

Call for papers

Gender and marriage migration in Asia and Europe: why do integration measures target women?

Center for Migration Law, Faculty of Law
Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands
28 and 29 September 2023

In much of the academic literature, integration measures are framed as a more or less recent phenomenon that can be found in western liberal democracies. (Western) comparative studies regarding integration requirements focus on laws and policies applied in Europe (see, for instance, Goodman 2010, Scholten et al. 2012, Strik et al 2010, Strik et al. 2013, Van Oers 2014). However, such integration measures are also common in other parts of the world, most notably in Asia (see Chiu & Yeoh 2021 for an overview). Within and from this region, marriage migration has been on the rise for the last five decades, eliciting regulatory attention in both sending and receiving countries (Fresnoza-Flot & Ricordeau 2017; Ishii 2016; Kim et al. 2021; Mu & Yeung 2022). This interdisciplinary seminar aims to provide key insights into states' regulatory mechanisms surrounding marriage migration and their gendered dimensions in Asia and Europe in comparative perspective.

Such a comparison is fruitful because in both regions, 1) integration measures are generally targeting family migrants; 2) marriage migration is a highly gendered phenomenon, as most marriage migrants are women, whose rights to remain depend on their husbands or partners (Chiu & Yeoh 2021: 881); and 3) although states in Asia and Europe may have different perspectives of statehood and nationhood, in both regions migration regimes have become increasingly restrictive and family migration has become highly problematized.

As a result, in both the European and Asian contexts, migrant women are the main targets of integration measures. In the Asian context, female marriage migrants are assumed to take on mainly reproductive familial roles; they are depicted as 'deficit' mothers incapable of nurturing their (citizen) children and forming a threat to the nation's population quality (Chiu & Choi 2019, Chiu & Yeoh 2021: 885). In the European context too, marriage migration is seen as 'importing' unemancipated and uneducated wives who are bound to make 'bad mothers' (Bonjour & Kraler 2015; Bonjour & de Hart 2013; Kofman et al. 2011; Muller Myrdahl 2010). Narratives based on this gendered problematization have become institutionalized, found their way into the mission statements of NGOs focusing on the emancipation of female migrants from ethnic communities, and presumably into the curricula of the integration programmes offered to marriage migrants. However, most studies on integration seem to fail to take

gender into account, thereby ignoring how central gendered discourses have been in the development and implementation of integration policies (Kofman 2022).

We invite theoretical and empirical papers from different disciplines that may relate to, but are not limited to, the following issues:

- **State integration policies and the power of gender:** How gendered are integration policies in migrant receiving countries in Europe and Asia? To what extent do such policies reflect and/or reinforce the gender ideologies and norms in the countries concerned? How does the gender dimension of integration policies evolve through time and why? How do integration policies portray, represent, or view migrant women? Which specific figure (e.g., single women, mothers, nationals from economically developing countries, ...) of migrant women has been the focus of these policies and why? What forms of femininities are valorized, devalued, or challenged in this process? How do the countries of origin of migrant women react to, challenge, or align their migration policies vis-à-vis the integration policies of their citizens' receiving countries?
- The integration policies are developed in a political and geographical context in which **power hierarchies of race/ethnicity, gender, and class** are central. How have state laws and policies shaped identities of gender, intersecting with 'race' and 'ethnicity' in developing and justifying integration measures? How was it determined who had to integrate and who not and how can this be analysed from a critical postcolonial or decolonial and gender perspective?
- **The role of non-state and private actors in the multi-level governance of integration measures.** The state policies under discussion are often implemented at the local level, e.g. by municipalities and NGOs, but also private companies such as language institutes or matrimonial agencies, developing course materials and offering courses. How and in what ways is the curriculum of integration tests and courses informed by gendered ideologies of gender, nation and motherhood? What role do (feminist) NGOs play in integration programs and integration narratives targeting female family migration?
- **Agency of female marriage migrants.** How have integration measures impacted the sense of belonging of female family migrants? How have they benefited from them? How do family migrants and activists respond to integration measures? How do they negotiate the different social dynamics and power relations ingrained in integration policies? How have they challenged or resisted the host state's patriarchal integration projects and calmed the power to define themselves?

We intend to stimulate an interdisciplinary, thematic approach in researching the role of gender in integration policies and practices in comparative perspective. The call is therefore aimed at researchers from Asia and Europe and from various academic backgrounds. To list some but not all:

- Legal scholars in the field of migration law;
- Migration scholars from various other disciplines such as history, social sciences, political science, etc. researching immigrant integration or inclusion policies;
- Researchers at any stage of their career are welcome;
- Theoretical, empirical and/or legal/normative studies are welcome; and
- Both national studies and comparative studies are welcome.

Paper abstracts should be about 400 words in length and include the following information: a title, a summary (aim, central question, methods, key findings), and a short biography of the author(s).

Please send you abstract to: dr. Ricky van Oers (ricky.vanoers@ru.nl). A selection of the presented papers will be part of a Special Issue for a peer reviewed international journal.

Deadline for Abstracts: 26 May 2023

Information on selection: 14 June 2023

Submission of full draft papers: 1 September 2023

Please note that we will ask the participants to present and comment each other's papers. Timely submission of the full papers is, therefore, a must.

The seminar will take place on **28 and 29 September 2023** at the Centre for Migration Law of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. For those who are unable to attend the meeting, a possibility to join online will be provided. Contact Ricky van Oers (ricky.vanoers@ru.nl) for questions regarding the covering of travel expenses.

Organisers:

Dr. Ricky van Oers (Radboud University): ricky.vanoers@ru.nl

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This seminar has received funding from the Standing Committee "Gender and Sexuality in Migration Research" (GenSeM) of IMISCOE.