

Preface

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Over the past decade, family migration has moved to the centre of political debates on migration, integration and multiculturalism in Europe. This has occurred both in national contexts and at the European Union level. In a similar vein, academic interest in various family dimensions of international migration has grown considerably, forming them into a core concern of migration research at large. Not only is there a flourishing of specialised research projects, publications and conferences addressing family-related aspects of international migration, but such issues are also increasingly discussed in the context of other work not especially concerned with family migration.

This said, the observation a co-editor of this book made in a review of research on family migration more than seven years ago, that there has been little analysis of many of the relevant issues in the European context partly, still remains true today (Kofman 2004: 244). While no longer seen as a neglected field within migration studies in Europe, the different strands of research – including legal and policy analysis of family migration policies, anthropological research on family practices and identities in a transnational context and sociological analysis of macro-patterns of family forms and patterns – frequently stay quite separate from, and largely ignorant of, each other. In addition, and despite the quantitative relevance of families affected by international migration, the migration dimension of family forms, patterns and practices is still marginal in the field of mainstream family studies. Compartmentalisation of more general research on families and research on migrant families, specifically, is also reflected in official governmental reporting and monitoring practices. Frequently, separate reporting systems are in place when it comes to migrants. Furthermore, migration issues are often marginalised, if not altogether ignored, in general reports and monitoring on the situation of families.

Taking stock of what we know about the family dimensions of international migration and its patterns was one of our main objectives for this book. However, so was uniting different strands of research on the migrant family to allow them to speak to each other, or as one well-known edited volume on migration theory put it, ‘talking across disciplines’ (Brettell & Hollifield 2000). This book thus comprises contributions from political

scientists, lawyers, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists and social policy scholars using different methodologies and often a combination thereof, such as qualitative, quantitative, sociological and anthropological methods, legal and policy analysis and historical methods, to investigate a broad range of themes of international migration's family dimension. In this sense, our contributors have taken a significant step forward for a more inter-disciplinary and multidisciplinary understanding of family-related migration. Of course, family migration is too vast a topic to be comprehensively covered by any single volume. Similarly, the range of possible perspectives on family-related migration is too wide to be adequately reflected in a book like this. On both counts, we are acutely aware of our omissions and limitations, particularly regarding the more profound disciplinary divides, such as those between economists and social scientists or legal scholars and social scientists, or regarding the underdeveloped dialogue between historians and social scientists working on contemporary issues, which persists despite both scholars addressing very similar issues.¹

A second concern we wanted to address is the state's role in influencing patterns of family-related migration and family practices, without limiting the volume to an analysis of family migration policies or normative debates around family-related migration, gender and citizenship. We also wanted to bring together different disciplinary aspects and analyses focusing on state policies and political debates on family-related migration alongside analyses addressing assumptions underlying or consequences following from state policies. Indeed, interest in the role of the state in family-related migration provided the immediate context in which the idea for a conference and subsequent volume based on its proceedings could emerge. In 2006, co-editors Eleonore Kofman at Middlesex University in London and Albert Kraler at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Vienna engaged in a research project that investigated family migration policies and their impact in nine European states.² One of its broader goals was to move beyond a narrow legal and policy analysis of family migration policies, instead placing emphasis on the consequences of policies for the individuals and families affected by them. The research was based on small-scale qualitative studies of persons involved in family migration in six of the nine countries. From here, the interest in bringing together diverse strands of research on family-related migration emerged.

We originally intended to organise a conference primarily to disseminate the project's results, though also to solicit comments on our findings and engage in dialogue with other interested researchers. Parallel to this, we organised a number of smaller panels and workshops, notably in the framework of various IMISCOE Network of Excellence conferences,³ where we presented studies in progress and invited others to present their

own work. For our own project, opening up the panels and workshops to others proved enormously fruitful. It fulfilled our need for broader contextualisation of our own research and its impact, thus embedding it in the wider research on family-related migration. Thus, rather than limiting our project conference exclusively to our own work, we decided to organise a conference with a broad focus on family-related migration, inviting contributions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and research approaches. Martin Kohli and Camille Schmoll at the European University Institute (EUI) in Fiesole, Italy, complemented the organising committee and offered to host the conference at the EUI. A call for papers was launched in early 2007 and the Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration conference was held in June that year.⁴ The enthusiastic response to the call – with 40 abstracts submitted – confirmed that organising an interdisciplinary conference to ‘explore the various dimensions of the migrant family and link it to the stages in the life course, gender and generational relations, on the one hand, and the politics and policies around the migrant family, on the other’, as the call specified, met the needs and interests of many researchers. Ultimately, seventeen papers were selected and organised around seven themes.

The Robert Schuman Centre of Advanced Studies (RSCAS) at the EUI provided invaluable logistical assistance for the organisation of the conference and also contributed to its financing. The conference, however, would not have been possible without the generous financial contribution and encouragement from IMISCOE. The generous funding we received under the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research’s New Orientations in Democracy in Europe (NODE) programme enabled us not only to implement our own small-scale project, but also furnished the financial means to put the conference and, ultimately, the book project into practice.

For their valuable comments and encouraging us to pursue this publication, we wish to thank Rainer Bauböck, Jean-Pierre Cassarino, Virginie Guiraudon, Stéphanie Mahieu, Ettore Recchi and Sarah van Walsum who also served as chairs and discussants for the panels, alongside the conference organisers. Thanks are particularly due to the contributors to this volume, both those among the original conference participants who agreed to revise their contributions for publication and those who agreed to prepare additional pieces when we approached them. We thank all authors for their enthusiasm, the work they put into this and the many comments they shared with us and their fellow contributors. We are grateful for their patience and endurance during the four years we dealt with chapter preparation, comments on drafts and first versions, the peer-review process and the final revisions. We also wish to thank the IMISCOE Editorial Committee and, in particular, its managing editor, Karina Hof, for support during the final revisions and her patience when we once again had to ask for more time to finalise the manuscript. Finally, we thank the

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This volume is thus the result of a truly collective endeavour to which many individuals and institutions have contributed. Particular thanks go to Verena Platzer and Dieter Mayr at ICMPD for editing and formatting draft chapters, to Ranmal Burkmar at Middlesex University for proofreading and language editing.

Notes

- 1 See Venken, Beyers and Goddeeris (2009) for an excellent interdisciplinary publication project that brings together contributions from historians and social scientists.
- 2 The project Civic Stratification, Gender and Family Migration Policies in Europe was implemented between 2006 and 2009 (Kraler 2010). It received funding from the New Orientations in Democracy in Europe (NODE) Research Programme of the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research and involved the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Vienna as coordinator and Middlesex University in London and the Austrian NGO MAIZ as research partners (for more information on the project, see <http://research.icmpd.org/1445.html>).
- 3 The panels and workshops were presented in sessions organised by IMISCOE Cluster B3 (Legal Status, Citizenship and Political Integration) and Cluster C8 (Gender, Age and Generations).
- 4 The Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration conference was organised in cooperation with the IMISCOE Network of Excellence and the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) at the European University Institute (EUI), Robert Schuman Centre, Florence, 14-16 June 2007.

References

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