Never outside the labour market, but always outsiders: female migrant workers in Greece

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NEVER OUTSIDE THE LABOUR MARKET, BUT ALWAYS OUTSIDERS: FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS IN GREECE

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on migrant women's diverse experiences in the Greek labour market. Since the early 1980s all four Southern European countries of the EU, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, have been transformed from emigration into immigration countries. The new immigrants, mostly undocumented and illegal, join the informal labour market under highly exploitative conditions. Starting from migrant women's own perspectives, we analyze their experiences (1) in the framework of the unfolding «Mediterranean immigration model» (2) in the midst of increasing «South» – «North» migrations and increasing migratory flows to Greece in particular; (3) in the context of the legal and policy framework for migrants in Greece; and (4) in the framework of women's citizenship in society. Our qualitative study of immigrant women in Greece fleshes out the general trends of women's participation in informal labour markets, documents the multi-layered nature of their economic and social exclusion, and highlights the intersecting racialization and sexist practices shaping their experiences

INTRODUCTION

«What can I say? I have to live, don't I? My children have to have bread and education. This is the only reason why I work 10-16 hours a day, almost everyday. I hope that one day I will have a better life. I thank God for having a roof over my head». Albanian immigrant (December, 1999).

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In this paper[1] we outline a framework for the study of gender, international migration and work in Greece since the 1970s. Key concepts in our analysis are the so-called «Mediterranean model of immigration» and women's citizenship in society. The Mediterranean model unfolds in the context of a continuing population movement from the world's «South» to the «North» as a result of degradation of economic, social, political and environmental conditions in the South, including many of the former ex-socialist societies. In this part of the paper, we also provide some facts about contemporary migration and female migration to Greece in particular, and present the legal and policy framework which organizes entry and settlement. The main empirical material of the paper then follows, divided into several sub-headings that form the range of our findings. Starting from an investigation of the diversity of migrant women's experiences in the Greek labour markets, our empirical analysis enables us to begin exploring the processes accounting for and the multi-layered nature of economic and social exclusion inflicted upon them. Our conclusions underscore directions for future research and the importance of designing and implementing appropriate policies for Greece in the EU framework for the twenty-first century, anticipating an increasing and permanent presence of various cultural and ethnic groups.

THE MEDITERRANEAN IMMIGRATION MODEL

Migration is not new to the late twentieth century. Colonialism had propelled movements of free and unfree people across the world. Between 1810 and 1921, for example, 34 million Europeans emigrated to the US alone. During the 1980s, between 300 and 400 million people moved internally in the Third World as a result of debt restructurings. This pool of labour contributes to current levels of global migration from overburdened, desperately impoverished, Third World cities to metropolitan regions as it seeks to

support families back home. Estimates suggest that roughly 100 million kinfolk depend on remittances of the global labour force. In addition, dislocation of populations as a result of war contributes to massive and increasing numbers of people migrating out of the world's «South» toward the world's «North» (McMichael, 2000: 190-208; Kofman et al., 2000: 113-114).

In Western Europe, industrial development from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s was characterized by job creation and rising demand for migrant labour. Subsequently, the trend was reversed to de-industrialization, economic growth with no job creation, and increasing casualization of employment along with the expansion of the «informal sector» (Morokvasic, 1993; King, 2000). The rise of «Fortress Europe» in Northern and Western Europe especially coincided with rising numbers of economic migrants, undocumented migrants, and refugees all over the world (Miles, 1993; Campani, 1993). The four countries of Southern Europe and members of the European Union - Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece - started receiving significant numbers of migrants in the late 1970s. These countries soon became known as «new immigration countries» as new, unplanned waves of immigration transpired outside the formal recruitment channels and toward these countries. This situation was dictated by geography, particular patterns of Southern European economic development and/or laissez-faire immigration policies, among other factors (Miles, 1993; Morokvasic, 1993; Freeman, 1996; Iosifides and King, 1998; King, 2000). These countries had historically been «senders» rather than «receivers» of migrants. Thus they were totally unprepared in terms of experience or social infrastructure to deal with these new immigration waves.

There are certain characteristics of economic and political responses to immigration shared in common by all four Southern European countries, to the point that we can speak of a «Mediterranean Mode» (Freeman, 1996) of immigration politics, a «Mediterranean Model of Immigration» (Pugliese, 1997) or a «South European Immigration Model» (King, 2000). We use the term «immigration model» here to refer explicitly to a set of economic and political factors affecting immigration flows and immigrant communities, as they are in turn shaped by them. Such factors include some economic growth, characterized by increasing tertiarization, prevalence of small-scale family enterprise, along with the development of segmented labour markets with large informal sectors (Venturini, 1991; Petrinioti, 1993; Pteroudis, 1996; Baldwin-Edwards, 1998; King, 2000). The latter are a consequence of certain common structural features of the economies of Southern Europe, such as: (a) insufficient labour supply, (b) inflexible labour markets, and (c)

uncompetitive low-productivity sectors (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002a). The strength of the demand for labour in some of these countries, especially in the context of demographic facts such as dramatic fertility collapses and a reduction of internal / urban migration, is not to be underestimated because it affects governmental attitudes toward those seeking to enter these countries. This is particularly clear in the case of domestic workers, who are in great demand in all four countries. In addition, other factors of the Mediterranean or South European immigration model include: inefficient institutional mechanisms for immigration control or regularization, administrative inexperience in planning or regulating immigration, intense migration pressures from especially nearby countries as well as great numbers of illegal immigrants (Freeman, 1996).

Contemporary migrants and refugees come from a larger number of nationalities than in the past, including those from traditionally non-migratory ethnic and social groups, like the Sri Lankan Tamils (Miles, 1993; Pugliese, 1997; Campani, 1993; King, 2000). New migrants are also relatively more educated, more urban, more middle-class and involve more independent women and younger people than in the past (Miles, 1993; Campani, 1993; King, 2000). They either utilize South European countries as gateways to Northern and Western Europe, or, increasingly, they settle in Southern European countries, taking up opportunities for casual, marginal and precarious or seasonal employment in their large informal sectors (King, 2000). These new migration trends have given rise to more distinct forms of racism in each of these societies, shaped by past and present realities. Thus, segmented labour markets have been consolidated in Southern European countries. In these markets, immigrants are legally differentiated, socially discriminated against, and economically exploited with illegal status facilitating labour market ghettoization.

The existence of historical mechanisms linking specific sending and South-European immigrant-receiving countries cannot be overestimated. For example, colonialism has been playing a role in conditioning immigration into Spain and Portugal from Latin America and the Portuguese colonies. Also, the Catholic Church has been playing a similar role as a connecting agency between Catholic destination countries and Catholic countries of the developing world (King, 2000: 9).

