

1. Género, feminismos e estudos sobre as mulheres

OC - (23216) - FROM 'FEMPOWERMENT' TO STRUCTURAL PRECARITIES: REFRAMING THE CONCEPT OF VULNERABILITY OF 'MIGRANT WOMEN' IN PANDEMIC-ERA GERMANY

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Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the policy responses concerning those termed "migrant women" have gained significant attention. This presentation, informed by critical policy analysis and expert interviews, navigates the complexities of these interventions, taking into account the recent emphasis of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs on "fempowerment". This perspective frames „migrant women“ as intrinsically vulnerable, requiring individual 'empowerment' to deal with their challenging situation. The reflexive policy approach draws on intersectionality theory and postcolonial insights and posits that prevailing policy interventions rely on an individualized conception of vulnerability, inadvertently reinforcing social disparities. By focussing on personal transformation, these structural disparities often remain overlooked, leaving the intertwining dynamics of genderization and migrantization unchallenged.

Like in most other countries, Germany's pandemic-related measures have intensified social disparities. Those identified as "migrant women" faced amplified economic insecurities, typified by low wages, limited career advancement, and an increased domestic burden. In the wake of regulatory measures, many either grappled with employment instability or found themselves in indispensable sectors, yet without the opportunity of remote work options. Using Germany as a case study, this presentation challenges the "fempowerment" discourse, spotlighting its inadequacy in redressing structural inequalities. Through an intersectional approach, it highlights that vulnerabilities are more a product of systemic conditions and social processes than the innate characteristics of the supposed deficient agency (lack of information or human capital) or 'cultural difference' of individuals. Concurrently, a postcolonial lens illuminates the inadvertent reinforcement of racial hierarchies by policies, deepening exclusionary narratives. In sum, this presentation seeks to deconstruct dominant notions of "vulnerability" and accentuates the urgency of holistic comprehension of social inequalities that are important in thinking about more just and inclusive post-pandemic strategies.