Moving relationships/shifting alliances: Constructions of migration in the leftist anti-racist movement in Athens.

Alexandra Zavos

Abstract

Researching migration in Greece presents opportunities for expanding and reconsidering debates on multiculturalism, sovereignty and postcolonialism in the era of globalization. Common identity discourses construct migrants as reified national 'others'. Sociological approaches link migration to neo-liberal management regimes. Feminist and social movements' conceptualizations of migration reproduce dominant western assumptions about subjectivity, agency and emancipation. Considering the above problems as methodological as well as ideological challenges, I argue for the need to research and understand the situated constructions of migration and migrant subjectivities, which are produced and performed in particular contexts that define to a large extent the repertoire of available discourses and positions for both natives and foreigners alike. As performances, however, they simultaneously reproduce but also transform, through different embodiments, the contexts in which they are generated. Contextualizing and situating my discussion of migration in Greece in relation to the leftist anti-racist movement, a specific site of production and negotiation of migrant identities, I consider the intersections of gender, 'race', class and ethnicity in the construction of positions of subordination and conditional inclusion for migrants and the reproduction of material and symbolic hierarchies within radical political spaces. Gender needs to be inscribed in our activist discourses and practices, not as a tribute to 'political correctness' but as foundational critique of the naturalization of dominant power inequalities in politics between natives and foreigners, and men and women. Questioning our own established identifications and investments could effect a much needed re-evaluation of anti-racism towards a proliferation and blurring of subject-positions between 'us' and 'migrants'/'others' and the subsequent development of new kinds of relationships, mobilizations and objectives.

Keywords: anti-racism, feminism, gender, migration, Greece.

In this paper I would like to think through some of the theoretical, methodological as well as political challenges presented in researching and mobilizing around migration. Firstly, I will consider some of the common assumptions and representations that underlie studies of migration. I will briefly outline three approaches - sociological, feminist and social movements' - and certain problems implicated therein. Against this theoretical background, I will focus on issues around migration, gender and entitlement raised in the context of anti-racist politics. I will analyze material from my own migration research/activism in the anti-racist movement in Athens. Finally, I will address the

possibility and need to link localized and situated migration research and activism to wider debates on multiculturalism, postcolonialism and globalization, and to issues of conceptual imperialism in academic discourse.

To begin with, I believe that contemporary migration and the processes (political, social and cultural) instantiated in and around it present significant challenges to, and thereby also a potential force of change for, our dominant western conceptualizations and practices of subjectivity and sovereignty in mainstream and radical politics. As an example, I would like to consider some problems in the common use, across political and social science discourses, of the term 'migrant' as an identity category, which does not reference a specific nationality/ethnicity but rather the exclusion from the identity of the Nation. As such, it aligns with national identities, such as 'Greek', yet only to reference their lack. To 'be' a migrant is to inhabit a national space negatively, through the impossibility of Identity with the sovereign national body. Constructed as national 'other' the migrant comes to represent all that lies outside the material and symbolic boundaries of a nation. This suggests that uses of the term migrant can themselves reinforce and reproduce nationalist discourses that we may want to challenge. At the same time, it constructs a totalizing and therefore empty subject position: a 'migrant' can be anyone and anyone can be a migrant, as long as they are (in a Greek context) non-Greek. This means that the particular experiences and trajectories of specific people in different locations, influenced by different geopolitical and historical circumstances are rendered invisible and subsumed under various abstractions which reflect the preoccupations and investments of mainly western theorists (Ahmed 1999), rather than the social actors themselves.

Considering the above problems as methodological, as well as ideological, challenges I would like to argue for the need to research, represent and understand the *construction* of migration and migrants in *particular* contexts, which define to a large extent the repertoire of available discourses and positions for both natives and foreigners alike. As performances they simultaneously reproduce but also transform through different embodiments and contested relationships, the contexts in which they are generated. Rather than referring to migration and migrants in general, thereby re/producing a discourse that renders them as reified, homogenized 'others' to the equally abstract and homogenized 'nation', we need to 'contextualize and situate' discussions on migration (Anthias 2000) in relation to specific sites, e.g. the anti-racist movement, and their particular generative discourses. In this way we can address both the investments that hinder and the renegotiations that enable the development of common struggles for social justice and equality (Anthias 2002).

