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Of Women's Bondage:[1] Socio-Economic Effects of Labour Migration on the Situation of Ukrainian Women and Family

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Abstract. The paper examines the effect of international labour migration on the situation of Ukrainian women and transnational families. Drawing from results of field research, it shows that the absence of possibilities for self-realisation of Ukrainians at home turns employment abroad into a *hereditary family business* and a *quasi-profession* which entails the formation of multi-generational *migratory dynasties*, shaped by means of migration patterns of *estafette* and *snow-balling*. The argument of the paper is that labour mobility has a dramatic impact on both migrant women and their families. The adverse effect for women is the lack of *gender dividends* and negative *gender saldo* of transnationalism. The salient impact on the family is in promoting mercantilisation and consumerisation of interpersonal relationships, decline of kinship ties and lessening of family integrity overall. The general conclusion is that low-status labour migration contributes to the disempowerment of Ukrainian women, and has the effect of "social surgery" on family connections. Hence, it is destructive for the family as a social institution.

Keywords: Ukrainian migratory dynasties, snow-balling and estafette migration patterns, gender equality remittances, migration as a family business and hereditary quasi-profession, gender dividends and gender saldo of migration, social surgery.

Introduction

State socialism is generally viewed as a formal dual-earner family model, wherein both men and women were guaranteed full-time employment on the labour market. Informally, however, a male bread-winner system was generally predominating in Soviet families, Ukrainian among others. The role of the man

1 This is a gendered paraphrase of the title of a classical novel by William Somerset Maugham: "Of Human Bondage" (1915).

as the head of the household and a main bread-winner was largely unquestioned, and this stereotype sustained long after the dissolution of the socialist system. Yet, during the years of 'shock therapy' ensuing the demise of the URSS, many men were affected by unemployment, and were bereft of the possibility to supply for the family. In these conditions, the role of women's contribution to family budget tangibly increased, although they were among the first to lose jobs together with family benefits and child-care allowances. Thus, whilst under socialism women had guaranteed wages and could count on their husbands' contribution to family economy, after the instalment of free market relations, in addition to the loss of financial independence they had to confront the transformation of a dual-earner family model into a sort of a 'nil-earner' one. For that matter, women had to develop survival strategies necessary to overcome family poverty. In many cases it entailed assuming the role of a sole bread-winner in the family and the head of the household, bearing the whole responsibility for its financial well-being. In conditions of shrinking labour markets in national economies, however, the possibilities for that were limited, which induced women to look for opportunities outside the formal work force. Among them was informal employment in petty trade abroad, which required frequent cross-border travels. By the data for 2002, females comprised over half of those involved in petty trade abroad (53.6%) (Libanova and Poznyak 2002). This short-term international experience encouraged women to seek for more earning opportunities aboard and eventually developed into circular labour migration, which incited the process of feminisation of labour force out-flow from Ukraine. This is confirmed by Sørensen (2005) who argues that the increase in female-headed households in economically disadvantaged countries contributes to feminisation of migration. Her opinion is backed up by UN-INSTRAW data, showing that insofar as men are increasingly unable to fulfil their traditional roles as economic providers to their families, while the demand for female labour continues to rise in the industrial societies, the pressure on women to seek new coping strategies for their families continues to fuel the increase of female migrants worldwide (UN-INSTRAW 2007).

The plethora of recent migration scholarship maintains that migration is an intrinsically gendered phenomenon insofar as gender affects every aspect of migratory experience: its causes, patterns, process, and impacts at every level, including the subjective personal experience of migrants (Pedraza 1991; Phizacklea 2003; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Lutz 2004; Morokvasic 2006). Therefore, a gender-sensitive analysis is indispensable for understanding labour mobility as a complex socio-economic phenomenon as well as for efficient policy-making in this domain. In Ukraine, however, a gender dimension of labour migration, its increasing feminisation and implications for social welfare provision and care arrangements in society did not draw a focused attention of the academic community. This may probably be due to the fact that there is an erroneous conviction among top

migration agencies and experts, particularly on the level of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU), that Ukrainian migration flows are dominated by men. Thus, the report on social monitoring of the Ukrainian society for 2006, conducted by the NASU Institute of Sociology, contends that Ukrainians working abroad are mainly males, comprising 93.8% of the total migrants stock in 2004 and 94.1% in 2005 (Pribytkova 2006, 173). The alternative sources, however, provide a different statistics (see in more detail below).

