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Neovi M. Karakatsanis, Jonathan Swarts

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Neovi M. Karakatsanis*, Jonathan Swarts**

MIGRANT WOMEN, DOMESTIC WORK AND THE SEX TRADE IN GREECE – A SNAPSHOT OF MIGRANT POLICY IN THE MAKING

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 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

As Greece enters the twenty-first century, it does so as a country undergoing a profound transformation. Having left behind its historical position as a largely poor, agricultural and culturally traditional country on the semi-periphery of Europe, it has entered the new millennium with strikingly radical changes afoot in Greek society, economy, culture and government.

* Assistant Professor of Political Science at Indiana University South Bend.

** Lecture of Political Science at Purdue University North Central and Indiana University South Bend.

Popular attitudes have become less traditionally conservative; new industries, particularly in the tertiary sector, are displacing a traditional agrarian economy; a consumer culture has arisen in a country previously unable to afford mass consumer consumption; a government, traditionally restrictive and implicitly corporatist, is undertaking significant freer-market reforms and integrating Greece ever more closely into the political and economic embrace of Europe; and the list goes on.

While hardly any aspect of modern Greek life remains untouched by these changes, nowhere are the contrasts clearer than with respect to migration. As is widely known, Greece has traditionally been an exporter of a significant number of its people. Simply looking at the fifteen years from 1955 to 1970, well over ten percent of the total Greek population – approximately one million people – left the country, emigrating primarily to Western Europe, Australia and North America (Tsoukalas, 1987: 194). In recent years, however, such migratory trends have been reversed; today, the number of Greeks emigrating abroad is minimal (OCED, 1999: 147; King, 2000: 5-7). Meanwhile, Greece has become a significant destination of choice for migrants from the Balkans, elsewhere in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia. In fact, in-migration has become such an important demographic feature of Greek society that, in a society with negative natural population growth, it has become the sole source of population increase overall. While estimates vary, anywhere from 1.5 to 3 percent of the total Greek population is composed of legal immigrants, while the total number of both documented and undocumented migrants may total nearly 10 percent of the Greek population, with Greece experiencing the highest illegal migration rates – primarily through its borders with Albania and Turkey – of all Southern European countries (OECD, 2000: 42, 193; Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999: 206; Baldwin-Edwards, 2001: 6, 9). The significance of this shift – particularly in a traditional population exporting country – cannot be overestimated.

Moreover, at a time when international migration is becoming increasingly feminized (Castles and Miller, 1993: 8; Phizacklea, 1998; Kelson and DeLaet, 1999; Kofman et al., 2000), Greece evinces the highest female migration rate in Europe (and the United States) (OECD, 2000: 25). While males dominate the migration flows from the Middle East and other Muslim countries (e.g., Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon), females outnumber male migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Philippines – so much so that, in 1998, 60 percent of all migrants to Greece were female, with the highest

female in-migration rates from places like Bulgaria (76%), Albania (70%), Romania (76%), Poland (85%), and the Philippines (80%) (OECD, 2000: 191, 314).

In this paper, we look at the feminization of migration in Greece as a critically important phenomenon in its own right, but also as a particularly potent case study that illustrates the crises, problems and dilemmas faced by state, society and economy as Greece attempts to grapple with the migrant phenomenon. In this respect, we focus particular attention on two of the most obviously feminized aspects of migration in Greece – that of the trafficking of women, particularly as it relates to the sex industry, and the large and growing role of migrant women (both documented and undocumented) in caregiving. In each case, one can clearly see demonstrated how the Greek state, economy and society are attempting to deal with the migrant phenomenon, yet coming only partway toward meeting their regional and international obligations.

Analyzing the feminization of Greek migration from the standpoint of a country in the throes of tremendous social, political and economic change, we consider the issue of female migrants within the context of five distinct transformations that are underway in Greece:

1. The transformation of the Greek legal system to fully conform to European Union and other international standards. Significant changes have been made to Greek law with respect to migrants in recent years and new anti-trafficking legislation is pending. Yet, Greece continues to lag behind most other European Union members with respect to the rights of migrants generally, and female workers and sex crimes victims, in particular. Too often serious abuses go unchecked because of insufficient legal protections.
2. The transformation of the Greek state apparatus from a heavily bureaucratized, strongly clientelistic public service in which existing legal regulations and procedures are only inconsistently applied to a more professional, rule-oriented organization focused on efficient and equal protection and services to all. In this paper, attention will be particularly paid to the police services, as their modes of operation are of critical importance if illegal and abusive treatment of women migrants is to be curtailed.
3. The transformation of a culture that has been characterized as particularistic, nationalistic and often xenophobic to one in which the protection of the political and fundamental human rights of all people,

regardless of race, class or origin, is seen as an important societal goal. While progress in this respect has been slow, it is nonetheless essential in a society that is increasingly becoming diverse and multicultural.

4. The transformation of the role of women within a traditionally male-dominated society and economy. As gender roles and expectations within Greek society change, women are increasingly entering the labor market and finding they have less time for their traditional roles as homemakers and caregivers. This is intrinsically related to social welfare provision in Greece, which is at the same time insufficient and in large measure based on the assumption that women will provide the bulk of social services, particularly to the young and the elderly, within the context of the home. With increased female labor participation, however, the welfare state has not «kept up». As we shall argue, this transformation has created a significant demand for someone to perform these functions – ones which migrant women are often called upon to fill.

DOMESTIC WORKERS: PROGRESS ON THE BACKS OF FOREIGNERS

We begin by turning our attention to the first major element in the feminization of migration in Greece – that of female domestic workers. Today thousands of women from Albania, the Philippines and Eastern Europe are employed as domestic workers in the homes of the Greek middle- and upper-classes. Both documented and undocumented, these women and their precarious personal, economic and legal situations typify many of the problems faced by Greek migrant women. In this section, we look at the migrant domestic worker phenomenon, showing how migrant women are trapped in an economy, society and polity that afford them little protection and support. As we shall see, while increased female participation rates in Greece have created a growing demand for domestic labor, the women who are drawn into these jobs lack fundamental legal and social protections. Migrant women are essentially caught in a legal system that insufficiently recognizes and protects fundamental rights, a condition exacerbated by law enforcement agencies that fail to provide adequate protection for these women, particularly those who are undocumented.

