

# Migration and Care Labour

## Theory, Policy and Politics

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## Transnational Households: Migrants and Care, at Home and Abroad

*Sarah van Walsum and Maybritt Jill Alpes*

### Introduction

'[M]igration has stretched people's care commitments across the globe and as such challenges the national basis of eligibility to benefits and pensions' (Williams, 2009). Taking Fiona Williams' thoughts about the recognition and redistribution of care as a starting point, this chapter aims to rethink welfare issues from a transnational perspective. In dominant perception, the welfare state is thought of as a discreet and bounded national entity, whose citizens lay claim to care and financial security vis-à-vis their government. State regulated care and welfare policies are grounded in assumptions concerning family life and obligations that do not match actual practices and are flanked by a market supply of commercial provisions and services (Von Benda Beckmann and Von Benda Beckmann, 1994). The triad state, family and market is not fixed, and shifts as governments try to varying degrees to win the 'hearts and minds' of their citizens – to cut costs, facilitate business or support social hierarchies. Moreover, while one can argue that the relationship between state and citizen is inherently national – if not geographically, then at least in terms of jurisdiction – family and privately contracted relationships can easily be transnational or international in scope. In a context of accelerated globalization, this is increasingly the case. This fact is brought home, as it were, by the phenomenon of migrant care labour – citizens of one state providing care for the citizens of another. Through remittances to their families in places of origin, migrant care workers (most of them women) moreover constitute important sources of transnational welfare.

We need to think of welfare issues from a transnational perspective because the 20th century model of the welfare state is based on

assumptions about family, state and market practices that decreasingly hold true today. Families are spread across states and care needs are increasingly met through labour migration, both in the global South and the global North. A feminist literature on care workers illuminates the intimate involvement of migrant workers with care arrangements in countries of residence (Lutz, 2008; Williams, 2009), but is only starting to discuss the care needs or social risks of migrants and their family members (Hochschild, 2000; Parreñas, 2005; Yeates, 2009). Scholars with a human rights focus pay attention to the basic needs of migrant (care) workers and argue for the inclusion of migrants into the national social security systems of their countries of residence and work (Bosniak, 2006; Carens, 2008; Dembour and Kelly 2011; Math and Toullier 2003, 2004). Yet this body of literature neglects the fact that migrants lead transnational lives for which welfare provisions organized at a national level are not necessarily the most satisfactory source of social protection.

This chapter explores migrants' cross-border arrangements of care for family members in their countries of origin, as well as their own care needs upon retirement. Our findings are based on empirical research conducted in 2008 and 2009. We held semi-structured interviews with 15 Ghanaian and 17 Filipino domestic workers in Amsterdam. Subsequently we spent three weeks in respectively Ghana and the Philippines during which we stayed with and/or interviewed family members of five informants from the Ghanaian and the Filipino segments of the Amsterdam sample.<sup>1</sup>

Our data reveals tensions and multiple connections between the modernist ideal of the nuclear family and networked families. Ideals about family norms of both migrants and non-migrants are often different from actual family practices. While much of migration is driven by aspirations toward modernist lifestyles for example, migrants and their family members cope with care obligations across borders through diffuse and flexible living arrangements. At the same time, the services of domestic workers are often needed in more affluent parts of the world precisely because the nuclear family has broken down and single parent households are unable to combine care obligations with livelihood strategies.

Besides highlighting tensions and connections between sending and receiving societies, our data – thanks to the comparison made between Ghana and the Philippines – also helps to show how, in different normative contexts, struggles to reconcile migration and care are producing similar ambiguities and conundrums. In the West African context, complex

extended family networks have a strong tradition that still rivals the modernist ideal of the nuclear family, but the tension between these competing models is clearly evident in radio talk-shows and daily conversations. Given their Catholic tradition and historical ties with the United States, the Philippines are more imbued with a 'Western' modernist lifestyle than Ghana (see, for example, Parreñas, 2005). Nevertheless, there too cross border families were forced to struggle with dilemmas similar to those experienced by cross-border families in Ghana, forcing them into solutions that, in normative terms, are similarly ambiguous.

