Saturday's plenary lecture "Education for a life-world or a hegemonic construct? Schooling in the British Empire, in France and in Canada, 1830s-2000s" by Prof. Dirk Hoerder tackled issues of educational policy from a historical and comparative perspective. The author of "Cultures in Contact" analyzed how curricula constructed by representatives of dominant cultures were aimed at transmitting to colonized or immigrant youth the values and attitudes of this culture. He also demonstrated how colonized or immigrants' children have a broader perspective with the ability to switch between at least two cultural contexts or negotiate between them.

Another important question raised during the conference was the influence of migration on the family system and especially on motherhood. When it comes to migrating parents there are two concurrent discourses: on the one hand, interviews conducted with Polish migrant mothers by Paula Pustulka, Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła, Magdalena Ślusarczyk and Krystyna Slany showed the "centrality of children" in their narrations, taking into account their future chances, happiness and "welfare". In this light migration seems to be an expression of good parenting or even self-sacrificing for children. On the other hand, however, there is a discourse of "euro-orphanhood" (the term itself became popular mainly in mass-media, not in academia), in which children are perceived as vulnerable victims of parents' decisions. The second perspective does not take into consideration children's agency, whereas many speakers highlighted the idea that analyzing children migration from the perspective of structural pressures and agency may be very inspiring and fruitful. Children migrants' agency manifests itself in influencing parents' decisions about migration, in taking care of younger siblings and different ways of negotiating identity in the migration process. Identity construction was another prominent subject during the conference. On Friday afternoon, Katia Mace-Nazina argued that the age of migration influences the likelihood of identity struggles of children migrants. Those who changed country in adolescence had more difficulties with adaptation to the school system, establishing friendships and forming a stable identity in comparison with those who migrated prior to adolescence. Katarzyna Wójcikowska explained different identity strategies of Polish return migrants, while Agnieszka Radziwinowicz demonstrated that in the case of Mexican children born and brought up in the United States it is very difficult to distinguish between home and host country, between migration and re-emigration. Very often these kids lack linguistic and cultural competences to study in their parents' country.

Consistently with what the title of the conference suggests, a few sessions were dedicated to Third Culture Kids (TCKs). TCK is referred to as "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside his/her parent's culture". The third culture kid builds relationships to all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any (Pollock

and van Reken 2009: 13). TCKs are usually children of businessmen, diplomats, scholars, missionaries or employees of transnational companies. The concept was coined in the '60s by American sociologists John and Ruth Hill Useem. On Sunday, Ann Cottrell, who conducted a great deal of research on American TCKs, commented on the changes within this category in the last few decades. Agnieszka Trąbka presented six "ideal types" of TCKs' biographies: homecomer, settled down, uprooted, continuator, nomad and explorer. She argued that Third Culture Kids' trajectories in adult life depend on their country of origin, their parents' educational strategy and the cycle of moves they have experienced. Claudia Vorheyer concentrated on those TCKs who choose for themselves a mobile career and illustrated the construction of cosmopolitan identity with her biographical research. It seems that these "Transnational Mobiles" play an important role in the process of transnationalisation and emerging postnational forms of identity.

On the one hand, TCKs lead a relatively privileged lifestyle (usually their financial situation is good, they attend prestigious schools and colleges, they know foreign languages, new technologies etc.). On the other hand, they very often experience serious problems in adapting to their passport country's culture and have difficulties in constructing a cohesive and integral identity. A number of psychotherapists and psychologists present at the conference explored these issues thoroughly, highlighting particularly identity struggles, difficulties in social relations, conflicts within the family and low self-esteem as a result of being uprooted so many times.

Last but not least, numerous problems experienced by refugees and asylum seekers were identified during the conference. Luzia Jurt talked about family separation in the process of asylum seeking and difficulties of reunification among refugees in Switzerland. Bahnaz Tavakoi shed light on multiple discrimination experienced by Afghan girls seeking asylum in Iran, while Joanna Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Karolina Łukasiewicz examined discriminatory practices toward children migrants in detention centres in Poland. Subsequently, some good practices of work with refugees were presented. Sheila Melzak of the Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile insisted on the necessity of providing young asylum seekers with professional psychological help and the need of strengthening their resilience. Katharina Benedetter and Marianne Dobner presented Cultural Orientation Trainings organized by the International Organization for Migration for unaccompanied minor refuges in Austria.

It is impossible to recapitulate in this short paper all the topics discussed during this three-day event, nor to mention every speaker. The conference proved that the migration of children is an important topic which demands more attention not only from academic researchers, but also of teachers, psychotherapists, social workers and policy makers. Hopefully the East-Central-European Network for Research on Children Migrants established by Beatrix Bukus after the conference and the Sirius Network focused on the Education of Children with migrant background will draw attention to the subject of children migrations.

Agnieszka Trąbka

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