The last, but not least, important characteristic of the Mediterranean model of immigration has been its high female component. Unlike most earlier migration waves, rising numbers of women migrate independently and not as associational migrants. The contemporary global trend is toward

a «feminization of migration» (Castles and Miller, 1998). While in Southern Europe some flows are overwhelmingly male, others are almost exclusively female, for example domestic work. Fakiolas and Maratou- Alipranti (2000: 103) propose several reasons for this change in the case of Greece, which can however be extended to the other three South European countries, as Kofman et al., illustrate (2000:118-122). Such reasons include: 1) The expansion in the educational system and increased labour force participation of Greek women, coupled with an increased «reverse» transfer of tasks from the state to the household, such as services to the young and the elderly, results in increased opportunity for migrant women. Other writers have argued that social welfare services have never been particularly well developed in the southern European EU countries, generating a high demand for domestic work (Kofman et al., 2000: 115). 2) The application of new technologies and the great change in service economies provides increased opportunities for both native and immigrant women. 3) The generally slow economic developments in the less developed and ex-socialist countries, with persisting and deeply rooted structural poverty with gender dimensions, accelerates labour migration and contributes to its feminization.

RECENT MIGRATION FLOWS TO GREECE:
SIZE, SOURCES AND CONTEXT

Due to the great extent of illegal migration and residence, official statistics in Greece provide limited or even contradictory information about the resident immigrant population. According to latest official data and estimates, Greece with a total population of 10,300 million people, is estimated to have 800-1,000 million immigrants, representing a 9-10% proportion. Regardless of whether these are immigrant stocks or represent complex flow patterns, Greece still has the highest proportion of immigrants among Southern European countries and possibly the highest in the EU as well (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b).

There are four categories of migrants in Greece: EU residents and other highly educated Europeans for whom Greece has always been a favourite place of residence and tourism; ethnic Greeks and others of Greek descent who have lost their Greek nationality and have been returning to the homeland from the former USSR (e.g., Pontians) and Eastern Europe; and an immigrant flow (including undocumented migrants) from the Mediterranean Basin, the Middle East, as well as Asia and Africa, the so-called «third- country nationalities» (SOPEMI, 1997). The third-country

nationalities are ranked by size as Albanian (the dominant nationality in Greece), Bulgarian, Pakistani, Ukrainian, Polish, Georgian, Indian, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Syrian and Nigerian (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b). This migrant flow also includes «pendle migration», mostly from the North and North-East, and trafficked women and children forced into prostitution. The last, but not least, category are the asylum-seekers whose numbers are generally low in terms of both those applying and those achieving the status, due to the ease of illegal migration, the historical difficulty in gaining asylum and the minimal rewards in achieving such a status (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b).

The numbers of female immigrants to Greece and gender proportions vary by nationality, with some of the movements being predominantly female (e.g., Filipinos, Russians) and others almost exclusively male (e.g., Pakistanis, Bangladeshis). Data derived from the processing of regularization applications in November 1999 showed that overall 26% of those who applied across nationalities were women, with some of the groups representing the largest numbers and gender proportions being Albanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Filipino and Russian (Fakiolas and Maratou – Alipranti, 2000). Such numbers are of course only indicative of the overall numbers of resident and/or working immigrant female population of Greece, as there may be particular incentives or disincentives, factors facilitating or prohibiting immigrant women's regularization applications, across nationalities or even by ethnic group.

While the reasons that make people migrate vary depending on the particular circumstances of the sending country or its relationship with the receiving country (Morokvasic, 1993; Eaton, 1993; Guibentif, 1996), the reasons for migrating to Greece are also related to geography, local economic and demographic trends, and finally a «Janus-faced» government policy. First, control of the Albanian border is practically impossible due to geographical morphology (Droukas, 1998:350). Thus, large numbers of Albanians cross the borders, many of whom are arrested and returned. The effectiveness of «sweeping» operations to combat illegal immigration is limited. Immigrants without work permits can find jobs at remunerations of about half the market rate of Greek wages. Established networks assist newcomers with information and accommodation and thus contribute to continuing inflows (Lazaridis, 1996; SOPEMI, 1997; Venturini, 1991).

Secondly, local economic and demographic trends include the strong seasonal character of the Greek economy (especially in construction, tourism and agriculture); the size of the informal economy and the fragmentation of the economy into a myriad of small, family-run enterprises; the

continuing exodus of Greeks from low-status jobs in combination with strong family ties which allow young people to wait for the «right» kind of employment rather than accept any job; and, finally, the low population growth due to the low fertility rate of Greek society. As a result, many low-status, low-paid jobs remain available for migrant labourers (Iosifides and King, 1998).

A study conducted in 1996 on behalf of the Athens Centre for Workers («Λόγοι Μετανάστευσης», Report, 1996) revealed that the most important self-reported reasons for migration were: (a) migrants could not find employment in their own countries (34.8%) and (b) wages were too low in the country of origin (33.3%). Greece was selected as destination because (a) it was close to the country of origin (30.8%) and (b) the migrant had relatives and/or friends there (27.8%). Life in Greece, however, has not always been what the migrants expected. In 48% of the cases life turned out to be worse, thus 30% expressed the intent to go back to the country of origin once the purpose for which they came to Greece had been reasonably fulfilled. About 10% of the migrants saw Greece as a country of transition, and intended to migrate somewhere else eventually, while 23.8% would like to travel back and forth between their country of origin and Greece. However, a full 27.2% in that study expressed the desire to settle in Greece permanently.

As Baldwin-Edwards argues (2002a), it is extremely difficult to provide an analysis of the legally present immigrant workers in Greece for a number of reasons, including: 1) that many illegal immigrants did not apply for legalization or were rejected; 2) that many who were given temporary permits were unable or unwilling to renew them and thus lapsed back into illegality; 3) the habit of Southern European states, including Greece, of giving people residence without the right to work – thus promoting the informal economy; 4) the inability of the bureaucracy to provide up-to-date collated statistics of all immigrants residing and/or working lawfully; 5) that many more illegal immigrants are thought to have arrived since the legalization programmes finished; and 6) that work permits are of varying duration in Greece, making it impossible at any given time to calculate the numbers of legally present immigrant workers.

According to OECD (2001) data, the largest categories of employment for foreign workers legally employed in Greece in 1998-99 were mining and manufacturing (19.3%), construction (26.6%), retail and wholesale (19.0%), households (19.9%), health, education and social services (5.9%), agriculture and fishing (3.5%), other services (5.0%), and public administration (0.8%).