I. Studies of migration: How is migration defined and what it at stake?

In current sociological European literature around migration (for an overview see Castles and Miller 2003, King 2002) the term refers to the movement of people from non-western to western countries, either by force or by choice (or a combination of the two), who enter national territories 'legally' or 'illegally' ('legal' and 'illegal' being, rather than an individual or group (moral) property, a legal status determined variously by supra/national legislations and policies) and are inserted into national labour markets as unskilled, low-waged, and largely undocumented workers. This is considered as being particularly the

case in Southern Europe, which has occasioned a proliferation of literature on the 'South European model of immigration' (King 2000, Cavounidis 2002, Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999). According to this model, southern European countries, such as Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal have, over the past twenty years, changed from being 'sending' to 'receiving' countries, due largely to the restructuring of global economic and political processes, and european integration and development. The geographical proximity of these countries to zones of 'underdeveloped' ones (e.g. Balkan, Eastern European, and Northern African countries), the perceived permeability of their borders, the lack of established national immigration policies and the large informal sectors of their economies are recited as reasons for the unprecedented (and overwhelming) influx of migrants (King et al 2000). This representation has become a sociological conundrum and frames the opening paragraphs of almost every article on migration in this region.

The empirical grounding of such analyses notwithstanding, my concern here is to consider them also as discourses with political/ideological implications, which are scientifically legitimized and link up with dominant models of migration management policies. The construction of migration as an exceptional and novel situation that countries, like Greece, are confronted and unprepared to deal with, ties in well with widespread neo-liberal preoccupations, within and beyond the European Union, for the local and global management of migration[1]. According to this multi-faceted framework, articulated by national and international governing bodies and development agencies[2], the movement of people must be controlled and channeled in ways that will accommodate the movement of capital, make flexible production possible, consolidate regimes and zones of unequal development, address demographic challenges, and secure continued Western supremacy. Representations of migration as an unregulated and destabilizing movement of (poor and unskilled) people (into the West) legitimize restrictive policies of control and conditional inclusion intended to serve the fluctuating labour and demographic demands of western economies and societies (Castles 2007). In this sense inadequate welfare provisions and contradictory legal frameworks, which help keep migrants hostage in positions of indeterminacy and marginality, must not be attributed to bureaucratic failures or misconstrued policies but in concert with neo-liberal economic demands for an expendable yet always available low-waged and mobile labour reservoir.

However, as feminist and marxist analyses variously illustrate[3] (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000, Castles 2006), Europe is not only the afflicted recipient of migration but also its *producer*[4]. In this sense, we can begin to consider migration not only as a social mobility

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[1] For examples, see European Commission (2002*), Migration and the Social Integration of Migrants*; UNESCO-MOST (2003*), Multicultural Policies and Modes of Citizenship in European Cities MPMC*; DEMOS (2003), *People Flow: Managing Migration in a New European Commonwealth*; UN Social Development Commission, "Better managing migration key challenge for twenty-first century", UNESCO News Archive, 10.02.04.

[2] See e.g. a critical analysis by Rutvica Andrijasevic (2005) on the policies and practices of the IOM in Central and Eastern Europe.

[3] There are significant differences between feminist and marxist analyses, such as the acknowledgment of the agency of social actors and the importance of symbolic processes against the domination of economic determinism.

[4] See for example discussions on the growing needs for cheap domestic service and care in relation to the changing position of european women in the labour market and the decline in welfare provisions of care and reproduction.

'strategy'[5] but also as a *response* to growing labour demands within the European Union (Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999). Turning the lens around provides a vantage point, particularly important for the anti-racist movement, from which to consider Europe as a socio-economic context which is actually inciting and 'inviting' migration and functions not only as 'shelter' and 'opportunity' to migrants, victims (or agents) of globalization in search for a better life. Prevailing representations of migration as a *one-way* process produced *outside* of Europe and encroaching upon (or enriching) its identity and resources can thus be countered. And ideologies of western hegemony and superiority – which accompany the above position - in which migrants figure as non-western, underdeveloped 'others' embodying the assumed 'uncivilized' characteristics of their countries of origin, can be challenged and resisted. The question then changes into one where we ask what kinds of bodies, identities, subjectivities and subsistences are constructed *in anticipation of,* and not in reaction to, the, officially unwanted yet structurally necessary, presence of outsiders.

