

Nina Susse, Kings College London

Title: The Everyday of German Family Policy Reform: *Translocal Coordination in the Organisation of Childcare*

Abstract:

Germany has substantially expanded its public childcare programme to improve work-family life reconciliation in the last decade. Debates include themes of gender, demography, working conditions and the integration and education of children. I trace how local networks of actors within one city construct and enact these discourses. I explicate thereby how extra-local policy information (reforms, legitimations, etc.) traverses within institutional networks and how actors experience and enact policy locally. The text-mediated infrastructure of communication practices, from childcare placement procedures to policy papers, is therein a component of the social process in which actors become intelligible to each other and coordinate their action.

Therein I examine how various actors construct the phenomenon of work-family reconciliation problems differently, to what extent reforms correspond to the needs they perceive, and how different problem conceptions may affect their ability to form alliances. I am interested in how systemic distributions of capabilities (inequalities of linguistic repertoires as much as pay checks) are active in shaping unequal access to different welfare provisions in a reform process that supposedly advocates “choice” between different family types and modes of employment.

Theoretically, my work is informed by D. E. Smith’s approach of Institutional Ethnography as its basic methodology, and tangentially inspired by sociolinguistic ethnography (Blommaert, Rampton) and a Foucaultian conception of power and subjectivity. The primary data is based on interviews with various local actors and public documents.