

MARIA KONTOS

RECOGNITION DYNAMICS IN A MISRECOGNISED JOB

Domestic and Care Work of Migrant Women in Europe

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Recognition Dynamics in a Misrecognised Job

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Abstract

In this paper I explore dynamics of social recognition within the domestic and care work relation. I discuss how claims of social recognition intersect on the one hand with the familialisation of paid domestic and care work, and on the other hand with the defamilialisation of the worker. I demonstrate the ambivalences and limitations of social recognition processes within this work relation and investigate the way social recognition processes are determined and constrained by the overlapping of the private/familial and public/economic spheres and logics. I argue that this overlap and the familialisation of the work together with the defamilialisation of the worker are the background for specific claims for recognition normally negotiated in the sphere of familial and intimate relations; and that the familialisation of the work produces recognition claims that ultimately remain unfulfilled. These claims and the responses to them find their limits in the defamilialisation of the worker and the overarching economic interests of the employer. Moreover, I show how cultures of rights influence recognition practices and expectations as intersubjective recognition is embedded in multiple normative structures within the two societies involved: the society of origin and the society of work.

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Contents

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | Family and Economic Logic in the In-house Care Work Relation and the Impact on the Worker | 6 |
| 2.1 | The Coincidence of Family and Economic Logics | 6 |
| 2.2 | The Familialisation of the Work and the Defamilialisation of the Worker..... | 7 |
| 3 | Recognition Dynamics Under Conditions of Familialised Work and Defamilialisation of the Worker | 10 |
| 4 | Cultures, Norms and Recognition | 14 |
| 5 | Conclusions | 16 |

1 Introduction

Life and working conditions of migrant domestic workers are influenced by a multiplicity of factors and are subject to a range of policies, among which labour market and migration policies are the most important. Migration policy in EU countries focuses on the one hand on controlling and limiting immigration and on the other hand on gaining high qualified migrants for male dominated sectors of the economy, leaving aside the emerging domestic work and care sectors (Williams and Gavanas 2008, Kontos et al. 2009). At the same time, Western and Northern European countries consider this sector to be a source of new jobs and have made efforts to regulate domestic and care work by adopting a series of legal measures, such as tax deductions, facilitation of employment procedures in households as well as more general regulations for the low salary sector.¹ However, the success of these efforts remains limited and most workers in these labour markets are irregular migrants in informal work relations. Many migrant women from the new EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe work in this sector in situations of semi-legality. Additionally, the EU Service Directive (96/71/EC) has created, at least in Germany, large populations of EU citizens working as domestic and care workers in private households. Their pay is as low as that of irregular workers and – being posted by a firm based in the new EU Member States – they do not enjoy the full rights of workers despite regular status. Moreover, the private nature of the work place does not favour the formalisation of work relations or the enforcement of regulations and so the sector remains largely unregulated (Kontos et al. 2009).

Like the unpaid care work of women, paid domestic and care work (Thiessen 2002) is socially undervalued and deprived the rewards of paid work outside the home (Resch 2002). Moreover, the unpaid work of women in the family has been considered to be a natural activity and “labour of love” (Bock and Duden 1977) rather than real work.² Socially undervalued work means little or no social recognition for those who perform it. Recognition of care work and care needs has been discussed in the framework of social justice, rights, quality of care and freedom of choice for carers and recipients of care. Feminists’ demands for care recognition (see Bock and Duden 1977, Lewis 1991) address the invisibility of women’s caring responsibilities. In this debate, recognition of care refers to the collective claims of unpaid carers, recipients of care, and paid carers (Williams 2009). With regard to paid migrant carers, reference is made to making visible this hidden workforce, giving these workers rights, for example the right to residency and family reunion, as well as a collective voice (Williams 2012).³

¹ An example in Germany is the expansion of the so called “mini job” regulations, jobs that are not exceeding a salary higher than 400 Euro per month (Kontos and Sacaliuc 2006).

² Therefore, theorists of work have focussed on paid work only (Oakley 1974).

³ This approach is similar to the discourse developed by migrant domestic workers’ organisations, especially the European network RESPECT. With the support of trade unions – for instance the ETUC (2005) – RESPECT has started campaigns for the recognition of paid domestic and care work as “real” work and for the legalisation of the residence status of migrant domestic workers (Schwenken 2006).