Considering the lack of appreciation in the Ukrainian scholarship of the role of gender in constructing daily realities of Ukrainian transmigrants and their family members, *the goal of the current paper* is to fill this gap by looking with a gender-sensitive eye at the impact of labour migration on the situation of women and gender relations in Ukrainian transnational families and document the challenges arising from transnationalism. Transnational migrants are understood here, following Levitt (2004), as those who work and express their political interests in several contexts rather than in a single nation-state.

Independent labour migration of women: Female shadow of globalization

Throughout the last decades, the "name of the game" in the development of the world economy has been globalisation with its three key components: trade in goods, capital flows and migration of people. The latter have become "an integral part of the fabric of local communities, economies and labour markets" (Fargues et al. 2011, 1) across the globe. It is generally recognised that a general trend in the global migratory flows has been their increasing feminisation (Andall 2000; Castles and Miller 2003; ILO 2003; UN: INSTRAW 2007; Petrozziello 2011; Toksöz and Ulutaş 2012). Statistically, only between 1965 and 1990 the absolute number of migrant women in the world increased from 35 to 57 million, i.e. by almost 63%, this increase acceding that of men by 8% (Zlotnik 1998). The ratio of women in the total estimated migrant stock in the mid 1990s was 48% (United Nations Organization 1995) and in 2005 it augmented by almost 3% as compared to 1960. Currently, migrant females amount 3% of the world population (Jolly and Reeves 2005). They are gaining agency in the process of international mobility and no longer represent only passive followers of their husbands or fathers. They increasingly act as autonomous subjects in mobile labour force and as "independent actors in migration" (Oishi 2002, 1). This transformation of women's roles in the global 'migratory industry' (Castles and Miller 2003) is perceived as a female underside of globalisation (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002) or female shadow of globalization (Ally 2005).

Yet in the 1980s, migration scholars identified four principal categories of migrant women, distinguished by their marital status and their reasons for

migrating (Thadani and Todaro 1984): 1) married women migrating in search of employment; 2) unmarried women migrating in search of employment; 3) unmarried women migrating for marriage reasons; and 4) married women engaged in associational migration with no thought of employment. However, with growing educational attainments, women have better educational and employment possibilities and are increasingly migrating as international students and employees (United Nations Organization 2006).

In what concerns CEE women, there is a general belief that the upsurge of their economic mobility started after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing destruction of the socialist camp. However, as shown by Phizacklea (1983), their numbers in labour flows to Western Europe started rapidly expanding yet since the 1960s, having constituted by the early 1980s over a quarter of the labour force and over 40% of the total of migrants. Currently, women predominate among migrants working in the EU having reached in 2003 around 54% of the total immigrant stock and 4% of the total EU population (European Parliament 2006). For example, in 2004 in Germany alone there were 10 Polish women immigrants for every 10 Polish men. The ratio was the same for Slovaks, 13 to 10 for Romanians, 18 to 10 for Czechs and 23 to 10 for Estonians and Latvians (Morokvasic 2008). It is noted, however, that after the EU Eastern enlargement in 2004, a new gendered tendency has been observed on the EU labour market. Immigrant women from third countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) are being increasingly replaced with women from poorer EU member states, such as Romania and Lithuania, who as EU citizens are outside the scope of the relevant legislation and, consequently, in a much more adverse position than third country migrants (KISA 2007).

In Ukraine, the share of females in migration flows is tangible and over recent years it has augmented. According to GFK Ukraine (2008), the increase of independent female migration comes from the early 2000s in response to the emerging demand for cheep female labour to work in care economy of global north. The data of the Parliamentary hearings on issues of equal opportunities in Ukraine stipulate that out of around 7 million of the total stock of Ukrainians working abroad, women make 5 million (Parlamentski Sluhannya 2006). However, expert evaluations of women's share in the overall Ukrainian migration flows are more modest: from 35.4 % to 50.5% (Markov 2009). In West-border regions, migration flows are more prominent. Thus in Transcarpathian oblast 41.9% of the population are involved in labour migration, 56.1% of whom are males and 43.9% are females (Kychak 2011). In the Ternopil region 17.6% of the economically active population have experience of making earnings abroad, of whom females constitute 51.4% and even 62.5% in the county capital Ternopil (Shushpanov 2009). Meanwhile, statistics evidence that the female profile of labour migration to some EU countries, especially to the Mediterranean, is rather pronounced. In Spain, for example, women currently make up to 65% of the Ukrainian labour

migrants, in Greece – 75.5%, in Italy their share reaches as much as 90.2%. At the same time, migration to some other countries is predominantly male: in 2001, 80.6% of Ukrainian migrant workers in Poland were men, in Portugal – 68%, in Russia – 60.4%, in Germany – 60.9%.

