Introduction: Family migration as an integration issue? Policy perspectives and academic insights

Bonjour, S.; Kraler, A.

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Saskia Bonjour[1] & Albert Kraler[2]

Abstract

'Family migration' and 'integration' are intimately related concepts in policy discourses in Europe today. Assumptions about the relation between 'family migration' and 'integration' play a crucial role in shaping policies. This special issue aims to examine the axis between 'family migration', 'policy', and 'integration', both from a policy perspective, and from the perspective of individuals engaged in family migration. In this introduction, we first discuss scholarly work on family migration policies in Europe, which analyses how policies and discourses on family migration and integration participate in the politics of belonging. Second, we explore the fragmented and incomplete insights offered by existing research about the actual relation between family migration and migrant integration.

Keywords

Family migration; migrant integration; gender; identity; migration policy

Introduction

'Family migration' and 'integration' are intimately related concepts in policy discourses in Europe today. Assumptions about the relation between 'family migration' and 'integration' play a crucial role in shaping policies. These assumptions pertain both to the effect of family migration on migrants' integration in European societies and, conversely, to the effect of

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[1] Leiden University Institute for History, Leiden, The Netherlands
[2] International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Vienna, Austria

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migrants' integration on family migration flows. Such policy perspectives on the relation between 'integration' and 'family migration' are very much part of the broader debate on social cohesion, national identity, and migration, which has been so high on European political agendas over the last decade.

Not so long ago, family migration remained a blind spot in migration studies. As long as migrants were analysed almost exclusively as individuals driven by strictly economic motives, the role of the family in patterns of migration, settlement, and integration was neglected (Kofman, 2004; Bailey & Boyle, 2004). However, the last decade has witnessed the emergence a rich body of research which investigates different aspects of the family dimension of international migration, including migrants' incorporation into receiving societies. More recently, this literature has been complemented with studies of the politics and policies of family migration, reflecting the increased salience of family related migration in public debates on migration.

This special issue aims to contribute to this emerging field by examining the axis between 'family migration', 'policy', and 'integration'. The contributions in the first part of this special issue adopt a policy perspective, to explore how the role of the family in migrant integration has been conceptualised in political and public debates, and how family migration policies have been shaped by concerns and perceptions related to integration. The contributions in the second part adopt the perspective of the individuals engaged in family migration. These papers investigate how migrant and binational families deal with state regulations and the other challenges they encounter when building a new family life for themselves, and how family migration policies impact on individual dimensions of integration and membership.

This introduction provides an inevitably incomplete overview of the literature with a similar twofold focus. First, we discuss scholarly work on family migration policies in

Europe, which analyses how policies and discourses on family migration and integration construe identities and communities, i.e. participate in the politics of belonging. Second, we explore what we know from existing research about the actual relation between family migration and migrant integration. This knowledge is fragmented and incomplete. Third and finally, we present the contributions to this edited volume.

Policy perspectives on family migration and integration: the politics of belonging

Family migration policies have come under academic scrutiny only recently. Except for Bhabha and Shutter (1994), pioneers in the field, most studies date from the second half of the last decade. Extensive research has been done in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Nordic countries, while relatively little is known about the dynamics of family migration policies in other parts of Europe (but see Fonseca, 2008 and Oliveira, 2013 on Portugal; Bekker et al., 2013 on Ireland; Raissiguier, 2013 on France; Kraler, 2010b and Kraler et al., 2013 on Austria; and Maskens, 2013a on Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland). The literature demonstrates that family migration policies are highly contested and form part of broader debates on identity, social cohesion, welfare and diversity

Family migration has long been closely associated with integration – even before integration became the dominant frame to describe the processes of settlement and incorporation of migrants into receiving countries in the 1990s and 2000s. In many European countries, the foreign wives of male citizens automatically acquired the citizenship of their husband upon marriage until the 1960s, and even retained unconditional access to their husband's nationality upon simple declaration of their wish to naturalise into the 1980s (De Hart &Van Oers, 2006; Kraler, 2010b, p. 83). Marriage to a male citizen thus was seen as tantamount to (legal) integration. In regard to labour migration, more practical concerns prevailed: in the first half of the twentieth century, the French government preferred Italian

labour migrants who were married and brought their family, because it feared the 'violent and unpredictable behavior' of unmarried men (Lucassen, 2005, p. 106-107). In the 1960s and 1970s, the International Labour Organisation recommended granting migrants the right to family reunification because it would promote their well-being and integration in receiving societies (see for example ILO, 1974 quoted in ILO, 1999). A similar perspective has shaped the EU policies on free movement rights, developed since the 1960s for workers and transformed into a fundamental entitlement of EU citizens in recent years. The European Commission considers family migration a 'vehicle to integration' and pleads for a liberal interpretation of EU law on family reunification for non-EU citizens, supported by the EU Court of Justice (Strik et al., 2013, p. 48; Block & Bonjour, 2013). While EU member states have nominally endorsed this view in the preamble to the Family Reunification Directive (Directive 2003/86/EC, preamble, para 5), today the Portuguese government is one of the few European governments which actually share this perspective and therefore encourage migrants to bring their families (Strik et al., 2013, p. 108).