The intersubjective recognition dynamics deployed in work relations have not been so far the subject of research. Some theorists implicitly assume severe misrecognition i.e. deprivation of any form of recognition, especially those scholars who investigate migrants' domestic work as a form of "modern day slavery" (Mantouvalou 2012a and b) related to trafficking practices (Anderson and Rogaly 2005). Anderson (2000) explicates the concept of modern slavery, arguing that the employer does not buy labour power but the very self, the personhood of the worker, and the power to command not merely labour power, but the whole person (Aguilar 2002). Some scholars have discussed migrants' paid domestic and care work in terms of a resource furthering the social recognition of the employer, who is able to document and underscore her social prestige and wealth through her capacity to employ a domestic worker. The employment of (migrant) domestic workers as a *symbol of class position* can be assumed when the female employer is not involved herself in paid work but uses the employment of a domestic and care worker for enhancing social prestige and expanding leisure time (Anderson 2000).⁴

Others have criticised the "modern day slavery" discourse for denying the agency and the "everyday acts of residence" (Constable 1997) of migrant domestic and care workers themselves, seeing them as victims only (Parreñas 2001, Briones 2009). Yet others stress the "moral economy" dimensions of paid work in a familial context and the need expressed by migrant domestic workers to be treated by the employer with "respect". This aspect is as relevant for the worker as the economic rewards of the work, according to Lena Näre (2011). However, given that the migration project of the migrant domestic worker is primarily economic, the comparative relevance of moral versus economic interests is not as clear as the author assumes.

The focus of my paper is to investigate the demand of the workers to be treated with "respect" and to discuss the inner dynamics and complexities of the intersubjective recognition processes that emerge within the home-based care work relation. The starting point of the analysis is the fundamental meaning of social recognition for the development and maintenance of personal identity and self-esteem and for enjoying satisfying intersubjective relations in work and other social fields (Honneth 1992, Margalit 2012, Taylor 2009 [1992]). On the other hand, the lack of social recognition for the job, and in many cases in the job, together with the traumatising experience of deskilling, means that the question of the intersubjective recognition processes for migrant domestic workers is of considerable relevance for understanding their work and life conditions.

In this paper I focus on live-in migrant women⁵ as the category most affected by the familial nature of paid domestic and care work. In the countries of Western and

⁴ This debate brings recognition dynamics close to Hegel's model of the "master – slave" relationship (Hegel 1988 [1807]). The "master" needs the work of the "slave" in order to feel recognised for his/her superiority and his/her high social position, while the "slave" may get recognition through his work (see also Neuhauser 2011).

⁵ The domestic and care work sector is far from being homogeneous. Domestic and care work varies significantly in terms of work content (cleaning, housekeeping, care for the elderly, child care), work

Northern Europe with a still functioning welfare state, live-in migrant domestic workers are not numerous. An exception is Germany. Here, it is estimated that there are some 200 000 live-in domestic workers, mostly occupied in the care of the elderly but also a substantial number involved in the care of children (Larsen and Rand 2011). In the Southern European countries, live-in migrant domestic workers are more numerous – despite the growing economic crisis – while in Eastern European countries this is also an expanding sector (Ayres et al. 2013).

The paper draws on the analysis of autobiographical narrative interviews conducted within the EU project “Integration of Female Migrants in Labour Market and Society; Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations”.⁶ The project investigated the integration processes of new female migrants – i.e. those who came in the 90ies and after – in eleven countries: Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia and UK. The focus was on female migrant domestic workers, prostitutes and victims of trafficking. From the 198 interviewees, 103 were migrant women employed in the domestic and care work sector at the time of the interview or previously. The wide range of different experiences revealed in the interviews underlines the need for a differentiated analysis of intersubjective recognition dynamics in this field.⁷

In the first part I discuss logics and structures in this field that affect social recognition dynamics, i.e. the familial and economic logics as well as the familialisation of work and the defamilialisation of the worker. In the second part I present some empirical results on the intersection of the above structures with recognition claims and responses. In the third part I discuss the impact of social norms and institutionalised recognition orders on the self-esteem of migrant domestic workers. I close with some thoughts on the prospects of migrant domestic workers in relation to their claims for social recognition and social integration.

arrangements (live-in, live-out) and underlying legislation (au pair programmes, labour legislation) (Kontos et al. 2009).

⁶ See the project homepage <www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de>.

⁷ Although most of the interviewees reported exploitation and experiences of domination, they had retained a considerable level of autonomy. Hence, their work relations should be analysed in terms going beyond the concepts of “forced labour” and “modern slavery”.