Yet, migration flows in Ukraine are marked by high gender dynamics and are sensitive to the changes in the economic situation. Thus, two research projects on Ukrainian transnational households, carried out respectively in 1994 (Pyrozhkov et al. 1997) and 2002 (Susak 2003) showcased that the total of migrant men increased throughout this period from 54% to 66%. Meanwhile, recently the feminisation of migration flows was observed, particularly for the accounts of increased migration of women to domestic and care services to EU countries and Russia. Most of them originate from rural regions of Western Ukraine, but other regions of Ukraine are affected by this process, too. Statistically, in 2001, women constituted 35.4% of the total migrant stock. This gender gap was confirmed in 2001 by the Regional Employment Centre in Ternopil oblast (TRSA 2002). By 2004, the stock of male migrants increased, but insufficiently – only by 4.8%, whereas the number of female migrants raised up by 47.5%. In rural areas, the total of female migrants reached 52.1%, while the total of male migrants dwindled to 47.9%. The feminisation of migration over these years was accompanied by the acceleration of labour force outflow to Russia: from 39.6% in 2001 to 50% in 2009 (UNIFEM 2009) and to Poland: from 19.4% in 2001 to 66% in 2009.

However, the lack of reliable sources of information on migration flows in Ukraine, the absence of gender-sensitive state statistic accounts and the gender-blind nature of available data make it difficult to get a clear insight into gender specificities of current migratory trends in the country, and to outline in terms of gender a comprehensive picture of migration flood (Engbersen et al. 2010) stemming from post-Soviet transition. For instance, the statistical account of the then State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religion for 2009 confirmed that starting from 2003–2005 the share of women in migration flows increased (SCUNR 2010). However, no data of these changes were specified. Additionally, the liquid character of migratory flows in Ukraine, as in CEE overall (Engbersen et al. 2002) further complicates the matter.

Methodology of the study

The current paper is grounded on the data of a multi-sited field research carried out in urban areas highly affected by labour migration: Ternopil oblast[2] and the city of Lviv (West-border region), Kherson oblast and Kirovograd (South of Ukraine) and the capital city Kyiv. The former region (west oblasts) is marked by the highest rate

2 In Ukraine, "oblast" is an administrative-territorial unit equivalent to "county".

of out-migration flows, which are structured to a large extent along gender lines given that females amount around 70% of the migrant stock (Zimmer 2007).

The field research stemmed from a mixed-methodology approach, covering non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with returnee migrants and members of their families. The group of responders covered 27 females of various age groups. The field-work was supplemented by the desk-work, involving analysis of secondary sources on the subject-matter of the study. Interviews were grounded on a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions, aimed to cover different stages of the migration cycle and to reflect on gendered experiences of migrants and their family members left behind. The interviewing process started with existing contacts with migrants and their families and in many cases followed by a snowball sampling method whereby new respondents were contacted through preceding respondents. However, occasional meetings in various social contexts with migrants or members of their social networks were also welcome, for instance in embassy lines, on board of a plane, at the airports lounges or in the airport shuttle buses during the author's international travels. Interviews were made under the condition that the real identities of the responders would not be disclosed in order to maintain their privacy. For that matter, the names of the responders in the text of interviews were changed.

Non-participant observation covered informal networking with members of various social groups directly or indirectly related to migrants' social networks: representatives of the Services in the affairs of family and minors at municipal administration; administration at schools enrolling migrants' children; businessmen, owners of local retail networks and other members of local communities with high share of transnational families.