In order to understand the roots of the migrant domestic worker phenomenon, one must look first at the changing role of women within

Greek society. Simply put, women have gone from being the sole providers of domestic services and childcare within the home to receiving ever-higher levels of education and entering the paid workforce in increasing numbers. Yet, while this dramatic transformation has taken place, Greek cultural values regarding women's «duties» within the home remain largely intact. Thus, a dilemma – and a demand – are created: women are increasingly taking on responsibilities outside the home, but their tasks inside the home remain largely unabated.

Greek society is not atypical of most other Southern European societies, particularly with respect to the role of women as providers of childcare and other domestic work. Cultural values put great emphasis on what has been referred to as a «familistic» social welfare model and a «family wage» model of domestic income (Flaquer, 2000; Bahle and Pfenning, 2000). In these models, the male head of household provides the formal family income through labor in the paid workforce. At the same time, other family members, particularly wives, daughters and daughters-in-law, contribute to the family wage with income from both formal and informal work outside the home.¹ Such female work has traditionally consisted of tasks such as baby-sitting, cleaning, and washing, as well as of unpaid «assistance» to the family business or farm (García and Karakatsanis, forthcoming; Hadjimichalis and Vaiou, 1990: 94-5; Carlos and Maratou-Alipranti, 2000: 41-6). Domestic chores are thus the near-exclusive domain of women, as is the care of children and of elderly parents and grandparents.

In one major respect, however, this traditional pattern is beginning to erode. Greek women are leaving the home in unprecedented numbers, seeking ever-higher levels of education and entering the professional workforce in remarkable numbers. In the twenty –five years between 1971 and 1996, adult female participation in the paid labor force has jumped by over half– from 31.2 percent to 47.5 percent. In fact, while the overall participation rate for both men and women in Greece has increased slightly over the past two-and-a-half decades –from 57.8 percent to 61.0 percent– all of that increase has been due to the increased participation of women (OECD, 1986, 2001).

An important factor in women's increasing participation in the labor force is the steady increase in the levels of education these workingwomen

1. Women's participation in the informal economy has always been substantial in Greece, where that informal work accounts for about thirty percent of GDP (see Kanellopoulos, 1992).

have attained. The labor force participation rate for Greek women with a high school education is less than 60 percent, while the participation rate for university-educated women is 85 to 90 percent, a figure approaching that of men (Karakatsanis, 1999: 258). Furthermore, the level of women's education is increasing, outpacing that of men. International Labour Office data show that, in addition to having a slightly higher level of education than the average male worker, the average female worker is also becoming more educated, and at a faster rate than her male counterpart (ILO, 1996, 2000). Put simply, Greece is seeing the development of an increasingly active, educated female workforce.

This has clear implications for the care of children and other household activities. As more and more young women leave the home and enter the workforce, the need for someone to tend to children, care for the elderly and do domestic work grows. In Greece, the bulk of the labor force growth among females has come amongst young women, primarily of childbearing age. Whereas under-19 female employment continues to fall – almost certainly a result of young women remaining in school longer – and while the employment of women over 64 has dropped precipitously,² the labor market participation rates of the 20-29 and 30-44 age groups have seen tremendous growth. In the early 1980s, the participation rates of women of childbearing age hovered around 40 percent. Today, that figure approaches 65 percent (ILO, 1984, 1992, 1996, 2000). In other words, two-thirds of the women who traditionally would have formed the «backbone» of full-time, in-home labor, caring for their young children and aged parents, now enter the Greek workforce.

2. An interesting, unanswered question is why the need for migrant domestic help has increased alongside a decline in the labor force participation rates of older women, who might be expected to take over the childcare and domestic responsibilities of their daughters and daughters-in-law (see, for instance, Esping-Andersen, 1994: 16). One possibility is that, as young people increasingly migrate to the cities and as overall geographic mobility increases, the extended family – whether within the same household or in close physical proximity – is gradually being replaced by a more nuclear one. Thus, the older generation of women may no longer be as available for domestic work in the homes of their children as they once were. Another possible explanation is that, with increasing affluence, hiring «outside help» to do domestic chores has become something of a status symbol. With Greeks increasingly recruiting migrants to do unpleasant or unattractive work (Lazaridis, 1999: 110), there has apparently developed some caché to the statement «Έχω φιλιππινέζα» («I have a Filipina»), which has now evolved into a generic term for a foreign domestic worker (Lazaridis, 2000: 61-2).

This is clearly a remarkable transformation – one that will likely, over time, lead Greece to more closely approximate the female participation rates found elsewhere in the European Union. However, while on the one hand, Greek women are entering the outside work force in a way unthinkable to previous generations, on the other hand, most women face traditional expectations – in their own families and in society at large – regarding their responsibilities to tend to the needs of the home and of other family members.

Public opinion data reveal the extent to which Greeks maintain traditional attitudes, particularly with respect to women's roles and especially in contrast to the rest of the European Union. When asked if they agreed with the statement that a husband's job is to earn a wage while a wife's job is to tend to domestic work, Greeks responded in the affirmative more than the citizens of any other EU country (save Portugal, with whom they were tied). While the negative response was dominant (56 percent disagreeing as opposed to 44 percent in favor), the persistence of traditional attitudes on this point becomes most apparent in comparison to the other EU countries. The percentage of Greeks expressing such traditional gender attitudes is nearly twice the European average and about three times the average in the most «progressive» European countries (Europinion, 1997b).

But the emphasis on women's roles within the home is not just a phenomenon of Greek cultural values. Rather, the conception of the home as the workplace of women and the point of social welfare provision for children and the aged has been institutionalized into the Greek social welfare state. Put in simple terms, Greek social welfare provision continues to assume that men will work for a wage, optimally in well-protected, stable, long-term employment from which the worker (and his family) derive various social welfare benefits. Women, in contrast, will work in the home providing care for children and the elderly, thereby relieving the state of much of this burden. Welfare provision thus tends to be «gender-specific, promoting motherhood and aimed at reinforcing the traditional distribution of authority and power within the family, between genders and between generations, as well as strengthening solidarity between kin members» (Naldini, 2000: 71-2; see also Pantelidou-Malouta, 1998, and Stratigiki and Vaiou, 1994). Here, then, is the rub: in a world in which women are increasingly leaving the home for work in the formal labor market, essentially challenging previously dominant social and economic patterns, a significant void of child and elder care is created – one that is increasingly filled by migrant women.