In reality however, these data refer to legal participation only and thus do not reveal actual immigrant participation in various sectors.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Perhaps the most important «pull» factor for migration into Greece pertains to the legal and government policy framework itself which also paves the ground for the social conditions of migrant labour. In Greece the legal and policy focus has been mostly on curtailing the flow of illegal immigrants rather than regularizing the status of individuals who are already living in the country illegally. In agreement with Baldwin-Edwards (2002b), we maintain such a framework is «Janus-faced» in Greece as well as in the other Southern European countries, because it discourages and encourages immigration at the same time. On the one hand, it involves hostility and suspicion, on the other, laissez-faire policies (Fakiolas and Maratou-Alipranti, 2000) or some –admittedly minimal– integration attempts. According to others (Iosifides and King, 1998), the Greek state's response on migration has been, until very recently, a «non-policy» allowing large numbers of immigrants to enter clandestinely yet refusing to grant them any kind of legal or citizenship rights, thereby constructing them as «non-persons». Law 1975/1991 on foreigners criminalizing illegal entry and work without a permit and providing for immediate deportation of illegal immigrants by police and border authorities, had replaced the much older law 4310/1929. The first regularization program of 1998 prepared the way to the new immigration law (2910), which was passed by the Greek Parliament on April 4, 2001.

Although the new law was more liberal than previous ones, it clearly intended to regularize only part of the foreign labour force in the country. A February 2001 draft of the bill lacked an anti-discrimination clause, violated the right to family reunification, failed to address trafficking of persons, failed to acknowledge the basic rights of undocumented migrants, denied undocumented migrant children access to education and health care, and lacked provisions prohibiting the arbitrary detention of migrants or their collective expulsion. After intense lobbying by human rights groups, the law adopted in April 2001 contained some improvements, including permission for trafficking victims to remain in Greece pending criminal proceedings against traffickers, access to education and health care for undocumented migrant children, the right to challenge immigration detention before an administrative court, and a time limit of three months for the detention of migrants who cannot be returned to their home countries (*Human Rights Watch Report*, 2002).

Illegal foreign workers were given the opportunity to apply for regularization within a certain period of time, but only after having paid expensive fees, which in the case of minors were exceedingly high (*Eleftherotypia,* 29/7/2001). In general, foreign workers may come to Greece for work only on the condition of prior approval that specifies the employer, the type of work to be undertaken and the location of employment. This approval is given only if a vacancy cannot be filled by Greeks, citizens of the EU, ethnic Greek foreigners or recognized refugees with work permits. Family immigration is still generally discouraged, though the rules on the matter were slightly relaxed in 2001. Permanent residence is granted after 10 years of legal residence in Greece, while the average period required in the EU is about 4.9 years. Mass expulsions are still the rule of the day with «broom» searches and expulsions amounting to 271,000 in 2001 (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b).

WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP IN SOCIETY

The concept of citizenship is broadly defined to include, in addition to legal rights and narrowly defined political rights, civic, social and economic entitlements. It is according to this broader definition that feminist theorists have persuasively argued that even native-born women's citizenship in contemporary societies is limited, ambiguous and dualistic (Yuval-Davis, 1993), that is that citizenship is deeply gendered. Although feminist theorists have made significant contributions in terms of how to make citizenship more inclusive for women, migrant women have largely been left out from this discourse (Kofman, 1995). Moreover, there is a small, though well-established and growing, social science literature on immigrant civic engagement, i.e. citizenship as practice (Stasiulis, 1997; Isin and Siemiatycki, 1999; Strategic Workshop on Immigrant Women Making Place in Canadian Cities, 2002). Some of that work has a specific gender analysis (Black 1997; Abu-Laban, 1997/98), while other scholars have studied immigrant women's civic engagement in a broader sense (Agnew, 1996; Das Gupta, 1986; Goldring, 2001; Ralston, 1995; Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2003).

Research on migrant women's employment globally indicates that migrant women are exploited and discriminated against in gender-specific ways (Anthias, 1993; Boyd, 1984; Giles and Preston, 1996; Ng, 1999; Preston and Man, 1999). They are placed at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, where they earn less than migrant men do in gender-segregated labour markets and suffer far higher unemployment rates when

compared with women in general (Boyd, 1992· SOPEMI, 1998). When they accompany a male family member, they are relegated to a legally dependent status upon him (Kofman et al., 2000: 88, 130). Regardless of whether they are independent migrants or accompany a spouse, migrant women often face the lack of legal recognition of their credentials, underemployment, deskilling and loss of career (Sorensen, 1995; Kofman et al., 2000). Racialized migrant women suffer from both racial and gender disadvantage in the labour market. These disadvantages intersect to create specific problems that both restrict access to the labour market and maintain segregation and discrimination within it (Kofman and Sales, 1992). Regardless of whether migrant women are in possession of a work permit or not, they are always peripheral and outsiders, with various degrees of externality depending on their legal status, and their race and ethnicity (Andall, 1992; Boyd, 1992; Lazaridis, 2000; Tastsoglou and Miedema, 2000).

Moreover, in the EU specifically, there is a whole hierarchy of citizenship entitlements for migrant women, depending on entry and legal status (permanent, legal temporary and undocumented), with some categories of women enjoying certain rights and others none by virtue of being undocumented and, consequently, illegal residents. Even when they are documented, their socio-economic position (i.e. the practice of citizenship) varies also by ethnic / racial group and country of residence, since stereotypes and discriminatory practices vary across ethnic communities and in different countries. There is a great range of diversity in the EU, both in terms of citizenship models and their openness to migrants, but also in terms of the nature of labour markets and the employment positioning of various categories of migrant women. In addition, divergent realities may exist at different levels (municipal, provincial, national etc.) of a single state (Kofman et al., 2000: 81-106). In terms of overall citizenship rights and entitlements, as Kofman et al. argue, «it is hard to sustain the notion that a postnational citizenship for migrants has become a reality in the European Union» (2000: 91).

In terms of citizenship as practice, in the economic sphere specifically, Morokvasic (1991b, 1993, and 1984) has pointed out that, despite the fact that immigrant women participate in the European economies and are never «out» of economic activity, their labour does not always count as economic activity. Hence, they are often considered as being «outside the labour market» and thus peripheral. In conclusion, as a result of exclusion from the civil, social, political, and economic arenas, migrant women derive few of

the benefits of such citizenship in the European Union. Given this framework of extremely limited citizenship then, the experiences and position of migrant women in the Greek labour market that this study documents, that is the practice of citizenship arrested by mechanisms of social exclusion and discrimination on various levels, comes as no surprise.

METHODOLOGICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

The empirical component of this study consists of fifteen formal interviews which were conducted with migrant women about their lives, family situation, work and community experiences in Greece by the two authors, in the fall of 1999 and winter of 2000. The interviews were in-depth, semi-structured and were conducted in Greek, Arabic, English, or the persons' mother tongue, depending on the fluency and preference of the woman and the availability of an interpreter. We were accompanied by an informant who spoke both Greek and the language of the interviewee when necessary. This was particularly helpful as it allowed the interviewees to feel comfortable and speak more freely about their experiences. A tape-recorder was used during some of the interviews after securing consent, while note taking took place for the rest. Fifteen more women were interviewed in a less formal manner, or engaged in casual yet focused conversations with the researchers, while further information in the form of field notes and observation was gathered on various occasions during the same period. The information gathered during the informal sessions added an invaluable dimension to our understanding of the complexity of issues migrant women face in Greece. To ensure methodological integrity however, this information is not presented in this study, though the insights gained have, admittedly, added to our frame of interpretation.