Discussion of fieldwork findings

Like mother, like daughter. Formation of migrant dynasties in transnational families

Interviews showed that, very often, transnational families have a few members working abroad. In some instances, migration involves not only members of immediate families, but even several generations in the extended family. This confirms an earlier argument, that migration in Ukraine has a tendency to become hereditary (Tolstokorova 2010a), thus following the beaten track of countries with a longer migration history. For example, Dominican migration, beginning as early as the 1970s and 1980s, showcases a new generation of migrants, raised by their grandparents, who now repeat the pattern of entrusting their own offspring

to the next generation of grandparents (Mummert 2005). The experience of such a hereditary pattern of migration is present in the post-Soviet area, as evidenced by migratory flows of a few generations of Moldovan women, mainly linguistically Turkish women of Ghaghaus origin, to domestic work in Turkey. As noted by Turkish interviewers, their female responders intimated that they were commuting to Turkey to earn money necessary to raise their children, and now it is the turn of their daughters to engage in this work to raise their own children (Toksöz and Ulutaş 2012).

The migration chains of this sort are becoming traditional in families of West-border oblasts of Ukraine, highly affected by economic mobility and increasingly feminised (Zimmer 2007). Migratory experience, survival skills, strategies of integration into the foreign milieu and the wisdom of maintaining connected relationship and 'virtual intimacies' (Wilding 2006) at distance – all this family legacy is being passed on from generation to generation, thus forming migratory dynasties, wherefore migration acquires the character of a quasi-profession with its own unwritten rules, norms, traditions and social networks.

Thus, in some families of our interviewees, migration followed a snow-balling pattern, when one family member who had left abroad, helped other relatives to settle in the country of work, and this one in turn, encouraged and helped others kin to leave for earnings abroad. This was the situation in Nina's family, who is a mother of two adult married children working in Italy. First, it was her daughter in-law who left abroad 12 years before followed by husband, Nina's son, and then her daughter together with her husband joined them 8 years hitherto. Throughout these years, Nina took care of two grand-children who stayed with her. Now that her grand-daughter is going to graduate from school, she also looks forward to leaving abroad, seeing no opportunities for herself at home. However, she has no intention to join her parents, but wants to start her own family with her boyfriend and have a separate household. This pattern of migration, when family members leave Ukraine, one after another, and stay in the country of work with no real perspectives to return back home, may entail gradual relocation of the whole family into a recipient country. In such instances, it is very likely that the members of this family may turn into 'immigrants forever' (Oliveira 2000).

Another migration pattern, a kind of 'migratory estafette' was observed when one family member temporarily left abroad for earnings, but then came back home, and the mission of leaving for earnings aboard was delegated to another family member, usually from a younger generation. This was the case in Marta's family, who went to work abroad yet in the 1990s, when the economic turmoil of transition left all adult members of her family jobless and, therefore, without the most basic means of survival. Marta left for Italy, because she had an uncle working there, who helped her settle in the country. She worked there for several years and provided for eight family members left behind in Ukraine.

Having reached the retirement age, she returned to Ukraine, and the role of the migrant bread-winner in the family was succeeded by her daughter, who, in her turn, went to work in Italy as a domestic. At the time of the interview, she still worked in Italy helping to support not only her own children and her old-aged mother left behind in Ukraine, but the families of her two siblings, too. This estafette or relay race pattern of family migration signifies that the subject of economic mobility in this case is not so much an individual family member, but a family as an integral unit. If for individual family members labour mobility might have a temporary character, for the family as a whole it involves continuity and successivity, involving multiple actors from a few generations and of varying of kinship ties.

Much pain, few gain: women as remittance managers

Among the group of interviewees who were left behind in Ukraine by their migrant family members, all women assumed the responsibilities of either remittance senders or receivers and managers in their families. Only one of them, Olena, an adult unmarried daughter of migrant parents, mentioned that when she yet studied at school, it was her father who received money transfers from her mother working aboard, but it was her and her brother who made decisions regarding the expenditures. After Olena had graduated, henceforward remittances were sent to her, and she managed them on a par with her brother, until he also left for earnings abroad. At the same time, despite their position as remittance receivers and financial managers in the household, most of the women did not see themselves as having a power position in the family and did not benefit of their decision-making role. When asked if the role of remittance managers made an impact on their power status in the family, only one woman confirmed its positive effect:

"Of course it matters! Yes, certainly. I do have more power. No doubt. Because I have the power to control the child's expenditures. I have more power in the family, because it is me who decides how to spend this money" (Ganna, retired, works part-time, mother to a divorced migrant son).