2 Family and Economic Logic in the In-house Care Work Relation and the Impact on the Worker

2.1 The Coincidence of Family and Economic Logics

In the field of paid domestic and care work the public and private sphere and their opposing logics overlap in both familial and economic terms. The *workplace* is the private realm of the employer and the *work tasks* are those that had previously been performed by female family members as the *unpaid work of love* (Bock and Duden 1977). My argument is that the overlapping and the *simultaneity (coexistence) of family and economic logics* have a considerable impact on the forms and dynamics of inter-subjective recognition in this field: the opposing principles of action entailed in these logics create tensions for the actors. The logic of satisfying human needs is opposed to the economic logic of the action. For satisfying human needs, the standardisation of work in the name of productivity and profit is not what is required but rather the broadest flexibility possible (Geissler 2002). In view of the need for flexibility, the live-in state, i.e. 24-hour-availability, appears to be the most suitable work form for the performance of care tasks. In this case, workers' rights are usually not codified, and work contracts are rarely fixed in written form, in keeping with the familial character of the work and the way that diffuse social relations tend to prevail over specific roles in the sphere of the family (Oevermann 1979). Due to the lack of formal workers' rights, the work conditions depend on the *moral standards* of the employer, including their notions about and attitudes towards human needs and workers' rights.

The metaphor of "the worker being a family member" that is broadly used in the interaction in the work place arises from the familial character of the work in question. Scholars have considered the use of this metaphor by the employers as a means of obscuring the economic relation and the exploitation of the domestic worker (Anderson 2000, Parreñas 2001, Romero 1992). Others have pointed out that the metaphor obscures the way the domestic worker is infantilised and kept in dependency with no prospect of achieving what the real family members are expected to achieve, namely the creation of a family of their own and independence through work in the labour market outside of the home (Young 1987).

However, we may ask whether the metaphor of the domestic worker being a "family member" does not only serve to obscure the imbalanced power relations. It should also be analysed in relation to other dimensions of the work, as a *strategy of both employer/client and care worker for adapting* to the specific ambivalences and tensions of commodification of care within the private sphere. This means that the "family member" metaphor may have a profound impact on the relationship between the persons involved and the social recognition dynamics that take place.

- a. From the point of view of the domestic workers the use of the metaphor can be understood as an *intuitive strategy of professionalisation*. The familial character

of the relationship between carer and care receiver is decisive for the good quality performance of care tasks. For instance, in the case of the care of the elderly, the carer knows that the care work will be most effective if it is done by a family member. Therefore, she will temporarily “take over” the role of a family member in order to maximise the quality of care. “Doing family member” – calling the elderly person “grandma” or “grandpa”, together with efforts to acquire knowledge about appropriate care methods, is part of an intuitive self-professionalisation process. However, it is significant that this metaphor is used by the worker specifically in relation to the elderly person she cares for but not the employing relative. The use of the metaphor does not hinder the carer’s awareness of discrimination in work relations and low payment, nor does it prevent them negotiating their salary (Kontos and Sacaliuc 2006).

- b. The employer copes with the opening of her intimate space to economic logic by incorporating the worker into the household via the family member metaphor. Using the metaphor is an effort to negate the presence of a non-family member within the household, and the delegation of care to a paid worker, i.e. a non-family-member, to suppress the economic relation inherent in paid work and with this the professionalism of the worker. The metaphor thus serves to negate the own role as employer (Moras 2008, see also Thiessen 2002).

2.2 The Familialisation of the Work and the Defamilialisation of the Worker

One important aspect of the structure of 24-hour-care is that the migrant worker is deprived of her family life, i.e. she is defamilialised. The terms familialisation and defamilialisation have been used by Esping Andersen (1999) to analyse state/family relationships in order to distinguish between countries’ social policies. (De-)familialisation refers to the impact of those social policies that assign care tasks to families or to the state respectively. Social democratic countries have been found to achieve a high level of defamilialisation, while conservative countries preserve the male breadwinner model and the dependency of women on the family rather than on the state. In this context, defamilialisation of care refers to the independence of women from care tasks and their freedom of choice between care tasks or paid work. The commodification of care work, and with this the assignment of care work neither to the family nor to the state but to the market adds a new actor to the field: the (migrant) care worker. The employer of the migrant domestic worker is freed from care tasks and is thus defamilialised, as defined by Esping Andersen. The care tasks are now assigned to the migrant worker whose work is familialised because the care tasks take place within the home and in the form that has been previously conducted by a family woman; at the same time, however, she has to be freed from her own care tasks in order to do this work and is thus defamilialised herself in a radical way. She is not out of a home during her paid work time, but she is completely, day and night, out of *her* own home.