Before presenting and analysing our data, we shall first theorize the role the nuclear family plays as an ideal for the national welfare state and as a goal of migration projects. Following the writings of Ferguson (1999), we argue that the nuclear family is integral to the modernist project of the national welfare state. Its assumed stability, its well-defined limits and its dictated gender roles make it a unit that bureaucracies can control, and consumer markets can target. While falling apart in practice, the nuclear family and the lifestyle it stands for continue to shape the aspirations of many men and women in both the global North and the global South. The paradox is that, to achieve the modern lifestyle associated with the nuclear family, men and women increasingly experience the need to engage in social arrangements that are in fact at odds with it.

Migration forms an integral part of people's coping strategies, creating and reproducing complex reciprocal relationships across borders. Such fluid social structures are often better able to meet people's basic human needs of sustenance, shelter and care than nuclear families. In the course of our fieldwork we were witness to various ways in which the architecture of modernity, namely that of the single family home, was challenged by tactics of survival. Less visible than its physical architecture, but equally compelling, is the normative architecture of modernity, such as national laws, policies and adjudications. As Adam McKeown has argued, migration law is integral to the modernity projects of states and, as such, liable to be at odds with the strategies of cross-border care that we have observed (McKeown, 2008). In our conclusions we reflect on some of the tensions that can arise between the life projects of migrant domestic workers and their kin, and the normative assumptions in migration law.

## **The family, care and the contested architecture of modernity**

As Ferguson has theorized, a modern lifestyle is not a state of being people automatically 'develop' into, but a specific style that they must

work to attain, and that they must be able to support (1999). Because of the relative affluence that it expresses – a steady job, a home of one's own, ability to purchase consumer goods and independence from kin and other networks both for financial support and care labour-, a modern lifestyle is not universally accessible, but is in fact a sign of status. Ferguson describes how, as the Zambian economy fell into recession in the 1990s, retired copper miners were forced to leave the cities, where the cost of living was too high for them, and try their luck in rural areas (1999). The degree to which they succeeded depended largely on the quality and extent of their family and/or faith-based networks in those areas, and their ability to actively participate in those networks. That ability in turn depended largely on whether their dress, demeanour, language and choice of spouse expressed loyalty to the networks they wished to engage with and adherence to the rural value systems these promoted.

Ferguson argues that people do not evolve from 'traditional' to 'modern' ways of living and doing. Rather, styles accumulate, and a repertoire of styles can exist at any one time, offering people various options to choose from. Nor is one style necessarily better or more 'rational' than another. How relevant a particular style is to a person's needs will depend on their character, capabilities and specific material circumstances. Style is contingent, and people are likely to adapt their style to meet their perceived options (Ferguson, 1999).

In the course of our fieldwork, we saw competing lifestyles, like those theorized by Ferguson, manifest through the architecture of homes financed by migrants. While conducting interviews in the suburbs of Accra, Ghana, we visited one of the many housing developments that had sprouted throughout the outskirts of the capital. The project we visited was still under construction, but already included a few hundred homes. Each was gated in its own right, while a wall with a large entrance gate surrounded the development as a whole. A carpenter completing the kitchen in one of the homes told us most had been bought as an investment by migrants living abroad, and were being rented out to people working in white collar jobs in downtown Accra.

The houses in the development were similar in design, arranged in neat rows and linked by freshly paved roads. Each house sported its own identical water tank and was equipped with indoor plumbing. A number were already occupied, with carefully tended gardens. They were clearly built for single nuclear families, and the plots of land they were built on were too small to allow for much expansion. For young professionals, like a medical student and a civil engineer whom we talked to in the course of our field work, owning a single family home like the

ones in this development formed one of their three main goals in life. The other two were a car so they would no longer have to depend on public transport and a good private school for their children.

However, not all migrants investing into housing projects in their country of origin opt for such modern developments, nor did everyone we spoke to aspire to such a lifestyle. Next to this compound was a very different neighbourhood, consisting of houses built in various styles, built on individually bought plots of land. A few had been completed, were freshly painted, fenced off and skirted by flowery shrubs. Most, however were still under construction, while the plots of land were being used to grow plantain, yam and other vegetables. There were no paved roads, and many of the dirt tracks that linked the properties to the main road were badly eroded. The houses were supplied with electricity, but there was no municipal water supply or sewage.