Others were at pains conceptualising the meaning of power in the family relationship. One responder perceived the question in the sense that while remittances might provide more power to control the lives of her grandchildren, it might also lead to emotional distancing from her dependants, which she did not associate with financial rewards of her position of a remittance receiver and manager:

"No, my kids are good. Very good…They help me a lot. Now that the girl is getting older, she helps me whenever I ask her about it. Yes, they are very good. So, I don't think our relations depend on money" (Marta, retired, works part-time, mother to a widowed migrant daughter).

One responder was deeply puzzled by the question:

"Oh, such a question! You see, I had never thought of it before. Yet, now that you've asked me... I tried to give it a thought. And you see... I am not sure what to answer. Probably no... I don't think...I don't know... Although, probably yes. Well, probably just a little bit. But generally, I am not sure" (Olena, daughter of parents working in Italy and sister to a young man working in USA).

All the senior women left behind assumed the functions of child-minders to migrants' dependants. They unanimously admitted that, although remittances allowed them to tangibly improve the financial security of their household, still, their incomes were hardy sufficient to maintain a decent level of live in their families. Even though nearly all of them pulled remittances (sometimes received from more than one relative) with retirement allowances and earnings from part-time jobs, and despite migrant parents took the responsibility for more costly expenditures for children, like clothes, footwear and other expensive commodities, women assessed their financial situation no more than satisfactory. Therefore, the results of interviews showed that the empowering effect of remittances on women left-behind is rather limited, both in terms of their financial advancement and in terms of their family status promotion.

Paradoxes of migrant women's gender equality remittances. Cakes and ales for Ukrainian males?

The interviews confirmed earlier findings (Tolstokorova 2009; 2010b; 2011), that the empowering effect of migration on women, allegedly enabling them "to move away from situations where they lived under traditional, patriarchal authority to situations where they are empowered to exercise greater authority over their own lives" (United Nations Organisation 2006, III), is but relative. The paradox is that although remittances enable migrant women to acquire more financial freedom and self-reliance, they entail neither more fiscal democracy, nor more gender democracy in transnational families. The work aboard only increases the double burden of 'motherhood from afar' (Sánchez-Carretero 2005) but does not necessarily entail more financial independence insofar as by assuming the roles of breadwinners, women become more bound by financial obligations to their children and their minders, while their husbands use the managerial financial roles of their wives as an opportunity to decrease or even escape their own contribution into family budget. Not infrequently, they quit working and live on remittances sent by their wives. As one of our responders noted:

"Here, in small towns in the South of Ukraine, around 40% of men live on remittances of their migrant wives and take care of the household. In the West of Ukraine their share is even higher, probably over 50% and since my sister lives in Moldova and I know that there such men make no less than 70% of the total male population" (Varvara, retired, a mother of a man working in Russia).

Furthermore, in some cases, women may even be trapped into specific forms of financial dependency on their ex-husbands, who try to manipulate their ex-spouses. This was illustrated in a story told by Vera, a retired woman and a mother of two men working in Russia, told a story of her neighbour, a former woman-engineer, who left for earnings to Spain to work in olives harvesting.

"You know, our Ukrainian women are in high demand everywhere, not only because they are beautiful, but primarily because they are good housewives and responsible mothers. Even when she (a Ukrainian woman) lives in the most inappropriate conditions, she will always make this place a 'true home.' It will always be clean, cosy and there will be cucumbers and tomatoes in the kitchen yard and flowers all around. That is the case with Maya. She is a real beauty and a perfect home-maker. This is why very soon after she had found her job in Spain and started settling herself in a new place, her employer "put an eye on her" (liked her) and invited her to take care of his own house. She agreed, and very soon they started living together as husband and wife. But the problem was that she was officially married in Ukraine. So, to be able to marry this Spanish guy she had to divorce from her husband, this poor unemployed drunkard, to whom she sent all her money while working in Spain. Yet, when she asked him about a divorce, he told:'It makes no sense for me to divorce. If I agree, I'll forfeit your money transfers. How will I survive after that? If you want a divorce, buy me a flat, a car and give me $N thousand in cash.' She had no choice and agreed to his conditions. In addition, her adult son, who was also unemployed and lived on her remittances, showed his discontent of his parents' separation and she had to buy a flat and a car to him too to please him" (Vera, retired, a mother of two adult sons working in Russia).

