

Doing Dirty Business in the European Social State? Encouraging work migration in the informal social service sector of the private household.

(Schmutziges Geschäft des europäischen Sozialstaates? Förderung der Arbeitsmigration im informellen Dienstleistungssektor des Privathaushalts.)

The role of migration in the development of the European Union has been called one of the “most pressing issues of our time” (Schierup et al. 2006), and leading researchers, like Kofmann, have stated “the role of migrant labor in changing and supporting welfare regimes urgently needs to be explored” (Kofmann et al 2005, 19). Migrant labor in the grey informal sector has been largely left unexplored, partly because of the difficulties in the data collection, partly because of the unpopularity of unearthing political problems of the formal sector employment. This research project handles how migrant labor in the domestic service sector might be a response to the welfare states’ (re)shaping of their domestic service sector in an effort, for example, to encourage women’s labor market participation. Migrant work offers a cheap solution to fill (otherwise expensive) gaps in care work provision caused by women’s exit into the labor market.

While recent studies have dealt with the diversity of responses of the European countries and attempts at a mutual European consensus, what has been missing in migration and welfare state research is a focus on the interrelationships of migration, state regulation and care work (see Williams 2005; Lutz 2005, for exceptions). For example, if policies promote tax credits or cash payments instead of state organized day care services, there is impetus for the development of an informal care sector and an opening for an unregulated services niche for low-skilled and low-paid workers and immigrants. This development of an informal care sector will in turn have a great impact in how the economies, labor markets and social security systems develop. By focusing on and understanding this developing informal care sector in the European Union, researchers and policy analysts will be more able to successfully plan for the economic future.

The project explores answers to some of the following questions: What kind of (expanding) domestic sectors (in regulated or unregulated grey economies) dealing with child care and elderly care are occurring in the various European welfare states? What do these services look like and what sort of demand is there for migrant workers in these occupancies? How are domestic service sectors being influenced by various welfare state policies? How is migration being used to fill needs for “cheap” caring gaps in social services? What policies promote migration work in these areas? [Cited literature](#)

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Project duration: August 2006-August 2007
Project association: "[Bewegtes Europa - Migration, Integration und Gestaltung kultureller Vielfalt in Europa](#)"
Finanzed through the University of
Tübingen, Strukturfond "Förderprogramm NachwuchswissenschaftlerInnen"

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