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# Care and Migration. International Conference

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### Klíčová slova

care, migration, globalization, female migrants, citizenship

### CARE AND MIGRATION

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Working women are traveling the globe as never before. Each year millions leave their homes and their families in Third World countries for jobs in homes and nurseries and as babysitters of the First World.

Kofman (1999) estimates 1 million legal migrant workers in homes of the EU countries. The rising demand can be seen especially in those countries where the labor market of public childcare and care for the elderly or handicapped does not suffice (for example, Germany, Italy, Great Britain etc). This demand correlates with the ageing of the European population, changes in the family structures and with the development of new social and cultural lifestyles. Women, for instance, leave their home for work because they perceive this as the only way to sustain their family.

The international conference Care and Migration at the Goethe University in Frankfurt brought together experts from different disciplines in the field of care and migration. The conference was inspired by the renowned American author Arlie Hochschild, who gave the keynote lecture *Global Traffic, Female Services and Emotional Life: the case of Nannies and Surrogates*. Sociologists, anthropologists and social theorists examined the impact of the reproductive crisis on receiving countries while also shedding light on its impact on sending countries. Relevant issues included: new conditions of domestic and care work, the impact of the financial crisis on social reproduction, the debate on paid care and citizenship, as well as transnational care relations. Organizers focused on the following questions: "Who takes care of the young and the old, disabled people and people who need care on a daily basis? Who shops, cooks and cleans? Who cares?"

Despite certain difficulties, the participants of the conference defined domestic work as work that involves processes necessary for sustenance and reproduction of human life, i.e., among others childcare, so-called reproduction service and domestic chores. The theoretician of globalization Sassen (2001) asserts that paid domestic work is not regarded by migrants as the worst type of jobs, particularly when we take into account that female migrants do mainly "dead-end jobs"; they rather consider it as a regular job. It is not perceived as real work though and the research shows that when it becomes paid work it is not as well respected as before (Sotelo, 1994). Domestic workers are considered to be the most endangered group of migrants regarding the threat of violence. A crucial problem in the position of migrant aides is their inequality which was critically reflected upon at the conference many times.

The lecture given by the above-mentioned Arlie Hochschild, the author of famous sociology bestsellers *The Time Bind*, *The Second Shift* and *Global Woman*, was an important and keenly awaited contribution to the conference. Apart from other reasons, Hochschild also became famous for introducing the term *global care chain* which captures the hierarchical outsourcing of care that involves several tiers of women: migrant domestics or female relatives in the global South at the bottom, international migrant domestic and care workers in the middle of the "chain," and their female employers in the North at the upper end.

At the Frankfurt conference, Hochschild compares Filipinas who leave their families to care for the children and elderly of the 1st world with Indian surrogate mothers who bear children in India for clients in the 1st world. As Hochschild argued: "Both are pursuing private rescue strategies in the absence of public answers to their needs at the cost of facing great emotional challenges." She spoke about "drawing lines around their intimate lives in global times," which she calls the globalization of the life cycle. She pointed out the importance of asking about the exact nature of this kind of emotional work that occurs in babysitters and surrogates.

However, I absolutely do not agree with her claim that the inequality between an Indian surrogate mother and her client can be leveled out when both parties consider the carrying of the baby to term and the giving birth to the baby for money as some kind of an exchange or a gift.

Ursula Apitzsch of Goethe University in Frankfurt examined in her paper Care, Migration, and the Gender Order transnational spaces as topographies of typical biographical trajectories of migrant women. These trajectories are constituted and they are being continuously reconstructed by the phenomenon of transnational border-crossing activities in order to supply the rich countries with care work from poor countries of the global periphery.

I believe that it's essential for the research of transnational families to understand the role of migrants in globalization: globalization makes migrants live parallel lives which, in turn, accelerates the globalization itself. Transnational families can thus perfectly exemplify the politics of segregation. The receiving society profits from migrants' minimized needs and from the high volume of migrants' manpower. (Parrenas, 2001). The receiving countries support migrants on low wages who work in transnational types of families because they don't have to be responsible for migrants' reproduction.

Helma Lutz & Ewa Palenga-Möllnbeck of Goethe University in Frankfurt then demonstrated the issue of transnational families on their research findings (from biographical and depth interviews). They presented their The "care chain" concept under scrutiny which focused on the management of the care gap by Polish migrant women working in Germany and Ukrainian care migrants working in Poland. The researchers asked the following questions: "How is care arranged for children and elderly family members who stay behind? What does transnational mothering mean for the children (partners, elderly parents, etc.) left behind in practical and in emotional terms?"

Lutz and Pallenga-Möllnbeck made an attempt to classify new types of family and care that develop when grandparents and even more distant relatives take on reproduction activities of Polish women who have left their country. They pointed out the important role of new technologies (namely mobile phones and the Internet) in communication between the members of transnational families. These technologies are crucial in "updating" of family relations. They also interestingly analyzed the public and media discourse that form the public opinion on "bad mothers": migrants who leave their children ("social orphanism" according to the media) in order to work abroad.

The conference, however, didn't stay only on the theoretical ground of research presentations and analyses. Many contributions promoted the activist stream of feministicly orientated sociology. Ute Gerhard of the University of Bremen (the author of "Gender and Citizenship in Western Europe") analyzed feminist studies of today by conceptualizing the provision of care as a central hinge of gender justice and she extended the framing of social rights to include family and domestic rights and obligations. She tried to link both discourses on care and citizenship in order to give reasons for a model of women and men as citizen earners and carers. Gerhard inveighed against gender inequalities that, according to her, develop because men do not sufficiently participate in childcare and domestic work. She argues that the neoliberalistic concept of work-and-home management forces "Western" women to procure a childminder. It's the women from the "East" who have to leave their own children due to the bad economical situation to look after somebody else's children (Hochschild coins the term "alternative loving" here).

The participants in the conference agreed on a more resolute solution of the given situation, though on a rather vague level, I dare say: by activism, by pushing "Western" countries towards increase in financial aid to the developing and so-called "pink" countries (whose GDP is for the major part based on remittances of female domestic workers), e.g. the Philippines, by improving the legal status of female migrants, particularly in the EU countries, by supporting the development of NPOs that liaise with domestic workers, etc. As many authors of the presentations work as consultants in European institutions and cooperate actively with international organizations and NPOs it's more likely that they will find more specific solution to this problem.

Conference Contributions by Ursula Apitzsch, Margrit Brückner, Birgit Geissler, Ute Gerhard, Lena Inowlocki, Karin Jurczyk, Juliane Karakayali, Maria Kontos, Helma Lutz, Ewa Palenga-Möllnbeck, Maria Rerrich, Helen Schwenken, Marianne Schmidbaur, Kyoko Shinozaki, Helen Schwenken, Gabriele Wenner, Brigitte Young.

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