Focusing on the subjects, subjectivities and agencies of migration has been one of the important contributions of feminist research. In fact, feminist studies of migration have been instrumental in addressing the kinds of subject positions constructed for and inhabited by migrant women by elaborating a framework of intersectional analysis of social relations that takes the articulation of gender, 'race', class, ethnicity and other social divisions into account when looking at the experiences and practices of migration, belonging and marginalization (Anderson 1999, Anthias and Lazaridis 2000[6], Parrenas 2001). Intersectionality accounts for the differential construction of gendered, racialized, minoritized subjects/identities (Anthias 2000, Brah and Phoenix 2004, Yuval-Davis 2006). It illustrates how inequalities are interrelated and co-construct complex and overdetermined positions of domination/ subordination (Treacher 2005) that cannot be reduced to a single determining cause (e.g. class or economic privilege, 'race') as is often advocated in leftist and anti-racist politics (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993). Privileging one inequality over others poses the danger of leaving the presumed secondary ones intact and reproducible, even within radical political movements with emancipatory objectives (Eschle and Maiguascha 2005). In these political arenas, the explicit and public denunciation of sexism, racism and/or nationalism is often coupled with a simultaneous, implicit and disavowed, discriminatory practice of gendered, racialized and minoritized political representation (Καμπούρη και Ζαββού 2007). This point will be further illustrated in my account of my own fieldwork and research with the anti-racist movement in Athens.

Feminist theory has highlighted the role of gender in naturalizing and regulating power relations, particularly with regard to (the imaginaries and ideologies of) nation and national identity (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Yuval-Davis 1993, 1997). Constructed divides between outside/inside, public/private, political/personal, citizenship/clandestinity, as aspects of personal, collective or spatialized national identifications, reflected within institutional state practices and informal relations alike, install and institutionalize

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[5] The term is used here to include various rationalizations and determinations of the reasons for migration.
[6] "It is necessary to look beyond merely economic processes for understanding the position of migrant women and to attend to ethnic and national boundaries… The migrant 'other' is gendered as well as racialized and classed." (Anthias 2000, p. 24).

hierarchies, inequalities and differential entitlements, which regulate conditional access to material and symbolic resources (Prokhovnik 1998). By attending to the processes that produce and distribute differential status and rights (between men and women, natives/citizens and foreigners), feminist research accounts for the gendered production of migration both as a *condition* which affects women's and men's lives differently (e.g. feminization of migration, feminization of labour), but also as a *position* that consolidates or possibly challenges existing relationships of power / difference as they are enacted in various formal and informal settings (Kofman, Phizacklea et al 2000, Anthias and Lazaridis 2000). By pointing at the multiple moments and practices in which these regulated entitlements and rights are contested and renegotiated, by particular subjects, in specific contexts, through any means available, migrants, and particularly women migrants, are recognized as active agents wielding power[7].

However, while importantly highlighting the ways in which women migrants are not victims but agents, feminist research sometimes *equates* gender relations with feminization (of migration or labour), since processes and relations are not considered gendered *unless* and *until* mainly women occupy them[8]. Men are typically absent from gendered readings, either because they belong to the general category of 'human' or because they do not suffer the same discriminations as women. In this way, certain masculinist assumptions about subjectivity and agency are inadvertently reproduced: women have gender, men have class; women (in the end do) have agency (but we have to dig deep to find it), men (obviously) have politics (which we observe immediately); women's agency is mainly of and in the private sphere (illuminating the fine nuances of oppression and subversion), men's politics are in and of the public domain (capturing the main axes of domination and resistance); women's agency is contingent, men's politics is innate. As I will develop further in my fieldwork account, this kind of reasoning underscores not only feminist research but also anti-racist activism on migration.

Obviously gender as a constitutive social relation affects and concerns both women and men and their relative positions. The migration of women and men as a family unit creates different possibilities and limitations, for both sexes, in comparison to women's or men's individual migration. Regarding these different positionalities, even if men are materially absent, we need to imagine them as a symbolically present relation (to) which one performs. Gender is not *in*operative until and unless we *name* it, in fact *not* being named is precisely one of the preconditions of its function as a power inequality naturaliser. Using 'gender' as an analytic category (Butler 1990), however, is a political and not an essentialist choice, in other words the *concept* of gender should not stand for a universal, natural, biological and a-historical category, but should work to question particular and situated relations of power and representation (Zavos 2006). In this sense, occupying a *feminist* anti-racist position would mean claiming women's lives and practices as *explicitly* political, inscribing notions of personal agency in *public* political discourses; legitimating actions not included in traditional activist repertoires as political practices of *resistance*,

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[7] For different accounts of women migrants' practices and resistances, see the special issue on 'Labour Migrations', *Feminist Review*, vol. 77, 2004.