Furthermore, as was learned through the participant observation in West-border oblasts of Ukraine, the town courts there receive plethora of applications from migrant women who want to withdraw their ex-husbands' paternal rights in view of men's alcoholism or other kinds of anti-social behaviour. Although these quasi-fathers fail to perform their parental duties, they still enjoy their paternal authority, which they often use to blackmail their ex-wives. For example, they refuse to give mothers permission to take their children abroad with them even for summer holidays, leave alone for a longer period of time. These men often demand to be paid penalties by their ex-wives for signing the consent for abandonment of paternal care to their own children. The rationality behind these collisions is not the emotional attachment of fathers to their children, who they do not want to forfeit for free, but a mercantile desire of men to obtain dividends for a 'favour' of abandoning the rights to their own offsprings.

A similar instance of such an attitude of men to their offsprings was showcased in January, 2011, in the program "A Private Matter" on the Ukrainian TV channel "1+1." It related a story of a boy, whose parents worked abroad – the mother in

Italy, and the father in Germany – while he stayed with his grandparents in Ukraine. When the mother decided to take him to live with her in Italy, the father, who neither provided any financial support to the boy, nor paid alimonies to his mother, required from his ex-wife to pay him €10,000 for his consent to abandon his paternal rights (and duties) for the boy. The woman failed to collect that much money and could not pay it, for which she was cruelly beaten by her ex-husband. Meanwhile, the boy stayed without any financial support either from the state or from his parents.

Therefore, apart from an earlier noted tendency to reinforcement of the roles of fathers and their increasing responsibility for family and children incited by transnationalism in Ukrainian migrant families (Tolstokorova 2012), which is in compliance with the global trend of responsible parenthood, a reverse tendency is emerging, not observed under state socialism: the consumerist attitude of fathers to children and their mothers. This evinces not only the changing role of masculinity in Ukraine, but the transformation of the institution of fatherhood, the polarisation of its values and the vagueness of ethical boundaries.

These tendencies not only testify the gender transformation of role models in migrants' families, but also evince the mercantilisation of interpersonal ties in transnational kinship relationships. Therefore, financial independence and 'gender equality remittances' (Tolstokorova 2010a), as a gendered variety of 'social remittances' (Levitt 1998) and a kind of 'transfer of norms' (Lodigiani and Salomone 2012) of egalitarian mentality, which women adopt due to the exposure to more gender equitable cultures of Western democracies, do not obligatory entail empowerment, but may even have a reverse effect on them, leading to more dependency on family and ex-husbands. This conclusion confirms the observation that while in some ways women's wage-earning and remitting may afford them a certain sense of empowerment, the new forms of dependency arise due to transnationalism, which constrain the choices available to female migrants and lead to their disempowerment (Petrozziello 2011). Hence, *gender saldo* of migration for women might often be negative, and their *gender dividends* of investments into transnationalism might be nil, while their husbands left behind at home may receive good 'gender gains' (Bastia and Busse 2011) without any investments into family well-being.

Meanwhile, same as migrant women, the Ukrainian men working abroad may convey their own *gender equality remittances* which they acquire by adopting more egalitarian behavioural patterns observed in the countries of work, such as doing more of women's traditional work, including childcare, developing more equitable attitudes to their wives and women in the family. Thus, when asked by an interviewer about his first impressions in Italy, our male informant replied:

"I see that the attitude to women here is different than in Ukraine. So I learn to respect my wife" (Roman, a small bakery owner in Italy).

This implies that migration incites a gradual *modernisation of masculinity* in migrants' families, and provides grounds to hope that, in the long-run, it may entail more gender democracy in transnational couples and, eventually, it will lead to progressive changes in the gender culture in Ukraine overall, not only for women, but for both sexes.

Out of sight, out of mind. Declining kinship ties

Our interviews showed that in many cases economic mobility entails transformation of post-migration family structure. Nearly all the informants noted that far too often it leads to marriage dissolution:

"You see, I toiled abroad for around ten years. Now I am financially well-off and have everything I need. So, it seems to be just the best time to start living happily and enjoy life. Yet, the question is which way and who with? My health was badly undermined while I worked abroad. My husband has got another woman and I decided to apply for a divorce. My sons are now grown up and live their own lives in other cities. This is why I ask myself: now, in the end of the road, were the scarifies I made for my family worthwhile?" (Margarita, a returnee migrant, worked as a care-giver in Russia, Greece, Cyprus and Israel).