As García and Karakatsanis (forthcoming) point out, Greece and other countries of Southern Europe «have been extraordinarily reticent to provide public child-care services (especially for under three-year-olds) to working parents. ...[C]overage is ... less than three percent»³ (see also Flaquer, 2000: 19). Greece in 1992 had only fourteen state-funded nurseries (for infants) and thirty-five nursery sections within kindergartens (for preschool toddlers) – in a country of over ten million people (Karantinos et al., 1992: 46; quoted in Sims-Shouten, 2000: 278). This reluctance, combined with parents' apprehension about leaving their children in public crèches to be cared for by «strangers» (Sims-Shouten, 2000) has meant that «public demand for state provisions of such services is relatively low. The family continues to be the main provider» (García and Karakatsanis forthcoming). In such an environment, it should come as no surprise that poor women from impoverished countries should seek to fill the void by migrating to Greece and providing this domestic help.

Who, then, are these migrant women and how are they positioned in the Greek state and society?

Women from the Philippines, Albania and Eastern Europe dominate migrant domestic work in Greece. The numbers of such women in Greece is difficult to accurately ascertain, however. Filipinas, who come to Greece mainly as legal migrants, were estimated to number around 40,000 in 1993 (Lazaridis, 2000: 59). The number of Albanian women is even harder to estimate, as the greatest number of them enter Greece illegally and thus are effectively uncountable by official sources. Albanians in general, however, make up the largest migrant group in Greece. In the initial phase of the 1998 regularization program for undocumented migrants in Greece, 375,000 applications were received. Just over half of these came from Albanians and over 70 percent were from men (OECD, 1999: 149). On the basis of these figures, then, one could conservatively estimate the number of Albanian women in Greece to be at least that of the number of Filipinas. Figures for Eastern European women are likewise sketchy, but the number working as domestics can safely be said to be in the tens of thousands.

In considering the situation in which these women find themselves, three important features must be emphasized – first, the economically precarious existence of these women; second, the vulnerable, insufficiently protected

3. As Esping-Andersen puts it, «familialism easily goes hand-in-hand with a very passive and undeveloped» social welfare state (1999: 51; see also Saraceno, 1991, and Nash, 1991).

position this economic precariousness places them in; and third, the grossly insufficient response of the Greek state and Greek society to their plight.

The first point –the extremely precarious existence of migrant workers– is abundantly obvious. Migrant women working as domestic laborers are motivated primarily by the desire to break out of deep poverty in their home countries. The Philippines and Albania have per capita incomes that are roughly one-fifth that of Greece, while most countries in Eastern Europe have incomes that range from about one-third to one-half the Greek average. Even poorly paid undocumented workers in Greece can earn as much as four to six times what they could expect to earn at home – assuming they can obtain employment (Fakiolas, 2000: 67). It is revealing of the levels of poverty these women face at home that Greece, the poorest country in the EU, is considered a destination of choice, where «good jobs» can be had at «good pay» by women, many of whom have substantially higher levels of education than even their Greek employers.⁴

But how good are these jobs, and what kinds of conditions do migrant women face? This brings us to our second main point – the extreme vulnerability and lack of overall legal and social protection these women face, a vulnerability that is only compounded by orders of magnitude for undocumented women migrants. In order to fully understand this vulnerability –and how Greek society and the state contribute to it– we need to make a distinction between documented, legal women migrants (most of whom are Filipinas) and the often undocumented women from Albania and Eastern Europe.

In the case of Filipina domestic workers, many come to Greece legally and with proper documentation. This usually occurs in one of three ways – through contact with an agent in the Philippines who actively recruits women to be migrant workers; through the auspices of an international organization such as Caritas, which helps facilitate a woman's migration to Greece; or finally, through word-of-mouth contact with other migrant workers who, through informal networks, are able to connect prospective migrants with employers willing to employ and sponsor their migration to Greece (Lazaridis, 2000: 62). In each case, a Filipina worker can only enter

4. Fakiolas refers to the emigration of highly educated people from poor countries to work as domestics and other unskilled labor as «brain waste» – the systematic wastage of skills and education in jobs for which migrants are dramatically overqualified (2000, 68; see also Morokvasic and de Tinguy, 1993).

Greece legally if she is in possession of a valid visa, which can only be obtained if she has already entered into a contract to work in Greece.⁵

The situation of undocumented women is even more difficult. With no official sponsors, contacts, or institutional support, these women generally find irregular, «under the table» work through personal contacts, word of mouth and even going door-to-door asking if domestic help is required (Lazaridis, 2000: 62). Given their «illegal» position, undocumented women migrants are even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Put simply, the Greek legal system –which has been slow to introduce laws that would legalize undocumented migrants and, once adopted, has routinely misinterpreted and misapplied them (International Helsinki Federation, 2002: 158)– offers little protection to domestic workers and, in important ways, actually serves to heighten their insecurity and vulnerability. In the absence of protective measures, employers have what amounts to a nearly free hand in the treatment of their domestic help, as abuses of all kinds go largely unreported and unprosecuted.

Documented workers are in a curious legal position. Because their residence in Greece is tied to the contract they have with a specific employer, they have little recourse if their employer proves unacceptable, fraudulent or abusive. Most domestic workers have little other choice than to tolerate various forms of exploitation and abuse given the fact that their right to remain in Greece is dependent on the very contract that ties them to the abusive employer. Given this near-total dependence on what amounts to virtually omnipotent employers, there is widespread evidence that abuse is rampant. Human Rights Watch, for instance, has reported that migrant domestic workers face a wide range of exploitative and abusive conditions – including «physical and verbal abuse; restrictions on freedom of movement; labor rights violations, including nonpayment of wages, long hours and poor working conditions. ... In many cases, the abusive employer had confiscated their documents, leaving them vulnerable to deportation as undocumented migrants» (Human Rights Watch, 2001b). Even under the best of circumstances, in which abuse is not present, migrant women –even documented ones– lack fundamental legal and social welfare protections.

5. As Lazaridis points out, this poses a significant economic burden to the migrant in and of itself. Most women obtain the necessary contracts through paying high fees to employment agencies. «It costs the domestic [worker] between 20,000 and 100,000 drachmas to find work through an agency, and the employer pays 50,000 to 60,000» (Anderson and Phizacklea, 1997: 29; quoted in Lazaridis, 2000: 62).

Domestic workers are not protected by legislation stipulating minimum wages, hours of work, and the like. Nor are they covered by unemployment insurance, paid sick leave, or pensions; they are treated as disposable nappies. They are therefore an extremely insecure group of workers, open to exploitation. They usually have no access to medical insurance (Lazaridis, 2000: 66-7).

