

TransFam Lecture Series

The current state and future paths of research on transnational families

Due to spatial mobility and migration, many families have become scattered across different countries. For more than two decades, transnational families have received considerable scientific attention. A growing body of research impressively demonstrates the variety of cross-border family arrangements, the challenges that mobility of their members imposes on the entire family, their living circumstances and well-being, and how families handle these challenges. This research suggests that traditional perspectives which perceive families as social units that live primarily within one nation-state should be reconsidered and expanded to include the transnational dimension.

Despite the extensive existing knowledge, there are still crucial issues concerning transnational families that deserve more scholarly attention. Since most empirical studies have relied on qualitative methods and have been restricted to specific migrant groups, we know little about the prevalence of transnational families in different societies and the extent of social support within families across countries. Similarly, there is a lack of knowledge about how different sending and receiving contexts, each with their own set of unique political, economic, institutional and socio-cultural configurations impact the capabilities of families to maintain cross-border bonds. Furthermore, several recent global developments have brought new issues to the fore. The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as more restrictive migration policies worldwide, limit mobility options, and it is unclear how these impact families striving for greater physical proximity. At the same time, multiple humanitarian crises, such as the current war in Ukraine, force family separations which adds to personal distress. All these considerations necessitate the continuation of research on transnational families in order to inform public debates and political decision-making processes.

The lecture series, therefore, brings together renowned international scholars from various disciplines to discuss the current and future trends, as well as the work program for researching transnational families. The contributions encompass normative and definitory aspects, policy implications, methodological challenges and opportunities in researching transnationalism within families, the relationship between migrant transnationalism and migrant integration, and the effects of spatial mobility and dispersion on personal emotional states and well-being.

The series comprises four lectures, which will all be held online. Each lecture will begin with an introductory talk by an expert in the field, followed by a commentary by a second expert and a discussion with the audience.

The lectures will be accessible via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84285437038?pwd=am8zOVVjRzI0VWkVFQUVEVC93VEILQT09>
(Meeting-ID: 842 8543 7038, Identification-Code: 417662).

Hosts

This lecture series is hosted by the German Center for Migration and Integration Research (DeZIM-Institute) in Berlin (Prof. Magdalena Nowicka, Dr. David Schiefer) and the Interdisciplinary Center for Integration and Migration Research (InZentIM) at the University Duisburg-Essen (Prof. Helen Baykara-Krumme). The series is part of the research project “Transnational families and socio-cultural integration in Germany” currently conducted at DeZIM-Institute. Based on quantitative survey data this project explores the prevalence of transnational families in Germany and the link between transnational family ties and socio-cultural integration (e.g., identity) in Germany.

Lectures

May 20th, 2022, 2:00-3:30 p.m. (CEST (UTC + 2:00))

Transnational family research: future trends and challenges

This opening lecture summarizes key achievements and identifies future themes and main challenges for transnational family research, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and new refugee flows worldwide. It stresses the societal relevance of transnational family arrangements and challenges to be addressed by policy makers.

Introductory Lecture: *Prof. Laura Merla, Université Catholique de Louvain*

Discussant: *Prof. Valentina Mazzucato, Maastricht University*

June 3rd, 2022, 2:00-3:30 p.m. (CEST (UTC + 2:00))

Migrant transnationalism and Integration – reconciling distinct approaches

Transnationalism has been developed as a scholarly perspective alternative to conventional integration approaches. More recently, scholars argue that interactions of migrant transnationalism and migrant integration should be considered an empirical question: potentially competing, complementary, simply simultaneous, or a mix over time. Still, national discourses and state policies continue to neglect the transnational commitments and the ties of migrants across international borders. This lecture explores the interactions between migrant transnationalism and integration processes, how the two approaches not only can, but ought to be, bridged, and the context of national policies for such interactions.

Introductory Lecture: *Prof. Marta Bivand Erdal, Peace Research Institute Oslo*

Discussant: *Dr. Lenore Sauer, Federal Institute for Population Research, Wiesbaden, Germany*

June 10th, 2022, 2:00-3:30 p.m. (CEST (UTC + 2:00))

Methodological challenges and future directions for researching transnational families

Transnational research has frequently relied on qualitative and ethnographic methods, but increasingly quantitative approaches are used to better estimate the prevalence and relevance of transnational social ties. This lecture discusses various approaches such as social network analysis, surveys, mixed-methods designs, and their potentials and limitations. It considers how to operationalize family-related transnationality in surveys, how to adapt study designs to meet the requirements of transnational research, and addresses the challenges related to the demands of data protection legislation in the context of multi-sited data collection.