The possibility of family separation is higher when husband and wife live separately. Yet, if the couple moves to work abroad together, there is a possibility to preserve marriage:

Responder: "When my daughter-in law was leaving abroad I told her: Galya, I am ready to take care of your kids, but only on the condition that you go abroad together with my son [Galya's husband]. Because you see, if she goes there alone, the family is sure to be ruined. If the couple is separated – the family is sure to collapse. It is 100% sure."

Interviewer: "Are there many families like that?"

Responder: "Oh, yes, many! Very many! Actually, all of them! As soon as the husband and wife are separated, there is no family any more. And children do not have the family any more either" (Nina, retired, works part-time, a mother of two adult married children working in Italy).

In what concerns the effect of parents' absence on children left behind at home, women-carers noted that kinship ties between generations in the family gradually declined. Thus, for some time after their parents' departure, children were often very frustrated and missed them dearly, but after a while they adjusted themselves to this situation and started getting used to other people, most often to their carers who became their "other-mothers" (Schmalzbauer 2004):

"After my daughter had left to work aboard, her son actually moved to us. He studied at the 8th grade at school at that time and, in effect, he lived with us. He was coming back from school to our place, and not to his own home. He got used

to us. After a time, he even stopped missing his Mom very much" (Marta, retired, works part-time, mother to a widowed migrant daughter).

In some instances, children developed emotional connections with other important people from their surrounding:

"My girl [grand-daughter] was in the second grade when her parents left for earnings abroad. After they had left I saw her weeping now and again. I asked her why she was weeping, but she would not respond. Yet, I understood that it was because she was missing her Mom. Yet, it was so when she was yet a little girl. Now she does not seem to miss her Mom any more. She has got this boy-friend of hers, and she's got used to him" (Nina, retired, works part-time, a mother of two adult married children working in Italy).

Other women-carers left behind noted that migrants' children became gradually alienated from their parents and eventually perceived them as strangers, as was the case with Ganna's grand-daughter. Her son, the girl's father, currently works in the construction industry in Portugal, whereto he moved from the Czech Republic. While he worked there, his wife worked in Italy as a domestic, and Ganna took care of their daughter. Being separated, the couple failed to preserve marriage, and soon the woman divorced her husband and remarried. At first, she regularly sent remittances to Ganna to support her daughter, but after the baby was born in the new family, money transfers stopped arriving. Over the first time after her parents had left, the girl lacked them both dearly, but after a while she started forgetting them and eventually forfeited emotional connections with them and did not need them any more:

"At first she badly wanted to have her Mom and Dad to be around with her, but after some time, I saw that she did not need them that much anymore. When my son came home for a visit, he was an alien for her. She felt ill at ease with him and did not know what to say or what to do in his presence" (Ganna, retired, works part-time, mother to a divorced migrant son).

At the same time, the relationships between minors and their carers do not always develop smoothly, even when the latter treat the former as their own children and there are close emotional ties between them. Thus, as was commented by one of our informants, children often revolt against their minders if the latter refuse to spend remittances for the purchase of items children want to have. The common argumentation by children is that, although remittances are sent by parents to their guardians, they intended for them to be used for the sake of children, and, for that matter, children have the right to decide how to spend them. Such collisions sometimes become a matter of court trials between children and their carers or guardians. One of such cases was showcased in 2007 on the TV Channel "1+1." This confirms the earlier findings (Tolstokorova 2009) evidencing that the financial benefits of migration are overridden by the erosion and decline of kinship ties between members of transnational families. Migrants'

children develop a materialistic mentality and start to perceive their parents and carers as sources of financial, but not emotional rewards. In other words, family values are gradually being taken over by consumerist attitudes, hardly contributing to family integrity.

Furthermore, informal conversations with owners of local retail networks revealed numerous instances of juvenile delinquency among children of transnationals. This was confirmed by the statistics of the Ministry of Interior, evidencing that one out of ten under-aged criminals in Ukraine comes from a transnational family (ProUA News 2010). These teenagers, being quite well-off financially, often commit petty larceny just for fun, for example, in supermarkets, from vending machines, at retailers, etc. In pedagogical terms, this may be interpreted as children's attempts to attract the attention they lack due to absence of parents, and attempts to express their discontent of the family situation wherein they were induced by adults. Additionally, it testifies that the family members left behind at home to take care of migrants' children, fail to cope properly with their child-rearing obligations. In turn, this signifies that family ties between members of transnational families are being formalised and kinship closeness withers.

