

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**Circular migrant domestic workers in
European societies. New insights into an
old phenomenon**

San Domenico di Fiesole, FI (Italy), 21-23 November 2012

Convened by:

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SCIENTIFIC REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workshop “**Circular migrant domestic workers in European societies. New insights into an old phenomenon**” took place on 21-23 November 2012 at the European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole, in the hills surrounding the city of Florence, Italy.

The workshop started in the evening of Wednesday 21st November with a welcome dinner at a small restaurant in the centre of Florence. From that moment an **atmosphere** of dialogue and constructive exchange permeated our meeting in which 16 experts from different disciplinary backgrounds and nine different countries, brought together by their strong interest on issues of migrant domestic work, shared their views and dilemmas regarding circularity in this specific labour sector.

On the morning of Thursday 22nd, after the introductory talk by the ESF representative Prof. Knudsen, the **first session** of the workshop began with three presentations aimed at offering the conceptual and policy background on which to build our discussion of specific cases. Circular migration and migrant care/domestic work were discussed in depth at the theoretical level thanks to the presentations given by Prof. Eleonore Kofmann (expert on gender, household reproduction and migration), Dr. Nicola Mai (expert on East-West circular migration) and Prof. Jean-Pierre Cassarino (expert on EU policies on mobility), and the comments of the discussant Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou (expert on circular migration, EU policies and diversity). Naturally the questions and dilemmas concerning circular migration in care and domestic work raised in this introductory session were discussed throughout the workshop in the effort to make some progress in both the debates on circular migration and domestic/care work.

In the **second and third sessions** of the workshop (afternoon of the 22nd and morning of the 23rd), six participants presented their research results on different examples of circuits of rotation for care and domestic workers along the axes South America-Spain-UK, Greece-Albania, Ukraine-Greece, Portugal-Ukraine, Poland-Ukraine, Poland-Germany, Poland-France and Italy-Ukraine.

These two sessions thus focused on the “realities” of circular care and domestic labour, notably the case of migrant women who work in shifts between their country of origin and the country of settlement. These circular workers spend a few months in their country of destination and then they find a replacement (a relative, a friend or simply a co-national) in order to go back home to take care of their own families (children, elderly parents). They stay for a couple of months in the country of origin and then return to the country of destination to work. Examples of this migratory pattern, as it is applied to this field, were given in the second session by Dr. Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck with a focus on circular migration from/to Poland of Poles (going to Germany) and of Ukrainians (coming to Poland); by Prof. Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller for the case of Polish women to Italy, Germany and France; and by Dr. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez for the case of Latinoamerican migrants, naturalizing as Spaniards and then circulating with the UK. The three presenters received rich feedback from Dr. Raffaella Sarti, a specialist on the history of migrant domestic work. In the third session, examples were given of circulation of migrant domestic/care workers in Portugal by Manuel Abrantes, in Italy by Dr. Sabrina Marchetti, and in Greece by Dr. Thanos Maroukis. Pitfalls and opportunities in the interpretation of circular

migration in care/domestic work offered by the three presenters were highlighted by Dr. Helen Schwenken who is an expert of migrant domestic work and grassroots organising.

The **final session** (afternoon of the 22nd) consisted in a roundtable conversation between four senior experts who thoroughly discussed the main outcomes from the previous sessions, from their own perspective. These experts were an ILO officer expert on domestic work issue (Luc Demaret) and 3 scholars from different national and disciplinary backgrounds: Prof. Maurizio Ambrosini (Italy, sociologist), Prof. Krystyna Iglicka (Poland, economist), and Prof. Sarah van Walsum (the Netherlands, lawyer).

This roundtable discussion paved the way for the last event of the workshop, which was an operational meeting planned in order to discuss in detail a **proposal for a special issue** on the theme of the workshop. The proposal was prepared by the convenors in the days preceding the workshop and had been circulated in advance amongst the participants. See section 3 for more details.