Although the size of these houses varied, most were at least as large as or larger than the houses in the development next door, and almost all were surrounded by more land. One of the most impressive homes stood near the main road. It sported the name 'Canada Castle', sculpted into the front gate. Since one of us originally came from Canada herself, we decided to investigate. The owner of the house happened to be home, on vacation from Toronto where he had been living for a number of years. He proudly told us his house would accommodate twenty people once it was completed. When we asked if he planned to rent out rooms or apartments, he vehemently shook his head. No, this was meant to house the extended family.

Being able to house one's kin is a sign of success in Ghana, and a proof of one's capacity to take on responsibilities as an adult member of society (Smith, 2006). It struck us that there were at least two competing visions in Ghana on what it meant to be successful: one consists in a modernist lifestyle and the other in acting as a resource person in extended family based networks. Migrants living abroad are implicated in both.

When travelling to the Philippines, we realized that such ambiguities applied beyond the African context. At first sight, the middle class suburbs we visited in the Philippines seemed to conform to the architecture of modernity more consistently than those of Accra. However we eventually concluded that there, too, modernity as a lifestyle vied with different family norms, care obligations and social ambitions.

Upon hearing about our plan to visit the Philippines, one of our Filipina informants offered to let us stay in her house in a suburb of Manila. She had purchased the lot, just four years after coming to

the Netherlands as an au pair, from a real-estate agent who had been travelling through Europe to do business with Filipino migrants. The house was completed two years later, and now housed this informant's mother, who before had been renting an apartment closer to town. The house formed part of a modern housing development, similar in many ways to the one we had visited near Accra. This too was a gated community, formed of modestly sized homes designed to accommodate a nuclear family. Our informant's house had only two bedrooms. Like the housing development outside Accra, this one too had been built in a uniform style, in this case meant to evoke a Mediterranean ambiance. It was striking, however, that almost all the owners (including our informant) had purchased a second lot, next to the one their home was built on. Throughout the neighbourhood, construction was going on. Many of the houses already sported extensions, and no longer conformed to the original hacienda style. At least four were flanked by a small shop selling groceries, dry goods and credit for mobile phones.

While showing us around the neighbourhood, our informant's mother pointed out the houses owned by physicians and other professionals, and quoted the prices of the all-terrain vehicles that dotted the driveways. The fact that her daughter had been able to buy a house in such a fine neighbourhood, attested to her success as a migrant. Before leaving the Philippines, her daughter had confided to her that it was her dream to buy a house of her own. Now she had succeeded – the only one, not only among her siblings but also among her cousins.

What had initially been intended as an individual investment was, however, put under pressure by family commitments. Concerned that her mother, who had developed diabetes, would need care and help in the home, our Amsterdam informant eventually invited her unemployed younger brother, his wife and their two children to join her mother in the house. By having her brother move into her house, our informant could release him and his family from the overcrowded and run-down home that they had been sharing with the wife's widowed mother, siblings and in-laws, while ensuring her own mother of the help and care that she increasingly needed. Hence, whereas she had initially invested in a home of her own, our informant ended up accommodating her extended family members' needs.

## **Migration and care for older people**

As the previous example makes clear, there can be tensions between migrants' personal ambitions and individual needs for their own old

age with their commitments to their extended family, in particularly their aging parents. Lothar Smith, who studied Ghanaian migrants' home-building projects in the city of Accra, discovered that many people tried to negotiate such tensions by building two houses. Before building a house in the capital Accra, as a personal investment, they first built a home in their home town. They did this to express their success as migrants and their commitment to the extended family there and to secure shelter for themselves in their own old age, in a place where they expected to be looked after and kept company by their kin (Smith, 2006; see also: Mazzali et al., 2006).