Thus, it is the familial logic of the work that dictates the defamilialisation of the worker. The worker can only perform the 24-hour-job if she separates from her family. Therefore it is mainly migrant women who, driven by the neo liberal restructuring of the world economies (Parreñas 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000) and in order to benefit from the wage-gap between the country of work and the country of origin, migrate alone and enter this labour market. The geographical distance to the own family is a precondition for performing the job. Settled migrant and native poor women do not take on such jobs as they would have to separate from their own families. Furthermore, such low payment can only gain in value if there is a wage and currency value gap, i.e. if the family of the worker lives in a country where the low pay of the worker has high purchase power. Therefore, migration of women into the care labour markets in the Global North produces *transnational families*, *transnational mothers* (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000) and *global care chains* (Hochschild 2001).

Efforts to adapt to the remote care situation cannot extinguish the *suffering* of children and mothers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997, see also Parreñas 2001). However, feminist scholars avoid giving emphasis to this suffering as this might be interpreted as an argument for the reification of motherhood (Widding Isaksen, Uma Devi and Hochschild 2008). Instead, they highlight the *experience of autonomy and empowerment* that migrant domestic workers might derive from their ability to send earnings to their families and from the *experience of the (contradictory) upward social mobility* in the country of origin through the remittances that they send to their families (Briones 2009, Parreñas 2001). *However*, the efforts of migrant domestic workers to circumvent continuous defamilialisation contradict the hypothesis of autonomy and empowerment as being their main experience. Domestic and care workers from the new EU Member States who exploit the opportunities offered by geographical vicinity and the opening of borders within the enlarged Europe try to reconcile work abroad and family responsibilities by periodically returning home and staying for a while before they leave again (Metz-Göckel, Morokvasic-Müller and Müntst 2008). In the meantime, another migrant woman fills their position on the job. In this way the workers set up a self-organised system of rotation/alternation in the work place. Such strategically performed self-organized mobility underlines the need of migrant women to care for their own families. In this way it becomes clear that migrant women, in spite of their desperate need for earnings, prefer to repeatedly exit the familialised/defamilialised work situation, instead of considering it as a source of empowerment and autonomy.

In practice, many workers from overseas have to stay in the job for longer periods of times – in Germany, especially those from the Philippines – being confronted with high travel costs and generally having irregular status with no possibility of re-entering the country. Their strategy of compensating defamilialisation is to *join communities* of coethnic domestic workers that function as a quasi-family (Parreñas 2001), or as Amrita Pande (forthcoming) named it: a “Sunday family”. Their meetings on Sundays, their common day off, become communities of mutual emotional support, and self-help, by exchanging information about jobs and about coping strategies in the work place (Parreñas 2001). For this, the spatial organisation is of importance (Pajnik and Bajt

2013, Hrzenjak and Pajnik forthcoming, Kontos 2013). These gatherings are a locus of sociability for the migrant domestic workers carrying out their job in isolation without free time and privacy.

Thus, besides the social field of work where the metaphor of the family member establishes “fictive family relations”, migrant domestic workers experience fictive/constructed family relations in the framework of their Sunday meetings. In sum, a *triangle of familial fields* arises in the social world of the migrant domestic and care workers and is reflected in the interviews we have conducted with defamilialised migrant domestic workers.

- The “*real family*” *back home*,
- The *fictive family* in the work place *invented* by employers and employees out of the need to reconcile the contradictory logics of economy and family, to maintain the familial character of the care tasks and to improve and professionalise care work,
- The *imagined family* of the Sunday meetings that services needs for emotional support and commonality.

It seems thus that the defamilialisation of the worker together with the familial character of the work establishes the family as an overarching pattern in the social relations of migrant care workers. Family as social relation generalises and intersects with other spheres of life of the migrant domestic worker. Work and non-work spheres turn out to be family-like social fields.

