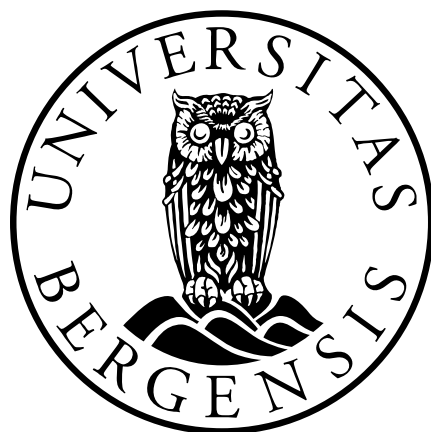


# The Egalitarian Heart

Glocal Care Chains in the Filipino Au Pair Migration To  
Norway

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## Summary

This study explores the phenomenon of Filipino au pair migration to Norway through the lens of the global care chains framework. For the past two decades au pairing has grown alongside other forms of paid domestic labour, also in Norway, where the norms of gender equality and international solidarity have traditionally been strong and the employment of private cleaners and domestic workers is seen as morally problematic.

Because of the affinities between au pairs and domestic workers, the global care chains perspective – developed originally in the USA for the study of domestic workers and nannies in private homes – has been extended to the study of au pairs, often without taking into consideration the local institutional contexts to which it is applied.

The metaphor of the care chain calls attention to the commodification of reproductive labour and the multiple links that emerge between individuals, households, and societies when tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and caring become commodities sold and bought on a global market. Studies deploying the care chains perspective have often depicted migrant women as victims and servants of globalization.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among current and former Filipino au pairs, this study explores how they rationalize and go about au pairing in Norway, and how they experience being au pairs in an egalitarian society with ‘passion for equality’. Unlike other au pair studies, this one brings also the perspectives of the au pairs’ family members to the fore of the analysis in an attempt to understand how the au pair migration to Norway impacts the lives of their families in the country of origin.

With a glocalized care chains framework, i.e., a framework sensitive to the particularities of the local contexts of the sending and receiving societies, this study shows that economic motivation is an important reason for migration, but that also the cultural and formative elements of the au pair scheme are important for the au pairs. The analysis shows that the Norwegian au pair scheme offers an attractive way to travel, work, and achieve one’s personal goals to au pairs from different class backgrounds, and that rather than always poor and disadvantaged, Filipino au pairs are agentive and resourceful.

Another important finding is that due to the local Norwegian care culture, according to which the best care for children is the pedagogical upbringing in the kindergarten, Filipino au pairs are seldom responsible for the daily care of the host family's children. The analysis reveals that even though the au pairs might want to engage in the care of the host family's children, they are not always able to. In this situation, the au pairs are performing mostly the domestic work of the host families.

Even though au pairs are hired mostly for the sake of doing the 'dirty work' of cleaning, cooking and dusting, the Norwegian host families try not to overwork them and to follow the terms of the employment contract. An important finding, made possible through the glocalization of the care chains analysis, is that the interplay of the Norwegian gender, care and migration regimes create locally-specific conditions for au pairing that not only enable the au pairs to enjoy leisure time, but also make possible new ways of producing emotional surplus value.

The study examines also the role of remittances in the everyday lives of the au pairs' families in the country of origin, and shows that monetary remittances reorganize local care relations by challenging established gender orders and by triggering new care chains. The analysis, however, shows that the practice of remitting is not universal, but class-specific, and that the transnational exchanges of care are complex and multi-directional.

The glocalization of the global care chain framework is a major contribution of this study. By exploring the experiences of au pairs from different socio-economic backgrounds, this study challenges the victimization perspective in much of the care chains literature and contributes to decentering the care chains' preoccupation with motherly care. The study makes an overall contribution to the scholarship on globalization of reproductive labour, transnational families and to the scholarship on global feminized migration to the Nordic societies.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction to the rationale and aims of this study

### Introduction

This study explores the phenomenon of Filipino au pair migration to Norway through the lens of one of the most influential perspectives on contemporary transnational (female) migration into care and domestic work – ‘global care chains’ (Hochschild 2000). The concept of global care chain refers to the international division of labour, in which women from economically disadvantaged regions of the world cross the globe in response to the growing demand for paid domestic and care work in more developed regions and take over the reproductive tasks of privileged families in exchange for money. Filipino women’s participation in the au pair scheme is now increasingly recognized as a case of transnational feminized migration for work and a response to this growing demand for paid domestic and care labour<sup>1</sup> (Cox 2015, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, Isaksen 2010a, Stenum 2011a, 2015).

For the last few decades the phenomenon of au pairing has grown alongside other forms of paid domestic work such as nannies, housecleaners and live-in domestic workers and has become an important source of low-paid migrant labour throughout Europe and the New World (Cox 2015a, Yodanis and Lauer 2005). This has also been the case in Norway despite its generous and universal provision of childcare services aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of paid work with care for children. Norway, in line with the other Nordic welfare states has a long history of active policies on gender equality and social welfare for all.

The differences between au pairs and domestic workers are not always easy to see as the au pairs are often subject to many of the same challenges and privations – low pay, long working hours, lack of privacy and vulnerability to abuse – as other live-in domestic workers (Cox 2015a). Because of the affinities between au pairs and domestic workers, the concept of global care chains has been extended to the study of au pairs in both the USA, where the concept was originally developed (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002), and to European

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<sup>1</sup> I use the words ‘work’ and ‘labour’ interchangeably although I am aware of their slightly different connotations. Work refers to waged labour or so-called productive labour, while labour might be seen as “the activity that reproduces biological labour” (Weeks 2011). Labour has its own pace and is harder to quantify.

countries (Lutz 2008) and especially to the au pair migration to Norway and Denmark (Bikova 2015b, 2010, Stenum 2015, 2011a, Hovdan 2005, Isaksen 2001, Stubberud 2015b).

## **Global movement of paid domestic workers and au pairs**

The global-scale trends that have underpinned the movement of workers and particularly the movement of women around the world to carry out the reproductive work of privileged families have also supported the growth of au pairing (Cox 2015a). Major demographic changes in the western industrialized societies have underpinned the growing demand for paid domestic and care labour. Among these are women's entrance into the paid labour force and the growth of the dual-earner family model that, at the face of men's reluctance to take their share of the household chores has created the need for someone else – most often a woman, and increasingly a migrant woman, to take over the domestic and care work. Another is the growing life expectancy that poses challenges to states when it comes to the provision of adequate care services (Lutz 2008, Isaksen 2010a, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). Welfare states' difficulties to provide affordable care services for the reconciliation of work and family life and the persistent unequal distribution of care and domestic work in the dual-earner family has created a cultural lag that has opened for the outsourcing of these tasks to the global market (Isaksen 2010b, Cox 2015).

In the poorer regions of the world, the destruction of local economies, unemployment and poverty have pressed women into assuming a greater breadwinner role, often without any form of state support. This has been a major factor, though not the only one, behind the increased migration of women in search of work and their undertaking of domestic and care work (Castles and Miller 2009, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are at least 53 million domestic workers worldwide, not including child domestic workers and au pairs, and that the number may be as high as 100 million, 83 per cent of whom are women (ILO 2015).

There are five main streams of migrant domestic workers that reflect immigration regulations, historical colonial relationships, income inequalities and language commonalities. These are movements of workers from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, from Mexico, Central and South America to the United States, from North Africa to Southern Europe, from South Asia

to the oil-rich Persian Gulf and from the Philippines to much of the world (Isaksen, Devi, and Hochschild 2008, Romero, Preston, and Giles 2014).

Au pair migrations are part of these patterns and they often reflect historic relationships between states as well as more recent cultural relationships (Cox 2015a). There is no official data on the number of au pairs worldwide, but substantial academic and industry evidence suggests that au pairing has been growing globally in recent years and that this growth is part of a broader expansion of migration for domestic work. Language learning and language commonalities between countries have traditionally been important in shaping flows of au pairs. The role of English as a global language sends thousands of au pairs to the UK and the USA each year so that they can improve their skills.

The movement of Filipino au pairs to Norway and Denmark, however, can hardly be explained with language commonalities between the Philippines and the Scandinavian countries despite the fact that English is widely used in both of these regions. Neither are there former colonial ties or long trading relationships between the Philippines and the Scandinavian countries. In fact, Norway was not always a popular destination for Filipino migrant workers because of its cold climate, difficult language and most importantly – the restrictive immigration regulations for migrants from outside the EU and the EEA-countries<sup>2</sup>. Apart from the Filipino nurse migration to Norway in the 1970s and 2000s (Seeberg and Sollund 2010), Filipino migration to Norway has been rather modest. Still, Norway and Denmark have become preferred au pair-destinations for young Filipinos and thousands of Filipino au pairs have been placed in Norwegian and Danish homes for the past decade (Stenum 2011a, Liversage, Bille, and Jakobsen 2013, UDI 2016b, 2014).

### **Au pairs in Norway. Some basic numbers**

From 2002 to May 2016, 20, 232 young foreigners received au pair permits for Norway and 18, 254 of these were given to au pairs from non-EEA countries (also called third country nationals). Prior to the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, the majority of the au pairs in Norway were from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe. In 2002, a total number

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<sup>2</sup> The European Economic Area (EEA) brings together the EU Member States and the three member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) allowing the EFTA-EEA states to participate in the EU's Internal Market without being members of the EU.

of 756 new au pair permits were granted to foreign nationals and only 274 of these given to third country nationals (UDI 2016b).

With EU-enlargements in 2004 and 2007, however, the number of au pairs from the new member states decreased as they could move freely between the EU and the EEA-countries and take jobs in the EU/EEA labour market. Free access to the European labour market made the institution of au pairing – formerly used as a strategy for entry, work and higher education in Norway, a less attractive option (Øien 2009).

For non-EU/EEA-nationals, the enlargement of the EU meant increased control of its outer borders and reduced opportunities for entry into the European countries. It is, however, among the third country nationals and particularly au pairs from the Philippines, that the largest growth of au pair permits has been registered in Norway. For example, from 2002 to May 2016, 18, 254 third-country nationals received au pair permits for Norway and 13, 346 or 73 per cent of these were given to Filipino citizens (UDI 2016b). While only 71 persons with Filipino citizenship received au pair visa in 2002, their number was 1521 in 2011 (UDI 2016b). That this increase has taken place in a period when the Filipino au pair migration to Europe was officially forbidden by the Philippine Immigration Authorities is an interesting development.

The Filipino au pair migration to Europe, including the Scandinavian countries, was until June 2010, officially banned by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs with a Ban on Deployment (DFA 1998). The ban aimed at protecting Filipino au pairs from abuse and exploitation after a number of cases of poor treatment of Filipino au pairs in Europe were reported (Anderson 2000).

The ban made the Filipino au pair migration to Europe illegal and the implications for those who chose to migrate were that they were not covered by the administrative umbrella of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). This means that Filipino au pair migrants could not formally appeal to their embassies abroad in case of abuse and that they also risked being banned from future migration via POEA. Still, Filipino au pair migrants continued coming to Europe and Norway even though they had to pay a bribe to airport personnel and border guards to exit the Philippines (Stenum 2015). This also makes the exploration of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway an important object of study for the current research.

## Research question

A main objective of this study is to explore whether the Filipino migrants' participation in the Norwegian au pair scheme can be understood in terms of global care chains. Such an exploration will hopefully make a contribution to both national and international scholarship on the globalization of reproductive labour, the feminization of migration and migration to the Nordic societies, which are also topics with long research traditions at the Department of Sociology at the University of Bergen. The main research question organizing this study is,

What knowledge about the Filipino au pair migration to Norway can be obtained with help of the global care chain conceptual framework?

To explore this question empirically, I have studied different sides of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway and interviewed both Filipino au pair migrants in Norway and family members of au pairs in the Philippines. The four empirical chapters of this study (Chapter 5 to Chapter 8) are empirically-based specifications of the main research question and explore different dimensions of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway.

The knowledge about the Filipino au pair migration to Norway presented in this study is based on the au pair migrants' and their families' own elaborations on their experiences with and rationalizations of migration and is as such a bottom-up analysis of transnational migration.

This work is situated within the field of sociology, where the analysis of social relations at the local, national and global levels is central. More particularly, with its focus on local and transnational family relations, the globalization of reproductive labour and the way welfare states impact people's everyday lives, this study stands at the intersection of the sociology of the family, the sociology of migration and welfare sociology. All these subdisciplines have long traditions in empirical research at the Department of Sociology at the University of Bergen and particularly in the research groups Migration, Environment and Development (Migrasjon, Utvikling og Miljø) and Welfare, Inequality and Life Course (Velferd, Ulikhet og Livsløp).

## What is an au pair?

The au pair system dates back to the late nineteenth century and has its roots in European pre-war informal exchanges between middle-class households who would send their daughters to a household of a similar socio-economic status in another country to improve their language skills and learn about housekeeping. The period abroad was intended as a preparation for adult life and particularly marriage as the young middle-class women were expected to learn how to run a household and set up their own homes. The first records of au pairs refer to young German-speaking middle-class women in Switzerland placed in French-speaking families to enhance their knowledge of housekeeping, the French language and French cuisine, while the host families, in return, received childcare from women of their own social standing (Anderson 2009, Cox 2015, Liarou 2015). ‘Au pair’ comes from French and means ‘on equal terms’ reflecting the idea that the temporal membership in a household will be exchange between equals who will be ‘on equal terms’ (Griffith and Legg 1989).

In the post-war years due to the shortage of domestic workers throughout Europe, au pairing grew in a number of European countries and ceased to be based on exchanges between households who knew each other (Liarou 2015, Cox 2015a). In the United Kingdom, for example, the employment of au pairs has always been a way to relieve the British middle classes of the ‘servant problem’ (Liarou 2015, Cox 2006). The ‘servant problem’ is the historical ‘problem’ of the upper class to find good servants. The upper class complained that servants did not know their place and were insubordinate and lazy (Cox 2006). With this historical fact, Liarou (2015) locates the history of au pairing in the context of servitude. Moreover, au pairs and domestic servants have historically performed much of the same work. This further emphasizes the difficulty of drawing a line between au pairing and other forms of paid domestic work.

Concerns about the unregulated movement of young women around Europe and their treatment within the households they were hosted by led, in 1969, to the first international agreement on au pairing, the ‘European Agreement on “au pair” placement’ also known as the ‘Strasbourg Agreement’ (Council of Europe 1969). The Strasbourg Agreement defines the au pair placement as follows,

The temporary reception by families, in exchange for certain services, of young foreigners who come to improve their linguistic and possibly professional knowledge as well as their general culture by acquiring a better knowledge of the country where they are received (Council of Europe 1969, Article 2).

In exchange for free board, lodging and ‘pocket money’, the young foreigners, aged 17 to 30 years old, were expected to help with light household chores and childcare. The Agreement was also a recognition that the practice of au pairing though not new has become a problem of ever-increasing magnitude that needed to be regulated (Council of Europe 1969). The stated objective of the Strasbourg Agreement was to define and standardize the conditions governing au pair placements among the member states of the Council of Europe and to provide protection for au pairs by defining their age, length of stay, maximum working hours as well as the right to free time and religious activities (Cox 2015a).

The Agreement was opened for signature by the Member States of the Council of Europe on November 24, 1969. Only six Member states ratified it: Denmark, France, Italy, Luxemburg, Norway, Spain and Luxemburg. Luxemburg revoked the ratification in 2002. Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Moldova and Switzerland have signed the agreement, but have not ratified it. While not all European countries signed up to the agreement, its tenets provided the basis for most au pair schemes in Europe and elsewhere. It established the idea of au pairing as a form of international movement, carried out by young women and involving the ‘exchange’ of childcare and housework for room, board, pocket money and the opportunity to learn about a different culture (Cox 2015a).

Today, au pair is an ambiguous term. It is partly a visa category, partly a travel arrangement and partly a living arrangement. The persons who are labelled au pairs are neither students nor workers, but a category with characteristics of both. Even though the category of au pair is defined in gender neutral terms “[...] young foreigners who come to improve their linguistic and possibly professional knowledge [...]” (Council of Europe 1969, Article 2) the majority of au pairs are women (Cox 2015). This is related to the fact that au pairing is part of a larger historical legacy of paid domestic labour and that au pair migrations are part of contemporary transnational feminized migration for work.

Au pairing is a highly gendered migration route also because the work conducted by au pairs – the cleaning, cooking and caring is a highly gendered work. In fact, until 1993 men were not even allowed to apply for au pair visas in the UK (Griffith and Legg 1989). While male applicants are now accepted and the number of male au pairs is growing (Cox 2015), the majority of au pairs are still female. This is the case also in Norway, where the majority of au pairs are women from the Philippines (UDI 2016b). In 2013, for example, the Norwegian Immigration Authorities issued 1476 new au pair permits to foreign nationals and 96 per cent of the visa holders were women (UDI 2016b, 2014).

In Norway, the au pair scheme became popular after World War II when young Norwegian women started travelling to English-speaking countries such as England, Australia and the USA to improve their English language skills and to experience a new culture (Hemsing 2003). In the late 1990s, foreign au pairs started coming to Norway and by the middle of 2000, from being primarily an au pair-sending country Norway had developed into a receiving country for au pairs from all over the world, and especially for au pairs from Eastern Europe, Russia, the Baltic countries and Asia.<sup>3</sup>

## **Overview and outline of the chapters**

The next two chapters give a broad account of the context and background for the current study. Chapter 2 describes the social, political and economic contexts of the Philippines and Norway as respectively au pair-sending and au pair-receiving countries and provides as such a macro perspective on the Filipino au pair migration to Norway. The chapter elaborates on some of the major structural characteristics of the Philippine and the Norwegian societies in order to enable an understanding of why young Filipinos come to Norway as au pairs and what they come to when they arrive to Norway. The chapter presents in some greater detail structural elements of the Norwegian context such as the legal framework for au pair placements in Norway and the different childcare solutions available to families with care responsibilities for children as these elements play an important role in forming the au pair experience in Norway. Drawing on studies of Norwegian families' childcare and domestic

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<sup>3</sup> The terms and conditions of the au pair placement in Norway are elaborated on in Chapter 2 under the section 'migration regime'.



work practices, this chapter also presents the different types of families who hire au pairs: thus it also offers a meso-perspective on au pair migration. The aim of offering such a broad account of the Norwegian and Philippine structural contexts is to establish a background for the more empirically-based chapters of this study and the bottom-up, micro-perspectives on migration that they offer.

Chapter 3 introduces the research tradition within which this study is situated and elaborates on the origin, general features and development of the global care chains framework. The chapter discusses how it has been used in research on migrant care and domestic workers in different work settings, geographical areas and national contexts and identifies three main research traditions – the North American, the European and the Nordic. The main findings and conclusions from these traditions are discussed for the purpose of showing how prior research has influenced my thinking and my approach to the global care chains framework. In the last part of the chapter I discuss my take on the global care chain framework.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the research design of this study and my choice of research methodology. My approach to the field can be described as ethnographic as I have sought to obtain ‘first hand’ knowledge about the Filipino au pairs’ and their family members’ perspectives on the au pair migration to Norway. The research methods deployed for the collection and production of empirical material are interviews and observations. The research was conducted in multiple places and in two different national contexts and is as such multi-sited by default, but it is also inspired by the global ethnography tradition as it seeks to explore whether the global care chain framework can ‘accommodate’ the case of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway. The chapter also offers a detailed description of the more practical sides of the research process – from recruiting informants for the study to the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material.

Chapter 5 explores the Filipino au pairs’ motivations for migration and for enrolling in the Norwegian au pair scheme. The analysis shows that economic motivation is an important reason for migration among the au pair migrants in my study. More personal and idiosyncratic reasons such as the breakdown of relationships or the desire to experience something new are also pointed out as important reasons for migration. The analysis shows that apart from a way to fulfil their filial obligations towards their families, young Filipinos use the au pair scheme as a route to personal growth and self-exploration. The au pair migrants’ different reasons for

migration are also seen as related to the structural characteristics of the Philippine society such as unemployment, local 'culture of migration' and patriarchal structures.

Chapter 6 provides a look into the everyday life of the Filipino au pairs working for Norwegian families. The main purpose is to examine what is like to be an au pair in a welfare state with a strong normative focus on gender equality and a preference for public day care. The chapter explores what the workday of the Filipino au pairs in Norway is like in a situation where the host family's children are either attending day care or are old enough not to need any assistance from the au pair. The workday of the au pairs is examined through the au pairs' main tasks – care for children and domestic work. The analysis of the au pairs' own elaborations shows that their work days differ in terms of the amount of childcare and domestic work they are asked to perform. Some au pairs are doing much housework and little or no childcare, while others are performing much housework and much childcare. The amount of time the au pairs spend with the children of the employing family is seen as crucial for the development of a strong emotional bond that could potentially result in the extraction of motherly-like love and care from the au pair and transferring it to the child.

Chapter 7 continues the exploration of the Filipino au pairs' experiences in Norway and focuses on the way the au pair migrants spend their free time within the framework of the Norwegian context. Drawing on notes and observations from my fieldwork among Filipino au pairs in Norway, this chapter explores the different functions and dimensions of the au pairs' contractual free time. The analysis reveals that important processes of empowerment, risk management and a reinforcement of linguistic, religious and national identities are taking place when the Filipino au pairs have the opportunity to enjoy free time in the company of other au pairs and co-nationals. The chapter argues that the interplay of the local Norwegian 'passion for equality' and the local migration regime, create locally-specific conditions for au pairing that not only enable the au pairs to enjoy leisure time but also enable new ways of producing emotional surplus value. The discussions offered in this chapter connect my study to the international debates on care chains and emotional surplus value by showing how a particular local form of emotional surplus value is produced as a result of local normative culture on gender equality and international solidarity.

While all the previous empirical chapters explore mostly the au pair migrants' experiences and perspectives on their own migration to Norway, Chapter 8 focuses on how the family members of the au pairs perceive of and relate to the au pair migration. The aim of bringing

families' perspectives to the fore of analysis is to enable a discussion of how the Filipino au pair migration to Norway impacts the lives of their families and local communities in the country of origin. The chapter draws on observational data and interview data from my fieldwork among family members of au pairs in the Philippines. Informed by the global care chains' framework and its focus on the redistribution and reorganization of care in the context of migration, in this chapter I explore how au pair migration to Norway influences the local organization of care in the au pair migrants' families and local communities. More particularly, the chapter examines how the Filipino au pair migrants organize care for their family members in the country of origin and whether these care relations can be understood in terms of care chains, care deficits and emotional surplus value. The analysis shows that women's physical absence from the everyday lives of their families is contributing to the reorganization of local care arrangements, but that due to local care cultures that involve the extended family in the provision of care, in the context of migration, family members of the au pairs are not left without care, but rather in the care of somebody else.

Chapter 9 offers a summary and discussion of main findings and discusses new directions for research emerging from this study.

Some of the chapters in this study close with discussion of main points and arguments, while other with a short summary and short conclusion.

## Chapter 2. Contextual backgrounds

### Introduction

This chapter provides a broad account of the contextual background for the current study. The chapter offers a macro perspective on the Filipino au pair migration to Norway by elaborating on some of the major demographic developments and structural frameworks, i.e., policies, discourses, political and social developments of the Philippines and Norway, within which the Filipino au pair migration takes place. These macro factors are important to take into consideration in order to understand the scope and character of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway.

The first part of the chapter outlines some of the major social, political and economic challenges faced by the Philippine society that play a role in Filipino citizens' transnational migration. Apart from discussing how the Philippines has emerged as a country of immigration, this part also discusses the role of the Philippine state in promoting, organizing and encouraging the overseas migration of its citizens and in the emergence of local 'culture of migration'. The second part of the chapter elaborates on institutional characteristics of the Norwegian context. The institutional features that are of particular importance for the everyday lives of host families and the au pairs placed in their homes are the local childcare arrangements and the discourses on what constitutes appropriate care, the local gender equality ideals according to which people live and organize their lives as well as the immigration regulations defining the terms and conditions of au pair placements in Norway.

In the third and last part of the chapter, instead of summarizing main points and demographic facts about the Norwegian and the Philippine societies, I discuss what the typical Norwegian au pair family is. Norwegian families constitute an important element of the context that the au pairs come. Hence, an elaboration of their childcare and domestic work practices will enhance the readers' understanding of the different dimensions of the au pairs' everyday lives, but also establish the meso level of analysis by showing how macro structures impact on the organization of people's everyday lives.

## The Filipino context

Few countries have as many of their citizens living abroad as the Republic of the Philippines, or depend so greatly on migrant remittances for their national economies. Since the 1970s, successive governments have encouraged the emigration of Filipino workers. Millions have gone to the Gulf oil countries or the fast growing economies of the other Asian countries, but also to the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe, which are the more preferred destinations among Filipino migrants (Paul 2011). Filipino migrant workers are to be found in more than 200 countries around world. They are respected for their good education and skills and have established some specific niches. However, the most prominent feature of contemporary Filipino transnational migration is its feminization. Today, the majority of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are women and they are demanded as domestic workers, nannies, nurses and entertainers in many parts of the world. Filipino men work as seafarers under many national flags, but also as construction workers, service workers or in manufacturing (Asis 2008, Battistella and Asis 2013a).

Decades of social, political and economic crises, rapid demographic growth and natural disasters have triggered the migration of millions of Filipinos. During the past 40 years, over ten million Filipinos, or, ten per cent of the population of now 100 million went abroad for work (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016, Battistella and Asis 2013a). As of October 2013, overseas Filipino workers sent home more than US\$ 26 billion in remittances, equivalent to 9.8 per cent of the GDP in the Philippines (The World Bank 2014). Today, migrant remittances have become a pillar of the Philippine economy.

Classified as a lower middle-income country, the Philippines has a per capita income of USD 4,199 (The World Bank 2016). Unemployment has been very high since the 1970s and is further aggravated by the rapidly growing Filipino population. For the past 30 years, the unemployment rate has hardly fallen under 7 percent and reached its peak in 2004, when it was 11.8 per cent (BLES 2012b). Especially youth unemployment (15-24 age group) has been higher than unemployment in general. For example, in 2011, the unemployment rate for the Philippines was 7 percent, while for the age groups 15-19 years and 20-24 years, it was 13.9 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively (BLES 2012b).

Among the unemployed are the large numbers of college graduates who cannot be absorbed by the domestic market. Moreover, according to data from the Philippine Bureau of Labour and Employment Statistics, the unemployment rate increases with education: those with college education had the highest unemployment rates (BLES 2012b).

Overseas employment has also become a way to deal with the high unemployment levels also for the younger generations. This is reflected in their educational choices that are often oriented towards preparing for work overseas. Nursing and seafaring have long been popular choices of education among young Filipinos as these are also among the better-paid occupations for OFWs. However, the overseas unemployment opportunities for young Filipinos are mostly in the service and production sectors (Battistella and Asis 2013a: 33). As a recent study by the Scalabrini Migration Center shows, for many years now domestic work has been the topmost occupation among young OFWs (Asis and Battistella 2013c). In the face of limited job opportunities, some 32 per cent of the job applicants with college degrees seek for positions as factory workers (Battistella and Liao 2013b).

## **History and culture of migration**

Many years of large-scale, state-organized migration have rendered it routine, predictable and valued in Philippine society. Young Filipinos have grown up in a society that has lived with migration as a fact of life. This has contributed to the development of a ‘culture of migration’ in which overseas migration has come to be regarded as a major route to achieving a better life (Asis 2006, Tyner 1996, O’Neil 2004).

The history of migration in the Philippines can be traced back centuries, with immigration and emigration within the region. Due to American control from 1898 until the mid-1900s, ‘international migration’ for Filipinos meant movement to the United States and its Pacific territories for much of the twentieth century. The first Filipino migrants arrived in the USA in 1906 to work on sugarcane and pineapple plantations in Hawaii. More workers, mostly single men, followed shortly after. Others left Hawaii to work in agriculture in California, Washington and Oregon, or the salmon canneries of Alaska. On the mainland, low-wage service work in the cities — waiters, busboys, or domestic work — provided alternative jobs between agricultural seasons or when other jobs were not available (Asis 2006).

A small number of scholars, known as *pensionados*, also immigrated to the United States before the 1920s. They were either sponsored by the U.S. government or by missionary-related programs. Some were sent by rich families to study and a few were self-supporting students. Those who returned assumed important positions in Filipino society while others remained in the United States (Espiritu 2003, Asis 2006, O'Neil 2004). Being a U.S. colony, the Philippines was a convenient source of labour as Filipinos did not need visas to work in the US. The colonial labour system under the US administration including the introduction of training programs for overseas employment and the labour recruitment industry provided the cornerstone of the contemporary labour migration apparatus.

However, the 'culture of migration' has emerged only in the last 40 years with President Marco's institutionalization of policy to encourage emigration and to stimulate the national economy. Government activism to promote labour migration from the Philippines began in the mid-1970s, when rising oil prices caused a boom in contract migrant labour in the Middle East. The government of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, saw an opportunity to export young men left unemployed by the stagnant economy and established a system to regulate and encourage labour outflows (O'Neil 2004, Asis 2006).

The Arab Oil Boycott in 1973 brought great benefits to the Gulf countries and sped up development in massive infrastructure. Therefore, a large labour force was needed to fulfil the construction boom. At the same time, the Philippines was in trouble with high unemployment, poor economic development, political instability and low wages. With supply and demand factors converging, the Philippines was ripe for large-scale labour migration, an opportunity the Marcos government recognized. The framework for what became the government's overseas employment program was established with the passage of the Labour Code of the Philippines in 1974. The program was supposed to be a temporary solution, lasting only until the country recovered from its economic problems. However, the continuing demand for workers in the Gulf countries, the opening of new labour markets in other regions and the stagnancy in domestic development turned the transition policy into a survival strategy (Battistella and Asis 2013a).

The imposition of martial law by President Ferdinand Marcos from 1972 to 1981 affected all aspects of national life. The political climate under the martial law was a factor driving emigration and especially political opponents and middle-class Filipinos left the country to escape political repression. Although martial law officially ended in 1981, the political, economic and social instability continued. The return to democracy invited investments and development assistance, but these opportunities were missed due to continued political instability. Remittances sent home from Filipino migrant workers helped to strengthen the Philippines' foreign exchange reserves, but could not fully alleviate the balance of payment crisis and the state had to seek relief from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a condition for granting development assistance, IMF imposed strict structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that further exacerbated a worsening economy in the midst of political transitions and caused the migration of many Filipinos (Guevarra 2010, Rodriguez 2010). By the 1980s, the Philippines had become one of the most structurally adjusted states in the world. As a strategy to manage the national economy, the state started to actively promote international labour migration to deflect high unemployment levels and secure the much needed dollar remittances. The Philippine economy failed to maintain strong manufacturing and agricultural sectors or promote the expansion of the middle class and remained increasingly dependent on migrant remittances.

With its low rate of foreign investment and a steady reduction in development assistance, the government, not just the people, came to rely on overseas employment as a strategy for survival. The government set an official target of improving the 'marketing' of Filipino labour to the point where 1 million would be deployed overseas every year. In a situation of a sustained political and economic instability, high unemployment and poor living standards, the annual deployment of overseas foreign workers increased from 36, 035 in 1975 to 933,588 in 2004 and the goal of exporting 1 million Filipinos annually was reached in 2006 (Battistella and Asis 2013a, Asis 2008).

### **How labour export works**

The Philippine Government takes an active role in migration. Through an elaborate net of agencies and organizations, the government facilitates the out-migration of Filipino citizens and shapes their economic and political connections to the homeland (Guevarra 2010). The



government works actively to secure access to foreign labour markets, but also to prevent its citizens from using unregulated channels to migrate. This is in order to protect workers from abuse, but also to ensure that their remittances reach home (O'Neil 2004). Remittances are a critical source of foreign exchange and the government actively encourages migrants to send money home. As late as 1985, the government was attempting to force workers to send remittances via a mandatory remittances quota (O'Neil 2004).

Today, rather than sticks, the government is using carrots as a way of encouraging migrants to use official migration channels and eventually return at the end of their contract. By migrating officially, migrants are entitled to a number of subsidized benefits such as pre-migration training on social and work conditions abroad, life insurance and pension plans, medical assistance and emergency loans (O'Neil 2004).

In order to leave the country to work, Filipino workers must be recruited by either a licensed recruiter or a government agency, or must have their contract approved by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The POEA is a government agency established within the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) that recruits OFWs and processes their documents and contracts. POEA is also responsible for the licensing, regulating and monitoring private recruitment agencies. POEA monitors foreign labour markets for employment opportunities and provides labour directly to foreign employers, clients and governments.

Another government agency – the Overseas Welfare Administration (OWWA) – provides support and assistance to migrants and their families left at home. All processes and requirements up until the point of departure are handled by the POEA, while OWWA assumes responsibility for the workers' welfare while they are employed abroad.

A separate agency, the Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO), provides programs and services to permanent emigrants and works for sustaining the ties between emigrants and the Philippines. It also provides courses for departing emigrants, especially for women migrating as wives or fiancées of foreign nationals. COF's pre-departure orientation seminars (PDOS) are designed to prepare prospective migrants for life and realities overseas (CFO 2016a).

With the lifting of the Ban on Deployment of au pairs to Europe in 2010 Filipinos leaving the country with an au pair visa are included in the labour emigration system and are required to register at the COF and pay for a membership in OWWA. After the au pair ban was lifted, migrants are increasingly treated as OFWs, but they are still not granted all the rights that regular migrant workers have because of their status as participating in a cultural exchange scheme.

As part of the registration requirements, Filipino au pairs are now required to attend a Country Familiarization Seminar (CFS) that aims ‘to equip the au pair participants with adequate information on topics such as settlement concerns, values, cultural and social realities in the host countries, health and safety issues, airport and travel procedures and support networks’ (CFO 2016b). Filipino au pairs coming to Norway after the ban was lifted must complete this seminar in order to receive exit clearance.

The Philippine state’s systematic export of human resources has in the literature been referred to as ‘labour brokerage’ and is described as “a neoliberal strategy comprised of institutional and discursive practices through which the state mobilizes citizens and sends them abroad, while generating profits from the remittances they send back home” (Rodriguez 2010: x). Under a migration regime of labour brokerage, Philippine citizens leave their families behind in the Philippines, but continue being linked to the homeland through remittances.

The structural factors that I have described in this section – the Filipino history and culture of migration, the social, economic and political challenges as well as the migration regime of labour brokerage under which Filipino citizens work abroad, constitute an important background for understanding the scope and character of Filipino transnational migration and Filipino au pair migration in particular.

## **The Norwegian Context**

### **A demographic note**

Au pairs who come to Norway arrive to a country of approximately 5 million people, with 17 inhabitants per square kilometer, which compared to the Philippine’s population of over 100 million people may seem sparsely populated. Just 600,000 people live in Norway’s capital

Oslo, while the Philippine's capital Manila is home to approximately 1.65 million people and is the most densely populated city in the world with 43,079 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Demographically, Norway experiences high life expectancy (84 years for women and 82 for men), high fertility rates (1.78 in 2013) and generally high life satisfaction (OECD 2016).

This is due to good living standards, educated and healthy population (82 per cent of adults aged 25-64 have completed upper secondary education) and most importantly – to a highly-developed welfare state aimed at ensuring the equality and well-being of its citizens (OECD 2016).

Since the discovery of the oil in Norway in 1969, the petroleum industry has contributed significantly to the economic growth of the country and enabled the development of a generous and comprehensive welfare state. In Esping-Andersen's (1990, 1992, 1999) well-known typology of welfare states Norway together with the other Nordic countries is classified as a social democratic type of welfare state because of its redistributive aspects and the principles of universalism and egalitarianism as core values in the organization of provision of social services. The generous provision of public services, such as education and health, plays a major role in Norwegians' personal fulfilment and well-being.

Unemployment, though rising, is low compared to other OECD countries. Currently, the average household net-adjusted<sup>4</sup> disposable income per capita is USD 33,492 a year, which is considerably higher than the OECD average of USD 25,908 a year (OECD 2016). Wage inequality is relatively low and the redistribution through the tax and benefit system is large so that the distribution of net income is even more egalitarian. Norway's progressive tax system, which includes quite high wealth tax, raises a lot of revenue helping to reduce income inequality without excessively undermining economic performance. Still, the economic differences among people in Norway are increasing. The average net-adjusted disposable income of the top 20 per cent of the population is an estimated USD 57,453 a year, whereas the bottom 20 per cent live on an estimated USD 15,420 a year (OECD 2016).

