

Filipino migrations to Germany: what lessons could they teach us about the visibility of *care*

Introduction

This paper aims at presenting some of the lessons about the visibility of *care* that long-lasting ethnographic research on Filipino women migration to Germany unveiled. To do so, we will first discuss the pertinence of the concept of *care* on shedding light on the *invisible care* work done by migrant women in developed countries. Subsequently, we will introduce the context of Filipino women migration to Germany as well as the role they play within the current German *care* structures. At this point, we will discuss some present-day German *care* structures dilemmas and challenges when it comes to the visibility of Filipino women migrant's *care* work. Finally, we will address the lessons that their presence in Germany can teach us about the visibility of *care*.

1. The international division of reproductive labor: care and reproductive labor

Social sciences have been long studying the consequences and various contexts of *care work* or *reproduction labor* transfer between underdeveloped and developed countries. Sociologist Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2015, 40) calls this phenomenon the international division of reproductive labor, as it connects “[...] global capitalism and systems of gender inequality in both different geopolitical scales of migration, including regional migration [...]; south-to-south migration [...] [and] south-to-north or global migration [...]”. Under such division of labor in the global arena, women from undeveloped countries perform what Salazar Parreñas (2015, 47) defines as reproductive labor or a wide array of activities that “[...] entails the work of sustaining a population instead of just one person [, such as caring and providing emotional support for children and adults, cleaning the households, cooking....“ for “[...] class-privileged women in industrialized countries, or richer, countries, while they leave their own dependents to be cared for mostly by other women [in their own countries] [...]”. The Filipino sociologist adopts the concept of reproductive labor as in her view it is broader than the concept of *care work*. This is a theoretical matter rather than merely a problem of terminology, as for Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2015, 47) it allows us to better grasp (and shed light to) the diversity in terms of realities of migrant women's activities, as “much of the work done by migrant women is

non-relational and would therefore not fit the traditional definition¹ of “care work”. Moreover, according to Salazar Parreñas (2015) the concept – rather than the one of *care work* – also concedes us to consider the racial division of labor among those who assure the reproduction of society. Therefore, it allows us to “[...] take note of who does menial and nonmenial and nurturant and nonnurturant work in caring institutions [...] In domestic work “spiritual” labor like reading books and providing emotional support is mostly done by employers (Roberts, 1997); menial work, including nurturant (such as cleaning soiled pants) and nonnurturant tasks (such as sweeping the floor), is mostly done by migrant women and women of color (Glenn; 1992 ; Romero, 1992)” (2015, 47).

1.2 Filipino women migration in Germany: a migratory stream to supply the needs in terms of social reproduction

Germany is no exception in terms of its position as a developed nation within the international division of reproductive labor. Indeed, most Filipino migrants in this country are highly educated women of color, from precarious Filipino middle class² lacking opportunities in the home country, whose families rely on the monthly remittances they send by working in equally precarious jobs, that migrate “as wives or *care workers*” to fulfill a need for social reproduction of the German society. This need is expressed through the hiring of Filipino care workers via intergovernmental agreements such as the “Triple Win³” agreement. As for “migrant wives,” these are German-Filipino unions that are easily recorded in German statistics, almost always following the same pattern: a German husband and a Filipino wife. The German case study of migration within marriage of Filipino also allows us to underline the place of the Philippines concerning marriage within migration migratory streams. For instance, the country is often

¹ The definition of England, Bulding & Folbre (2002) is that *care work* implies person to person contact and the improvement of human potentiality of the recipient.

² I am referring here to the middle classes in the sense of Georg Simmel. For the latter (1981, p. 200), « Ce n'est pas seulement une troisième classe ajoutée aux deux autres [les classes prolétaires, les moins aisées, et bourgeoises, les plus aisées], et qui n'en diffère qu'en degrés, comme elles diffèrent elles-mêmes l'une de l'autre. Ce qu'elle a de vraiment original, c'est qu'elle fait de continuel échanges avec les deux autres classes et que ces fluctuations permanentes effacent les frontières et les remplacent par des transitions parfaitement continues [...] ». Free translation to English by the author of the current paper: “It is not only a third class added to the two others [the proletarian, the least well-off, and bourgeois, the most well-off], and which differs from them only in degrees, as they themselves differ from each other. What is truly original about it is that it makes continuous exchanges with the other two classes and that these permanent fluctuations erase the borders and replace them by perfectly continuous transitions [...]”.