Most of the women in our sample were identified through a snowball technique, while some were contacted with the assistance of a church-based program in Athens, which provides assistance (legal, counseling, advocacy, orientation, some immediate relief) to migrants in difficult circumstances. A great variety of migrants resort to or seek to find out about this program. In our attempt to know more about the most troubled migrants' experiences, we decided to seek the assistance of such a program in identifying some potential respondents. The interviews took place in the participants' homes, their places of employment or in the offices of the program. In addition to the interviews with the migrant women, several discussions took place with government officials, local labour union representatives, and other community leaders. All

interviews were subsequently translated in English and transcribed. On several occasions, revealing informal discussions were cut short when we asked the woman to be officially interviewed. This behaviour came in contrast with the experience we have had with conducting interviews in North America or in Greece with Greek women who were part of the informal economy, who welcomed discussion and were very agreeable to being interviewed (Hadjicostandi, 1987). In other words, we found that we needed to work a lot harder in establishing the trust necessary for successful in-depth interviews with the foreign women, especially when they held illegal status. Although this scenario clearly reflects the obvious problem of doing research within the informal economy, it is especially acute when dealing with undocumented migrants.[2] As a consequence of our non-probability sample, our interpretations and conclusions, unless corroborated by additional research evidence, should only be considered tentative.

The profile of the women in our study was fairly diverse. Of the fifteen women interviewed two thirds came from various East European countries (Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Russia) while the rest came from African (Sierra Leone, Senegal, Egypt, and Ethiopia) and Asian (Sri Lanca) countries, a pattern consistent with already existing findings on migration to Greece. We decided against concentrating on any particular ethnic group at this stage in order to get a sense of the labour market situation of women from as many ethnic backgrounds as possible. The age of the women ranged from twenty to sixty- one years and the majority of them were born in small towns and cities. Only a third claimed to be from the countryside, where their families had always lived. The length of time most women spent in Greece reflected fairly recent arrivals, for the majority of whom this was the first time they had moved out of their country. Eight women had lived in Greece for two to five years, while only one woman reported having been there for over twenty years.

Their family situations also reflected the trend of single female migration. Although two thirds of the women were married and had children, less than half lived with their husbands and children. Of the others, the majority of the women had grown up children, and even grandchildren, back home. Most of those women expressed a longing to be with their children. Instead many of

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2. The fear of women informants in such situations has also been documented by Lazaridis in her Greek study of female migrant workers from the Philippines and Albania in Corfu and Athens (2000: 52).

them spent their entire time in the homes of their employers, with the exception of a few free hours. Four of them lived on their own. The majority of the women interviewed have had formal education, having completed at least twelve years of education. Five women reported having attended higher education, yet they were under-employed with very few prospects for advancement, unless they obtained their employment authorization. The partners of the women who were in current relationships (married or not) were also highly educated with a minimum of twelve years of education. It made a great difference, however, if their husbands were Greek nationals. The two women in our sample married to Greek men enjoyed several privileges over other women, including better job opportunities as well as enjoying smoother integration into the community. These privileges, however, were also relative to other factors such as class position, physical ability and age of the men.

When it came to employment only one woman, the most recent arrival, claimed not to be working, but eagerly looking for a job, «any job», while the majority (twelve women) held full time and part time employment (two women). Not surprisingly, two thirds of the women were engaged in housework (domestic or personal care work). Their partners' occupations displayed greater variety, however, with some without work permits, some unemployed, and, finally, some unemployed due to disability. The time spent on the job was also one of the issues discussed. Although we devote special attention to this issue in the analysis section, more than half the women reported to have regularly spent between seven and twelve hours a day working to earn the income necessary to meet their basic needs of food and shelter. Others reported having worked «all day»; while three women could not even account for the hours they spent working. Further, problems at work, especially harsh working conditions, language problems and legal encounters with the police for lack of work permits, were some of the concerns the women mentioned.

OUR FINDINGS: THE RANGE OF ISSUES

The methodological tool of in-depth interviewing presents a challenging task in general. Engaging in interviews with women who can hardly speak the language and are quite suspicious of one's motives is doubly challenging. In this research however, we felt that no other theoretical or methodological tool was more appropriate in obtaining the information we were seeking. Furthermore, the use of multiple languages, and of course of body language, along with making a concerted effort to establish a friendly rapport, was

central to our study. Being used to more disclosure from interviewing (legal) immigrants in North America, initially we were not as happy with the volume or detail of the information we obtained. Nevertheless, we believe that the substantive and methodological directions that our data point to are worth addressing, comparing against existing studies, and further investigating. The following are some of our most important findings and tentative conclusions:

Super-Exploitation: Although the women interviewed rarely encountered interpersonal problems with their employers, they were however financially exploited. In addition, there was no formal recourse for complaints. They were forced to work long hours, oftentimes in tedious kinds of work, and they were usually underpaid. A fifty-five year old Serbian woman with a high school education granted us an interview. She had been living in Greece for about one year at the time of the interview, but had no work permit, spoke minimal Greek and worked as a house-cleaner in at least two homes. This is what she told us:

> «So far my employers have been OK. They are kind and give me things. Sometimes I face problems when I go to the store to shop and the attendants treat me suspiciously. Yes, some people are rude. They speak behind my back and call me names. I can see them doing that, but there is nothing much I can do. Thank goodness this is not too often. If I have a problem I try to talk to my employers about it. I try not to be confrontational, but politely mention it. Personal discussions are the best way to solve problems, especially since I cannot complain to anybody about it or belong to a workers' union».

A fifty-year old, high-school-educated Russian woman, who had lived in Greece for about five years taking care of an elderly sick man as a live-in, had similar stories to tell. Her work was tiring, emotionally hard and isolating. She was underpaid in relation to her work hours. She described her work circumstances as follows:

> «It is hard taking care of him. Sometimes he is forgetful, and he makes me scared. He also yells a whole lot. One time he opened the door and left the house in his underwear, and the neighbours had to bring him back. I had gone to the supermarket at that time... I started with 80,000, and now I get about 120,000 Drs.. There is no real time table. I'm on call all the time. If he needs me he calls me until I show up, even if it is in the middle of the night... I am usually tired and discouraged...».