Since the turn of the century the very large majority of governments in Europe have come to adopt the opposite perspective : family migration is associated with 'failing' integration, in the context of soaring anxieties about identity, community, and social cohesion (Kofman et al., 2011, p. 23-26). In public and political debates, the ethnic and cultural diversity produced by past and present migration flows in general and family related flows in particular has been presented as a threat to social cohesion and national identity. The alleged 'failure' of migrants to integrate is 'often laid at the door of their families, or rather their practices of familial relations, and the (collectivist) principles (cultural, religious) which underpin them' (Grillo, 2008, p. 31).

Indeed, to a large degree the 'problem' of family migration and integration is construed as a problem of culture, identity, and belonging. National identities in Europe today

are construed in opposition to the perceived culture and identity of migrants, epitomized by the 'migrant' – especially 'Muslim' – family. Whereas the 'Western' family is imagined as modern, emancipated, and egalitarian, the 'migrant' family is associated with tradition, patriarchy, oppression, and even violence (Van Walsum, 2008; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013; Raissiguier, 2013; Rytter, 2013, p. 204). This 'unintegrable' family (Grillo, 2008, p. 24), where 'deviant' practices such as polygamy and female circumcision are produced and reproduced, is seen to pose a threat not only to the autonomy of individual migrants, but also to 'social order' (Gedalof, 2007) and to the 'national self' (Schmidt, 2011, p. 271).

Yet family related migration has also been problematised in terms of the 'quality' of migrants coming in as family migrants. Often strongly interlinked with, but analytically distinct from cultural arguments, family migrants have been argued to be less educated, less skilled, and poorly integrated in the labour market, with women in particular showing far below average rates of labour force participation (Kofman et al., 2013). It is these combined socio-economic and cultural concerns that have strongly shaped policy changes aiming at making admission more selective (Strik et al., 2013, p. 51).

Probably the most problematized form of family migration is the transnational marriage of persons of migrant origin to spouses from their own or their (grand)parents' country of origin. Such marriage patterns contradict the assumption, based on classic theories of assimilation, that 'second' and 'third generation' migrants will marry outside of their ethnic community. To policymakers, such transnational marriages conjure up the frightening scenario of a potentially endless chain migration coupled to the transfer from generation to generation of socio-economic deprivation as well as traditional practices and norms (Kofman et al., 2011, p. 28; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013). The choice for a partner from abroad in itself is interpreted as a sign of insufficient integration or belonging (Muller Myrdahl, 2010, p. 112), based on 'traditional' practices such as forced or arranged marriages (Schmidt, 2011).

Whereas in the United Kingdom and Norway, arranged marriages are recognized as a legitimate – if not necessarily unproblematic – family form (Wray, 2009; Muller Myrdahl, 2010; Eggebø, 2010), in countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, arranged marriages are conflated with forced marriages, and any form of marriage which is not perceived as based on romantic love between two autonomous individuals is rejected as incompatible with national values (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013; Fair, 2010).

The 'othering' of the 'migrant' family is highly gendered. Migrant women are consistently represented as victims of economic deprivation and social isolation as well as of patriarchal oppression and violence (Gedalof, 2007; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013). The often implicit counter-image of this victimisation of migrant women is the representation of migrant men as violent oppressors: 'as migrant women are denied agency, migrant men are denied humanity and vulnerability' (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013, p. 73; see also Wray, 2011). Whereas in the past, policymakers' concerns focused on foreign grooms, who were considered labour migrants in disguise (Bhabha & Shutter, 1994; Wray, 2011), today the most problematized marriage migrant is the foreign bride, perceived as an unemancipated victim bound to make a bad mother (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013).

Family migration policies reflect these identity constructions: construing migrant families as 'product and producer' of 'deviant norms and practices' – i.e. of failing integration – places them 'outside the imagined national community', which legitimises keeping these families out through restrictive migration policies (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013, p. 73; see also Fog Olwig, 2011, p. 191-192). Family migration policies are shaped in fundamental ways by dominant norms about what the roles of men and women ought to be, what marriage ought to be, what parenting ought to be and what family ought to be (Strasser et al., 2009; Van Walsum, 2008; Wray, 2011; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013).Thus, in most European countries the dominance of the nuclear family model results in very restricted admission for family

members other than the spouse and minor children. Also common is the obligation on the sponsoring spouse to earn a minimum income, placing the migrant spouse in a position of dependency that is reminiscent of the traditional breadwinner model (Strasser et al., 2009, p. 167-167, 175). In the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, Denmark, France, and Norway, the need to 'protect women' from forced marriages has been invoked to justify recent restrictive reforms of income requirements, integration requirements, and age requirements (Eggebø, 2010; Block, 2012; Muller Myrdahl, 2010; Fair, 2010; Wray, 2009; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013; Collet et al., 2008; Bonjour & Block, 2014).

Controls aimed at identifying 'fraudulent' or 'sham' marriages are shaped by similar 'moral gatekeeping' (Wray, 2006) based on dominant norms about marriage and gender roles. Those couples which deviate from the norm that marriage should be based on love between two equal and autonomous individuals are met with suspicion (De Hart, 2003; Eggebø, 2013; Messinger, 2011; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013; Lavanchy, 2013; Maskens, 2013b). However, in the UK, Norway and Finland officials have also been observed to evaluate the 'authenticity' of marriage according to not only 'European' norms but also their conception of the 'typical' 'traditional' marriage of the migrant community, and to exclude couples deemed 'atypical' (Wray, 2011; Eggebø, 2013; Pellander, in this issue). Large age differences are likely to trigger extra controls, as are couples where the male spouse migrates to join his wife, rather than the other way around (De Hart, 2003; Wray, 2011).

