Abstract

Greece has been dominating the news agenda in the past few years mainly because of the political developments with regards to its economic crisis. Due to its Eurozone membership matters of national policy are being critiqued and evaluated in relation to their European Union merits. In recent years migration in Greece has been framed as a European problem due to the country’s geographical position as the European Union’s external border. The changes on the patterns and trends of migration due to the crisis, the subsequent changing political national agenda on migration and its political utilization as part of the country’s foreign policy tactics to exercise pressure towards Europe have raised concerns on the effects these developments will have for the national population, the European Union and migrants themselves. As such research on the relationship between the humanitarian concerns on migration and the role of migration policies in addressing them has become prevalent especially for the more invisible migrant groups.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to argue for the need of further research on Greece as a migrant host country and the choice of female migrant domestic workers as the focus of this case study. Starting by providing an introduction on the case of female migrant domestic labour in Greece I aim to draw the basic characteristics that set the case of Greece apart on an international level. Having identified these characteristics I will then move to the second section to discuss the choice to situate this project in the sub-discipline of Critical Security Studies and the choice of the Copenhagen School’s securitization theory as the basis for the development of my project’s theoretical framework. I will do so by providing an overview of the different ways various disciplines within the social sciences have theorized female migrant domestic labour.

Greece as a Host of Female Migrant Domestic Labour

This project is a case study on Greece as a host country for the group of female migrant domestic workers. The aim is to explore this migrant group’s experienced inequalities and vulnerabilities within the specific national context. Research and political attention has been drawn on domestic labour as an occupation as much on national as on international levels mainly because, as established by the 2011 ILO ‘Domestic Workers Convention’,

*domestic work continues to be undervalued and invisible and is mainly carried out by women and girls, many of whom are migrants or members of disadvantaged*
communities and who are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in respect to conditions of employment and of work, and to other abuses of human rights’ (ILO, 2011)

Despite the mutuality in the conditions through which domestic labour has emerged as a labour sector on a global level and the subsequent commonalities in its trends, patterns and basic characteristics Greece has stood out as a case on both political and academic levels due to the comparatively higher levels of political illegality that characterize the experiences of this labour group in Greece. Illegality and the extreme conditions of political, social and economic vulnerability that migrants in general (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002; Cavounidis, 2004; Hatziprokopiou, 2005; Kolovos, 2003; Lamprianidis and Limperaki, 2001; Marvakis, Parsanoglou and Pavlou, 2001) and female migrants in particular (Anderson, 2001; Liapi, 2008; Lyberaki, 2008; Riga, 2007; Topali 2001; Vaiou, 2006) experience in Greece have been researched and documented on both national and international levels. Within this national and international body of work the experiences of migration have been extensively linked with illegality and the absence of responsive migration policies. As it was argued by the OECD the main problem Greece has been facing its inability to find ‘a way to bring migration legislation into line with the facts on the ground’ (OECD, 2005).

On 22nd December 2008 Konstantina Kuneva, a Bulgarian legal female migrant working for a cleaning company in Greece, was attacked with sulphuric acid by unknown men as she was leaving work late at night. Her attackers apart from pouring the acid on her body forced her to drink a significant amount causing external and internal damage. Due to the extensive damage she is still undergoing significant surgeries and treatments. At the point of the attack Konstantina Kuneva was the Secretary of the Attica Union of Cleaners and Domestic Workers and a spokesperson fighting to improve the basic working conditions and safeguard their basic labour rights in their workplace. The attack came after a period of tension between her employer and herself and anonymous telephone threats (Protagonists, 2009; The New Folders, 2009). The police investigation the incident was labelled as a domestic/family violence case contradicting testimonies of family and friends through which one of the attackers was identified as a police officer. Despite the inconclusiveness of the police investigation in July 2013 the Piraeus First Instance Court ruled in favour of Kuneva in a trial against her former employer Ikomet deciding that they are morally liable for her attack. The basis of the ruling was:

1. the experienced hostility within the workplace stemming from Kuneva’s trade union activity
2. her late night working hours which had been one of the safety concerns Kuneva had been brought to the attention of her employers the months prior to her attack (Mindova, 2013).

