

Conceptualising "Home"

The Question of Belonging Among Turkish Families in Germany

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Leseprobe

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 supportiv