However, thanks to oil assets, government revenues have exceeded expenditures over the past decade even during the recent fiscal crisis. Recent data shows about 25 per cent of the economy is devoted to producing public goods and services (OECD 2016).

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<sup>4</sup> Household net-adjusted disposable income is the amount of money that a household earns each year after taxes and transfers. It represents the money available to a household for spending on goods or services (OECD 2016).

The Filipino au pairs coming to the Scandinavian countries arrive to a region where ‘passion for equality’ (Graubard 1986) is a core value and where gender equality and social equality are high on the political agenda. Norway, in particular, likes to think of itself as an example to follow in terms of gender equality achievements (Danielsen, Larsen, and Owsen 2015b, Kristensen 2010). In many respects, Norway is a leading nation in terms of the emancipation of women. For instance, in 2009, Norway ranked number two of 109 countries in the UNDP’s Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)(United Nations 2014b). The Gender Empowerment Measure is an index designed to measure the extent of gender inequality across the globe’s countries based on estimates of women’s relative economic income, participation in high-paying positions with economic power and access to professional and parliamentary positions. That Norway came up as number two of 109 countries is an indication that gender equality is high compared to many other countries and that women in Norway have access to high-level positions and economic power.

Through the public takeover of the provision of education, health and welfare services or what is conceptualized in the literature as ‘the family going public’ (Hernes 1987) and the consequent professionalization and expansion of these tasks, Norwegian women have been able to join the work force initially on a part-time basis. Today, supported by a generous welfare state, the participation of women in the Norwegian labour market is high compared to most other countries. This is also the case among mothers with children. In 2010, 86 per cent of mothers with children aged 3 to 5 years old were gainfully employed, although 29 per cent of them worked part-time. The employment rate is also high among mothers with children younger than three – 83 per cent of mothers with children aged 1-2 were employed in 2010 and 32 per cent of them worked part-time (Engel et al. 2015). The high participation of mothers in the labour market has been enabled by the Norwegian welfare state’s support for public daycare and, particularly, the expansion of the kindergarten sector.

While female participation in the labour market is high, gender segregation in the labour market is also high. A large proportion of women work part-time (40 per cent of women, compared to 13 per cent of men), there is a gender pay gap of 15 per cent and over 90 per cent of employees in care work and cleaning services are women. In all, 25 per cent of the workforce works part-time, and 75 per cent of these workers are women (Aune 2009). In female-dominated sectors salaries are lower, and part-time and temporary employment are structural features.

## **Childcare regime**

In the regime scholarship, the question of how the provision of care services is distributed between the state, the market and the family as well as the dominant national and local discourses – ‘care cultures’ – on what constitutes appropriate care are captured by the notion of a ‘care regime’ (Gavanas and Williams 2008, Williams 2010, Lutz 2008a: 2, Kilkey and Merla 2013). The notion of ‘regime’ accentuates policies as a system in which the different policies interact and generate a structure of opportunities that shape people’s care practices (Ellingsæter 2006: 122).

The Norwegian childcare regime offers one of the world’s most generous and comprehensive policy packages that entitle parents with the legal right to withdraw from work for certain periods of time and provide care for their children without the risk of losing their jobs. Currently, parents with care responsibilities for children are entitled to different types of public support for childcare – the parental leave benefit, subsidized daycare (kindergartens) and cash-benefit for care.

### *Parental leave benefit*

Parents are entitled to the benefit if they have been gainfully employed for at least six of the ten months before the outtake. The benefit aims to ensure the parents’ financial security while they are at home with children and is currently given for a period of 49 weeks with 100 per cent income compensation or 59 weeks with 80 per cent income compensation (NAV 2016). Though generous, the parental benefit does not cover the part of the income that exceeds six times the National insurance basic amount and is less attractive for parents with very high incomes. The parental benefit period consists of maternal quota, paternal quota (also called father’s quota) and a shared period.

The father’s quota was introduced in 1993 by Brundtland’s Social-democratic government with the objective to encourage fathers to participate in the care of children and to enable an early bond between the father and the child. The quota is tax-financed, individual and non-transferrable right of the father to take a leave of absence from work and care for his child for a period of originally four weeks. The quota had also clear gender equality ambitions as fathers’ participation in the daily care of the child is seen as enabling mothers’ participation in

paid work (or education) and hence contributing to increased gender equality in the family and society at large (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Brandth, Kvande, and Andersson 2013).<sup>5</sup>

The introduction of the father's quota has been deemed a success story in Norwegian care policy when it comes to getting more fathers to spend more time with their children. It has, however, not been that successful in getting fathers take an equal share of the cleaning and cooking and it is still women who do the larger share of these tasks (Kitterød 2012).

The Norwegian parental leave scheme offers a great degree of freedom in the outtake and can, in practice, be prolonged up to three years after the birth of the child. Most parents, however, choose to place their child in a kindergarten when the child is between one and three years old. Unlike liberal and conservative types of welfare states where public daycare for pre-school children is limited and often means-tested, in Norway, children have an individual, statutory right to a place in a kindergarten (Engel et al. 2015, Regjeringen 2005).

### *Formal daycare – kindergartens*

The kindergartens as pedagogical institutions are very popular among Norwegian parents. The purpose of the kindergarten is to assist parents in the upbringing of their children and to lay a sound foundation for the children's development, life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society. The kindergartens provide children with opportunities for play, self-expression and learning in a safe and health-promoting environment under the supervision of pedagogical staff. By providing the same opportunities to all children, formal daycare is believed to alleviate the disparity in parental resources as well as promote democracy and equality as core values. Besides being good pedagogical institutions for children, the kindergartens also enhance gender equality as they enable both parents to be both earners and carers (Ellingsæter and Leira 2006a, Ellingsæter 2006).

The proportion of children aged 1-5 years old who attend kindergarten has increased by 30 percentage points since 2000 and in 2014 as much as 97 per cent of children aged 3-5 and 80

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<sup>5</sup> The length of the quota has been extended several times since its introduction in 1993 and every time it has been extended, the fathers' uptake has also increased (Brandth, Kvande, and Andersson 2013). Only 4 per cent of eligible fathers took the quota in 1993. Today more than 90 per cent of eligible fathers take the quota although fathers with a top-income might be less motivated to take it due to the restriction on income compensation (Aarseth 2014, Lyng and Halrynjo 2010).

per cent of children aged 1-2 years had a place in a state-subsidized kindergarten (SSB 2015). This increased participation reflects the popularity of kindergarten as a pedagogical institution across families of different socio-economical and educational backgrounds (Stefansen and Skogen 2010a).

### *Cash benefit for care*

The cash benefit was introduced in 1998 as a temporary solution to the shortage of kindergarten places and is granted to families with children aged 1-2 years old who do not have a place in state-subsidized daycare. This reform was supported by political parties of the center and right and opposed strongly by the political parties on the left. Currently, the size of the benefit is 6000NOK when the child does not attend daycare and is reduced if the child attends on a part-time basis. Critics of the benefit argue that its effect on gender equality is negative as it discourages mothers from returning to work after birth. The benefit is also seen as supporting the traditional male-breadwinner model and a traditional gendered division of labour, which is counterproductive to gender equality.

The size of the benefit, however, is very small compared to a monthly salary and does not really discourage mothers from returning to work (Ellingsæter 2003). Rather, it has been used by working-class mothers who have been reluctant to send their one-year olds to public daycare and by career-oriented middle class families who have used the money to hire an au pair (Due 2011, Sollund 2010a, 2010b).

### **Gender regime**

The different childcare policies that constitute the Norwegian childcare regime – paid parental leave, cash benefit and subsidized daycare have different implications for the organization of childcare. Moreover different assumptions about childhood, parenthood and gender equality are inscribed in them (Ellingsæter 2006). The parental leave schemes and the state-subsidized daycare services for children, for example, have clear gender equality ambitions as they aim to give parents, and especially mothers, the opportunity to work and care, but they also

encourage the fathers' involvement in the care of children. The cash benefit, on the other hand, supports a more traditional gendered division of labour (Ellingsæter 2006).

The policy logic and the gender equality ambitions of the Norwegian childcare regime may be seen as a part of a larger system of 'rules and norms about gender relations', or, 'gender regime' as conceptualized in the regime literature (Sainsbury 1999a, Lutz 2008a, Williams 2010, Gavanoas and Williams 2008). Gender policy regimes can be distinguished on the basis of ideologies that describe actual or preferred relations between women and men, principles of entitlement and policy construction (Sainsbury 1999b).

The Norwegian gender regime is commonly described as dual-earner/dual-carer model or individual earner-carer (Sainsbury 1999b) as both parents are expected to be both earners and care providers. Both parents are accordingly entitled with individual rights that enable them to do so. Compared to other gender policy regimes, such as the male-breadwinner regime, for example, where men's entitlements are related to their breadwinning role and women's to their roles as carers, the individual earner-carer regime envisions greater equality between women and men and "the transformation of the traditional division of labour between sexes, so that each individual is involved in both caring and earning" (Sainsbury 1999b: 260).

To what extent Norwegian families do in fact organize and live their everyday lives according to these gender equality ideals varies largely across families of different social and educational backgrounds. What is important to note here is that the particular welfare context that the Filipino au pairs come to is shaped by local gender equality ideals and the way families practice these in their everyday lives.

## **Migration regime**

Migration regimes are about who are desired and undesired migrants and under what terms and conditions they may enter and/or stay in a country. Migration regimes are constituted by immigration policies that define "the rules for entrance into the country (quotas and special arrangements), settlement and naturalization rights, as well as employment, social, political and civil rights" (Williams 2010: 390). The legal framework of the au pair scheme is part of the Norwegian migration regime.



## **Norwegian regulations of the au pair scheme**

### *Legal requirements for applicants*

According to the current regulations of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the au pair's purpose of participation in the scheme should be cultural exchange. The au pair visa is given for a maximum of two years and is tied to a specific host family. In order for the candidates to be eligible for visas, they must be between 18 and 30 years old, unmarried and not have children. It should be likely that the au pair will return home upon completion of the au pair stay and that the conditions in the home country allow return (UDI 2016c).

The requirement that au pair candidates are not married and do not have children was introduced in July 2012 after a number of research studies and journalistic work revealed the situation in which mothers were leaving their children behind in order to become au pairs in Norway (Sollund 2010b, 2010a, Øien 2009, Sollund 2009, Hovdan 2005, Sandvik 2006, Bergem 2006). This was especially common among au pairs from the Philippines. As an attempt to prevent mother-child separation and in order to strengthen the cultural aspect of the scheme, the Norwegian Immigration Authorities banned married persons from being au pairs in Norway. Whether or not this prohibition has had the desired effect is not the objective of this study to evaluate. Suffice it to say that one of my au pair informants who came to Norway after July 2012 decided not to disclose that she has a child when applying for an au pair visa in order to meet the new visa requirements. These requirements suggest that the Norwegian migration regime views only certain persons as desired migrants. Candidates who are young, unmarried and unburdened with family obligations and who come from a country that is stable enough for them to return are the preferred au pair candidates. Persons who are married and/or have children are believed to have reasons other than cultural exchange for participating in the scheme and therefore no longer wanted as au pairs in Norway.

### *Legal requirements for host families*

There are certain requirements to families who want to host au pair as well. Married couples, partners or cohabitants with or without children may host an au pair. Single parents must have

children living in their homes in order to be allowed to host an au pair. The host family must have good knowledge of the Norwegian society and speak Norwegian to the au pair.

However, that the employing family need not have children in order to be approved as host family may in practice mean that the au pair is hired solely for the purpose of doing the family's domestic work.

If a member of the host family is from the same country as the au pair, a visa will normally not be granted. The au pair and the host family must not be related, but exceptions may sometimes be made under certain conditions. One of the au pairs in my study was related to a member of her host family, but as the family had been living in Norway for more than ten years, a visa was granted.

Further, as suggested by UDI's information website about au pairs, the host family should treat the au pair as a family member and include the au pair in both everyday routines such as eating meals and in festivities such as birthdays and outings. The au pair should have her own room in the host family's house and live with the host family during the whole period of the au pair stay.

### *Legal terms and conditions of the placement*

In exchange for board and lodging, Norwegian classes and 'pocket money' of currently 5,600 NOK before tax, the au pair is expected to carry out 'light tasks such as housework, child care and caring for pets (dog, cat etc.)' (UDI 2016c) for a maximum of five hours per day or 30 hours per week. While the au pair and host family are now encouraged to draw up a detailed overview of the au pair's work tasks and work hours for each day of the week, earlier versions of the employment contract left the definition of 'light tasks' open to interpretation on the part of the host family and often resulted in abuse of the scheme (Øien 2009). The au pair is not allowed to work more than 30 hours per week or work for other employers than her/his host family either for pay or on a voluntary basis. Work for others than the host family is illegal both for the au pair and for those who have the work done.

The au pairs are entitled to least one day (24 hours) off per week, and at least one such day per month must be a Sunday. If the au pair becomes ill, the host family shall continue to

provide board and lodging free of charge until another arrangement has been found. The host family must take out insurance for the au pair in the event of grave illness, injury or death. Failure to take out insurance is considered as a breach of the contract (UDI 2016a).

It is a legal requirement that the au pair is given an opportunity to participate in Norwegian language classes and recreational activities. Au pairs are also entitled to holiday pay in accordance with the Norwegian Holiday Act. The host family must pay for the au pair's return ticket provided that the au pair returns to her home country after the contractual period is over. This commitment ceases if the au pair stays in Norway on another residence permit or goes to a country different from the home country.

### *Recent measures for improving the legal protection of au pairs*

As of February 2016, at least one of the parents in the host family must have completed the e-learning course for host families (UDI 2016c) in order to ensure that they know what the purpose of the au pair scheme is and what rights and duties each party has. The course was developed by the Au Pair Center in Oslo and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI).

The Au Pair Center is a NGO run by the Norwegian People's Aid and the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees and was established in December 2012 after an initiative of the Norwegian Ministry of Justice (Au Pair Center 2014a). It has the mandate to provide information, help and legal counselling to au pairs and host families in case of conflicts as well as strengthen the cultural aspects of the au pair scheme by offering au pairs cultural and social activities. It is not a formal trade union as the Danish FOA (Fag og Arbejde) that also offers legal counselling, social and skill training events to au pairs who have become members and paid a membership fee (FOA 2016).

The Au Pair Center is localized in Oslo and is thus more available for au pairs and host families based in Oslo although attempts have been made to organize au pair meetings and cultural activities in the other large Norwegian cities. As to the au pair informants in my study, most of them arrived in Norway before the establishment of the Au Pair Center and the

challenges they might have had with their host families were solved with help of the local Filipino au pair communities they were part of.

The Au Pair Center is, however, an important part of the current welfare context and migration regime that the au pairs come to when they enroll in the Norwegian au pair scheme. The Au Pair Center is also part of a number of measures introduced by the Norwegian Immigration Authorities for the purpose of protecting the rights of au pairs and preventing abuse of the scheme.

Another such measure is the possibility of blacklisting and quarantining host families that violate the conditions of au pairing. In July 2013 the Norwegian Parliament passed an amendment to the Immigration Act making it possible to blacklist families who violate the terms and conditions of the Au Pair Scheme or otherwise abuse au pairs. The host family can be blacklisted and quarantined for one, two, five or ten years depending on the violation (Regjeringen 2013). Even though it might be difficult for the au pairs to report violation due to for example, their restricted knowledge of their rights or fear of having to leave the country, currently 45 Norwegian families are under investigation by the UDI for different violations of the scheme and risk being blacklisted (Hartwig 2016).

### **Host families in the Norwegian welfare state: establishing the meso level**

The way Norwegian families live and organize their everyday lives within the structural frameworks created by the local gender, care and migration regimes is also part of the local socio-political context that the Filipino au pairs come to. Rather than repeating the main points, statistics and demographic facts of the Norwegian and the Philippine institutional contexts, in this last part of the chapter, I elaborate on the childcare and domestic work practices of Norwegian families of different socio-economic and educational backgrounds and identify the typical au pair family. This is found necessary also because the Norwegian host families' use of the different childcare solutions organizes the work days of the au pairs placed at their homes.

Class plays an important role for how parents organize the care for their children and for how they choose to combine the different elements of the policy package offered by the

Norwegian childcare regime (Stefansen and Farstad 2008, Stefansen and Skogen 2010a, Stefansen and Farstad 2010b). Most middle-class parents place their children in kindergartens as soon as the child is one-year old, provided there are places available in kindergartens. Working-class parents, on the other hand, have traditionally been reluctant to put children under three in formal daycare (Stefansen and Farstad 2008, Stefansen and Skogen 2010a, Stefansen and Farstad 2010b).

These ‘classed’ differences in the use of formal daycare are related to the way parents from different socio-economic backgrounds perceive of the child as well as to the kind of work they hold (LeVine et al. 1994, Stefansen and Farstad 2010b). While middle-class parents perceive of their one-year olds as robust, flexible and independent enough to benefit from the pedagogical service of the formal daycare, working-class parents view the children at this age as too vulnerable and too dependent to be taken out of the ‘sheltered space’ of the home and put in formal daycare institution (Stefansen and Farstad 2008, 2010b).

Another factor is the parents’ type of job. Middle-class parents often have jobs with higher degrees of flexibility that allow them to combine public daycare with paid employment outside the home. Working-class parents, however, who often have jobs that start before the kindergarten’s opening hours (07.30-16.30) or who work shifts, find it often challenging to meet the opening hours of the kindergarten. Still, it is mostly middle-class parents who hire au pairs despite their (often) flexible jobs and preference for public daycare.

Meeting the opening hours of the public daycare may be a challenge even for middle-class parents with flexible working time especially if they hold jobs with high degree of individualized responsibility. Some middle-class jobs are ‘greedy institutions’ (Coser 1974) that ‘seduce’ the workers with opportunities for personal growth and career advancement and require more of the workers’ time and devotion. In such jobs, working long hours is often expected regardless of the employee’s care responsibilities. If both parents have such ‘greedy jobs’, the balancing of work and family life can be quite challenging. In such cases the outsourcing of childcare and domestic work becomes often a solution to the ‘time bind’ (Hochschild 1997).

Not all fractions within the middle class, however, use private childcare or private cleaning services. The highly-educated and gender-equality oriented fraction of the middle class, known also as ‘the ascetic middle class’ (Aarseth 2010, 2008b, 2008a, 2007, Savage 1992)

aspire to realize the dual-earner/dual-care model without any use of private childcare or cleaning services. These parents are often largely involved in the organization of their children's free time activities. Still, they are not outsourcing domestic tasks, but rather redefining these as joint projects, in which the whole family participates (Aarseth 2011, 2008a, 2007).

Another fraction that is relevant to my discussion is the financial elite that earn its money from an accumulation of capital (Folkman et al. 2007, Savage and Williams 2008). These are highly-educated parents who often work as investors, investment managers or CEOs in capital intensive enterprises (Aarseth 2014). Both parents in these families work a lot, but the women often 'opt out' of work once they become mothers to give priority to their children. Many of these women choose to stay at home with the child after the parental leave period is over rather than returning to work or sending the child to a kindergarten (Aarseth 2014, Lyng and Halrynjo 2010).

These women are often hugely involved in their children's schooling and free-time activities and organize their days around their children's schedules. They are, however, seldom performing any of the 'dirty' work of cleaning, dusting or washing. These tasks are outsourced to private cleaners and au pairs. In these families, the au pairs seldom have any tasks related to the care of the host family's children (Aarseth 2014, Kristensen 2015).

The middle-class fraction that shares characteristics of both the ascetic middle class and the business elite is a large group of middle-class families that I refer to as 'the general middle class'. These are families in which both parents work at least full time and often have jobs with high degrees of personal responsibility. Many of these families have employed private cleaners before deciding to hire an au pair. The employment of au pair is often motivated by the need for more flexibility in their everyday lives and as a way of outsourcing conflicts over the unequal sharing of the domestic work (Kristensen 2015, Bikova 2008, Sollund 2010a).

Unlike the women in the business elite class who often reduce their working time or 'opt out' when they become mothers, interrupting their careers is not an option for the mothers in the general middle class. With an au pair who picks up the child from kindergarten and starts preparing the dinner, these middle-class women can continue working longer hours just like they did before becoming mothers. Moreover, by taking over most of the cleaning, cooking

and washing, as well as some childcare, the au pairs reduce the tensions and quarrels between the parents and enable them to spend more peaceful time together.

There are, however, nuances in the middle-class families' reasons and motivations for hiring au pairs. Not all families in the general middle class are in desperate need of help to manage their everyday lives even when both parents work full time. Some families, for example, hire au pairs not because they really need one, but simply because the au pair 'doesn't cost more than an old rusty car' (Kristensen 2015) and because they want to have one (an au pair, not a rusty car). These families are also of the perception that as long as they treat the au pair well and follow the contract, the employment of one is morally acceptable and completely in line with the local social democratic ideals. These families would often present the employment of an au pair as an act of charity towards the au pair and her family in the country of origin thus establishing themselves as generous and benevolent people (Kristensen 2015, Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Bikova 2008).

There are also nuances as to what kind of tasks the families use the au pair for. While all of the families in this middle-class fraction delegate most of the domestic work to the au pair, not all families involve the au pair in the care for children. Some families do hire an au pair in order to have someone to pick up the children from the kindergarten and to spend time with them until one of the parents return from work (Bikova 2008, 2010, Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Hovdan 2005), while others would prefer not to involve the au pair in this daily routine (Due 2011). These parents perceive of the au pair's limited knowledge of Norwegian as a problem when it comes to the child's language development and prefer that the au pair does not spend too much time with the child.

Having elaborated on the childcare and domestic work practices of the different types of middle-class families it becomes clear that it is mostly the financial elite and the general middle class that employ au pairs. Identifying and describing the typical Norwegian au pair families will hopefully enhance the reader's understanding of the different dimensions of the au pairs' everyday lives in Norway and the dynamics of the relations between au pairs and host families. Before presenting the empirical analyses of the Filipino migrants' elaborations on their everyday lives as au pairs in Norway, I introduce the theoretical landscape (Chapter 3) and the methodological framework (Chapter 4) within which these analyses are carried out.

## Chapter 3. Theoretical and research landscapes

### Introduction

This is the second of the two background chapters that aim to situate the study's research question into relevant contexts. While the previous chapter contextualized the study into the institutional contexts of Norway and the Philippines, the objective of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical and research landscapes that frame this study.

The field of the globalization of reproductive labour is a fast growing research field with a vibrant research agenda. Apart from the focus on gender, care and globalization, this research agenda increasingly recognizes the role of states in shaping the local, regional and global relations between receivers and providers of reproductive labour. In this research agenda, the global care chain framework has emerged as a dominant perspective in the study of the globalization of reproductive labour as it captures the links and relationships between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving societies on individual, societal and global level (Yeates 2004a).

Situating the current study in this dynamic research field has been both challenging and intellectually stimulating as it has inspired me use my sociological imagination to try to understand the relationships and dynamics between private troubles and public issues and between why people migrate and how states shape people's choices.

In this chapter, I elaborate on the origin, general features and development of the global care chain framework and discuss how it is used in research on migrant care and domestic workers and au pairs in different work settings, geographical areas and institutional contexts. I identify three main research traditions – the North American, the European and the Nordic that reflect not only the geographical reach of the care chains, but also their local particularities. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive review of the existing literature on the subject, but rather point to some of the main developments that have influenced my thinking and my take on the care chain framework.

The first section outlines central concepts in the study of globalization of reproductive labour that are important also for my study. The next section introduces some of the main arguments



of the early literature on care chains known also as the North American tradition. The third section elaborates on how the care chain framework has been adopted and modified by European research and discusses to what extent it has been deployed in studies of au pairs. The fourth section introduces research on global care chains in the Nordic countries. The chapter closes with a summary and discussion of main points that lead to an outline of my take on the global care chain framework.

## **Central concepts in the study of globalization of reproductive labour**

Based on Parreñas' extensive scholarship on Filipina migrant domestic workers in Italy and the USA and rephrasing her original formulations 'international transfer of caregiving' (Parreñas 1998) and 'international division of reproductive labour' (Parreñas 2000), the sociologist Arlie Russel Hochschild developed the concept 'global care chains' to describe the dynamics of a major social phenomenon of our time – the globalization of reproductive labour (Hochschild 2000).

Reproductive labour is essentially what creates and sustains labour power. It encompasses an array of activities and relationships involved in maintaining people both on a daily basis and intergenerationally (Glenn 1992, Yeates 2012). These activities and relationships may include "purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and preparing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional support of adults, and maintaining kin and community ties" (Glen 1992: 1). These are, in other words, activities that may range from highly intimate social, health and sexual care services to less intimate ones such as educational activities, household chores and general maintenance work offered on a waged and non-waged basis, and provided in domestic (household) and institutional settings (Yeates 2012).

Domestic work takes place in the domestic sphere of people's private homes, while reproductive labour may take place in both domestic and institutional settings and is as such a more general and a broader term than domestic work. Still, the concept of reproductive labour is often used interchangeably with care work and domestic work as all of these concepts refer to activities that promote people's health and well-being. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, for example, sees care work and domestic work as overlapping and argues that "it is utterly impossible to

separate domestic and carework from each other as the skills and tasks deployed in them overlap” (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010: 4), while Bridget Anderson (2000) sees care work as an element of domestic work’s three ‘C’ – cleaning, cooking and caring.

Another nuance concerns the character and content of the activities involved in domestic work, care work and reproductive labour. Care work, just like domestic work, covers a range of activities involved in promoting and maintaining the personal health and well-being of people who cannot, or who are not inclined to do so themselves (Yeates 2009a). Care work, however, is inherently relational as pointed out by a number of scholars (England, Budig, and Folbre 2003, Tronto 2012, 1993, Wærness 1982), while many reproductive tasks such as the ‘laundry and preparing clothing’ or the ‘maintaining furnishings and appliances’ (Glenn 1992) to name just some, do not necessarily involve a relation to another person. The concept of care work, then, does not necessarily accommodate the bulk of the work that migrant workers in domestic settings actually do (Parreñas 2012).

Care studies is a multi-disciplinary field of study that exhibits a large range of approaches, perspectives and understandings of care. For example, globalist approaches to caregiving emphasize the worldwide and border-spanning characteristics and qualities of care provision, while psychological approaches focus on the individual motivations, emotional attachments and the identities of the care-givers. Labourist approaches conceptualize care-giving as labour, be this the physical labour involved in ‘caring for’ someone or the emotional labour involved in ‘caring about’ someone (Hooyman and Gonyea 1995). Feminist approaches have focused particularly on the global inequalities that emerge in the intersections of class, gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, age, sexuality and how they impact on women’s lives and care-giving practices, while institutionalist approaches attend to the institutional arrangements of care provision in different national contexts (Yeates 2009a). Institutional approaches to care draw extensively on welfare theory and regime literature (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996, 1999, Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, Sainsbury 1994, Daly and Lewis 2000, Orloff 1993).

All these different approaches, perspectives and understandings of care are deployed in the research literature that I discuss in this chapter. In my analysis of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway, I also draw on these different approaches to care, but without necessarily specifying whether I am using a labourist or an institutionalist approach to care.

Apart from reproductive labour, care and domestic work, gender is another central category in the scholarship of globalization of reproductive labour. Much of the scholarship on globalization of reproductive labour draws on the experiences of women and privileges the experiences of migrant women with children (Yeates 2012). This is related to the gendered nature of the work these women perform in the private homes of the employing family, but also to the larger global trends of feminization of migration.

The work of the au pairs is also highly gendered, not only because of the nature of the tasks they perform, but also for the simple fact that the majority of the au pairs in Norway as elsewhere are women (Cox 2015, Øien 2009, UDI 2016b). Further, it is usually the woman in the family who is the main employer of the au pair and it is the woman's reproductive tasks that the au pairs take over (Bikova 2008, Sollund 2010a). Gender is an important aspect in the activity of au pairing – from the role of the au pair in the family to the tasks that the au pairs carry out, not least through the historical genealogy of women's work.

(Transnational) migration is how the reproductive labour of au pairs and domestic workers gets globalized. Migration is a concept about the movement of person (or group of persons) either across national border or within a state (IOM 2016). Movements within states are usually referred to as internal migrations, while the concept of 'migration' is commonly used for movements across national borders.

There is no internationally agreed term to define 'migrant', but according to the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, "Migrants might be defined by foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or by their movement into a new country to stay temporarily (sometimes for as little as a year) or to settle for long-term" (Anderson and Blinder 2015). Throughout this study, I refer to the Filipino au pairs in Norwegian homes as 'Filipino au pair migrants' to indicate that they are foreign by birth and nationality.

The migration of young Filipinos through the Norwegian au pair scheme is transnational, not only because they cross national borders (and continents) to come to Norway, but also because they forge and sustain active relations to their families and communities in the country of origin. The transnational perspective to migration emphasizes the importance of the contacts that migrants maintain with their country of origin and the potential tensions between 'localized lives and multifocal horizons and practices' (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994).

Transnationalism is a complex and contested concept with long history and different applications. The ambivalence around the term is related to the variety of its definitions that are not always consistent with each other, and the conflation of a practical, analytical and perspectival dimension in one and the same word (Boccagni 2012b).

Transnationalism may stand for a set of ‘actually existing’ social phenomena and at the same time, as a theoretical lens for the study of society. As a lens, transnationalism has contributed to globalization related claims for ‘a reformulation of the concept of society’ (Khagram and Levitt 2008b) grounded on the fact that many migrants “are embodied in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social field, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1003). The systematic application of this lens has shed novel light on migration processes by emphasizing “the need to include non-migrants as well as migrants, consider the multiple sites and levels of transnational social fields beyond just the sending and receiving country, rethink assumptions about belonging, and trace the historical continuity of these processes” (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

In scholarship on globalization of reproductive labour and my study of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway, in particular, it is especially the concepts of ‘transnational care’, ‘transnational families’ and ‘transnational social spaces’ that may be seen as central. Transnational care is understood as the continuing care responsibilities migrant workers have towards their families back home and the different ways migrants provide care for their family members from a distance and across national borders, i.e., transnationally (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007). Transnational families are “families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’, even across national borders” (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 3). ‘Transnational social spaces’ (Faist 2000) refers to the variety of social practices, relations and artefacts that migrants establish across time and national borders and is another useful concept to think with when approaching Filipino migrants’ transnational practices. It is a broader concept that encompasses the different transnational activities that migrants are involved in. Transnational care is only one of the many different transnational practices that take place in the transnational social space created by migration.

## North American Tradition: the globalization of reproductive labour

Women's migration into care and domestic work creates "series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid and unpaid work of caring", or, global care chains as Hochschild (2000: 131) conceptualizes it. These are links between individual providers and receivers of care work, or, micro-level links, but also macro-level links between economic and welfare systems of different levels of 'development' and between countries occupying different positions in the global political economy of care (Yeates 2005, 2004a).

The early literature on global care chains or the North American tradition as represented by the work of Hochschild (2000, 2002), Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) and Parreñas (1998, 2000, 2001a, 2001), among others, focuses extensively on the transnational transfers of motherly love and care.

Hochschild describes the care chains as typically entailing, "an older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny, who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country" (Hochschild 2000: 131). In this account, she views the care chains as driven by a gainfully-employed woman in a 'rich country' who finds herself unable or unwilling to perform the household's reproductive tasks without working a 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 1990). To free herself from the second shift of cleaning, cooking and caring, she pays another woman to do it on her behalf. This other woman is drawn from a poorer household, either locally, or increasingly, it is suggested, from poorer regions of the world, and especially from the Philippines as seen in the work of, for example, Hochschild (2000), Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) and Parreñas' (1998, 2000, 2001a, 2001b).

Unemployment, poverty and persistent patriarchal structures in the migrant women's country of origin are seen as pushing women into migration, while the perspective of better earnings is what the global care chain framework sees as pulling women towards the more economically developed regions of the world (Hochschild 2000, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, Parreñas 2001).

Many, though far from all migrant women are married and have children whom they have to arrange substitute care for in order to take up employment abroad. The substitute care may come from a local caregiver, who gets paid according to the local value of care work, or from

the migrant worker's own family members, who may not always be paid. As a result of these local care transfers, local care chains emerge. As we go down in the care chain, the value ascribed to the care labour decreases and often becomes unpaid at the end of the chain where a family member of the migrant worker provides care for younger siblings.

A major argument in the North American literature is that in the process of the local and transnational transfers of care, women's reproductive labour becomes a commodity that is sold and bought on the global market, i.e. it is commodified and globalized. The notion of 'global' in the global care chain concept, then, indicates both the geographical reach of the care relations and the geo-political relations among the countries involved in these care relations.

### **Global heart transplants and emotional surplus value**

Because poor women's participation in the local and global care transfers is seen as resulting from unequal development on a global level and because many are mothers, Hochschild (2000, 2002) sees the 'international transfers of caregiving' as an 'extraction' of care resources from the Global South to the Global North. In the countries of destination, migrant women are required to perform both physical labour 'caring for' and emotional labour 'caring about' the employing family's children (Hooyman and Gonyea 1999). Both types of care labour are relational in the sense that both 'caring for' and 'caring about' build on and develop the relationship between the care provider and the care receiver. It is, however, particularly the emotional type of care – the 'caring about' and especially in a situation where migrant women leave their own children in the care of someone else in order to provide care for a privileged family's children, that Hochschild (2000) sees as an 'extraction' of care resources and as 'global heart transplant'.

A mother's heart – the symbol of and metaphor for her love and care, is seen as being 'extracted' from the migrant worker's household and 'transplanted' into the employing family's home, where the migrant mother, in the physical absence of her own children, is allegedly investing herself in the relationship with the children of the employing family. In this process, motherly love and care is said to be transferred to the employing family's children at the expense of the migrant worker's own children. Migrant woman's children are

then seen as suffering from “the extraction of care from the global south to the global north” (Parreñas 2002: 53) and as being deprived of “the joys of physical contact, the emotional security of physical presence and the familiarity allowed by physical proximity” (Parreñas 2005a: 335).

The children of the employing family, on the other hand, allegedly find themselves in a situation where they receive love and care from two sources – from their own parents and from the migrant care worker. The employing family’s children are seen as benefiting from the emotional surplus value that is generated when both their parents and their nanny ‘work to ensure the development of the bond’ by caring about them and for them. The metaphor of emotional surplus value is clearly inspired by Marx’s labour theory of value, in which he argues that in a capitalist system, the profit of the capitalist is based on the exploitation of the labourer. The children of the employing family receive surplus in form of motherly love and care that is transferred to them by both their own parents and by the migrant worker, who, in the absence of her own children, becomes emotionally attached to her employer’s children.

Hochschild (2000, 2002) describes this process with yet another metaphor – ‘care drain’ – as the migration of women into care and domestic work is seen as draining resources from the migrant workers’ own families and local communities. Women’s migration into care and domestic work is also seen as causing ‘care deficits’ on an institutional level as it drains care resources not only from individual households but also from institutions such as the health sector.

### **Critiques of the early global care chain framework**

In the early literature on global care chains, there is a strong focus on migrant women’s care labour and less on the variety of other reproductive tasks they perform for the employing family (Parreñas 2012). The very language of this early literature draws mostly on the notion of care work when discussing migrant women’s reproductive work and blurs the concepts of care work and domestic work. Such an understanding rests on the idea that care work and domestic work are difficult to separate (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010). For my study of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway, however, this distinction an important one as it is

related to the particular institutional context of Norway and the way it impacts the content and practice of au pairing in Norway.

Further, the notion of care is understood mainly as physical, daily, face-to-face feminine and most often motherly care that gets lost or 'drained' with women's migration. Hence also the view that women's, and particularly mother's, migration negatively affects their own families, children, home communities and even national institutions. The globalization of reproductive labour is in this literature equated with globalization of motherly care even though many of these early accounts recognize the fact that far from all migrant women are mothers. A central focus of the 'transnational motherhood' literature (Parreñas 2001a, 2001, 2005a, 2005, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001) lies in the emotional strains that mothers and children experience as a result of the physical separation caused by the mother's migration. Another central theme is the 'emotional labour' that mothers perform in order to sustain relationships with their children and husbands and to achieve some sort of long distance intimacy (Parreñas 2001a, 2001, 2005a, 2005, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Less attention has been paid to the caring relations that involve other family members such as elderly parents or the extended family. Men and fathers are also often excluded from the early accounts on care chains or are otherwise portrayed as absent fathers (see however Parreñas 2008). This one-sided focus on 'global women' (and their suffering and exploitation) is criticized by a number of authors (Yeates 2009, 2012, Williams 2012, Dumitru 2014, Baldassar and Merla 2014) and contributes to a renewed research agenda where the care practices and experiences of men, sons, fathers and other members of the transnational families are explored (e.g. Baldassar and Merla 2014, Fresnoza-Flot 2014, Kilkey 2010, Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013).

