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Conceptualising "Home"

The Question of Belonging Among Turkish Families in Germany

campus

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grant groups in Germany, and the debate on foreign women turned into a debate on Turkish women (Lutz and Huth-Hildebrand 1998).

Key themes structuring the studies on Turkish migrant women in Germany have been that of the uncivilized stranger and the victim of patriarchal honour (Inowlocki and Lutz 2000; 307). Social research, policy and public discourse converged to construct a homogenized image of women with Turkish background as backward, isolated and needy people with low decision-making power in the family, and Turkish men as patriarchs (Herwatz-Emden and Westphal 1997; Sechster Familienbericht 2000). Especially early period studies employed a stereotypical perspective and depicted Turkish women as oppressed, obedient and weak individuals, and Turkish men as violent domineering people. Continuous citations of these studies strengthened negative pictures. They were used to legitimate ethnic differences and sharpened the boundaries between the majority society and migrants (Tunc 2006).

Feminist research on migrant women during the last two decades contributed hugely to deconstruct these representations. A path-breaking work has been Helma Lutz's (1986) study on Turkish social workers in Germany and Netherlands, which challenged the assumption that Muslim women's identity and behaviour can be explained on the basis of their culture of origin, narrowly defined as religious, rustic and traditionally patriarchal. Moreover, Berrin Özlem Otyakmaz's (1995) study on Turkish women from the second generation; Margaret Spohn's (2002) research on the first generation of Turkish men in Germany criticising stereotypical depictions in the literature, especially in early period research; Yasemin Karakasoglu and Ursula Boos-Nünning's (2005) study on young women with immigration background; Werner Schiffauer's (2002) study on migration and cultural difference pointing at the feminist discourse against violence, arranged marriages and gendered division of labour in the narratives of "self-conscious Muslim women" (p.24) all constituted significant steps in the field and contributed to the opening/enlargement of the research perspective.

3.2. Gendered facets of Turkish migration to Germany

A look at the history of migration from Turkey demonstrates the inaccuracy of the predominant image of Turkish women constructed by early studies. As opposed to the common opinion, migrant women of Turkish origin who arrived after 1960s were mostly skilled and educated women coming from urban areas of Turkey. Especially after the economic recessions in West Germany in 1966 and 1967, job prospects for men got worse and the demand for women workers grew. Traditional gender roles and stereotypical images regarding the place of women in society influenced the type of work for which migrant female labour was recruited. Accordingly, women, who were admitted as workers concentrated in "female occupations" such as small manufacturing industries, textile, tailoring, food processing, packaging and cleaning (Toksöz 1992). German companies increasingly employed women as reliable sources of cheap female labour and reproduced an ethnically structured and gendered labour market (Anthias 2003). It was mostly in the second phase of migration starting in early 1970s that women from rural areas started to arrive in Germany. Main migration motivations of these women were economic improvement, education, training, political refuge, escape from unsatisfactory marriages, the pressure of tradition, family reunification and marriage migration (Ilkkaracan 1996; Erman 1998). It would not be correct to assume that all women emigrating for marriage purposes or joining their husbands stayed as housewives in Germany. The desire to speed up the process of money accumulation for an earlier return to the homeland was an important motivation for some emigrant women to participate to the labour market (Dietzel-Papakyriakou 1990; Mihciyazgan 1992).

However, not all emigrant women had the chance to work. Some were hindered by language problems, familial and institutional constraints or limited access to supportive social networks. These constraints led to social isolation, economic dependence and inequalities in the exercise of domestic labour. In certain situations, emigration strengthened women's homemaking role by pushing them to *become* housewives (Ilkkaracan and Ilkkaracan 1998) in contrast to their pre-migration status. As argued by Sibley (1995), the house might become a place in which women's options are seriously restricted, considered that the conflicting aspects of domestic life and the tensions surrounding the use of domestic space may lead to questions of oppression, exploitation and violence in houses. According to

Karen Fog Olwig (1999), we must recognize that home (in the sense of a place/house) is often "a contested domain: an arena where differing interests struggle to define their own spaces within which to localise and cultivate their identity" (cited in Morley 2000, 57). This arena may become "a place of exclusion, segregation, hierarchy and violence" for some people (Hörder 2005, 15), who are demonstrated to be women mostly.