Findings in the literature, however, suggest that the overlapping of family and economic logics is not confined to the work sphere, but expands also into family relations in different ways. Substituting for maternal presence by sending material goods to their families is one available strategy to cope with the suffering of the separation and means that migrant domestic workers commodify transnational family relations (Parreñas 2001). Following a different strategy, the social relationships within the Sunday gatherings may also become economic ones, especially in the big cities where co-ethnics are concentrated and are numerous, as the domestic workers try to engage in micro-capitalist activities – offering for instance services like hair-cuts – and earn extra money within the group (ibid.). It is the power of the economic migration project that potentially brings the economic logic into the quasi-family relations of the Sunday gatherings and generalises the economic logic within the family relations. It becomes clear that not only does the familial logic pervade economic relations, but also the familial and economic logics diffuse and may overlap in almost all fields of social life.

3 Recognition Dynamics Under Conditions of Familialised Work and Defamilialisation of the Worker

In domestic and care work, as in other work relations, struggles for social recognition can be observed – recognition claims, offers or denials of recognition. They emerge under the conditions of generalisation of the familial and the economic principle in the spheres of life (work, family, and social relations). In this section I discuss how claims of social recognition intersect with the familialisation of the work and the familial incorporation of the workers that is demonstrated by the use of the family member metaphor. Moreover, I want to show how cultures of rights and normative orders influence recognition practices and expectations. I rely on the differentiation of the three main recognition spheres of society that Axel Honneth (1992) has identified as relevant for identity construction:

- Family and other intimate relations: recognition of the subject as a person with needs.
- Society and work: subjects are recognised on the basis of their competencies and achievements
- Law: subjects are recognised as supplied with rights.

Within the domestic and care work relationship we have identified recognition claims that obey familial logic as well as recognition claims that obey economic logic. Recognition obeying familial logic takes *two different forms*:

- Recognising the worker as a person with own needs, as is characteristic for family and intimate relations.
- Recognising the worker as a “member of the family” and the credibility of what this concept transports and promises.

The need of the workers for recognition as a *person with own needs* and the response of the employer to this need became apparent in the interviews in various ways, mostly as a negative experience of disrespect for individual needs: to eat the food they are used to, to have recreation time, to have fixed times of work.

However, positive experiences were also reported: of being recognised by the employer as a person with own needs, especially with regard to the need for care giving, i.e. a person needing to nurture their own family back home. Etna, a Sri Lankan interviewee in Cyprus⁸ reports the experience of precisely this kind of recognition:

“They help me with everything, they have helped for my daughter’s education and they helped me to build my house in Sri-Lanka.”

⁸ The interview has been conducted by Michaela Foulis Souroulla

Employers giving such recognition correspond to the figure of the “good” employer (Gallotti 2009) often described in the narrations as the one who is not only generous in terms of pay, but who also becomes an important source of support and guidance in utilising resources for life in migration, for instance in relation to learning the language, legalizing the residence status, even getting out of the domestic sector. The *ambivalent effects* of recognition in an unequal relation characterized by dependency (Honneth 2004) become visible, however, as recognition practices establish a gift and counter gift relation within which the worker feels obliged to respond to the generosity of her employer with the means she has at her disposal, i.e. by offering unpaid overtime. The gift and counter gift relation is based on pre-economic principles of social reciprocity and at the same time it extends the (economic) work relationship beyond the boundaries initially negotiated. Moreover, the structure of defamilialisation as a precondition for doing 24-hour- work hinders the recognition of the worker as a person with the need to share daily life with her own family. Thus, the claim for recognition as a person with own needs finds its limits in the structural requirements of the job, i.e. the priority of the care needs of the employing family. This structural requirement does not allow for realising one of the most genuine needs of the worker, namely her life with her own family. By defamilialising and co-opting the worker for the employer’s own family, this structure prioritizes the economic need to earn a living for her family back home as the key principle of her life organisation. Thus, the metaphor of the worker “being a family member” does not deliver the “material basis” (ibid.) for recognising the worker as a person with her own needs and has to be regarded as an affirmative effort to compensate and maintain the defamilialising work relationship.

