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Gender, Migration and intercultural Interaction
in South-East Europe
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Thematic Workshops Report on “Intercultural Violence” (WP8)

FYROM, Greece, Cyprus, Romania

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1. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to study violence in relation to gender, migration, and intercultural interaction, aiming also to the question of the gap between theoretical discourse and the one used in policy documents and activist reports.

2. Starting Points for the Research

The three main premises that underline this research are:

- There is invisible trauma of the victims of the violence. Metaphor of invisibility can mean “silent”, “silenced”, “unspeakable” trauma, but only relative to the contexts and perspectives, i.e. dominant discourse on migration and trafficking;
- The theoretical, legal, political and public Reality of person’s identity as a victim is based on discursive construction;
- Victimization of migrants and victims of trafficking is a process not sum of events.

2.1 Thematic Workshops

2.1.1. Thematic Workshop I

Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to review the progress accomplished within WP8 and to revisit methodological and epistemological concerns raised at the beginning of the research cycle. The meeting followed a structure that allowed exhaustive reporting on field research and revisiting some of the theoretical presuppositions from which the field research design departs, and was structured in a way that allowed viewing issues of the field research conducted within WP8 as common

issues of the international team rather than as separate issues of the different national teams.

Basic Information about the Workshop

The Workshop was hosted by the Institute in Social Sciences and Humanities Research "Euro-Balkan," The Gender Studies Department/Research Center in Gender Studies from Skopje. It took place in Ohrid, from July 1st to July 4th, 2009. "Euro-Balkan" Institute was represented by Katerina Kolozova, Bobi Badarevski, Viktorija Borovska, and Slavco Dimitrov. Cyprus team was represented by Zelia Gregoriou, and Sylvia Michael, while from the Romanian team the Workshop was attended by Gabriela Colipca and Lidia Necula.

The accent of the workshop was put on the progress accomplished within WP8, based on the brief progress reports of the national teams, as well as the research results. Also, methodological and epistemological, as well as thematic issues pertaining to WP8 were discussed.

Research Issues and National Case Studies

The WP8 international team, following feedback from ongoing field research revisited some of its own theoretical presuppositions as well as the mainstream discourse on trafficking and inter-cultural gender based violence in the light of the processes of migration in Europe. It has been agreed that trafficking should be viewed as yet another form of intercultural gender based violence related to migration, one of the variety of forms that are dominant within Europe. It has been determined that apart from a) trafficking as the paradigmatic form of the exclusion based on the intersection of gender/culture/migration, the issues of female b) migrant workers should be investigated as one of the major gender-based forms of cultural exclusion (in particular domestic

workers, cleaners, etc.), c) the issue of motherhood (in particular that of the single mothers) in the context of female migrant labor as well as that of d) sexual minority. The latter two are included as forms of accentuated precariousness of gender-based intercultural violence related to migration. Another major theme of critical rethinking that is at the center of the investigations of the international team of WP8 is e) the concept of the “victim” and the institutionalized practices of “victimization” (aiming at identifying the instances of violence -- accounted for by the “victims” themselves – beyond the institutional and NGO discourses of moralization that impede effective action and creation of policies that would enable such action.)

FYROM

The aim of the team is to focus on the processes of victimization in the context of migration from the perspective of internally trafficked women. Interviews are being conducted with representatives of cultural and ethnic/national minorities. It is announced that a focus group with members of NGO's working with victims of trafficking will also be conducted.

Greece

The focus of the team is the discourse of violence with regards to two groups: trafficked women and migrant cleaners. The intention is to approach the issue by interviewing members of NGO's dealing with the issues of trafficking, emigration and labor, and prominent activists. Interview with the leader of the cleaners syndicate Konstantina Kuneva is announced.

Cyprus

The focus of the Cyprus study are two distinct groups, vulnerable to multiple levels of violence: migrant women victims of sex trafficking and migrant single mothers. Cyprus team opted for participant observation of labor immigration in Cyprus, mostly coming from Far East, and

predominantly single mothers. Apart from this, the intention is to also find trafficked persons.

Romania

The Romanian team concentrated on two categories/groups in order to study the discourse of violence: Romanian migrant workers temporarily working in Western Europe (Italy and Spain), and Romanian victims of trafficking, who benefit from the specialized institutions. The team reported that NGO's dealing with the issues of trafficking are very hard to reach, as well as the victims of trafficking. Attempt to contact them will continue, but the intention is to put the focus on the first group - Romanian women who work in Western Europe as immigrant illegal domestic workers.

Proposed further steps and conclusions

It has also been agreed to revisit the plan of field research according to its feasibility, concurring among the 4 national teams that it is highly unlikely to conduct the initially envisaged number of interviews with trafficked considering the fact that access to trafficked is extremely difficult in all 4 countries. One has come to a conclusion that narratives of shelter and NGO activists (and professionals) can also serve as significant resource of analysis. It has been agreed that other forms of female labor in which freedom of movement and/or legality of migrant status are denied, such as illegal migrant domestic workers, would be investigated by way of analyzing personal narratives.

2.1.2. Thematic Workshop II

Purpose of the Workshop

The workshop was held with a purpose to summarize the reporting on field research and to discuss the interpretation of the empirical results.

