

Conceptualizing Fertility and Migration: the Case of Academia

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Social change coupled with recent financial and economic crisis in Europe has altered not only careers in the commercial sector, but in academia as well. Academia undergoes significant changes towards marketisation and neoliberalisation, thus reforming its structures towards flexibility, demand and service orientation (Etzkowitz, 2003; Lynch, 2006). This goes along with growing modification of academic life courses: they transform increasingly towards destandardisation (Etzkowitz, 2003).

Under the new conditions of requirements regarding academic performance and efficiency, academic workers are exposed to a greater pressure if they aspire to stay at or to achieve desirable positions in academia. This is especially true for female academics: scientific careers are still considered less suitable for them (e.g. Bagilhole, 2007). In order to increase their social status and chances on upward mobility, both male and female academics often determine to migrate in order to gain international experience and thus to be more competitive regarding their career advancement. These decisions lead to far reaching consequences not only for migrating academics themselves but also for their families: the latter ones are often exposed to the processes of forced or chain migration due to the necessity of accompanying the migrating individuals.

So far, past research has focused on academic mobility from the institutional point of view as well as from the perspective of status improvement. By shifting the discussion to the discourse of international mobility, latest studies have paid less attention to the individual effects of academic migration such as social inclusion and fertility. Thus, some areas of scientific inquiry have widely neglected such issues as fertility practices of highly skilled migrant women in receiving societies (Riaño, 2016), or migration effects on family formation. This paper addresses very first empirical analyses regarding fertility of Russian speaking female academics in Germany. Specifically, it aims to reveal whether the fact of migration leads to an adjustment of fertility patterns of academics to those of their counterparts in receiving society, or to discrepancies between a desirable and actual fertility. The explorative study employs data based on problem centred interviews with Russian speaking female academics in Germany.