The claim for recognition of the migrant domestic worker as a person with the need to care for her own family, as discussed above, is one point. Besides this, we came across the worker’s claim to be recognised as a person in need of care herself. This claim marks further limits of the metaphor of being a family member, especially when the carer herself is in need of care. Esther, a sixty three years old Filipina domestic worker in Germany anticipated coming care needs and expressed in the interview her concerns about how to cope with probable health decline in the coming years. She explained that her (“good”) employer was willing to organize care for her if needed, but she remained uncertain about whether this offer would be realized. The familial character of the relationship remains fictive and in the case of real need, it is the real family that the worker can rely on for care and support.⁹

Another form of familial recognition claims came up when the reality contradicted the supposed recognition of family membership and the promise entailed in the “family member” metaphor. The domestic worker may be emotionally involved in the family life of the employer – developing for instance emotional bonds to the children she cares for – and she may identify through this relationship with the role of a family member. Such an emotional involvement appears in the interview with Angela, a Filipina,

⁹ A similar case, described by Bianca Brijnath (2009), is a Filipina domestic worker who became seriously ill and decided to return to her family in the country of origin, although the (“good”) employer offered care services.

working for a high salaried single mother in Germany.¹⁰ Angela's emotional involvement with the family led to her *imagining a real nuclear family*, with her as the "mother" of the children and the employer as the breadwinner, i.e. the male part of the traditional family. This idea became obvious from Angela's reaction when the employer presented her new liaison. This made Angela feel deceived and not capable of continuing in the work relationship. The supposed "real family" turned out to be asymmetrical and one-sided in this case, with highly ambivalent and conflict-loaded outcomes. This is not the only example in our interviews of the emergence of a myth of "real family bonds" not only on the part of the migrant but also of the employer. The asymmetry and one-sidedness within the imagined notion of being a "family member" become visible when the worker retreats from the fictive family member role. Thus, the ambivalence of the "family member" metaphor finds its limits in various situations. Even in work relations with most generous employers, the family member metaphor remains a myth. It entails, for instance, no legal consequences of being a family member – participation in the material wealth of the family via heritage, for instance – except if the metaphor acquires a material, i.e. a legal basis, for instance through marriage with a member of the family (see Fulias-Souroulla 2006, Anderson 2000).

Nevertheless, many interviewees report ambivalence deriving from the "family member" metaphor concerning needs and claims for recognition and *refused responses* from the side of the employer. They point to the coexistence of both the "family member" metaphor and the negation of family logic, i.e. the coexistence of *intimacy and exclusion*. Negation of the worker as a person with own needs, and the experience of disrespect rather than of temporary inclusion in the family, are widely reported in the interviews. In these cases, the interviewees comment on the "family member" metaphor as pure ideology. Monika, a Polish domestic worker in Germany,¹¹ reflects on live-in work as entailing closeness combined with processes of exclusion as well as arbitrariness ensuing from the economic work relationship and the power gap. The member-of-the-family rhetoric clashes with the insecurity of an irregular employee, who can be dismissed at any time:¹²

"On the one side I was a member of the family, on the other side I knew that they could fire me at any moment; that I had to do what they ordered me to do. I could only go to Poland when this was convenient for them."

In this passage Monika depicts the contradictory double role, being on the one hand "a member of the family" and therewith assuming mothering duties, accompanying family members in their everyday and intimate life and, on the other hand, being simultaneously made aware of the boundaries of power and arbitrariness, deprived of her own private and intimate life. Her position is extremely weak in regard to both the organisa-

¹⁰ The interview has been conducted by Kyoko Shinozaki.

¹¹ The interview has been conducted by Agnieszka Satola.

¹² The interviewee refers to experiences before the EU accession of her country and the legalisation of her residence status as EU citizen.

tion of daily work as well as organisation of the alternation between work and leisure, i.e. the organisation of her own leisure time and the visits to her family back home.

In sum, (mis-)recognition dynamics deriving from the realm of family and intimate relations range from the crude confrontation of the worker with the fictive nature of the family member metaphor to the recognition of both the need of the care worker to care and her need of care. However, in most cases there are limits to this kind of recognition because of the fictive nature of the family member metaphor and the priority of the employer's need for the services of a defamilialised worker. As mentioned above, our interviewees satisfy their need for familial inclusion through informal gatherings with other co-ethnic domestic workers.

Even in this context, the risk of commodification of social relationships and the coincidence of economic and familial logics does not vanish. As Rachel Parreñas (2001) observed, engagement in micro-capitalist ventures during the Sunday gatherings is common. Economic logic is potentially as omnipresent as familial logic. Despite these observations, our interviewees refer to their Sunday meetings as the social field in which they experience the recognition of being a person with needs and are able to satisfy these needs and get emotional support without any ambivalence worthy of mention. However, the limits of recognition as an "intimate other" in a fictive family coming together once in a week are also obvious here, as the fictive family of the Sunday meetings can rarely take over everyday tasks of care, for instance, for carers confronted with the vulnerability of coming old age.

