Immigration System and Marital Strategies. Turkish Families Emigrated in France From a Village in Central Anatolia (Elif Aksaz)

One of the main characteristics of Turkish migrant populations in France is their discretion, their cut-off-the-world way of life. However, they take a stand on the media and on major public debate because of the practice of ‘arranged marriages’. Certain associations, very sensitive to the tendency of Turkish families to resort to these methods and financially supported by FASILD (Help and Support Fund for Integration and Struggle Against Discrimination), have created shelters for women. They consider this practice as an expression of their attachment to Islamic values and of their fear of seeing their children become French, and they believe that the integration process must come to a stop. The examination of these practices on integration grounds suggests that Turkish migrant populations in France represent a faulty case, ‘an exception’ that ‘will, sooner or later, become an important problem for French society’. Moreover, living conditions for Turkish migrant women are particularly alarming.

The aim of this research project is to examine the rather unknown universe of Turkish migrant populations in France through the analysis of their perception of their own situation and the meaning of their practices for themselves. This study suggests a hypothesis according to which ‘arranged marriages’ with a spouse in Turkey are just a piece of a very complex system, visible from the outside and shocking for the receiving society, that cannot be understood on its own. Firstly, one of the characteristics of this system is its multi-location, that is to say, its capacity to involve actors in both emigration and immigration locations, marriage alliances are only one of the institutions that make these contacts possible. Secondly, as suggested by a previous research on daily practices of Turkish women living in an HLM (council flats) quarter in the outskirts of Paris (housework, visits to neighbours, relationship with North African women), immigrant Turkish women play a rather invisible, but very active, role in the regulation of social relations within the quarter. The analysis of their universe can therefore be an appropriate way to examine this system.