

TRANSNATIONALISATION OF CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN (SEMI)PERIPHERY AND CORE

Collection of Abstracts

Editor: Majda Hrženjak



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1. INTRODUCTION: TRANSNATIONALISATION OF CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN (SEMI)PERIPHERY AND CORE

European studies of care migration consider the Eastern European and Balkan countries primarily as source countries of female care work for Western Europe. However, neoliberal care policies established conditions for marketization and transnationalisation of care in these countries too. Care migration within these regions are still under-researched, but rare studies point out that many states started to accept migrants in households and formal care services (Kindler 2008; Hrženjak 2019; Gábrriel 2022; Uhde and Ezzeddine 2021). Whether care migration in Eastern European countries – countries of the global semi-periphery (Wallerstein 1976; Viera 2018; Blagojević 2015) – has some structural characteristics that determine its specificity compared to the core European contexts has yet to be answered. Also, the involvement of migrant care workers from Western Balkan states as “third countries” in the European geopolitical economy of care remains (with a few emerging exceptions; Višić 2021) invisible on the European research agenda.

At this symposium we aim to discuss care migration in care for older people in Central and Eastern Europe and Western Balkan through the lenses of historical connections within the regions and their geopolitical location at the European (semi)periphery understood as a hybrid position between the core and the periphery. Studies (Morales Ruvalcaba 2020) point to the complexity of labour migration in (semi)peripheral countries, which are both destination and transit countries for periphery-to-core migration, as well as source countries to core countries. While more research is needed about the interdependences between sending, transit and receiving countries, diverse patterns of care mobilities and institutional settings, our tentative starting point would be that care for older people in Europe has been transformed not only in a scarce commodity, but also in a geo-strategical resource. Maintaining care costs low (as a structural condition of capitalism), semi-peripheral countries are competing with core countries in systematic extraction of care work from periphery, which brings new dimensions to transnational gender and care inequalities.

The symposium will open space for discussing transnationalisation of care for older people from the perspectives of (semi)peripheral countries constructed in the mainstream research as primarily sending countries. It will reflect potential alternative epistemologies of researching care mobilities from the European margin. It will provide space for exchange, networking and developing potential collaborations between the care researchers in both regions.

2. KEYNOTE SPEECH

Uhde Zuzana, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Extraction and Exploitation of Care in Europe: Production of East–West Inequalities.

Cross-border mobility and migration of care workers in Europe are motivated by East–West economic inequalities between countries. However, the structural push of migrant women into the care sector and the exploitative conditions foreign care workers face are being constantly produced not only by their migration status, but also by care policies and processes of marketisation of care. In this sense, it is not simply migration of care workers, for women migration means becoming a care worker. Transnational capitalist markets treat care as both a resource that is being extracted and labour that is being exploited. In this presentation, I will focus on the entanglements of extraction of care and exploitation of care workers from the perspective of women’s lived experiences. I will demonstrate the processes of extractive exploitation on two examples: Cross-border mobility of Czech women working in Austria and Germany as care workers, who as EU citizens have relatively open access to the labour market, yet meet everyday bordering practices of othering and exploitation. And women migrating from Ukraine to Czechia after the war who have received a temporary protection status granting them access to the labour market, which, however, instantly marked them as care workers and cleaners and pushed them to a grey economy. I will explore how extractivist logic behind governing bodies and the labour of women othered by borders produce East–West inequalities in Europe through the systemic devaluation of care. My goal is to analytically capture the active role of the state in shaping contradictions of the transnational political economy of social reproduction, however, doing so without reproducing the category of the state as a natural unit of analysis, which is a dominant approach in migration policy research and discourses of care drain.

3. EPISTEMOLOGY OF LOCATION IN CARE MIGRATION RESEARCH

Majstorović Danijela, University of Banja Luka, English department.

Our Migrating Laboring Bodies: When Periphery Moves to the Center.

Through a couple of vignettes, this presentation deals with the life worlds and stories of fifteen third wave Bosnian and Herzegovinian (BiH) emigrants to Germany after 2015 who I interviewed between 25 March 2019 and 1 November 2020 in Frankfurt, Offenbach, Muellheim, Linden Holzhausen (Limburg), Luebeck and Munich. The surge included more than 100,000 BiH nationals for whom the 2015 Western Balkans Regulation by the German Bundestag alleviated the obtainment of German work visas mostly in the sectors of cleaning, construction and care work and it still continues. Through the politics of location (Rich 2003) and poetics of relation (Glissant 1997), I supply critical migration studies with postcolonial and postsocialist analyses inclusive of affect, race/ethnicity and gender in studying relationships between center and periphery. In tracking the trajectories of their immigrant lives, including my own temporary migration, I look at notions of “here” and “there”, the systematic extraction of care work from the periphery and the volatility of migrant lives in Germany play a pivotal role in negotiating their new roles at work and social life. Despite the burdensome emigration, they are adamant in not wanting their children to live in BiH, which brings into consideration transgenerational duty in addition to transnational gender and care dimensions with certain professions against the labor market needs and hierarchies.