³ The Triple Win project is managed by a unit of the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), the Foreign Labor Placement Agency (Zentrale Auslands und Fachvermittlung) (ZAV). It was implemented in 2013 by the German government to address the growing demand for care workers (estimated to be at least 150,000 workers by 2025) (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2022). The countries participating in the program are Vietnam - hiring in this case is based on the prospect of training migrants in nursing in Germany -, the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Tunisia (ibid). According to the planned regulation, qualified nursing professionals who meet certain requirements are trained locally so that they can enter the German labor market (ibid). They are then placed in small groups in German health care institutions (ibid). These same professionals are also monitored for their social and work integration. In the case of Filipino staff, German officials also cover travel and visa costs, as well as finding local accommodation (ibid). Filipino nurses are required to have a valid license, but also a minimum of two years of experience, among other prerequisites (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2020b). Monthly pay can be as high as €2,400 for a certified nurse (Department of Labor and Employment, 2019). About 1,000 nurses were expected to be hired in 2020 (ibid). For more details, see also the brochure produced by the Philippine Office for Overseas Workers (POEA) for applicants: <http://www.poea.gov.ph/twp/files/Triple%20Win%20Philippinen.pdf>

mentioned in the literature regarding the matter. Filipino women migrate to developed countries such as Germany to fulfill their roles as daughters, wives or mothers; to help their families by sending them monthly remittances from abroad or to pursue what they imagine to be the Western man, more “modern” and concerned with their freedom than the Filipino men (Piper, 2003 ; Le Bail, 2018).

However, the issue of "migrant wives" is more complex to assess than it seems, since even though it is true that the shrinking of time-space and the technological development linked to globalization has made it possible for partners to meet each other at increasingly greater geographical distances, the presence of these Filipino "migrant wives" does not seem to be correlated with a particularly high rate of female bachelorhood in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). The latter is often cited, along with an aging population and declining birthrate, as an explanation for "spousal migration" (Le Bail, 2018; Bélanger and Haemmerli, 2019). Similarly, some refer to developments in conjugality in Germany, which tended to establish a "gap" between men and women in that country regarding their expectations of married life (Lauser, 2004). Men are said to be in an "in-between" situation between the old model of conjugality and a more egalitarian and mutually fulfilling model that German women seem to be attracted to (Lauser, 2004). Marriage to a Filipino woman would thus signify for them a kind of smooth transition, where the difference (and exoticism) of these women often perceived as "more feminine and traditional" would represent an upheaval amid the "void" left by the increasing "disengagement" of German women (ibid.).

From our point of view, although all the elements mentioned undoubtedly participate in the construction of the field of possibilities of these unions, the needs in terms of social reproduction seem to be the probable and main determinants of the phenomenon of the "migration of Filipino wives" in Germany”. We would tend to advocate for this hypothesis, mainly because the country has both a contradictory response to the needs of an aging and dependent population, and a historical deficit in public care for young children. In concrete terms, Germany has increasingly⁴ opted for a "cash for care" system for the care of dependent persons, while the choices adopted for early childhood rely on public crèches, without providing all the necessary resources (Giraud, 2017). In the case of dependent persons, the

⁴ The last news on the matter were the plans of the current coalition in power (led by *Bundeskanzler* Olaf Scholz) to address the problem of families who find it difficult to pay for the care of young children by introducing an annual bonus of 2,000 euros for the hiring of care workers in 2021 (Zeit, 2021).

result of this choice is that families often end up having to use care allowances by hiring privately (a nursing aid or a paid nurse, some of whom are Filipinas). The hiring often takes place within the family of the elderly person concerned, and it is also often a low-skilled woman in a precarious situation (ibid). The system thus leads to a tendency to re-familiarize the care of the elderly when its stated objective is to reduce it (ibid).

The same pattern is repeated for the care of the youngest children. In the absence of day care centers, families have to outsource this need to other family members (e.g. grandparents) or hire a nanny. In this case, too, it is often women who take on early childhood care. Filipino migrant women adopt a similar solution: whenever possible, they bring in another woman from the country, such as a sister or cousin. Clearly, the system of “dependency *care*”, which is accentuated in old age, seems to lead to a privatization and a re-familiarization of the costs of social reproduction (Veil, 2011; Giraud, 2017). From our point of view, the most interesting avenue for understanding Germany's positioning within the international division of reproductive labor is precisely the fact that Filipino "migrant wives" could participate in this process as an element that ensures the social reproduction of the oldest (their mothers-in-law, for example) and the youngest (their own sons or those from a German husband's first marriage) outside of the sphere of salaried work. This hypothesis remains to be confirmed, however.