In family migration policies, such gendered family norms interact with conceptions of ethnicity and class to construct the category of the undesirable family migrant, likely to disrupt the national community and to be a burden on the welfare state (Wray, 2006, 2011; Fair, 2010; Messinger, 2012; Eggebø, 2010). Thus, family migration policies are control policies that aim to protect the labour market and the welfare state, but also to 'defend the (imagined) homogeneity and … cultural cohesion' of the nation (Schmidt, 2011, p. 260). In

this sense, family migration policies are symbolic policies, which serve to 'define and mark the [national] norm and identity, and to show that the government upholds and protects this norm and identity' (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013, p. 73).

Family migration policies are different from other migration policies, in that they concern not only 'outsiders knocking at a state's doors and requesting entry' but also the 'moral claim of insiders', people living within state borders who ask to be united with their family (Block, 2012, p. 37; see also Bonjour, 2009, p. 17). Indeed, the right to family reunification is construed as the right of legal insiders – the right of sponsors with some form of legal tie to the country of residence to bring in family members (De Hart, 2009). Laws and regulations attribute different degrees of entitlement to family migration to different categories of people, thus constructing a 'stratification' (Kraler, 2010a) or 'hierarchy' (Wray, 2011) within the state's population (Strik et al., 2013). The more the person requesting family reunification is considered an insider, a 'member' who belongs to the nation, the stronger his or her claim to be entitled to live his or her family life on national territory (Staver; Block, both in this issue). Accordingly, many states grant privileged family migration rights to citizens, and no family migration rights at all to seasonal workers. Moreover, states 'evaluate the "quality" of membership' both in socio-economic and in cultural terms by imposing income and integration requirements (Block, 2012, p. 44-47). The Danish 'attachment requirement', which tests whether the couples' ties to Denmark are stronger than to any other country, is a powerful example of a policy instrument aimed at assessing whether the person wanting to bring in foreign family members really 'belongs'. According to Schmidt (2011, p. 261) its purpose is to make a distinction between Danish citizens: on the one hand citizens who belong, and on the other hand citizens with a migrant background, whose integration and membership is questioned and who are therefore denied family migration rights. Here as in other areas of migrant and migration policies, 'integration' becomes a term less related to

emancipation and improvement than to evaluating to which extent migrants and their descendants are 'proper members of a given society' (Fog Olwig, 2011, p. 187).To 'marry wrongly', i.e. to choose a foreign partner, is interpreted as a sign of 'failed integration' and questionable belonging and membership – which in turn weakens the claim to family migration rights. This is true for citizens of migrant origin (Wray, 2011, p. 230-235; Muller Myrdahl, 2010) but also for white women (De Hart, 2006; Wray, 2011, p. 231) and even sometimes for white men, especially those seen to look for 'docile' and 'sexually servile' women abroad (Bonjour & De Hart, 2013, p. 66).

Ironically, whereas 'integration' has become a criterion to deny family migration to certain sponsors and foreign family members, integration and the presence of family ties have – largely as a result of jurisprudence on article 8 (protection of private and family life) of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) – become increasingly important rationales for regularising migrants with little or no claim to residence, thus providing a humanitarian backdoor for some of those excluded by recent restrictions of family migration policies (Kraler, 2011, Chauvin et al., 2013). Humanitarian reasons for allowing what could be called 'family retention' (Strik et al., 2013, p. 2) have sometimes translated into specific regularisation programmes addressing families, such as a 2006 programme in France targeting parents of children enrolled in schools below the age of 13 (Kraler et al., 2014, p. 56). But exceptional mechanisms allowing migrants to regularise their stay based on family ties and integration have also found their way into regular migration policy frameworks such as in Austria, Belgium or Spain (Chauvin et al., 2013, p. 125; Kraler et al., 2014, p. 50f). The extent to which such humanitarian provisions provide an avenue for obtaining legal residence, however, differs widely.

Academic perspectives on family migration and integration: fragmented insights

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As argued above, the connection between integration and family migration in political discourse and policy is largely a matter of symbolic identity politics. This representation of migrant families as product and producer of 'deviant' family practices and therefore of 'failed integration' is based on beliefs rather than facts. Even the alleged inferior socio-economic characteristics of family migrants, which in principle seem easier to verify or falsify, are barely sustained by solid scholarly knowledge. All in all, the 'broader research evidence' on the relation between family migration and integration is 'remarkably limited' (Charsley, 2012).