Višić Tanja, Institute for European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

Promises and Pitfalls of “Care Work Migration Research”: Power -(of) Knowledge and Re-contextualization of Epistemological Locations.

The paper aims at critical analyses of processes and implications of the production of knowledge on “migrant live-in care workers” (from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe) in the European North-Western scientific centers. The relevance of the epistemological South (epistemology from the “periphery”) in the global knowledge market invites the problematization of “power-knowledge” privileged by the epistemologies of the North. I argue that the “power-knowledge” that mirrors dominant, often unproblematized, and uncritically deployed theories and concepts (for example notions of “care migration”, “care drain” vs “care gain”) must be geographically, politically, socially and culturally contextualized to avoid explanatory reductionism, ahistorical and straightforward descriptions of care work, and generalization of global processes of commodification of care work. To this end, this paper aims to unravel how the phenomenon of “triple peripherality” (of those who produce the knowledge; of alternative theories, concepts, and research designs; and of heterogeneous actors in increasingly diverse commodified care markets) discourages epistemological

advances. Drawing on my ethnographic study of the live-in elder care work mobility industry between ex-Yugoslavia countries and Germany and my positionality as a researcher (outsider within German academia), I address the problem of re-contextualization of the peripheralized knowledge. Using my research results and other examples, I want to show how disruption of epistemological orders by acknowledging and legitimizing knowledge from the periphery is crucial for new dialogical center-periphery perspectives and future collaborative and more egalitarian academic practices of production and dissemination of knowledge on (elderly) care work across borders. Consequently, the power of knowledge is crucial because there is no social justice and problem of social inequalities effectively addressed, without epistemic justice.

Breznik Maja, Peace Institute, Ljubljana.

Uneven and Combined Development of Elderly Care in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

International migrant flows between the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe outline the geographical area considered in this paper. The starting point is that cross-border labour flows are an expression of profound changes in the national spheres of social reproduction. We therefore analyse the changes in social reproduction in the field of elderly care in Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, we are not looking for an institutional cross-section that is frozen in time, but for the unfolding of structures in dynamic processes. These processes link the national spheres of social reproduction in what Leon Trotsky called “uneven and combined development”. Analyses of elderly care in Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina show the particularities of the respective institutional arrangements and the dynamics of development in which international migrant flows take place. They identify three models for the development of institutional elderly care: the stimulation of consumption in Germany and Austria, the stimulation of the supply of services in Slovenia and a model of minimum social security in Bosnia and Herzegovina in connection with the export of labour. The country examples show that the private, profit-oriented sector determines the dynamics in the development of long-term care. As a driver for the development of institutional care, it imposes market behaviour, establishes capitalist relations and generates a social economy that creates a high demand for labour. Using two variables (Eurostat total social protection expenditure per capita and World Bank government health expenditure per capita), we show how the social economies of core, semi-periphery and periphery countries are linked. The two variables show that while the relative differences between countries are decreasing, the absolute differences are increasing at the same time. The so-called “snowball effect” helps us to understand the uneven and combined development of the region, in which the mechanisms of a broader reproduction of dependency are imposed on the countries of the (semi-)periphery.

4. GOVERNMENTALITY OF CARE LABOUR MOBILITY IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

Bađun Marijana, Institute of Public Finance, Zagreb.

Long-Term Care Workforce in Croatia: The Potential Role of Immigration.

Croatia is one of the European Union member countries experiencing a "care drain." Approximately 2,400 nurses left Croatia over the past decade, and according to some estimates, more than 1,000 of them are needed in long-term care (LTC). The LTC in Croatia relies heavily on informal assistance from family members. However, due to shrinking family size, higher geographic mobility, and increasing women's involvement in the labour market, the demand for formal LTC in Croatia will likely increase. The Croatian government has acknowledged the workforce issue in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, but specific steps have not been taken. Employing immigrants in LTC is one of the proposed measures. To explore the potential role of immigration in addressing the LTC workforce shortage in Croatia, semi-structured interviews ($N=13$) were conducted with stakeholders from the government, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, nursing homes, and the academic community. The interviewees agreed that immigration is a viable solution to the LTC labour shortage in Croatia. However, to retain native workers and attract foreign ones, it is urgent to enhance working conditions and increase wages. The development of integration policies, provision of good professional training, and quality language education for foreign workers were also deemed crucial. Additionally, the negative attitudes towards immigration and the underlying reasons should be tackled. More research is needed on the effects of immigration on the health outcomes of elderly individuals, the labour market effects, and the availability, quality, and price of formal care services.