Early accounts on global care chains have often portrayed migrant women as victims of circumstances beyond their control and ultimately as victims and 'servants of globalization' (Parreñas 2001). The victimization perspective has been much used in studies of poor women's migration into the domestic work and care sectors of industrialized countries. This has often been done without paying sufficient attention to the women's personal, individual and more idiosyncratic reasons for migration or the institutional contexts within which women's migration takes place.



Less attention has been given also to the role of the state in the growth of paid migrant domestic and care work. North American research discusses the role of the state when it comes to the construction of migrant legality and illegality (Cecilia Menjívar 2006, Pessar 1999, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002), but the specificities of the particular welfare contexts in which the early global care chain studies were carried out are less adequately accounted for (Dumitru 2014: 193).

The different criticisms of the global care chains framework and particularly the insufficient focus on the role of the state for the organization and redistribution of care have been addressed by the European literature on care chains.

### **European tradition: European welfare states and care chains**

To explain the emergence and dynamics of transnational care and domestic work migration in Europe, scholars working within the fields of gender, migration and welfare studies draw on the conceptual tools developed by the North American literature (Erel 2012b), but recognize the fact that the dynamics of the European care chains cannot be adequately explained without taking into consideration the role of the state in shaping the institutional contexts within which these chains unfold (Gavanas and Williams 2008, Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck 2012b, 2011, Kilkey, Lutz, and Palenga-Möllnbeck 2010, Lutz 2008a, Yeates 2012).

The European literature on transnational migration into care and domestic work examines the dynamics of the movement of migrant care and domestic workers within Europe – from Central and Eastern European countries (such as Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, the Czech Republic) to high-income Western European countries such as Germany, Austria, France and Great Britain for example, but also from Central and Eastern Europe to countries in Southern Europe and particularly to Italy and Spain. This literature also examines the movement of migrant care and domestic workers from outside Europe – often from Latin America, Africa and Asia to countries in Southern and Western Europe.

On the theoretical level, the European literature recognizes three different intersecting regimes as lying at the heart of the phenomenon of migrant care and domestic work in Europe – the gender, care and migration regimes shaping respectively the rules and norms about

gender relations, the distribution of care between the state, the family and the market and the rules for entrance into a country, settlement and naturalization rights (Lutz 2008a: 2, Gavanas and Williams 2008, Williams 2011, 2010). The interplay of these regimes is seen as impacting the emergence of local and regional European care chains (Williams 2012).

In addition to the stronger focus on the role of the state for the emergence of care chains, the European contributions emphasize also the agency and creativity of the migrant workers and the various ways in which they creatively navigate through the changing geo-political landscapes of Europe.

Lena Näre, for example, shows the agency and creativity of the migrant care workers in Naples when analysing the migration of Ukrainian and Polish women into the Italian domestic work sector from the perspective of the moral economy of care (Näre 2011, 2012). Näre theorizes the organization of paid reproductive labour as a form of moral economy based on the notions of good/bad and just/unjust rather than as a relation based simply on market logic. Näre argues that in the moral economy of reproductive labour, an unwritten moral contract is established between the employer and the worker, where migrant workers creatively and actively develop working relationships with their employers and the family members they are hired to provide care for (Näre 2012). Examining how the Italian familistic care culture intersects with the still quite traditional division of reproductive labour and the largely undeveloped public sector, Näre observes a Mediterranean type of 'care drain' (Bettio, Simonazzi, and Villa 2006) that has been increasingly addressed through the employment of migrant care labour (Näre 2012).

Marta Kindler (2012) in her ethnography of Ukrainian women's irregular migration to Poland's domestic work sector also acknowledges the role of the state in the emergence and operation of care chains, which, in the case of Ukrainian women's migration to Poland, are regional and based on temporary, circular migrations (Caglar, Sillo, and Józwiak 2011). Taking the Ukrainian women's migration into Polish domestic work sector as a case of regional feminized migration, Kindler examines migrant women's responses to Poland's changing migration regime and the variety of strategies they deploy to handle and minimize the different risks related to irregular labour migration. Kindler (2012) analyses Ukrainian women's circular migrations from a risk perspective – a perspective that has not been previously (or explicitly) applied to the study of transnational or regional care chains.

Based on their study of Ukrainian women's migration to the Polish domestic work sector and Polish women's migration to Germany, Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck (2012a) argue that a 'care curtain' exists in Europe that replaces the Iron Curtain prior to 1989. Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck (2012a) see the 'care curtain' as an expression of a geo-political pattern characterized by drain in the East and gain in the West. Souralová (2013), on the other hand, shows a reverse case where immigrant Vietnamese families hire local women in the country of destination to provide paid care for their children.

In her later work Palenga-Möllenbeck (2013) abandons the 'care curtain' metaphor and acknowledges that the East/West divide is not that rigid after all especially when examining the case of Poland that has emerged as both a migrant-sending and migrant-receiving country. Palenga-Möllenbeck's (2013) contribution may also be seen in that she explicitly tests the applicability of the global care chains concept in a European context and offers a multilevel analytical model for the study of the European migratory chains in the care and domestic work sector. Her analytical model consists of three levels: the macro level of social institutions (such as labour markets, welfare and migration policies), the meso level of social organizations and networks, and the micro level of individuals. The model also relies on a double transnational perspective, i.e., the perspective of both the migrant-sending and migrant-receiving country in its attempt to adequately explain the emergence and dynamics of transnational domestic work migration in Europe (Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013, Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck 2011).

### **Global care chain perspectives in European au pair studies**

Even though the European literature draws on the care chains framework when analyzing domestic workers' local and transnational lives, and despite the fact that this body of literature does perceive of au pairs as 'the new maids' (Lutz 2002, 2011), au pair migrations to Europe are only partially analyzed in terms of care chains. For example, studies of au pair migrations to Europe make use of the notion of 'care deficit' when discussing the reasons for the increased popularity of the au pair scheme, but do not view au pair migrations as causing 'care drains' in the au pairs' country of origin and do not explore the relationships between the au pairs and their family members back home. This might be related to the characteristics

of the au pairs coming to European countries and especially their age, education, marital status, pre-migration class position and motivations for migration.

As indicated in much of the European literature on au pair migrations (Búriková and Miller 2010, Hess and Puckhaber 2004, Mellini, Yodanis, and Godenzi 2007, Cox 2007, Kaleciak 2010, Williams and Balaz 2004), the majority of the au pairs coming to Europe are young, unmarried, often European women with at least high school education, but often also with university degrees. These women have turned to au pairing for various reasons but seldom as a way of providing for their families back home. Even though for many of the young women coming from Central and Eastern Europe, becoming an au pair might have been a way of coping with social and economic difficulties of the post-socialist transformations, there are no reports in the literature that they have taken up au pairing to provide for own children or parents.

Rather, as Zuzana Búriková's (2014, 2010) study among Slovak au pairs in London shows, their motivations for becoming au pairs are much more complex than the obvious differences in salaries between Slovakia and the UK. For young Slovak women, the au pair scheme is an opportunity to travel to an attractive destination and learn English, which they consider an important qualification for their future careers. For others, the au pair scheme offers an opportunity to escape a boring life or dysfunctional personal relationships as well as experiment with life-styles, identities, intimate relationships and consumption. As observed by Búriková:

Au pairs conceptualize their migration as a rite of passage to adulthood and a life-stage before settling down and starting a family. This route to becoming adult involves gaining independence from their parents, relying on themselves, becoming 'experienced' and being able to endure difficulties (Búriková 2014: 158).

Another important dimension of the European literature on au pairs is the focus on the au pairs' pre-migration class position and the way class affects the relationships between the au pairs and the employing family. In their study of au pairs in France and Switzerland, Mellini, Yodanis, and Godenzi (2007), for example, find that au pairs may often be of the same class

position as the host families and demand being treated as equals. Despite the different geopolitical development of the au pair-sending and au pair-receiving countries, many of the au pairs are middle class in their countries of origin and are used to middle-class life styles. Some of the au pair informants of Hess and Puckhaber (2004), for example, were quite surprised that they were expected to do the domestic work of the host family. This is an important observation that is relevant for my work, too, as it challenges a common perception of au pairs as being disadvantaged and poor women.

That the short-term migration through the au pair scheme offers opportunities for travel, personal development and excitement, does not mean that it is unproblematic to be an au pair in the private home of a foreign family. The European literature on au pair migrations has documented many of the vulnerabilities and ambiguities related to au pair placement (Hess and Puckhaber 2004, Cox 2007, Cox and Narula 2003, Búriková and Miller 2010). Hess and Puckhaber's (2004) study of Slovak au pairs in Germany, for example, shows how the au pairs' insecure immigration status, lack of information about their rights and duties, and the construction of the au pair as a 'bigger sister' leaves au pairs vulnerable to exploitation from the receiving family.

As found in the European literature, the local organization of childcare and local immigration regulations in the country of destination may be seen as contributing to the exploitation and overworking of au pairs. In the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, for example, the care for children outside the school is deemed to be the responsibility of the family whether or not the mothers work (Busch 2015). In the UK, the lack of public provision for childcare and high costs of private nurseries, combined with parents' long working hours and a cultural preference for in-home care have made au pairs a popular solution. Private nurseries are often much more expensive than hosting an au pair. Moreover, unlike the Nordic countries, in the UK there is no particular cultural antipathy towards the employment of domestic workers, and many au pairs are expected to function as such (Busch 2015, Búriková and Miller 2010, Cox 2007, 2006, Cox and Narula 2003).

With the removal of the au pair visa in the UK in 2008 (Busch 2015) any official input into the recommendations and requirements regarding the pay and working conditions for au pairs were removed, too. As a result, au pairs in the UK may find themselves working long hours, often under difficult conditions, for very low pay and with few opportunities for personal development or skill upgrading (Busch 2015). This is stark contrast with the situation of au

pairs in Norway, where the protection of the au pairs has rather been improved and the rights of the au pairs have been strengthened (see Chapter 2).

### **The Nordic tradition: global care chains in Nordic countries**

Since its introduction to the Norwegian public in 2001<sup>6</sup>, the concept of global care chains has been increasingly used in studies of care migrations into domestic and institutional settings to Norway and the other Nordic countries. While the North-American and European literatures on care chains focus mostly on the migrations of domestic and care workers (and less on au pairs), the Nordic tradition has applied the global chain perspective first and foremost to studies of au pair-migrations. This is related to the fact that the domestic work profession is today officially non-existent in Scandinavian countries where the strong societal norms of gender equality and international solidarity make it morally problematic to employ domestic workers. Servitude does not fit with the Nordic and Norwegian ideals of equality and solidarity. There has also been a general reluctance in society to admit the need for domestic workers (Gullestad 2002).

### **Early uses of the global care chains concept**

In the article *Is your au pair also from Lithuania?* (Kommer din praktikant også fra Litauen?), Isaksen (2001) discusses recent challenges to the Norwegian welfare state related to globalization and demographic changes and how these are increasingly met by the import of migrant workers such as au pairs, migrant nurses and cleaners. Isaksen argues that Norwegian women's increased participation in the labour force, the persistent unequal division of household chores in the family and individualization processes have made care work a less attractive path for self-realization. These developments have challenged the Norwegian state's capacity to provide adequate care for an ageing population as fewer women want to work in the care sector, but it has also lowered the threshold for paying someone to do the domestic and care tasks traditionally performed by women.

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of global care chains was introduced to the Norwegian audience by Arlie Russel Hochschild in a public talk she gave at the University of Oslo in the fall of 2001 when she was appointed Honorary Doctor (Isaksen 2001).

Isaksen identifies a circular and rotational pattern of female migration to Norway and a regional care chain when describing how women from Eastern Europe, Poland and the Baltic countries come to Norway on three-month tourist visas to work as cleaners in Norwegian homes while leaving their own children in the care of sisters, mothers or other female family members in the country of origin. After the three-month period in Norway, the migrant woman goes back to her family, while another female family member takes over the cleaning job. This pattern of circular migration with a three-month rotational frequency is related to the particular geo-political and post-socialist situation in Europe in the early 2000 when a number of European countries had yet not joined the EU.

As indicated by the very title of Isaksen's article, the majority of the au pairs in Norway in the late 1990s and early 2000 came from Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries. There were, however, au pairs from the Philippines in Norway in the early 2000s, but they did not outnumber all the other nationalities. A major difference between the au pairs from European countries and the au pair migration as we know it today is that the au pair migrants from the Baltic countries, Eastern Europe and Russia did not necessarily view au pairing solely as a financial strategy as it often is the case with au pairs from the Philippines.

For the young women from the former Eastern Bloc, the Norwegian au pair scheme offered an opportunity to travel and experience something new, but it was also a stepping stone for a life and education in Norway. As indicated in the research literature, many of these au pairs were university students or university graduates and did not expect to be treated as maids by the host family (Tkach 2014, Bikova 2008). The most important difference, however, is that European au pairs are seldom mothers with care responsibilities for children in the country of origin. Hence, the early research on au pair migrations to Norway (Bikova 2008, Bertelsen 2007, Isaksen 2001, Hovdan 2005) focuses mainly on the au pairs' motivations for migration, living and working conditions at the host families' homes rather than on the relationships between the au pairs and their own family members in the country of origin. Hovdan (2005), however, whose au pair informants are both from Eastern Europe and the Philippines, discusses issues of 'care drain' and absent mother problems, which, she sees as emerging from Norwegian families' decisions to solve their own 'time bind' problems by hiring poor women to work as au pairs in their homes. Hovdan (2005) claims that:

Norwegian families are part of a system robbing the children in the third world of their mothers. We are creating an absent mother problem in the care cultures from which we get some of our au pairs. I believe that is quite common to think of au pairs as single girls, but in reality some of them are *single mothers*. When we as a rich nation are importing mothers and paying them to care for our children we are buying their love, and taking it away from their children left at home (emphasis in original; Hovdan 2005: 96-97).

The work of Hovdan (2005) exemplifies an early and straightforward use of the global care chains framework and is not based on the empirical analysis of the au pairs' family networks. Hovdan interviewed au pairs in Norway, but not the au pairs' family members in the country of origin. Still, her work is an important contribution to both research on au pairs and to care chains analysis as it raises important questions of how decisions made on a micro level in one country can have institutional and individual consequences in the exporting countries.

### **Institutional interactions: new patterns, new challenges**

Throughout the 2000s, the question of how globalization, individualization processes and demographic changes challenge major social institutions such as the family and the welfare state and their capacity to provide care were discussed increasingly in research literature. With the growing demand for care workers in both private homes and the public care sector and with the increasing import of care workers to Norway either as au pairs or nurses, the question of how these transnational migrations influence the migrant workers' own families, local communities and countries of origin has become pressing. The ways migrant workers sustain family relations from afar and provide care across national borders have also been among the issues discussed in the research literature. Moreover, the role of the welfare state in the development and operation of global care chains has emerged as an important research question in both studies of migrant nurses and increasingly in studies of au pair migrations to Norway and the other Scandinavian countries.

Savides (2005), Isaksen (2012, 2010c) and Seeberg and Sollund (2010), for example, have examined how the Norwegian welfare state contributes to the emergence of global and



regional nursing care chains (Yeates 2009) when importing nurses from countries such as Poland, Germany, Latvia and the Philippines in the Norwegian health sector. These studies have examined the political governance of the global care chains and how the employing societies' care and migration regimes shape not only the development of the care chains, but also on lives of the migrant workers and their relations to their families in the countries of origin. Apart from nurse migrations, in a Nordic context, the global care chains concept has been extended to the study migrant workers such as au pairs, cleaners, sex workers and mail-order brides (Isaksen 2010a).

In both Denmark and Norway, the majority of foreign au pairs are from the Philippines, while Sweden has restricted Filipino au pair migration and made it very difficult for third country nationals to obtain au pair permits for Sweden. The majority of au pairs in Sweden are from Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Lithuania (Platzer 2006). That among the Filipino au pairs in Denmark and Norway there are mothers with care responsibilities for own children in the country of origin has encouraged researchers to approach Filipino au pair migrations from the care chains perspective. In Norway, for example, the social criminologist Ragnhild Sollund (2009) studied the experiences of Filipino au pairs through the lens of the global care chains perspective. Sollund (2009) claims that Filipino women's migration into the Norwegian au pair scheme should not be seen as 'care drain' due to the fact that Filipino au pairs do not leave their children without care but in the care of someone else. With this argument Sollund (2009) challenges the dominant global care chain literature that views mothers' migrations as 'care drain' (Hochschild 2000, 2002, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002b, Parreñas 2001).

Another argument in Sollund's (2009) analysis is that because of missing their own children, Filipino mothers working as au pairs for Norwegian families transfer their motherly love and care to the children they are taking care of and that the employing family benefits from these transfers. The extraction of 'emotional surplus value' that Sollund (2009) refers to with this observation is another central argument in the global care chain literature. This argument, however, Sollund (2009) challenges only partially even though she notes that au pairs in Norwegian homes spend less time with the children of the employing family compared to nannies in, for example, the USA.

Bikova (2015b) also analyzes Filipino au pair migration to Norway in terms of global care chains when pointing out that Filipino women's migration "activates a global care chain that starts at the au pair's country of origin and ends at the homes of the privileged host families in

the North” (Bikova 2015b: 69). Bikova describes a classic care chain where at the top of the chain one finds a host family in the North that receives care from both the au pair and the public welfare system. At the bottom of the chain are the children and family members of the au pair who receive care from the whole family network. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among families of Filipino au pairs, Bikova (2015b) examines the role of the extended family in the provision and organization of transnational care and for the dynamics and functioning of the global care chain.

Stenum (2015, 2011a) also examines Filipino au pair migration to Denmark and Norway with perspectives from the global care chain framework, but her focus is on the governmentality of the au pair migration and the way states produce migrant legality and illegality. More specifically, Stenum (2015, 2011a) explores how the Philippine and the Danish national regulations of the au pair scheme construct au pairs as marginalized migrants who are largely excluded from the rights and entitlements given to citizens and permanent residents. Marginalized migrants, Stenum (2011a) argues, are characterized by fragile or absent residence permits and reside as non-citizens. Stenum’s (2015, 2011a) analysis shows how the Philippine state as a ‘labour brokering nation’ that ‘exports’ labour power and the Danish state with its need for domestic workers contribute to the development of global care chains.

Among the most recent contributions to the au pair research in Norway is the work of Stubberud (2015) who examines different aspects of the au pair experience in Norway and particularly the possibilities for formal and informal citizenship through au pairing, the cultural representations of au pairing in Norway and the way au pairing is constructed simultaneously as work and non-work. Based on analyses of TV documentaries about au pairs in Norway and interviews with au pairs in Norway, Stubberud (2015b) argues that the public construction of au pairs relies on the global care chain logic, whereas au pairs are constructed as poor, vulnerable and self-sacrificing mothers, who are frequently exploited and always Filipinas. The media representations of the au pair migration is that families who hire au pairs ‘rob’ children of their mothers and that Filipino au pairs’ absent motherhood is problematic for their children. Stubberud (2015a) sees this framing of au pairs as problematic as it not only naturalizes au pairs as poor and easily exploitable women, but it also carves out space in which it may be argued that the au pair scheme should be closed for women from the Global South.

## My take on the global care chains framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework that is the point of departure for my study of Filipino au pair migration to Norway. One of the objectives of the chapter is to elaborate on the origin, general features and developments of the global care chains framework and show how it is used in different national contexts, geographical areas and work settings. Another is to show how the local, regional and national particularities of women's migrations, and the adjustments made into to care chains framework in order to understand these particularities, have influenced my thinking and my use of the care chains framework.

Being an empirically based framework derived from studies of global feminized migration into the domestic and care work sectors of developed countries, I have found it reasonable to look for developments in the global care chains framework in studies that have used this perspective in their approaches to global feminized migration. It has not been my aim to offer an exhaustive review of all the existing literature on the subject, but rather to point to some of the contributions that have influenced my thinking and my approach to the global care chains framework. A discussion of local cases of global care chains is necessary also because the global care chains is a quite general framework, developed in a particular welfare context, which, by default, is different from other national welfare contexts that it is applied to. This is also why the care chains framework is not always sensitive to local variations in the organization and redistribution of reproductive labour.

Reproductive labour, care work and domestic work are among the central analytical elements of the global care chains framework, but also the central activities that constitute the relationships between the Filipino au pair migrants and the Norwegian families that employ them. Of particular importance for my study is the distinction between care work and domestic work as it is a distinction that constitutes one of the major arguments in this study.

While I do follow Gutiérrez-Rodríguez's (2010) argument that much of the skills and tasks involved in care work and domestic work overlap and that both types of work promote people's health and well-being, my insistence on making a distinction between these two types of labour builds on an understanding that while care work is relational, domestic work does not need to be. Both the emotional labour of 'caring about' and the practical labour of 'caring for' develop the relationship between the care provider and the care receiver. The

cooking, cleaning, dusting and ironing do promote people's health and well-being, but they are not necessary relational as the au pairs are often left alone with the bulk of the host family's 'dirty work'. Hence the importance to distinguish between care work and domestic work when analyzing the Filipino au pair experience in Norway. This is a distinction that I build upon in the empirical chapters of this study and particularly in Chapter 6 where I explore what the work day of the Filipino au pairs in Norway is like. The Filipino au pairs in Norway do perform care work for the members of the host family, but the amount of the domestic work is considerably larger than the caring tasks they are asked or allowed to perform.

The Filipino au pairs in Norway provide care also for their own family members in the country of origin and this provision takes place from a distance and across borders, i.e., it is transnational. Care is provided transnationally with help of modern communication technologies such as mobile phones, internet or instant messages. It also takes form of conversations aimed to provide moral and emotional support to family members in the country of origin or it may take the form of money transactions providing financial support (see Chapter 8). All these forms of transnational care are relational as they develop the relationship between the care provider and care receiver.

Further, my take on the global care chains framework has been informed by the European research on care chains and its focus on the role of the state in shaping the institutional contexts within which these chains unfold. It is particularly the work of Palenga-Möllnbeck (2013) and her multi-level analytical model for the study of European migratory chains that has informed my approach. Palenga-Möllnbeck's (2013) model consists of three levels: the macro level of social institutions, the meso level of social organizations and networks and the micro levels of the individuals. Also in my analysis of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway, I have found it necessary and meaningful to consider the macro level of the Norwegian and the Philippine institutional contexts, the meso level of family practices and Filipino communities and the micro level of the au pair migrants' experiences of migration.

Palenga-Möllnbeck's (2013) model relies also on a double-transnational perspective, i.e., the perspective of both the migrant-sending and the migrant-receiving country as a way of explaining the emergence and dynamics of the transnational domestic work migration in Europe. The double transnational perspective is indeed part of my original research design

and hence an important analytical perspective in the study of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway.

The discussions of the European and Nordic care chains research have shown that the application of the global care chain framework to the analysis of the increase in migrant women working in home-based domestic and care work in Europe faces a number of challenges related to the specificities of migration and care work in Europe and the Nordic countries, but also to the fact that the global care chain framework is not sensitive to local variations in the organization and redistribution of reproductive labour.

The modifications that I have made in the global care chains framework in order to be able to use it as an analytical tool in the current study are (1) a stronger focus on the role of institutional contexts in the emergence and operation of the care chains, (2) a double transnational perspective, and (3) a stronger focus on the Filipino au pair migrants' pre-migration configurations of care. Through these modifications I have endeavoured to situate the global care chains analysis into relevant institutional contexts, geo-political histories and the local particularities of the organization and redistribution of reproductive labour.

Taking into consideration how the local variations in the organization and redistribution of reproductive labour are produced in the interplay of the local migration, care and gender regimes is to 'glocalize' the care chains analysis. By 'glocalization' of care, Wrede and Näre (2013) mean "the interface between simultaneously wide-spreading phenomenon connected to globalizing socioeconomic processes, and a diverging phenomenon which takes on particular forms and develops according to the local political and economic development, welfare and migration regimes and cultural norms governing good care and domesticity" (Wrede and Näre 2013: 59).

Wrede and Näre (2013) speak also of "glocal care chains in the Nordic countries" as a way of showing how the care chains in the Nordic countries are different from other, for example, European global and regional care chains. A glocal Nordic care chain, as this study will show, is a care chain that is formed by 'wide-spreading phenomena connected to globalizing socioeconomic processes', but that also is shaped by local phenomena such as the Nordic 'passion for equality' and international solidarity.

In the next chapter I outline the methodological choices that frame this study and elaborate on practical sides of the research process.

## **Chapter 4. Methods and methodology**

### **Introduction**

The material that the empirical analyses in this study build on is based on qualitative research interviews and observations collected through ethnographic fieldwork in Norway and the Philippines in the period from November 2010 to December 2012. In this chapter I elaborate on the research design of this study and my choice of research methodology, how I recruited participants for the study and conducted the interviews, my role and position in the research field as well as ethical issues related to the research process. I also discuss issues related to the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material.

This chapter offers a rather detailed chronological, step-by-step description of the research process. I chose this strategy to give the readers the necessary background for understanding the different choices I have made in the course of research and how these have impacted the process of data production, but also to enable the reader evaluate the merits of the research project as a whole.

### **Background for the research design and choice of research methods**

When I started working on this thesis, I was interested in exploring a number of issues related to Filipino au pair migration to Norway. I wanted to find out what motivates young Filipinos to cross the globe and come to Norway as au pairs, how they learned about the au pair scheme and what they knew about it upon arrival to Norway. I was also interested in learning what it was like for them to be placed with a Norwegian family as well as what their future plans and aspirations were. Based on research findings that indicated that among the Filipino au pairs in Norway there were mothers with children back home, I was also interested in learning what it was like for the au pairs' family members and, particularly, their children to be separated by time and physical distance. Was the Filipino au pair migration to Norway a case of 'care drain' and 'global heart transplant' as research literature indicates? Another question that interested me was, who were the families that hired Filipino au pairs, what kind occupations

and education did they have and what were their everyday lives like? Why did they need an au pair and what did they use the au pair for? Finally, were Norwegian families robbing mothers of their children when hiring young women from the Philippines to work as au pairs in their homes?

To answer these questions, I decided to speak to persons who had experiences with au pairing in Norway. The qualitative research interview is a useful technique for accessing people's interpretations of how they understand their own lives. Interviewing provides insight into how people talk and think about their relationships and ties with each other, the meanings they attach to them and how they interpret what lies behind these relationships. The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the study participants from their own points of view (Kvale et al. 2009, Kvale 1996). This is a phenomenological approach to learning about a social phenomenon as it focuses on the meanings that the social actors attach to their lived experience.

The qualitative research interview is a flexible research technique in the sense that it enables both the researcher and the informants to make adjustments during the interview situation. The researcher may, for example, adjust the questions asked according to how the interview develops and ask follow-up questions, omit or reformulate questions. The research participant, on the other hand, can emphasize themes that are important to them and thus make the researcher aware of other themes and questions that are relevant to explore. Deploying the research technique of semi-structured qualitative interview, I was hoping to gain knowledge about the au pairs' everyday lives from their own points of view. I was also interested in learning about their motivations for migration, experiences as au pairs in Norway, future plans and aspirations as well as their relations with the host families they were placed with and their family members in the country of origin.

To gain knowledge about how the family members and closer relations of the au pairs experienced being involved in au pair migration I needed to talk to them, too. I was interested in learning whether and how the migration of a family member shapes their everyday lives and whether the au pair migration was 'visible' in the local communities of the au pairs. Had the remittances sent from the au pair migrants materialized in consumer goods or had they been used for other purposes that were not that easy to spot? Did the au pairs send remittances at all?

I did not consider speaking with family members of au pairs over the telephone or Skype as a viable research strategy for many reasons. For one thing, I did not know whether the family members of the Filipino au pairs had access to the kind of communication technologies needed to conduct telephone/Skype interviews and whether they would agree speaking to a complete stranger about their private familial matters. Further, I did not know whether the au pairs' family members had the command of English needed to conduct the interview. Moreover, being interested in the impact of migration on the au pairs' local communities, I needed to see and experience what that impact was, if any. Given the kind of knowledge I was interested in, I considered the ethnographic research in the Philippines as the most appropriate research strategy. My idea was to first get in touch with Filipino au pair migrants in Norway and then, having interviewed them, to ask for their permission to visit and interview their family members in the Philippines. The way I went about recruiting au pair informants and family members is elaborated in later sections of this chapter.

But first, a few words about doing research on Norwegian families who hire au pairs. Interviews with host families could provide 'first hand' information about why they hire au pairs, what work tasks the au pairs were assigned and what the relations between au pairs and host families were like from the point of view of the host families. However, having planned multi-sited and potentially time-consuming ethnographic fieldwork in Norway and the Philippines, I decided to concentrate on the interviews with au pairs and their family members in the Philippines. Moreover, Norwegian families' reasons for hiring au pairs, their voices and perspectives are well represented in the research literature (see for example, Due 2011, Sollund 2010b, 2010a, 2009, Øien 2009, Bikova 2008), while no prior research on the family members of the au pairs is available. The fieldwork among family members and close relations of Filipino au pairs, I hoped, would contribute to new knowledge about the au pair scheme in general and the Filipino au pair migration to Norway in particular by bringing the voices and perspectives of those who are usually described as 'left behind' (Parreñas 2001, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002).



## Ethnographic approach to the study of Filipino au pair migration to Norway

Since the Chicago School's sociological studies of foreigners arriving in its back yard (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927, Wirth 1956 [1928]), migration has been a central concern of ethnographers (Fitzgerald 2006: 1). Glick Schiller in *The Centrality of Ethnography in the Study of Transnational Migration* (2003), sees ethnography as "the most appropriate methodology for the study of transnational migration" (Glick-Schiller 2003: 100).

Even though ethnography is recognized as an appropriate methodology for the study of transnational migration, it is not that easy to define ethnography. There are different perceptions of what ethnography is (see for example, Burawoy 1998, Fangen 2010, Gobo 2008, Hammersley and Atkinson 1996, Hammersley 2006) and whether it is best described as a research method, a set of methods (see for example, Hammersley and Atkinson 1996: 31) or research methodology (see for example, Gobo 2008: 2). A relatively broad definition is offered by Hammersley who defines ethnography as a form of "social research that emphasizes the importance of studying at *firsthand* what people do and say in particular contexts" (emphasis in original) (Hammersley 2006: 4).

I find this definition useful as it emphasizes the fact that ethnography is about studying people's choices, actions and lives in particular contexts and that this exploration is at 'first hand', i.e., taking place in closeness to or in conversation with the people studied. Although this definition is not explicit about the research methods seen as most appropriate for collecting and analyzing information about people's lives, the 'first hand' study is generally associated with participant observation and open-ended interviewing. These are also the research methods that I have used for producing empirical material for this study.

I conducted interviews and observations at multiple places in Norway and the Philippines and my approach is, then, 'multi-sited' (Marcus 1995) by default. Having interviewed Filipino au pairs in Norway, I would ask them for their permission to visit their families in the Philippines and talk to them. My idea was to follow the people, the ideas, the commodities and the circulation of money as suggested by Marcus (1995: 105-110) in order to learn more about how the migration of young Filipinos in the Norwegian au pair scheme impacts (if at all) the au pairs' families and local communities.

However, unlike the multi-sited ethnographic approach that ‘holds theory in abeyance’ (Marcus 1995) waiting for the theory to emerge from the field, I entered the field with a set of assumptions and expectations. These were based on my immersion with the research literature before entering the field as well as on my personal and academic interest in the au pair scheme. Having been au pair myself and drawing on research studies of au pair migrations to Norway, I had some expectations about what the relations between the Filipino au pairs in Norway and their host families might be. I had, however, restricted knowledge of what the dynamics of the relations between the au pairs and their family members in the country of origin might be like and immersed myself in the literature on Filipino transnational migration and particularly the work of Parreñas (2000, 2001a, 2001, 2002, 2005a), Hochschild (2000, 2001, 2002) and Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002). As such, my entrance in the field was theoretically informed and I was particularly ‘sensitized’ by the global care chains framework and its focus on the reorganization and redistribution of care in the context of migration.

The framework of global care chains did guide my choices of where to look, what to look at and what questions to ask, but I still endeavored to keep an open mind for unexpected turns and new experiences in the field. Most importantly, I tried to keep an open mind and listen to what the persons I spoke to found important and meaningful to them.

The role of theory in ethnographic research is a contested issue. While proponents of the multi-sited ethnography expect the theory to emerge from the field, it is now increasingly recognized that ethnographers always perceive of the field with aid of theory and that no research is ‘theory-free’ (Silverman 2001, Burawoy 2000).

Having been ‘sensitized’ by the global care chains framework and being interested in exploring whether it can accommodate the Norwegian case, i.e., whether the Filipino au pair migration to Norway may be conceptualized in terms of ‘care drain’, ‘extraction of emotional surplus value’ and ‘robbing children of their mothers’, my approach could be seen as inspired by the research design of global ethnography (GE)(Burawoy 2000). The research design proposed by GE is a dimension of the extended case method (Burawoy 1998), where the objective of the research is to strengthen and extend an already existing theory by accommodating ‘observed lacunae or anomalies’ (Burawoy 2000). Proponents of GE try to constitute the field as a challenge to some theory that they want to improve. What makes the field ‘interesting’ is “its violation of some expectation and expectation is nothing other than theory waited to be explicated” (Burawoy 2000: 28). So even though the objective of my

research has not been to ‘strengthen and extend an already existing theory’, the way of entering the field with the idea of exploring whether or not the Filipino au pair migration to Norway can be understood with the conceptual framework of the global care chains framework could be seen as inspired by the logic of the global ethnography approach.

### **Access, sampling and recruitment: Norway**

My first attempts to come in contact with potential participants took place in the late autumn of 2010. I knew that most Filipinos were Catholics and assumed that they would attend mass at Catholic churches. However, since church is a place where people seek peace and seclusion, it did not seem to me to be an appropriate place to approach potential informants. I could not simply approach people and ask them if they were au pairs or if they knew somebody who was one. To gain access and acceptance in the au pair community I needed somebody from within the Filipino community to open a door for me.

After having spoken to family, colleagues, friends and distant acquaintances about my research project and my wish to get in touch with Filipino au pairs, the ‘strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973) led me to a person who appeared to be a central figure in the local Filipino community. This person was actively engaged in the organization of a number of church and social activities, in which au pairs participated.

I was invited to attend a religious celebration in the local Filipino community and after the formal part of the mass I was introduced to a group of young women who were all au pairs. My contact person spoke Tagalog to the young women when introducing me, and I had no clue what exactly she told them. I only picked up the words ‘researcher’ and ‘university’ as they were pronounced in English. But whatever she told them, they must have been good words as the young women seemed friendly and curious about me. I took the opportunity to introduce myself and my project briefly and to ask whether they would be interested in talking to me about their au pair experiences. I also shared my plan of going to the Philippines and speaking to families of au pairs, which received an enthusiastic reception. When asked why I was interested in the au pair scheme, I readily revealed my background as an au pair in Norway and my academic interest in the subject. The majority of the young women provided me with their contact information and confirmed that I could contact them for an interview.

This enthusiastic response was not followed up by a positive response to my telephone calls and invitations to participate in the interview. Some of the au pairs would tell me that they were busy or no longer interested in participating in my study, others were unsure whether their host families would approve it and some would simply not answer my phone calls. Even though I had explained that participation in the study is anonymous and that I would not use any real names, four of the six Filipino women I spoke to after the Filipino mass declined my invitation for an interview. Only two women accepted my interview invitation – one was a current au pair, but was about to finish her au pair-contract soon; the other was no longer working as an au pair and held another type of visa.

