



Ge.M.I.C.

Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions in the Mediterranean and South-East Europe

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Partners:

- International Centre for Minority Studies & Intercultural Relations (IMIR), Bulgaria
- University of Cyprus (UCY), Cyprus
- University of Bologna (UNIBO), Italy
- "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati (UDJG), Romania
- Institute of Childhood and Urban World (CIIMU), Spain
- "Euro-Balkan" Institute (EU-BAL), FYROM
- Bilkent University (BILKENT-U), Turkey

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RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium	
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Gender, Migration and intercultural Interaction
in South-East Europe
(www.gemic.eu)

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Thematic Workshops Report on "Religion" (WP6)

Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey

Renata Pepicelli

**University of Bologna, Department of Politics,
Institutions and History, (UNIBO)
Italy**

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1. Purpose of the WP6 research

The workpackage analyses the relationship between women and religion in contemporary Europe, with the aim of assessing similarities and differences in the ways in which migrant women of different faiths negotiate their religious identities and publicly perform religion in the public spheres in Italy, Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. The research addresses the issue of the new forms of revivalism in an Islamic and in a Christian framework and the ways in which women contribute to the repositioning of religion at the local, national, transnational and sovranational levels, challenging hegemonies and powers inside both their national/religious communities as well as inside European countries.

The research have a twofold aim: on the one hand, it investigates the tensions between secularism and religion in European public spheres, and on the other hand, it analyzes the multiple discourses, strategies and activities migrant women employ in their life, both private and public. Moreover, it focuses on the construction of religious identities as a tool for incorporation/empowerment in local contexts and in transnational networks and public spheres. The aim is analyzing from one hand daily religious practices and from the other hand women (and men)'s participation in religious contexts.

2. Starting point of the research

The research aims at analysing the following questions:

- The ways in which migrant women and their offspring reconstruct religion in the public sphere.
- Whether and how religion is used as a tool for simultaneously redefining and accessing citizenship.
- Whether and how religion can be a terrain for implementing and increasing women's rights.
- Whether and how Muslims pose "exceptional" challenges to the European liberal/secular traditions or whether and how there are historical and current continuities between Islam and other minority religions in Europe.
- Whether and how we could see religious claims for redefining the boundary between public and private realms as sharing terrain with other social movements who are questioning the normativity of the secular/liberal/majority religious sphere.
- Whether and how the religiosity of migrant women challenges the historical configurations and the close connection between religion and national/ethnic identity in the countries of the research.

3. Thematic Workshops

In order to reach the objectives two Thematic Workshops took place: one in Bologna (7 April 2009) and one in Sofia (24 October 2009)

3.1. Report of the first thematic meeting WP6 Bologna (7 April 2009)

On 7 April 2009 the coordinator of WP6 organized an intermediate meeting at the university of Bologna for:

- a) discussing the common theoretical and empirical framework
- b) elaborating the general guidelines for the fieldwork
- c) fixing the next steps, including the dissemination activities

During this meeting the Italian, the Greek, the Bulgarian and the Turkish team presented the country case study through a power point and discussed methodological issues and future lines of investigation.

Italy

The Italian team explained that they have been studying the relationship between female migrants and religion in the neighbourhood of Centocelle in Rome. Collocated in East periphery, Centocelle, with a surface of 208,16 ha and 55.000 inhabitants, is one of the neighborhoods in which the presence of immigrants is more relevant in the town. The Italian research focuses on groups of women of different ages who habitually attend the mosque and the Baptist church. Aim of this study is analyzing the religious practices in the everyday life.

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian team showed that they focus on the dynamics of gender and religion among recently arrived immigrant Muslim groups. The target group comprises immigrants from the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa with different status (refugees, temporary residents, citizens).

Greece

The Greek team illustrated that they focus on studying the relationship between religion, gender and intercultural interactions among Albanian and Bulgarian migrants. The case study is located in Athens and examines religious practices of Albanian and Bulgarian migrants who identify, or have in the past identified, themselves as Christian Orthodox, Muslim, or Catholic believers. The study analyses the religious practices in the everyday

migrant lives and trajectories, as well as the varying attitudes towards Greek Orthodox Christianity, the officially recognized 'dominant religion of the Greek state'.

Turkey

The Turkish team explained that they were going to start fieldwork on migrant women from ex-Soviet countries, and Central and Eastern Europe such as Moldova, Ukraine, Belarussia, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia, who actually live in Istanbul and identify themselves as Orthodox Christians and various levels of religiosity. The goal of the research is to find out how these migrant women relate to their religiosity, practice their religion and interact in their Churches in a dominantly Muslim country and culture such as the one in Turkey. Moreover, the research team questions how orthodox Christian culture coexists within a Muslim culture, what kind of transformations are observed in religious identifications during the migration process vis-a-vis their gender roles.