It is noteworthy that migration also incited some 'pleasant' surprises in the relationships between children and their migrant parents. This happed with a daughter of an interviewee, Julya, ex-wife of a migrant man working in Italy. The couple separated when the girl was yet a toddler. Her father has never visited her after the divorce, and the girl did not remember him at all. She knew him only through photographs. When the girl turned thirteen, the father emerged unexpectedly to offer her a modest financial support. By that time he had been working in Italy for two years, and was well off financially. He tried to reconnect with his daughter by giving her telephone calls from time to time, mainly for her birthdays. It is hard to say what the rationale was behind this upsurge of fatherly feelings, but probably the loneliness of a single man living in a foreign social environment and the improved financial possibilities due to earnings made abroad incited him to recall about his paternal duties. Anyway, it was due to labour migration, that the father reunited with his daughter and the girl received his attention which she needed a lot, but had been lacking for a long time.

Conclusions

It is generally recognised that the situation of women under state socialism, despite the non-democratic setting, was in a certain way even better than in many other parts of the world, because females had some advantages in social welfare, public access to health-care services, basic education and paid employment (Saurer et al. 2006). This was evidenced by a UNICEF report (UNICEF 1999) which showed that,

according to the human development index (HDI), women in Central and Eastern Europe under the Communist rule even had certain advantages in terms of gender equality promotion and health-care provision to mothers and children, as compared to other parts of the world with the respective level of development. A comparative analysis of UNDP reporting over the first years of transition showcased that until 1995 HDI in the region was even lower as compared to the gender-development index (GDI) (Bretherton 1999), exposing a pattern of gender democracy similar to socially equitable Nordic welfare states (Fábián 2006). Meanwhile, the subsequent period of transition to liberal market economy had adverse implications for the situation of post-Soviet women as long as it entailed feminisation of poverty, increase of violence and trafficking in women, drop-out of female representation in the labour force and in decision-making, and decline of the social security system (Marsh 1996; Fultz et al. 2003; UNIFEM 2006; Tolstrokorova 2007). Among the key social factors, which made a dramatic impact on the situation of women and family, was the accelerated economic mobility of Ukrainian population, accompanied by increasing feminisation of labour force fluxes.

As evidenced by the empirical results of this study, labour mobility has a large-scale effect on Ukrainian women and family. My earlier papers (Tolstokorova 2008, 2009) showcased that it affects principle family functions, consumption patters and economic well-being, encourages transformation of gender role models and gives rise to such a new phenomenon in inter-familial relationship as transnational parenthood (Tolstokorova 2010a). Increasing out-migration of women and fragmentation of transnational family style has adverse implications for care-provision in the family, fostering social orphanhood and juvenile delinquency among children and social desadaptation among husbands left behind.

The results of the field work for the current paper showed that labour migration in Ukraine has a tendency to transform from a short-term individual project into a 'hereditary' family business, and to become a quasi-profession leading to the development of transnational families into migratory dynasties, shaped by estafette and snow-balling migration patterns. Among the favorable effects of labour migration is a possibility for women to enhance their decision-making positions in the family and advance their family status, promote their fiscal inclusion and financial independence. However, the paradox of women's economic empowerment due to transnationalism is that despite women work hard for remittances, remittances do not necessarily work for women. Hence, the gender saldo of labour migration for women is often negative, while gender dividends from investments into transnationalism are but ephemeral. At the same time, their husbands left behind at home often obtain tangible 'gender gains' from their wives' earning abroad without any contribution to the family budget.

However, not less importantly, labour mobility has an adverse effect on mentality and family values of transnationals, promoting mercantilisation and

consumerisation of interpersonal relationships, decline of kinship ties and contributing to lessening of family integrity overall. Therefore, although labour migration may entail gender equality remittances and financial empowerment for Ukrainian women from transnational families, having an effect of 'social therapy from the darkness of poverty,' the field research for this paper confirmed the earlier theoretical assumption that for Ukrainian transnational families, labour migration has rather an effect of social surgery in the sense that it most often leads to familial disconnection, alienation and, eventually, to dissolution due to the socio-economic context into which the transnational families are induced against their will.

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