Other researchers have also experienced difficulties getting in touch with persons working as au pairs in Norway (see for example, Stubberud 2015: 95-97), but this is particularly the case for the Filipino au pair community, probably because that it has been exposed to a lot of media attention recently. In TV documentaries (TV2's *Mammaranet* 2007), journalistic work (Kvalheim 2006, Sandvik 2006, Bergem 2006) and academic work (Sollund 2010b, 2010a, 2009, Øien 2009, Hovdan 2005), the living and working conditions of Filipino au pairs in Norwegian homes as well as cases of abuse and exploitation have been revealed. My impression is that the Filipinos whom I spoke to during my fieldwork in Norway were aware of the media interest in Filipino au pairs and that they were conscious about being exposed to too much in media. That many of the Filipino au pairs whom I invited to participate in my study declined the invitation might be an expression of their unwillingness to expose themselves. It is also my impression that the Filipino au pairs whom I spoke to were not that positive to giving interviews to journalists as this has resulted in problems with their host families. I was frequently asked whether I was a journalist and whether I would go to the newspaper with their stories. Having been challenged about my role and position in the field, I would assure potential study participants that the stories they might tell me will only be used in my study and that I was not a journalist, but a researcher.

Despite these initial difficulties in recruiting participants for my study, with the help of the two Filipino women who agreed to meet me for an interview, I received access to the field. Each of them invited me to introduce myself to their respective networks of Filipino friends and family, which more or less got the snowball rolling and resulted in a number of observations and interviews with current and former au pairs.

## **Description of the au pair informants**

The au pair informants interviewed in this study are persons who were au pairs at the time of the interview or had been au pairs in Norway earlier. All sixteen au pair informants in my study are women and their age was between 21 to 30 years at the time they arrived to Norway as au pairs. Two of the informants were married at the time of the interview and one was separated from the father of her child. The other two informants who were married had children, too, whom they had left in the care of family members in the Philippines. Three other au pair informants had boyfriends in the Philippines, while the rest of the informants were single at the time they came to Norway.

In terms of education, all of the informants had either started or completed higher education. Two of the mothers had to interrupt their higher education when they got pregnant, while the third dropped out of college because of financial problems. Also two other of the au pair informants had to interrupt higher education because their families could not afford paying for their education. The informants who interrupted higher education completed instead computer courses or caregiver courses that are often required for overseas employment. The other informants had college or university education in the fields of nursing, pre-school education, business and administration, international relations and European studies. Few of the informants had a job that was related to their education or that enabled them to use their qualifications. Those who had a job worked in the service sector before coming to Norway.

Nine of the sixteen au pair informants had prior migration experience before coming to Norway as au pairs. Four of them had been working as domestic workers in the typical for the Filipino Overseas Workers' destinations – Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East, while the other five had been au pairs in other European countries before coming to Norway. The other seven of the sixteen informants did not have prior migration experience.

## **Observations**

Having been invited to introduce myself to the networks of two of the Filipino women whom I met at the social gathering after the Filipino mass, I had the opportunity to participate in a number of social gatherings during the autumn of 2010 and the spring of 2011. I was invited to birthday celebrations, home parties, dinners and after-mass gatherings where I had the

opportunity to meet both current and former au pairs. The person who invited me to these social events would usually introduce me to the people there (the introduction was often done in Tagalog and I would often hear the words ‘researcher’, ‘au pair’, ‘Philippines’).

As these were social events with certain structure, I was conscious to follow the rhythm of the event. For example, during birthday celebrations, I would socialize with the rest of the guests, I would then watch the opening of the gifts, join the guests at the table and eat whatever I was offered. There were a lot of different Filipino foods served at these social gatherings and I would often go home overwhelmed not only by the many impressions, but also by the amount of food eaten. This would often make writing notes after these visits difficult, but I would still endeavour to write down as much as possible of what I experienced and observed.

I did enjoy the Filipino food and ate a lot of it, which I assume, contributed to being more easily included in these social events. Offering food to strangers, I would later learn, was a key feature of the Filipino culture and an expression of friendliness and hospitality. The fact that I enjoyed the Filipino food must have made it easier for people to accept my invitations to participate in my study. In a way, the food established a common ground from which I could easily start a conversation.

Food was important part of most of the other social gatherings that I was invited to, but particularly at the Filipino House<sup>7</sup> - a place that soon become a focal point for my fieldwork. I was invited to the Filipino House by the second of the Filipino women I met at the social gathering after the Filipino mass. The Filipino House is not a whole house, but the basement of a house and consists of kitchen, bathroom and three bedrooms rented to Filipinos. I was invited to visit the house on a Friday evening and already during this first visit I was able to meet and speak to a number of Filipino people some of whom later become participants in my study. There were more than twenty visitors in the house that evening and most of them had gathered in the kitchen. I was offered food before I even had the chance to introduce myself and while eating the food and speaking about it, I also talked a bit about my study. This Friday evening was one of the many visits to the Filipino House during the autumn of 2010 and the spring of 2011.

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<sup>7</sup> The guests and inhabitants of the house themselves referred to it as the Filipino House, hence my use of this term.

Most of the conversations at the house took place in Tagalog and I could not understand what they were about, but I could observe the atmosphere at the house and the activities going on there. The atmosphere was light and cheerful, and people seemed friendly to each other. Many of the activities were organized around the preparation and eating of Filipino food, but there was also karaoke and socializing. There were people coming and going, and there were the people living there. After I got to know some of the house's visitors a bit better, I would ask them what a conversation was about and they would either tell me or try to include me in the conversation.

Even though I often was more of an observer than a participant, I consider the time I spent at the house as an important to the development of my understanding of the functioning and dynamics of the local Filipino community. Moreover, my visits and observations at the Filipino House also resulted in a number of interviews with current and former au pairs as well as new contacts that eventually led me to new study participants.

As a result of my participation in the different networks that I was introduced to and through the snowball method, from November 2010 to April 2011, I conducted eleven qualitative research interviews with current and former au pairs. The recruitment criteria were that they had experiences as au pairs in Norway and that they were willing to share their experiences with me. This way of selecting participants for a study is known as 'purposeful sampling' (Patton 2002) as certain persons with certain types of experiences are selected in order to meet the purposes of the study. One participant was included in the study based on self-selection, i.e., the participant herself suggested that I should conduct an interview with her as she had experiences that she wanted to share with me. I gladly welcomed this initiative and arranged for an interview with this person, who later became one of my key informants. One au pair informant was interviewed in the Philippines during one of my visits to au pair families. This person was a family member of one of the au pairs I interviewed in Norway. She also had been au pair in Norway herself, but had returned to the Philippines at the time of the interview.

To diversify my sample, I re-entered the field almost two years later – in the autumn of 2012, when I recruited four new participants for my study. I entered the field in the same manner as the previous time – by first establishing contact with a person within the Filipino community, who then introduced me to au pairs. My re-entrance was partly necessitated by the fact that only four of the twelve au pair migrants I had interviewed were current au pairs at the time I

conducted the study, while I was interested in getting the perspectives of both current and former au pairs. The recruitment turned out quite challenging this time and after having recruited and interviewed four participants I decided not to conduct further interviews.

## **Interviewing**

Having established contact with persons who had experiences as au pairs in Norway, I would invite them to share their experiences with me. I would also ask them to suggest a place for the interview if they accepted to be interviewed. Those who were still working as au pairs would often prefer to conduct the interview at the house of their host family. For me that was a good opportunity to see the houses and the material standards of these families.

Other would prefer to make the interview at the Filipino House. In such cases, I would ask to borrow one of the rooms and do the interview there. My impression is that the informants felt comfortable doing the interview at the house. However, due to the lively atmosphere at the house – there was often singing, laughter and generally a cheerful atmosphere, I often found it difficult to concentrate and felt distracted. Sometimes the interview was also interrupted by a house guest who needed to take something from the room where we sat and talked. As I found this situation quite demanding and as I was afraid that the many distractions and interruptions would jeopardize the quality of the interview, I suggested to the rest of the informants that we conduct the interview at my office at the university. Some agreed, while others preferred to have the interview at the Filipino House, which I agreed to.

The interviews with former au pairs were conducted either at their private homes or at my office at the university. One interview was conducted by e-mail as the informant was too busy to meet me. Even though I would have preferred to conduct the interview face-to-face, the e-mail was the only opportunity for this person to participate in my study. This interview did not provide equally rich data as the other interviews did, but it still contributed to my understanding of the dynamics of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway and is as such an important part of this study's empirical material.

All of the interviews were conducted in English, except for one that was partly conducted in Norwegian as the informant wished so. The duration of the interviews with au pair migrants was between 40 minutes and two hours. All the interviews were tape-recorded and fully



transcribed by either me or another person who transcribed the interviews in accordance with certain criteria that I defined.

### **Themes and organization of the interviews**

The interviews were loosely structured and the themes were formed by interest in learning what motivated the young Filipinos to enroll in the au pair scheme, how they went about organizing their migration to Norway, what it was like to be au pair in Norway and what their future plans and aspirations were. To obtain knowledge about these themes I inquired about the informants' age, marital status, education and/or professional experience and invited them to tell me about their families – where the family lived (rural or urban area), how the family earned their living and whether the au pair had any siblings. This background information enabled me to get some idea about what kind of family the au pair migrant came from and to better understand their reasons and motivations for migration.

An important part of the interview conversation was about Filipino migrants' lives as au pairs in Norway and I was interested in learning about both their work days at the host families' houses and about how they spend their free time. The informants' descriptions of their work days, for example, have been particularly important in my analyses of how the interplay between the local care regime, gender regime and migration regime shapes the practice and experience of au pairing in Norway.

Another central theme was the au pairs' relations with their family members in the country of origin, where I was particularly interested in how the Filipino au pair migrants sustain relations to their families and what the nature of these relations was.

I did have an interview guide that I used during the first couple of interviews (see Appendix 3), but I noticed that I got too focused on the guide and that the conversations could become a bit artificial. To avoid this, in the rest of the interviews, I used keywords to remind myself of the themes that I wanted to discuss with the research participants. Shortly after the interview, I would try to make detailed notes of the interview situation and note down most of what I remembered and what made impressions on me. I would always start with writing down the time and place of the interview and would then go on to describing the actual interview situation. Even though all the interviews were tape-recorded, I would still try to reconstruct

some of the main themes that were discussed during the interview. This reconstruction contains some initial elements of analysis as the very process of turning a social event such as the interview into a written account is based on the researcher's own interpretation of the interview situation (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). To describe something contains always an element of interpretation. Descriptions are always 'theoretically impregnated' as noted by Silverman (2001: 69). Based on my reading of these interview notes, I would make some adjustments in, for example, the way I asked questions and tried to be more reflexive about how I impact the informant and the interview situation.

### **Access, sampling and recruitment: The Philippines**

Seven of the informants interviewed in Norway invited me to visit their families in the Philippines. For different reasons, visiting the families of the other informants' places was not an option<sup>8</sup>. One did not feel comfortable having me in her house in the Philippines because of the material standard of the house, while another had no relatives left in the Philippines whom I could visit (her parents were no longer alive and her relatives had migrated) and in yet another instance, the place where the informant came from was riddled by civil war and was not a safe place to visit.

Even though the number of families that I could visit was not that large, I decided to carry out the fieldwork in the Philippines as it was an opportunity to learn about the life in the Philippines and get to know the families and local communities that my informants came from. My idea was to speak to several of the family members of my informants, which could eventually result in a greater number of interviews than originally planned. Moreover, some of my informants indicated that they had friends and neighbors in the Philippines who had au pair experiences from Norway and whom I could probably interview.

It was one of my au pair informants in Norway who invited me to travel with her to the Philippines. She needed someone to help her out with her two children during the 16-hour flight to the Philippines and offered to have me stay at her place in the Philippines in

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<sup>8</sup> Only the informants recruited in 2010 and 2011 were asked for permission to visit their families. By the time I re-entered the field in 2012, I had already returned from my fieldwork in the Philippines and did not plan for more fieldwork.

exchange for some help during the trip. I simply could not have got a better opportunity to, in a multi-sited manner, follow the person, the ideas and the money (Marcus 1995). I accepted this invitation and in the months before the fieldwork, I started preparing myself by reading literature about the Philippines and making more specific arrangements with members of the families of my informants. Arrangements were made by mail, phone and with help of the informants whom I interviewed in Norway. This preparation was necessary also due to the fact that except for the trip to the Philippines that I shared with one of my informants, I was going to travel alone in the Philippines.

The fieldwork in the Philippines took place in the period from April 2011 to June 2011 and was short but intense. In a period of less than three months I travelled throughout the Philippines visiting places and people that were related to the au pair migrants I had interviewed in Norway. The visits lasted from a couple of hours to a couple of weeks depending on what was possible and comfortable for the family that I visited. These visits gave me an opportunity to see and experience the everyday life of my informants' families and talk to people who were close to or related to my au pair informants.

The fieldwork started in an agricultural province in the central part of the Philippines' biggest island Luzon and about a three-hour drive from Manila. The au pair informant whom I travelled to the Philippines with comes from this province. I stayed in the province about a week spending most of my time with the family members of my au pair informant, learning about the everyday life of the family and getting used to the local food and climate. Even though I had an opportunity to speak with a number of my informant's family members, I did not conduct any formal interviews. Many of the conversations were about life in the Philippines and how my informant contributed to the well-being of her family, but none of the family members I spoke to, accepted my invitation to be interviewed. It might be the case that they did not feel comfortable speaking to me or they simply did not understand or like the idea of my study. Whatever the reasons for these refusals, I accepted them without asking for any explanations.

Still, the time spent with my informant's family was important for my understanding of the relations between the au pair migrant and her family members. During this first week I also started obtaining 'embodied knowledge' of the life in the rural Philippines by literally experiencing with my own body the heat, the food, the smells and the sounds of the rural life, but also the dynamics of the daily rhythm of my informant's family. Equally important was

the experience of people's unwillingness to talk to me. At some point, I must have taken for granted that as long as the au pair informants whom I interviewed in Norway had invited me to visit their families, the family members would also be welcoming and excited about my visit and my study. This was often the case, but in this first visit my expectations were not met and made me think about my role and position in the field and how I might influence the people I visited.

After this first week in the rural Philippines, I headed towards Manila where I spent almost a week planning the rest of my visits and making arrangements with the families of my informants. The rest of the fieldwork was spent in three different provinces of the Philippines.

From Manila I went to a province situated approximately an hour drive from Manila. It is known as the Detroit of the Philippines and the Silicon Valley of the Philippines because of the large number of vehicle manufacturers and electronic companies in the region. The visit to the province was an interesting and surprising experience as I had the chance to live with an au pair family that was quite different from all the other au pairs families that I met during my fieldwork. Based on the material resources, educational level and professional occupations of the members of this family, they may be described as belonging to the upper-middle class in the Philippines. I stayed with this family for less than a week during which time I had a lot of informal conversations with the father and sister of my informant as well as the opportunity to conduct formal interviews with each of them. The time spent with this family yielded interesting data on the importance of class for the au pair experience in Norway and for the dynamics of transnational familial relations.

The next family I visited lived in a province located on the western coast of Northern Luzon some 400 km from Manila. I traveled by plane and after some initial difficulties I managed to meet this family for short visit and to speak to several of its members. While at the airport waiting for my flight to Northern Luzon, I received a message from this family that they were not able to accommodate me. This put me in some distress as I did not have any other place to stay and the nearest town where I could probably find a hotel was 50 km away from the village.

It turned out that the family felt that their house was not good enough for a 'visitor from Norway' as I was commonly referred to while in the Philippines and decided to withdraw their invitation. This experience made me think about how people's ideas and pre-conceptions

of me impacted the research process. I did receive a new invitation to visit this family and had the chance to speak to the mother, brother and sister of my au pair informant. Several members of this family were currently abroad for work and the importance of migration for the everyday life of those who were in the Philippines came up naturally as a major topic of the conversation.

The last part of the fieldwork was carried out in an agricultural province situated in the north-west part of Luzon. The families of two of my au pair informants came from this province and I had made arrangements with both of these families. I successfully reached this last destination and visited both of these families, which, as I learned during my stay there, were related. They lived in the same village and were part of the same extended family. The stay with these two families was very useful for my understanding of how the au pair migration to Norway influences the life of the family members in the country of origin in terms of their material well-being. In addition to a number of informal conversations with the family members of my au pair informants and many pages of field notes, I also conducted five interviews with family members of the au pairs in this province and one interview with a close friend of an au pair informant.

For different reasons I could not locate the last two of the seven families who had invited me to visit them, but during my fieldwork in the Philippines, I came into contact with other families whose family members had au pair experiences from Norway. I had the chance to interview some of these families. These encounters contributed to my understanding of the role of migration in everyday life in the Philippines and of the relations between Filipino migrants and their family members in the country of origin.



Figure 1: Map of the Philippines

## **Description of the informants**

The fieldwork in the Philippines resulted in seven individual interviews and one group interview with family members of persons whom I had interviewed in Norway and three interviews with families that I came in contact with while I was in the Philippines. The individual interviews were conducted with six adults aged 20 to 60 years old and one child that was a sixth grader at the time of the interview. Two of the six informants are young adults in their twenties and are siblings of the Filipino au pair informants interviewed in Norway, while the other four are adults in their sixties and are parents and a sister of the au pair informants. The child that was interviewed in the Philippines is the daughter of one of my au pair informants.

The group interview was conducted with the family that first withdrew their invitation for visit, but eventually invited me for a day visit to their house. The mother, one of the sisters and one of the brothers of one of my Filipino au pair informant participated in the group interview.

In addition to interviews with family members of Filipino au pairs whom I had interviewed in Norway, I conducted also three interviews with family members of au pairs who were referred to me by friends and neighbours of the families that I visited.

All but one of the families that I visited and interviewed lived in the rural parts of the Philippines and had agriculture as their primary income-earning activity. Few of the members of these families had paid jobs and these were often overseas jobs. Even though largely reliant on agricultural production and migrant remittances, none of the families of my Filipino au pair informants may be described as poor family. Two of the families lived in concrete houses with electricity, running water and had cars, while the house of another family was in a process of construction. Another of the families of my Filipino au pair informants lived in an upper-middle class residential area. Only the house of the family that withdrew their invitation for a visit was a traditional nipa house made of local materials.

In terms of family structure, all the rural families were embedded in an extended kinship network, while the upper-middle class family had a family structure resembling a modern nuclear household.

## Analysis of the empirical material: an ongoing research practice

A characteristic feature of qualitative research and of ethnographic research in particular, is that the process of data analysis often takes place parallel with the process of data collection. In ethnographic studies, the line between data collection and data analysis is less clear compared to their types of research design (Fangen 2010, Gobo 2008). Much of what I have discussed above, e.g., whom I interviewed and what questions I asked, what I observed and with what theoretical perspective I did the observations, what I included in the field notes as well as the adjustments I made in the research design are all part of the ongoing analytical process. It may even seem redundant to have a section about ‘analyses’ (Fangen 2010). Still, while in the previous sections I discussed, rather indirectly, how the process of data analysis took place during fieldwork, in this section, I focus on the analytical techniques and procedures I employed after the fieldwork was finished and the empirical material was produced.

The first thing I did after finishing collecting data for the study was to print out the field notes from all the observations in Norway and the Philippines as well as all transcriptions and notes from the interviews with au pairs and family members of the au pairs. I then read through the field notes and wrote down ‘central themes’, i.e., themes that were recurrent and that I found analytically important, interesting or surprising.

I then listened through all the interviews in order to both refresh my memory of the interview situations and to correct any misunderstandings that the transcriptions contained. This was also important because some of the interviews were transcribed by others than me. I also wrote down ‘central themes’ from the interviews and reading through the central themes from the observational notes, interview notes and interview transcriptions I started to code the material into broader categories. This way of working with data is known as theme-based analysis as described by the sociologist Karin Widerberg in *Historien om et kvalitativt forskningsprosjekt* (The story of a qualitative research project) (Widerberg 2001: 116-62).

Most of the categories were descriptive and referred to different places, situations or relations such as the categories of ‘work tasks’ and ‘free time activities’ that had the sub-categories ‘cleaning’, ‘washing clothes’, ‘ironing’, ‘baby-sitting’ and ‘church going’, ‘socializing’, ‘sleep-overs’, ‘Filipino House’ and ‘cooking’, respectively. Other categories were more analytical, and I coded the parts of the material that were relevant for my theoretical



ambitions in categories such as ‘surplus value’, ‘class’, ‘transnational care’ etc. A third type of category was that of ‘methodological issues’ with which I coded the parts of the observational and interview notes that concerned issues such as my role and position in the field, access to the field, ethical considerations and other methodological reflections.

My relatively small number of informants and observations enabled me to work through the material manually while coding and categorizing. In the good, old-fashioned way, I used different colours for the different categories, reading through the material and marking in the same colour the parts of the material that could be grouped into a category. An alternative way of doing this would be to use a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package such as Nvivo or HyperResearch. I did in fact start coding my material with HyperResearch software, but felt alienated from my own material and went back to the good old-fashioned pen-and-paper approach.

Based on my reading of the interview transcripts, the observational notes and the subsequent coding and categorization of the empirical material, I found that the au pairs’ reasons and motivations for migration, their relations to the members of the host family, their access to networks of nationals as well as their relations to their own family members in the country of origin could be important for understanding what it is like to be an au pair in Norway. These are also the major themes around which the four empirical chapters in this thesis are organized.

### **Generalizability, validity, reliability**

The question of the possibility for generalizing from studies that use qualitative methods and especially from ethnographic research is a much-debated issue in the methodological literature (see for example, Lincoln and Guba 1985, Mjøset 2009, Payne and Williams 2005). Qualitative data do not lend themselves to the kind of generalizations commonly used in quantitative research and many qualitative researchers explicitly reject any form of context-free generalizations as a goal (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Moreover, the reflexive character of qualitative research means that individual researchers inevitably inject something of themselves into the research process and, hence, into the outcomes. Qualitative studies are also unique because of the particular characteristics of the researcher and the researched, their

effects on each other, and the hermeneutic process involved in the production of the researcher's account (Blaikie 2000).

In discussing the possibilities for generalizing from qualitative research, Schofield has argued that because a piece of qualitative research is always influenced by the researcher's individual attributes, the goal of qualitative research should not be to produce a set of results that another researcher can replicate, but rather, "to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of this situation" (Schofield 1993: 202). This is exactly what I attempt to do in this chapter when giving the reader detailed descriptions of not only the research process and the way the data was produced, but also of the choices and decisions that I made in the course of this research.

By providing 'thick' descriptions of both the research process and the sites, relations and phenomena in question, ethnographers can achieve some kind of wider relevance for their findings (Blaikie 2000: 253-56).

When discussing whether the analyses and findings offered in this study are relevant to other sites, it is useful to think of them in 'contextualist terms' (Mjøset 2009) meaning that the particular context in which the study was carried out must be taken into consideration when evaluating the relevance and transferability of the findings and the analysis. The particular Norwegian social-democratic welfare context with its 'passion for equality' has been an important frame for the whole study and must be taken into consideration when discussing this study's relevance for other (national) contexts.

## **Ethical considerations**

This research has been conducted in accordance with the Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology as defined by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH).

Ethical standards in social science are based on the principles of respect for human dignity, justice and beneficence (van Liempt and Bilger 2012: 453). These principles are implemented through the requirements for informed consent, non-deception of research participants, privacy, confidentiality and accuracy in the dissemination of research findings. For van

Liempt and Bilger (2012: 453) these standards still bear the hallmarks of medical research, where they first were formulated, but are nevertheless applicable to qualitative research in the social sciences.

## **Informed consent**

Ethical codes prescribe that the participants must be given complete information about the aims of the research, so that they can decide whether or not to give their consent to participate in it (Gobo 2008). The principle of informed consent requires a written or verbal agreement between the researcher and the research participants. All the participants in my study received information about the purposes and objectives of the study and all have given consent to participate in the study.

All the au pair migrants whom I interviewed were first provided with oral information about the study and then asked whether they would like to participate in an interview. Having agreed to participate in the study, I would send them information about the study by e-mail or hand it to them personally in cases when the interview was to take place soon. I had developed an informed consent scheme that explained briefly the purposes and objectives of the study and that participation is voluntary and anonymous as well as that the participant may withdraw at any time without having to give any explanation (see Appendix 1). Some of the informants read through the informed consent scheme quickly and signed it, while others took their time to read it and ask questions of something was unclear. None of the informants whom I sent or handed the scheme to refused to sign it or withdrew from the study.

When it comes to the families of the au pair informants, in most cases, information about the study was given orally. Informed consent was also received orally. I did have the informed consent scheme with me (see Appendix 2), but it was too overwhelming for some of the families and I considered the oral orientation more appropriate. It was more important for me to make sure that family members of my au pair informants understood why I was interested in talking to them and that their participation in the study was voluntarily than having their signatures on a sheet of paper. That being said, one of the families that I visited really took their time to study the informed consent scheme and signed it only after having discussed

with me the possible implications of my research for the au pair community and for the politics in this field.

The only child that was interviewed in this study received information about the study and about my visit to the Philippines by her mother, by the other adults in the family and by me.

Working with children requires careful consideration of the ethical issues evolving in the process of research. Children may be easily manipulated to accept questions that adults would not accept or provide answers they think the researcher wants to hear (Van Blerk 2006). It is therefore of crucial importance that the researcher explains the purpose of the study in a simple and a straightforward language to the child and the child's guardian as well as ask age-appropriate questions that are not too long or leading and confusing.

The mother had informed her daughter over the phone and through Skype and had asked also the other family members involved in the care of her daughter to provide her with information about my study and my visit. A written consent was received by the mother confirming that the child wanted to participate in the study and that the mother gives her permission for participation. I asked my informant's daughter if she knew about me and my visit and if she was interested in talking to me about her everyday life. Only after receiving her oral consent did I conduct the interview with her.

### **The question of power and the role of the researcher**

An important ethical consideration during the course of the research is how the balance of power can influence people's decision to participate. Research participants should not feel forced to participate in research or to give information that they otherwise should not provide (van Liempt and Bilger 2012).

As mentioned earlier, my identity and position in the field and the perceptions that people might have had about me, played an important role in my access to the field. In fact, all the stages of the research process – from the selection of the research topic, gaining access to the field, the recruitment of research participants, interviewing, observations, the visits to the au pairs' families in the Philippines to the analysis and presentation of the empirical material

have been formed by my academic and personal interest in the subject of au pairing as well as my personal characteristics and professional background.

Different factors impact the relations and power balance between the researcher and her informants: gender, age, race/ethnicity, class, educational level, language proficiency, religion, citizenship and visa status, marital status and sexual orientation, political views etc. The way these factors play into the research process is not easy to predict, but the researcher should at least be reflexive about how her own positioning across these factors can influence the research participants.

Already during the early stages of the research process when trying to gain access to the Filipino au pair community, my role and position in the field as a young researcher with interest in the au pair migration was crucial for gaining access. As a young woman of about the same age as the Filipino women with whom I spoke and with au pair experiences from Norway, I did manage to attract their attention and make them curious about my study. I believe that my background as an au pair in Norway contributed to gaining access to the field and winning the trust of my research participants as they could easily identify with me and my experiences as an au pair. Having revealed my background as an au pair, they would often ask me about my time as an au pair in Norway and whether I liked it or not. This was a ‘natural’ way to start a conversation about the subject and about my study.

It is, however, not my au pair background alone that opened the doors to me, but rather the efforts and the good will of the informants whom I had already established contact with and/or interviewed. Their willingness to introduce me to their networks in Norway and families in the Philippines contributed largely to me gaining access to the field. Also the way I was introduced to these networks – as a researcher, student, au pair, guest, friend, a visitor from Norway – influenced the way people perceived of me and related to me.

These perceptions, as I experienced during my fieldwork in the Philippines, could work both in my favour, but also against me. On one occasion, a family withdrew their invitation for a visit as they felt their house was not good enough for a ‘visit from a Norwegian researcher’. On another occasion, however, my identity as ‘a visitor from Norway’ and ‘an acquaintance of our daughter’ resulted in the warmest welcome and a genuine interest in me and my study.

Despite my privileged position of a young researcher from a Norwegian university with financial resources and confidence to travel alone to another continent, the balance of power was not necessarily always in my favour. The families that I visited did exercise their power to choose not to participate in my study as I experienced in the beginning of my fieldwork. During my trip to the Philippines, I had literally taken the role of a nanny for my informant's children and I was executing my tasks according to her instructions. Moreover, having arrived at her house, she had the power to decide which of her family members I could meet by inviting them to the house and introducing me to them. The very fact that she spoke the local language – Tagalog – and I did not, put her in a privileged position.

### **Anonymity**

Another important ethical principle is to protect the anonymity of the research participants. The usual practice is to use pseudonyms and to change details so that persons and places cannot be identified. The relatively small number of research participants and the Filipino au pair community being a small one does pose challenges to protecting their anonymity. Moreover, due to my recruitment strategy – the snowball method where I set several snowballs rolling, it was to expect that some of the informants would probably know each other. To avoid a situation when the informants in my study know each other, I entered the au pair-community several times, from different places and at different periods in time. Further, when describing the informants, I deliberately omitted some identifiable characteristics such as exact age, place of origin, type of education, migration experience or altered these to an equivalent alternative.

### **Responsibility**

The researcher's responsibility does not end with considering issues of anonymity and informed consent. Her responsibilities also include presenting the informants and disseminating research findings as well as her responsibility to the research community and the larger society the researcher represents and is funded by. Questions that are important to consider not only in the final phases of the study, but also throughout the research process

include: What are the possible outcomes of the research? Who is or might be interested in research findings? Who should benefit from the research? Could the research harm anybody?

These are important questions to consider and failure to relate to them can potentially have negative effects on both the research participants and the research community. The issue of Filipino au pairs in Norway is a politically contested subject and policy makers might be interested in the research findings even though my research was never designed or intended as policy-driven research. Norwegian media might be interested, too, and will hopefully through the accurate dissemination of research findings contribute to a more nuanced picture of Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Further, the work of different NGOs working for the protection of the rights of au pairs might also be informed by research findings.

## Conclusion

This chapter presents the research design of the study and my choice of research methodology. The chapter offers a detailed, chronological and step-by-step description of the research process to enable the reader understand the different choices that I have made in the course of research and evaluate the merits of the research project as a whole.

The methodology framing this study can be described as ethnographic as I have sought to obtain ‘first hand’ information about the Filipino au pairs and their families’ perspectives on the au pair migration to Norway. The research methods that I have used for the collection and production of the material that the empirical analyses build on are interviews and observations among Filipino au pairs and family members of the au pairs in the country of origin.

The research is conducted at multiple places in both Norway and the Philippines and is thus multi-sited by default, but is also inspired by the global ethnography tradition as it seeks to explore whether the global care chains framework can accommodate the case of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Unlike the multi-sited ethnographic approach that waits for the theory to emerge from the field, I entered the field with a set of assumptions about the local and transnational relations that I studied. As such, my entrance in the field is theoretically informed.

The next four chapters offer empirically-based explorations of different sides of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Chapter 5 explores Filipino au pairs' motivations for participation in the au pair scheme, while chapter 6 provides a closer look at the au pairs' everyday lives in the homes of the Norwegian host families. These chapters are based mostly on interviews with au pairs migrants. Chapter 7 explores the free time of the au pairs in my study, while Chapter 8 focuses on the family members of the au pairs in the country of origin and their experiences with and rationalizations of au pair migration. These two chapters draw on ethnographic data from my fieldwork among Filipino au pairs in Norway and family members of the au pairs in the Philippines.



## Chapter 5. Motivations for migration: what triggers care chains?<sup>9</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter explores the Filipino au pair migrants' motivations for participation in the Norwegian au pair scheme. As pointed out in previous chapters, Filipino women's au pair migration is now increasingly recognized as a case of transnational feminized migration for work and a response to the growing demand for paid domestic and care labour in the industrialized economies of the Global North (Cox 2015, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, Isaksen 2010a, Stenum 2011a, 2015).

Studies of au pair migrations point to economic motivations and macro structural factors as reasons for participating in the au pair scheme (Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Stenum 2010, Hess and Puckhaber 2004, Hovdan 2005). These are also important reasons to migrate for the Filipino au pair migrants in my study as I illustrate in this chapter. The au pair migrants' individual, personal and idiosyncratic reasons for migration, however, are less explored (see however, Búriková and Miller 2010, Búriková 2014) even though such reasons are often described as 'the hidden cause of migration' (Parreñas 2001).

In this chapter, drawing on interviews with current and former Filipino au pairs, I explore the Filipino au pair migrants' own understandings of their trajectories and decisions to participate in the Norwegian au pair scheme. The ethnographic, bottom-up approach to the migrants' experiences places their own perspectives as active and reflexive agents at the centre of the analysis. Based on the au pairs' own elaborations, in this chapter, I distinguish roughly between *economic* reasons for migration, where the purpose is to provide financially for one's family, and *personal* reasons, where migration is a way to exit a dysfunctional personal relationship, create a better future for oneself or simply experience something new. This categorization is not absolute but rather a pragmatic way of organizing and presenting the empirical material. As the chapter illustrates, Filipino migrants' reasons and motivations for migration are rather complex and multiple.

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<sup>9</sup> Parts of this chapter are published in the anthology *Au pairs' lives in global context. Sisters or servants?* edited by Rosie Cox (2015). The title of the chapter in Cox (2015) is 'In a minefield of transnational social relations – Filipino au pairs between moral obligations and personal ambitions' (Bikova 2015a).

The chapter builds on the elaborations of ten of the sixteen au pair informants and two interviews with family members of the au pairs. The first section explores different dimensions of the economic motivation for migration and shows how structural factors such as the lack of adequate employment opportunities in the Philippines and the tradition of filial piety plays into young Filipinos' motivations for migration. The next two sections explore the au pairs' personal and idiosyncratic reasons for migration such as relationships breakdown, the desire for self-improvement and the need for autonomy and freedom from parental control. The chapter closes with a discussion of whether and to what extent the relations that the au pair migrants are leaving behind in order to take up an au pair job in Norway may be conceptualized in terms of care chains. This is the first of a number of discussions in this study that will explore this question.

## **Economic motivation for migration**

### **For the sake of the family**

Chona, a former au pair, came to Norway in 2006, in her mid-twenties and was an experienced overseas migrant worker by that time. She left home for overseas work in her early twenties. Her overseas employment was preceded by an internal migration to Manila and a number of unsuccessful attempts to find work in the Philippines. Being the only one whom her family could afford to send to college, Chona was expected to find a well-paying job that would provide for her whole family. In a family of six, nobody had a permanent job or any other income-earning work except for farming. The family only had income after the harvest, if a typhoon did not destroy it, which happened quite often in this part of the Philippines. To help her family financially and because of the lack of employment opportunities in the Philippines, Chona took up a job as a domestic worker in Hong Kong. For four years, Chona worked for an old, moody Chinese lady before the opportunity for an au pair placement in Norway appeared. Chona did not know anything about Norway. She did not even know that such a country exists:

Actually, I had no idea about Norway. I did not even know what Norway is. I don't have in my mind any [idea] that there is a country like Norway. But when I go to internet and checked about Norway, pictures of snow appeared and I said, ok, I want to go to Norway, I want to see the snow (Chona).

Having been told by a Filipino friend who was already in Norway that the Norwegian host families are nice and the work day is only five hours, Chona was even more motivated to go to Norway. The five-hour work day sounded like child's play compared to the 18-hour days in Hong Kong where she was not allowed to sit down throughout the work day. That the Filipino au pair migration to Europe was officially forbidden at that time was not an issue for Chona. She knew how the 'system' worked and that she had to pay an exit bribe at the airport in order to be allowed to leave the country as an au pair. Moreover, having invested in her education, her family expected some returns. The five-hour work day in Norway would allow for extra jobs in addition to au pairing.

Rowena, a current au pair, had also been working as maid before coming to Norway. Rowena came to Norway in 2009, in her late twenties at that time. Her migration to Singapore was preceded by internal migration to Manila where she worked for a couple of years. Rowena came from a big family in a rural province on the western coast of Northern Luzon and was the youngest of nine children. Rowena had five brothers and three sisters and most of her siblings worked at the family's farm. Two of her brothers were overseas workers and sent money to the family in the Philippines. As the only one of her sisters who was not married, Rowena was sent to Manila to study and work. Due to the high costs of living in Manila, however, she was not able to save any money or help her family financially, and she decided to go abroad. Rowena took a domestic worker job in Singapore where she worked for two years before the opportunity of an au pair placement in Norway appeared.