In order to better coordinate the different case studies (Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey), all the partners agreed to take the following steps:

- a) Focusing on daily religious practices.
- b) Addressing the question of public-private space.
- c) Challenging the exceptionality of Islam.
- d) Use gender as analytical category.

All partners agree on the usefulness of the workshop and underline the necessity of a second intermediate meeting to analyze the research development.

3.2. Report of the second thematic meeting WP6 Sofia (24 October 2009)

On 24th October 2009 a second intermediate meeting of WP6 took place in Sofia, Bulgaria at the Imir center. The workshop was divided in two parts. During the first one the Bulgarian, the Greek, the Turkish and the Italian team discussed the fieldwork results and the empirical findings, while in the second they decided upon the overall common framework and categories of analysis to be applied for the next reports.

Part one

The presentations of each research team showed similarities and differences in the fieldwork framework and in the preliminary results as well. In the Turkish case, most of the women interviewed have migrated independently, in the Greek, Bulgarian, Italian case, most of the women interviewed have migrated through family migration. Both Greek and Turkish research teams focused mainly on Christian migrants, while the Bulgarian team on Muslim migrants and the Italian one on Muslim and Christian (Baptists) migrants. Moreover, while in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria research was based on interviews and in some cases on focus groups with women, in Italy the research was based mostly on observant participation in places of worship as a mosque and a Baptist church. This choice was dictated by the fact that in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria migrant religious practices tend to

be defined by migrants themselves as mostly taking place in private. So in these cases the private sphere was the main object of the study. Instead, in the Italian case the relationship between women and religion was indagated in the public more than in the private sphere. This choice depended on the fact that in Italy there is a growing migration that claims new rights and visibility, including the right to live the religiosity in the public. Italy is in fact the third European country, after Germany and Spain, for number of foreigners (they are the 8% of the Italian population). A long stay migration is already a reality and a second migrant generation is well settled.

The preliminary fieldwork results indicated that the national historical political context affects the relationship between gender, religion and migration, and it is not possible to talk about a unique European model reproduced everywhere in Europe. Secular past, dominant majority religions of the host countries, such as Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity, affect the ways in which women live their religiosity in the public and in the private sphere.

In order to empower the common theoretical framework, the partners decided to exchange literature on migration, gender and religion.

At the end of the discussion upon fieldwork and preliminary results, all partners agreed that the deadline for submitting the Country Reports to the WP6 coordinator is February 2010, while the deadline for submitting the final WP6 Thematic Report is June 2010.

Part two

The second part of the workshop was dedicated to the discussion upon dissemination activities and publications.

Concerning dissemination activities: all the partners agreed in spreading research findings in academic and public (non academic) conferences and meetings. For this reason they applied for the XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology, in Gothenburg, Sweden, 11-17 July 2010, in the session "Immigrant Religion and Gender" and all received acceptances for a common session presentation.

With regard to publication possibilities it has been suggested that each country team should seek a space in local reviews and in English language publisher to spread the research results. All the partners agreed to take concrete publication proposals at the next GeMIC meeting in Athens (April 2010).

At the end of the meeting all partners agree on the usefulness of the workshop and the need of a better use of the internal mailing list of WP6 to discuss the ongoing work, to post comments and to share reading.

4. Appendix

a- Agenda: I thematic workshop Bologna 7th April 2009

Venue: Faculty of Political Sciences
Department of Politics, Institutions and History
Strada Maggiore, 45

Room: Aula Collotti Pischel

9:30 Welcoming and introduction

10:00 Italy (country case study)

10:30 Greece (country case study)

11:00 Turkey (country case study)

11:30 coffee break

12:00 Bulgaria (country case study)

12: 30- 14:00 Lunch

14:00- 15:00 Discussion of Methodological issues

15:00- 15:45 Future lines of investigation in each country

15:45- 16:15 coffee break

16:15 -17:00 Wrap up

b- Agenda: II thematic workshop Bologna 24th October 2009

Venue: IMIR (Antim I, 55.Sofia)

9: 30 Welcoming (Marko). Introduction (Renata)

10:00 Bulgaria (country case study)

10:30 Turkey (country case study)

11:00 coffee break

11:30 Italy (country case study)

12:00 Greece (country case study)

12: 30- 14:00 Lunch

14:00- 15:30 Discussion on the Country Reports and the Final Thematic Report

15:30- 15.45 coffee break

15:45- 16:45 Discussion on dissemination activities and publications

16:45- 17:00 Wrap up