Migrant Care: Discipline through Self-Regulation or emancipatory potentials through concepts of (transnational) Social Justice in Migrant Care Arrangements.

Romanian and Austrian Narratives.

According to Nancy Fraser, Foucault’s theory of social ordering and discipline that has arisen since after the Enlightenment and especially during the 20th century has to be re-read and interpreted today in light of arising globalisation. As she points out, there are three aspects to Foucault’s analysis of self-regulation, which are: 1) Rationalisation of all major aspects of social life, such as family and community life, 2) a concentration of these self-regulation practises within the national frame and 3) the individual self-regulation through which discipline is exercised. Here, Foucault, as well as Fraser, highlights the paradoxical relationship of self-imposed regulation through autonomy, meaning governing individuals through their internal self-regulation.

In light of globalisation, Fraser considers re-evaluating these three ways of social regulation and concludes that there are three new parameters of regulation nowadays: 1) The transnational character of governmentality, in which the nation state is just one among a variety of actors that govern. 2) The increased marketization of social welfare, which increasingly functions according to economic rationality, expressed through intensified claims for individual rationality and individual responsibility in all aspects of life. Moreover, market mechanisms organize human acidity. 3) The new subject of governmentality is the actively responsible agent, consequently resulting in the obligation to take care of one’s own live, one’s own human capital and one’s own quality of life. Everyone thus becomes an expert on her_himself.

To Fraser, following these new premises of governmentality, a new form of transnational segmentation is arising, separating the capable ones from the incapable, the over-achievers from the under-achievers. In addition, a new form of population profiling arises “for the sake of efficiency and risk prevention”. These capable ones are those who are highly flexible and fully networked, they are the self-responsible ones, while the others are repressed. During this segmentation, the universal drive of former (national) social policy is overthrown (Fraser 2003).

The need to rethink traditional concepts of social policy due to intensifying transnational arrangements that hollow-out national defined social security rights and provisions based on national concepts of social justice rises. These transnational arrangements and movements of people are neither new nor historically unique, but are pressing issues to which national social security systems seem unable to respond. Transnational migrant care serves as one good example of these transnational movements, greatly connected with global inequalities. At the global level, this
phenomenon is guiding theme to various research projects, establishing for example the concept of
global care chains, various extensions of the global care chain concept or the terminus “new servant
society” But migrant care is not a phenomenon that only occurs on a global scale, from (very) poor to
(very) rich countries. It is also within the European Union, that transnational migration for care takes
place. Within the European Union, it is especially along the former division line between so-called
Eastern and Western Europe that women migrate to care. Based on the example of the European
Union as a political and economic union, it is especially striking how the lack of a transnational
concept of justice and transnational social policy shifts away problems of one member state to other
member states. The case of Romania and Austria will illustrate the scope and various aspects of
migrant care in the sector of in-home elderly care.

The paper will thus analyse the example of Romania and Austria as a pair of sending and receiving
countries in the sector of in-home elderly care in light of the overall research question: Are
transnational migrant care arrangements the expression of a new Foucauldian form of transnational,
marketized self-regulation that acts through segmentation and population profiling rather than
universalty?