Todić Antonija, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana.

The Intersections and Disjunctions of Migration and Elderly Care in Slovenia.

This presentation provides preliminary findings from the doctoral research project *The Transnationalisation of Care and the Position of Migrant Workers in Elderly Care in Slovenia*. More specifically, its aim is to highlight some of the conceptual issues that arise when studying care migration in the Slovenian semi-peripheral context. Like most developed countries, Slovenia is faced with an increasing demand for care services due to population aging, with significant labour shortages already today. At the same time, it is a relatively new destination country for (care) migrants, lacking a comprehensive approach to attract and retain foreign workers in the sector. Drawing on qualitative interviews with migrant women engaged in different forms of elderly care in Slovenia, the presentation will touch on their varied migratory and occupational pathways that produce different outcomes in terms of their experience as care workers, depending on their background and motivations. On the other hand, this fragmentation of types and forms also reflects a lack of coordination between care

and migration policies, even though recruiting foreign workers is often suggested as a solution to the care deficits.

Hrženjak Majda, Peace Institute, Ljubljana.

Tacit Strategies of Labour Migration Management in Senior Care Homes at the European (Semi)Periphery.

The paper brings a case study of gendered, racialised and affective neoliberal management of care labour migration in under-researched state-governed services of senior care on the European (semi)periphery, in the micro-region of the former Yugoslavia states. Through the theoretical lenses of the 'affective turn' which provides insight into the new forms of governmentality and subjectivities established by neoliberalism, and based on individual interviews with stakeholders and migrant care workers, the analysis discloses tacit organizational strategies of mobilizing migrants' intimacy, emotions and affects as instruments of and targets for managing labour migration in senior care homes. Three main themes emerge from the interviews: the instrumentalisation of intimate relations and family bonds for recruiting processes; friendly micro-management; deskilling and its affects. It has been said that a focus on emotions within migration studies enables to delve into migrants' subjective views against overly structural accounts of migration. This paper tends to demonstrate the opposite - inquiring intimacies, emotions, and affects enables to demask the mechanisms that link micro, meso and macro socio-political and economic forces in the conditions of late capitalism. Ultimately, the state's strategy of recruiting migrant care workers reinforces the neoliberal hierarchical care regime based on intersectionality of gender, 'race', and class.

5. SPATIAL DISTANCING OF SENIOR CARE AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Palenga-Möllenbeck Ewa & Fiebig-Spindler Roxana, Institute of Sociology and the Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Gender of Goethe University, Frankfurt.

Emerging Home Care Markets in Central and Eastern Europe: Transformations of Senior Care, Labour Mobility, and Housing.

Given the current demographic, political and social developments, it is obvious that the current care regimes in many parts of Europe are unsustainable; their reorganisation is becoming increasingly urgent. Driven by economic inequalities, the demand for transnational senior care is growing across Europe and seems to offer a perfect solution not only from but also within Central and Eastern Europe. Our case study draws on two research projects, DecentCare (2017-2021) and CareOrg (2023-2026), and investigates Poland's well-established industry of intermediary agencies providing temporary live-in carers within and outside the EU, as well as the emerging domestic home care market in Poland. First, we discuss the Polish home care market: how it is affected by labour mobilities, immigration, emigration and transit migration, as well as its ongoing corporatization, transnationalisation and digital transformation. Second, we examine the political dimension of the Polish senior care regime, which can be characterised as a privatized, familialistic, and gendered system in which care is primarily performed at home, with a growing share of migrant carers. Third, we look at the intersection of transnational live-in care and housing: By which standards should the quality of the care provided by live-in care workers to their clients and to their own families (and their own self-care) be evaluated? As it turns out, both the continuing familialistic Polish care policy and the provision of care work in the care recipient's household, which is promoted in Western Europe, have their own requirements that can hardly be reconciled. Ultimately, the carers' tasks in terms of care/self-care are confined to the time they spend in their place of origin and disappear completely from view in the host society. This transnational political economy of care and housing calls for empirical answers to the question of who contributes to and influences the discourses and regulations on (migrant) home care in Poland and how the tension between fair and comprehensive (self-) care and care for profit can be resolved.

Fischbach Svenja & Jeremić Slađana, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work.

The Social Consequences of Care Mobility to Western Europe for Individuals, Families, and Communities in Northern Serbia.