Introductory Lecture: *Prof. Miranda J. Lubbers, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

Discussant: *Dr. Viorela Ducu Telegdi-Csetri, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai/Centre for the Study of Transnational Families (CAST-LE), Cluj-Napoca*

June 24th, 2022, 2:00-3:30 p.m. (CEST (UTC + 2:00))

Emotional engagement and well-being in transnational families

This lecture discusses how cross-border dispersal and physical separation of families impacts their members' psychological well-being, emotional closeness and mutual affection. It addresses contextual and structural factors that mitigate the effects of separation and pays specific attention to gender in this regard.

Introductory Lecture: *Dr. Karlijn Haagsman, Maastricht University*

Discussant: *Prof. Jinyu Liu, Columbia University, New York*

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The speakers and discussants

Laura Merla is a sociologist with a background in political science, and a professor at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium). From September 2012 to 2018 she was director of the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Families and Sexualities (CIRFASE). She is also Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia. Her research is currently focused on the transformation of family relationships in a context of mobility and geographical distance. She studies these questions through two prisms, namely intergenerational solidarities in „transnational“ families, and children’s lived experience of multilocality in situations of separation/divorce/family re-composition.

Valentina Mazzucato is professor of Globalisation and Development at Maastricht University, The Netherlands. She specializes in migration focusing on the linkages that migrants forge and maintain between their societies of origin and residence. She heads numerous international, multi-sited and interdisciplinary research projects on transnational migration between Africa and Europe, most recently the Mobility Trajectories of Young Lives in Global South and North (MO-TRAYL) funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant. Her work is characterized by interdisciplinary teamwork, multi-sited research designs and mixed methods integrating ethnography and large-scale surveys. She is widely published in migration, development, geography and child development journals, most recently in *Mobilities*, *Children’s Geographies*, *Global Networks*, *Population Space and Place*, and *Social Science and Medicine*. She has lived and worked in West African countries for over 25 years.

Marta Bivand Erdal is a Research Professor in Migration Studies, at Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), where she is Co-Director of the PRIO Migration Center. As a Human Geographer she is interested in the impacts of migration and transnationalism in emigration and immigration contexts. Marta’s work draws on interview, focus group, and survey data, paying critical attention to the use of categories. Her empirical focus is on European and Asian contexts. She has published extensively in migration studies and regularly engages with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. She’s currently working on the ERC funded project *Migration Rhythms in Trajectories of Upward Social Mobility in Asia*.

Lenore Sauer is an economist and senior researcher in the Research Group International Migration at the Federal Institute for Population Research in Wiesbaden, Germany. She is currently coordinating the project „TransFAR: Forced Migration and Transnational Family Arrangements - Eritrean and Syrian Refugees in Germany“. Previously, she worked as a researcher both at the Research Center of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and at the Technical University of Kaiserslautern. Her research interests include in particular the study of transnational relations, migration processes between highly developed countries, and integration processes of different groups of new immigrants.

Miranda Lubbers is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and an ICREA Acadèmia fellow. She directs the newly founded Laboratory for the Computational Analysis of Egonetworks, Social Cohesion, and Exclusion (COALESCE Lab), which investigates how social networks shape processes of social cohesion, polarization, and exclusion. She was awarded the ERC Advanced Grant and also has funding from the German Volkswagen Foundation, the Spanish Ministry of Education, and the La Caixa Foundation. Her research has been published in journals such as *International Migration Review*, *Human Nature*, *Global Networks*, the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, and the *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

Viorela Ducu is Centre coordinator CASTLE - Centre for the Study of Transnational Families, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences/ Babeş-Bolyai University/ Romania. She is PhD in Sociology, with an interest in mixed and transnational families, children’s rights and qualitative research methods. Her main publications include *Romanian Transnational Families - Gender, Family Practices and Difference*, 2018, (author) at Palgrave Macmillan and *Displaying grandparenting within Romanian transnational families*, in *Global Networks*, 2020.

Karlijn Haagsman is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maastricht, The Netherlands. She has a background in Cultural Anthropology and Migration Sociology. For the past 11 years she has been studying the well-being of transnational family members and migrant families living between the Global North and Global South. This started with her PhD which investigated the effects of transnational parent-child separation on the well-being of Angolan and Nigerian migrant parents in The Netherlands. Currently, she is studying the effects mobility, such as visits to the country of origin, has on the well-being of youth of migrant background.

Jinyu Liu is an associate professor in Columbia University School of Social Work. Dr. Liu studies determinants of stress among Chinese family caregivers and effects of social support on the mental health of older Chinese adults. Her current research projects include developing and testing culturally-sensitive interventions to reduce stress of dementia caregivers in Chinese American communities and examining technology use and mental health among Asian older immigrants in the United States. Dr. Liu’s work has been funded by National Institute of Aging, the Columbia Population Research Center, the Rutgers RCMAR center, and the Columbia School of Social Work.