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SECOND GENERATION OF MIGRANTS: BIOGRAPHICAL DISCONTINUITIES AND THE ACCOUNTS OF FAMILY MIGRATION HISTORY

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In the second generation of the migrant population we find youths whom never experienced migration themselves, and yet for whom the experiences, as the descendants of migrants, play a specific role in their social location and world view. A characteristic of this migratory location is the discontinuities in family biography which are revealed by the oral accounts of the youths. In the following I shall discuss different accounts concerning the collective memory of family migration history and their connection with three distinguishable types of migratory location. Prior to this analysis a short outline of the research project and its methodological standpoint is required.

Migration and the Sociology of Knowledge

In the frame of the research project¹ about 30 peer groups, constituted by male, working migrant youths aged between 18 and 22, were investigated by participant observation and narrative interview. In group discussions, the principal method used, youths unfolded – beyond intent – their collective experiences and orientations.²

According to Karl Mannheim, a founder of the sociology of knowledge,³ collective experiences are shared by those who belong to the same collective or “conjunctive experiential space” (Mannheim 1982), e. g. the experiential space specific for migrants, that is the “migratory location” (Nohl 1996). In the research project special attention was given to this migratory location, which encompasses not only the youths’ collective experiences as members of a minority but refers also to a socialization history that includes family migration. The latter topic was spontaneously brought up throughout the group discussions by the youths themselves.

In the frame of the methodology based on the works of Karl Mannheim (1952;1982) and developed by Ralf Bohnsack (1999) it was possible to compare various cases of peer groups and distinguish three types of migratory location. In each type we find a specific handling of biographical discontinuities as well as a specific account of family migration history. This shows the interconnection firstly, of the narrated collective memory of family migration history and the migratory location of the narrators, and, secondly, of the synchronical performance of the accounts and the narrated diachronical experiences.

¹ This DFG-project was conducted by Ralf Bohnsack (head), Peter Loos, Aglaja Przyborski, Yvonne Garfer, Monika Wagner and the author. For the first results see Bohnsack & Nohl 1998, Nohl 1999a and b, Bohnsack et al. 2000.

² The focus on collective experiences lies on the level of social meso-structures and is part of an approach that gets over the dichotomy of subjective representation vis a vis macro-structures (see Plato 1991, p. 108).

³ On Mannheim’s methodological and epistemological contribution to the sociology of his time see Lichtblau 1996, pp. 492-539.

Separation of parents’ and youths’ perspectives

According to the youths’ collective experience the parents and their generation are attached to, as one peer group puts it, “the old way of thinking”. This world view is orientated towards the “life of the village” that parents used to live in prior to migration, while the youths and their generation⁴ develop their biographical plans in the frame of the host society. This migration-specific intergenerational gap is evident in all types of migratory location presented here and points out the biographical discontinuities in family biography.

In the first type of migratory location youths deal with this intergenerational gap by making a clear distinction and separation between their family life and life “on the street”. That is their action practice in society and in the peer group respectively.

Although these youths attach importance to their family they do not communicate anything of biographical relevance with their parents. “If parents would know”, says Aziz, meaning their street life, “one could not look into their face”. Biographical plans rather develop in the sphere of the peer group which is strictly separated from the spheres of parents/family and society respectively. In the following account the biographical plans of the youths and the migration history of their parents are put side by side:⁵

Deniz:

We don’t want to stay here but neither do we want to go back to Turkey just yet. If one thinks our parents ... simply emigrated from Turkey they simply came to Germany too at the age of sixteen or twenty. They also didn’t listen to their parents, they also had their parents living in Turkey they simply left for the big wide world in order to earn money and we imagine the same thing we want to go to another country because there the motivation will be better because here we know everything there is nothing new for us.

Although in this type of migratory location biographical discontinuities lead to a strict separation of generations the latter are not unrelated. Youths take the migration history of the parents and their disregard towards their own parents as a one-to-one blueprint to plan their own migration to another country. Intergenerational reciprocity is limited to the imitation of the common denominator, e. g. of migration.⁶

Intergenerational reciprocity of perspectives

In the second type of migratory location we find an account which shares the stress on parental economic success with the other types but differs regarding its

⁴ As Mannheim (1952) has elaborated it is not sufficient to define a “generation” as a mere cohort but as cohort-specific experiential space and world-view (Welanschauung).

⁵ For the full version of this shortened transcript see Nohl 1999b, p.232.

