

## **BOOK REVIEW**

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By Helen-Maria Lekas

Floya Anthias and Gabriella Lazaridis (eds), 2000, *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe: Women on the Move*, Oxford, New York, Berg, pp. 263.

In the 1980s, researchers began to recognize that women actively participated in shaping the international migratory ebbs and flows often following different trajectories than men, and therefore, deserved to be the focus of immigration studies. Recent geopolitical changes have produced another interesting phenomenon: Southern European countries such as, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, that were traditionally places of emigration have instead began to attract immigrants from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Moreover, the majority of the migrants who choose Southern Europe as their place of destination are women. These women, like the men in the past, tend to migrate on their own with the intention to build better lives in a new country, and many pave the road so that other family members can follow in their footsteps. Examining the intersection of these two recent shifts in the immigration field, that is, how the feminization of migration unfolds in Southern Europe, is the goal of this edited volume by Anthias and Lazaridis.

This is a groundbreaking collection of studies both because the issue of gender and migration to this part of Europe has not been previously analyzed, but also because the contributing authors reach beyond the economic explanations of migration. Although globalization creates demand for gendered work, such as, domestic and sex work, that spills over national boundaries, the essays in this book successfully argue that globalization cannot fully account for the trends in female migration. To understand female migrants' experiences, the authors refer to the concepts of family and social networks, and define women as complex social agents whose actions are determined by a variety of factors, not solely economic survival. Chell-Robinson's piece, for instance, on the challenges confronting Filipino and Somalian women in Italy indicates that the personal networks migrant women develop in the destination country constitute their primary source of practical and emotional support for constructing their new lives in a foreign

place. O' Reilly's essay on the experiences of British women who migrate to Costa del Sol, Spain effectively illustrates the limitations of personal networks. When attempting to become integrated into a foreign place that views them as outsiders, British women experience loneliness, uncertainty, and frustration. The coethnic friendship networks these women develop provide guidance, tangible assistance, and some emotional comfort but, due to their impermanency, these friendships lack the intimacy and trust of the relationships these women enjoyed while living in Britain.

Two of the chapters in the book (Chapters 6 and 7), focus on women migrants as they organize to improve their lives in Italy, by either joining the national domestic workers' association, or by forming their own associations in order to influence the city council of Bologna and fight for housing, health care, social security and other entitlements. While both these essays demonstrate that women are actively involved in determining their transnational destinies and «not just passive receivers of social processes», as Anthias stated (p. 35), they also highlight two more issues found throughout the book: the impact of the geographical and the social place on women migrants' experiences, and the significance of the intersection among gender, race, and class in shaping instances of the feminization of migration.

In Psimmenos' analysis of the processes that relegate Albanian women in the margins of Athens' labor market and confine them in dangerous, exploitative jobs in the sex industry, the concepts of urban and social spaces emerge as key interpretative factors. By identifying three housing zones and linking them to different sectors of the sex industry, the author argues, that the sex workers' degree of powerlessness is reflected in different degrees of spatial segregation. Extreme segregation or «hypersegregation», for instance, is associated with enforced prostitution where women relinquish all somatic and economic power. The analytical significance of place is poignantly illustrated in some Albanian sex workers' quotes where they describe themselves as placeless, that is, unwilling to stay in the Athenian sex industry but also embarrassed and unable to go back to their families in Albania.

A number of essays emphasize how the interplay between gender and race/ethnicity produce and reproduce a hierarchy of female migrants working in the same occupation and within the same country. Using the prototypical example of domestic workers, Lazaridis shows that Filipino women enjoy slightly higher wages and status compared to their Albanian counterparts. Albanian women working as domestics suffer a greater labor market vulnerability in part because they appear to embody the notion of the «other» for many Greek families. According to the narratives Lazaridis analyzed, Greek employers'

tend to view Filipino domestic workers as efficient, honest, «good Catholic girls», and therefore preferable, to the dishonest, dirty, lazy, «Muslim» Albanian women. In her essay, Chell-Robinson also reveals a power differentiation between the relatively advantaged Filipino domestic female workers and their Somalian counterparts.

The state also plays a role in racializing and gendering the migrants' experiences. As several essays suggested, states through immigration laws or often lack of such laws facilitate or hinder the economic, social, and cultural integration of particular racial/ethnic groups and women. In southern Europe, for instance, governments seeking to meet the demand for domestic workers are pro-actively issuing work permits for female migrants willing to fill these positions. On the other hand, the book's chapters focusing on Greece and Italy suggest that the lack of a comprehensive body of immigration laws has transformed these countries into migration magnets, while also enabling the exploitation of undocumented migrants, including women. A state's attempt to racialize the migration flow is one of the issues addressed in Escriva's essay where she documents that Spain's immigration regulations openly favor Latin American, Filipino and Equatorial Guinean migrants vis-à-vis Moroccan migrants. The primary theme, however, Escriva's tackles is whether the process of migration increases or decreases women's status; a theme that permeates the book.

A comprehensive analysis of the effects of migration on women's status requires an examination of the gender dynamics characterizing both a woman's place of origin and destination. The timing, circumstances, and reasons for migration affect a female migrant's status. Migrating independently, however, and even becoming the primary breadwinner in a family does not automatically translate into an increase in a woman's standing, since both migration and working may be interpreted in a patriarchal context as part of a wife's or mother's female duties. Using the case of Catalonia, Ribas-Mateos' essay constructs a typology of «three migratory models in respect to gender», where the Filipino model is viewed as «highly feminized», the Gambian as «highly masculine», and the Moroccan as «masculine in transition» (p. 173), to argue that we have to examine the gender roles in a woman's country of origin to better understand how the process of migration may affect her status and life.

In concluding, I would recommend this book to both scholars and policy makers interested in issues of gender and migration. My only disappointment was that some of the essays did not provide enough original data to substantiate their points, a weakness I attributed to space limitations. As many of the essays hint, and Anthias' theoretical chapter suggests, the feminization of migration in South Europe has produced a Kuhnian scientific anomaly that challenges our existing conceptual tools

for explaining the patterns and effects of immigration (Kuhn, 1970). The Anthias-Lazaridis volume provides some of the

concepts and analytical relationships for beginning to make this paradigm shift.

### **References**

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