The goals pursued by the convenors have been fully achieved. In fact, the workshop succeeded in bringing together the debate around the currently emerging concept (and reality) of circular migration, and, on the other hand, the debate on migrant domestic and care workers. The presentations and the roundtable together highlighted how circularity can be an economic survival strategy that allows migrant women workers to combine expectations for them as migrant breadwinners and, at the same time, as caring mothers and grandmothers. The presenters focusing on Southern European contexts put particular emphasis on the role of the current economic crisis in this scenario. A particularly lively discussion was had about the role of EU policies on this matter that have been seen as double sided, as far as they can both enhance and constrain the decisions and choices that migrant workers (and their families) make. The circulation of migration domestic workers prevents their settling down and avoids the related integration challenges that European societies would face if migrant domestic carers brought their families over. However, at the same time, circular domestic work poses important integration challenges for the people involved as they somehow belong nowhere; they are in-between two countries. Circular domestic work provides no long-term answer to the crisis of the European welfare systems and the ageing of native European populations. In addition it raises important welfare issues for the circulating migrant workers.

2. SCIENTIFIC CONTENT OF THE EVENT

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATIONS

Prof. Eleonore Kofman, Middlesex University:

Kofman put emphasis on the need to draw our focus towards what is happening inside the household as a site of reproduction. This is particularly interesting when the household employs a paid (migrant) worker in order to accomplish some of its cleaning and caring tasks.

Prof. Jean-Pierre Cassarino, European University Institute:

It was noted by Cassarino that circular migration is to be contextualised within the broader issue of mobility policies enacted by the EU, especially for what concerns bilateral and readmission agreements. The increased attention by the side of policy makers on circularity signals the spread of flexicurity approach on (migrant) labour.

Dr. Nicola Mai, Metropolitan University of London:

Mai's presentation shed light on the dynamics that take place in circularity at the individual and psychological level. He took the example of Albanian youth involved in sex work in order to introduce the notions of 'embodied' and 'reluctant' circularity.

Dr. Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, Frankfurt University:

Palenga showed how Polish women are at the crossroads of global care chains: upper-class and career women employ Ukrainians, while working-class Polish emigrate to Germany to do the same work. This is to be contextualised in the Polish stalled gender revolution, the Ukrainian gender roles crisis and the German lack of welfare, at the same time.

Dr. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, University of Manchester:

Gutierrez explored the circulatory movement of Ecuadorian and Peruvian women, who arrive in Spain, naturalise as Spaniards and thus acquire EU citizenship, and then move towards northern England. The migration towards other EU countries is an option sought by migrants who are particularly badly affected by the current economic crisis.

Prof. Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller, University of Paris X:

This presentation discussed opportunities and limitations that a circulatory migration offers to Polish women going to Italy, France and Germany. Morokvasic-Müller put emphasis on the constraints represented by visa regulations and on the influence of what can be seen as the 'force of domesticity' in pushing women to engage in these movements.

Dr. Sabrina Marchetti, European University Institute:

Marchetti showed how circular migration is an option that Ukrainian and Polish care workers in Italy seek in order to balance their (transnational) family life and their working commitments/financial needs. They engage in a transnational job-sharing by way of a planned rotation. These women seem to actively seek this type of employment, demanding us to reformulate the notion of 'employability' in the light of what is happening with this specific category of workers.

Manuel Abrantes, Technical University of Lisbon:

Abrantes looked at Eastern European migrant women in the city of Lisbon. Their experiences show the trade off between material resources and personal well-being. The interesting feature of this case lies in the combination of circularity for internal migration (of working-class Portuguese women from small towns) and for international migration.

Dr. Thanos Maroukis, ELIAMEP:

This paper concentrated on the economic crisis and its impact on Ukrainian and Albanian domestic and care workers in Greece. We can see that mobility (in spatial and economic terms) of the migrants' families is interconnected with that of the Greek family, and with its transformations through the crisis.

DILEMMAS AND IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT EMERGED DURING THE DISCUSSION

1. Circular migration (CM) in care and domestic work, in the context of European policies:

Circularity in domestic and care labour needs to be understood in the context of the EU Global Approach to Migration Management (GAMM). This view relates to the understanding of mobility (of people and labour) within a neoliberal framework and the impact on it of securitisation policies. In this, circularity is often bargained by countries of destination for readmission agreements.

At the same time, CM is an opportunity for the improvement of the quality of life of these migrants. The options offered by CM spur the possibility of multiple migratory destinations and they acknowledge the variety of motivations that migrants might have depending on their background.

It needs to be taken into consideration the fact that policymakers' understanding of CM and the actual reality of it may differ significantly. Hence it would be important to have more data on the actual reality of circular migration in this sector and, at the same time, of the different legal frameworks that apply to it in each European country.