⁶ This imitation has a tendency towards “mimicry of ossification”, the “physical assimilation to external nature” (Gebauer & Wulf 1995, p. 314).

narrative structure. One peer group refers to the family migration biography at a point of the group discussion where youths dissociate themselves from a peer migrant who "still speaks barely no German".⁷

Baki: I want to say how will he live on, he then is the same, he starts at the same point where his father started twenty years before. Fortunately with us it is not like this. Our parents have achieved a lot here and we have to continue this and must not stop.

Ali: There is a Turkish proverb on parents. That says try to get something off the ground and don't become a donkey as your father.

The youths place their own biographical perspective in the wider frame of family migration biography. Yet within this frame of reference the youths differentiate between their own generation and that of their parents, referred to as "donkeys". This surface contradiction is resolved in the proverb of which the Turkish origin implicitly emphasizes that development and change are already part of the culture the parents inherit.⁸

This account is framed in the specific experiential space of these migrant youths. Although they are deeply disappointed by their parents lack of understanding towards their own world view, expressed in hair style, job preferences etc., they themselves try to take over the perspective of their parents. The youths are orientated towards reciprocity of perspectives and communicative negotiation of disagreements as holds true for encounters with other members of society too. Differences of perspective only become troubling when they cannot be communicated; e. g. when the youths are exposed to disguised racial discrimination.

In the comparison of these two types the interrelation of migratory location and the collective memory of migration history becomes evident. The orientation towards the reciprocity of perspectives is linked to an account of migration history that makes an intergenerational distinction framed by reciprocity. In the type of separation of generational perspectives the biography of the youths and that of their parents constitute self-contained distinct projects only to be copied. In spite of the migration-specific discontinuities in family biography it is important for the youths to keep even a reflexive, narrative relationship with their family. The cited accounts are a means to 'bridge' the intergenerational gap and to deal with the specific problems of migratory location. The same holds true for the third type:

Fusion of generational perspectives

Discontinuities in family biography are evident in the third type of migratory location too. Yet in this type there is no distance towards parents. Rather the youths tend to merge and mix both their parents and their own perspectives. The personal biography of Duran is a good example of this fusion of generation-specific

perspectives. When Duran was unsuccessful in the labour market his parents suggested that "vocational training is important for Turks". Duran implemented this ethnized family logic in his professional life directly and accepted an opportunity for vocational training although it did not fit with his personal ideas. Like his friends Duran did not draw a line between himself and his parents.

This orientation towards the fusion of disparate perspectives is not only documented in the family relations but also in the encounters with other members of society. Rather than keeping a thorough distance or expressing disparities of perspective these youths act based on the assumption of shared orientations.

The account of family migration history follows the discourse of professional experiences which constitutes a major problem for the youths. They complain about working upon command, and plan to be their "own boss". When this perspective is justified by their specific but undefined "mentality", the discourse spontaneously switches to the family migration history:⁹

Duran: ...our parents are already here for a long time ... forty twenty years thirty years all of them, they have built up everything. Let's say a house a shop or so. And they already have their own income. Let's say if anybody of us would now somehow go to Turkey or so, we would have our perfect, Behran: a perfect life.

Duran: We would have already earned enough money.

In the collective account youths do not make a distinction between their parents migration history and their own biography. Both merge into one mutually supporting migration biography in which the life performance of their parents counts for the whole family.

Experiences and accounts of migration

The orientations youths find in migratory location (fusion or separation of generations or communication of intergenerational differences) are habitualized and self-evident within their collective experiential space. Even when these orientations are spontaneously explained with the accounts of family migration history and thus legitimized vis a vis the researchers who do not belong to the same migratory location, the performative structure of the account is related to the migratory location. Whether any of the implied plans (continuation of success in the host society, remigration, or repetition of migration) will be realized or not, each narrative performance reflects the respective type of migratory location the narrators belong to. In this structural identity of performance and narrated experience it is evident that the past effects the present and the present effects the collective memory of the past.

⁷ See Nohl 1996, p. 133.

⁸ The reference made to the older generation is mimetic, in so far as "mimesis construes anew already construed worlds" (Gebauer & Wulf 1995, p. 317).

⁹ See Nohl 1999b, p. 183.

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WHAT RURAL WOMEN SAY ON THEIR PAST AND PRESENT

Nurgün Okdik

This work is a case study of social change in rural community in Mugla province. The method applied is a direct inter view of rural women born before 1950s. The questions are devised to find out changes in their life style and their view of life. The results are related to change in their income generating activities. Specifically social and economic changes lconnected to tourism were studied and then inter views followed up for five years for certain groups.