There is however a substantial and expanding body of research which focuses on the politically most problematized form of family migration: the marriage of people of migrant origin to partners from their own or their (grand)parents' country of origin. In policy circles, such transnational marriage patterns are considered a result of 'failed' integration of these 'second' or 'third generation' migrants, i.e. of the prevalence of 'traditional' marriage norms and practices and a negative attitude towards the host society. This perception has been partially confirmed by studies of transnational marriages among Turkish and Moroccan origin youth in Belgium and the Netherlands, and Pakistani origin youth in the United Kingdom (Hooghiemstra, 2003; Lievens, 1999; Timmerman, 2006; Shaw & Charsley, 2006). These studies have shown that young men – and their parents – often prefer a wife from the 'home country' because she is expected to be the 'bearer of uncorrupted tradition desirable both in a chaste wife and in mothers' (Charsley, 2012), unlike the women grown up in Europe. Based on a survey of children of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in six European countries, Carol et al. (2014) confirm the association of more 'traditional' attitudes to transnational marriage preferences by showing that transnational marriages are associated with a higher degree of religiosity whereas the reverse is true for less religious children of immigrants (Carol et al., 2014, p. 19-20). However, while Carol et al. observe no gender differences, previous French,

Dutch and Belgian studies found that women from Turkish and Moroccan migrant communities opt for transnational marriage not out of loyalty to 'tradition', but because they expect foreign men to be more modern and progressive and because the distance from their family in law and the migrant status of their new husband will assure them a position of relative power and independence in their marriage (Autant, 1995; Hooghiemstra, 2003; Lievens, 1999; Timmerman, 2006).

According to Lievens (1999) and Carol et al. (2014), the choice of a transnational marriage is related to high educational achievements – which Lievens associates with 'being highly assimilated' – for women, and low educational achievements for men. However, a German study finds this relation for men but not for women (Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006) and another German study neither for men nor for women (Kalter & Schroedter, 2010). The contradictory results of these studies suggest that other factors such as generation or cohort effects may significantly influence marriage preferences. In Belgium, persons who marry a foreign spouse often have a weak socio-economic position: 20% are unemployed (twice as high as the general unemployment rate) and 66% earn a gross monthly income of less than €1500 (Timmerman & Wets, 2011).

Research confirms the perception among policymakers that the choice for a transnational marriage among migrant youth involves not only the couple but also the parents, but 'forced' marriage seems a great deal less common than often assumed. Instead, researchers observe negotiations between parents and children based on loyalty and attachment (Straβburger, 2003; Shaw & Charsley, 2006). Parental involvement does not exclude freedom of partner choice (Hooghiemstra, 2003). Recent research shows that the role of parents in the partner choice of Turkish Belgians is declining, which may partly explain the decline of transnational marriage among this group in the last decade. Other explanations could be the 'awareness of the problems and risks involved in transnational marriages' and

the occurrence of premarital relationships observed among young Turkish Belgians (Van Kerckem et al., 2013).

Some researchers argue explicitly that transnational marriage among youth of migrant origin should not be interpreted as a sign of failed integration, but rather as a result of demographic structures and social networks (Straβburger, 2003), a 'conscious negotiation process' in response to 'challenges in the local marriage market' (Van Kerckem et al., 2013). Marriage migrants are 'border artistes' (Beck-Gernsheim, 2011) who hope for a better life – both in economic and in social and political terms – in Europe (Timmerman & Wets, 2011). Scholars studying transnational marriages in and from Asia have also challenged the perception of female family migrants as passive and oppressed 'import brides', emphasising instead the agency of women, who opt for transnational marriage deliberately (Constable, 2005; Piper & Roces, 2003).

Policy discourses on family migration and integration do not acknowledge the diversity of transnational marriage patterns observed among different migrant groups. In Denmark, while youth of Turkish origin bring in marriage migrants with a low educational background, Pakistani Danes marry highly-educated foreign spouses (Çelikaksoy et al., 2006). In the United Kingdom, Pakistani and Bangladeshi are far more likely to marry someone from 'back home' than Indians (Dale, 2008). In Germany, transnational marriage is of notable importance among Turks and ex-Yugoslavs, but negligible among Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks – possibly in part due to strict immigration rules which leave family migration as virtually the only accessible migration channel. These rules apply to Turks and ex-Yugoslavs but not to EU citizens (Kalter & Schroedter, 2013). In the Netherlands, family formation patterns have been observed to vary according to the 'prevailing cultural values and behavioural patterns' of migrants' region of origin, which result in substantially different patterns of family formation among migrants from Islamic countries, from countries with a

Confucian tradition, and from the Caribbean (De Valk et al., 2004). Research also shows that not only men of migrant origin, but also 'white' men may seek a partner from abroad because they assume that women from Asia or Eastern Europe are less emancipated and more docile and homely (Charsley, 2012; Constable, 2005).

While the dynamics of marriage migration are relatively well-researched, much less is known about the role of the family in other migration dynamics, especially in Europe. For a long time, migration was considered an individual decision based on a rational cost-benefit analysis. Only recently, as the role of networks and transnational ties has come into focus in migration studies, have scholars begun to inquire how the migration decision is 'related to the family life cycle' (Kofman, 2004, p. 248-249) and 'influenced by intra-household power relations' (Bailey & Boyle, 2004, p. 231). Among the few European studies of families' migration decisions is the book by Ackers and Stalford (2004), which shows the crucial importance of parents' perceptions of their children's best interest in shaping migration decisions, as well as the limited say which children themselves have in matters of mobility.