2. Circular migration in care and domestic work as a standpoint for the understanding of inequalities based on gender, race, class and so forth:

It is important to shift our perspective on households as a site of power construction. This is emphasised in households that employ migrants for domestic and care chores. It thus becomes important to investigate the distributions of tasks, the hierarchies between different workers, and how gender, ethnicity, class and citizenship enter into this picture.

From the point of view of gender, CM takes place in a context of reproduction of gender inequalities based on current welfare regimes in most European countries. Moreover, women are particularly prone to circular movements because their obligations are divided, more than those of migrant men, between the country of emigration (where they work or study) and the one of origin (where they have family members).

Finally, from the labour market perspective, we need to assess how/in what circumstances circularity will undermine workers' rights to freedom of association, equal treatment,

enjoyment of contributions, health and safety in the workplace, family reunification (cfr. ILO Convention of domestic work). We need to maintain the ideal of a permanent employment.

3. Circular migration as nodal point for the analysis of the subjectivity of migrants:

The discussion of CM cannot do without the acknowledgement of the importance of identity in migration studies. In this view, the notion of “embodied circularity” (Mai) is suggested to bridge the relationship between official and individual accounts of migratory trajectories. Some circular migrants can be defined as “reluctant” (Mai).

Ultimately, circularity comes as a choice that migrant domestic/care workers make, which takes shape depending on their profile, their projects, and their aspirations.

4. Dilemmas in the use of the term ‘circularity’:

It is important to be aware, as scholars, of the risks involved in using a term (circularity) which has been appropriated by policy-makers who see in it, fundamentally, a form of securitised repeated temporary mobility. It is also important to reaffirm, while referring to circularity, that this is not the best option for migrants, but rather their back-up strategy to come to terms with their needs.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS, CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE FIELD, OUTCOME

The discussion that took place during the workshop has made a significant contribution to the converging debates on migrant domestic/care work and circular migration, which can be summarised in the points listed here below.

These topics will be carefully discussed in the publication that will follow the workshop. In fact, the workshop participants agreed that the **special issue** will be edited by the convenors and proposed to the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* for an issue towards the end of 2013. Most likely it will include four of the papers presented during the workshop, plus an introduction written by the convenors. The papers will be selected on the basis of their relevance for the study of circular migration in the domestic work and care sector, their original contribution, the completeness of the study carried out, and the feasibility of turning them into a journal article within a short space of time. After the workshop, the convenors communicated further practical info (deadlines, length of the papers, guidelines, etc.) to the authors of the papers currently selected for the special issue, which are – at the current stage – Krystina Iglicka, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck and the convenor Sabrina Marchetti.

1. Differentiations within circular migration:

The gap between the vision of CM for skilled professionals (e.g. the ‘Eurostars’) and the one for low skilled workers (e.g. seasonal workers in agriculture and tourism) and even undocumented workers (usually over-stayers of tourism visas) needs to be emphasized.

For some, circularity is at the end of a stable and regular migration, for others it is an irregular and very precarious form of mobility. In this picture, care and domestic workers enter into CM on the basis of:

- family plans and individual trajectories
- considerations of costs-benefits
- individual work situation and dynamics of the occupation sector
- legal conditions and security rights
- past experiences and expectations for the future
- opportunities for cross-country and internal-migration.

2. General typology of circular migration:

A comprehensive typology of CM distinguishes between:

- 1) autonomous
- 2) autonomous but accidental
- 3) reluctant
- 4) forced
- 5) “aspirational” circularity: this is the novel element introduced in the presentation by Sabrina Marchetti in comparison with the typology offered by the *Metoikos* project.

3. Preconditions for entering in CM as care and domestic worker:

Circularity in care works can take place only when some preconditions are met:

- the capacity to find consensual employers and a good and reliable co-worker;
- the fact of having enough economical resources, since this pattern is less remunerative,
- have regular documents and long-term residency.

4. CM in care and domestic work in the context of the economic crisis in Europe:

The question to be investigated is in what measure circularity is a strategy enacted by migrant care and domestic workers vis-à-vis the crisis, with precarity/unemployment, inflation, and lack of welfare in both their countries of arrival and of origin. In this context, circularity in care/domestic work reveals the importance of maintaining support structures and security. It can be of inspiration to look at what happened to migrant workers during the economic crisis of 1973 and the Asian crisis in the 1990s.

