

B) Poor families, the metropolitan city and new gender challenges

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A second major focal point of the research line focuses on poor people, their family life and social networks. In the context of globalisation processes, family life is being profoundly transformed. This project will contribute to the debate on how globalisation processes take shape at the most intimate levels of family life, how they incite family members to reposition themselves towards each other and how people's daily actions produce, transform and determine the specific directions that globalisation processes may take. In the last decennia, major economic, social and political transformations have taken place, which means a shift of the resources available to people of all strata of society. Because of their already vulnerable economic and social position, poor people especially face new challenges, grab new opportunities and adapt their everyday lives. The way individuals deal with these transformations is not gender neutral. Based on gender notions and practices, women and men develop different ways of dealing with their daily challenges. The question is, how do poor men and women experience globalisation processes in their everyday lives? What are the challenges they face and what opportunities open up to them? How does globalisation confirm, reconstruct and challenge gender and family notions and how does it change family life?

One concrete project here will be carried out in a poor neighbourhood in a metropolitan city and will focus on how families deal with the urban transformations of the past decades. Between the 1960s and 1990s, poor neighbourhoods in metropolitan cities were a preferred destination of rural migrants and their children. Often starting with nothing, poor families invested in their social networks and cooperated to build houses, establish grassroots organizations and change the slums into liveable neighbourhoods. Although these neighbourhoods have now become consolidated and often have some form of infrastructure, the metropolitan city may have lost its attraction as a place to live. Severe problems of pollution, crime, sanitation, transportation and a transformation of the urban economy (increasing poverty, informalisation and a decrease of formal labour) may have stimulated people to look elsewhere. This raises the question of what daily life now looks like in the consolidated neighbourhoods that used to be slums. How have the livelihood possibilities changed? What has happened to the grassroots organisations and the social networks of their members? What are the gendered outcomes of all this?

As the literature shows, it has become increasingly difficult for men to fulfil their breadwinning responsibilities, while women have entered the labour market in massive numbers. Women's workload has increased substantially because they continue to be responsible for the household and caring chores. Both men and women may migrate in search of new livelihood opportunities. This is one of the reasons for the rise of one-parent and grandparents' households, but migration may also extend family's social networks to other cities and countries. Men and women have redefined their family responsibilities and the way they relate to each other. With their wives and daughters becoming more financially and otherwise independent, men may feel that they are losing their authority and privileged position in the family. Women, on the other hand, may develop an increasingly critical attitude towards their men folk because of their failure as providers, or they may wish to become even more independent. The question is, what are the

outcomes of these changes in the gendered division of labour and struggles over family responsibilities? Do they lead to more equality between men and women? Or do they indicate a crisis in the family that may lead to more trouble and despair?