Fortunately however, above described conflicts, oppressions, isolations and closure processes do not constitute the only possibility. Emigrant women also encounter new opportunities for education, training or employment in the hostland, which contribute to the re-conceptualisation of gender roles and the challenging of gender hierarchies (Kurosch 1990). Those who are employed benefit most from these opportunities, because labour market participation affects the female "normal biography" (Levy 1991), plays a dominant role in structuring women's life courses, and transforms gender roles and gender relations (Krüger 2001b). Especially for those women coming from rural areas and large households where they live under the strict control of senior family members, emigration refers to the liberation from traditional/patriarchal forms of authority, the social pressure of the community (Schiffauer 2003, 2005c), and everyday arrangements of a large family. Moreover, it refers to a movement towards financial independence, to increasing decision-making power and autonomy (Clifford 1997; Morley 2000), and control over economic resources. Transformations in migrant women's new economic roles and their contributions to family income change their position in families and in wider migrant community, and challenges gender hierarchies. This is reported to cause a positive shift in the relationship between migrant women and their husbands. In his study on emigrants from Subay, Schiffauer (1991) reports that with the emigration from the rural area in Turkey to the urban space in Germany, first generation of Turkish migrants developed new structures of subjectivity, which are shaped by migration-specific terms and conditions, transforming the relationship between the couples and giving them a more personal, intimate and egalitarian character. Similar observations are reported by Nermin Abadan-Unat (1977) and Barbara Wolbert (1995) stressing that the most important change has taken place in the relationship between couples and the decision-making process in the family.[47]

47 cp. Nauck (1998) and Gümen et al. (1994).

Changes in women's and men's lives with women's post-migration employment contribute to the transformation of gender relations and the weakening of gender hierarchies among Turkish migrant couples. However, the same transformations might become conflicting experiences for women who have difficulties in reconciling traditional gender roles of their home culture with the demands of participation to a new socio-cultural environment. Especially in case of a sharp difference between home and host cultures, the difficulty to find an adequate strategy with which to counter and balance contradictory demands of tradition and progress might grow (Gillespie 1995; Gray 2004). In such a situation, women might adapt to new structures by remaining attached to the home culture selectively. They might experience this condition as a process of connecting-disconnecting, and forgetting-remembering between their pasts and futures, while trying to find the acceptable behaviour for the majority society *and* the ethnic/religious community (Clifford 1997).

The compromise between old and new is argued to be a female concern, because women are seen as the key actors not only in the biological reproduction of the family and the community, but also in the construction, maintenance and communication of cultural and national heritage, as constituent of home. Women are charged with the duty to construct homes in spatial, social and conceptual senses, and to assure continuity over time and space. Their stability is perceived to be necessary for the construction and maintenance of home, and for the communication of cultural and ethnic memory to younger members of the family/community, particularly in a foreign environment, which is imagined as a dangerous space.

The following part will go into the details of these associations and discuss their impact on women, their lives, bodies and sexuality.

3.3. Women and home

There is a long and well-established tradition of writing on the mutual identification of the woman/mother and the house.[48] The house is seen as "a feminised domestic space" (Olalquiaga 1993), in which women nurture

48 cp. Massey (1994), Falk and Campbell (1997), Chapman (1999) and Goldring (1999).

their young, satisfy the domestic and personal needs of a husband and exercise their own creative energies. It is presented as "the reification of the setting for good women, virtuous wives and mothers" who keep the home clean (physically and morally) to prevent a stain appear on the household and on their own reputation (Palmer 1989 in Morley 2000). The idea that the house is the preserve over which women (and not men) are likely to have most control is reinforced by the community who are women themselves such as mothers, sisters, aunts, neighbours and friends, participating to the process of supervising and controlling each other's performance, and by the media in various forms including women's magazines, film, television drama, advertising and marketing psychology. With processes of teaching, supervision, monitoring and internalisation of the home-making role, women come to believe that they know the best way that tasks should be done, feel responsible for the organisation of the house and expend much more energy and time in running the house than men, as the "pivots of home" (Chapman 1999).

As members of the family who are responsible for the construction and representation of the house/home, women are seen to constitute "a stable symbolic centre" or a place of no-change, whereas men are associated with movement, activity and mobility. The heroes of modernity like the *flaneur*, the stranger with the freedom to wander are all men, who "share the possibility of lone travel, of voluntary uprooting and of anonymous arrival at a new place", whereas women/homes are perceived as still points in a changing world, and as places to which the (male) labourer or traveller returns to (Wolf 1985 in Morley 2000). Women are believed to be well suited to preserve, protect and communicate cultural and national belongings as timeless and stable centres. They are seen as "ethnic actors" (Anthias 2000) who are particularly influential in preserving values, guarding traditions, bearing the language, and retaining/communicating nationhood and belongingness (Yuval-Davis 1997). Therefore, it is not simply the house itself which is coded as feminine in the literature, also the realm of tradition, culture, community and the nation are often understood as women's business (Morley 2000). This is particularly so among migrant or displaced groups in which cultural continuity is often felt to be under threat, and a special effort is put to preserve and protect cultural, traditional and national codes and values. Women's role to disguise or compensate for disruption and change, and to transmit the heritage is strengthened in diaspora (Gillespie 1995; Gray 2004). While men are allowed to change