



In a gendered space. Forms and reasons of migration and the integration of female migrants

In this study we analyzed the biographic self-representation of legal female immigrants coming from third countries into eight European Union countries. In the analysis we focused on the forms and reasons of migration in order to see what biographies are generated by the migrants themselves and how we can relate them to overall discourses on migration and to different European migratory spaces. In the project we combined several methods, but with regard to the present perspective of the migrants in a life course framework we employed an adapted version of biographic narrative method and partially the related objective hermeneutic method as the most systematic way of understanding the structure of biographies. Altogether 239 interviews were conducted in eight destination countries, all participating in the FEMAGE project.

Country of destination and country or region of origin of the interviewees

Country of destination	Country or region of origin
Austria	Turkey and Bosnia
Czech Republic	Russia, Ukraine and Romania
Estonia	Russia and Central Asia
Finland	Albania and Russia
Germany	Russia, Ukraine and Turkey
Hungary	China, Russia and Ukraine
Poland	Russia, Ukraine and Vietnam
Slovenia	Russia, Ukraine and Bosnia

Looking at the different types of biographies from the point of view of the type, process and reason of migration, it seems that the most important perspective of women when reconstructing their migration story is that it is one way or another related to gender and family issues. This can be the basis to understand some of their specific problems and social traps in the integration process. The first one can be termed as a traditionalist trap. "Traditionalist" women follow the norms of migrant men and they intend recreate something of the original familial society left behind. This approach is interpreted by the receiving society as a lack of will to get integrated and it leads to a "conflict of cultures" understood as the disability of the migrants. The second trap is related to emancipation. In this case women come from the territories of the previous Soviet Union with the aim of achieving emancipation via establishing familial relationship with "Westerners" or just via moving into the so called "West", which ideals are not fulfilled. On the basis of biographies and narrative interviews we have demonstrated that migration is a gendered process in the perspective of immigrant women as they reconstruct their life story around gender relationships.



The study is based on the research project "Needs for female immigrants and their integration in ageing societies" (FEMAGE), funded by the European Commission under the Specific Support to Policies - Work Programme (SSP4) of FP6 in 2006 and 2007.
www.bib-demografie.de/femage/