The economic character of the job finds its expression in the workers' claim for recognition of the value of their competencies and the quality of the work they offer, as well as in claims for equal treatment and payment (Catarino, Kontos and Shinozaki 2013). Recognition of the quality of work affects the level of pay and is hampered by the economic interest of the employer in dictating low payment for an irregular migrant woman. Jadwiga, a Polish nurse caring for an old lady in Germany¹³, complains that her work is not being appropriately paid and the value of the work not adequately recognised. She pleads for the recognition of her work and the work of her colleagues, who take turns to look after the old lady, claiming that they manage to keep the old lady in relatively good health. She says:

"If it were not for us the grandma would be dead now"

Rejecting her claim for a higher salary, the son of the old lady devalues her work, insinuating that there are many other women on the global labour market who would be willing to do the same work for less money. The qualification and work done by migrant caregivers does not get recognised as they can be easily replaced by other migrant women. Thus, the globalisation of the care labour market contributes to the reduction of the social value attached to the paid care work.

Other interviewees refer to universal norms of equality for legitimising their struggle for recognition: they claim equality in payment, arguing against the assumption that their

¹³ The interview has been conducted by Agnieszka Satola.

living costs are lower due to the price gap between the country of origin and the country of work. “Our stomachs are not smaller so do not fill up with less” argues Monika. Moreover, part of the claim for equality is a claim for recognition of their own human dignity against stereotypes allowing some employers to treat migrant domestic and care workers as being an “easy girl” or a “prostitute”.

4 Cultures, Norms and Recognition

The dynamics of social recognition – according or rejecting and demanding or expecting recognition – are *embedded in multiple normative orders* shaping the social contexts for both the employer and the worker. Nancy Fraser (2000) has stressed the relevance of normative elements related to broader institutional structures creating social statuses and with this, establishing social recognition criteria. Migrant domestic workers may derive social recognition or be deprived of it through various cultures. Institutionalised structures of recognition touch upon the value of women’s (unpaid) care work, the value of paid work and specifically the value of paid domestic and care work as well as the social status attached to the job. Although paid domestic work is not recognised as valuable, various criteria of evaluation are entailed in various cultures embedded in historical developments. These various cultures become more visible in the comparison of national cases.

- *Cultures of rights* include legal norms and moral obligations in the workplace and – in the case of paid domestic and care work that in most countries is regarded as not being proper work – notions of domestic workers as workers with rights or just as helpers.
- *Cultures of care* include consciousness of responsibility of the employer for his/her employees.
- *Cultures of anti-racism* prevent the adverse treatment of the migrant domestic worker in line with racist stereotypes.
- *Cultures of gender equality* that have developed within and through the feminist women’s movements have become part of hegemonic norms and are also crucial for the work relationship within the household. Such norms are norms of equality between men and women but also the norm of equality among women (sisterhood).

Forming attitudes and social expectations, all these cultures have a considerable impact on social recognition dynamics, recognition claims and recognition offers or the lack of recognition and the prevalence of misrecognition. From the analysis of our interviews we came upon considerable differences in the social value of paid care work between

Northern, Eastern and Southern European countries and how this value affects experiences of recognition and with this, self-esteem.

Many scholars have highlighted the dilemma of local women in Western and Northern European countries when hiring another woman to do the “dirty work” in view of the prevailing cultures of equality deriving from the recent feminists’ movement for gender equality (Rerrich 2002). This dilemma has led them to rationalise their decision to hire a domestic worker as “helping” the poor migrant (Anderson 2000).

On the other hand, despite structures of exploitation and lack of rights, migrant domestic workers in Northern European countries have highlighted the benefits from the higher socially perceived value of paid domestic and care work compared with the country of origin. This enables the workers to restore some of the damaged self-esteem for having to enter this marginalised labour market sector and to experience deskilling. In contrast, in the Southern, but also (surprisingly) in the Eastern European countries, migrant domestic workers reported more frequent and massive experiences of *disrespect* (Kontos and Sacaliuc 2008).

The relevance of social status for processes of recognition and processes of identity and self-understanding is two-fold. It relates not only to the social status ascribed to the job and to the employee but also to the social status of the employer. The identification of the worker with the wealthy employer - sustained by the familial logic and the family member metaphor – is part of inner-subjective processes of perceiving social recognition. The social status of the wealthy employer is a source of pride for the employee, enabling her to construct a higher social status for herself.