2. The frame of our research

The research that allowed us to unveil the lessons that we will progressively evoke took place between two different phases, 2014-2015 and 2018 to 2022. It draws mainly on interviews as well as field observation among informal migrant women who migrated to Germany as either wives of German nationals or contract *care* workers. Furthermore, it was conducted in a main area both in terms of time spent and materials collected: the German state of Baden-Württemberg. For this reason, we will first present some of the national and local characteristics of the research area when it concerns its needs in terms of social reproduction labor. This description will be followed by an analysis of the German *care* structures dilemmas and challenges when it comes to the visibility of Filipino women migrant's *care* work. We will then proceed to the final part of our paper: the lessons that their presence in Germany can teach us about the visibility of *care*.

Baden-Württemberg is a German state in the southwest of the country. Its capital is the important industrial city of Stuttgart. It shares a long border with France and its departments of Bas-Rhin (67) and Haut-Rhin (68). The state was formed in 1952 from the merger of three other states, Württemberg-Baden, Württemberg-Hohenzollern and Baden. On its 35,751 square kilometers live approximately 11 million inhabitants, making the region one of the largest in Germany by population size (Baden-Württemberg, website, 2022). Baden-Württemberg is also among the most important Länder for the country's economy (Baden-Württemberg, website, 2022). The region is home to an important part of German industry, with companies like Bosch, IBM or Daimler-Benz. In addition, it is a particularly "elderly" state, with 2.1 million senior citizens aged 65 and over (Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2022). This figure has reportedly increased by 58% since the 1980s and is expected to increase by at least another third until 2030 (ibid.). The number of elderly people is then expected to reach 2.7 million.

Baden-Württemberg also represents the German region with the highest percentage of foreigners (1.78 million or 11 percent of the total population), just behind Bavaria (1.86 million) and ahead of the state of Hesse (1.09 million) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018a). Net migration has been mostly positive here. When it concerns the Filipino population in Baden-Württemberg, it has similar characteristics to those that define it at the national level. For example, the presence of women there is also significant and so is the gap from men (3,465 vs. 595) (Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018c). Similarly, the two trends in Filipino migration to Germany discussed earlier, namely marriage and migration to the care sector, are found in Baden-Württemberg. The demographic transition process of declining birth rates and ageing is affecting both the state and the country. In Baden-Württemberg this phenomenon leads to a need for at least 51,000 new *care* professionals by 2030 (Gölz and Weber, 2016): 3). The solution to the problem appears to be the same as that adopted over the years at the national level, i.e. the hiring of personnel from abroad for the care workers, combined with the care for cash system described above.

In this sense, it is also not surprising to find a regional guideline clearly expressing a preference for hiring foreign caregivers, moreover from the Philippines and India (Enquetekommission

der Landtag von Baden-Württemberg, 2016: 80). Similarly, of the approximately 328,297 dependent persons in need of care in the state under the Pflegeversicherungsgesetz, 72% (236,220) received care at home, of which 170,104 were exclusively cared for by relatives according to Section 1 of Book XI of the Sozialgesetzbuch - Elftes Buch - Soziale Pflegeversicherung (in French, the Social Code, Long-Term Care Insurance, included in the Long-Term Care Insurance Act (Pflegeversicherungsgesetz) of 1994 (Gölz and Weber, 2017). In comparison, 66,116 people were cared for by outpatient services, while 92,077 received care in an inpatient setting in nursing homes (Pflegebedürftige in Heimen) (Gölz and Weber, 2017). Finally, given its needs, it is also not surprising that the state of Baden-Württemberg is also in second place with regard to the presence of foreign nurses in Germany (8.5 percent), with first place in this case, barring any later surprises, going to the state of Hesse (9.9 percent) (Enquetekommission der Landtag von Baden-Württemberg, 2016: 579).

As for the marriage migration trends, statistics from the region show that the number of Filipino women married to Germans in the state is about 1,525 (Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018c). If we take up the hypothesis outlined above about "wife migration," it is curious to note a discrete increase in male bachelorhood in Baden-Württemberg (2,578,892 single men in 2018 compared to 2,300,909 in 2011), although this is obviously far from the levels of (female, in particular) bachelorhood in some Asian countries (Belanger and Haemmerli, 2019). Overall, the proportion of singles there was 4,713,786 for 11,069,533 inhabitants (Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018b).