The situation is even grimmer in the case of undocumented workers, where the opportunity for –and incidence of– exploitation is magnified many-fold. Unlike legal migrants who are at least within the penumbras of the law, deficient as it is, undocumented migrants have virtually no protection or recourse from abuse. They are, simply put, «ephemeral, transferable and highly vulnerable to exploitation» (Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 183). Hired by employers looking for domestic help at bargain basement wages and who are fully cognizant of the power that the women's illegal status grants them, these women are essentially at the mercy of the whims of their bosses. As one Albanian domestic put it:

I was expected to clean the house, look after the kids, cater for parties and ... gradually the boss's husband made clear that he was expecting sexual favours from me (quoted in Lazaridis, 1999: 112).

Another Albanian migrant, a woman who also was a physician, attests to the utter powerlessness of these women:

I am working as [a] domestic looking after an elderly relative of my boss. They know that I have qualifications but they treat me like a slave. I am working for long hours and receive only insults. I have no choice. I am illegal, I am not insured. I receive 1,000 drachmas per hour and I work more than 12 hours a day. I only go out on Sundays (quoted in Lazaridis, 1999: 113).

What «choices» these women have are particularly unattractive. They can work at exploitative wages in potentially abusive conditions – running the risk that someday their employer might tire of them, refuse to pay them wages they are owed, and report them to the police for deportation as illegals. They can, if they wish, refuse to work under such conditions –and thereby go unemployed and probably back into the same potentially dangerous situations elsewhere. The choice they cannot make is to seek protection and redress by the authorities. Such action is likely to produce only one response– not the prosecution of the abuser, but the deportation of the abused. As Lazaridis sums up this sorry state of affairs: «Their illegal status dissolves their entitlement and protection and respect accorded to

non-illegal women. They have no civil rights, and therefore they become the property of any man» (1999: 112).

Yet despite a glaring need for substantial legal protections for all migrants –and in particular exploited migrant women– the Greek state has yet to provide a sufficient level of such protection. Here we see in dramatic relief the curious halfway measures that have so far been taken in Greece with respect to the rights of migrants. On the one hand, positive steps have been made, particularly with the adoption in April 2001 of the new immigration law. Initially, a draft of the law lacked a clause outlawing discrimination against migrants on racial or religious grounds, placed especially stringent requirements on family unification, failed to address the problem of human trafficking (a topic taken up in a later bill), denied education and health care to the children of undocumented migrants, and did not prohibit the arbitrary detention or collective expulsion of migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2001b).

However, in a move that amply reflects the inadequate nature of the Greek legal system, the bill that was eventually adopted in the spring of 2001 corrected a number of these deficiencies, in particular with respect to the access of the children of undocumented workers to health care and education. But from the point of view of domestic workers, there was still a glaring deficiency: Greek law still bases employment-based migration on an exclusive contract between a worker and an employer. Domestic workers facing abusive conditions have little choice but to remain in that situation, or break the contract and lose their right to remain in Greece. The most logical and humane option –both sides agreeing to void the contract and part ways– is rarely employed: employers who have paid fees to employment agencies to recruit domestic workers are usually keen to «get their money's worth» from their domestic worker and use the ever-present threat of deportation to obtain workers' compliance (Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 179). Put simply, the Greek legal system, even after reform, provides domestic workers little protection.

Greek law is not the only example of inadequacy with respect to migrant workers. A second feature we identify is the insufficient, inefficient nature of the Greek bureaucracy, particularly the police services. As will be discussed in detail below with respect to trafficking, a significant obstacle to the fair, equitable and legally required protection of migrants by the police is a mixture of apathy, indifference, corruption and, at times, outright hostility. This is particularly true with respect to undocumented migrants –those who are indiscriminately caught up in the police's regular «sweeps» of major

Greek cities suffer conditions of mistreatment and abuse unacceptable in the light of various international conventions to which Greece is a signatory (Amnesty International, Dec. 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2002c).⁶

While less has been reported with respect to domestic workers and their interactions with police, what anecdotal evidence that does exist confirms that migrant women face the same problems of apathy and hostility from the Greek state bureaucracy, including the police. It is not at all unusual for abused migrant workers to be arrested and eventually deported, as state authorities resort to dishonesty to deny such women rights, (International Helsinki Federation, 2002: 158) while their former employers are virtually immune from prosecution –and therefore can act with impunity. Clearly, these sorts of obstacles present a Catch 22 to migrant workers– besides not having access to full legal protection from abuse and exploitation, they also face the added challenge of attempting to secure state enforcement of what few legal rights they do have. In the end, migrant women learn that rights unenforced are effectively rights denied.

TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN: THE NEW SLAVERY OF SEX

We now turn to the second main aspect of the feminization of migration in Greece –the trafficking of women for forced labor in the sex industry. Unquestionably, these women and girls are the most vulnerable and exploited migrants in Greece. Often coming to Greece with little or no awareness of the degraded life they are about to be forced into, these women are quickly trapped. As we shall see, they are held hostage– first, by their traffickers and pimps, and second, by a state and society that, as with domestic workers, provide them with very little of the support and assistance they so desperately need.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (November 2000; see also Williams, 1999), hundreds of thousands of women worldwide are trafficked each year. Far from being immune to these trends, Greece has itself become one of the major destination and transit countries for trafficked women. The trafficking of women for sex work has increased sharply in recent years, with over 20,000 migrant women trafficked annually into Greece (BBC, 2001).

6. The magnitude of these sweeps –and indeed of the size of illegal migration to Greece in general– can be seen by the fact that, since 1991, about 1.3 million people, mostly Albanians, have been deported from Greece (Fakiolas, 2000, 59).

The issue of human trafficking can be seen –as was the case with domestic workers– as a manifestation of a rapidly changing state and society. Sex work has long been legal in Greece and sex trade workers employed in brothels have been, and continue to be, licensed by the state.⁷ However, as Greek society has become more affluent and educated, the number of Greek women entering this profession has declined, aided by the increased demand for «cheaper,» more «exotic» women. To fill the void traffickers have stepped in and the number of foreign women brought to Greece to work the sex trade –particularly from the former Soviet republics, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia– has increased sharply (US Department of State, 2000; see also Lazaridis, 1998). The change has occurred quite rapidly. In 1991 the ratio of native sex trade workers to foreign ones was estimated to be 7: 3. By 1996, however, for every two Greek sex workers there were now three foreign ones (2:3). Today it is estimated that fully 50-55 percent of sex trade workers in Athens are from the former Soviet bloc alone (Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 4-5; see also Lazos, 1996: 17). Many of these women work in cafeterias, coffee houses, bars and other such establishments where they are ostensibly employed as waitresses, hostesses, and dancers – part of what Emke-Poulopoulos (2001: 5) calls «hidden prostitution».