4. FINAL PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2012

Afternoon/evening - *Arrival*

20.00 - *Welcome Dinner*

THURSDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER 2012

09.00-09.20 *Welcome coffee*

09.20-09.40 - **Welcome by Convenors**

Anna Triandafyllidou (EUI, Florence, Italy) and Sabrina Marchetti (EUI, Florence, Italy)

09.20-09.40 Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)

Lisbeth B. Knudsen (University of Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark/ Standing Committee for Social Sciences - SCSS)

09.50-13.00 Session 1: Circular migration, welfare and care work: setting the theoretical and policy framework

09.50-10.10 "Overcoming the circularity impasse? Circular migration in the context of EU policies", Jean Pierre Cassarino (EUI, Florence, Italy)

10.10-10.30 "Reproductive labour in the household, migrants and welfare regimes in Europe", Eleonore Kofman (Middlesex University, London, UK)

10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*

11.00-11.20 "Reluctant circularities: interrupted integrations and differential exclusions of eastern European migrants within the EU", Nicola Mai (Metropolitan University of London, London, UK)

11.20-11.30 Discussant: Anna Triandafyllidou (EUI, Florence, Italy)

11.30-13.00 General discussion

13.00-14.30 *Lunch*

14.30-17.30 Session 2: Circular care workers in western and central eastern Europe

14.30-14.50 "Being here and there: transnational mobility and care in Europe", Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller (Paris X University, Paris, France)

14.50-15.10 "Care work migration in Germany: method in the madness", Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck (Frankfurt University, Frankfurt, Germany)

15.10-15.30 "Circuits of feminization and coloniality in a precarious Europe. The transnational dimension of the British case of care and domestic work", Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (University of Manchester, Manchester, UK)

15.30-16.00 *Coffee / tea break*

16.00-16.10 Discussant: Raffaella Sarti (University of Urbino, Urbino, Italy)

16.10-17.30 General Discussion

20.00 *Dinner*

FRIDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER 2012

09.20-12.30 Session 3: Circular care workers in southern Europe

09.20-09.40 "Dreaming circularity? Negotiations around temporariness of work and care for eastern European women and their employers in Italy", Sabrina Marchetti (EUI, Florence, Italy)

09.40-10.00 "'Two countries, two homes': circular migration and the negotiation of the employment relationship in domestic services in Portugal", Manuel Abrantes (Technical University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal)

10.00-10.20 "Care work and migrant workers' trajectories: the Greek case", Thanos Maroukis (Eliamep, Athens, Greece)

10.20-10.50 *Coffee / Tea Break*

10.50-11.00 Discussant: Helen Schwenken (University of Kassel, Kassel, Germany)

11.00-12.30 General discussion

12.30-13.30 *Lunch*

13.30-17.00 Final session: Discussion and planning

13.30-15.30 Roundtable

Maurizio Ambrosini (Milan University, Milan, Italy), Krystyna Iglicka (Lazarski University, Warsaw, Poland), Sarah Van Walsum (Free University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands), Luc Demaret (ILO ACTRAV, Geneva, Switzerland)

15:30 *Coffee/tea* to take into the room (without interruption to work)

15.30-17.00 Plans for follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions

17.00 *End of Workshop*

Saturday, 24th November 2012

morning - *Departure*

5. FINAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou, European University Institute, Florence
2. Dr. Sabrina Marchetti, European University Institute, Florence
3. Dr. Raffaella Sarti, University of Urbino, Urbino
4. Prof. Maurizio Ambrosini, University of Milan, Milan
5. Prof. Jean Pierre Cassarino, European University Institute, Florence
6. Dr. Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, Frankfurt University, Frankfurt
7. Dr. Helen Schwenken, University of Kassel, Kassel
8. Prof. Eleonore Kofman, Middlesex University, London
9. Dr. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, University of Manchester, Manchester
10. Dr. Nicola Mai, Metropolitan University of London
11. Prof. Krystyna Iglicka, CSM, Warsaw
12. Prof. Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller, Paris X University, Paris
13. Dr. Thanos Maroukis, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens
14. Prof. Sarah Van Walsum, Free University, Amsterdam
15. Manuel Abrantes, Technical University, Lisbon
16. Luc Demaret, ILO ACTRAV, Geneva

6. STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANTS

Age group	30-40	41-50	51-65
Number of participants	5	5	6

Gender	Men	Women
Number of participants	6	10

Country of institutional affiliation	Number of participants
Italy	5
Portugal	1
United Kingdom	3
The Netherlands	1
Germany	2
Poland	1
France	1
Greece	1
Switzerland	1