It is common for policymakers in Europe to assume that family migrants face integration problems after arrival, because they have not been selected for their education or professional skills, and are perceived to marry into closed and isolated communities (Bonjour, 2010). Scholars have suggested that family migrants are likely to be low-skilled as a result of the 'combination of the characteristics of the original immigrant population in these countries and later network effects', since the low-skilled workers originally recruited in many European countries are likely to bring in equally low-skilled persons through chain migration (Nannestad, 2007, p. 518). Preliminary results of ongoing research by the OECD into characteristics of family migrants generally suggest that joining spouses indeed mirror sponsors in their human capital characteristics, thus multiplying the education composition of other types of migration. Not unsurprisingly, the category family reunification in OECD

countries comprises the relatively largest share of low-skilled migrants, above all reflecting past large-scale recruitment of low-skilled migrants. In regard to family formation, the OECD finds that family formation by immigrants brings higher skills than family formation by natives (Chaloff, 2013).

There is very little empirical research however, which maps how migrants who were admitted on family grounds fare after arrival, in comparison to other migrant categories. One rare example is Jayaweera (2012) who finds that in the UK, family migrants show lower rates of employment and lower language skills than students and labour migrants, but higher rates of perceived financial security and much higher participation in elections. In Australia, where better data appears to be available for comparing migrant categories (Charsley, 2012), Chiswick et al. (2006) find that shortly after immigration, family migrants' language skills are lower than those of economic migrants, but higher than those of refugees. After 3,5 years, the differences in speaking skills between these categories disappear, and differences in reading and writing skills diminish substantially. Research in Denmark has shown that female marriage migrants may have trouble improving their language skills, because they have limited access to social and professional environments where Danish is spoken, but also because migration law obliges them to work rather than attend language courses, in order to secure their residence permit (Liversage, 2009).

Studies of internal migration in the US, the UK, and the Netherlands have shown that for women who move as family migrants – as a majority among female migrants do – migration is likely to have a negative impact on their employment situation, because it is not their own professional or economic situation but that of their spouse or of the family as a whole which determines the decision to move (Boyle et al., 2001; Smits 1999). Scholars studying transnational marriages in and from Asia have likewise pointed out that female marriage migrants do not necessarily experience emancipation or upward social or

professional mobility as a result of migration (Palriwala & Uberoi, 2008; Constable, 2005).

They nevertheless emphasise that female migrants should not be victimised or denied agency.

Women may follow at some phases of their lives, and lead in others (Piper &Roces, 2003, p.

10-11). Moreover, the distinctions between the categories of 'wife' and 'worker' are 'very

much blurred' (Piper &Roces, 2003, p. 4), since '"wives" are typically also "workers", though

their "work" may not be adequately recognised as such' (Palriwala & Uberoi, 2008, p. 26).

Policymakers in Europe worry about the effects of intra-ethnic transnational marriage

on the integration prospects of the children born from such unions. Research among children

of Turkish origin in South-West Germany partly justifies these concerns. It shows that

children of inter-marriages have better cognitive and language skills than other groups of

Turkish children, while children with a first generation mother and a second generation father

score worse than all others. This latter finding might be interpreted as revealing that second

generation male migrants who choose a partner from their 'home country' as well as their

foreign wives are 'negatively selected along various dimensions'. While the cognitive skills of

the children are entirely explained by the parents' education and socio-economic status,

children's language skills are impacted in crucial ways by the parents' political, cultural and

social integration in Germany, including their German language skills and language use

(Becker, 2011).

Policymakers in Europe also tend to assume that family migration has a negative

impact on the sponsor, i.e. on the resident who asks to be united with foreign family members.

However, the little research available contradicts this assumption. In the UK, the engagement

of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian women in paid work depends mostly on their

qualifications, parenthood, and ethnic origin – but not at all on whether or not their husband is

a migrant from the 'home country' (Dale, 2008). Research among refugees in Scandinavian

countries shows that the presence of family is important to the integration process, not only in

terms of social and emotional well-being, but also because it stimulates labour market participation. Engaging in paid work allows refugees 'to assert themselves as persons of respect in their family and thereby to regain their social identity as responsible family members' (Fog Olwig, 2011, p. 193). In addition, research on labour market trajectories of skilled migrants after admission in Canada has shown the importance of social and emotional capital within the family household for the success of labour market and re-skilling strategies of (usually male) members of the household active on the labour market. Thus women's broader community based social networks, linked to children's schooling or paid and volunteer community work has been found essential for job searches and for sustaining a sense of belonging in often difficult contexts of reskilling of male skilled migrants, who found Canada's labour market much more difficult to navigate than promised (Creese et al., 2011, p. 158). Thus even if labour market outcomes in particular of female family migrants appears to be less favourable than that of other migrants, it is important to recognise their role in contributing to successful economic integration of the household.

A major aspect of family migrants' life after arrival, which is usually overlooked by policymakers, are the relations within the couple and in the wider family. These relations are affected in crucial ways by the migration process. Within the couple, 'opposed expectations' may be a source of disappointment and frustration, if the migrant spouse came to Europe to lead a 'modern' life, while the sponsor went 'back home' to seek a 'traditional' partner (Timmerman, 2006). Moreover, marriage migration raises issues of power which may cause tensions within the couple, as the migrant spouse usually has far fewer judicial, social, and professional resources than the sponsoring spouse (De Hart, 2003; Liversage, 2012). If the sponsor is male, and the migrant spouse is female, traditional gender roles and dependencies are reinforced. Some migrant women find it 'self-evident' to care for the children and the household, and feel 'protected in an alien society by their traditional role' (Timmerman, 2006,

p. 135). However, migrant women who are used to, or aspire to, more egalitarian gender roles often feel intensely frustrated and belittled (Strasser et al., 2009; Timmerman, 2006). Male sponsoring spouses may also resent being pushed into the 'breadwinner' role, when they are used to sharing work and care with their partner (Strasser et al., 2009).