Even this strategy, however, could prove to be too rigid to meet the needs of kin. The social significance of fluid and flexible housing arrangements that could accommodate a shifting constellation of family members was impressed upon us during a visit with the mother of a Ghanaian whom we had interviewed in the Netherlands. She lived in a small cocoa farming town in the western part of the Brong Ahafo region. She must have been in her early seventies, but was still fit and vigorous. She showed us a room she had had built for herself, among the dilapidated structures of her maternal family compound, situated in the oldest part of the town. In contrast to the crumbling surroundings, her room stood straight and proud, built of fresh mud bricks, on a cement foundation, with broad cement steps leading to a fine wooden door with glass panes. Her two sons, our informant in the Netherlands and one of his brothers who was also living there, had been investing in a more modern home for their parents, situated in a newer part of town. The sons' ambition had been to raise the status of their parents and siblings, and themselves by association, by constructing a modern bungalow away from the ancient family compound. However, their father had died a couple of years back, as had one of their sisters. Much of their savings had been spent on funeral costs, and construction on their parental home had stagnated. Their ageing mother had become impatient, laid claim to some of the building materials and remaining funds, and used these to build a room of her own, in her maternal family compound. 'Now at least I have a place where I can sleep in peace,' she told us. Left alone by the death of her husband and the departure of her children, the construction of her new single-family house being put on hold, she diverted her sons' savings toward the more ramshackle security of the traditional family compound.

Not all the elderly in Ghana can bank on the security of an extended family. Many aspects of Ghanaian society are in flux. The town where the woman discussed earlier lived was poor, but not yet depopulated.

The compound she lived in was in bad repair (except, of course, for her own room) but still lively and occupied by various generations, that could each play its part in helping her, should the need arise. Other towns, however, had thinned out as more of their younger people had moved to larger cities in Ghana or had migrated out of the country. We visited one woman in her eighties, who still worked three farms located at two, three and six miles from her village home. She too lived in a family compound, but it housed only herself, an equally elderly female relative, her youngest son who, unlike his older siblings, had not yet managed to leave the country and a small child sent over by a relative to help out.

As families become geographically spread out as a result of migration, care for the elderly must be divided between a far-flung network of relatives. Migrants may contribute by sending remittances or medicines. The money they send may support a sibling or other relative still resident in the town of origin, who can then devote his or her time to caring for an elderly parent, as described earlier. Siblings and other relatives can share the responsibility by letting an elderly parent move from one to the other (Van Walsum, 2000). It struck us during our visit to Ghana that elderly people were often on the move, visiting one relative after another.

Sometimes the most practical solution can be to have an aging parent move abroad to join a child who has migrated (Van Walsum, 2001). However, the admission policies of migrant children's countries of residence will not always accommodate such arrangements. Current Dutch policies, for example, no longer include provisions for widowed parents wishing to enter the Netherlands to live with children.<sup>2</sup> If a migrant is unable to bring over a care-dependent parent, they may feel compelled to return to look after them. One of the people we met during our trip in the Philippines was a woman who had worked in Japan for seven years as an entertainer. She was now back to help look after her mother, a spry old lady in her nineties, but paralyzed from the waist down by a series of strokes.

## **Migration and childcare**

In contexts of no social benefits and publicly financed services, childcare will often, of necessity, be structured via a complex interplay of nuclear and extended family. While parents (particularly mothers) may bear the primary responsibility for raising, and caring for children, they may also only be able to meet these responsibilities by delegating the

day-to-day work to family members (Van Walsum, 2000, 2009). This can be the case in countries of origin, where there are no social services, but also in more affluent countries when social services have been cut, or are not accessible to everyone.

Thus working mothers or housewives with more children than they can manage may ask friends or relatives to take one or more children into their homes. Parents living in the countryside may ask family in the city to take one or more of their children so that they can attend school there. Parents living in the city, on the other hand, may send their children to family in their home town to be looked after there. Conversely, adults with no children of their own may take on someone else's child to raise and set to work in the home, on the farm, or in the family business. Such foster children may moreover care for their foster parents in their old age.

During our visit to Ghana, we encountered many examples of child fostering arrangements. One of the women we visited whose husband was living in the Netherlands was fostering the child of a friend who had divorced. The father had claimed custody over the child, but had failed to send her to school, so the mother had intervened. Since she had by then remarried and her new husband wouldn't agree to take on a child from her previous marriage, she had asked the woman we were visiting to help. This woman could use an extra hand in her extended household, and complied.