The demographics of those involved in the sex industry have changed in other ways as well. «Old-style» sex trade workers were not only ethnically Greek but also generally older –and most worked in legally licensed brothels. «New-style» workers in contrast, are usually not only foreign-born but also much younger– rarely past their twenties – and work in unlicensed, «illegal» settings. In fact, the average age of a sex worker in Greece is becoming progressively younger, with 12-15 year old girls being the «preferred “commodity”» of Greek pimps (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2000: 25; Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 7; Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 181). The ethnic origins of foreign sex trade workers have also changed. Before the 1990s, most were Asian, primarily Thai and Filipina. However, by 1996, Central and East European women made up just over half of all sex workers, while women from the Balkans composed one-third. In many cases foreign sex trade workers tend to be well educated and multi-lingual and have come to be preferred to Greek women (Emke-

7. In addition to the legal sex trade, however, it should be noted that an illegal sex trade also takes place in the form of unlicensed establishments as well as on the streets, which is forbidden by Greek law. On Greek sex trade workers, see Lazos, 1996, and Lazaridis, 2001.

Poulopoulos, 2001: 4, 8). In a survey conducted by the Non Aligned Women's Movement, 38 percent of respondents answered that foreign women were preferable because they were cheaper, 38 percent said they were more available and more liberated, while others maintained that they were more beautiful and exotic (Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 30).

Finally, the way in which the sex trade business is conducted in Greece has also been transformed. In past years, traditional brothels were the main locus of this trade. Today traffickers are bypassing this «old-style prostitution,» moving the industry out of brothels and into bars, nightclubs, massage parlors, and the call-girl business (BBC, 2001). These businesses conceal their exploitation of women and girls behind a thin veneer of legitimacy, promoting their «services» publicly through regular advertising in newspapers, the broadcast media and on the internet (International Helsinki Federation, 2000: 25).

The shift to foreign sex workers, however, has not been a benign consequence of the globalization of the sex industry. Rather, it has carried with it a terrible truth: the fact that most foreign sex workers in Greece have been forcibly coerced into this trade. One study estimates that fully 75 percent of foreign female sex workers had not realized the real reason they were being brought to Greece (cited in Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 15). Lured with deceptive promises of lawful employment, they are often sold to club owners who specialize in the sex trade and who threaten them with deportation and violence if they refuse to cooperate. Often, as with domestics, their victimizers confiscate these women's documents, making their escape virtually impossible. Others are secretly videotaped and blackmailed by their «employers». As one 14-year old sex worker in central Athens described her plight: «If I return home, my father or brother (now that they have knowledge of my doings here) ... will kill me with the axe» (quoted in Psimmenos, 2000: 96; see also Psimmenos 1995: 164).

Increasingly, victims also undergo serious psychological and physical abuse (Lazos, 1996): Enslaved women and girls are often emotionally abused and physically battered, raped, deprived of food and water, not allowed to relieve themselves – all in an attempt to make them more submissive and «willing to cooperate». According to a thirteen-year-old girl who was kidnapped from Albania, smuggled into Greece and forced into the industry,

He beat and raped me on a daily basis because the customers would complain to him that I was not accommodating. ... He would make me watch videos so that I could improve my «technique» (quoted in *Athens News*, 2000).

Trafficking victims are frequently forced to «accommodate» so many customers per day –often over fifty– that they lose their sense of time and even consciousness (Lazos, 1998a: 462-3, 1998b: 19-22; quoted in Emke-Pouloupoulos, 2001: 17; see also Lazaridis, 2001: 89).

The problem of trafficked victims has become so grave in recent years that anti-trafficking plans have moved into the forefront of the legislative action programs of such organizations as the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and a variety of other international and domestic nongovernmental organizations. In December 2000, over 120 countries signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and eighty-six countries signed the convention's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 4-5). Greece signed both documents but has yet to formally ratify them. Greece's response to trafficking has been so slow that the US Department of State, in a report released in July 2001, gave Greece the lowest rating possible «for failing to combat trafficking, protect victims, or even acknowledge publicly that trafficking in Greece is a problem» (Human Rights Watch, 2001a). This lowest possible rating placed Greece alongside such countries as Burma, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Turkey – and behind other nations, such as Thailand, that have traditionally been identified as hotspots of the international sex trade (Phongpaichit, 1999).

Thus, as with the case of domestic workers, the Greek state and its legal system have left coerced sex workers in a grossly underprotected position. Even though the Greek Constitution outlaws all compulsory labor, Greek law does not yet criminalize trafficking.⁸ Instead it «refers to crimes against sexual freedom and the economic exploitation of sexual life,» including such offenses as rape (chapter 18, article 336), insult to sexual dignity (article 337), assault (article 338) and abuse of power (article 343) (International Helsinki Federation, 2000: 25). In this regard, the government has until recently taken a decidedly sanguine, rather than proactive, approach to anti-trafficking legislation, waiting for «direction» from the EU.

Thus, little has been done by the government to increase awareness of trafficking abuses or develop laws and programs that fight trafficking, punish

8. This was true at the time of this article's submission. However, in October 2002, a new anti-trafficking was passed by parliament. While trafficking was explicitly criminalized, the bill does not provide for the full protection of trafficking victims.

the perpetrators of such crimes, and provide protection for trafficking victims (Human Rights Watch, 2001a). Not only does Greek law not explicitly criminalize the trafficking of people but it also does not differentiate between illegal immigrants and trafficking victims. In this regard, even Greece's new Immigration Act, passed in April 2001 and discussed above, does not bring Greek law into full compliance with European and international standards. In particular, there is no provision in the Act that addresses «penalties for the trafficking of migrants ... or that provides protection and support services to trafficked migrants» (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 17-18). According to Human Rights Watch (2001a), the lack of such laws, coupled with an absence of coordination among law enforcement agencies, leaves trafficking victims with no protection from traffickers and trafficking networks. In addition, Chapter Eight of that draft bill initially included provisions for a visa regime for «alien artists employed in entertainment centers,» thereby implicitly referring to migrant sex-workers employed in nightclubs, bars and other entertainment establishments. However, these articles were eventually dropped due to opposition fear that it would facilitate «pimping networks» (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 22). While this fear was in some ways justified, at least one NGO rightly pointed out that the complete «absence of any mechanism for women to enter Greece for legal employment as dancers, barmaids, and other jobs in the entertainment sector, leaves migrant women even more vulnerable to traffickers for their entry into Greece» (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 22). Illegal migrants are, of course, infinitely more vulnerable to trafficking than are legal migrants working as entertainers or artists with legal work permits. Thus, some NGOs continue to urge the government to establish a visa regime that would grant visas to migrants seeking legal employment in the entertainment and tourism industry, while simultaneously providing penalties against traffickers who use coercive tactics with migrants seeking to secure such visas.