Speaking with Rowena about what motivated her to come to Norway she shares that she wanted to help her family financially, but that she also wanted to save some money for her own future. More specifically, Rowena wants to reunite with her two brothers who are working abroad, but to be able to do that she needs quite a lot of money. The financial obligation to her family, however, seems to be the main reason for her migration, a fact, that her family also confirmed when I spoke to them during my fieldwork in the Philippines. Having put her through college, Rowena's family feel entitled to financial support from their daughter and every time she calls home, they ask her "When are you going to send money?" (Rowena's mother). Rowena's mother and sisters also ask her if she has found a boyfriend reminding her that she is getting older and that at her age she is supposed to be married and have children already. Rowena describes these conversations as burdensome and, as a result,

she chooses not to call her family just to prevent being confronted with these questions. She also chooses not to go home for holidays because of the heavy monetary demands from family and friends:

Rowena: Because when you stay in Norway and then you want to go home just for a visit, it costs a lot. It takes four months' salary just to get the ticket [...]. And if you have a friend and that friend knows you are there, then they ask 'Where is my pasalobong?'

Mariya: Where is my what?

Rowena: Gift, a gift from here to the Philippines.

Mariya: So you have to bring gifts to people in the Philippines?

Rowena: Yes, for everybody, for all the relatives; for relatives, for friends. That's why we don't go to Philippines even if we have a holiday.

As seen in both Chona's and Rowena's cases, the pressure that the family puts on the au pair migrant in Norway can be quite heavy and can even result in the migrant distancing herself from her family. The pressure in Rowena's case is not only in terms of financial support, to which her family feels morally entitled to, but also in terms of her private life. According to Filipino motherhood norms, at the age of almost thirty, Rowena is supposed to be married and have children. Following such cultural scripts puts enormous pressure on Rowena who is not only expected to provide for her family, but also to look for opportunities for herself, which often means finding someone to marry. It is common for women in the Philippines to marry in their early twenties (Aguilar et al. 2009), but Rowena's family does not seem to recognize or realize that international migration makes fulfilling these norms more difficult. Rowena's family seems to be expecting that she will use the time in Norway to both earn money and find a future husband.

Both Chona and Rowena went abroad 'for the sake of the family'. The family is indeed the most important institution in Filipino peoples' lives and a source of one's personal identity and emotional and material support (Aguilar et al. 2009). It is also the focus of one's primary duty and commitment. The concern for the welfare of one's family is often expressed in the honour and respect bestowed to parents and relatives, the care provided to children and the

individual sacrifice made on behalf of family members and especially on behalf of children (Aguilar et al. 2009, Parreñas 2001a, 2005). Both Chona and Rowena, made individual sacrifices when they decided to go abroad rather than stay in the Philippines and establish their own families. Migration for the purpose of providing for one's family, however, is also a way for young Filipinos to be recognized as mature and financially able persons who can contribute to the family as the section below illustrates.

Gerelyn, a former au pair, explains her decision to go abroad with her duty and commitment to her family. Gerelyn's migration trajectory is, in fact, quite similar to that of Chona and Rowena. Gerelyn, too, went to Manila to look for work, but after months of searching and applying for different positions had to give up the hope of finding work in Manila and accepted a domestic work position in Singapore. Gerelyn was quite young at that time – barely twenty – but she already had a strongly developed sense of obligation to her family as seen in this quotation:

I was thinking to myself, 'How am I going to provide a good life for my parents?'<sup>10</sup> And my parents, you know, they are getting old and it's just me who is really ... I was thinking like that. And I am the one who will provide, because I am the one who's young, and they, you know, they trust me so much that I can, you know, provide the things, so much things that they don't have. So I said, oh, that's it, I have to go in the city to find some work (Gerelyn).

The 'trust' that Gerelyn talks about is the cultural expectation to provide for one's ageing parents known as *filial piety*. Filial piety is a core value in Asian societies, including in the Philippines, and is organized around the idea that children have the moral responsibility to care for their ageing parents, to uphold their parents' good name and to obtain the material resources needed to provide for their parents (Aguilar et al. 2009). Staying in the Philippines without an adequate income made it difficult for Gerelyn to provide for her mother. Even though migration implies separation from her mother, Gerelyn perceives of it as an

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<sup>10</sup> When speaking about her obligation to her parents, Gerelyn means her mother as her father was not part of the family any more.

opportunity to secure the things ‘that they don’t have’, as well as a chance to prove herself worthy of the love and trust she has received from her family and to establish herself as a mature, independent woman, “[I] get the chance to...you know, to show them what I am capable of” (Gerelyn).

The utmost proof of Gerelyn’s dedication and sacrifices for her family and also an expression of filial piety is the building of a new house for her mother. Gerelyn started building the house while in Singapore and continued financing the construction work with money from au pair work in Norway. The process, however, took such a long time that Gerelyn’s mother hardly had the time to enjoy her new house; she passed away only a year after the house was finished:

Gerelyn: It's not like one month and I will finish [the house]. It takes a lot of time. I think [I finished] just only last year.

Mariya: So you have been building the house many years now?

Gerelyn: Yes. Slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly. It wasn’t just easy. As you know, being au pair you don’t have that much money. So, slowly half for example, half my salary must go in building the house and you buy these materials and you buy this one. Next month again I send another one.

By the time the house was finished Gerelyn had already settled down in Norway. Going back to the Philippines and living in her newly-built house was not an option for her, so she decided to ‘give the house away’ to her relatives. Selling the house for a very little sum to her relatives is a way to give back the care and love that she had received. The house was built with hard-earned money from overseas employment and giving it away to the family can be seen as a sacrifice for the family.

### **For the sake of the children**

Nenita, a former au pair and a mother of three, came to Norway in 2007. She was almost thirty-years old when she left the Philippines for the first time. Nenita did not have any plans

of going abroad. In fact, she did not want to go abroad as this would mean leaving behind her three children. However, in the Philippines, she did not have paid employment. The family was dependent on her husband's income that was not big enough to send their three children to good schools. Good schools are often private schools, and they are expensive. Encouraged by a relative living in Norway, Nenita decided to go abroad and try to earn some money for her children's education. This is how Nenita explains her decision to go abroad:

In the Philippines, we can't earn this big [money] that we earn here because I don't have work in the Philippines. I'm just a plain housewife. So I said 'I just want to try' and while trying I'm earning. So it's for my kids also. Yes, it is only for my kids, I think, to earn money for them. Because they are three now (Nenita).

Nenita's relative had been encouraging her to come to Norway for years, but Nenita was not willing to leave her three small children even though her husband and sister could have taken care of them. Only when Nenita's children were old enough not to miss her did she decide to go abroad:

My kids are getting older so they don't look for me now, they don't miss me. I don't know. I think they are growing, so they're not like babies any more. Like before, when they are small, they were always looking for Mommy. But now, I don't think they are looking for Mommy now, they are looking for their friends and ... [*not finishing her sentence*]. But it's okay. As long as I know that they are fine, that's okay with me (Nenita).

In the interview with me, Nenita is very clear that the only reason she decided to go abroad was to earn money for the education of her children and that working abroad is not something that she enjoys or wants to do again:

Yes, this is my first and hopefully my last time. And if I go home, I don't want to go again. I want to stay home, yes (Nenita).

The au pair position in Norway was presented to her as work and she had no idea that the au pair scheme was a scheme for cultural exchange, "No, my auntie didn't tell me about this. I don't think she knew about this either. I think she didn't know that" (Nenita). It appears that Nenita's choice of migration destination was not related to any particular interest in Norway, but rather to the fact that she had a relative in Norway who could help her with some information and probably practical assistance.

Also another of my Filipino au pair informants pointed out the need to provide for her children as her main reason for migrating and participating in the au pair scheme. Imelda, a former au pair, came to Norway in 2007 after having worked as a domestic worker abroad for six years. Imelda went abroad for work for the first time when her daughter Leah was only one and a half years old. Imelda did have a job in the Philippines, but the salary was too low to meet the family's needs. Moreover, her husband, Noel, was unemployed and his prospects of finding paid work in the rural province where they lived were quite poor. He had neither the qualifications nor knowledge of English that would allow him to take overseas employment. Imelda explains her decision to go abroad in the following terms:

I left my country for the sake of my daughter. She is the only reason why I came here. Because in the Philippines we have to pay for everything. Like when your kids start to go to school, you have to pay everything – school fees, books, uniforms and everything. There are so many things that need to be paid. And after getting the salary you don't ... you know, at the end of the day you don't have anything anymore so you have to borrow again. The debt is becoming bigger and bigger, piling up and everything (Imelda).

Imelda, just like the other informants presented in this chapter, did not think of the au pair scheme as one for cultural exchange, but rather as an opportunity to work in an attractive



destination. Neither did she know much about Norway, “Well, the very first time I came to Norway, I did not have any idea about it”, Imelda shares.

A common theme in the stories presented so far is that the au pair informants opted for overseas migration because of lack of adequate employment opportunities in the Philippines. High unemployment and underemployment levels, particularly among younger, highly educated Filipinos, are now recognized as structural factors causing the temporary and permanent migration of millions of Filipinos (Battistella and Asis 2013a) (see also Chapter 2). My Filipino informants too, opted for overseas migration because of lack of employment opportunities that would allow them to fulfil their duties and commitments to their families. Moreover, overseas migration, is, as pointed out earlier, highly valued in Philippine society and regarded as a major route to achieving a better life. Migrant workers are celebrated as ‘national heroes’ who rescue their country and their families from economic crisis and as respected persons with valuable knowledge of the life in foreign countries (Aguilar 1999). In this local ‘culture of migration’ going abroad for the sake of one’s family is accepted, normalized and even expected. Going abroad or prolonging the period of overseas employment because of unhappy or dysfunctional personal relationships, however, are less legitimate reasons for migration as the literature also indicates. Parreñas (2001) refers to these as ‘the hidden cause of migration’ to emphasize the fact that these are seldom recognized in theories of international migration.

### **Relationship breakdown – between the personal and structural**

While the need to provide for Leah’s education and crippling debts are important reasons why Imelda went abroad in the first place, it is her relationship with her husband Noel that necessitated repeated periods of overseas work. The reason for the difficult relationship with Noel might be found in the way he dealt with the money Imelda sent home from her overseas jobs. For two years, Imelda remitted almost everything she earned as a domestic worker in Qatar. Noel was supposed to save the money for their daughter’s education and for a house-building project. When Imelda came home, there was nothing left of the money she had worked hard for. While Noel claimed to have used the money for family needs, rumour had it that he wasted it on drinking and gambling. Imelda did not want to go abroad again, but she

saw no other choice if she wanted to send her daughter to school. Also this time Noel spent Imelda's remittances on drinking and gambling. By this time, their marital relationship had started deteriorating and when an opportunity for an au pair placement in Norway appeared, Imelda decided to take it. Apart from Noel's drinking, gambling and systematic abuse of remittances, Imelda's difficult relationship with her husband was because he never approved of her going abroad even though he did not have any paid work himself. About her relationship to her husband, Imelda says:

Sometimes he thinks that they are not important anymore because I am away. But in my heart and in my mind, I am doing this for my family. [...] Like, because of the things that we needed, I have to go away and I am just asking for his understanding about the situation. He does not understand and I have to explain and sometimes I get tired, sometimes I get irritated (Imelda).

Also Nenita's relationship to her husband Rocky deteriorated during the period of au pair employment in Norway even though she fully sponsored his business in the Philippines and the schooling of their three children. Rumour had it that Rocky had an affair with another woman, but Nenita had no proof of this and continued remitting to her family. When Nenita calls her family in the Philippines, she avoids speaking with her husband and speaks with her children. Infidelity and the breakdown of marital relationships is not unusual in the context of migration and is a finding supported by the wider literature on Filipino migration (Parreñas 2001).

Another of my au pair informants, Arlene, a current au pair in her early twenties and a single mother, came to Norway in 2011 after having been an au pair in the Netherlands for a year. Arlene did not expound on her relationship to her ex-husband, but shared that she would not have gone abroad if it were not for their bad relationship. As a single parent, Arlene had sole responsibility for the financial support and upbringing of her daughter. Arlene managed to complete only one year of college education before she dropped out because of financial reasons. Her chances of finding work in the Philippines without an education were small, and when a relative from Netherlands told her about an au pair position in Amsterdam Arlene decided to go.

Relationship breakdown is a motivation for migration in which personal and structural reasons relating to gender inequalities and the position of women in the Philippine society combine. Noel's refusal to let Imelda go abroad for work, for example, can be seen as an expression of the patriarchal structures in Philippine society that draw women back to the home sphere and position them as inferior to men. Imelda's taking the bread-winner role of the family might have threatened Noel's masculine identity, which he reinforced by doing masculine things such as drinking and gambling.

It should, however, be noted that the migrants' motivations for migration are seldom solely economic or solely personal. Rather, they can be seen as a confluence of factors that are simultaneously personal, social and structural.

### **Migration for self-improvement**

While for many of the au pair migrants in my study the lack of opportunities in the Philippines was an important reason for migration, for others, migration was just one of many different opportunities for work and self-exploration through work.

Marilag, for example, a former au pair now, came to Norway after having worked for an international company in the Philippines for two years. Marilag was in her early twenties at that time and newly graduated from a prestigious private university in the Philippines. Marilag comes from what may be described as the Filipino upper-middle class – a well-off family with good educations, well-paid jobs and a comfortable life. Both of Marilag's parents are university graduates and both had leading positions in Philippine-based international companies. Marilag's younger sister Rose was also a university graduate and had a promising career ahead of her.

At the time Marilag decided to take up an au pair job in Norway, she had advanced so much in her career that she was about to be promoted to a junior managerial position. This job, however, was not what she wanted and when a relative called from Norway with an offer for an au pair position, Marilag was ready to go "Okay, I will try it. Why not?" (Marilag). She did not know much about Norway or the au pair scheme, but having heard that it is a scheme for cultural exchange she was intrigued and motivated to go:

I didn't have any idea what an au pair was. I didn't know anything. It's like, 'What's an au pair?' So I had to research it in the internet what it was. And then my relative explained it to me what it was, and I thought it was cultural exchange. That's what I really knew. So I just said, 'Why not try it?' (Marilag).

Moreover, through her university studies Marilag knew a lot about Europe and was eager to experience European culture. She was also fluent in a couple of European languages and hoped to be able to practice them in Europe. Going to Europe as au pair seemed to be the perfect way to do this. Marilag's parents, however, were not that happy with their daughter's decision to leave a promising job in the Philippines in order to do 'the dirty work' (Anderson 2000) of Norwegian families. When Rose, Marilag's younger sister, also decided to go to Norway, their parents could not help but express disappointment with their daughters' choices:

Bagwis: As I said earlier, my daughters are already professionals. My first impression of au pair is, to be honest, that they will help Norwegian couples or European couples doing this job and that job. But when I later learned that it is more of learning the culture and the history of the place, I got this inclination that 'May be you can try it'.

Mariya: What kind of job do you mean?

Bagwis: My first impression was that she will cook, she will clean the house, she will do the laundry, she will take good care of the children. So I thought on the bad side of it, I, we, did the hard time raising our children, getting them into a good school, having them graduate with a very good college scores and here you are doing those things.

I conducted this interview with Bagwis during my fieldwork in the Philippines. The interview took place after Bagwis had shown me around their house and proudly pointed out the pictures of his daughters and their academic credentials hanging on the walls. Bagwis made it clear that he regretted his daughters' decisions to take up au pair jobs and that he felt that the investment he and his wife had made in their daughters' education was wasted.

For Marilag and Rose, however, doing work which is beneath their qualifications and experiencing temporary downward class mobility (Parreñas 2001) was not a big deal. Both Marilag and Rose had plans of finding more fulfilling jobs in Norway and they were confident that they would manage to do that. Marilag states clearly that the job in the Philippines is not what she wanted, while Rose went to Norway 'to look around for opportunities'. This is how Rose describes her decision to go to Norway:

[It] was that part of my life when I was looking for my niche; I was trying to find myself. And then fortunately enough that was Norway. And I thought it was a good opportunity, a good experience for me to go to go to another country, to study their language, meet other people and experience other culture (Rose).

Rose was aware of the fact that her parents were not particularly happy with her decision to go to Norway, but the au pair stay in Norway was an important part of her own project of self-development and self-exploration, which she needed to do for her own sake. Rose even attributes her current career choice to au pair experiences from Norway, which, in her own words, confirmed that working with people is the right career for her.

Rona, a current au pair in her late twenties at the time of the interview, came to Norway in 2011, after a year as an au pair in Denmark. Unlike many other of the au pair informants in my study, Rona did not go abroad for the sake of her family or to escape unemployment in her home country. In fact, Rona had a well-paid job in the Philippines and so did the rest of her family. Her two brothers and four sisters were all gainfully employed or studying and her parents had good incomes, too. The family was well-off and lived a comfortable life in a bigger city situated on the east coast of Northern Luzon. To my question why she decided to go abroad, Rona answers:

Rona: Being au pair is very nice and of course you have to..., like, you are getting old so you have to be far away from your family. And then you have to learn new culture, have to know a lot of people, meet new people. And also for my own sake.

Mariya: What do you mean by that?

Rona: I mean ...what they call it in English? Look, because my whole life if I were to stay with my dad [who is] always supporting us ... [*not finishing her sentence*]. So actually he doesn't want me to go, to be far away from him, but I got my freedom when I am already here.

Rona's participation in the au pair scheme was not motivated by economic necessity, but by her need to be away from her family for at least some time, meet new people and experience something new. Going abroad was part of Rona's personal project of self-exploration and self-development, a *rite de passage* in a way, during which she could try and learn new things and come back with valuable knowledge of life in Western countries. The au pair scheme was the perfect way to do this. As a scheme for cultural exchange, it offers the opportunity to live with a foreign family, learn their culture and even earn some pocket money for helping out with domestic work and childcare.

Coming from a well-off family and having a well-paid job, Rona simply did not have a good enough reason to go abroad. Moreover, patriarchal structures in Philippine society as seen in her father's wish to have the family complete and his reluctance to let her go abroad put a further restriction on her freedom. As an au pair, however, Rona could live in the safety of a Norwegian family's home and even more importantly experience some freedom.

The way Rona manoeuvres in the complicated landscape of familial and patriarchal relations and her temporary exit of these oppressive structures is pretty much what Parreñas (2001) refers to as 'the hidden cause of migration'. Rona was well informed about the au pair scheme. She found information about the scheme on the internet and quickly realized that this was the way for her to gain independence from her father.

However, even though Rona's father did not want her to go to Norway, he and the rest of the family support Rona's self-improvement project by, for example, advising her to keep the money she earned abroad for herself rather than making claims on her remittances like many other families do. This is what Rona shares:

Yeah, but they actually don't oblige me to send. They say to me to keep [the money], to save it for my future. So I'm so happy that they are my mom and my dad cause

unlike other families, because they have to persuade you to ... you have to [give] you know. But for me, I don't have to give, I just give voluntarily. So when there is a birthday I give, only that. My mum always says, 'That's why you are working so you can buy what you like' (Rona).

Rona plans to go back to the Philippines after the contractual period as an au pair in Norway is over and to continue in her former work, "So that's enough for me [laughing]. That's enough for me. At least I tried, you know, Norway and Denmark" (Rona). Rona did not have plans of going to other European countries although she had friends in both Italy and Spain who could help her find both work and place to live. Having been abroad and particularly to two Scandinavian countries, Rona feels 'that's enough for me' and is ready to return to her former job enriched by the Scandinavian culture she experienced as an au pair in Scandinavia.

Joyce, a current au pair, came to Norway in 2011 in her mid-twenties after having been an au pair in Denmark for almost two years. Joyce, just like Rona, comes from a well-off family living a comfortable life in a bigger city. Joyce is the youngest of five sisters, all of whom are professionals and some with working experience from abroad. Joyce's decision to go abroad was not motivated by unemployment or a lack of opportunities in the Philippines. In fact, at the time Joyce decided to go to Europe, she had two job offers – one for a permanent position at a famous hospital in the Philippines and one for an overseas job in the Middle East with good payment and good working conditions. As Joyce herself explains, "Actually, [when] I was in the Philippines, I have lots of choices before I moved to Denmark" (Joyce). However, when an opportunity for au pair placement in Denmark appeared, she decided to reconsider these offers.

A relative of Joyce was au pair in Denmark and could help her find host family. This was before 2010 when the Filipino Ban on Deployment to Europe had yet not been lifted, but this relative knew people who could help Joyce with the whole process of going to Europe – from finding a host family to escorting her through the immigration authorities. About the decision to come to Europe, Joyce shares the following:

And then I was thinking if I will still accept the offer, because I am thinking probably I will take the chance to work in the hospital, because it is a permanent work. And then my mom said, 'Don't you think ... It's a shame actually if you try to ask a person for help like this, can you help me find a host family for me, and they did everything, the networking and everything'. And then I was thinking, probably I will take the chance to ..., to take this opportunity to travel. Because I'm still young, and then I will just come home, I will come home if there still is a job there. So my mother said, 'Okay just go'. But they are not pushing me. It's my own choice. So I said, 'I'll try something different' (Joyce).

In the face of all the other opportunities that she had, Joyce describes going to Europe as a case of trying 'something different' and 'an opportunity to travel'. Her mother's advice not to turn down an offer that many people had worked on to make possible, Joyce perceives of as encouragement to be more adventurous and to take more chances:

Joyce: Actually they are just supporting me and my plans. They are not pushing me, just go outside. They are just letting me to decide. So for them it's fine that I travel around the ... Because I have the chances to travel around ... within the Scandinavian countries. That's the advantage of having that visa.

Mariya: You mean the au pair visa?

Joyce: The au pair visa, yes. I mean, I'm still young, I want to explore outside and then if I feel too old, I can go back and relax. But there are a lot of open doors you know, opportunities. So I can grab that opportunity.

The wish to explore and the opportunity to make an even better future for herself is what motivates Joyce to go abroad. That the au pair scheme offers an opportunity for travel and cultural learning makes going to Europe even more exciting. Joyce read about the au pair scheme and knew that once in Denmark she would also be able to travel to the other Scandinavian countries. Moreover, having read about the cultural exchange aim of the scheme she comments, "Okay, cultural exchange, that's not a problem for me, very interesting" (Joyce).



Joyce had also read about ‘the rules and everything’ and was aware of the type of work she was expected to perform as an au pair, but this did not bother her at all. Her plans were to explore the opportunities of finding good work in Scandinavia and for that objective the au pair scheme was a good start. Joyce was a registered nurse and if she only managed to learn the language, she could easily find a job after her contractual au pair period was over. As a nurse in Europe, she could earn much more as she was told at the nursing college:

When I was studying they told me, ‘Oh, it’s very ..., the salary is very high if you work as a nurse outside, abroad’. Because in the Philippines, we are just earning, the amount is just exactly the same amount you need for your needs. You are not able to save; it’s just a small amount. So most of us, including myself, we like to go out and work and save (Joyce).

That au pairs are strategically using their time in Norway to learn Norwegian and find a job after the au pair period is over is a finding consistent with Seeberg and Sollund’s (2010) study of Filipino au pairs and nurses in Norway.

Joyce’s decision to go to Europe has an economic motive, but it is her wish to make the most of the existing opportunities for personal and professional development that motivates her and not the need to provide for her family. Even though Joyce frames her decision to go abroad in terms of her wish to try something different, to travel and explore, the impact of social and structural factors is also visible in her motivation. As much as her mother encouraged her to take more chances and ‘go out’ rather than taking a permanent job in the Philippines, the local ‘culture of migration’ is also shaping Joyce’s decision to go abroad.

Already at the nursing college, Joyce was told that ‘the salary is very high if you work as a nurse outside’. The opportunity to work ‘outside, abroad’ is related to the growing demand for care workers in the industrialized regions of the world, to which, the Philippines has responded by educating a large number of nurses. Nursing has long been seen as ‘passport out of the country’ (Battistella and Asis 2013a). All of Joyce’s classmates from the nursing college went abroad after they graduated. That all of her sisters also had experience working

overseas only illustrates the scope of the local ‘culture of migration’ that Joyce has also been socialized into.

## Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to examine the reasons why young Filipinos leave their families in the Philippines and take up au pair positions in Norway. This is an important question to explore as women’s migration into the domestic work and care sectors of the more developed regions of the world has been seen as starting global care chains.

In this study, I explore whether the Filipino migrants’ participation in the Norwegian au pair scheme can be understood in terms of global care chains and what knowledge about the Filipino au pair migration to Norway we can obtain with the help of the global care chains conceptual framework.

The analysis reveals that economic motivation is an important reason for migration among young Filipinos who enroll in the Norwegian au pair scheme. Structural factors such as unemployment and underemployment, especially among young, highly-educated Filipinos, as well as uneven regional and global development are among the reasons why young Filipinos seek employment overseas.

The family, as seen in the elaborations of my au pair informants, plays an important role in Filipino migration. In fact, much of the Filipino internal and international migration can be seen as motivated by the duty and obligation to provide for one’s family. This is also the case for the young Filipino migrants in my study, most of whom opted for overseas migration ‘for the sake of the family’. Solidarity and loyalty with the family are of the highest priority and the reason why Chona and Rowena, for example, postponed their own lives in order to provide for their families.

The family, however, can put a lot of pressure on the au pair migrant by making monetary demands or by intervening in the migrant’s private life and life trajectory as seen in Rowena’s case. The family can also contribute to periods of repeated and unwanted overseas migration when the migrant’s remittances are not managed properly and wasted, or when a familial relationship is deteriorating. Divorce is still officially forbidden in the Philippines, but

migration is often called ‘the Filipino divorce’ as it gives a more legitimate reason to exit a dysfunctional marriage. Dysfunctional familial relationships are now increasingly recognized as ‘the hidden cause of migration’ (Parreñas 2001) and is for some of the au pair informants the reason why they went abroad in the first place or prolonged the period of overseas employment.

Overseas migration, however, and particularly participation in the au pair scheme, can also provide a route for personal growth and self-development. For some of my Filipino au pair informants, taking up overseas work and becoming the family’s main breadwinner was a way to establish themselves as respectable and mature persons who are capable of fulfilling their financial duties and obligations to their families. For others, the au pair migration offered an opportunity for self-exploration and a way to find themselves and their ‘niche’.

The cultural and formative element of the au pair scheme seems to be particularly important for the Filipino upper-middle class and is used by both the au pair migrants and their families to legitimize participation in the scheme. For upper-middle class families whose daughters have grown up being served by maids and taken care of by nannies, having their daughters servicing Norwegian families and ‘doing this job and that job’ (Bagwis) hurts their pride. As participants in a cultural exchange program, however, these upper-middle class daughters are seen as immersing themselves in European culture, and, thus becoming knowledgeable persons, which is an activity more compatible with the upper-middle class life styles than doing the ‘dirty work’ of Norwegian families. The au pair migrants themselves also use the cultural exchange element of the scheme in order to gain freedom (and their parents’ approval) to leave the family for a certain period of time. In some instances, the au pair scheme and the freedom from parental control it offers, is even used as a way to challenge patriarchal structures in Philippine society.

The analysis thus far shows that young Filipinos have different reasons and motivations for migrating and participating in the au pair scheme and that different personal, structural and social factors shape these. These findings and particularly the importance of structural factors for the au pair migrants’ motivations for migration connect my study to the larger body of research on au pairs and migrant care and domestic workers, but they also add new dimensions to this body of literature by emphasizing the importance of class in Filipino au pair migration. The analysis shows that the au pair scheme offers an attractive way to achieve one’s personal goals, travel and work for au pairs from different class backgrounds and that

far from being poor and disadvantaged as often depicted in the literature, Filipino au pair migrants are quite resourceful.

Based on these preliminary findings, the question that is relevant to ask is whether the Filipino au pair migration to Norway can be approached with the help of the global care chains conceptual framework.

Most of the relationships described in this chapter do imply care chains in the sense that the family members of the au pairs who would normally receive care from the au pair are left behind in the country of origin so that the Filipino migrant is able to take up the au pair position in Norway. This is particularly the case for the three au pair informants in my study who are mothers and who have left behind their own children in order to be able to come to Norway. These are in a way 'classic' examples of care chains as all three au pair informants left their children in the care of family members (mothers, sisters and other female family members) while providing care for family members of the Norwegian host family.

The relationships of the au pair informants who are not mothers can also be approached with the care chain concept since these Filipino au pair migrants also leave behind family members who would normally expect to receive care from the au pair migrant as is the case with Gerelyn and her mother, for example. Gerelyn left her ageing mother in the care of female family members in order to be able to go abroad and provide financially for her mother. Such relationships are often described in the literature as global care chains, and the cases of my Filipino au pair informants are not that different from what the literature views as global care chains.

But whether these relationships may be conceptualized in terms of 'care drain', extracting of 'emotional surplus value' and 'robbing children of their mothers' is a question that the remaining chapters of this study explore. I start exploring this question by providing a closer look to the work day of the Filipino au pairs in Norway and the kinds of tasks they are asked to perform by their Norwegian host families.

## Chapter 6. Au pairing in the context of the Norwegian welfare state

### Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to explore what is like to be au pair in the socio-political context of the Norwegian welfare state. The socio-political context that the Filipino au pair migrants come to when they enroll in the Norwegian au pair scheme can be seen as emerging in the interplay of three regimes – the local migration regime, the childcare regime and the gender regime. These three regimes define (1) the legal framework of au pair placements in Norway, (2) the childcare solutions that Norwegian families choose for their children, and, hence, the time that the au pairs spend with the host families' children as well as (3) the local gender-equality norms and ideals that organize the host families' everyday lives and their relations to the au pairs.

Based on the au pair migrants' own elaborations on their everyday lives as au pairs in Norway and drawing on notes and observations from my fieldwork among Filipino au pair migrants in Norway, this chapter offers a bottom-up, ethnographic perspective on what it is like to be an au pair in Norway. The analysis of the au pair migrants' experiences in Norway and particularly their relations to the members of the host family brings new dimensions to the discussion of whether the local and transnational relations that the Filipino au pair migrants are part of may be conceptualized in terms of care chains.

The purpose of the au pair placement as defined by both the Council of Europe's European Agreement on 'au pair' Placement and the Norwegian Immigration Authorities is cultural exchange. The idea is that through participation in a foreign family's everyday life, the au pair will get to know the local culture literally from the inside by immersing herself in the everyday life and routines of a foreign family. The activities, practices and routines through which the au pair is invited to discover the new culture are mostly childcare and housework. These are also the activities that this chapter focuses on. The chapter is organized around the elaborations of six of my Filipino au pair informants and shows the diversity of both the informants' backgrounds and their au pair experiences in Norway.

The first section explores what the normal work days of the Filipino au pairs in my study are like and shows that because of the host parents busy work schedules and their preferences for public daycare, the au pairs are performing much domestic work and little or no childcare. The next section continues the exploration of the au pairs' work days and illustrates occasions where the au pairs are performing much housework and much childcare. Section three focuses particularly on the work days of the Filipino au pairs who are mothers with care responsibilities for own children in the country of origin. The purpose is to explore whether migrant mothers develop emotional bonds to the children of the employing families. The chapter closes with a discussion of how the particularities of the local Norwegian context impacts the au pair experience in Norway and the opportunity for the development of strong emotional bonds between the au pairs and their wards.

### **Just a normal work day: a lot of housework, little childcare**

Alma's work day starts at seven-thirty in the morning when she has to wake up the youngest of the family's four children, prepare breakfast for her and help her get ready for kindergarten. The host mother prepares breakfast for the other three children, all of whom are school aged. The host father is usually not at home at that time. As the other three children are old enough and do not need any assistance from the au pair, Alma had no tasks related to them except for the times when the parents are working late or are not at home. In such occasions, she stays at home with all four children.

Alma, a former au pair at the time of the interview, came to Norway in her mid-twenties from a family of farmers in a rural province of Central Luzon. The au pair placement in Norway was Alma's first overseas work and the first time she had travelled to Europe. As the only woman among her five siblings, Alma was used to doing household chores and looking after her younger brothers and felt more than qualified for the au pair work in Norway, which she took 'for the sake of the family'. Moreover, right after her arrival in Norway and before meeting her host family, Alma received a crash-course in au pairing from a Filipino friend. This friend was the person who helped her find a host family. The purpose of the crash-course was to ensure that Alma knew what was expected of her as an au pair in Norway. Having spent the night at her friend's place and being prepared for her new life as an au pair in

Norway, the next morning Alma was delivered to the host family's house. After a short welcome, she was shown around and introduced to her work tasks. Alma recalls her first conversations with the host family, or rather with the host mother, to be about Alma's duties, "My host family they told me, this is my house, these are my children, and this is what we and you to do" (Alma).

In addition to helping the youngest of the host family's children with practical tasks such as getting ready for kindergarten and taking her to kindergarten, Alma is also responsible for all of the cleaning and cooking, which she does every day except for the weekends. This is how Alma describes her normal work day:

Alma: I cooked dinner every day and washed clothes every day. While I was cooking the dinner, I had to wash the clothes, hang up the clothes, did the cleaning, everything. Every day.

Mariya: Every day? Also in the weekends? Saturdays and Sundays?

Alma: No, I have free in the weekends. But on Fridays, every Friday, I have a general cleaning.

Mariya: The whole house?

Alma: The whole house. And it's a big house. A three-storey house with a basement and an attic.

What Alma describes is a considerable workload, which sometimes also includes picking up the youngest child from kindergarten if the host mother has to work longer hours. Moreover, twice a week, Alma attends a Norwegian language course during the day while the host family's children are at daycare and school. These days can become quite stressful for Alma as she has to do the cleaning and the cooking after her Norwegian classes, in the afternoon, before the family members arrive home. If, on the top of that, the host mother calls her and asks her to pick the youngest child from kindergarten, Alma's workload and stress increases even further. In such cases, Alma has to cook dinner and clean the house, while at the same time looking after the youngest child. Alma's work day often finishes between six and seven o'clock in the evening after the host mother has come home from work.

The reason for Alma's heavy workload may be seen as related to the host family's busy schedules and particularly the fact that both parents work a lot in pursuit of their own careers. The host father, in particular, is seldom at home. He travels a lot on business and is often abroad. In the two years that Alma has spent with this host family, she has only seen him "seven or ten times" (Alma). The host mother, too, has a busy work schedule, but unlike her husband does not travel that much and at least not abroad. Because of the host father's regular absences, Alma has developed a kind of 'partnership' with the host mother based on a 'shared' responsibility for the housework and the children:

Me and the host mother, we have become kind of partners (laughs). [...] 'Alma, you know your duties, right? And you know that I have to go to work, you understand, right?'. So I have become ... I've worked a lot and I've done a great job (Alma).

Even though Alma describes this relationship as 'partnership' – a word that creates an expectation for more or less equal division of household duties and chores – Alma is the one who carries out most of the family's domestic work. She is also the one who is expected to meet the host family's need for flexibility in their everyday life and be at home with the four children when the parents are working late or are on work-related trips. Alma is required to take the role of an adult and act as a substitute parent, but at the same time she is spoken to as a child as expressed in the host mother's questions, 'you know your duties, right?' and 'you know that I have to go to work, you understand, right?'.

Manoeuvring in this landscape of multiple, diverse and contradictory roles puts Alma under a lot of pressure. Despite having been prepared for the au pair job by her Filipino friend, Alma seems to be putting a lot of effort in controlling her emotions. In addition to all the physical labour of cooking, cleaning and caring for the host family's members, Alma is also doing a considerable amount of what Hochschild (1983) has conceptualized as 'emotional labour', i.e., controlling and hiding her real feelings in order to deliver a service that she is expected to. When 'back stage' (Goffman 1959) in her own room, however, Alma lets her feelings out and expresses her homesickness and frustration:



Alma: When I'm finish at 7 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the evening, I go upstairs and cry, every day. What the hell am I doing here? I miss my family and I want to go home, back to the Philippines, but I can't go back because I have a contract. So I told to myself, 'I have to get myself together. I have a contract for the next two years'.

Mariya: So you had made your mind that you would continue working?

Alma: Also because I had used a lot of money and a lot of time to process the documents, right.

In addition to the heavy workload that she is given, Alma's emotional stress may as well be related to the expectations towards her from her family in the Philippines. Having invested 'a lot of money and a lot of time' to process her documents to come to Norway, Alma, like the other Filipino au pair informants in my study, feels morally responsible to give something back to her family. This, however, is only possible if she continues working as an au pair in Norway. Moreover, Alma also feels moral responsibility towards her friend who helped her find a host family in Norway and whose good name depends on Alma's good performance as an au pair.