Furthermore, regarding early childhood care, which we have already briefly analyzed, Baden-Württemberg is characterized by significant contrasts. For example, although 90% of children in the kindergarten age group (3 years and older) were actually in public and/or private care in 2017, the highest rate of care for children up to 3 years of age was only 45% in the city of Heidelberg alone (Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018a). In this way, if the analysis makes sense, and without forgetting the other elements mentioned (changes in conjugality or the exoticization of the other), Baden-Württemberg's insertion into the international division of reproductive labor could reproduce the dynamic that organizes that of Germany: that of taking care of growing needs in terms of social reproduction through both the policies of hiring care personnel in underdeveloped countries and "marriage migration"

3. Dilemmas of the German care system and the lessons it can teach us

As we have seen, the trend to refamiliarize and the costs of *care* the elderly and children in Germany social is engendered by the logics behind the German care system as well as the insufficient *care* structures. This process of refamiliarization of *care* draws attention to a major consequence that also constitute the main dilemma of the German *care* system: it maintains and worsens the burden on women, especially migrant women such as Filipinas, who end up providing the *care* work at home far from the eyes of society. In terms of visibility, the refamiliarization of *care* exacerbates the invisibility that is usual when it concerns the *care* work as gender norms already construct it as women's tasks – by assigning them to the domestic sphere. Furthermore, the subaltern position of Filipino migrant women in Germany in terms of class, gender, and race renders even more inconspicuous the *care* work provided within their families for their husbands and children – as it usually happens to many other women from underdeveloped countries who migrate to provide *care* work in developed countries.

Finally, the main dilemma of the German *care* system can also constitute an occasion to examine some of the lessons it could at the same time teach us about the visibility of *care*. The first one is that to shed light to the *care* work and to render it visible means reconducting to the public sphere the debate and the solutions for the challenges of *care* in an aging society – as within the public sphere, meaning State institutions and society, the problem can be apprehended as a collective a matter (Habermas, 1991). As for the second one, deeply rooted in the first one, it means understanding *care* work as reproductive labor - as it implies understanding it as a wider array of activities that are quintessential to the reproduction of life, therefore also vital for society itself – which means enhancing same public sphere's conscience about the importance of *care* work. The third lesson is also linked to the second and the first. It connotes that bringing *care* work to the light of the public sphere together with an understanding of *care* as reproductive labor means addressing (by shedding light to them) at the same time the consequences of the subaltern position of migrant women as they are usually the ones whose invisibility comes at a higher price – as precarious workers, mothers who

contribute to the social reproduction of their families and daughters who are expected to help their families back home. This third lesson leads us to the fourth and last one. It regards the fact that the dilemma of the German care system can also constitute the occasion to examine what subjects do to face consequences of their subaltern position. Indeed, Filipino women migrant are not solely victims of the consequences of their position. For instance, they actively resist their position by inventing strategies to cope with unequal gender or class relations. By doing so, they manage to obtain, among other things, the right to work outside the household, but also better conditions at work.

Conclusion: the public sphere as a regulator for finding new solutions for the issues of care in western societies

One of the lessons that the care dilemma in Germany can teach us suggests the centrality of the public sphere in the possibility that Western societies have to make the problem of care visible. Indeed, this is in our view the main lead that emerges from the German case. Only state institutions and civil society can construct the problem as an eminently collective issue, democratizing the debate on care and on the often-difficult situation of those who increasingly provide care - migrant women from dependent countries. This lesson is in our opinion a possible way to start building a solution for care issues that can take into consideration the needs of aging societies and the needs of migrant women. Nevertheless, this is only possible if a debate is started in which public opinion is constituted to irrigate and orientate the state's action in this matter – a debate that considers the opinions and needs of multiple parts such as migrants themselves. Finally, the lesson on the importance of the public sphere also suggests that the problem of care cannot, in our opinion, be solved outside the collective dimension, since care is a matter, whose roots are highly collective – after all, it concerns the reproduction of society.