Closely related to the insufficient nature of legal protections against trafficking is the lack of concerted, sympathetic, supportive action by the police services and the courts.⁹ While prosecutions of traffickers have increased recently, they continue to remain at a low level and fines and sentences for perpetrators of trafficking are minimal. According to the

9. As Fakiolas (2000: 72) points out, Greece has hardly any foreigners employed in its public sector.

International Helsinki Federation (2002: 158), law enforcement officials (as well as society in general) are willing to tolerate racism in Greece and Greek officials often resort to dishonesty to deny migrants their rights. Moreover, since, as one officer of the Greek police reported, «women become completely dependant on their exploiters» (International Helsinki Federation, 2000: 25-6), victims rarely press charges against the perpetrators and few cases ever reach the courts. This is, of course, compounded by the fact that most victims fear their offenders and lack residence permits (Lazaridis, 2001: 89).

More common than the punishment of the perpetrators of trafficking-related crimes is, ironically, the punishment of victims (Lazaridis, 2001: 89; Tsigris, 1996). Abused women are usually the ones to be apprehended, detained and deported, while traffickers and their accomplices act with impunity. The story of a Bulgarian woman, incarcerated at Korydallos Women's Prison, is typical. At no time were her status as a victim of trafficking and the crimes she suffered taken into consideration by the authorities. Rather, law enforcement officials were only concerned with her status as an undocumented migrant. Accordingly, she was ordered deported and was prohibited from reentering the country.

I paid a man 350 German marks (approximately U.S. \$162) to go to Greece since I had no papers. Instead, he brought me to Greece and sold me to a bar. He told me he would kill me if I left. We could not leave the house. There were twelve women, all of us from fifteen to twenty years old. ... We slept with a lot of men, ten men a day. We were beaten if we tried to leave. ... I stayed for four months in prison. After that I went to court. Because I did not have papers, the court gave me three months [suspended sentence and immediate deportation] and told me I could not return to Greece for five years (quoted in Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 10).

Without question, state indifference and lack of government support for trafficking victims reinforces these women's vulnerability to physical and emotional abuse. Support for such women is severely limited, consisting of medical care only in cases where the victim is injured or is ill (International Helsinki Federation, 2000: 26). There are no shelters in Greece that offer refuge and protection to trafficked women. Instead, arrest and deportation awaits them.

Even the methods by which trafficking victims are deported leave them vulnerable to continued abuse. Greek authorities routinely deport

trafficked persons by train or bus, rather than by air, as land travel is less expensive. Victims are unaccompanied in their travels, and the government usually makes little effort to arrange assistance for them at the point of destination. As a result, they often fail to make it home safely (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 15; International Helsinki Federation, 2000: 26). According to General Nikolaos Tassiopoulos, of the Greek Ministry of Public Order, it is not uncommon for criminal networks to enter the trains en route and force the women back to Greece (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 15). It is estimated that eighty percent of women deported by train are returned to Greece within 48 hours (Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 19). To ameliorate this problem, the government recently established some provisions for the repatriation of victims by air. However, few agencies and nongovernmental organizations seem to know about this provision and the fund has been reportedly extremely difficult to access (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 13, 16).

However, the difficulties trafficked women face in dealing with the Greek state is unfortunately not limited to simple apathy and indifference. In an alarmingly high number of cases, law enforcement officials and other public employees have been found to be complicit in the abuse of the very women and children they are charged to protect (Lazaridis, 2001: 89). In May 2001, the UN Committee Against Torture cited reports of police brutality, the complicity of some police officers in the trafficking of young girls, and their involvement in the illegal sex industry (*Athens News*, 11 May 2001). According to Greek press reports and a Panteion University study, policemen allegedly accept bribes from pimps and traffickers «to look the other way» and «tip off» the owners of establishments. Other officers participate still more actively in trafficking by themselves forcing illegal immigrants into the sex industry (Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 21; US Department of State, 2000). While it is difficult to quantify the full extent of police complicity in the trafficking of women, in 2000 allegations were made that Greek police officers were involved in an international network that may have traded as many as 1,200 women over the course of the 1990s (*Kathimerini*, 2000; quoted in Human Rights Watch, 2001c: 20). Press reports also indicate that between 1989 and 2000, 650 policemen were removed from service due to their involvement in human trafficking. Moreover, the Internal Affairs Bureau reported in February 2001 that 146 charges had been made against seventy-four police officers, with approximately one-half of those charges being related to undocumented

migrants, including complicity in the illegal sex industry (*Kathimerini*, 2001; quoted in Humans Rights Watch, 2001c: 19-20). In fact, this problem has become so serious that, in recent years, both the Greek government as well as the president of the Panhellenic Confederation of Police Officers have formally acknowledged police complicity in forced sex work and, in part as a result of these allegations, the police vice squad unit itself was temporarily disbanded in 2000.¹⁰

Despite this poor track record, however, some tangible efforts have recently been made by the Greek authorities to more effectively deal with this serious public policy concern and to bring Greece into closer compliance with international norms. According to the US Department of State (2000), «arrests and court cases for prostitution by unlicensed foreign women, and cases against their traffickers, reportedly have increased.» Moreover, a National Human Rights Commission (EEDA) and an Ombudsman's Office have been established in Greece and both of these agencies advocate on behalf of migrants, including trafficked women. Most significantly, in May 2001, the Greek government created a «work management group on trafficking» and charged it with developing a national anti-trafficking action plan for Greece. This group, composed of police officials, a sociologist, and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Secretariat for Equality, the International Organization for Migration, and the European Observatory on Trafficking is to report to the government in May 2002 on the trafficking situation. It has also been charged with introducing trafficking legislation, developing a model for an anti-trafficking office within the Greek police, creating an archive on trafficking and developing a voluntary repatriation plan for trafficking victims (Human Rights Watch, 2001a).

