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In *Crossborder Care: Lessons from Central Europe*, sociologist Miloslav Bahna and anthropologist Martina Sekulová offer a refreshing approach to the lives of Slovakian migrant care workers in Austria. They hold that care workers should be seen as active, purposeful agents, positively constructing their own life projects. This argument derives from current analyses of migrant care work, that commonly focus on global care chains and care regimes, neither of which give prominence to the agency of care workers. By conceptualizing care workers as labor and economic migrants, the authors are able to examine care workers' agency which derives from their day to day care work. In the introductory chapter, the authors outline the particularities of their approach: they identify care workers as active agents in labor migration; they utilize evidence collected from Slovakia and Austria; and they employ a mixed methods approach. Questions such as what determines whether someone decides to become a care worker, what explains work satisfaction within the income levels of a given labor market, or what happens after leaving care work (4) are addressed in the remainder of the whole book. Chapter 2 provides some background information on Slovak care workers in Austria. Of particular importance here are the legalization of live-in 24-hour home care in Austria on the one hand, and the high unemployment rates in Slovakia on the other. This chapter also introduces in more detail the data used for the authors' analyses, including available official surveys and interviews with care workers in 2011 and 2017.

Chapter 3 identifies the motivational factors for Slovak care workers through both survey analysis and interviews. Unsurprisingly, the levels of income and the labor market in the sending country impact individuals' choices for emigrant labor, and this particularly during and after the 2008/2009 global financial crisis, which induced a rise in the unemployment rate in Slovakia. In Chapter 4, departing from oft referenced global care drain literature – which tends to accentuate the negative consequences on the left-behind family members as a result of care workers' transnational migration – the authors find that commodification of care does not necessarily induce alienation of the care workers' relationships with their families. Especially the many middle-aged care workers, who have neither younger children nor heavy eldercare responsibilities at home, reported gaining satisfaction from working in Austria as their experience enabled them to both escape domestic unemployment and to gain tangential opportunities which fluency in German can bring. This contributes to a sense of independence among these Slovakian care workers, and a concomitant sense of self-worth. Finally, cross-border proximity between the two countries permits fortnightly commuting, and with it, the

ability to stay in touch with family members and social activities in Slovakia, thus having the best of both worlds.

Although care work in Austria engenders self-realization for many care workers, it is still challenging for workers to find a healthy balance between providing paid care services in Austria and simultaneously meeting care needs within their own homes. For instance, within dominant constructions of motherhood and gender roles with regard to women, female care workers are expected to secure delivery of their own home care prior to departure for Austria, and then to “catch up” on all that was missed after the return (105). This is illustrated in Chapter 5 through an intersectional lens of aging, gender, and circularity. Paradoxically, the dynamics of circular and temporary care migrations observed in Europe both facilitate care workers’ self-realization and simultaneously, reinforce traditional care expectations placed on care workers in both Austria and Slovakia. In other words, care workers do escape unemployment, but they cannot escape their caregiving roles as women in both countries. Chapter 6 focuses on life of the care workers after they have ended their work in Austria and return to Slovakia. Care workers’ working life once they return to their home country, is negatively affected by their care work in Austria, in the sense that it does not increase their employment chances in Slovakia. Finally, the authors argue in the concluding chapter that new insights can be gained by focusing on questions of who the care workers are and why they do this type of work (136). These questions help to examine the mechanisms of labor migration from the bottom up.

One aspect of this book which particularly draws my attention is the diachronic pattern of care migration. The book delineates the geographic ‘movement’ of source regions which provide care workers for wealthier Western European countries. Within Slovakia, few care workers are from the affluent area bordering Austria, the majority hailing from the eastern regions of the country. Furthermore, there is a noticeable decrease of Slovakian care workers entering the market for the first time. Indications are that Romania will replace Slovakia as the largest source country of future care workers. This pinpoints a crucial question for care migration scholars and policymakers: how stable are current care regimes? This book provides fresh insights for delving into this important question by accentuating the economic, gendered, and kinship realities of sending countries such as Slovakia.

Several questions emerge in reading the book. Despite the authors’ research methods in combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the external validity of the data on life experiences of twelve female care workers (34) is not convincing. Additionally, since care work is highly relational, it would be interesting to further explore how care workers interact with care recipients, and how they mutually negotiate care tasks to draw personal and professional boundaries, as well as how they both experience and process emotions in those private homes. Presumably, relational bonds can have an impact on care workers’ commitments to remain in eldercare beyond merely economic incentives. Lastly, since gender has a direct impact on care migration, adding the voice of male migrant care workers would have complemented the conventional gender component in co-determining the motivations and experiences of care. These questions might however be too ambitious an agenda to achieve within one book.

That said, *Crossborder Care* addresses an important research gap in care migration studies and shall be of interest to those who work on issues of care and migration, both domestically and transnationally. It is a timely contribution to the study of care work and migration within Europe and offers unique insights on how care workers exercise agency in their circuitous paths to care. The current ongoing pandemic cuts short the mobility of peoples and poses unanticipated challenges and burdens for the transnational delivery of care. In this sense, care workers are made increasingly vulnerable. However, this book convincingly furthers the discussion of multiple conditions for self-realization among

transnational care workers, which lays the ground for creating a more sustainable care infrastructure for the increasingly silver population.