If the sponsor is female, and the migrant spouse is male, then traditional gender roles and dependencies are reversed. The resulting power (re)negotiation may be difficult and painful (Liversage, 2012). Especially in the first period after migration, the woman often provides for the family. Many migrant men suffer from being unable to perform their traditional role as 'breadwinner' (Timmerman, 2006; Strasser et al., 2009).The reversal of power balance and gender roles may be particularly pronounced if the couple moves in with the wife's family – whereas tradition in for instance Pakistan proscribes that the new wife moves in with her husband's family. The frustration experienced by migrant men, who have not been prepared in their upbringing for having to adapt to another household, may 'help to explain instances where such marriages have ended in the husband's violence, desertion, or taking a second wife' (Charsley, 2005, p. 85).

Migration also affects relations with the wider family. Very often, migration implies a 'shrinking family' as the circle of family members living nearby is sharply reduced. Women especially address how this affects their lives. Some find it liberating to get away from the pressures and constraints of their (conservative) family environments. Others suffer from the absence of family, which implies not only loss of social contacts, but also loss of practical support without which they struggle to reconcile professional life with family duties (Strasser et al., 2009). However, a Danish study found that migration may also lead to intensified ties with extended family: almost half of Turkish transnational couples in Denmark who started their married lives in the 1990s did so living with the parents of one of the partners, for practical and economic as well as normative reasons. Some women felt locked up by their

parents-in-law in 'traditional Turkish norms of female domesticity'. Other women appreciated that the pooling of incomes allowed them not to work, or at a later stage, to find work while other family members cared for their children. A law passed in 2002, which required sponsor to have independent housing before they could bring in a foreign spouse, made such extended family living arrangements impossible (Liversage, 2009, p. 711).

Finally, scholars have begun to inquire how family migration policies – which are subject to an increasingly restrictive trend in large parts of Europe – affect the integration of migrant families. First, research has shown that the dependencies and tensions within couples described above are reinforced by migration policies. Income requirements put further pressure on the sponsoring spouse – male or female – to be the 'breadwinner', pushing the migrant spouse into a position of dependency (Eggebø, 2010; Strasser et al., 2009). This dynamic may be reinforced by migration or labour market policies which limit the migrant spouse's access to paid work (Kraler, 2010a). Also, in most European countries, the residence permit of the migrant spouse is withdrawn if the relationship ends during the first years of residence. Fearing expulsion if they leave their partner or are left by them, migrant spouses may thus be vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of migration law (Strasser et al., 2009; Liversage, 2013).

Second, researchers have attempted to evaluate how specific family migration policy measures have impacted on the integration process of family migrants. This question is extremely difficult to answer, because integration is a long-term process which is influenced by a multitude of factors (Strik et al., 2013). However, in a study of family migration policies and their effects in six EU member states, Strik et al. (2013, p. 110-111) observe that during the time it takes for the sponsor to meet the requirements to bring his or her family members over, and even during the time after arrival when residence permits remain temporary and insecure, the lives of all family members are 'on hold'. All the energy goes into the admission

and residence procedures rather than into building a new life in the country of residence. Children are affected badly by the delay of family migration as a result of restrictive conditions; their separation from their parent or parents is prolonged, and their language learning and integration process is delayed. Strik et al. (2013, p. 110-111) conclude that 'restrictive measures on the admission and residence of family members have not furthered integration and in many cases have actually impeded it'. Leerkes and Kulu-Glasgow (2011, p. 117) found that as a result of the income requirement of 120% of the minimum wage applied to family migration in the Netherlands from 2004 to 2010, 'females and younger men in particular, felt forced to adapt their life course in undesired ways by working more hours than desired, forsaking (part-time) study opportunities, and working in an "undesirable" job'. Other qualitative studies confirm that the need to meet income requirements may negatively affect the labour market integration of both sponsors and family migrants by pushing family members to adopt risk averse employment strategies, such as limiting the duration of job searches in case of unemployment, staying with demanding and unsatisfying jobs below family members' qualifications, or postponing educational plans and plans for re-skilling (Kraler et al., 2013, p. 95f; Liversage, 2009). Schmidt et al. (2009) have studied the effects of Danish marriage migration policy reforms implemented between 2002 and 2004, in particular the rise of the minimum age from 21 to 24 years and the 'attachment requirement', on the integration of second generation migrants in Denmark. The most significant effect they observe is that young migrant women marry less or later. The marrying age, which had been rising since the 1990s, rose steeply after the minimum age for marriage migration was set at 24 years. Inter-ethnic marriages did not increase, but there was a slight increase in marriages with a Danish partner from the same ethnic group, especially among Turks. The researchers found no evidence that the number of arranged marriages had decreased, nor that the policy reforms had affected the education or employment of second generation migrants.