Significant legislative efforts have also been made. After intense lobbying by human rights groups, the immigration law adopted by parliament in April 2001 included provisions allowing the victims of trafficking to remain in Greece while proceedings against traffickers take place. And while explicit anti-trafficking legislation is still nonexistent and relatively few prosecutions of crimes related to trafficking take place, it is significant that parliament's

10. It is important to note, however, that police corruption is not the only problem of the Greek police contributing to trafficking in Greece. The understaffing of the Athens vice squad, for example, staffed by only twenty officers, is a second reason why authorities have been unable to effectively deal with the trafficking problem (Emke-Poulopoulos, 2001: 31).

human rights committee is currently considering an anti-trafficking bill to be introduced shortly in the *Vouli*. This bill, while imperfect, takes a significant step towards addressing this serious problem by proposing revisions to the criminal code. If adopted, the current draft law would criminalize trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and would impose stiffer penalties for such offenses, calling for ten-year sentences when violence, threats or false promises are used to force individuals into sex work. If passed, the law would allow the state and its authorities to seriously tackle trafficking and would bring Greek law into partial compliance with its international obligations (Human Rights Watch, 2002b).¹¹

While the anti-trafficking bill is a potentially significant step forward, full compliance would require the bill to criminalize *all* forms of trafficking, not only trafficking for forced sex work. Recent research (Human Rights Watch, 2002b) has revealed that some migrant women have been trafficked into the country for the purposes of forced labor as domestic help. These women and other trafficked persons –including the so-called «traffic light children»– ought to be accorded the same legal rights and protections as those trafficked for sex work (Human Rights Watch, 2002a, 2002b). Additionally, the bill should create explicit penalties for «complicity and other unlawful involvement in trafficking» by state authorities, including the police and customs officials – e.g., individuals who sell visas for large sums of money, facilitate illegal border crossings, provide false documentation to migrants, and give information such as «tip offs» to traffickers. Finally, the anti-trafficking law should also provide protective measures for trafficking victims. Such measures should include witness protection programs and the provision of shelter, medical care, and psychological support to trafficked women and children, which currently are largely nonexistent.

THE THORNY PROBLEM OF XENOPHOBIA

Finally, there is the issue of cultural norms and attitudes in Greece –a potent underlying factor in discouraging adequate protection for foreign workers. Put simply, Greece has become an increasingly diverse society– yet popular

11. Including its obligations to the European Commission's December 2000 proposal, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Decision (November, 2000), and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

attitudes remain essentially xenophobic and anti-foreigner, with a great emphasis on maintaining ethnic homogeneity. These attitudes have both deep, long-standing roots in Greece's national experience, as well as more proximate, contemporary causes. They are both encouraged by anti-foreigner policies and actions by the state, as well as serve to popularly legitimize and reinforce them.

The origins of Greek xenophobia are varied and complex –and can only be hinted at here. First, the historical development of the modern Greek nation-state– characterized as it was by repeated struggles for self-determination, disputes with its neighbors over borders and lands, and an explicit commitment to the conception of Greece as a «natural» entity directly connected to the ancient Greek past – produced a near-national consensus on Greek «uniqueness» and a closed, rather than open, sense of national self-identity and «belonging». National homogeneity, then, became a source of pride and ultimately a perceived defense against hostile neighbors (National Center for Social Research, 1998; Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 1997, 2000; Avdela, 2000; Voulgaris, 2000; Karakasidou, 2000).

Reinforcing these notions has been a state, and in particular an education system, devoted, as Efi Avdela (2000: 247) argues, not to the development of critical thinking, but to the cultivation of a patriotic national consciousness. As she puts it, «In the discourse of [Greek] textbooks, the categories of continuity, absence of change, homogeneity, resistance and superiority emerge as the main traits of the national Greek self-image and the cornerstones of national identity». In this way, then, the state plays a role in cultivating a sense of national identity that emphasizes homogeneity and marginalizes those who are different – a conception that feeds back into, and reinforces, anti-foreigner state policy and behavior.

Finally, events of the recent past have served to heighten anti-foreigner sentiment. The early 1990s saw the largely contemporaneous collapse of communism; the closely related influx of immigrants, many from former Soviet bloc countries; the perception of a territorial threat emanating not only from neighboring Turkey but from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as Albania; as well as sharply rising unemployment in Greece and an ongoing crisis in the ability of the state to adequately fund Greece's overburdened social welfare state (National Center for Social Research 1998). Compounding this confluence of events have been politicians and a news media ready to play to xenophobic attitudes, particularly by labeling immigrants the chief sources of unemployment and

crime in Greece.¹² As government officials summed up the official attitude: «Greece is not an immigration country» nor is it a «multicultural society» (Fakiolas, 2000: 71; Human Rights Watch, 2001d).

The unsurprising result is that Greeks consistently report opinions that position Greece as perhaps the most xenophobic country in Europe.¹³ The links between such opinions and attitudes and the lack of formal legal protection for migrants as well as an unresponsive, even hostile state bureaucracy are not hard to infer. To put it simply, given the current state of attitudes in Greece, there is no general popular demand for reform, for change, for a greater recognition of the rights of migrants, male or female. At best, the rights of foreigners in Greece are simply ignored. At worst, xenophobic attitudes actively work to discourage the full recognition and enforcement of migrant rights.

A number of questions in recent Eurobarometer polls provide typically Greek responses. When asked about the number of foreigners living in EU countries, 71 percent of Greeks believed there were «too many». This compares to an EU average of 45 percent and is seven times the number in the least xenophobic country in this poll (Finland) (Eurobarometer, 1998). The results are largely similar when Greeks are asked if they find the presence of foreigners in their country to be disturbing (Eurobarometer, 2000). In a figure well over two times the European average, nearly four in ten Greeks admit that the presence of foreigners in Greece troubles them. While 61 percent said their presence was «not disturbing», this sum is well below every other EU country, which range from 72 to 94 percent.¹⁴

Perhaps most interesting, however, are the questions reported in a 1997 Europinion poll that have clear public policy significance. When asked specifically about the rights of foreigners in Greece –whether they should be extended, left as they are, or restricted– 44 percent of Greeks responded that the rights of foreigners should be restricted. That is, in a country roundly condemned by various human rights organizations for its gross *lack* of legal protections for foreigners, nearly half of the respondents believe that what

12. The reality with respect to crime, ironically enough, is that the violent crime rate among native Greeks is apparently higher than that among immigrants.

13. For extensive analysis of this topic, see National Center for Social Research (EKKE), 1998.

14. However, research in Greece has suggested that more positive attitudes toward migrants emerge when Greeks have interpersonal contact with them (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999). In another finding that bodes well for the future, it also appears that

few rights migrants enjoy should be restricted further! While the 19 percent of Greeks who felt that foreigners' rights should be extended was significantly higher than in several other EU countries, it must be noted that the lowest numbers occurred in the countries where significant protections are already well in place (Europinion, 1997a).