Sexual exploitation represents one of the harshest consequences of economic and legal vulnerability for migrant women without any recourse for complaint other than the sense of justice of, not always understanding, bystanders. Such exploitation has an adverse effect on the woman's working conditions and exacerbates her economic vulnerability (see also Lazaridis, 2000: 70). A thirty-year old Sri Lancan woman with a high-school education, who had lived in Greece for four years and worked as a cleaner of the building, where she shared a small apartment with a co-worker, had been the victim of sexual exploitation by her Greek former employer. She got pregnant by him and had a baby boy whom she was raising alone. The father was forced to recognize his son and provide some financial support under pressure of being reported to the authorities. An older Greek woman, who decided to intervene for the sake of justice, placed the necessary pressure on him, by forcing him to have a DNA test to confirm paternity.

Our findings in this area corroborate those of previous studies reporting super-exploitation of migrant workers. The Attica study for the Athens Centre for Workers («Reasons for Migration», 1996), documented that the most frequently-reported problems that migrant workers in Greece (regardless of legal status) faced are as follows: a) migrants' wages were lower than those of Greek workers (81%); b) migrants had no social security (78.3%); c) they were asked to work longer hours without pay (59%); d) their work was more intense than that of the Greek workers (65.3%); employers often asked them to perform the more dangerous or difficult kinds of work without fair compensation (39.2%); e) they were threatened by employers with the police in order to accept the previous conditions (28%); and f) employers required other, not previously specified kinds of work without pay (22.5%).

Similarly, Lazaridis' 1995 study points in the same direction. In her 1995 fieldwork Lazaridis focused on domestic workers from the Philippines and Albania in Corfu and discovered similarities and differences in their conditions of employment. The main similarity was the exploitation of migrant women's labour under almost semi-feudal conditions, especially for live-in caregivers. Pressured by economic necessity and the threat of deportation, these workers, who were not protected by the labour code, worked long hours for pay that was below the minimum wage and without health benefits. Filipinas were separated from their families for years, often at the expense of the spousal relationship and the relationship between mother and children. Albanian families had little access to day care with the consequence that older children were withdrawn from school to provide care

for younger siblings. Women from both groups were subjected to sexual harassment and often lost their jobs as a result (Lazaridis, 1995: 59-69).

Multiple Labour Market Segmentation: The East European women of our study worked typically in house cleaning and personal care while black- and darker-skinned women from African or Asian countries had more diverse, yet not necessarily better, fields of employment, often involving small entrepreneurial enterprises. Our findings lead us to tentatively conclude that European women are given preference in housework,[3] though a hierarchy among them most likely exist. At the same time, black women are also part of this employment market.

Compared to East-Europeans, the African migrant women of our study, especially more recent arrivals, seemed to have a more difficult time in both obtaining and retaining employment in housework. This finding is in agreement to Kofman et al.'s (2000: 122) argument about black women in Western Europe as being the most exploited and least preferred in the racial hierarchization of domestic work. African women's reports indicate that discrimination was more prevalent and overt. In addition they were financially more vulnerable, since they tended to support extended families back home. The words of a 32-year old Ethiopian woman who had been in Greece for five years lend support to our claim. Although she had twelve years of education, she had worked throughout her stay in Greece in house - cleaning. She worked hard but was constantly frustrated at work. Young and single, she provided financial support to both her parents who were separated in Ethiopia and even her step siblings, i.e. her mother's seven children from another marriage. In this case, defying gender stereotypes, it is the female boss who appears to be the most demanding employer, insisting on reducing the employee's rights into mere privileges:

«My employers are not happy with what I do. My female boss always wants more. If she wants something she tells her husband to tell me: she won't talk to me directly. She usually screams at everyone. Her husband is a nice guy. In the beginning I started working for 120,000 Drs. a month. The wife believes I am paid 80,000 Drs (she would be

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3. Our relatively limited formal sample did not include Filipina workers who are overwhelmingly in domestic work and caregiving. Their migration overall represents a predominantly female, highly structured and legal form of migratory movement (Iosifides and King, 1998). In addition, other studies indicate that they may be the preferred nationality in caregiving (Fakiolas and Maratou-Alipranti, 2000), which is in agreement with findings from the Spanish labour market (Kofman et al., 2000: 123).

very upset otherwise). Now, I am getting 131,000 Drs. plus IKA (the national health care system of Greece). I also clean the husband's clinic. He is a physician. I do all the shopping for the house (using a list and a receipt). I also buy whatever the children need. My female employer knows I am good, but she never praises me for what I do. I have been working here for three years. For a period of time I had left them; I went back to Ethiopia to see my parents and then came back to work for five months at another job. I did not like it and decided to go back to work for that couple, who in the meantime had tried other girls but liked me best... My female employer will only give me 5,000 Drs. as a Christmas present, for example, and the husband will supplement it to make it a regular Christmas present behind his wife's back».

On the other hand, studies about Greece specifically indicate that Albanian women are the least trusted East-European women especially with regard to baby-sitting, as a result of allegations of infant smuggling organized by the Albanian mafia and a general public perception of the Albanian immigrant as criminal (Droukas, 1998:360; Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 179-181; Lazaridis, 2000: 50). Lazaridis' explanation for such mistrust and lower ranking of (mostly Moslem) Albanian women as domestic workers compared with (mostly Christian Catholic) Filipinas, refers to the racialization of Islam in Europe, intersecting with gender and cultural/religious differences (2000: 55-56, 65). A further study with a specific focus on examining the motives and rate of preference of Greek employers for female domestic workers of diverse origins, as well as a comparative methodology of the experiences of individuals from specific ethnic groups and national origins, would be needed in order to determine how racism, economic considerations based on racist practices, sexist, and cultural ideologies and practices interface in the hiring process and in retaining domestic employment.

The greater financial vulnerability and difficulty in making a living in Greece is attested by a Senegalese migrant woman, 65 years of age, who had lived in Athens alone for about five months (at the time of the interview) selling artifacts on the street. Her six children were back in Senegal, caring for each other and cared for by extended family, a story which is common for migrant women (Kofman et al., 2000: 122). This «transnational mother» (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997) had to work very long hours in the streets of Athens in order to gain sufficient income to support them. She described a life «on the run» as a street vendor:

«My biggest problem is that sometimes the police chase me because I have no license. I then have to move to another spot. Also, sometimes I get called names because I sit on the sidewalk and get in people's way. Only the people who like the African artifacts I sell stop and talk to me. Sometimes people look at me funny but they are generally friendly…I work as many hours as I can. They vary on a daily basis from seven to ten hours…If the business goes well, I stay longer, on slow days though I just pick up and leave…. I have to do it. I don't have much choice. I need to send money home and need to survive as well».

Literature on Greek labour market segmentation supports generally this study's findings. The Greek labour market is highly segmented and the migrant labour force is wholly complementary to the native one, rather than standing in an antagonistic relationship to it. Immigrants without work permits can expect to find employment at about half the market rates for Greeks. They have no social security coverage and stand under the constant threat of deportation by demanding employers, even in areas of high unemployment. These immigrants usually work in seasonal jobs (construction, tourism, and agriculture). A large number of small firms across all sectors also depend on foreign labour. Migrants also work in households taking care of small children and older adults, as well as in maintenance and repairs. The complementary nature of the migrant labour force enables the survival of entire industries - and therefore is not a cause of higher Greek unemployment levels (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999; Iosifides and King, 1998).