Scholars are divided as to the effects of restrictive family migration policies on the number of family migrants coming to European countries. Strik et al. (2013, p. 107) observe that the number of applications and permits granted has 'dropped dramatically' and argue that 'it is more than likely that the largest part of the drop relates to the restrictive measures introduced in the past decade'. Similarly, Fair (2010, p. 148) states that the twenty-four year age requirement had the 'intended impact' of cutting the number of marriage migrants arriving in Denmark in half. Scholten et al. (2012) observe a decline of family reunions in the Netherlands and Germany especially in the first years after the introduction of the pre-entry tests in 2006 and 2007 respectively (see also Kraler et al., 2013 on Austria). Scholten et al. also observe a significant increase in the human capital of family migrants, which is probably a result of self-selection induced by the pre-entry test and which contributes to achieving at least part of the objectives of the restrictive reform. In a similar vein Carol et al. (2014, p. 22) find on the basis of a survey of children of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in six European countries that more restrictive policy frameworks indeed negatively impact on the propensity to marry transnationally. In addition, they argue that restrictive policy changes are likely to have lasting, rather than temporary effects. However, Van Kerckem et al. (2013) argue that the decline in transnational marriages among Turkish Belgians 'should not necessarily be attributed only to restrictive policies' since a 'drastic decline … precedes the adoption of restrictive legislation'. As discussed above, Van Kerckem et al. attribute the decline in transnational marriages primarily to changes in the attitudes and behaviour of young Turkish Belgians and their parents. Aybek (2012) also questions the quantitative impact of restrictive family migration policies. He argues that the 'many political attempts' to restrict family migration from Turkey to Germany have not significantly influenced the inflow of spouses and children from the 1970s until today. Therefore, the political debate about restricting

family migration should be interpreted as largely 'symbolic politics' used to 'highlight and preserve the idea that Germany was not an immigration country' (Aybek, 2012, p. 38).

Finally, scholars have raised the question how restrictive family migration policies affect the sense of belonging and emotional and psychological well-being of migrant families, and particularly resident spouses who want to bring in foreign family members. Rytter (2013, p. 203-204) observes that 'the ongoing national securitisation of migration has increased the experience of insecurity and uncertainty in immigrants' everyday lives', an insecurity which becomes visible for instance in increased suspicions of sorcery. The systematic exclusion of Pakistani Danes from the Danish national community in political discourse may lead to a 'lack of recognition' and a 'feeling of not belonging in the world' (Rytter, 2013, p. 202). Similarly, Wray (2011, p. 230-235) describes how women and men living in the UK whose claim to bring over foreign family members is rejected face a 'loss of belonging', as the state denies their entitlement to live their family life in the United Kingdom. Most of the fifty couples interviewed by Leerkes and Kulu Glasgow (2011, p. 117) reported 'personal and relational "stress" in connection with the admission procedure'. Strasser et al. (2009, p. 175) find that migrant and binational families resent the state intervention in their family lives, and aspire to shape their life and their family according to their own wishes: 'to live together, marry, separate, work, and have and raise children, if and when they so desire'. Those who experience that the laws and actors of the state prohibit them from having an 'ordinary family life' (Strasser et al., 2009, p. 175) inevitably adopt a different attitude towards that state: their sense of belonging and citizenship is profoundly affected. In this sense, 'family formations have become politics', as Schmidt (2011, p. 272) argues: 'whom one marries has … also become a practice defining who you are as a citizen'.

Conclusion

Policy perspectives on family migration and integration participate in the politics of belonging. Migrant families are construed as product and producer of 'failed integration', i.e. of 'deviant' family norms and practices. This 'Otherness' is seen as a threat to the social cohesion and identity of nations, which legitimises keeping migrant families out through restrictive family migration policies. 'Integration' also serves to measure the 'membership' of those requesting family migration, and thereby the legitimacy of their claim to live their family life on national territory.

The empirical evidence to sustain these policy assumptions on the relation between family migration and integration is scarce and fragmented. Studies show that intra-ethnic transnational marriages are much more diverse than policymakers account for. Such unions may be aimed at maintaining ethnic closure and tradition, but also be used as an emancipatory strategy. Whether family migrants' integration prospects are worse than those of other categories of migrants has barely been studied until now. There is some limited evidence that marriage migration may affect the integration of children negatively, and the integration of sponsors neutrally or positively. Finally, the increasingly restrictive family migration policies recently implemented in many European countries have been shown to have a detrimental effect on migrant families' well-being and integration. Lengthy immigration procedures delay and obstruct migrant families' life projects, affect their labour market and educational integration strategies negatively, and may lead to emotional distress and tensions within the family. Being denied the opportunity to lead their family lives in their country of residence may undermine the sense of belonging of resident spouses – be they citizens or migrants – and thus negatively affect the social cohesion of European societies.

Contributions to this special issue

The first four contributions to this special issue examine family migration policies from a policy perspective, probing into how policies, policymakers and public officials charged to process family reunion cases construct and frame the relationship between family related admission and integration. The opening contribution by Laura Block puts forward an analytical framework based on the notion of social membership. As Block argues, the various conditions attached to admission on family related grounds can fruitfully be interpreted as instruments to assess different types – and degrees – of membership of both sponsors and incoming family members. Besides any immediate policy aims, family migration policies have an important normative dimension that reflects broader conceptions and reconfigurations of who is considered a (potentially) good member of society. As Block argues, the concept of social membership is particularly appropriate for examining the intersection of class, ethnicity and gender in the stratification of family migration rights.

