Transnational families circulating care across borders

A framework for the analysis of intergenerational solidarities

Laura Merla - Université catholique de Louvain
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Transfam research program
www.uclouvain.be/transfam

Research projects

The Transnational Care project, financed under the EU FP6 Program from 2007 to 2010 explored and compared the impact of distance on the experiences of Salvadoran migrants living in Europe and Australia who cared for ageing, disabled parents in their home countries. This work addressed the questions of their motivation and capacity to contribute to the financial, practical, emotional and personal care of their elderly parents back home and investigated the structural constraints that shape the forms of this type of care-giving.

The ongoing Transnational Family Networks project financed under the EU FP7 Program studies the extent to which transnational adult migrants living in Belgium are able to exchange care and support with their geographically distant parents, and the specific role that intra-familial dynamics play in the exchange of care between adult migrants from the Dominican Republic and Brazil, their siblings and their parents.

The TRANSFAM research program is coordinated by Dr Laura Merla.

Scientific collaboration

Loretta Baldassar (University of Western Australia)
Majella Kilkey (University of Sheffield)
Transnational families
A kinship group whose members (including quasi- and fictive-kin) are connected through reciprocal caregiving relations across distance and national borders and who share a sense of being part of a family.

Caregiving
Might be thought of as the activity that traces and re-traces the links and connections between members across distance and time, and between households. This trajectory of caregiving across distance both defines and sustains the members of transnational families.
Key argument

Members of transnational family networks are passively and actively engaged in the reciprocal exchange of multi-directional flows of care that ‘circulate’ within and between home and host societies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of care</th>
<th>Direct provision with physical co-presence</th>
<th>Co-ordination from a distance</th>
<th>Direct provision without physical co-presence</th>
<th>Delegation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>visits: tourist, duty, special, routine</td>
<td>Communication technologies</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>From complete withdrawal to ‘caring about’ Cf ‘dormant’ family members (Bonvalet &amp; Ogg 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical support</td>
<td></td>
<td>letters, cards, telephone,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td></td>
<td>email, fax, SMS skype</td>
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<td>Financial support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Care circulation
the reciprocal, multidirectional and asymmetrical exchange of care that fluctuates over the life-cycle within transnational family networks

Caregiving in the form of goods and services flows – circulates – within family networks:
• horizontally and vertically,
• both upwards and downwards
• over the family/life-cycle

Inequalities and Power relations
‘Situated’ transnationalism

Institutions and relevant parameters

- Migration regime
- Gendered care regime
- Welfare regime
- Social employment regime
- Transport
- Communication
- Banking
Institutions and relevant parameters

Migration regime

Gendered care regime

Welfare regime

Social employment regime

Transport

Communication

Banking
Exit/entry/residency rights

Insertion in the labour market and access to social security

Overall approach to migration

Right to 'time to care'

Right to receive care

Gendered care cultures

Quality of social entitlements

Portability rules

Segmented, ethno-stratified labour market

Employment quality
- wages
- stability
- work-family articulation
Conclusion

Bring together migration and family studies
References

Merla L. (Fc) Transnational Family Solidarity in Local Contexts, Routledge.


Thank you

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