[8] "The agenda for the future of research on migration must include concerns with the ways in which, *increasingly*, transnational migration processes are gendered, as well as new citizenship issues prompted by these processes" (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000, p.12, my emphasis).

thereby forcing open dominant western and masculinist assumptions about politics and subjectivity. This is where a feminist anti-racist politics can play an important role in migration activism.

Turning now to conceptualizations of contemporary migration by social movements[9] that aim to politicize and radicalize migration theories and the politics of anti-racism, we move from a defensive to an assertive discourse. Rejecting neo-classical economic 'push and pull' models that account for people's movement as a rational, individualistic calculation of economic opportunity, and reacting against structuralist Marxist political economic analyses of global inequalities that treat migrants as a 'reserve army of labour'[10], social movements speak of the 'autonomy of migration' and the 'right to flight' or 'escape' (Mezzadra 2004a, b, Moulier-Boutang 2003). 'Autonomy of migration' refers to the *non-reducibility* of migration either to 'push and pull' or economic determinants but rather stresses the importance of introducing into our understandings and representations of migration the notions of *desire* and *subjectivity* as constituting dynamics that produce excess and unpredictable meanings, practices and values connected to the experience of movement, of crossing borders and relocating. Echoing postcolonial and feminist approaches, they refuse to approach migrants as victims, or voiceless subjects and stress the emancipating momentum and paradigmatic character of migration struggles and practices, that challenge all existing legitimacies and boundaries upon which modern nation-states, unionized labour and institutionalized relations of 'otherness' have been predicated. They connect migration struggles to the growing precarity movement in Europe (Frassanito Network 2006) in an interconnected web of practices of resistance to post-fordist capitalist relations.

Through the notion of the 'right to flight' they introduce the idea of people's right to movement and pursuit of a different (better?) life as a purposeful, *strategically* enacted, liberating motivation. Along with feminist analyses (Phizacklea 2006) they identify the need for multi-causal accounts that address the complexity of the phenomenon of migration and stress the role of *social networks* in migration trajectories. They elaborate theories of agency to account for how migrants deal with the institutional forces that affect their lives, how they manipulate, negotiate, resist or change them, thereby emerging not only as passive victims but also as agents of globalization from below (Hess 2003). Another strand (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2007) draws on a Deleuzian framework to illuminate the dis-indentification processes involved in migratory movements, the immanent and perpetual state of 'becoming' that characterizes the life of migrants and the turn from a politics of difference and visibility to a politics of *in-visibility*, imperceptibility and de-subjectification as a form of resistance to and overcoming of the technologies of global control, border policing, administration.

While social movements' conceptualizations of migration and agency, introduce very important *political* dimensions to current debates on subjectivity and mobility it is important to avoid easy reifications and unification of the different subjects and locations of political agency in favour of more complex and situated accounts of particular social

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[9] E.g. transnational groups and networks such as the NoBorder Network, the Frassanito Network, the NoLager Network a.o.

[10] For a critical overview of both see Anthias 2000, Papastergiadis 2000.

contexts portrayed as experiences. Underlying assumptions of emancipation as independence, self-realization, self-determination, assumptions that permeate feminist and social movements' conceptualizations of agency, are projected onto migrant subjectivities. Migration is a global movement but it has many different faces, priorities and means, which need to be represented and accounted for separately and non-linearly. Practices of resistance need to be networked as different nodes and materializations of specific and historicized socio-political struggles, which some times can and sometimes can't be allied into a common frame of action. While both social movements and feminist approaches stress the agentic side of migration practices, that challenge material and symbolic investments of established institutional and anti-racist politics alike, they still remain largely unconnected both at the level of knowledge production and activism. I will consider this point further while reflecting on my own experience as activist/researcher trying to introduce a feminist perspective in anti-racist activism in Athens.