In addition, the literature reveals that there seems to be sex and age segregation in employment with women working more in domestic service, in care of the elderly or accompanying male customers in bars (Romaniszyn, 1996; Lazaridis, 1996; Petronoti, 1998). Furthermore, there is an ethnic differentiation in employment and payment, with different ethnic groups specializing in different kinds of work (dependent on networks and ethnic stereotypes as to who can do what) and obtaining different wages even if it pertains to the same kind of work. For example, Albanians, one of the newest migrant groups, are used in the most dangerous or totally «flexible» (i.e. low paying, no benefits, temporary) kinds of work and for the lowest pay (Psimmenos, 1998; Iosifides and King, 1998). Nigerians specialize in clothes trading, Egyptians, Iraqis and Kurds in fishing, animal and bird farming, and Filipinos in domestic work and as staff in merchant ships.

Psimmenos (1998: 257, 263) calls this concentration of different ethnicities in specific lines of work the «ethnicization of work and payment». Even traditional kinds of work that have been eliminated by mechanization over the years in Greece have been revived because of such high worker availability (Psimmenos, 1998: 264). Invariably, profit margins for businesses have increased as a result of this ghettoization of categories of workers and labour market segmentation.

Assumed Guilty: Racism in Society at Large. Another important issue to examine is the level of discrimination women face not only in their place of employment but within the larger society, as this has a major impact on the woman's ability to work, economic and personal security, health and well-being. Several women encountered problems on the streets and in their neighbourhoods in terms of name-calling and overt discrimination. The following report of a forty-three-year old Bulgarian woman, with fourteen years of education (high school and vocational schools) working as a live-in for an elderly lady in Athens, speaks to that. The woman was very aware of her racialization in Greece and referred to herself as «black». She had a very good relationship with her employer, but not with the neighbours or the broader community. She stated:

> «The taxi driver cheated me today because he drove me in rounds so that he could charge more… I have been offended and even attacked on the street because I was speaking Bulgarian with my son when he was visiting me. He does not want to come back to Greece any more… They made me wait at the supermarket until all the Greeks waiting in line passed through first. They did that because I was "black". Although we are needed here, we face so many difficulties».

At some point she was picked up by the police at her home, taken to the police station and interrogated as to whether she brought men home at night. In desperation, she called an organization for human rights in Athens and they provided her with a lawyer immediately.

One of the officials at the office of the Central Trade Union of Greece (ΓΣΕΕ) informed us that several organized immigrant groups exist to help the immigrants with possible problems. The Trade Union also often plays the role of an advocate. The Bulgarian woman was released, as there was no evidence against her. The police did not even know her name; a neighbour who disliked foreigners had called the police accusing her of prostitution. She was humiliated in front of the neighbourhood when two policemen accompanied her to the station in broad daylight. This woman's experiences

attest to the notion that migrants are confined in «periphractic» –fenced-off– spaces (Psimmenos, 2000: 81-101; Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 183), as they are surrounded by multiple barriers separating them from the mainstream Greek society. These barriers are enforced by the police and their neighbours and denote the migrant's racialization. This racism of the wider society[4] reflects the institutional nature of racism embedded even in the most recent immigration law and relevant policies.

An African woman working in house cleaning despite her twelve years of education, relates her own perceptions of racism in Greek society, outside her place of employment where she is clearly aware of the super-exploitation she experiences:

> «No problems other than these. Some Greek people are racist and feel that Africans are different, that they did not go to school, they do not know how to read or play or garden. Greeks believe what they see in the UNICEF advertising about Ethiopians… that they are poor and at war. But these pictures are from fifteen years ago, and are used to solicit funding. War is happening in certain areas, not everywhere. Besides the odd racist / misinformed comment, I, personally, have not experienced racism outside».

The migrants' reactions to racism against them encompass a wide spectrum ranging from fear, to defensive strategies, passive resistance, verbal confrontation, organizing, reverse hostility and so forth, depending on their education, level of understanding and political awareness, and intensity of their experiences. In the face of obstacles and oppressive circumstances, the range of migrant women's reactions demonstrates their human agency and struggle to gain a measure of empowerment. A recent immigrant from Serbia with a high school education and limited knowledge of the Greek language, working ten hours a day in house cleaning, has decided to endure: «I like to work. I need to know that I am doing something for myself. I know that sometimes it can be hard, but what can I say? I have to endure and wish for better days». A 32-year-old woman from Sierra Leone, who was at the time unemployed with three small children, expressed different feelings in commenting on Greek racism:

> «I cope because there is no other way. I miss my country more when I am faced with racist incidents. Then I may shout back or I talk with

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4. Triandafyllidou has analyzed the discourse of social exclusion in the Greek society in a comparative study of Greece and Italy (2000: 186-206).

other people about [what is happening]. It depends on the circumstances. Sometimes people use me to scare their children off. Such are not civilized people... The Greeks of Greece are mostly racist. My brother was recently killed in Sierra Leone [in the war]. I think of him all the time. It is very sad, but to die in Greece because of racism is even worse. Seven foreigners were killed here last week because of racism. I have decided to become racist against Greeks when I go back to my country».

Another woman reported on her husband's insolent reaction to another man asserting his racial superiority to her husband: «Do you know who I am? I am Greek!» Her husband replied: «and I am Turk»! Informant [laughing]: «The man almost had a heart attack». Finally, another woman decided on a more systematic and political reaction – to get involved in an organization:

«I am a member of the Ethiopian community organization paying 1,000 drachmas a month plus 3,000 drachmas for original registration. We are about 500 members in that organization. There are many more Ethiopians in Greece. The organization helps people go to hospitals, they gather money for the sick and dying. They take care of those arrested by the Greek police. We meet every three to four months. We celebrate Christmas, Easter etc. together. I have been a member since 1995».

The Friendliness and Hostility of Smaller Communities: Migrant women, especially from Eastern Europe, may be worse-off in the provincial towns because wages are lower, work is more precarious and they often stand out as «different» among a fairly homogeneous population, which renders them more exposed and thus vulnerable to racist incidents. At the same time, lower populations overall, the closeness of living in the smaller community and the slower pace of life may bring migrant workers more in personal contact with local people, having thus the potential of undermining the impersonal stereotype. In areas where the ratio of migrant numbers to local populations is low, migrants may be construed as less of a threat. Although our findings point in this direction, further, comparative research is required on the matter in order to compare, for example, small towns and large urban areas or different regions of Greece with different migrant densities. Also, comparing the labour market experiences of groups of diverse national origins in smaller towns would be fruitful in that regard. On this last point, the mayor of the small town in the Peloponnese, where we conducted some fieldwork and interviews, carefully made distinctions among various groups:

«We have excellent relations with the Greeks from Northern Epirus [the Greek minority of Albania], we have excellent relations with the Indians in our midst. We do not have very good relations with the Albanians… They are into petty crime, theft and other crimes due to poverty. We can understand what they do, but we cannot justify it. Also, a well known merchant was murdered a couple of years ago by Albanians in our town… With all of these foreign workers the countryside was revived, production increased, abandoned land came to life again».