Alma's elaborations show how the different dimensions of the au pair experience in Norway are formed by the interplay of factors on both the structural and the individual level. Alma's long working day, for example and the fact that the Norwegian host family needs an au pair can be seen as related to the local gender equality norms according to which both men and women should provide financially for their family. That both parents in this family are pursuing their own careers can, in this local context, be seen as an expression of (gender) equality. This equality, however, is based mainly on the financial contributions to the family budget and not on equal sharing of household chores and care for children. The latter tasks are carried out almost entirely by the au pair, who is hired for the purpose of enabling the parents to pursue their professional careers. That the host mother is 'partnering' the au pair may be seen as reproducing a pattern of the traditional gendered division of labour where the woman is responsible for organizing domestic chores, only that the host mother is organizing the work, while the au pair is carrying it out. That the host father in this family is more or less absent from the family's everyday routines is also interesting in a Norwegian context, through quotas and policies, fathers have been encouraged to take their share of the care for children and household chores (see Chapter 2).

The local Norwegian welfare context can also be seen as impacting the au pair experience in Norway in other ways and particularly when it comes to the amount of childcare the au pairs are performing. As seen in Alma's own descriptions of her work tasks, the caring labour she is doing for the host family's children consists of mostly practical tasks such as helping the youngest child get ready for kindergarten, getting her to and from kindergarten and babysitting all four children when their parents are not at home. This is what care theories have described as 'caring for' or the physical labour of caring (Hooyman and Gonyea 1995). This is not to say that Alma does not 'care about' the host family's children, but her tasks do not involve the type of activities that enable the children to develop strong emotional bonds to her. The nurturing tasks of putting the children to bed and reading bedtime stories that do create emotional bonds are reserved for the host mother. Moreover, in accordance with local care cultures and discourses of what constitutes appropriate care for children, the host family's children spend most of the day in either daycare or school, which are the pedagogical institutions responsible for the education and upbringing of children. As a result, except for occasions when Alma is babysitting the host family's children, her time with the children is limited to the hours around breakfasts and dinners.

For several other of the Filipino au pair informants in my study, the work day also consisted of more housework than childcare. Cassy, for example, a current au pair in her mid-twenties came to a Norwegian family with four teenage children aged thirteen to nineteen, none of whom needed any particular help or assistance from the au pair. Cassy of the children's ages, Cassy did not have any work tasks related to the children. Cassy, however, herself coming from a big middle-class family with three brothers and four sisters felt comfortable spending time with the host family's teens and joined them in their activities:

But sometimes I join their activities. Because the kids love to ... I've learned to play, to join their..., what you call it, arrow, hit the arrow. They love that. So sometimes I join their activities as well. They invite me (Cassy).

Cassy, however, is aware of the fact that the main reason why the host family hired her is to do the housework. This is how Cassy describes her usual work day:

Cassy: We just have to work five hours in the house. But I work in the morning and then every day I cook dinner for my family. So we eat together. I'll cook them Asian food, they love it. Yes, I also cook a lot of Filipino food and they just eat it. It's a good my family are not very ... what do you call it, 'Oh, I don't like this meal' like that. So they just eat what I cook.

Mariya: And what about the children? How many children are you looking after?

Cassy: So they don't really [want me] to look after the children. The important thing for them is that there is someone who will clean the house; the kitchen is important to clean.

Cassy describes her work day as consisting mainly of household chores, but this does not seem to bother her at all. Cassy does not complain about the cleaning, cooking and ironing she is asked to do even though it is reasonable to assume that two adults and four teenage children are producing quite an amount of clothes to be washed, dishes to be placed in the dishwasher, floors to be cleaned and dust to be wiped up.

Rather than a source of discontent or dissatisfaction, the housework, or, more particularly the cooking, seems to bring Cassy and the host family closer and it even gives her a sense of being 'one of the family'. Not only does the host family like the food that Cassy cooks for them, as seen in the quotation above, but they also eat that food together as a family. They also ask Cassy what kind of foods she would prefer to eat and buy them for her.

Apart from sharing meals with her host family on a daily basis (except for the weekends, which Cassy spends with her friends), Cassy is invited to participate in many of the other activities and routines of the family. Unlike other au pairs who might often be unwanted in the family's living room and private space after their 'shift' is finished (Bikova 2008, Stenum 2011a, Sollund 2010a, Búriková and Miller 2010, Platzer 2002), Cassy is welcomed to spend time with the host family in a manner she herself finds comfortable. In her free time, Cassy often chooses to watch TV with the host family or cook food with the host mother:

Yeah, we watch TV and we cook together sometimes. The host [mother] she loves to bake so I join sometimes. She is teaching me how to cook [...] so I learn a lot from her also (Cassy).

As pointed out in the literature on au pairs and live-in domestic workers, the employing family's living room is often reserved for the social activities of the employer's family (Lan 2003). That Cassy is invited to use the host family's home space on equal terms with the other family members and that she feels comfortable doing this could be seen as an indication that the host family perceives of her as 'one of the family'.

As 'one of the family', Cassy was also invited to join her host family for skiing in the mountains, which she, in her own words, "enjoyed quite much" (Cassy). The host family also made a short video of her skiing that she sent to her family and friends in the Philippines. Even though she enjoyed the skiing quite a lot, Cassy was not that eager to join her host family for their upcoming ski trip. That she had the confidence to decline the invitations could also be seen as an indication of her equal position in the family.

Cassy's au pair experiences are quite interesting in a Norwegian context for several reasons. According to Cassy's own descriptions of her work day and relations with the members of the host family, she is well integrated in the host family's everyday life in many ways. The sharing of meals, in particular, can be seen as an indication that Cassy is treated as 'one of the family' since mealtime is often seen as the most important element of the construction and maintenance of family ties (DeVault 1994). This is especially the case in Norway, where, because of the busy schedules of both parents and children, dinner is often the only time when the whole family is gathered together. Since mealtimes provide 'a routinized setting for sharing information, coordinating activities and transmitting social norms and cultural values among family members' (McIntosh 1996), sharing meals with the host family also implies being included in the family.

Further, the preparation of family meals, as noted by DeVault (1994), involves the affective work of 'constructing the family' based on tacit knowledge about family members' tastes and nutritional needs. When Cassy's host family asks her what kind of food she would like to eat, they are doing the affective work of learning about her food preferences and nutritional needs and including these into the family's priorities. This is in stark contrast to many host families

who do not even want the au pair to share a meal with them as seen in the work of for example Dalgas (2016).

Cassy is included in the host family also in other ways. She is invited to share the private space of the family's living room and to spend time with the members of the host family in a manner that is comfortable for her. She is also invited to join the family for their holidays and free time activities.

All these different ways of including the au pair in the host family's everyday life can be seen as an expression of the local 'passion for equality' and as an indication that the host family is doing their best to follow the recommendations, terms and conditions of au pair placement and provide the au pair with the time and opportunities for cultural experiences. At the same time, the au pair is hired solely for the purpose of doing the host family's housework, which in the local context with a strong normative focus on gender equality, is quite problematic. In a society where people are encouraged and expected to clean their own dirt, hiring someone only for the purpose of doing someone's 'dirty work' (Anderson 2000) is not quite socially accepted.

### **The frustrations of au pairing in Norway**

That au pairs in Norway spend less time on childcare than au pairs in other European countries, as discussed earlier, could be seen as related to the local childcare regime according to which kindergartens and schools offer the most appropriate upbringing and care for children. For some of the au pair informants in my study, this does not seem to be an issue at all. For others, however, not being able to provide nurturing, emotional care for the host family's children is a source of frustration and dissatisfaction.

Gerelyn is one of my au pair informants, who, even though has the responsibility for the daily care of the host family's six-month old baby, would rather spend even more time on childcare than she is allowed to. Gerelyn is also one of the au pair informants who had worked abroad before coming to Norway and is an experienced overseas worker. Gerelyn had worked for a Singaporean family for seven years before she came to Norway as an au pair.

In Norway, Gerelyn's work day starts at six-thirty in the morning – much earlier than the work day of many other of the au pairs in my study. Gerelyn, however, is used to getting up early and working a lot. The Norwegian host family that Gerelyn is placed with has two children – a five-year old and a six-month old baby. Both parents work full time. In addition to a full-time job, the host mother is taking some extra university courses as she needs to upgrade her qualifications. At seven o'clock in the morning Gerelyn is expected to take charge the baby and take care of it for the rest of the day until the host parents come home from work, usually between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. Gerelyn has almost no duties related to the five-year old as the parents usually take him to and bring him back from kindergarten. This is how Gerelyn describes her own work day:

Just only clean the house and [care for] the youngest one since that one is six months old and that's the one I'm looking after. [...] And if he's sleeping, that's the time I have to start my work also. But if he is playing, I have to play with him. But since I got lots of experience, of course, I know how to manage my time. Because I'm used to, you know, look after two kids and I'm used to do everything. So I know how to really manage everything (Gerelyn).

Gerelyn describes a busy work day with a lot of housework and childcare. Taking care of a six-month old baby and doing the housework is not exactly 'light housework', but Gerelyn does not complain over the workload. On the contrary, she prides herself on her good time-management, which she attributes to her experience as a domestic worker in Singapore. In Singapore, Gerelyn was used to doing many more household chores and having full responsibility for the daily care of the employing family's two children. She was also asked to run errands on the behalf of her employers. Coming to Norway and 'only' having the responsibility for cooking, cleaning and the baby, Gerelyn felt she was not able to take in use her professional knowledge and experience of running a household:

Well, in my case, the big difference is when I came here in Norway, I'm used to, you know, do so much things, [do] everything. Because my host family there in Singapore,

they are used to just leave everything with me, because they're both working and they know that I can do almost everything without even [telling me] what to do. You wouldn't even believe – I can go to the bank and, you know, deposit some money. They would just leave it up to me, everything (Gerelyn).

It might seem that Gerelyn experienced her work situation in Singapore as much more meaningful and challenging, but also more satisfactory than the work as an au pair in Norway. Her exclamation, 'you wouldn't even believe' can be seen as an expression of her satisfaction with her work in Singapore, where she could demonstrate her professional skills and prove herself as a competent caregiver. In Singapore, Gerelyn was responsible for the daily care of her employer's two children, whom she had been taking care of since they were babies. For the seven years that Gerelyn worked for this family, she became emotionally attached to the employing family's children and perceived of them as 'my kids'.

The situation in Norway is quite different. Gerelyn feels that she is not able bond to the Norwegian family's children due to "our language barrier, because the kids here don't speak English" (Gerelyn), but also because the care tasks that could potentially establish an emotional bond to the au pair are reserved for the children's biological mother. In the interview with me, Gerelyn provides a quite elaborate description of the differences between Norway and Singapore when it comes to her role as a caregiver:

The big difference here in Norway, working as an au pair in Norway, [compared] to what I used to do in Singapore, is that my host family here, they spend so much time with their kids. And like for example, during the evenings, what they do before they go to bed, they're the one who will take them to shower and brush their teeth. While when I was in Singapore, I used to do everything. No, it's a big difference because I used to, you know, look after a lot of kids, my two kids in Singapore. I used to do it every day – putting them to bed, and you know, bathing them and helping them brush their teeth.

Since I was so close with my two kids in Singapore, I was telling them [they are] my kids. So I used to prepare, I wanted to do a lot, so much things for them because I did

it also, you know, I used to do that most of the time, so it doesn't change. But when I came here to Norway, the eldest is I think six-years old already at that time or five. So it's more than I expect. Of course our relationship, it wasn't the way it was in Singapore because my kids there in Singapore, they grew up with me (Gerelyn).

What Gerelyn describes very well and particularly with her observation 'my host family here, they spend so much time with their kids' are the local parenthood norms, according to which the close and nurturing care for children or the so-called 'intensive mothering' (Macdonald 1998) that creates the psychological bond to the child, is reserved for the parents. The activities described by Gerelyn, such as helping the children get ready for bed and putting the children to bed, but also taking the children to and picking them up from kindergarten, are not only practices that create emotional bonds between the child and her parents, but they are also a part of what Stefansen and Aarseth (2011) have conceptualized as 'enriching intimacy', i.e., the daily parent-child interactions that aim at developing the child's agentic self and capabilities (Gillies 2005, Stefansen and Aarseth 2011). Moreover, some host families, as noted earlier, would not leave their pre-school children in the care of the au pair entirely as they see the au pair's limited knowledge of Norwegian as an impediment to the child's linguistic development (Due 2011). Whether or not this is the reason behind the host family's decision not to engage Gerelyn in the care for their five-years old is not really the question here. However, some of the patterns that both Due (2011) and Stefansen and Aarseth (2011) describe in their studies are recognizable.

That Gerelyn's Singaporean employers assigned her with the full care for their two children and with the responsibility for running the household, she interprets as a token of their trust in her professional abilities and expertise, but also as an indication that she is a member of the family. Gerelyn shares that, "I did not feel during that time that I am a stranger. They loved me so much and I felt included in the family" (Gerelyn), which she contrasts with the way she feels in Norway. That she is not involved enough in the care of the host family's children seems to be an issue for her even though she has full responsibility for the daily care of the host family's six-month old baby. To protect her feelings and her professional pride, Gerelyn rationalizes the lack of bonding with the fact that she is the host family's third au pair, and, hence she is someone with whom the children do not bother to engage emotionally. This is how Gerelyn rationalizes the situation:



So these children had a lot of experience also. I think the first [child] is the one who had this very good relationship with the first [au pair] because she came also when he was young (Gerelyn).

What Gerelyn seems to imply is that the children, or rather, the five-year old, has developed his own strategies for coping with the frequent change of caregivers and has learned not to get emotionally invested in the au pair. This observation is also confirmed by other au pair studies that have found that mothers will often try to discount the effects of au pair turn over by micro-managing the relationship between the au pair and the child (Sollund 2010a, Due 2011).

Gerelyn's au pair experiences can also be seen as another example of how the interplay of the local childcare regime and migration regime shapes the practices and experiences of au pairing in Norway. In the local childcare regime with institutionalized daycare for children there is not much room for an au pair who wants to provide full-time care for the host family's children. The weekdays of most pre-school and school children are scheduled in the sense that the children spend the majority of the day at kindergarten, school or after-school programs (SFO). Kindergartens, in particular, are seen as the most appropriate and pedagogically stimulating environment for small children and most parents, regardless of their class background (see Chapter 2) send their children to kindergarten even when the family has hired an au pair. This leaves the au pair with somewhat limited time to spend with the host family's children and can, as seen in Gerelyn's case, lead to frustration and discontent with the au pair job.

Moreover, the local migration regime according to which the au pairs are only allowed to stay with a host family for a maximum period of two years puts further restrictions on the time they may spend with the host family and their children. Two years is enough time for au pairs to become emotionally attached to the host family's children if only they are given the opportunity to do so.

The commonality of the three au pair informants whose au pair experiences I have presented so far in this chapter is that none of them had children of their own whom they had to leave

behind in order to take up the au pair job in Norway. All of the informants were indeed part of family networks and family relations that they missed and longed to reunite with. Below, I explore the experiences of migrant mothers working as au pairs in Norwegian homes.

### **Migrant mothers' au pairing in Norway**

Only three of the sixteen au pair informants in my study are mothers with care responsibilities for their own children in the country of origin. All three of them – Nenita, Imelda and Arlene are presented in the previous chapter. All three of them came to Norway 'for the sake of their children' and because of their deteriorating marital relationships.

Imelda, for example, worked for a host family with three school-aged children. The children were aged eight to fourteen and because of their ages, she did not have any particular work tasks related to them. Her main work tasks were cleaning and cooking, which she did every day. Imelda, like my other Filipino au pair informants, did not seem to mind the workload. This is how Imelda describes her relation to the Norwegian host family:

And being in Norway is really ... I really like it here in Norway. They appreciate the way you work, what you have done to them [...]. But here in Norway they consider you as a member of the family. They always wanted you to be part of whatever activity they have. You know, programs they have in the family. So you feel like being part of the family. The whole family (Imelda).

What Imelda indicates is that she does feel appreciated by the host family even though she is aware of the fact that she is hired solely for the purpose of doing the host family's 'dirty work'. It is important to note that Imelda makes this comparison based on her prior experiences as domestic worker in Qatar and Singapore. Both of these destinations are known for the poor treatment of domestic workers and poor working conditions. Much like Gerelyn and Chona, Imelda seems to approach the au pair placement in Norway from the perspective of her working experiences abroad, which makes the au pair job look quite pleasant and likeable. Imelda, however, seemed genuinely satisfied with her Norwegian host family and

could not “say one bad word for them” (Imelda). She was invited to join her host family for their holidays, which made her feel like being part of the family.

In her interview with me, Imelda did not speak much about her relation to the host family’s children. This might be because she did not spend much time with them. Imelda, however, spoke quite a lot about her own daughter – Leah – whom she missed very much. Imelda longed to be reunited with her daughter and called her as often as she could, “just to hear her voice” (Imelda). How exactly and whether the separation from her own daughter influenced her relationship to the children of the host family is not a question with a clear answer. From what Imelda told me in the course of the interview, however, it did seem that she grew emotionally attached to host family’s children as she continued visiting them and even bringing them their favourite Filipino food long after her au pair contract was over.

Nenita, whom I introduced in the previous chapter, also misses her children very much. Nenita describes her first months as an au pair in Norway as particularly tough:

Before I would call every morning when I wake up, it’s an everyday routine. So it’s like they are just here. Yeah, but it’s okay, I’m used to it now. Before, I was really homesick and really sad. But it’s okay now, I’m used to it now (Nenita).

Nenita’s children were aged eight to twelve at the time she was working as an au pair in Norway, and, in her own words, they did not miss her as they were growing up and spending more time with their own friends.

The Norwegian host family that she was placed with had four children aged two to fourteen year old. Two of the children were in their teens, while the other two had not started at school yet. Nenita was responsible for the two youngest children, whom she was to take to and pick up from kindergarten. She was also responsible for the cleaning and cooking. Nenita describes her work day as follows:

Cleaning, taking the kids to the kindergarten, cooking dinner for them [the host family]. Mostly that. Not that much. Because it’s only five hours’ work. [...] It’s

mostly Monday and Friday they wanted the house cleaned. So I can do some chatting and run some errands on the other days (Nenita).

The amount of work and the childcare tasks were not an issue for Nenita, who, as a mother of three children was used to cleaning, cooking and caring. In fact, she found the au pair job in Norway as quite nice and generally quite ok to be au pair, “Yes, but its’ ok. It’s nice to be au pair. And it’s just five hours a day, so it’s not that bad” (Nenita).

Even though the work itself was ‘not that bad’ and it was ‘ok now’ to be away from her own children, Nenita did speak about them for the most of the interview. When I met her in the late autumn of 2010 she was no longer working as an au pair, but just like Imelda, she still visited the host family’s children “just to see the kids because I miss them sometimes, because I have been with them for two years, so it’s now hard to leave them” (Nenita).

The third mother in my study, Arlene, came to a Norwegian family with three children, two of whom are school aged and one is attending daycare. Arlene’s work day is not that busy and to fill the day with some activities she does housework:

Actually from the morning the kids are at school and in the kindergarten, and I do nothing here at home. So I myself just do everything I can do here, like laundry (Arlene).

Arlene cooks for the family once or twice a week and she often chooses to cook Asian food. She does some cleaning as well, but the host family is not that stringent on that and do not ask her to clean very often. Unlike the majority of the other au pairs in my study, however, Arlene does some of the nurturing care that in the other host families is reserved for the parents.

Both parents sometimes work in the evening – the host mother twice a week and the host father mostly in the afternoons. In such cases, Arlene has the responsibility for cooking dinner for the children, helping them with their evening routines, such as brushing their teeth and putting them to bed. These are the intimate and nurturing care tasks that the host family of Gerelyn, for example, does not let her do and reserve for themselves. In Arlene’s host family,

however, because both parents often work late, Arlene is allowed to do some of the ‘intensive mothering’ (Macdonald 1998).

This intensive mothering, however, might have created an emotional bond between the au pair and the children, or, at least between the au pair the youngest child as I happened to observe during the interview with Arlene. Arlene invited me to do the interview at her host family’s house, during a weekday and at a time when the members of the host family were coming home from school, work or kindergarten. That particular day, it was the host mother who brought the youngest child home from kindergarten.

When the youngest child – a four-year old girl – saw Arlene, she immediately ran towards her and gave Arlene a big hug. The child wanted to cuddle with Arlene and was not interested in either me or her own mother. Arlene told me that the youngest is very attached to her and that she reminds Arlene of her own daughter, whom she had left behind in the Philippines in the care of her parents.

Arlene is one of the au pair informants who came to Norway after the Philippine Immigration Authorities lifted the Ban on Deployment in 2010. That Arlene came to Norway after 2010 also means that according to the changes made in the au pair regulations with the lifting of the ban, she was no longer eligible for an au pair visa to Norway because she is a mother. In an attempt to prevent parents from separating from their children and in order to strengthen the cultural character of the scheme, persons who are married, have been married and who have children are no longer granted au pair visas for Norway. Arlene was aware of these recent changes and the fact that she was violating Norwegian law, but in her own words, she was doing this for the sake of her daughter. Whether or not Arlene’s Norwegian host family knows that she is a mother is not something that Arlene expounded on. Still, having someone’s child hugging her, while she longs to be reunited with her own daughter is a situation that in the literature is commonly described as the ‘global care chain’.

## Discussion

The objective of this chapter has been to explore what it is like to be an au pair in the context of the Norwegian welfare state. The Norwegian welfare state with its universal provision of services and benefits that enable the combination of paid work and care for children, the gender-equality ambitions behind the public provision of childcare and the way people live and organize their everyday lives in accordance with the local gender-equality norms create quite specific and unique conditions for au pairing in Norway.

The way these structural factors play into the experiences of persons who work as au pairs for Norwegian families are examined in this chapter by looking at what the work days of au pairs in Norway are like. Care for children and housework are the main tasks that au pairs in Norway are expected to do. Hence, the work day of the Filipino au pairs in my study is examined through these tasks.

The analysis of the empirical material shows that the Filipino au pairs have quite different experiences when it comes to the amount of cleaning, cooking and caring they are asked to do for the host family. The au pairs' own elaborations on their work days revealed that while some au pairs are hired solely for the purpose of doing the family's domestic work and have almost no tasks related to the host family's children, others do quite a lot of domestic work and childcare. What is common for the au pair informants presented in this chapter and for the rest of the au pair informants in my study is that all of them performed much more domestic work than childcare.

Still the work days of the Filipino au pairs in my study are quite different. This may be related both to the host parents' working time and to the age of the children. Some of the au pairs presented in this chapter had long and busy work days filled with a lot of housework and childcare, while others did almost no childcare at all. For some au pairs, the heavy workload caused frustration as was the case with Alma, while for others, the amount of work was not an issue and became even a way to get closer to the host family. For Cassy, for example, the housework and particularly the cooking is a way to be included in her host family's everyday life and it makes her feel like 'one of the family'.

For other au pair informants, the amount of housework is an issue not because there is too much work, but because there is too little. Gerelyn, for example, despite being responsible for

the daily care of the host family's six-month old baby and all the cleaning and cooking, is still dissatisfied with the amount of work, which she considers to be 'too little' for her. For Gerelyn, mastering the domestic work is a source of professional pride. Being an experienced domestic worker, she feels unable to make use of her professional experience as an au pair in Norway. Within the framework of the local migration regime, however, and according to the regulations of the au pair placements in Norway, she was already doing quite a lot of childcare and domestic work.

The primary source of her dissatisfaction, however, is the fact that she is not involved in the care of the host family's five-year old. Moreover, that the host family has 'reserved' the nurturing care tasks such as putting the children to bed for themselves Gerelyn interprets as a kind of boundary that she is not to transgress and as an indication that her role in the family is one of a domestic worker and not a family member.

So how are we to understand and conceptualize the relations between the Filipino au pairs in Norway and their Norwegian host families?

This chapter illustrates that the local welfare context and particularly the interplay of the local care culture, gender equality ideals and immigration regulations constitutes an important framework within which the relations between au pairs and host families are situated. The relations between au pairs and host families must, however, be situated also within the larger framework of global relations, where the different geo-political positions of Norway and the Philippines as countries from respectively the Global North and Global South has made the au pair scheme an attractive way for Filipino citizens to come to Norway. The relations between Filipino au pairs in Norway and the Norwegian host families, then, can be conceptualized in terms of South-North relations, in which the Filipino au pairs provide care to the Norwegian host families in exchange for money.

A major discussion in the literature on global care chains and also a question that this study explores is whether emotional surplus value can be seen as produced and extracted in these relations. The particular welfare context in which these relations unfold does play a major role. While the Filipino nannies in Italy and USA whom Parreñas (2001) studied in the 1990s spend years with their wards because of the lack of public daycare in these two countries, the Norwegian welfare state with its universal, state-subsidized daycare and its migration regime that limits the au pair stay to maximum of two years almost 'prevents' the au pairs from

developing strong emotional bonds to the host family's children. This is not to say that the au pairs placed in Norwegian families do not grow fond of the children, but rather that the au pairs do not always have the opportunity to bond with the host family's children either because the children are too big to need an au pair or simply because the children are at school or kindergarten.

The situation is, however, a bit more complicated when the au pairs are mothers with own children in the country of origin. Based on the elaborations of the migrant mothers in my study, it is reasonable to assume that they do project some motherly-like feelings on the children of the host family as seen particularly in the case of Arlene.

Before I turn to the Filipino au pair migrants' transnational family lives, I focus on another dimension of the Filipino au pair experience in Norway, namely, the way au pair migrants organize and spend their free time. As au pairs in Norway, Filipino nationals are entitled to time for recreation, educational, cultural and religious activities. How the local welfare context shapes the au pairs' opportunities to enjoy free time and how the au pairs' participation in free time activities is related to the production of emotional surplus value is examined in the next chapter.



## Chapter 7. Free time, trade unions and surplus value

### Introduction

This chapter continues the exploration of Filipino au pair experiences in Norway using perspectives from the welfare state and regime literature. While the previous chapter explored the work day of the Filipino au pairs, this chapter focuses on the way they spend their free time within the framework of the Norwegian welfare context.

Drawing on my fieldwork among Filipino au pairs in Norway, I focus on the different functions and dimensions of the au pairs' contractual free time. This part of the au pair experience is important to look at not only because it marks an important difference between au pairs and domestic workers – many domestic workers have little or no contractual free time – but also because of the processes taking place in the fellowship of other au pairs and co-nationals, namely, empowerment, risk management and the affirmation of linguistic, national and religious identities. These are important processes that are usually inaccessible to the host families because they are seldom part of their au pairs' free time.

It is a major argument of this chapter that the interplay of the local 'passion for equality' and the local migration regime create locally-specific conditions for au pairing that not only enable the au pairs to enjoy leisure and recreational activities, but that also benefit the host families. To develop my argument, in the first section, drawing on the au pair informants' own descriptions of their arrangements with the host family, I illustrate how the local egalitarian culture contributes to the au pairs being able to enjoy their contractual free time and to get compensation for their extra work. In the next sections I provide ethnographic descriptions of two types of free time activities in particular – home parties with sleep-overs and participation in religious activities – and argue that these contribute to the reinforcement of the au pair migrants' linguistic, religious and national identities.

In the last section, through a discussion of this chapter's main findings, I conceptualize the fellowship of co-nationals as an informal trade union. I argue that the processes taking place in these informal trade unions contribute not only to the empowerment of the au pairs, but ultimately to the production of emotional surplus value. The chapter draws on interviews with ten of my sixteen au pair informants.

## Fair play, unfair play: Norwegian host families through the eyes of their au pairs

'Nobody needs an au pair just five hours' a day' (Kristensen 2015, Sollund 2010b, 2010a, Hess and Puckhaber 2004) is a finding reversing in much of the au pair studies from both Scandinavian and the European countries. A work day that exceeds five hours daily is also common for many of the Filipino au pairs in my study, some of whom, as shown in the previous chapter, worked much more than five hours a day and more than thirty hours a week. Some of my Filipino au pair informants worked up to ten hours a day or even more as did Gerelyn and Alma, for example. Other au pair informants, however, worked five hours a day or less as did Vilma, who, "From Monday to Friday, after twelve o'clock, [I] just watch some movies from Philippines" (Vilma), listened to music and talked with her friends via Facebook, Skype or messenger.

The work days of the Filipino au pair informants in my study differ both in terms of the workload they carry out and relations with the members of the host family. As is discussed in the previous chapter, the age of the children as well as parents' work schedules shape the work days of the au pairs. As it comes from the elaborations of my Filipino au pair informants, however, even though many of the host families had difficulties following the five-hour working day part of the contract, the majority still tries not to overwork their au pair or at least offer some compensation for extra work. Compensation was given in the form of extra free time, extra payment (pocket money) or extra Norwegian language classes.

Joyce's host family, for example, sometimes needed her to stay the night with the children because of work-related trips or when the host parents went for recreational, adult only and child-free trips and activities. In such cases, Joyce was offered either extra payment or extra free days. For the most of the time, however, Joyce's host family were lenient with following the rules of the contract, which left Joyce with enough free time during the week days and at weekends. Joyce had two contractual days off every week, usually Saturday and Sunday and could also 'collect' her extra free time and demand another day off if she wished or needed so.

Other au pair informants received extra payment or extra Norwegian classes as compensation for the extra work. Both extra work and extra payment is against the regulations of the au pair

placement; however, both parties seem to accept these arrangements. The au pairs perceived of these arrangements as 'fair' treatment when the host family offered them compensation for the extra work and as 'unfair' when the host family failed to compensate them for their extra efforts.

Chona, for example, unlike the majority of the au pair informants in my study, felt that she was treated unfairly and even badly by her Norwegian host family. Chona is one of my au pair informants who came to Norway as an experienced overseas migrant worker. She had worked as maid for a Chinese family for four years before she came to Norway and her experiences as maid in Hong Kong did impact her performance in Norway. As she points out herself:

Chona: In Hong Kong we work very hard, we have an initiative, and we are used to work like that. So when I came here to Norway, with the first employer, they are very good actually, really good. And I used to call them ma'am and sir because we used to do that in Hong Kong. So they never stopped me to do that. They never told me anything about 'You need to call us names', but that's not the point here. The point is that I worked in the family the way I worked in Hong Kong, I worked hard. I did everything. I do car washing here, gardening.

Mariya: Here in Norway?

Chona: In my first employer, which they did not inform me about.

Chona rationalizes her over-performance in Norway with the fact that she was used to work hard in Hong Kong, but also that her Norwegian host family did not inform her properly about her rights and duties. According to Chona, her Norwegian host family not only got used to her 'services', but also started increasing her workload.

Chona did considerable amounts of cleaning, cooking and babysitting, but on the top of that, her host family would also ask her to do extra babysitting during the weekend without offering her any form of compensation. For Chona, who came to Norway 'for the sake of her family', and who even hoped that the shorter work day in Norway would enable her to take some extra jobs, being asked to put in additional hours without being remunerated was a

problem. Not only did she miss out on the opportunity to take extra jobs when providing services for her host family, but she also had less free time than did other au pairs.

Only after Chona started spending some time with other Filipino au pairs and exchanging information with them about what their work tasks and duties were like, did she realize that she was working way too much and that “[My] thinking is wrong, because they have their own rules here in Norway” (Chona).

Chona realized that as an au pair in Norway she was not supposed to work that much and blamed her host family for not informing her properly about her rights and duties and for taking advantage of her lack of knowledge. But she saw it also as a personal failure that she did not establish contact with the Filipino community soon enough after her arrival to Norway so that the community could inform her about her duties:

Chona: It’s my fault from the beginning.

Mariya: Because you didn’t know?

Chona: Because I didn’t know, but also because I got adopted it from Hong Kong and I bring it here the way I work and because I didn’t have Filipino friends at that time to inform me that it’s like that.

What Chona points out here, namely, the importance of socializing with fellow au pairs and co-nationals, is an important dimension of the au pair experience in Norway and also one that this chapter explores.

It is, however, important to note that even though Chona was unhappy with her first Norwegian host family (she did change host family after speaking with other au pairs), most of the Filipino au pair informants in my study spoke warmly about their Norwegian host families and could not emphasize enough how lucky they were with their host families. Marilag, for example, describes her host family as “really, really nice”, “basically a very good family” and “I have nothing but good words for them”, while Nenita sees not only her family as “very good” but also Norwegian people in general as “very kind” and “people here are good. They are always smiling”.

Even Gerelyn, who was frustrated over her Norwegian host family as they did not involve her enough in the care of their five-year old child, appreciated the care and concern they showed for her especially during the first month of her stay in Norway when she was having a hard time adapting to the new environment. Having noticed that she was spending a lot of time alone in her room, Gerelyn's Norwegian host family would not only come to her room and ask if she was ok, but also took the initiative to put her into contact with other au pairs from the neighbourhood. Vilma's host family also encouraged her to go out and meet other people after they noticed that she was staying mostly in her room and not meeting other people.

What appears from the elaborations of my Filipino au pair informants is that even though many of their host families did not always succeed in following the contract when it came to working time and work load, the majority of the host families would still try to treat their au pairs fairly and offer them some form of compensation for their extra work.

Studies of host families, however, have interpreted the Norwegian host families' benevolence and generosity as act of charity through which the employment of au pair is legitimated in the local normative culture of social equality and international solidarity (Kristensen 2015, Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Bikova 2008). Hiring someone to do the 'dirty work' (Anderson 2000) in a culture where families are expected to 'clean their own dirt' and where men and women are encouraged and expected to share the responsibilities for childcare and domestic work is morally problematic and can only be legitimized if the host families respect the terms and conditions of the au pair placement and treat the au pairs as equals.

Whether or not Gerelyn's host family was genuinely concerned for her when they put her in contact with other au pairs or whether they were establishing themselves as good and benevolent people is not the question here. What is important is that because the majority of my informants' host families tried to follow the contract, the Filipino au pairs did have free time both in the evenings and at weekends. It is the opportunity to enjoy free time and the processes taking place during the au pairs' free time that I see as of particular importance for the Filipino au pairs' experience in Norway.

## **When does the free time start and how is it spent?**

In the host families with children of school age or in daycare, the free time of the Filipino au pairs in my study would usually start after one or both of the parents had come home from work and after the host family had eaten their dinner. Most of my au pair informants cooked dinner for the host family at least few days per week. Some of the au pairs joined their host families for dinner, while others did not. The au pairs would also help clean up after dinner before their work day was over unless there was some babysitting. In the families where the au pairs did not have any work tasks related to the children, time off was more flexible.

During the week days, most of the Filipino au pairs in my study had free time in the evenings. Time off was spent in different ways, but attending Norwegian language courses and staying in their rooms were the two most common activities. The majority of my informants attended Norwegian language courses at least one afternoon per week except for Alma, whose language course was during the day. As the language course occupied most of the afternoon, there was usually not much time left for socializing or other activities, but some of my informants would sometimes hang out with their classmates from the Norwegian language course. Other would visit their au pair friends if the friend's house was nearby or simply stay in their rooms, watch TV and talk to their friends.

It was, however, during weekends, which, for the majority of the Filipino au pairs in my study, began on Friday afternoon and ended on Sunday evening, that they had the opportunity to spend more time with their au pair friends and co-nationals. The weekends offered more time for recreational and leisure activities and among the most popular activities were home parties with sleep-overs, cooking, singing and attending church as well as shopping, hanging out and self-organized excursions.

## **Reinforcing national and linguistic identity: Filipino House and the like**

Home parties with sleep-overs followed by Sunday church attendance were among the free time activities that most of the Filipino au pair informants in my study participated in on a regular basis. The parties took place at someone's host family's house when the host family

was away for the weekend. Cooking and eating Filipino food, watching Filipino movies and signing karaoke were the regular, almost compulsory ingredients of these home parties. Home parties with sleep-overs took place in many different neighbourhoods where there were families who had hired au pairs, but it at a place referred to as Filipino House by its visitors that I had the chance to observe and participate in some of the au pairs' free time activities.

The Filipino House is a place where current and former au pairs as well as Filipinos with permanent or temporary residence permits come to socialize, exchange information and eat Filipino food. On weekdays, the Filipino House is a residence of Filipinos living and working in Norway, but during weekends, the house turns into a hub where Filipinos from different networks can meet and mingle. The main activity in the house is cooking and eating Filipino food, but also watching Filipino movies, singing karaoke and simply hanging out. During my visits to the house, the atmosphere was always cheerful and I could see that the visitors enjoyed themselves. Cassy, one of my Filipino au pair informants, and a regular visitor of the house, describes preparations for the weekend at the house and the activities taking place there as follows:

So we come here for the weekend, because we can eat rice, cook everything we want. So we bought food already on the Friday night and then we also share the money for what we need [to buy]. We make a contribution and ask each other how much money you spent for our food this weekend (Cassy).