Unfortunately, this preference for further restrictions on the rights of foreigners in Greece cannot be laid solely at the door of ignorance about the true plight of migrants there. When asked if people from minority groups (which would include both native minorities as well as migrants) were discriminated against in the domestic job market, 90 percent of Greeks –the highest percentage in the EU– admitted that such workers were indeed discriminated against in Greece (Eurobarometer, 1997: 5). Thus, a fair conclusion would seem to be that the common wish to see migrants' rights restricted is not based on an erroneously optimistic understanding of migrants' disadvantaged position within Greek society, but rather on a desire to discourage migration to Greece altogether. The dominant approach to foreigners is to stigmatize and socially isolate and exclude them, forcing them into what Psimmenos calls *periphractic spaces* – that is, «fenced off» areas in which the possibility of social integration and inclusion is denied¹⁵ (2000; see also Lazaridis and Wickens, 1999). As one Albanian woman explained Greeks' racist attitudes towards her and her fellow Albanians: «No-one is willing to rent a flat to me. We are poor and roofless; as soon as they realize that I am an Albanian, they either put the phone down or ask me to leave» (quoted in Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000: 177).

Implicitly implicating xenophobia in his analysis, Emke-Poulopoulos points to widespread indifference within Greek society to the plight of migrant women, particularly those enslaved in the sex trade. Whether active, conscious xenophobia or simply uncaring indifference is to blame, the result for abused women is the same. As he puts it:

Social indifference is startling and consequently this indifference makes people responsible to the degree that everyone keeps silent although they are aware of what is happening and they tolerate the situation without showing anger. No one denounces what he [sic] knows, nor does anyone react to the trafficking of foreign women.

15. Baldwin-Edwards notes that the Greek state, unlike its Southern European counterparts, has done virtually nothing to facilitate and encourage the social integration of migrants (2001: 9).

Doctors perform abortions, citizens let their flats for «massage parlours» knowing that they are transformed into informal brothels, tenants/owners of other flats in the same building either know or suspect what is going on, or are even perfectly sure that in their very building alien minors are often prostituted against their will.

Referring to the 13-year old Albanian girl held captive as a sex slave and referred to above, he concludes:

The neighbors had suspicions because they heard noises, voices and screams during the night and they found used condoms in the entrance of the building; however, for several months they did not report the matter (2001: 32)

In such an environment of xenophobia and indifference, then, it comes as little surprise that the rights of migrants are so poorly protected by the Greek state and its agencies, including the legal system. Simply put, there are few political or social imperatives for positive change – and significant resistance to it.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have considered the situation of migrant women in Greece from the perspective of state structures and social norms, values and practices. We have argued that in a society in which Greek women are seeking ever-higher levels of education and workforce participation, a demand for migrant women has been created and has, in a number of ways, contributed to the feminization of migration in Greece. We have shown that as Greek women leave the home in search of employment, as they become increasingly integrated into Greek public life, and as they begin to reject the gendered nature of their roles as sole primary caregivers and social-welfare providers within the home, many do so on the backs of poor, migrant women. The insufficient, particularistic nature of the Greek social welfare state only compounds this phenomenon. On the one hand, by incorporating the key assumption that a significant amount of social provision will take place within the home, it creates a demand and necessitates the employment

16. The role of the Greek media in propagating and reinforcing anti-migrant sentiment cannot be overlooked. Newspapers and television news regularly characterize crime in Greece as directly related to migration, with the clear implication that migrants themselves are all too often dangerous criminals (see Lazaridis, 1999: 105, 116-17).

of domestic help when Greek women choose to enter the paid workforce. On the other hand, by providing precious little protection for migrant workers (even legal ones), it deepens and reinforces these women's dependence on their employers. As we have seen, even in the case of trafficked women migrants—all of whom have suffered the worst forms of physical and emotional abuse—the state has yet to provide shelters and other forms of protection, and the little medical care it does provide is highly restricted and reserved for those with serious physical illness or injury. Thus, the lack of state-provided social assistance has been a significant pull-factor, helping produce the migrant phenomenon, on the one hand, but simultaneously leaving most migrants woefully underprotected, on the other.

We have also considered the failure of the Greek legal system to adequately protect the rights of migrant workers. This is true both for documented workers, who risk deportation if they attempt to escape exploitative work environments, but even more so for undocumented workers, who face the prospect of abuse and exploitation without legal recourse. Nowhere is this legal precariousness better illustrated than in the streets, brothels, and establishments of «hidden prostitution» in Greece. As we have seen, women and young girls trafficked into the country for slave sex work have virtually nowhere to turn for legal help and few victims ever press charges against their offenders. This is, of course, to be expected in a country such as Greece, where the law does not yet criminalize trafficking nor does it differentiate between illegal immigrants and trafficking victims.

Closely related is the insufficient protection provided to migrants by the Greek bureaucracy, particularly the police force and other state authorities. Instead of offering desperately needed protection, law enforcement and other officials routinely treat migrants with a mixture of apathy, hostility, and corruption. Migrants caught in «sweeps» are detained in inhumane prison conditions awaiting their deportation—often with no recourse to legal counsel or the right of appeal. As we have also seen, the deportation of trafficked women—the majority of whom are recaptured *en route* and returned to Greece—is particularly illustrative of the Greek bureaucracy's failure to offer necessary protection to vulnerable migrant women. Sadly enough, though, apathy and indifference are not the only difficulties migrant women face when dealing with state authorities. In recent years, an alarming number of law enforcement officials and other public employees have been charged with corruption and complicity—providing false documentation, accepting bribes, «looking the other way», tipping off establishments of impending raids and being involved in the illegal sex trade themselves.

Finally, all of the aforementioned shortcomings of the Greek state and legal system are reinforced by Greek cultural norms and public attitudes at the mass level. Specifically, the widespread perception of the majority of Greek citizens is that Greece is not and, by implication, should never become multicultural. We have seen that, of all European Union citizens, Greeks today continue to be the most xenophobic in Europe, believing there are far too many migrants in Greece and that what few rights they have been granted should be curtailed. With such widespread public attitudes, then, the Greek state's heretofore indifferent approach to migrant issues in general, as well as the near-total absence of programs that promote the social inclusion of migrants, can more easily be understood. However, experiences elsewhere have proven that migrants are not a transitory phenomenon. As various Northern European countries have learned, once in a country, migrants tend to remain. Countries once «diversified» rarely return to homogeneity. Thus, the question for a state such as Greece is not «whether» but «how» – how readily, how willingly and how comprehensively it will adjust to its new demographic and cultural realities.

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