This dissertation project examines the social consequences of care mobility between Northern Serbia and Germany for individuals, families and communities. In particular, it shows how care mobility affects the living (and working) situation of mobile care workers and immobile 'stayers' in Northern Serbia. The research focuses on the temporary, informal, undocumented side of care migration, which is widespread in the region but absent from

public discourse and severely underrepresented in academic research. For this purpose, 20 interviews were conducted with mobile care workers and their family members, as well as with 15 professionals (from care homes, Centre for Social Work and NGOs working in various fields). The fieldwork took place between May and September 2023 in Vojvodina. Preliminary results are presented on the following topics: the consequences for older relatives in need of care, the double burden for mobile care workers managing two households, the reorganisation of domestic care work and informal care, the stigmatisation of mobile care workers, an increase in autonomy and agency on the part of care workers and other results. The findings will be understood within the conceptual and theoretical framework of care drain, care extractivism, geopolitical inequalities in care, transnational social inequality and intersectionality. The findings will shed light on how care migration affects gender identities and the prevailing gender regime in Serbia, in terms of division of labour, care work practises, ideological constructions and perceptions of women and men.

Pantović Ljiljana, Radovanović Bojana, and Sekulović Milica, University of Belgrade, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory.

Elder Care in Serbia during the Pandemic: A Care Diamond Analysis.

The COVID-19 pandemic's global impact has presented profound challenges to social policy, necessitating a reassessment of elder care provisions due to social distancing measures and limited access to services, affecting older individuals' welfare. This research investigates elder care in postsocialist Serbia during the pandemic, analysing care delivery across state, market, family, and civil sectors using the care diamond model. Qualitative data from 40 in-depth interviews with elder care providers and recipients were collected between April and September 2022, representing diverse geographical settings and care homes. Findings shed light on experiences, strategies, and systemic factors influencing elder care amidst hindered physical proximity. Our research contributes valuable insights to elder care in postsocialist Serbia and broader discussions on welfare systems and caregiving practices in Eastern Europe, supporting policymakers and practitioners in crafting responsive social policies during crises.

6. ETHNOGRAPHY OF IM/MOBILE CARING WOMEN

Čengić Nejšra Nuna, University of Graz, Centre for Southeast European Studies.

Being a Part of the European Family: Perspectives of Female Informal Paid Domestic Care Workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

How to write about transnational labour migrations of care givers? How to interpret them? Feminist scholars have developed many concepts to analyse the exploitation, racialization, colonization of female migrants from poorer countries performing domestic/care work in more affluent ones as part of dynamics of global capitalism. They speak of “global care chains” (Hochschild 2000), the “peripheral whiteness of C/E European care workers” (Safuta 2018), “care extractivism” (Wichterich 2020), and similar. I find such work highly relevant. Yet, in a purposely naïve manner, I suggest we ask: why do carers accept such conditions? Behind the obvious answer (because of the money and better life), many writings seem to rest on an assumption that such women don't see any other way to secure livelihoods and/or that they are not aware of the (level of) exploitation involved. This may be partly true, but such interpretations obscure their lives in their home countries and their overall experience of care work abroad. In a way, blaming (homogenised) forces of global capitalism also amnesties local political elites. Working with Boatca's writing on 'multiple Europes' and Blagojević's on semiperipheralization, the aim of this presentation is to show what conceptualization of Europes emerges from the practice of women who care for elderly persons in Sarajevo, BiH, or who commute between BiH and Western European countries to do so. The presentation is based on findings of my MSCA-supported ethnographic study about female informal paid care work.

Šarić Marija, University of Zadar, Department of sociology.

Navigating Precarity: Older Caregivers in Circular Migration Cycles.

Inequalities in socioeconomic development have been a long-term driver of labour migration from the Croatian region of Slavonia. This migration pattern has become increasingly significant due to the marketization of the care sector in Europe, where migrant caregivers now assume a pivotal role (Kofman, 2013; Lutz, 2018). Circular migration between the home country and the destination country has become integral to the organization of employment in caregiving. The aim of this presentation is to provide insight into the motivations and experiences of older women's employment as caregivers in the private household, thus perpetuating circular labour migration patterns. Eleven narrative interviews were conducted with women from Slavonija, aged 50-76, who are employed as carers in Austria, Italy, and Germany. The older caregivers' circular migration is a response to prolonged experiences of unemployment or pauperization, while the pressure to continue working stems from the need to avoid family dependence, especially due to the perceived economic stagnation of the

sending region. Unlike in the domestic labour market, they are employable in caregiving because of their age and gender, and are finding employment easily via local women working as caregivers, as well as (in)formal agencies. What ultimately allows their migration cycles to perpetuate is the ability to organize the fulfilment of their usual obligations at home, their labour effort, and the embeddedness in the migrant network which provides emotional support and safeguards against prolonged unemployment. However, their position remains precarious and dependent upon their agency to organize fluid realization of each cycle of migration.