By consistently using the plural pronoun 'we' to describe the preparations for the weekend at the Filipino House, Cassy indicates that she belongs to a community of fellow nationals and au pairs who all gather for the purpose of having a good time and simply being together. The 'we' in her descriptions, however, refers not only to her friends who participate in the sharing of money for the purchase of food, but also to casual visitors who come by for a chat or a meal. During the weekend, Filipino food is cooked almost all the time and just like in the Philippines, friends and family members, neighbours and even strangers can come by at any time and get some food. Lorna, a former au pair living in the house and waiting for her student visa to be granted, explained this tradition of food-sharing as follows:

In our culture, every time you come into a house, you don't even say 'hi', you just ask him [the visitor], 'Are you hungry?' That's the way we greet people who come to our house (Lorna).

Gerelyn, who belongs to another network of Filipino au pairs, also remarks that "even we are poor, when you pass by in our place and you are hungry, we don't know [you], but you can come and eat. We can share whatever we have" (Gerelyn). This practice of solidarity and care for each other, the cooperative endeavour or the *bayanihan*<sup>11</sup>, or the cooperative endeavour, is what is recreated in the Filipino House and in many other places where Filipino au pair migrants gather for the purpose of being together and having a good time.

Apart from the all-day cooking, another popular activity is karaoke. Karaoke is a very popular pastime in the Philippines, especially among the very poor, for whom singing popular songs is a way to escape from the harsh realities of the everyday life (Reuters 2007). In the Philippines, there are no festivities without karaoke (Sood 2011). Bars, restaurants, malls and hotels offer karaoke as Filipinos love to sing and perform. During my fieldwork in the Philippines in the summer of 2011, I was often invited by my Filipino hosts to the local karaoke bars and restaurants and encouraged to sing. This national pastime was practiced enthusiastically in the Filipino House and all of the other home parties, birthday celebrations or festivities organized by Filipinos and can be seen as a practice through which the Filipinos reinforce their linguistic and national identity.

Another important activity that takes place in the house is the exchange of information about the different aspects of the au pair experience in Norway, life in Norway and overseas work in general. Both current and former au pairs as well as Filipinos occupying different professions and positions in Norwegian society visit the house, which contributes to the house also functioning as a kind of information center. Many Filipino au pairs come to the house to spend the weekend and they often share information about how much they work, how much they get paid for extra jobs and how to deal with demanding host families.

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<sup>11</sup> *Bayanihan* from Tagalog translates as cooperative endeavour.



Similar processes, however, also take place at other places where Filipino migrants gather as indicated by my Filipino au pair informants. Chona, for example, realized that she was working too much only after she started socializing with other Filipino au pairs who told her what their work schedules were like.

So when I first ..., when I stayed here in Norway for like few months, I started to know other people, other Filipina au pairs. And we gathered, we talked. We are like this. We are Filipina; we are very friendly like, 'Oh, where do you come from?' and 'How are you today?', like that. [And] they start asking, and they start to compare themselves. And I remember one of my friends she said to me, 'I don't know why you are doing this. You know that au pair is only five hours a day, and you don't need to work more than that? Didn't your employer, didn't [they] inform you about this?' [...] So day by day I have more and more friends who told me also 'Oh, my employer is like this, and like this, and I can go out'. And when I started to go out and visited them in their houses, really, it was lots of friends in their house after they have just finished the five hours (Chona).

The fellowship of other Filipino au pairs helped Chona realize that their everyday lives as au pairs in Norway were quite different from hers and that they enjoyed much more leisure time than what she had. When one of Chona's Filipino friends told her that she could recommend her to another host family, Chona decided to terminate her contract with her current host family and accept her friend's offer for another host family. The relationship with the new host family worked out very well and Chona was happy with her new host family for the rest of her au pair stay in Norway.

Gerelyn's au pair stay also improved considerably after she started socializing with other Filipino au pairs. Even though when asked by her host family why she was not socializing, Gerelyn blamed on the bad Norwegian weather, in the interview with me, she shared that she simply didn't have any friends to go out with.

Not having friends also had practical implications for Gerelyn's everyday life as she did not have the network to share experiences with and to inform her about her rights and duties as an au pair in Norway.

As I showed in the previous chapter, Gerelyn approached the au pair placement in Norway much like her domestic work job in Singapore. She not only worked much more than what is expected of an au pair, but she also felt frustrated that she was not involved in the care of the host family's children in the way she was used to in Singapore. Probably because of her experiences as a professional domestic worker in Singapore where she only had one day off per month, Gerelyn was not used to having free time. Neither was she aware of the fact that she was entitled to two days off per week and that most of her evenings were supposed to be free. Having been told by the Filipino au pairs that 'it's your free time so you are allowed to go' Gerelyn decided to accept their invitations for parties and ended up having fun and indulging herself in beloved Filipino activities such as singing karaoke, dancing and eating Filipino food. This is how Gerelyn describes her first meeting with the Filipino au pairs in her neighbourhood:

And when I arrived, she – they are all laughing at me, because I was so bundled up and so cold, and they said, 'How many jackets are you using?'. I said, 'Three, and I'm still cold. That's why I'm wearing this'. They said, 'That's a lot of coats'. And I realized how funny it is. But the coat is..., I do so because I came from the warm weather and I said 'I'm so cold, I'm freezing'. And they said, 'Oh, later you will get used to it' [...]. And they said, 'Oh, you have to go to the party'. They had a party with these Filipino people, and I said, 'No, I don't know them, I'm shy'. They said, 'No way. You stay [abroad] so long and now you don't want? You can go with us. I will take you up there. I will tell to them that I will bring you in the party', and all that. 'Of course it's your free time so you are allowed to go'. I said, 'Okay, you can—I will just come here later, no need to pick me up'. They said, 'Okay then, but I will talk to them and tell them that I will bring you'. I said, 'Okay, thank you' and then we eat this Filipino food. We had fun. And during this time, this time also, I think five people who are au pairs were also coming and visiting her. And three of them are her relatives also, who were au pairs. And that's the beginning of my socializing here in Norway. Because of that party I got to, you know, know a lot of people, all of them

also are Filipina. And Filipinas love party. They cook food; they do this, uh, like karaoke. The singing and dancing ... And they call, they always invite me. And since then on Saturdays, Sundays I am always out (Gerelyn).

As indicated by this quotation, Gerelyn was warmly welcomed into the local Filipino community and was immediately taken care of. By laughingly asking her how many jackets she was wearing and telling her that she would get used to the weather, the members of the local au pair community were sharing their knowledge and experience with her and thus providing immediate care for a co-national. Gerelyn was also included in the activities of the community by being invited to a party where she could meet other Filipinos. Her attempt to decline the invitation with the excuse of being 'shy' was not accepted by the other au pairs – a gesture through which they confirmed their wish to include Gerelyn in their fellowship.

The fellowships of co-nationals such as these formed in the Filipino House and the local ones that Gerelyn and Chona were part of have the important function of informing newcomers about their rights and duties in the host society and function thus as both information centers and informal trade unions. Moreover, in addition to being recreational, the activities taking place during the au pairs' free time – the cooking and eating for Filipino food, the singing and dancing – contribute to the reinforcement of national identity, the 'we' that Marilag spoke about.

### **Reinforcing Filipino identity through participation in religious activities**

Participation in religious activities and especially attending Sunday mass is another free time activity that the majority of my informants participated in. The Catholic Church holds a monthly Filipino mass in Tagalog, but every Sunday there is a mass in English attended by both Filipino migrants and by other Catholics. As part of my fieldwork among Filipino au pair migrants in Norway, I attended some of these monthly Filipino masses and the gatherings organized by the local Filipino community that followed them.

Before going to church on Sunday, some of my Filipino au pair informants participated in either bible-study groups or bible sharing, as they called it that took place in different groups

affiliated with church. Joyce, one of my informants who participated in such a group, describes the practice of bible sharing in the following way:

It's just we are reading bible scriptures and then sharing about ... we have our own reflections on the scriptures. And then afterwards we share about experiences. And then the experiences is just in the group – we don't need to share these with someone else (Joyce).

The practice of bible sharing offers a social space where Filipino nationals have the opportunity to enhance and reinforce their religious and linguistic identities in a dialogical and interactive environment. Moreover, what is shared are not only the group members' reflections on biblical scriptures, but also their personal experiences. The sharing of 'experiences', as pointed out by Joyce, is an exclusive practice only available for the members of the group. This creates a sense of confidence, intimacy and belonging and a fellowship in which the group members exchange advice and support on different matters.

Nenita also participated in a church-affiliated bible-sharing group called Couples for Christ<sup>12</sup>, which, as indicated by its name targeted couples and families. The main objective of Couples for Christ is to strengthen and defend Christian marriage and 'to provide community for brothers and sisters all over the world' (Couples for Christ 2007). Membership in Couples for Christ groups is a statement and a declaration that one is devoted to keep one's family 'complete' despite physical separation because of, for example, migration (Horn-Hanssen 2007).

Through participation in different activities, such as the practice of bible sharing, for example, the members of the group are encouraged to stay away from the temptations of transnational life and focus on their families. For Nenita, one of the au pairs in my study who was married

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<sup>12</sup> Couples for Christ is an international foundation working for "renewing the family and defending life" and is officially recognized by the Catholic Church (Couples for Christ 2007). The foundation defines itself as "servant to the Church" and conforms to Catholic values and ideals (Couples for Christ 2007). As indicated by the name, Couples for Christ targets couples and families either they are proxy or transnational, but has also subdivisions targeting children, singles and youth. Among the core objectives of the foundation is to strengthen and defend Christian marriage and "to provide community for brothers and sisters all over the world" (Couples for Christ 2007).

and had three children in the Philippines, Couples for Christ provided a sense of belonging to a community of co-nationals who could understand her decision to leave her country for the sake of her children and provide her with the moral support and the recreational activities she needed to continue her job as an au pair. This is how Nenita describes the activities of the Couples for Christ group:

Nenita: We always go out with friends on Saturdays, but not on Sundays. [On Sundays] we usually talk about the gospel for the day, so we share each other's opinion about that. Like that. And one is preaching, talking about something, some topic from the Bible, form anything that is inspiring so that we can learn something good at least [...]. But it's not like that every Sunday. We also have this fellowship; we go some places not to do the Bible. Just to chat, chatting and enjoying the day.

Mariya: On Sundays?

Nenita: Yes, on Sundays. So it's sometimes we do that on Saturday if it's fellowship. So there's no work on next day, so we can stay the whole night. Sometimes we do it in one house, staying there, just relaxing, singing, eating. The last time we have fellowship we went bowling. So all the members are there and it's like enjoying the day. It's not like reading the Bible every Sunday. But every time we meet, there is a lot of food – Filipino food. We usually eat and eat and eat. We love eating.

Nenita's membership in the Couples for Christ group provides her with the linguistic, religious and social fellowship that, apart from ensuring her well-being, reinforces and affirms her Filipino identity in the transnational social space created by her migration to Norway. Filipino national identity is reinforced through the shared religiosity, as seen in the practice of bible sharing, but also through the practice of cooking and eating Filipino food, which, as already discussed, recreates the feeling and taste of being at home in the Philippines

The church with its different groups and activities, but also through the celebration of masses and fiestas, brings together Filipinos of different age and marital status, education and professional affiliation, residence permits and visa types. The Sunday mass and particularly the festivities after the monthly Filipino mass held in Tagalog is an important meeting point for Filipino migrants and permanent residents. The gatherings after mass are also an important

arena where au pairs can meet other au pairs and exchange information about, for example, host families, but they are also an opportunity for the au pairs to receive information about potential boyfriends and even future husbands. It is common for former au pairs and other Filipino women married to Norwegian men to bring their husbands or partners to the mass and to the festivities after the mass. Through the networks of these Filipino women, current au pairs can receive information about potential suitors.

## Discussion

Drawing on interviews with current and former Filipino au pair migrants as well as on notes and observations from my fieldwork among Filipino au pairs, I explore in this chapter, the part of the Filipino au pair experience in Norway that is largely invisible and inaccessible to the Norwegian host families, namely the au pairs' free time activities. The very fact that au pairs in Norway, unlike those in the UK or Germany, for example, or domestic workers and nannies in Italy or the USA, have the opportunity to have free time can be seen as related to the local Norwegian egalitarian culture, according to which people should be treated equally regardless of the type of job they do or their position in society. It is the local 'passion for equality' that, according to studies of Norwegian host families (Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Kristensen 2015), is what motivates Norwegian host families to treat their au pairs fairly and offer them extra payment or other types of compensation for the extra work they do.

Further, thanks to the local 'passion for equality' that implies not only gender equality, but also social equality and international solidarity, Norwegian host families do not want to be seen as people who hire young women from poor countries to do their 'dirty work'. This is why the host families not only attempt to follow the contract and compensate au pairs for their extra work, but also present au pair employment as an act of charity towards the au pairs and their families in the country of origin (Sollund 2010a, 2010b, Bikova 2008).

Regardless of the host family's reasons for trying to follow the contract, the fact that they do attempt not to overwork their au pairs enables the au pairs to enjoy free time and recreational activities.

As illustrated in this chapter, the home parties, bible sharing and Sunday church attendance play important roles in affirming the au pairs' linguistic and religious identities, but also in reinforcing the sense of belonging to a transnational Filipino community. It is, however, the home parties and particularly the fellowships of former and current au pairs and the information exchange taking place there that are of particular importance for the well-being of the Filipino au pair migrants. At these home parties the au pairs receive information about their rights and duties, get some advice about how to handle disagreements with host families as well as recommendations about where to go after the au pair visa in Norway has expired or how to stay in Norway after the au pair period is over. These temporary, transient communities of Filipino au pair migrants function as *informal trade unions* as they not only provide work-related counselling and information, but in a way they also protect their members from the risk of overworking and exploitation. The work of these informal trade unions is also preventive as they educate their 'members' on how to negotiate with host families and demand their rights and even to confront the host family if agreement is difficult to achieve.

Having participated in home parties either in the Filipino House or elsewhere, the Filipino au pairs encounter their Norwegian host families not only with a strengthened sense of national belonging, but also with information about their rights and duties, and empowered to make changes in order to improve their own situations. Having received counselling from her local trade union of fellow au pairs and having been offered help to find a new host family, Chona, for example, took the big step of terminating her own contact and leaving her host family.

Given the fact that the majority of my Filipino au pair informants came to Norway before 2010, i.e., before the lifting of the Ban on Deployment of Filipino au pairs to Europe with which some major changes in the au pair scheme were made, the participation in such informal trade unions is of particular importance.

With the lifting of the Ban on Deployment in 2010 changes were made in the terms and conditions for au pair placements that aimed at strengthening the cultural element of the au pair scheme and protecting the au pairs from abuse and exploitation. The Philippine Immigration Authorities, for example, required that Filipinos leaving the country as au pairs register at the COF and participate in a Country Familiarization Seminar that gives information about the values, cultural and social realities of the host country (CFO 2016b). Only a couple of my Filipino au pair informants (those who came to Norway after the lifting

of the Ban on Deployment) had participated in such pre-departure orientation seminars and had received information about their rights and duties as au pairs in Norway.

The majority of the au pairs in my study, however, came to Norway before the ban was lifted and were not included in the state organized pre-departure orientation programmes. Still, they were socialized in the Filipino ‘culture of migration’, in which – it is common to receive information about the migration destination from returning migrants, family or friends. Many of my au pair informants were recruited privately by a friend or a family member who was already in Norway. Some received little information about the au pair scheme, others were given a crash-course in au pairing (Alma) or tried to inform themselves by searching for information on the internet. The au pairs’ knowledge of their rights and duties, however, must have been somewhat restricted as Chona and Gerelyn, for example, did not even know that they were entitled to free time.

This is why participation in informal trade unions such as the one formed at the Filipino House and other places where Filipino migrants gather is important for current au pair migrants.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the different functions and dimensions of the au pairs migrants’ free time and its role for the overall au pair experience in Norway. The analysis shows that apart from a recreational function, the opportunity to enjoy free time in the community of other au pairs and co-nationals not only enhances the au pairs’ linguistic, national and religious identities, but also increases their awareness of their rights and duties as au pairs and contributes to their empowerment. The positive feeling of belonging to a community of nationals that is produced when Filipino au pairs enjoy their free time and the feeling of empowerment after having been counselled by the informal trade union can be seen as a kind of emotional surplus value. This surplus value, however, is hardly transferred to the children of the employing family as the au pairs spend limited time with them. It is therefore channelled to the other tasks and activities that fill the au pairs’ work days such as doing domestic work for example. The surplus that is generated when the au pairs enjoy free time may be seen as coming back to the Norwegian host families who, following their egalitarian hearts, encourage and enable the au pairs to enjoy recreational and leisure activities.

The exploration of the au pairs’ free time, then, reveals a new way of producing surplus value that is not related to the transfer of motherly-like love to the members of the employing



family, but rather to the generation of positive experiences as a result of the participation in recreational free time activities.

## **Chapter 8. Empty spaces in the care chain? How Filipino communities deal with migration**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapters, I explored the Filipino au pair migrants' motivations for migrating and participating in the Norwegian au pair scheme as well as their everyday lives as au pairs in Norway. The objective of this chapter is to show the perspectives of the au pairs migrants' family members in the Philippines by exploring how they perceive of and relate to the Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Bringing the perspectives of the migrants' families to the fore of the analysis enables a discussion of how the Filipino au pair migration to Norway impacts the lives of the au pairs' families and the communities in the country of origin from the point of view of the families themselves.

Drawing on interviews and observations from my fieldwork among family members of au pair migrants, in this chapter, I explore the role of au pair migration in the lives of their families in the Philippines. More particularly, sensitized by the global care chains perspective and its focus on the redistribution of care in the context of migration, I explore whether and how the care relations that the au pairs were part of prior to migration have been influenced by migration.

A central argument in the global care chains literature is that the globalization of labour markets is drawing third-world women to more developed regions to perform the care and domestic work of privileged families in exchange for salaries, while delegating their own care responsibilities to female family members or local caregivers. Such relations have been seen as endangering familial intimacy, 'extracting' care resources from the migrant workers' own families and communities and causing 'care deficits' (see Chapter 3). One of the objectives of this chapter is to explore whether this is also the case among the Filipino au pair informants in my study and how they organize their care relations in the context of migration.

In this chapter, I argue that the Filipino au pair migration to Norway reorganizes local care relations because of the migrants' physical absence from the everyday lives of their families and through the remittances that they send. I also argue that due to Filipino care culture, according to which the extended family is responsible for the care of its members, in the

context of migration, parents, siblings and children of au pair migrants are not left without care, but in someone's care. Moreover, this chapter shows that the Filipino migrants' transnational care practices with remittances as the ultimate expression of care for one's family are not universal, but rather class-specific. The first section discusses the role of remittances in the lives of the migrants' family members in the country of origin and particularly how remittances contribute to fulfilling and creating family obligations. The next section continues the exploration of the role of remittances for reorganization of family relations by showing a 'classic' example of global care chains. Section three brings the importance of class in transnational family relations. The last section discusses main findings of this chapter. The empirical material presented in this chapter is based on seven interviews with family members from four of the families that I visited during my fieldwork.

### **Creating and fulfilling familial obligations through remittances**

Many of my Filipino au pair informants cited economic motivation and particularly the need to provide for their families as an important reason for enrolling in the Norwegian au pair scheme. Migration for the sake of the family is, as mentioned earlier, common among Filipinos and often implies sending remittances to one's family.

Alma, for example, the au pair informant with whom I travelled to the Philippines, used to send most of her pocket money to her family in the Philippines. A larger share of the money was used for the construction of a new house; some of it was used for everyday needs. With the money from Norway, Alma also managed to finance the migration of one of her brothers and buy a motorized tricycle<sup>13</sup> for another so that they can provide for their own families. Alma's house was the first place I stayed at during my fieldwork in the Philippines and already from this first visit to a family with an au pair migrant, I noticed the differences between Alma's house and the other houses in the neighbourhood.

With au pair money from Norway, Alma had managed to build a concrete house fully equipped with modern electric appliances and furnished with nice furniture. In a neighbourhood of traditional Filipino houses built of local materials such as bamboo and nipa

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<sup>13</sup> A motorized tricycle is a three-wheel motorbike and a common means of public transportation in the Philippines.

palm, Alma's house distinguished itself with its solid, modern structure. It was her father and one of her brothers who lived in the house, but the house functioned as a gathering place for the whole family, and they often used it for family celebrations and bigger family meals at weekends. Alma's mother was no longer alive and it was one of Alma's brothers who took care of their father. Alma's sisters-in-law would also help with practical tasks such as cleaning and cooking on an almost daily basis to relieve Alma's brother who had the responsibility for the daily care of his father.

During her visits to the Philippines, however, Alma would hire someone else, usually young local girls, to do the cleaning and cooking for her father and brother so that her sisters-in-law were relieved of these tasks at least for some time, but also because Alma herself did not feel like using her holiday time on such trivial tasks. When on holiday in the Philippines, Alma would rather spend time with her family and friends and treat herself with shopping and other relaxing activities. Moreover, now that she had settled in Norway and was working in the Norwegian labour market, she could afford to buy herself free from the work of cleaning and cooking for her father.

Other among my au pair informants had also contributed considerably to the material well-being of their families. Much like Alma, Chona remitted most of her pocket money to her family in the Philippines. Chona had also managed to build a new house for her parents that they proudly accommodated me in during my stay in their village. The house was newly finished, beautifully furnished and equipped with electric appliances. Chona's parents and their three grandchildren were living in the house. With money from Norway, Chona had also sponsored the overseas migration of her elder sister, her cousin and her sister-in-law. She had also purchased agricultural land for her father and brother to work on, paid back her family's debts and sponsored the schooling of her three nieces. Chona's three nieces were taken care of by Chona's parents since their mother, sponsored by Chona, was working abroad. The girls' father lived nearby, but he did not earn enough to provide for his three daughters. Moreover, rumour had it that he was drinking heavily while his wife was abroad and Chona's parents preferred to take the children rather than leave them in the care of their father. Chona's brother lived nearby too, but because of the absence of his wife, who was also abroad thanks to Chona, he spent much of his time in his parents' house. Chona's brother did not have any gainful employment, and his only income came from the agricultural land that Chona had bought for him to cultivate.

Chona's cousin – Imelda<sup>14</sup>, also an informant of mine whom I interviewed in Norway, was in Norway thanks to Chona. Imelda 'took over' Chona's host family after Chona's contractual time as au pair was over. In addition to supporting her family financially, Chona had authorized her parents to use some of her money to help neighbours and friends who might need financial support. Chona also sent small gifts to a friend in Manila, who helped her process her documents for the au pair placement in Norway and who had since become a beloved friend of Chona's whole family.

Chona's migration to Norway had created job opportunities for her whole family. Her older sister, sister-in-law and cousin were all working abroad and providing financially for their families thanks to Chona. Her father and brother were working on an agricultural land given to them by Chona and earned money by selling their produce at the local market. The whole family seemed very proud of Chona's achievements and the fact that she went abroad 'for the sake of the family'. Talking to Chona's father, for example, he told me that Chona went to Norway "for better chances, for a better opportunity for the whole family" and that "she helps us" (Chona's father).

However, even though the family was well acquainted with the reason why Chona was in Norway, they did not seem to know much about Norway or the kind of work she was doing there. To my question regarding what he knew about Norway, Chona's father answered quickly "nothing", while her mother knew that Norway is "cold and beautiful". Chona's brother, whose wife was working as au pair in Norway in a family that Chona found for her, knew that she was "cleaning the house and being babysitter". Only Chona's best friend, who helped her process her documents for the au pair placement in Norway, knew that Chona was working as an au pair and what an au pair was.

As described above, the au pair migration of Alma and Chona influenced the everyday lives of their families in multiple ways. It is, however, through the remittances that these changes are brought to the migrants' families and local communities. It is with the help of remittances sent from Norway that the families of the migrants have managed to build new houses, to finance the education or overseas migration of family members, to create jobs for family

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<sup>14</sup> In Norway, I interviewed both Chona and Imelda not knowing that they were related. Due to personal conflict, they were not speaking with each other or about each other and neither of them mentioned having a cousin in Norway. It was first during my preparations for the fieldwork in the Philippines that I discovered that the two women were related. It was the more or less identical addresses of their families in the Philippines that made me think that they must in fact be members of the same extended family.

members and ultimately to experience an increased living standard and material well-being. Migrant remittances, as indicated by both economic-oriented and ethnographic research on remittances (McKay 2007, Carling 2014), are not only an expression of migrants' sacrifice for their families, but also a way for the migrants to confirm and sustain their membership in a group. Chona's sustained involvement in the everyday lives of her family in the Philippines is legitimated by the regular allocation of monetary and gift remittances to her friends, family and neighbours. The allocation of remittances, however, also creates obligations and expectations of reciprocation (Carling 2014).

That Alma's two sisters-in-law are providing almost daily care for Alma's father is an arrangement necessitated by Alma's physical absence from the everyday life of her family. It can, however, also be seen as an expression of the obligations that were created when Alma sponsored the overseas migration of one of her brothers and bought a motorized tricycle for another, and helped them to provide for their own families. The care that Alma's sisters-in-law provide for her father can be seen as reciprocation for the help that Alma's brothers have received from her. Chona is creating a kind of security net for her parents by allocating remittances to family members, close friends and neighbours who then may be expected to reciprocate the financial help they have received. The provision of remittances is not a purely altruistic act as it creates moral obligations to reciprocate the help and functions as a kind of insurance (McKay 2007, Carling 2014). Remittances are also a way for the migrant to establish herself as a respected and honourable person and especially when remittances materialize in a new house.

A house is the most visible and tangible outcome of the migrant's hard work, and it is often seen as the ultimate expression of the migrants' care for their families (Aguilar 2009, Aguilar et al. 2009). Apart from providing comfortable living conditions for one's family, the house has also an important symbolic function as it communicates to the local community that the migrant daughter has not forgotten her family. According to the local Filipino care culture, an adult child who is unmarried, especially daughters, are expected to live with their parents and to surrender their income to parents as a payment for the costs that they have incurred while rearing her (Aguilar 2009). An unmarried daughter is also expected to look after her parents in their older age (Aguilar 2009). Overseas migration, however, changes the dynamics of these filial obligations and pushes migrants to find new ways of fulfilling their filial duties. Building a house is one way of fulfilling the filial duty to one's parents. The migrants'

investment in the house gives parents ‘a face’ in the wider community and communicates that the family is taken care of. In fact, in some local dialects, the word for house –*mukha ng magulang* means “the face of the parents” (Aguilar et al. 2009: 156). Through the house, the parents gain presentable faces of upward mobility and reap higher social status in the local community.

## Reorganizing familial networks and renegotiating care obligations

The au pair migration to Norway can also be seen as influencing the lives of the au pairs’ family members in other ways. Chona’s migration to Norway, for example, reorganized her whole family network not only because in her absence somebody else has to take care of her parents, but also because Chona’s migration, and particularly the money she sent home, made it possible for other family members to migrate. Not only was Chona not available for the daily care of her parents, but three of her female family members also had to reorganize the care responsibilities of their own families in order to be able to take overseas employment.

In the context of migration, a female family member usually takes over the responsibility for the daily care of elderly parents and/or children. Chona’s migration, however, created a situation, in which, all the female family members that were available for the care of her parents were working abroad. In this situation, Chona could hire a local woman to provide care for her parents as the literature indicates is often done (Hochschild 2000, Parreñas 2001), or she could delegate the caring tasks to her brother. Chona’s brother was more than willing to embrace these care obligations, and he even promised his sister that he would take care of their parents, “I said to my sister that I will care for my parents always” (Chona’s brother). One of Alma’s brothers also embraced the responsibility for providing care for his father even though he received daily help from his sisters-in-law.

Not all men, however, are that eager to assume the care responsibilities left after the migration of their wives or other female family members. Chona’s brother-in-law, for example, indulged himself in drinking and gambling rather than taking care of his three daughters, as a result of which the girls’ grandparents had to take care for them. Imelda’s husband was not always accountable when it came to the care of his daughter, Leah. During Imelda’s several

periods of overseas employment, Leah was taken care of by Imelda's sister who lived nearby, but Imelda's parents-in-law also provided care for Leah for some time.

Imelda is one of the au pair informants in my study who had left behind her own child in order to be able to take up an au pair job in Norway. Imelda's daughter was quite young the first time Imelda left her. The au pair migration to Norway was the third time Imelda was leaving her daughter in the care of somebody else in order to earn money. In the care chains literature (Hochschild 2000, Parreñas 2001a, 2001, 2005), the relationship between Imelda and her daughter is commonly described as a classic care chain scenario. A mother from the third world leaves her child in the care of her relatives in order to take caregiving work abroad in exchange for money.

### **The mother-child dyad: a classic global care chain scenario?**

During her first period of overseas employment that lasted for two years in the Middle East, Imelda left her daughter in the care of her parents-in-law. Leah was one and a half years old at that time and having spent the first years of her life in the care of her paternal grandparents, she did not know Imelda as her mother. Rather, "she knew them as her parents", which caused Imelda emotional distress:

It's hurting me a lot, but I think that being a mother ... the mother and daughter relationship is still there. The blood is running in her [veins]. So it takes time and energy for me and her to communicate again. Then I left her again (Imelda).

Imelda went abroad for the sake of her daughter (see Chapter 5). However, rather than saving the money sent from abroad, Imelda's husband spent it on drinking and gambling. As a result, Imelda had to engage in a new period of overseas employment that lasted for four years. Also this time Imelda left her daughter in the care of her family members. Imelda's parents-in-law and her sister were involved in the daily care of Leah. Unfortunately for Imelda, the second period of overseas migration also did not result in any savings since her husband again wasted the money on drinking and gambling. Moreover, rumour had it that he had engaged into a



romantic relationship with another woman. So when Imelda's cousin Chona offered her the opportunity to fill in her soon to be available au pair-position in Norway, Imelda decided to go abroad for a third time.

By that time, her marital relationship had deteriorated so much that her parents-in-law were no longer willing to take care of Leah, as they were not sure whether their son's marriage would last. This time Imelda turned to her own parents, who, despite their old age and frail health, agreed to take care of their granddaughter. In practice, it was Imelda's sister who provided care for Leah on a daily basis. Imelda's sister, a mother of three and grandmother of five took care of Leah even though in the face of Imelda's migration, she was also responsible also the care of their parents.

Imelda's sister has been involved in Leah's care "since she was born" and because "I took her as my own daughter, as my younger daughter" (Imelda's sister) following the local tradition of shared responsibility for the care and upbringing of children. In addition to being cared for by her aunt and grandparents, Leah also spent time at Chona's house and played with her three cousins whose mother was working overseas, too.

By the time Imelda was leaving for Norway as au pair, Leah was already seven years old and starting to make sense of her mother's migration. Even though Leah was taken good care of by her whole family, she missed her mother and "cried often" according to her aunt who took daily care of Leah. Imelda had given her daughter a mobile phone and would call her two or three times a week, and also send her text messages during the day to inquire about schoolwork and other everyday matters. Imelda and Leah would also speak on Skype, but the Skype meetings had to be arranged beforehand since somebody had to take Leah to an internet café.

When I visited Imelda's family in the summer of 2011, Leah was a sixth grader at the local elementary school, "the best pupil in the school" in her own words and had quite good knowledge of why her mother had gone abroad. "Norway is the richest country," Leah explained to me, and "she went to Norway to let me go to school" (Leah). Moreover, in a drawing that Leah gave me during my stay in the village, she depicted her mother sitting on a plane and smiling happily. Leah's father, her aunt, a mango tree and a water buffalo as well as Leah herself were also depicted in the drawing and everybody was smiling. To my question of why is everybody smiling, she explained to me that it was because of her mother's departure

to Norway. While this answer surprised me, especially after having heard that Leah often cried because she missed her mother, it made me think of the effort, time and energy that Imelda must have put into explaining to Leah the reason for her migration and presenting it as a positive event for the whole family.

As seen in the description of the care arrangements that Imelda made for her daughter, the whole family was involved in the daily care of Leah. Imelda's own parents, parents-in-law, sister and other family members were involved in the care of Leah. Moreover, since the houses of the family members were situated in the same neighborhood, it was possible for Leah to circulate between the different households of the extended family. Thanks to the local care culture, according to which the whole family is involved in the care for children regardless of whether the female family members were physically present or not, Leah would have done the same had her mother not take up overseas employment. This is not to claim that Leah did not miss her mother, but rather that because of the lack of public daycare for children in the local village, Leah would have been taken care of by her grandparents, aunts and other family members even though her mother was not working abroad. Imelda did have paid employment in the Philippines before she decided to take up overseas work, and she would have had to leave Leah in the care of someone else had she continued working in the Philippines.

This organization of care is not unusual in the Philippines. As pointed out by Aguilar et al. (2009: 329) in his ethnography of an upland village in the province of Batangas, "because traditionally children are never cared for by parents alone, even in the context of overseas migration, other kin and members of the community continue to form part of a caregiving network. Members of the wider kindred become part of the community's overall care for the children of the migrants". McKay (2007) in her ethnography of an upland village in the province of Ifuago also notes that "the search for work often takes parents out of the village, leaving their children with grandparents, aunts and uncles" (McKay 2007: 183) and that "the practice of caring for children within the extended family has characterized the Ifuago livelihoods and culture for several generations" (McKay 2007: 183).

The other two mothers in my study, Arlene and Nenita, also had similar arrangements for their children both in terms of transnational communication and the provision of daily care for the children. While I did not have the opportunity to visit the families of these two informants, my visit to Imelda's family, and particularly the time I spent with her sister and daughter,

have enhanced my understanding of the role of migration in the lives of the au pairs' family members in the Philippines.

Even though the whole extended family was providing care for Leah, Imelda's migration can be seen as reorganizing and redistributing the family's care responsibilities in the sense that some of the family members received extra care duties, while others were relieved of theirs. Not only did Imelda's sister, for example, have to take over the daily care for their frail parents, but she also took over caring for Leah after Imelda's parents-in-law were no longer willing to do this. The reorganization of care responsibilities was also necessitated by Imelda's husband's drinking and gambling, which, as pointed out in the literature on Filipino transnational families (Parreñas 2001, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002), is not an unusual practice among men who are left-behind. Women's bread-winning role is often seen as threatening men's masculine identities, which they, in turn, boost by doing 'masculine' things such as drinking, gambling or womanizing. Several of my au pair informants who had male partners in the Philippines, experienced that their partners engaged in romantic relationships with other women while they were au pairing in Norway.

Thus far, the analysis shows that Filipino women's migration to Norway shapes their families' everyday lives in multiple ways, but it does so particularly through the financial help in the form of remittances. However, even though the majority of my Filipino au pair informants did cite economic motivation as an important reason for enrolling in the au pair scheme, money was not the main motivation for all. Nor did all of my au pair informants have the responsibility of providing care for their parents or building houses for their families.

### Care chains and class

One of the families that I visited during my fieldwork in the Philippines is that of Marilag and Rose, whose parents lived a comfortable life in a beautiful house in an urbanized province south of Manila. The residential area where the family lived was guarded by a private security company and all visitors had to go through a security check before they were allowed to enter the village. There were several of these types of residential areas in the region that, thanks to its prosperity, was known as the Silicon Valley of the Philippines. Marilag and Rose's parents

live in an upper-middle class neighbourhood with bank directors and other professionals working in corporate finance as their neighbours.

During my fieldwork in the Philippines, I had the chance to speak with Rose and her father Bagwis. Rose was finishing her master's degree and planning a career in an international company in Singapore, while Bagwis had just started in a new job after many years in a Philippine-based international company. His wife was on a business trip to Europe, which, according to Bagwis, happened quite often in her job.