An Albanian woman with a high school education and two small children had been living for six years in the same small provincial town. There she was well connected with local families and especially women, was known as «the Albanian» and worked in house cleaning. Her spouse worked in construction and was paid less than a Greek worker. Neither one had social security coverage (IKA) at the time of the interview. She reported on her uneasy relationship with the local authorities, who were making fun of her but never seriously bothered her, and on her daily encounters with racism:

«We have a visa; now we are expecting a green card. Visas were in effect for one year. Once our visa expired, my husband was appre-hended by the police and sent back to Albania. He was asked to get a new visa from Albania, which he had to pay for and wait for months. This is why he had to buy the visa in the black market. He has paid over a million drachmas in visas. When he was captured by the police, I had to go and beg for his release with my baby daughter. The police were making fun of me, telling me he would be back in two days. They never bothered me though. I am generally treated well in cleaning homes…

My friend's son was not allowed to join the football team. They take the Greek children first. They do not accept children easily to the kindergarten. I am having difficulty placing my son in daycare. I may go the mayor to ask for help. I need to work and have to have both children in daycare…».

Living in the countryside may mean increased isolation and vulnerability to economic exploitation. Another woman worked with her husband, who was a university- educated professional. They worked as guardians, cooks and gardeners of a villa in an isolated area. The villa was empty during most of the year, but they were expected to keep it clean and ready to receive guests at all times. They were allowed to use only the quarters allocated to

them, although they were lucky to have had permission, «out of pity», to keep their two-month-old daughter with them. However, the little girl (two-and-a-half years old at the time of the interview) spent most of the time inside the house without any company because of her mother's work. Thus she hardly had any social interaction with either parents or other children of her age. Both the woman and her husband were at the employer's mercy when it came to payment:

«We started with 250,000 Drs. a year in the beginning. Now (after two and a half years), we get 280,000 Drs. We get paid 30,000 Drs. per month for food. The villa's owners had promised us 100,000 for food when we started but the promise was never kept. We spend much more in food. My husband in the last year receives social insurance stamps, but we do not know how much because the boss keeps his book. I do not receive social insurance stamps. We never get paid any extras (Easter gift, Christmas gift)...We do not have a green card yet. Officially, we are not supposed to do what we do for living. My husband is supposed to be a manual worker in Athens. We are presumed to live in [name of small town] separately. He has been bothered many times by the police in Athens (when he was living and working there), never in [name of small town]. They will have to give us a green card sooner or later».

The Vernacular of Love and Culture: Common language, a common cultural past or the common language of a close, personal relationship have demonstrated the potential, in this study, of abolishing racist barriers and serving as bridges between Greeks and migrant workers, facilitating the social and economic integration of the latter into the Greek society. An East-European woman married to a Greek seemed to have fared well in terms of employment. A 29-year-old woman from Kosovo with a high school education, who was married to a Greek man, had been tending a store selling women's clothes. She met the store's owner, a co-patriot, through her husband. Unlike most women in house cleaning, her employer paid her all the benefits required, including health and social insurance. She stated:

«I maintain the store, sell clothes, and work on all the items that need alterations. You know, sometimes we need to shorten pants or take in a skirt. My mother had taught me how to sew so it is very useful in this job... I work at least eight hours. Sometimes I stay a little later at closing time if the owner is not here... I get paid over 100,000 Drachmas. Of course during the holiday season the owner pays me all

the benefits and wages required. The good thing about this job is that I have IKA coverage, so when I have a baby, I will have all the benefits that come along with that. Also, if I have any health problems, I can take care of them».

Thus, being married to a Greek man has allowed her to enjoy many privileges in the labour market. With regular employment and full benefits she was the closest of our subjects to being part of the formal labour market. Although she was still waiting for her employment authorization, she was able to successfully obtain regular employment with full benefits.

A similar «privileged» access to local Greeks enabled the 50-year-old Egyptian woman in our study to gain consistent full time employment. She was the only person with a post high-school education and Christian Orthodox (Coptic) religion to have lived in Greece for more than twenty years. Her Egyptian background was very helpful to her, considering the thousands of Greek citizens who were born in Egypt and returned to Greece with the social reforms in the 1960s. Thus, she was able to easily obtain employment with Greek women born in Egypt and Arabic speakers like herself. This woman was providing personal aesthetic services or did house cleaning, both lower paid jobs without benefits, yet she was welcome and treated well in these homes. With her husband physically disabled and unemployed with a very low pension, it was necessary for her to work long hours in order to compensate for the family income. Despite her employment discrepancy from the previous woman, one point to be made is that both women, married to Greek men, were also light-skinned and well educated.

According to the literature review, personal, vernacular, pre-capitalist relations in the labour market between employer and employee are frequent. Even with the most recent measures, it is estimated that the overwhelming majority of immigrants remain illegal. Not being able to rely on any institutional and legal support mechanisms, the worker becomes personally dependent on the employer or the person who provides access to an employer. In addition, even for migrant workers with a permit, work relations with the employer resemble pre-capitalist times when the latter had a significant say in the worker's personal space. For example, Albanian workers are compelled to integrate with the Greek population by being encouraged to baptize their children and get baptized themselves, to change their names into Greek ones, or to re-define themselves as originating in the Greek minority of Albania, and thus being of Greek descent (Psimmenos, 1998: 260).

Intra-Ethnic Relations and Social Problems: Intra-ethnic networks, formal and informal, exist and provide assistance to new-comers and unemployed, albeit at a cost sometimes. A Kosovar refugee, with a small business of her own (owner of a store for women's clothes), was running at the same time

«…an informal employment agency, supplying workers to various places, mostly maids. Women who need employment usually do not know where to go, so I help them out since I can speak and understand the language a lot better».

A Russian woman, with a high school education, living in Greece for about five years at the time of the interview, related how she got to Greece in the first place by creating her own informal network:

«I lived in Romania for about one year before coming to Greece. Although it was quite nice there, I could barely make ends meet, let alone send anything to help my family. Then I heard from another Russian woman that her best friend in Greece is earning a lot more for the same type of work. So, I contacted her and she helped me when I got here first».

Aware of how useful such a network can be, the same woman has been a member of another group of her compatriots since. «We have a group of people from Russia that meets once a month, and we are trying to expand and include more people in order to talk about our needs and ways to face these».