Bibliography

- BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG. “Unser land”. Accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/unser-land/>
- BÉLANGER, Danièle, and, HAEMMERLI, Guillaume. “Populations et dynamiques migratoires”. In *L'Asie du Sud-Est : à la croisée des puissances*, edited by Dominique Granger, and Serge Caouette, 34-47. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2019.
- BUNDESAGENTUR FÜR ARBEIT. “Über Triple Win”. Accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/content/1533715565324>
- “*PILIPINAS / Philippinen : Information / Projektinformationen*”. Accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/triple-win/philippinen>
- ENGLAND, Paula, Michelle BUDIG, and Nancy FOLBRE. “Wages of Virtue: The Relative Pay of Care Work.” *Social Problems* 49, no. 4 (2002): 455–73. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2002.49.4.455>.
- DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES. “*More Pinoy nurses wanted in Germany*”. Accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/more-pinoy-nurses-wanted-in-germany/>
- DIE ZEIT. “Ampel plant 2000 Euro Bonus für Haushaltshilfe”. Accessed August 16, 2022. <https://www.zeit.de/news/2021-11/28/ampel-plant-2000-euro-bonus-fuer-haushaltshilfe>
- GIRAUD, Olivier. “L’introuvable démocratie du *care* ? La gouvernance multiscalaire des systèmes d’aide et de soins à domicile des personnes âgées entre néo-familialisme et privatisation : les cas de Hambourg et Édimbourg”. *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, no. 55 (2017): 127-147. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ress.3757>
- GÖLZ, Uwe, and WEBER, Matthias. “Pflege in Baden-Württemberg – Heute und Morgen : Voraussrechnung der Zahl der Pflegebedürftigen sowie des benötigten Pflegepersonals”. *Statistisches Monatsheft Baden-Württemberg*, no.9 (September 2016): 3-7. https://www.statistik-bw.de/Service/Veroeff/Monatshefte/PDF/Beitrag16_09_03.pdf

--- *Endstation Pflegeheim ? Ergebnisse der Pflegestatistik. Statistisches Monatsheft Baden-Württemberg*, no.7 (2017): 3-11. https://www.statistik-bw.de/Service/Veroeff/Monatshefte/PDF/Beitrag17_07_01.pdf

LANDTAG VON BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG. *Bericht und Empfehlungen der Enquetekommission "Pflege in Baden-Württemberg zukunftsorientiert und generationengerecht gestalten"*. Stuttgart : Landtag von Baden-Württemberg, 2016. https://www.landtag-bw.de/files/live/sites/LTBW/files/dokumente/WP15/Drucksachen/7000/15_7980_D.pdf.

LAUSER, Andrea. *Einer guter Mann ist harte Arbeit: Eine ethnographische Studie zu philippinischen Heiratsmigrantinnen*. Bielefeld : Transcript Verlag, 2004.

LE BAIL, Hélène. "Les migrations par le mariage : épouses souhaitées mais stigmatisées. État de la littérature abordant la question sous l'angle du travail reproductif et de la menace : focus sur l'Asie de l'Est". *Cahiers du Genre*, no. 64 (2018), 19-43. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-du-genre-2018-1-page-19.htm>

PIPER, Nicola. *Wife or worker : Asian Women and Migration*. Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

SALAZAR PARREÑAS, Rhacel. *Servants of Globalization : Migration and Domestic Work*. Redwood : Stanford University Press, 2015.

SIMMEL, Georg. *Sociologie et épistémologie*. Translated by Laura Gasparini. Paris : PUF, 1981 [1908].

STATISTISCHES LANDESAMT BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG. *Kindertagesbetreuung in Baden-Württemberg*. Stuttgart : Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018a. https://www.statistik-bw.de/Service/Veroeff/Statistik_AKTUELL/803418004.pdf.

--- *Ehe und Scheidung*. Stuttgart : Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018b. <https://www.statistik-bw.de/BevoelkGebiet/EheScheidung/01033010.tab?R=LA>

--- *Ausländer nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Familienstand*. Stuttgart: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2018c. <https://www.statistik-bw.de/BevoelkGebiet/MigrNation/Auslaender-FS.jsp>.

--- *Bevölkerungsvorausberechnung mit Jugend-, Alten- und Gesamtquotient.* Stuttgart: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2022. <https://www.statistik-bw.de/BevoelkGebiet/Alter/98015200.tab?R=LA>

STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT. *Ausländische Bevölkerung am 31.12.2018 nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Ländern.* Wiesbaden : Destatis, 2018a. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/auslaend-bevoelkerung-2010200187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

--- --- *Lebensituation von Männern – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2017.* Wiesbaden : Destatis., 2019. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/lebenssituation-maenner-5122204179004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

VEIL, Mechthild. “Familienpolitik in den Zwängen konservativer und neoliberaler Logiken: ein deutsch-französischer Vergleich”. In *Ungleiche Geschlechtergleichheit : Geschlechterpolitik und Theorien des Humankapitals*, edited by Edgar Forster, and Rita Casale, 95-11. Leverkusen : Barbara Budrich Verlag, 2011.