According to this woman, it was common practice, following divorce, to give the father custody over children of school-going age. Her own husband had taken custody over his two sons having divorced his first wife. He had then let his younger brother look after the boys while he left for the Netherlands. The younger brother did a good job of raising them, and the elder brother rewarded him by helping him migrate to the Netherlands to pursue his studies. Now this woman told us her husband had hoped to bring his youngest child, their son, over to the Netherlands so that the younger brother could bring him up over there. Dutch family migration policies – which at the time still excluded children from reunification with parents who had not been constantly and consistently involved with their upbringing – had however thwarted this plan (see: Van Walsum, 2009a).

This example shows how childcare arrangements could diverge considerably from those implied by the nuclear family model, whereby the primary caring responsibility rests with a child's biological parents, specifically the mother. We did however encounter examples of mothers who strove to conform to that model, although they too could be forced,

through the circumstances of migration, to postpone the moment of achieving their most desired caring arrangement.

One of our informants in Amsterdam had not surrendered custody to her children's father following divorce, but had kept her children. Both her parents were still alive at the time, and her father, as a former policeman, still had the use of a house on the police compound. The fact that she could move there with her four children may have made it easier for her to keep them. With only secondary education, however, it was difficult for her to earn enough to support the children and pay for their education. Two of her sisters were already settled in Amsterdam and encouraged her to join them. Our informant managed to convince a cousin of hers, a primary school teacher with a child of her own, to move in with her children and her by then widowed mother. Satisfied that her children would be well looked after and that her mother would have enough help, our informant left for the Netherlands, where she found work as a (initially undocumented) domestic worker and was able to remit to her children and pay their school fees.

While in Ghana, we visited this woman's children and the cousin who was looking after them in their spacious (nearly completed) bungalow to which they had moved after the woman's father had died. It was situated on the outskirts of Kumasi and was by far the most comfortable home we were to visit during our tour of Ghana. By then the two sons were more or less out of the house. The eldest had recently completed his polytechnic education in construction engineering. The youngest was studying civil engineering at the Nkwame Nkrumah Technical University. The two girls were still at boarding school. The day we visited was a school holiday, so our informant's cousin and the girls were all at home to receive us. The girls were excited to receive news and gifts (mobile phones) from their mother in Amsterdam. They missed her, although she had been back for a few months two years before. She had met and eventually married a Ghanaian with a British passport, and had thus been able to return to Kumasi after an absence of four years so that she could file for admission on the grounds of her marriage. Back in Amsterdam, she had started the procedure to bring over her two daughters before they reached the age of eighteen.

Although the children in this example said they missed their mother, they also seemed to have taken the fostering arrangement in their stride. We spoke with one of her sons at a construction site in Accra where he was doing his internship. When we asked him how he felt about his mother's absence, he indicated this was a fairly normal state

of affairs, and that he was grateful for the education his mother had been able to finance thanks to her work abroad. Although they might have preferred to have had her with them, these children did not seem to have experienced their family situation as being painfully abnormal (cf. Poeze and Mazzucato 2013).<sup>3</sup>

In her path-breaking work on the impact on Filipino mothers and children of cross-border parent-child relations, Parreñas reports that the gendered norms of the nuclear family are well entrenched in the Philippines, and that long term separations between mothers and children are consequently experienced as painfully abnormal and problematic (Parreñas, 2001, 2005). Our conclusions are more nuanced. Our observation was that, particularly in the event of a crisis like divorce, fostering in the Philippines was not uncommon (cf. Medina, 2005; Chant and McIlwaine, 1995). It even seemed to be a practice that was being handed over from one generation to another. A woman we visited in the city of Baguio, several hours north of Manila, told us she had been raised by an aunt after her parents had separated, and her mother had left the Philippines to work in Singapore as a domestic worker. This woman said she felt closer to this aunt than she ever had to her mother. In fact, when this aunt, who was one of our Amsterdam informants, left the Philippines, her niece took over the care of her children. When the niece left for Singapore some years later to work as a domestic worker herself, another aunt (a sister of our Amsterdam informant) took over the care of *her* children. By then yet another of our Amsterdam informant's sisters had taken on the responsibility for that informant's children. While the modernist ideal of the nuclear family may be well-entrenched in the Philippines, there too the exigencies of marital failure and migration have spawned well-entrenched practices that are at odds with it.

