Doing Family

Civic Stratification, Gender and Family Migration Policies

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• Family migration increasingly at the centre of public debates on migration/integration

• Main questions:
  – How do family migration policies impact on migrants and others affected by them?
  – In particular, how do state constructions of the family and migrants’ own conception of a “good family life” inform the lived reality of family life?
What is the family? – State constructions

- State constructs the family through:
  - Definitions of the family members in family migration policies
  - Definitions of the family through other laws (family & marriage law, custody regulations, social benefit regulations, etc.)
  - Implicit definitions in conditions attached to family reunification
„Conditioning“ the family

- Dependency
  - Residence rights of secondary migrant dependent on primary migrant/ sponsor
  - Scope of rights dependant on primary migrant (citizenship, admission channel)
  - Social dependency
  - Primary purpose – no immediate access to the labour market, probationary periods

- Integration conditions, Active family ties (NL), Attachment to the country (DK)
Migrants’ realities of family life

• navigating between state regulations, others’ expectations, and own conceptions of family life
  
  – individual concepts: nuclear family, extended family, (same sex) partnership, marriage, children, living close, etc.
  
  – common desire: to live according to individual concept
Performing family: adapting to the „outside world“

• actions and decisions are influenced by circumstances

• proof of „doing it the right way“
  – „taking the big step“ and its consequences
  – family life as a „daily struggle“
  – family as an „administrative unit“
Changing family: between family and social life

- impact on social aspects of family life and participation in society
  - Different lifestyle: liberation vs. loneliness and isolation

- reconstruction of responsibilities for the well-being of the family
Changing roles and responsibilities

• Division of productive-reproductive and public-private sphere and roles

• Challenging gender roles
  – *The male dependant*

• Renegotiate work and family life
Concluding remarks

- The state framework is an important, but only one of several constraints shaping family live/ family (migration) strategies of individuals.

- Both *civic stratification* - the differential positioning of individuals according to their rights – as well as individuals’ position in other regards act as opportunity structures for individual choices.
• It is crucial to understand the complex interaction of policies, social, labour market and other constraints in creating and shaping civic stratification

  – Capacity of policy to influence individual choices and strategies both over- and underestimated

  – This capacity is closely linked to the concrete situation a persons admitted as a family member finds him/herself in
Thank you for your attention 😊