OUR PROJECT

In the welfare state systems of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, 24-hour care is becoming an increasingly common way to fill care gaps. It appears as a ready solution at a time when demographic change poses new challenges and former care arrangements within the family, between the generations and between genders are eroding. Our project studies the transnational recruitment by home care agencies of (usually female) migrant caregivers who are employed as live-in workers in private households.

Our thesis is that under the current working and employment conditions, requirements and expectations of ‘decent care’ and ‘decent work’ are in latent or explicit contradiction to each other. We assume that the way in which people involved in transnational home care arrangements deal with these contradictions influences the organisation of these arrangements in the three welfare states. The global cities of Frankfurt am Main, Vienna and Zurich are ideally suited for our study because they are home to a growing number of care agencies that offer 24-hour care for seniors in private homes.

In this project, we track worker recruitment by home care agencies in the sending countries and accompany migrant 24-hour careworkers into the households. We carry out expert interviews with representatives of the agencies to explore the services, recruitment, qualification, contracts and work of the 24-hour carers as well as the expectations of the households. In episodic interviews, we ask the care receivers, the 24-hour care workers and their respective families about their own requirements and expectations of ‘decent care’ and ‘decent work’. In these interviews, we want to learn about how our interviewees describe the work being done in the private households, how they justify and legitimise the work and care arrangements, how they negotiate the conditions of work and care, and lastly how they perceive the contradictions and conflicts occurring in these arrangements.

For the first time, we utilise research approaches and perspectives that focus on what are perceived as legitimate expectations of ‘decent work’ AND ‘decent care’ when investigating 24-hour care in the private household. Furthermore, including all of the actors involved in these care arrangements allows us to investigate how the transnational home care arrangements of the three countries are negotiated in the sending communities, in the recruitment and placements of the agencies, and at work in the households.

In sum, this project sheds light on how the transnational home care arrangements are embedded within the welfare state systems of the three destination countries. It enables us to compare their commonalities and differences and to analyse which requirements and expectations of ‘decent care’ and ‘decent work’ come to bear, are violated, or cast doubt on these arrangements altogether.
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