

Summary: The social meanings of migration

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The thesis addresses the relationship between systems of social meaning and migration practices. Systems of social meaning shape migration decisions as migration come to be understood as a possible and sometimes even a necessary choice, for people in particular roles in particular situations of life. Approaching migration decisions from the perspective of a community of origin for migration, the thesis shows how migration can be understood as part of the cultural repertoires from which people devise their strategies, and how distinct migration practices can exist side by side in a community. Including a focus on systems of social meanings in analyses of migration decisions can also shed light on how migration practises emerge and are reproduced.

The thesis gives particular emphasis to the systems of meaning embedded in the institution of family, and shows how family roles and notions of responsibility tied to these roles can influence migration decisions. It shows how lack of access to divorce, absence of reasons to stay and conflicts in the family can be conceptualised as reasons for migration, and addresses the need to recognise that women, when framed as mothers, may not have available to them a discourse that allows them to talk about migration as an act to improve their own lives.

Methodologically the thesis draws on narrative analysis of interview data, showing how this approach can enables us to study the way migration is embedded in systems of social meaning in communities of origin. It argues the importance of the interview for understanding social practices in other contexts than our own, but point to the ethical responsibilities that come with recruiting respondents for interviews, as well as epistemological limitations for analysis of interview data. The analysis in this thesis draws on data from Western Ukraine, produced though four rounds of fieldwork conducted between 2008 and 2011

The main findings of the thesis are disseminated in the following four articles:

- I. TYLDUM, G. 2012. Ethics or access? Balancing informed consent against the application of institutional, economic or emotional pressures in recruiting respondents for research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15 (3).
- II. TYLDUM, G. In Review. Labour Migration and Social Institutions. *Migration Studies*
- III. TYLDUM, G. Forthcoming 2015. A welcomed seperation. Female migration and divorce in Western Ukraine. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 5(3)

- IV. TYLDUM, G. 2015. Motherhood, agency and sacrifice in narratives on female migration for care work. *Sociology* 49(1)