The following contribution by Anne Staver examines how family migration policies in Norway have become a tool of selective immigration policy, focusing on the considerable differences between favourable admission requirements for family members of labour migrants and very demanding conditions for the admission of family members of other migrants or, indeed, citizens. Staver finds that open family migration policies vis-à-vis (highly) skilled migrants are part of a larger package to attract skilled labour migrants to Norway, while high income conditions for other sponsors are justified in terms of deterring forced marriages and asylum related migration as well as ensuring economic self-sufficiency of families. Importantly, both liberal regulations for family migration for skilled migrants and strict requirements for other sponsors follow an economic rationale, pitting the potential economic contribution of beneficiaries of family related admission against the rights of legal insiders, including citizens.

The third contribution to this special issue applies the notion of moral gatekeeping to

examine the administrative implementation of family migration polices and the use of discretion by front-desk officers in Finland. Pellander's contribution examines the way in which norms and values inform immigration officers' assessment of the genuineness of marriages. Evaluating the 'acceptability' of a marriage is a showcase example of how a more abstract rationale of migration control and fraud prevention intertwines with other societal norms and values, as civil servants assess both the legal acceptability of a marriage for the purpose of family reunion and its social and cultural acceptability. Pellander finds that Finnish immigration officials engage in moral gatekeeping in a complex way, which is sensitive to non-western practices, but which at the same time rests on an essentialisation of expected marriage practices in "other cultures", paradoxically identifying acceptability with expected practices "there" rather than "here".

The last contribution of this first set of papers by Karin Borevi also deals with a Nordic country, Sweden. As Borevi shows, Swedish family migration policies differ markedly from policy approaches taken in other European countries. While the scope of family members eligible for family reunification is similar in Sweden to other European countries' policies, the conditions imposed for family reunification are much more liberal in Sweden than elsewhere. The income requirement, first introduced in 2010, is much lower than in other European countries and only applies to sponsors who have recently migrated to Sweden. Borevi argues that the exceptionally liberal Swedish policy approach is explained by the dominant welfare ideology which emphasises equal treatment of natives and migrants, as well as by the low degree of politicisation and the tendency of mainstream politicians to be concerned about too restrictive, rather than too liberal regulations – a tendency which is highly uncommon elsewhere in Europe.

The second set of papers focus on the perspective of individuals involved in family related migration and as such affected by family migration policies and by dominant societal

discourses on the rights and wrongs of families shaped by migration. Rikke Wagner's paper examines cross-border strategies of Danish international couples who have moved to Sweden so as to use EU mobility rights to access family unification, which was inaccessible to them in Denmark due to the particularly restrictive Danish family migration policies. In analysing individual case studies of couples that moved across the Oresund bridge to the South of Sweden, Wagner is particularly interested in what 'integration' means to couples engaging in such cross-border strategies. She finds that restrictive immigration regulations indeed prevent couples' integration in Denmark, pushing them to seek a shared family life across the border. Yet she also shows that subsequent experiences are diverse and complex and raise a number of questions on the interrelationship between mobility strategies and integration. Thus, couples may ultimately be integrated socially and politically in Sweden, while maintaining economic ties on both sides of the border. For others engaging in cross-border strategies ultimately aims at returning to and settling in Denmark, while for still others it means incorporation in a dynamic and economically integrated cross-border region of Oresund, in a sense making them the living proof of the postnational potential of EU citizenship.

In the following paper, Can Aybek examines the impact of the German pre-integration tests on temporal and spatial aspects of marriage practices of intra-ethnic transnational Turkish-German couples. Based on multi-sited qualitative research with prospective marriage migrants in Turkey and their sponsors in Germany, Aybek finds that the timing of marriage takes on new and highly gendered meanings in the context of the pre-entry tests. In the case of male prospective marriage migrants, marriage is often postponed to after the successful completion of the pre-entry tests, while marriage takes place before the start of language course in the case of females, reflecting gendered understandings of commitment and experiences of shame as well gender differences in power and in support expected from fiancé(e)s or spouses during the pre-migration phase. In addition Aybek observes that the pre-

entry requirements considerably increase the dependency of marriage migrants on their sponsors and other family members. In sum, Aybek's respondents experience the pre-migration integration requirements as stressful, inappropriate and inefficient.

The final contribution to this issue by Leen Sterckx examines the relationship of integration, partner choice and cross-cultural marriage in the Netherlands. Sterckx takes issue with the equation in policy discourses of intermarriage with integration and couples' orientation towards Dutch values, and as a corollary, the interpretation of co-ethnic marriage preferences as a sign of failed integration of introspective ethnic communities. As her case studies of couples show, marriage migration also takes place as a result of mixed marriages. Her case study of a devout Muslim Dutch-Moroccan couple highlights that acculturation is not a one-way process, indirectly also pointing at the inaccuracy of the conflation of particular value orientations (e.g. religiousness) with tradition (or by contrast, modernity). Sterckx' paper also highlights that rather than personifying a closing gap between social groups, individuals involved in cross-cultural marriages often find themselves torn between their respective families, friends and wider social networks, who often see their cross-cultural marriage as trespassing.

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