It was Marilag, the older of the two sisters who was the first to go to Norway leaving behind a promising career in an international company and disappointed parents. That the family did not have financial problems that could legitimize or necessitate Marilag's and Rose's overseas migration made it even more difficult for their father to accept his daughters' decisions to enroll in the au pair scheme. Speaking about the wide-spread practice among Filipino au pairs to send remittances to their families, Bagwis was eager to emphasize that this was not something that his daughters did while they were au pairs in Norway:

We don't do that to be honest. [...] Because in all honesty my wife is earning much, much for our family. We are only four, we don't pay for the house – we own the house. Normally here in the Philippines a lot of houses are loaned from the bank, right. But I must tell you, honestly, we own this house already. So we thought that as far as Marilag is concerned, we did not let her go for the money, but it's more for the challenges and meeting other people (Bagwis).

For Bagwis and his wife, who had invested a lot of money in sending their daughters to elite universities, seeing their highly-educated daughters going to Norway to clean the houses of Norwegian families was hurtful to their pride. To keep up face in the local community of upper-middle class families, the cultural side of the au pair scheme was emphasized and the au pair migration was framed as a challenge and an opportunity to meet new people.

Unlike the families of other Filipino au pair informants who could proudly show me the things they had bought with the money from Norway or accommodate me in the house they have built, it was not that easy to see how exactly the migration of Rose and Marilag had

influenced their parents' lives in the Philippines. The family owned their house and did not need any money from Norway to improve their material well-being. Apart from the souvenirs sent to them from Norway – small trolls, Viking ships and fridge magnets with views from Norway – it was not really easy to see that both of Bagwis' daughters had been au pairs in Norway. When during my almost week-long visit at Marilag and Rose's home, however, I had the chance to speak with Bagwis about his thoughts on his daughters' au pair migration to Norway, I realized that the impact of their migration was rather emotional.

Having invested a lot of money in his daughters' education, Bagwis felt disappointed by their decision not to pursue careers in the Philippines, but go Norway and perform the kind of work that in their household only the maid performed. Doing the cleaning, cooking and ironing of Norwegian families was not why Marilag and Rose had studied in prestigious universities. It hurt Bagwis' feelings that his highly-educated daughters were doing domestic work in Norway. But apart from the feeling of disappointment, their migration activated a feeling of abandonment and of being 'left behind'.

In his interview with me, Bagwis described himself as a sentimental person who cares about his daughters and his family, but also as a typical Filipino who wants the family to be complete:

You know, Mariya, to tell you honestly, probably seventy, probably eighty to ninety percent of Filipinos are family-oriented people, you know what I mean. [...]

We want the family to be complete. But you know, when you children reach the age of eighteen or twenty-one, I learned to accept that, ok, go on with your career, with your profession (Bagwis).

As much as the wish to have the family complete may be a typical Filipino sentiment, it could also be seen as an expression of the patriarchal structures of Philippine society that impose more restrictions on women than on men. Rona's father, as discussed in Chapter 5, was not supportive of her au pair migration to Norway either as also he wanted the family to be 'complete'. Nenita and Imelda's husbands, too, would not let their wives go to Norway at first, because also they wanted their families to be 'complete'.

In Bagwis' case, however, the sentiment of wanting the family to be complete was also deepened by his wife's frequent business trips that could last from a week to a couple of months. When Rose, his younger daughter, also decided to go to Norway as au pair (Marilag was already living in Norway on a permanent basis), Bagwis felt abandoned. Bagwis shared the following about Rose's au pair migration:

Not that I don't want her there, but again, I'm a very loving person, very sentimental. My feeling was, 'don't leave us' like that, you know.  
[...] I'm left alone here without my children, without my wife (Bagwis).

Despite his disappointment with his daughters' choice to go to Norway and his feeling of abandonment, Bagwis gradually learned to accept the fact that his daughters are grown up persons with their own lives. When, towards the end of her au pair stay in Norway, Marilag married a Norwegian man, her parents came to Norway for her wedding and this helped Bagwis change his view of the au pair scheme. Bagwis and his wife were hosted by the Norwegian host family who also organized Marilag's wedding reception. During their stay in Norway, Marilag's parents helped her out with her daily au pair duties to relieve her of the double workload of organizing a wedding and working as an au pair. Having had the chance to get to know the family that hosted his daughter, Bagwis, declared that:

This host family I think gave her a door for career in Norway [...]. The moment I realized that Marilag is in a good family and that there are good conditions there, and in a very healthy environment [with] a happy family, I realized that au pair is not what I thought, not what my first impression was (Bagwis).

Marilag's younger sister Rose also perceives of her sister's migration to Norway as success story that resulted in a career, a family and a lot of new friends. In fact, it was Marilag's success in Norway that motivated Rose to go to Norway as an au pair.

Well, she is very successful. She has her own work now. She has her own career, her own family so I think it did her well to go there. It was a good decision for her and I'm very happy for her [...]. Her experience in Norway did her well. It opened up a lot of opportunities for her. She has friends, so I'm very happy for her, very proud of what she has achieved (Rose).

Bagwis' initial disappointment with his daughters' decisions to enroll in the Norwegian au pair scheme as well as the fact that he and his wife crossed the globe to attend Marilag's wedding is indeed an expression for their privileged class position. Still, even though the majority of the au pair families are not upper-middle class families and seldom have the opportunity to visit their au pair daughters' in Norway, the way Rose and Marilag's family organized and distributed care in the context of migration points to some alternative experiences of transnational familial care.

## Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to discuss how the Filipino au pair migration to Norway impacts the lives of the au pairs' family members in the country of origin. The analysis is based on the au pair families' own perceptions and perspectives on the migration of their family members to Norway, and, is as such, a bottom-up analysis of au pair migration. Sensitized by the global care chains perspective and its focus on the redistribution and reorganization of care in the context of migration, in this chapter I explore how the care relations that the au pair migrants were part of prior to their migration to Norway are reorganized in the migrants' physical absence from the everyday lives of their families.

Migrants' physical absence does reorganize the familial care relationships because somebody else has to take over their care duties. When Alma went to Norway as au pair, for example, one of her brothers had to take over the daily care of her father. Being the only woman among her siblings and unmarried, Alma was the one that was expected to provide care for her ageing father. Chona also had to ask somebody else to look after her ageing parents when she went abroad to work.

The reorganization of local care relationships, however, is related not only to migrants' physical absence, but also to the changes brought about in their families with the help of remittances. Migrant remittances as seen in Chona's and Alma's families have the potential to reorganize care relationships and challenge established gender orders and can also function as a kind of insurance. Not only did Chona's and Alma's remittances create jobs for their family members, but some of these jobs took the female family members out of the country and necessitated the further reorganization of familial care. Chona's financial contributions to her family, in particular, sponsored the overseas migration of three of her female family members, whose respective care obligations had to be reorganized and redistributed within the family for them to be able to take the overseas jobs. The allocation of remittances can also be seen as a kind of investment, or insurance, as it creates obligations for reciprocation among the recipients. The reciprocation can be in the form of sustained membership in a group or in the form of reciprocation of care. As such, remittances contribute also to sustaining a migrant's contact with her family and ultimately, to sustaining familial intimacy.

Chona's sustained financial contributions to her family and the bread-winning role she assumed gave her higher status in her family and local community. With that higher status also comes the opportunity to influence power relations among the family members and to challenge established gender orders. Not only does Chona have the power to delegate care obligations to her younger brother, but her father has also surrendered his role as the head of the family in recognition and acknowledgment of Chona's sustained contributions to the family. For example, he always consults Chona before making any investments or before deciding on matters concerning the family.

Alma's bread-winning role, too, gave her the power to delegate care responsibilities to her older brother. However, it is particularly through the houses they built for their families that Chona and Alma gained higher status, power and individual autonomy. Precisely because the houses are the most visible outcome of the migrants' hard work, they are also an expression of the migrant's care for her parents. The finished house is a statement of the fulfilled filial duty – the daughter has paid back her parents for raising her and has fulfilled her filial obligations. With the fulfilled filial obligations comes also individual autonomy and the higher status of a successful person who is able to provide both for herself and her family. The family, too, gains a presentable 'face' in the local community and reaps higher social status related to the exhibition of enhanced material well-being and living standards.



Still, the situation in which the family members of the migrant take over some of the migrant's care responsibilities while the migrant sells her labour power in the country of destination for higher salaries is commonly described in the literature as a care chain (Hochschild 2000). Moreover, when the migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries occupy such disparate positions in the global economy of care, as do the Philippines and Norway, and when the migrant worker crosses the globe in search of better salaries, the care chains are seen as global. The migration of women and of mothers especially has often been seen as 'endangering familial intimacy' and causing 'care deficits' in their own families and local communities (Hochschild 2000, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). This chapter illustrates different ways in which familial intimacy is sustained in the context of migration and the allocation of remittances as discussed above is one of these. Transnational communication with help of modern communication technologies as well as the exchange of moral, practical and even hands-on care is another way for the migrants and their families to sustain familial intimacy.

The global care chains framework has proved a fruitful way to approach the dynamics of the relationships between the Filipino au pair migrants and their family members in the Philippines as it has enabled me to identify the different participants in the local familial care networks and make sense of the impact that the reorganization of care has had on them. In addition to identifying the different participants in the care chain – parents, siblings, aunts, fathers, brothers and sisters-in-law and their role in the redistribution of care within the familial network, the global care chains perspective has enabled me to make sense of how they deal with the different emotional impacts of migration.

The adjustments that Leah made to deal with her mother's migration, for example, can be approached with help of the concept of 'emotional labour'. As pointed out by her aunt, Leah cried when missing her mother, but not in front of her mother, when, for example, speaking with her on the telephone or Skype. Leah's drawing of her happy family can be seen as an expression of her 'emotional labour', i.e., the efforts to normalize her mother's migration. Despite being 'saddened' by her mother's departure, as she told me during my visit to the village, in the drawing she depicts her mother's migration as a positive event. The drawing, however, can also be seen as an expression of the efforts that Imelda has made to present and construct her overseas migration as a positive event for the whole family.

Bagwis' efforts not to show his disappointment in front of his daughters can also be seen as an expression of the emotional labour he is performing when realizing that the au pair migration of his daughters, combined with his wife's frequent international travels, implies that he is left behind. Despite his feelings of abandonment and disappointment, however, Bagwis supports his daughters and even provides hands-on, practical care by travelling to Norway to help Marilag out with the preparations for her wedding.

The situation when the family members of the migrant workers travel from the country of origin to the country of destination to provide hands-on practical care and moral support to their own families is a new dimension in global care chain analysis that highlights the importance of including class in the analysis of global care. That class is an important dimension to consider when exploring migrant families' transnational care practices becomes even more clear when the upper-middle class families' capacity to exchange care transnationally is compared to that of the less privileged migrant families.

The care arrangements of Rose and Marilag's family bring an important dimension to the care chains analysis as they show that the provision of care within the familial network does not necessarily go from the migrant worker to her family in the country of origin and is not necessarily financial, but it can also go the other way round, i.e., from the family in the South to their migrant daughter in the North.

However, Bagwis' efforts to conceal his disappointment with his daughters' migration to Norway and particularly his desire to have the family 'complete' can also be seen as an expression of the patriarchal structures in the Philippine society that, as discussed in previous chapters, are among the hidden causes of migration.

This makes the discussion of the role of men in women's transnational migration and in the redistribution of care relevant also in the case of Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Some of the men in the families that I studied did embrace the care obligations that were left to them after their female family members' overseas migration. Others, however, such as Imelda's husband and Chona's brother-in-law, for example, completely disregarded their care obligations. Women's migration and their capacity to provide for their families is seen as threatening men's masculine identities (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). Whether or not this is the reason why Imelda's husband and Chona's brother-in-law indulged themselves in drinking and gambling rather than taking care of their children is not easy to say as I did not

have the chance to speak to either of them. Still, men do play an important role in the redistribution and reorganization of familial care in the context of migration.

By discussing the role of men, this chapter addresses recent calls in the literature for complicating and developing the global care chains analysis (Yeates 2012, Dumitru 2014).

The study's overall contribution to the research field and scholarship on globalization of reproductive labour as well as directions for further research on the subject are outlined in the concluding chapter of this study.

## **Chapter 9. Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The main question that this study has endeavoured to answer is what knowledge about the Filipino au pair migration to Norway can be obtained with the help of the global care chain conceptual framework. To answer this question, I have explored empirically different sides of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway and endeavoured to understand the dynamics of the local and transnational relations of which young Filipino au pair migrants are part. The analysis of social relations at the local, national and global levels is a major focus of the discipline of sociology in which this study is situated.

In this last chapter, I synthesize the knowledge about Filipino au pair migration to Norway that this study has produced by summarizing the study's main findings, and I reflect on how I went about gathering and producing this knowledge. For this purpose, in the first section I briefly summarize the different choices that organize this study and reflect on how these have played out in the process of knowledge production. Next, I summarize the study's main findings and reflect on how the conceptual framework of global care chains enabled me to arrive at these findings. Then I discuss this study's contributions to the scholarship on care chains and point to relevant directions for further research on the subject.

### **The process of knowledge production**

The question of what knowledge about the phenomenon of Filipino au pair migration to Norway this study has produced concerns not only the research findings themselves, but also the way this knowledge was produced, i.e., the process of knowledge production. This process includes the gathering and production of the empirical material as well as the processes of analysis, interpretation and presentation of this material through which the research findings have emerged.

The methodological choices and procedures that organize the research process are elaborated on in Chapter 4, while the sociological analysis of the phenomenon of Filipino au pair

migration to Norway is presented mostly in the empirical chapters of this study. However, my reviews of the institutional and research contexts framing this study (Chapters 2 and 3) can also be seen as part of the process of knowledge production as the information selected and presented in these chapters is information that I have considered important and relevant for the purposes of this study. Other researchers would have found other information relevant. This necessarily means that the process of knowledge production is a process that is largely informed by the researcher's professional background, academic and personal interests and characteristics. Hence, the knowledge about the phenomenon of Filipino au pair migration to Norway presented in this study is not to be considered an objective and absolute truth, but knowledge produced and presented through my eyes.

### **Why Filipino au pair migration to Norway?**

The study's research question specifies one particular migrant group as the object of exploration – Filipino au pair migrants in Norway rather than other groups of au pairs. The interest in the Filipino migration to Norway as the object of study is related to (1) the increased number of Filipino au pairs in Norway, (2) the geo-political relations between Norway and the Philippines and (3) the way Filipino female migration has been constructed as object of study in the dominant literature on feminized migration into the domestic work and care sectors of the industrialized countries.

Women's entrance into the paid labour force, ageing populations and the downsizing of welfare states are among the demographic developments in western industrialized societies that have been seen as underpinning the growing demand for paid domestic and care work. In many European countries, the neo-liberal restructuring of the welfare state has resulted in states' withdrawal from the provision of social services and an increased demand for migrant care labour. In Norway, the number of migrant care and domestic workers such as au pairs has been increasing for the past fifteen years despite the fact that the public provision for families with care responsibilities for children has improved.

That the number of au pairs in Norway has increased in a period when kindergarten coverage has been expanding and that the majority of the au pairs coming to Norway are from the Philippines despite the ban on Deployment of Filipino au pairs to Norway until 2010, makes

the exploration of Filipino au pair migration to Norway a relevant and important object of study.

There are no colonial ties between Norway and the Philippines to attract Filipinos to Norway. In fact, Norway has not been among the preferred destinations of Filipino migrant workers because of its difficult language and cold climate. Apart from the organized and managed nurse migration in the 1970s and in the early 2000s (Seeberg and Sollund 2010), Filipino migration to Norway has been quite modest and restricted to mainly marriage migrations and student migrations. In this context, the increased number of Filipino au pairs coming to Norway is an interesting phenomenon.

Another reason for the interest in Filipino au pair migration to Norway is the way Filipino migrants are depicted in studies of the globalization of reproductive labour. It is particularly the (early) work of Rhacel Parreñas that has also provided the foundational empirical data for much of the global care chain analysis that depicts Filipino women as servants and victims of globalization (Parreñas 2001a, 2001, 2005). The victimization perspective has been ‘applied’ to au pair migrations and particularly to Filipino au pair migration to Norway (Hovdan 2005, Stenum 2011b, Sollund 2009). One of the objectives of this study has been to explore whether this is the case also for the Filipino au pair migration to Norway and to contribute with alternative views on Filipino au pair migration to Norway.

### **Why global care chains?**

The framework of global care chains has contributed to integrating research in the fields of globalization, care and migration studies. Prior to this work, the literature on care had not taken internationalization into consideration and women from the South were largely excluded from the study of work-family balance issues (Leira and Saraceno 2006).

Because of the affinities between au pairs and live-in domestic workers in terms of living and working conditions, the framework of global care chains has been extended to studies of au pair migrations to Norway (Stenum 2011a, Sollund 2009, Bikova 2010, Stubberud 2015b, Hovdan 2005, Østvoll 2014, Isaksen 2001, Øien 2009). Moreover, some of the relationships and dynamics described by researchers working within the global care chains perspective are also observed in the context of the Norwegian welfare state and particularly in the case of

Filipino au pair migration to Norway. Some au pairs are mothers with care responsibilities for children in the country of origin. Most au pairs do leave behind family members such as siblings and parents. Moreover, many Filipino au pairs have economic motivations for enrolling in the au pair scheme and do send remittances to their families in the Philippines. This makes the exploration of the au pairs' relations through the lens of care chains meaningful.

The metaphor of the global care chain focuses on individual or micro-level relations between the providers and receivers of care that develop when a woman from a poorer country leaves her family behind in the country of origin in order to provide care for the members of an employing family in an economically more developed country. The chains of care that this framework describes metaphorically are the relations between the receivers and providers of care. They are also the chains between the families that send and receive the migrant workers and are, as such, also relations at the meso level.

The framework of global care chains, then, enables an analysis the globalization of reproductive labour by exploring social relations on three analytical levels – the macro level of institutional contexts, the meso level of families and communities, and the micro level of the migrant workers' individual practices and experiences of migration. This also means that the knowledge produced through such a multi-level exploration has the potential to uncover new sides of the phenomenon of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway that prior studies focusing solely on the micro or macro level, for example, have not uncovered.

### **What did I find with the global care chain framework?**

On the macro level of analysis, the migration of young Filipinos into the Norwegian au pair scheme is related to, among others, the different geo-political positions of Norway and the Philippines as respectively countries in the Global North and the Global South. Norway's privileged position in the global political economy of care as a country with high-living standards and a highly-developed welfare state makes it an attractive destination for migrant care and domestic workers.

The Philippines, on the other hand, with its high unemployment levels, rapid demographic growth and long traditions of the state-organized export of labour power is among the countries that have responded to the growing demand for migrant care and domestic workers in industrialized countries, including Norway. In the literature, Filipino women's participation in the au pair scheme is now recognized as a case of transnational feminized migration for work and a response to the growing demand for cheap domestic and care labour (Cox 2015, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, Isaksen 2010a, Stenum 2011a, 2015).

The practice and experience of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway emerges in the interplay of two different institutional contexts – the Philippine and the Norwegian – each shaping the Filipino au pair migration in particular ways. The institutional contexts of Norway and the Philippines are also part of the macro level of analysis in this study.

The Filipino au pair migration is an organized and managed migration, in which the Philippine state plays an important role as facilitator of Filipino au pairs' out-migration, particularly after the lifting of the Ban on Deployment to Europe in 2010 (Stenum 2011a). With the lifting of the ban, Filipino au pairs are included in the Philippine system of labour emigration and are increasingly treated as regular Overseas Filipino Workers even though they are officially participating in a youth exchange program aimed at cultural exchange. In this migration regime of 'labour brokerage' (Rodriguez 2010), the Philippine state instructs departing au pairs to think of their families and nation while working abroad, which in practice means to send remittances back home. Today, migrant remittances have become a pillar of the Philippine economy and the young Filipinos working as au pairs in Norwegian families are contributing to the national economy when sending portions of their pocket money to their families in the Philippines.

The focus on the well-being of the family as a motivation for migration is also part of the Filipino culture of migration that the Filipino au pair informants in my study have been socialized into and according to which overseas migration is a major route for achieving a better life (Asis 2006, Tyner 1996). The Filipino tradition of filial piety expressed in adult children's duty to care for their parents is part of the Filipino care culture. However, when overseas migration becomes a way of fulfilling one's filial obligations, the local Filipino care culture contributes to the development of regional, transnational or global care chains.



## **Macro-meso links**

The practice and experience of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway emerges in the interplay of the Norwegian gender, migration and care regimes.

The Norwegian migration regime defines the terms and conditions of au pair placements in Norway. The way the Norwegian host families relate to these regulations and whether they follow the rules of, for example, how much an au pair works, is equally important for what the work day of the Filipino au pairs is like. Moreover, following the local 'passion for equality' or simply trying not to appear as families who employ poorer women to do their 'dirty work', the Norwegian host families try not to overwork their au pairs.

Further, the local childcare regime impacts the practice and experience of au pairing through the different childcare solutions offered to families with care responsibilities for children. The vast majority of Norwegian children of pre-school age attend state-subsidized daycare even when the family has hired au pair. This also means that au pairs in Norway spend less time with the children of the employing family than do nannies and au pairs in countries where public day care is less available. Many au pairs do not have any duties related to the host family's children at all, either because the children are at an age when they do not need help from the au pair or because the parents perform the nurturing care for their children themselves. The time the au pair spends with the host family's children is further restricted by the duration of the au pair visa that is given for a maximum of two years. Some au pairs also change host families if they are not happy with their current one. In this situation, even though the au pairs might want to get involved in the care of the host family's child and invest themselves in developing an emotional bond to the child, this may not be possible or desirable.

The emotional surplus value that the global care chain literature sees as being produced when a migrant nanny transfers her motherly love and care to the children of the employing family is not produced by such transfers in the context of the Norwegian welfare state due to the particular interplay of the local gender, care and migration regimes that create unique and locally-specific conditions for au pairing in Norway. These local conditions enable the Filipino au pairs to enjoy recreational and free time activities outside the host family's home.

These activities play an important role in the affirmation of the au pairs' linguistic, national and religious identities and contribute also to the empowerment of the au pairs. Having had

the opportunity to spend a weekend in the company of fellow au pairs and co-nationals, the Filipino au pairs return to the homes of their host families not only with a strengthened sense of national belonging, but also empowered and informed about how to negotiate with their host families and demand the changes they want. The temporary and transient communities of fellow au pairs and co-nationals that the Filipino au pair migrants participate in during their free time function as a kind of informal trade union that protects its 'members' from the risk of, for example, overworking and exploitation.

To take this argument even further, the recreational function of the au pairs' free time may be seen as benefiting the host families, too. What is produced when the Filipino au pairs enjoy free time in the fellowship of co-nationals is an emotional surplus value, but this surplus is not transferred to the children of the employing family as the au pairs spend only limited time in childcare. It is channeled to other tasks such as cleaning and cooking, for example. The work of the au pairs, however, the cleaning, cooking, dusting and washing they carry out before the members of the host family arrive home, leaves the host family with more time to spend with their children and with each other. The work of the au pairs, then, can be seen as generating surplus time for the host families that is further transformed into surplus value when the host family spend positive time together free of quarrels and conflicts over the redistribution of household tasks.

### **Institutional influences across borders**

With the global care chains framework, I have also been able to explore how the macro structures such as the Norwegian institutional context impacts not only the practice and experience of au pairing in Norway, but also the lives of the family members of the au pairs in the Philippines. The Norwegian migration regime defines the working time and payment of the Filipino au pairs in Norway, and hence the au pairs' opportunity to send remittances to their families in the Philippines. The remittances sent by the Filipino migrant workers have, as I demonstrated in Chapter 8, the potential not only to improve the social status and material well-being of their families, but also challenge established gender orders in the au pairs' country of origin. Remittances, however, also have the potential to create new global care chains and to further complicate the local configurations of care when triggering the migration of other family members.

The au pairs' absence from the everyday lives of their families does not necessarily mean that the parents, siblings or children of the au pair experience a shortage of care. To put this into global care chains terms, the physical absence of a female family member does not necessarily imply a 'care deficit' as argued in the care chain literature. Rather, due to local Filipino care cultures, according to which the whole family is involved in the care of its members, in the context of migration, family members of the au pairs are left not without care, but in someone else's care.

The family members of the au pair migrants are active participants in the global care chain as they both receive and provide care to their migrant daughters, manage and administer remittances sent from Norway, build houses and exhibit the fruits of the migrant's hard work. Sometimes, however, they also fail to manage the migrant's remittances thus triggering further migration and sometimes further care chains.

The care chains in which Filipino au pairs, their own family members in the country of origin and the members of the Norwegian host family are part of are 'glocal' as they are formed by both the wide-spreading processes of globalization and the local particularities of the Norwegian context.

### **Contributions and topical questions for further research**

This study has explored the phenomenon of the Filipino au pair migration to Norway with the help of the global care chain conceptual framework. The conceptual apparatus of the global care chain framework and particularly the notions of emotional surplus value and chains of care have enabled me to discover new ways in which emotional surplus value is produced and to explore the dynamics of the local and transnational relations of which the au pairs are part.

I would, however, not have arrived to these findings had I not taken into consideration the institutional contexts of Norway and the Philippines. It is particularly my focus on the way the local Norwegian gender, care and migration regimes play into the everyday lives of host families and au pairs that have enabled me to discover that the local egalitarian culture with its passion for equality and preference for public daycare contributes to a new way of producing emotional surplus value. This glocalization of the global care chain analysis

through a stronger focus on the welfare state is a major contribution of this study. By globalizing the global care chain analysis into local institutional contexts, this study has also addressed research calls for the further elaboration and development of the global care chain concept (Yeates 2004a, 2004b, 2012).

Moreover, by recognizing that not all female migrant care and domestic workers are mothers with dependent children and by exploring the care practices of the au pair migrants' male family members, this study has contributed to decentre the focus on motherly care. The focus on class through the exploration of the transnational care practices of upper-middle class au pairs has contributed to decentring the global care chains preoccupation with motherly care.

The exploration of the upper-middle class au pairs' transnational care practices and motivations for migration also contributes to the diversification of the perception of Filipino female migrants as poor, exploited women, and, hence, to challenge the victimization perspective. Apart from addressing recent calls for complicating and developing the global care chains framework (Yeates 2004a, 2004b, 2012), this study's findings will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the gendered transnational economy of care and the multiple ways of caring in the context of transnational migration.

With the analysis of the local and transnational relations that the Filipino au pair migrants are part of, this study has just scratched the surface of the dynamic and exciting field of the globalization of reproductive labour. The care relations that this study has explored are relations between, the Filipino au pair migrants and their families in the country of origin and on the one hand, and, through the au pairs' elaborations, the relations between the au pair migrants and the Norwegian host families, on the other. There are, however, important participants in the care chains that no previous studies of au pair migrations to Norway have explored, namely, the children of the Norwegian host families that have grown up with au pairs.

Some children, as indicated by the elaborations of my au pair informants, keep professional distance to the au pairs as they have learned that the au pair will only stay with them for a certain period of time and will be replaced by another au pair. This 'professional distance' has been interpreted as a way for the children to protect their feelings. However, children's own perspectives' on this frequent change of au pairs have yet to be explored.

Other aspects of the children's relations to the au pair are also important to explore. It is reasonable to assume that the children have observed or are told by their own parents that the au pairs are doing the family's housework. The children's relations to the au pair as a person performing domestic work and to the domestic work itself will be very important to explore. Do the children of the host family associate the au pair with the person who makes the domestic work disappear? And do they know at all that domestic work exists given the fact that the au pair has already made it disappear before the children and their parents come home? These are all questions for future research to explore.

## Appendix 1. Informed consent: Au pairs

As a part of my doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Bergen, I am conducting a study of how au pair migration impacts the lives of the au pairs and their family members in the country of origin. The objective of the au pair scheme is cultural exchange. As au pairs, young people can enrich their language skills and get to know another culture by participating in a host family's everyday life. The au pairs receive free board and lodging as well as pocket money by the host family, and are expected to help out with childcare and housework.

The au pair scheme has become popular among Norwegian families and an increasing number of families are now hiring au pairs. For many young people, Norway is an attractive destination for an au pair stay.

By interviewing persons who work as au pairs or have been au pairs in Norway, I hope to explore what motivates them for coming to Norway, how they experience being au pairs in Norway and how they sustain relations to their families and local communities at the country of origin. I plan to interview about ten persons who are or have been au pairs in Norway.

The interview will take the form of a conversation at a time and place suitable for you. The interview will probably take between one and two hours. I will use a tape recorder and take notes.

It is voluntary to participate in the study and you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all data I have collected about you will be deleted. All information that I gather will be processed confidentially and no one will be recognizable in the thesis. All information is going to be anonymized when the project is finished in the autumn of 2014.

Below you will find a declaration for a voluntary participation. If you want to participate, please sign the declaration. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions related to the study. My e-mail address is [mariya.bikova@sos.uib.no](mailto:mariya.bikova@sos.uib.no) and my phone number is 97604096. You may also contact my supervisor Prof. Lise Widding Isaksen at telephone number 55589157. The project is registered at the Privacy Ombudsman for Research by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

DECLARATION:

I have received information about the study and I would like to participate.

Name and Signature:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

## Appendix 2. Informed consent: Families

As a part of my doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Bergen, I am conducting a study of how au pair migration impacts the lives of the au pairs and their family members in the country of origin. The objective of the au pair scheme is cultural exchange. As au pairs, young people can enrich their language skills and get to know another culture by participating in a host family's everyday life. The au pairs receive free board and lodging as well as pocket money by the host family, and are expected to help out with childcare and housework.

The au pair scheme has become popular among Norwegian families and an increasing number of families are now hiring au pairs. For many young people, Norway is an attractive destination for an au pair stay. Many au pairs return home after the end of the au pair visa, while others choose to study in Norway or establish a family.

By interviewing family members of persons who are or have been au pairs in Norway, I hope to explore whether and how the au pair migration to Norway has influenced the lives of their family members in the country of origin.

The interview will take the form of a conversation at a time and place that is suitable for you. I will use a tape recorder and take notes.

It is voluntary to participate and you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If you decide to withdraw all data I have collected about you will be deleted. All information that I gather will be processed confidentially and no one will be recognizable in the thesis. All information is going to be anonymized when the project is finished in the autumn of 2014.

Below you will find a declaration for a voluntary participation. If you want to participate in the study, please sign the declaration.

Feel free to contact me at my phone number 97604096 or by e-mail [mariya.bikova@sos.uib.no](mailto:mariya.bikova@sos.uib.no) if you have any questions. You may also contact my supervisor Prof. Lise Widding Isaksen at telephone number 55589157.

The project is registered at the Privacy Ombudsman for Research by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

DECLARATION:

I have received information about the study and I would like to participate.

Name and Signature:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

## **Appendix 3. Interview guide: Au pairs**

### **Introduction**

- As part of my doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Bergen, I am conducting a study of how au pair migration impacts the lives of the au pairs and their family members in the country of origin.
- By interviewing persons who work as au pairs or have been au pairs in Norway, I hope to explore what motivates them for coming to Norway, how they experience being au pairs in Norway and how they sustain relations to their families and local communities at the country of origin.

### **Personal Information**

- Age
- Gender
- Family in the home country
- Marital status/children
- Education
- Work experience from the Philippines
- Prior migratory experience
- Time spent as an au pair in Norway

### **Before coming to Norway**

- Where did you grow up? (big city, small town, village)
- Whom did you grow up with? (parents, siblings, grandparents, other kin)
- What did you parents work?
- Do you have any siblings? How many? What do they do?
- Where did you go to school? (big city, small town, village)
- Any higher education?
- What did you do before you came to Norway as au pair? (work, studies, unemployed)
- Have you been working at other countries than Norway?
- Where? For how long? What did you do?

### **About Norway and the au pair scheme**

- Why/how did you decide to go to Norway?
- Did you have any friends or family who travelled to Norway before you?
- What did you know about Norway before you came here?
- What expectations and thoughts did you have about Norway and the au pair scheme?
- How did you get information about Norway and the au pair scheme?
- What did your family and friends thought about you going to Norway?

### **The time as au pair in Norway**



- How did you experience the first weeks and months of your time as au pair in Norway? (homesick, sad, excited, curious, adventurous, no difference from previous job)

### **Workday**

- Describe your normal work day. When do you get up, what are your work tasks (describe in detail), who is telling what work needs to be done at the house?
- How many children are you taking care of?
- Do you have a contract with the host family? What does the contract say?
- What do you think of having a contract? (important to have, feel more protected, unnecessary, we talk about things anyway)
- Does the host family follow the terms of the contract? In case they do not follow the contract, what do you do? What do they do?

### **Relation to the host family**

- How would you describe your relation to the host family? (I feel welcomed/unwelcomed, they are friendly and nice to me, the host family does not like me)
- How would you describe your role in the host family? (I am a bigger sister for the children, I am like a mother for the children, I am hired to do the domestic work, I feel like a member of the family, I feel like a guest/visitor)
- Whom in the host family do you spend most time with? What do you do together? Do you enjoy it?
- Have you had any conflicts or disagreements with the host family? What were they about? How did you solve them?
- Why do you think the host family needs you?
- How did the host family recruit you for this job? (through their previous au pair, through a friend, internet agency, I contacted them)
- What do the host parents work?

### **Living arrangements at the host family's home**

- Do you have your own room/apartment at the host family's house?
- How do you feel about living in someone's house?
- Do you invite your friends for visits/sleep-overs at your host family's house?

### **Free time**

- Do you have any free time? When does it begin?
- How do you spend your free time?
- Whom do you spend your free time with?
- Have you been on trips or holidays with the host family?

### **Contact with own family in the Philippines**

- How do you feel about being away from your family?

- How long have you been away from your family?
- How do you keep in touch with family in the Philippines? (phone, Skype, Internet, SMS, visits, sending presents, remittances)
- Who in your family back home do have most contact with? How often?
- Have any of your family members been in Norway? When? For how long? What was the purpose of the visit?

### **Plans for the future**

- What do you plan to do after your au pair visa has expired? (go back to the Philippines, go to another country, study/work in Norway, establish a family in Norway/another country)
- For former au pairs: What were your plans after the au pair period? Did you fulfill them?
- How/Why did you decide to stay in Norway?
- What is your life like now compared to the time you were au pair? What is the biggest difference?
- What do you do now? What are your plans for the future?

### **Relation to the Norwegian society**

- How do you like being in Norway?
- How do you like Norwegian people?
- Filipino au pairs have been a much-discussed subject in Norwegian newspapers and TV-documentaries. Have you seen any of these documentaries or newspaper articles?
- What do you think about this?
- Why do you think Norwegian media write about Filipino au pairs?

### **Debriefing**

- Is there anything that you feel you did not speak enough about?
- Anything that you want to add or elaborate on?
- Do you have any questions to me?

## Appendix 4. Interview guide: Families

### Introduction

- As part of my doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Bergen, I am conducting a study of how au pair migration impacts the lives of the au pairs and their family members in the country of origin.
- By interviewing persons who work as au pairs or have been au pairs in Norway, I hope to explore what motivates them for coming to Norway, how they experience being au pairs in Norway and how they sustain relations to their families and local communities at the country of origin.
- I am also interested in how the au pair migration has influenced your everyday life and would like to make an interview with you about this.

### Personal information

- Age, marital status, education, occupation
- Can you describe your family? Whom does the family consist of?
- What do the members of your family do/work?
- Are there any other members of your family who are abroad?
- What do they do abroad? (study, work, live abroad, on holiday, for a visit)

### About the au pair migration to Norway

- When did (*name of family member in Norway*) go to Norway as au pair?
- How did she learn about Norway and the au pair scheme?
- Why did she go to Norway?
- How do you feel about (*name of family member in Norway*) being in Norway?

### The family's knowledge about Norway and the au pair scheme

- What did you know about Norway before (*name of family member in Norway*) decided to go to Norway?
- What do you know about Norway now?
- What did you know about the au pair scheme before (*name of family member in Norway*) went to Norway?
- What do you know about the au pair scheme now?

### Communication with the au pair migrant in Norway

- Do you keep in touch with (*name of family member in Norway*)?
- If yes, how and how often? (phone calls, SMS, Skype, Internet, visits)
- What do you talk about when speaking with her?
- What is she telling about Norway?
- If you do not keep in touch, what is the reason for that?

### **Migration and the everyday life of the family**

- Is *(name of family member in Norway)* helping you in any way while she is in Norway?
- How is *(name of family member in Norway)* you?
- Are you helping her while she is in Norway? What do you do for her?
- I have spoken to *(name of family member in Norway)* and she told me that she has a daughter. Who is taking care of her daughter while she is in Norway?

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## List of figures

Figure 1: Map of the Philippines