### Migrants' perspectives upon retirement

Undocumented migrants, like most of the domestic workers in our Amsterdam sample, will generally not be in a position to bring over parents or children in need of care. In fact, they will often have to count on spending their own old age in their country of origin themselves, since they lack the financial resources and care-providing networks that would enable them to stay on in their countries of employment. Like the retiring copper miners described by Ferguson in the late 1990s (1999), undocumented migrant workers will be largely dependent on their networks 'at home' upon retirement.

Where state provisions for the elderly are scarce, children can play a key role in providing financial support and care for their ageing parents. However, undocumented migration can have unforeseen consequences on fertility. Nearly all of our Ghanaian and Filipino informants had originally entered on a tourist visa, or as an au pair, and subsequently overstayed. By doing so, they had made it practically impossible for themselves to ever enter the European Union (EU) again, should they return to their countries of origin. Only those who managed to acquire legal status would have the chance to get another visa to re-enter the EU.

One of the people we visited in Ghana was the wife of a male informant in the Netherlands. The couple had decided to wait with marriage until our informant had succeeded in 'getting his papers'. This took 14 years, and his future wife ended up spending most of her fertile years as the 'green widow' of an undocumented migrant. By the time our informant had built up a sufficiently secure position in the Netherlands to be able to return to Ghana and take on the responsibility of starting a family, his wife was in her forties. They had a child following that visit – her first, and probably her last. This woman had a younger sister, whose husband had also migrated and was residing illegally in the United Kingdom. She had become pregnant before her husband left, and now had a six year old girl. There was no telling how long it would take before this child would ever meet her father or her parents could consider conceiving a second.

Although some of the Filipina women whom we interviewed in the Netherlands had migrated after having started a family, many others had left the Philippines as young women. Most of these women subsequently remained single, like the woman discussed earlier in the section on elderly care, who had worked as an entertainer in Japan before returning to the Philippines to help look after her partially paralyzed mother. Now in her early fifties, this woman had nothing and no one to fall back on in her own old age. All her savings from her work in Japan had gone toward paying her mother's treatment in a private clinic. She had no home of her own, but lived-in with her mother. Without any children of her own, she worried about her own old age. Looking younger than her age, and well-versed in feminine charms, she had decided to search for a partner abroad via the Internet. Her efforts had been rewarded, and when we spoke with her she told us she was engaged to an American from California, and waiting for her papers to be processed.

Another childless woman whom we met, who was also in her early fifties, was less confident about her future well-being. She too had spent much of her adult life working abroad – not as an entertainer, but as a domestic worker. Like the woman who had worked in Japan, she too had returned to the Philippines to look after her ageing mother.

As long as her mother stayed alive, this woman could live with her and count on the support of a sister who lived in the Netherlands, and had financed the mansion she and the old lady stayed in. But once her mother passed away, this woman feared she would no longer be able to count on being maintained by her sister in the Netherlands.

Both in Ghana and the Philippines, being childless need not preclude developing a support network of young people who may commit to providing financial support and care in the future. As discussed earlier, fostering is a common practice in both countries, and in both the countries we also met women with no children – or only one child – who had been or still were caring for other people's children as if they were their own. However, for women who had spent many years abroad working the situation was different. Because of their long absences, the two Filipina women described previously had, for example, never been in a position to foster a child or otherwise establish strong ties with any of their nieces and nephews. Nor had they apparently been able to accumulate goodwill by investing in their college educations. Like the woman who had worked as an entertainer in Japan, the other woman also banked on finding a husband abroad who could support her after her mother died. But with none of the former's glamour and familiarity with the Internet, she clearly felt discouraged.