Thus, social recognition for migrant domestic and care workers is not only dependant on recognition accorded by the employer, but also on the normative structures offering institutionalised recognition that shape perception and interpretation patterns for migrant domestic workers and their social context.

Furthermore, ideologies (Honneth 2004, Althusser 1973) produced in the context of the country of origin intersect with the dynamics of recognition and the subjective process of coming to terms with the notion of the self. Practices of public recognition, i.e. *ideologies* of migration interconnected with state policies in the country of origin are relevant here. The Philippine state ideology of Philippine migrants – two thirds of which are women in domestic work – being “modern national heroines” (Chang and McAllister Groves 2000) affords public recognition to Philippine domestic workers abroad. This ideology legitimises the politics of export of care workers and secures the maintenance of the financial gain of the state through remittances (Briones 2009).¹⁴ The ideologically backed recognition seems to be behind specific patterns of pride arising in the narration of Filipinas interviewees. They take pride in their work and from “helping” the employer to organise his/her life.¹⁵ This consciousness of offering good care

¹⁴ At the same time this ideology is supported by the social upward mobility that the women experience through their remittances in their local community.

¹⁵ The act of helping creates a status difference with the recipient of help in a lower status position than the one who gives help (Luhmann, 1975: 139).

work and support to the employer's family strengthens their self-esteem. "Help" appears here as an ambiguous concept, it can be understood from the top and from below. Our Filipina interviewees don't feel that the help they offer is subordinated to the supervision of the employer but rather that the "help" they give plays a central role in the "survival" of the employer in everyday life. It is more a proof of their superiority than their subordination. This double meaning is backed by the ideology entailed in religious concepts developed in the context of the diasporic Philippine communities. In this religious discourse, the Filipinas domestic workers are redefined as "helpers of the world" rather than the "worlds' cleaners" (Chang and Ling 2000: 38–39).

5 Conclusions

I have tried to give an overview of the struggle for recognition of defamilialised migrant domestic and care workers in a familialised work relation. I have demonstrated the ambivalences and limitations of social recognition processes within this work relation and discussed the way these social recognition processes are determined and constrained by the overlapping of the private/familial and public/economic spheres and logics. This overlap and the familialisation of the work together with a defamilialisation of the worker are the background for claims for recognition of the workers normally negotiated in the family sphere. Here, the familial context of the work and the use of the "family member" metaphor are relevant. The familialisation of the work produces recognition claims that ultimately remain unfulfilled. These claims for recognition and the responses to them find their limits in the defamilialisation of the worker and the overarching economic interests of the employer. Both structures, the economic interest of the employer and the defamilialisation of the worker, are protected by policies tolerating the informal domestic and care work of migrant women, or even creating conditions to access cheap migrant labour from abroad.

Moreover, the intersubjective recognition within the work relation is also embedded in multiple normative structures within the two societies involved: the society of origin and the society of work. Internalisation of the social – for instance social status, norms and power relations that legitimise claims of recognition – leads to social recognition being also created through the self, i.e. through the reflection on the representations of the social within the process of identity formation and self-esteem of the workers as socially (mis-)recognised. The Filipina worker develops pride in her work out of the recognition accorded by the state ideology to so-called "national heroines". This ideology may fill the vacuum left by the lack of recognition of the work as valuable for the employing family and for society. The cultures of rights that shape the attitudes of the employers are most important for the inner- and inter-subjective recognition dynamics.

The familialisation of the work and the defamilialisation of the worker is the backdrop for the severe limitations on social recognition processes within the work relationship. It is mainly the defamilialisation of the worker that leads to an understanding of the work as only temporary and to seeing exit and return to the country of origin as the solution to the dire working and life conditions in the job. This might explain why the interviewees did not refer to claims for social recognition in the third recognition sphere defined by Honneth (1992) – the public sphere and the law – for instance by formulating demands for political rights but limited their discourse to claims related to their specific needs and their experiences within the work relationship. The complaints of reduced recognition reveal the specific marginal social integration that migrant domestic and care workers have to accept.

Given the social embeddedness of recognition struggles in historically developed normative structures, this analysis is limited to European national contexts. The varieties of modernisation imply a variety of normative structures and it is to be expected that in the different countries, different normative conditions of recognition struggles within the private sphere ensue.

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