The case attracted a significant amount of publicity both nationally and internationally not just as a newsworthy story but also as a representative example of the humanitarian concerns of migration in Greece used with the aim to raise awareness regarding the experienced inequalities and vulnerabilities of migrants in the country. At the core of Kuneva’s case lay questions with regards to the implementation of migration policies and the political substance of migrant legalization since the involvement of Kuneva in the Attica Union of Cleaners and Domestic Workers as a secretary and the exercise of her rights as a legal economic migrant were perceived as a ‘threat’ from her
employers and have been portrayed through testimonies of co-workers, friends and family as the igniting factors behind the threats and the incident (Protagonists, 2009; The New Folders, 2009). Unlike the majority of female migrants that are informally employed as domestic workers in households in Greece, Kuneva was one of the few legal female migrants employed in the national formal economy. In a country with strong trade union activity as a migrant Kuneva’s collective bargaining rights and her politically established legal status did not provide her any legal nor physical protection and were perceived as a threat to the national social cohesion.

Due to the absence of an ‘open door policy’ (ILO, 2014: 7) experienced inequalities, vulnerabilities and the subsequent violation of the migrants’ basic human rights have growingly been associated with migrant illegality. Inclusive migration policies and the human rights discourse have been acting as a tool to both monitor inflows but also to establish and protect the rights of legal migrants. The case of Kuneva and contemporary research on the case of Greece provide evidence that the status quo of legal migration itself is experienced as a national threat not managing to protect the constitutionally safeguarded basic human rights of even legal migrants.

The Director-General of the International Labour Organization recently argued that migration is inherently linked to controversies stemming from the competing economic, political and social interests (ILO, 2014: 3). In that sense the legalization of migration has to be seen as a project that acknowledges and reconciles these different interests. The aim of this project is to join the discussion with the part of the literature that looks into the development of migration policies and through the case of female migrant domestic labour in Greece trace the different conflicting elements between ‘reality and perceptions’ (ILO, 2014: 4) that question the political, social and economic value of migration policies and jeopardise their implementation.

The Globalization of Female Migrant Domestic Labour and Securitization Theory

Historically domestic labour has been documented as a low skilled, low class supporting “service” subjected to no legal protection or labour rights and as Bridget Anderson and Raffaella Sarti have argued an occupation associated with slavery, ‘colonial or imperialistic policies’ and class divisions (Anderson, 2000: 128; Fauve-Chamoux, 2004; Sarti, 2008). Within the current social, economic and political setting domestic labour, being performed in the apolitical, unregulated and engendered private sphere, has emerged as part of the peripheral economy of states to support the reproductive labour needs of the capitalist system (Agathangelou, 2004: 3). Even though monetarily outsourced, domestic work has maintained its undervalued, underprivileged and marginalised status. Due to this status and the engendered character of the activities of the private sphere the occupation has remained unpopular amongst nationals and has emerged as a female migrant occupation. The new distinctive dimensions of this phenomenon have attracted the attention of scholars from various fields within social sciences, such as women’s studies, politics and international relations and migration studies.

1 in this chapter Raffaella Sarti takes a historical and sociological perspective on the historical continuities in relation to the globalization of domestic service
Migration theorists frame female migrant domestic labor, as Lutz has criticized, as ‘just another market relationship, created by the so called ‘supply and demand’ balance’ (Lutz, 2008: 1) and provide an analytical interdisciplinary basis for the study of female migrant domestic labor as an occupation. Drawing upon the disciplines of anthropology, demography, economics (Zimmermann, 1996: 96), history, law, political science and sociology (Brettell, and Hollifield, 2000) and adopting rationalist and structuralist theoretical approaches they look into it as an economic phenomenon whose basic characteristics of irregularity and informality align with the universal characteristics of the globalization of economic migration and the flexible and unregulated employment of migrants from peripheral states by developed states in low skilled and low waged occupations (Kritz and Keely, 1981: xiv). Feminist scholars criticize the field for failing to offer theoretical tools for the study of the role of gender in determining and affecting migration patterns as well as in shaping the experiences of female migrants as both independent agents as well as family followers (Buijs, 1993; Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Kofman, 2000; Lutz, 2002; Mahler and Pessar, 2006).

The interest within sociology, and specifically within feminist scholars of the discipline (Anderson, 2000; Dahl, Keranen and Kovalainen, 2011; Ehrenreich and Ar. R. Hochschild, 2002; Isaksen, 2010; Lutz, 2012; Walby, 1986; Walby, 1988; Walby, 1990; Williams and Gavanas, 2008), on female migrant domestic labor stems from the sociological dimension of the particularities of domestic work as a labor sector and its engendered character (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006; Lutz, 2008; Schrinzi, 2008). Due to the sociological value of reproductive labor and the sociological element in the performativity of reproductive activities, ‘domestic work is not definable in terms of tasks but in terms of a role which constructs and situates the worker within a certain set of social relationships’ (Anderson, 2000: 21). Domestic workers are bound by a social contract rather than an economic in the conduct of domestic work. For sociologists domestic labor is a labor sector that has a story to tell about:

- the sociopolitical context within which the demand and the supply of this labor sector are emerging in each national context
- the power the different regimes - gender regimes, care regimes and migration regimes (Lutz, 2008: 2) - exercise on the production of the occupation, in shaping the conditions of migration, the trends and patterns of migration and the experiences of migrants on a micro level (Lutz and Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2011)

Sociologists touch upon the role of the state over the production of domestic labor as a female migrant occupation through the discussion of the regulatory authority of states over the care and migration regimes. The problematization of female migrant domestic labor from scholars in politics and international studies has emerged on two levels. Given the universality of the neoliberal capitalist organization of socioeconomic life and the embeddedness of patriarchal structures in the capitalist system both the demand and the supply of female migrant domestic labor are shaped by different ends of the same structural forces. For migrants the ways care regimes are regulated have an immediate effect on the access of female migrant domestic workers to labor rights since as domestic labor emerges as part of the periphery economy that access is compromised

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2 the authors offer a very good matrix that summarizes the research questions, methodologies, dominant theories and hypothesis for every discipline engaging
The second level is the security level and the management of migration regimes. The involvement of migrants nationally consists a threat to the sovereignty of the host states (Sassen, 1996). National identity plays a pivotal and explicit, in regulations, role in determining state membership and access to national structures and rights. The processes of the securitization of migration consist a distinctive state agenda and exercise parallel power to migrants (Buonfino, 2004; Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002; Huysmans and Squire, 2010; Munck, 2009; Ugur, 1995). Feminist scholars, such as Ruth Lister and Saskia Sassen, add to the discussion by engendering the theorization of state membership and citizenship. State membership and citizenship protect and facilitate the right for social reproduction. Migrant ‘women are often targeted as one of the racialized, sexualized threats to nation-states’ “security” and to a nationalist self’ (Agathangelou, 2004: 2). Within security regimes female migrants are expected to experience double marginalisation due to both their gender and migrant identities (Lister, 1997a; Lister, 1997b; Lister, 1998; Lister, 2003; Lister, Williams, Anttonen, Bussemaker, Gerhard, Heinen, Johansson, Leira, Siim, Tobio and Gavanas, 2007; Sassen, 2006).

The high political illegality that characterizes this migrant group reveals on one hand an unregulated domestic work labour sector as well as the existence of very restrictive migration regimes. Given the alien status of migrants for the regulation of distinctive migrant labour markets ‘the state apparatus’ still ‘deploys a security paradigm to understand and respond’ (Munck, 2009: 6) to the policy challenges of the economic phenomenon. Consequently ‘migration is clearly not a purely economic process dictated by market forces but is also a key element in shaping the contemporary politics of culture and the culture of politics’ (Munck, 2009: 5). The choice to situate this project in the sub-discipline of International Relations, Security Studies lays on this specific argument.

Within Security Studies migration as a research area emerged as part of the territorial security agenda of the state reflecting national concerns in relation to the states’ power to maintain control over the inflow of migrants (Heisbourg, 1991; Loescher, 1992; Widgren, 1990). The engagement of Critical Security Studies with migration came as a part of the broadening of the concept of security and as a response to the observed reorientation in the politicization of migration. The securitization of migration is now a response to social, economic, political and not just geopolitical disruptions (Ceyhan and Tsoukala, 2002). The choice of Buzan and Wæver’s Securitization Theory as the theoretical basis for the development of the theoretical framework of this project lays on the fact that by providing a theoretical basis which frames security as the product of social and political processes it enables the researcher to identify the involved actors, trace the basic premises and arguments upon which this politicization takes place and explore:

- the competing interests within which migration policies are produced
- their effects on the securitized object (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde, 1998: 27; Wæver, 2011: 466)

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• weaknesses in their implementation and responsiveness

The contradiction between the persistence of the politically recognized on one hand conditions of inequality and vulnerability within which female migrant domestic work operates and the continuing growth in both the demand supply of female migrant domestic workers reveals either the limited availability or capacity of the involved actors and agents to act upon the identified concerns within the existing political and economic structures. The literature doesn’t tell us much about whether the experienced inequalities of more vulnerable groups are ‘simply beyond control in world marked by more ‘intensive’ and ‘extensive’ flows of goods, people, capital and ideas (Held et al, 1999), or they are purposely ignored while at the same time manufactures by states’ (Samers, 2010: 210). This project aims to reflect on that and using Huysman’s (1995; 1998; 2000; 2006) argument towards the need for the desecuritization of migration and try and address this political antithesis.
Bibliography


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