On the basis of his study on retired mineworkers in Zambia, James Ferguson concluded that networks of kin and faith-based communities could not always be relied on to provide the necessary sustenance and (care) labour that people needed upon retirement (1999). Many of the retired mineworkers whom he had followed ended up living in poverty. During our conversations in Ghana and the Philippines, everyone assured us that care for the elderly was not a problem in their societies. The consensus was that there were always relatives around to look after them. On the basis of our observations, we question these assumptions. On the one hand, many older people risk ending up in an isolated and vulnerable position due to accelerated migration from rural areas to cities. On the other, migrants who have spent many years abroad but who are forced by circumstances to return to their countries of origin after retirement, may not have been able to generate the support they will need from a younger generation in order to be able to survive comfortably.

### **Extended cross border networks as counterpoints to nuclear families**

The gendered nuclear family and its household stand for a discrete, stable and circumscribed unit that is legible for a state bent on taxing its citizens

and redistributing resources among them, and on controlling sexuality and upbringing, important factors in the physical and moral reproduction of citizenship. The nuclear family also forms an identifiable target for a consumer market while providing a convenient arrangement for the reproduction of wage labour (cf. Oldenziel and Bouw, 1998). According to Adam McKeown, migration law similarly serves the modernist project of reducing populations to individual units, easily made subject to governance by a nation-state (2008).

Migrants from the global South working as domestic workers in the global North play an important role in facilitating the lifestyle associated with the ideal of the nuclear family among their kin in their countries of origin, financing modern homes, business investments, advanced education and private health care (UNDP, 2011; Mohapatra, Ratha and Silwal, 2010). Through their work, they also facilitate the ideal of the nuclear family in their country of residence, 'covering' for erstwhile homemakers who have left the home to take part in paid labour. The fact that their work is often not (fully) regulated in regimes of labour, social security and immigration law, helps maintain the illusion that these migrants don't really exist, and that it is still the national homemaker who is doing the work (cf. Botman, 2010). Paradoxically, in maintaining the ideal of the nuclear family at home and abroad, these migrants depend on and facilitate strategies involving extended family and other social configurations that are generally regarded as traditional, pre-modern and oppressive in comparison with the increasingly elusive nuclear family, which has always been viewed as more modern and emancipatory (cf. Ferguson, 1999; Stacey, 1991). A final example from our fieldwork can serve to illustrate this paradox.

While we were visiting the Batangas region of the Philippines, a few hours' bus ride south of Manila, we visited the son and daughter of two of our informants in Amsterdam, a Filipino couple working as domestics there. Their son and daughter were both married, with children of their own. In their parents' absence they had moved into the smart and spacious bungalow that their parents had financed with their remittances. Both lived there with their respective families – except for the daughter's husband who was working in the oilfields of Azerbaijan.

The son had a degree in Information and Communications Technology and was applying for a job in the Middle East oil fields. Should he succeed, his contract would most likely be temporary, forcing him to leave his wife and daughter behind in Batangas. His sister had a degree in mathematics, and had even gone to the Netherlands, with the help of an aunt who was settled there, to further her studies, but had been

unable to master the Dutch language. After returning to the Philippines she was happy to move into her parents' bungalow and look after her two children, while her husband remitted from Azerbaijan. She busied herself with driving her four year old daughter, in her own car, to a prestigious private school, with redecorating her parents' home, and with planting a flower garden. Although she shared the household with her brother and sister-in-law, she still felt she could use some help; and a cousin from the countryside, who had just divorced and needed a job, was brought over to look after the children and help out with the chores. This cousin's own children were left behind with their grandmother.

Despite her aborted education in the Netherlands, our informants' daughter had come a long way toward achieving a lifestyle like that was reflected by the soaps and ads on Filipino television and that she perhaps perceived of as typical of the Netherlands. But the transnational and extended household arrangement that supported this lifestyle was far removed from, and to a degree at odds with, the neatly contained nuclear family model generally associated with it.