What happened

The meeting was held at the Centre for Gender Studies-Pantheon University, Athens at 28th of November. Apart from summarizing the field research reports and empirical results, one also reviewed some the initial theoretical presuppositions of WP8 toward perfecting them in a way that would be responsive to the feedback received through the empirical research itself. As in the case of the previous meeting, the workshop was structured in a way that allowed viewing issues of the field research conducted within WP8 as common issues of the international team rather than as separate issues of the different national teams (please see *Appendix 2: Agenda of Thematic Workshop*)
Participants: Katerina Kolozova, Slavco Dimitrov, Nelli Kambouri, Zelia Gregoriou, Myria Konstantinidou, Gabriela Colipca, and Ionna Mohor-Ivan.

Common Research Issues and National Case Studies

Focus of the workshop was twofold:

- Revisiting some of the theoretical presuppositions of the research according to feedback from field research, re-conceptualizing some of the main notions, re-defining certain allegedly “self-evident” categories such as “trafficking” and “victim”
- Refining the field research that could be further added to the one already finalized, according to the above-mentioned reconsiderations.

FYROM

The team managed to access victims of internal trafficking and to conduct interviews. Also, two interviews and a mini focus group are

conducted with members of a NGO that provides shelter for victims of trafficking.

Greece

Prominent activist – members of NGO's dealing with the issues of trafficking, immigration and labor are being interviewed. As announced at the previous meeting that took place in Ohrid, a member of the team conducted an interview with the leader of the cleaners syndicate Konstantina Kuneva.

Cyprus

Cyprus' team is gathering valuable material (photographs, short video-clips, interviews) using participant observation of labor immigrant in Cyprus, mostly single mothers. The point to emphasize is the impression of the precariousness of motherhood. Victims of trafficking are not accessible.

Romania

Interviewing Romanian women who work in Western Europe as immigrant illegal domestic workers detected different variations of slavery and trafficking. Most of them work as house helpers, while their passports and other documents are being kept by their employers. There are numerous victims of this kind.

Attempts to access NGO's that deal with the issues of trafficking are not successful, as are the attempt to reach the victims of trafficking.

Proposed further steps and Conclusions

4.1 The term "trafficking" masks the reality of perpetual violence involved in the gender-based migration related intercultural violence the so-called "trafficking" is. We do not reject the term, but rather call upon its radical rethinking that will help bring out into light the traumatic experiences of the trafficked women rather than the criminological dimension that is automatically evoked through the notion of

“trafficking” in its habitual use issuing from mainstream policy terminology. In depth critical re-conceptualization of the notion will focus on instances of experienced violence (identified through narratives accounting on traumatic experiences), bringing the WP8 team to proposing policies that will be more preventive and more re-socializing rather than “victimizing.”

4.2. Consequently (to 4.1), the team will focus on forms of precariousness of gender-based migration related intercultural violence: motherhood, single motherhood among female migrant workers (also among trafficked women in case additionally acquiring empirical evidence is possible), disabilities, sexual minorities, of either legal or illegal migrant labor (social security).

4.3. The team has decided to structure the analysis of the issues mentioned in 4.1 and 4.2 in three major areas of their conceptual renditions:

- Policy Discourses;
- NGO and Government Discourse;
- Personal Narratives.

Appendix 1

Thematic Workshop I

hosted by

Institute in Social Sciences and Humanities Research "Euro-Balkan"
The Gender Studies Department/Research Center in Gender Studies from
Skopje Ohrid, from July 1st-4th, 2009

AGENDA

Day 1 (2nd of July)

10.00-11.30 Plenary discussion on the progress accomplished within WP8, based on the brief progress reports by the national teams. *Facilitator: Katerina Kolozova*

[Note to the participants: Each summary progress report should last not longer than 5 minutes]

11.30-12.00 Coffee break

12.00-13.00 Plenary brainstorming on the challenges of the field research within WP8. *Facilitator: Katerina Kolozova*

13.00-14.30 Lunch Break

14.30-17.00 Presentations of the research results by national teams, followed by a discussion. *Facilitator: Nelli Kambouri*

[Note to the presenters: Each presentation by the teams should last 15-20 minutes]

Day 2 (3rd of July)

10.00-11.30 Workshop on methodological-epistemological issues concerning WP8. *Moderator: Bobi Badarevski*

11.30-12.00 Coffee break

12.00-13.00 Workshop on thematic issues concerning WP8. *Moderator: Bobi Badarevski*

13.00-14.00 Lunch Break

14.00-15.30 Afternoon workshop: Conclusions and planning the upcoming stages of the joint research within WP8. *Facilitator: Gabriela Colipca*

20.00 Dinner in old town Ohrid

Appendix 2

Thematic Workshop I

hosted by
hosted by the University of Panteon, Athens
The Centre for Gender Studies
Athens, 26th of November

AGENDA

10.00-11.30. Plenary discussion on the progress accomplished within WP8 since the Ohrid meeting in July 2009, based on the brief progress reports by the national teams; followed by a general discussion on the challenges stated by each reporter. *Facilitator: Katerina Kolozova*

[Note to the participants: Each summary progress report should ideally last 5 minutes]

11.30-12.00 Coffee break

12.00-13.00. Reporting on the field research progress since July 2009. *Facilitator: Zelia Gregoriou*

13.00-14.30 Lunch Break

14.30-15.30. Reporting on the field research progress since July 2009 (continuation) *Facilitator: Zelia Gregoriou*

[Note to the presenters: Each presentation by the teams should last 20 minutes]

15.30-16.00 Coffee break

16.00-18.00. Summing-up, conclusions, and discussion of the structure of the upcoming annual research report (issues of its coherence in terms of argument and style, terminology and analysis of data)