Intra-ethnic relations are not always harmonious though. Some East-Europeans reported problems they faced in employment situations from their own group. An Albanian woman in her sixties who had lived in Greece for fifteen years and had been working in house cleaning relates her family's problems with the «Albanian Mafia». She claimed:

«Greek people are good to us. At one point we faced a lot of problems by the Albanian mafia. They tried to get us involved in illegal activity. They tried to get my husband involved in selling drugs. He was very lucky to escape the network without being harmed. This is because he never got to sell anything for them. He never talked to them again though. At another point I was offered some kind of job in a club that I came to realize would lead to prostitution. So, although it was a lot more money than what I make now, I did not get involved in it. You know a lot of our girls get involved in this type of work because of the better money. God help them».

Illegal immigrants are easy to push to the social margins because they cannot turn to social services, like the police, for assistance. On the one hand pressured or black-mailed by their own compatriots to engage in illegal activity, on the other unable and possibly unwilling to tell on their compatriots and report these pressures to the police, some immigrants may resort to illegal activities in order to survive. Being cut off from social networks and the moral control of the family (in the case of Albanians, for example), this totally «flexible» character of employment contributes to increased crime (Psimmenos, 1998: 266). Conditions of illegality and alienation (reinforced by isolation from family) provide the context in which migrants proceed in committing offences (Papantoniou et al. 1998: 305). Looking at the proportion of the immigrant prison population alone, which in Greece stand roughly at 50%, offers an inadequate explanation, as there are highly discriminatory reasons why immigrants are imprisoned including inadequate legal representation, automatic pre-trial detention, and even imprisonment beyond the actual sentence length (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b). Although there is some evidence to suggest that immigrants have contributed to certain specific petty crimes, generally the native population seems to be more involved with serious crime, with a notable exception the behaviour of foreign and indigenous mafia (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002b; Droukas, 1998: 355-56). Further research is required to discover the extent to which crime is committed within ethnic communities by members of that community or against members of other ethnic and migrant communities.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of South-North migrations in the late twentieth century and the Mediterranean model of immigration that has been developing in the last two decades of the twentieth century, increasing numbers of migrants, and women in particular, arrive every year on Greek soil. In the experiences of the migrant women of our study, women of all ages, races and nationalities, some with a legal status, some undocumented residents and workers, the modern Greek state hardly enables them and their families to live and work with dignity. The inherent difficulties of obtaining regularization or at least work permits to allow for better employment, exacerbates labour market segmentation along racial, ethnic, and gender divides. It is apparent that racism is prominent both at the institutional and the personal level, despite the cases of kindness and acceptance by a few. Since the official state has transformed migrants, through its institutions of law and policy, into an

«underclass» of workers (Droukas, 1998: 359; Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 182), the general attitude in Greece accepts exploiting the immigrant, whether this is in house cleaning, child and elderly care or construction. It is quite profitable to use a woman as a live-in caregiver to an elderly person and pay her a fraction of what one would pay a Greek woman who would demand full benefits. Exclusion and marginalization are thus materially reproduced on a daily basis. The spectre of the migrant warrants sufficient hostility to invoke even meaningless accusations and street harassment. Migrant women are seen in stereotypical roles, as prostitutes or maids. Exclusion and marginalization are thus symbolically reproduced as well. The African migrant women of our study, who are more recent immigrants, more economically vulnerable, and often in flight from political violence in their countries of origin, have a harder time surviving economically in Greece; they tend to live a more precarious existence. Discrimination in the provincial towns and villages is an area that is hugely under-investigated.

If the participation of migrant women with work permits in the collectivity of the modern Greek state is restricted in terms of legal, political, economic, civil and social rights, depending on the colour of their skin and ethnic origin, undocumented migrant female workers without permits are the most restricted and therefore the most vulnerable of all workers, living a precarious existence, often institutionalized in legal, social, cultural and economic apartheids. These patterns are not unlike patterns in informal labour markets globally, and especially for undocumented workers. In the global economy, international migration is connected with processes of integrating labour globally, harmonizing production at the lowest cost, as work is rendered flexible, complementary and transferable (McMichael, 2000: 190-208). International labour circulation combines some formal (and most frequently, as in Southern Europe, informal) labour migration policies with decidedly informal (read «exploitative») working conditions. Athens, especially, is increasingly becoming a «dual» city in the sense of clear demarcation of «native» from «mixed» (immigrant) spaces, in an almost apartheid South-Africa way (Psimmenos, quoted in Iosifides and King, 1998). In addition to respect for human rights and European and UN international conventions for the protection of migrant workers and their families (Kofman et al., 2000: 90), for Greece, in particular, located at the crossroads between the community of West European nations and the economic South, and also in an area that has been shaken by national and ethnic conflicts, wise, long-term policies for minority populations are of utmost urgency and importance.

Future studies on migrant women in Greece need to pay systematic attention to the legal status, nationality and race of migrants. Our study indicates that there are differences in the ways that East European and black African or Asian women are treated both in the workplace and in the wider society. It is important not to consider migrant women as a homogeneous category, but to pay systematic attention to their differences and how such differences intersect and shape their experiences of work and life in Greece. Such recognition of difference can only be a source of power among migrant women and migrant organizations, because it is only by respecting difference that one can start building coalitions and movements for change.

In addition, there is also a need to control for the time of arrival of migrants and systematically compare individuals who have arrived more recently with the earlier arrivals. Our study indicates that with sufficient time of residence in Greece some improvement in the labour force situation may be achieved. To an extent such improvement for migrants might be a function of becoming more fluent in the Greek language and better acquainted with employers, as well as making friends in the community and building networks (i.e. increasing their social capital). Furthermore, the social class of migrants in the country of origin, assessed through levels of education, as well as their networks within the Greek society prior to or upon arrival, need to be taken into consideration. Our study again points to such factors as being significant. Regional contexts of migrant reception need to be taken into consideration in identifying patterns and forms of racism and exclusion through comparative research of female migrant labour force experiences in different parts of Greece across migrant groups of diverse origins. Finally, systematic comparisons of male and female workers are needed on labour force experiences.

In terms of methodology, since we encountered considerable difficulty in establishing relations of trust with our participants, we would recommend a long period of establishing contacts and fieldwork before the actual interviews start, or even a sequence of interviews. The use of an interpreter, if needed, is also crucial, as each time the researcher/interviewer probes further into the questions in order to both allow more time to establish relations and/or to confirm findings. Some sort of reciprocity between interviewer–interviewee is also important, even if it takes the form of a token participation fee, otherwise the interview process runs the risk of being another form of migrant exploitation. Finally, action research, involving significant investment on the investigators' part in training the participants and empowering them by transforming them into co-researchers, providing the solutions themselves, would also be warranted in future research.

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