From a modern welfare state's perspective, services and support from family and other (transnational) networks are potentially subversive as these can provide ways to circumvent state restrictions and controls, reduce dependence on declared wage labour and provide alternatives to a state regulated market in commercial products and services (Van Walsum, 2000). Bashi has shown how transnational social networks structuring long-term and extended patterns of reciprocal commitments can serve to co-opt sections of both the labour and the real estate markets and to circumvent restrictive migration policies (Bashi, 2007). Criminologists have similarly charted the capacity of informally regulated transnational networks to circumvent state control of cross-border cash transfers and thwart measures against international crime (Bunt and Siegel, 2009; Passas, 2005).

It is not surprising then that configurations that we have described here as central to cross-border family arrangements of migrants, meet resistance in national migration policies. In the past, Dutch migration policies made it close to impossible for parents to bring over children whom they had left behind in the care of another adult (Van Walsum, 2009a). Although these policies were eventually abandoned under pressure of international law, they were subsequently applied once again when refugees applied to bring over their children (Strik, Ullersma and Werner, 2012). Moreover, current Dutch family migration policies no longer provide for the admission of extended family members.<sup>4</sup>

While Bashi's study convincingly charts the resilience of cross-border networks, it also shows how their success is contingent. While the West Indians that Bashi studied were successful in establishing themselves as property owners in the New York City area, in London, where housing is more state regulated, they remained dependent on the rental sector (Bashi, 2007). The regulatory context of nation states makes a difference.

## Conclusion

Although in different ways and to a lesser degree than in countries like Ghana or the Philippines, in more affluent societies the modernist ideal of the nuclear family is also in competition with more complex and diffuse household arrangements (cf. Stacey, 1991). As wealthier states age, the female members of their populations are supplementing the work their male partners perform on the labour market. Households of nuclear families are increasingly relying on migrant domestic workers, as women in wealthier states try to reduce the amount of time they devote to households, children and elderly.

In less affluent countries, young adult citizens have been leaving in growing numbers to work in the more affluent states (cf. Stewart, 2011). This has occurred as the governments of less affluent countries have been retracting state support for the education and health of their expanding populations, often under the pressure of international organizations like the IMF. Many of these young migrants – particularly although not exclusively the women among them – have been engaged in resolving the so-called 'crisis of care' in the wealthier states (Hochschild, 2000; Lutz, 2008; Triandafyllidou, 2013). In doing so, they have been able to supply the necessary funds to compensate for the reduced state involvement in the housing, education and health care of their extended families at home (UNDP, 2011; Mohapatra, Ratha and Silwal, 2010). In this process, they not only disrupt the model of the nuclear family (sometimes at the cost of their own reproductive chances), they also challenge the notion of the nation as a bounded entity in sole control of its citizens' welfare.

Migrant domestic workers, who play a growing role in resolving the newly emerging care issues in affluent countries of employment, also play a key role in initiating and maintaining alternative strategies for meeting care needs in their countries of origin. Permanent and total inclusion, along the lines of the traditional nuclear family model, into a single and closed scheme of national social policy can no longer be seen

as the sole approach to addressing issues of social security and care. As this chapter has illustrated, migrant care workers (like other migrants) often rely on extended informal social networks to put into place care arrangements across great distances for their parents, their children and for themselves during retirement. Policy makers trying to resolve such issues, both in the sending and in the receiving countries of migrant care workers, might derive inspiration from those workers' own initiatives to revise their care arrangements and those of their family. In seeking new ways to reconcile tensions between an increasingly varied and mobile workforce and the nationalist and gendered assumptions that still underlie the welfare state, policy makers would do well to support such alternative strategies rather than thwart them.

## Notes

1. This research was funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) as part of the collaborative ESF/EUROCORES project: Migration and Networks of Care in Europe.
2. Letter of the deputy minister of Safety and Justice, Fred Teeven, to Dutch Parliament of 21 December 2012, nr. 2012-0000732930 (hereafter: Letter of 21 December 2012).
3. While fosterage is a common practice in Ghana, the practice of fostering is currently increasingly being put to question (see Tsikata, 2011). Fostering after all does have its darker side, namely the possible exploitation of children as domestic workers. During our stay in Ghana, we were struck by the fact that children's rights were being strongly promoted by locally active human rights organisations.
4. Letter of 21 December 2012.

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