All of the above discourses inform the ways in which migration is understood and related to, not only in academic, but also in political and every-day contexts. In what follows, I will use my own research on the dynamics of gender and migration in the anti-racist movement in Athens to illustrate some of the ways in which the tensions and contradictions I outlined above can re-appear and shape actual political practices and the relations between 'natives' and 'migrants'. The purpose of this analysis will be to explore the different positions occupied by/available to 'greeks' and 'migrants' and the discourses used to justify them. The anti-racist movement seems to falter between representations of migrants as victims and agents of political processes and socio-economic relations. In this respect the anti-racist movement reproduces available discourses of migration, which – as I have tried to highlight in the previous section – also form part of social scientific repertoires. Thus, social scientific discourses and anti-racist discourses far from representing separate fields, actually, seem to draw on the same conceptual reservoir.

II. Reflections on doing activist research on migration in Athens: Moving 'between' incompatible positions?

My research on gender, migration and anti-racist activism in Athens developed after several adjustments, into an ethnographic project documenting my involvement in anti-racist mobilizations on migration issues. This included trying to set up an initiative on women and migration in the context of the activities of a leftist anti-racist collectivity called 'Network for the Social Support of Refugees and Migrants' which represents one of the oldest and most active political groups in the anti-racist and migration movement in Greece.

While a feminist and/or gender-informed approach to migration/activism are not part of the public and explicit profile of the group, or of any other anti-racist group for that matter, it was still, in my estimation, one of the more 'open' political spaces in which to introduce such an initiative, which I proceeded in doing over a period of eight months, and in collaboration with two other women members of the group. Feminist activists in Greece have tended to focus on trafficking and the sex industry, representing migrant women as helpless victims of (local, national and trans-national) networks of exploitation. Little or no work has been done on the conditions of women migrants' participation in the labour

market or with regards to the inadequacies and institutionalized discrimination of existing legal frameworks against women migrants. As part of our initiative we made personal contact with various migrant women and migrant women's organizations to discuss their problems and the possibilities of organizing common actions and campaigns, we facilitated an 'Open General Assembly on Women's Migration' and we organized a public discussion on 'Women Migrants and Domestic Labour' at the annual Anti-Racist Festival of Athens.

My double position as member and researcher of the group, while consciously chosen, proved to be quite challenging. On several occasions I experienced becoming the object of what I have come to name 'alignment processes'. In these instances, which ranged from informal talks to formal instructions and requirements, usually around issues relating to the group's practices vis-à-vis other leftist anti-racist groups and the group's positions on migration politics, I was 'guided' (i.e. pressurized or otherwise subjected to pedagogical instruction) to follow the 'correct' line and account to the group for my actions. Additionally, my relationship to migrants' groups and individual migrants proved to be much less straightforward and easy than I expected, often ending up in direct conflicts and/or compromises. My own position and the available or legitimized practices I could engage in, as well as the 'style' of engagement as a researcher and activist were delineated and (over)determined by certain inescapable markers: being seen and seeing myself as 'greek', woman, white, educated, middle class …. These were a source of continuous internal and external tensions.

Given these ongoing tensions, there were many points at which the only thing that bound me to the group and to my activist project was (paradoxically) my personal commitment to my research. Seeing that my 'political' commitment was often a source of frustration and disappointment rather than a liberating or emancipating process, it seemed to me relevant to further question activist motivations more generally. I initiated a series of individual conversations with the other members of the group, which I introduced as a part of my research and recorded, in order to create an opportunity for further and more intimate discussions regarding how we understand our practices and politics in the group and with migrants. In the next section I will introduce the 'Network' and, drawing on my discussions with greek and migrant activists in the group, as well as my own observations and experiences, I will look at how migration is constructed, represented, and used in this context, to both reproduce and consolidate group identity as well as homogenize or accentuate differences and power relations. *Specifically, I will look at how political participation and political representation is regulated through the construction of hierarchical and exclusionary subject positions for 'natives' and 'migrants' and the legitimization of particular discourses as valid political anti-racist ones*.

III. Group discourses, practices and subject-positions regarding migration: Symptoms of the field?

The Network for the Social Support of Refugees and Migrants was formed as a designated collectivity in 1996, consolidating various leftist and anti-racist initiatives on migration activism, with the objective of developing a strong migration movement that would become the political vanguard for campaigning for migrants' social and political rights.

The main focus and actions of the group were directed towards the greek state and government, a dominant ideological and practical orientation which has persisted to this day and highlights on the one hand the particular character of the group itself and of leftist activism in Greece in general, and on the other hand the limitations of this continuing political trajectory which are becoming more obvious today as a younger generation of activists with different priorities are getting involved. Spearheading the group's mobilizations over the past ten years has been an ongoing campaign for the unconditional legalization of migrants in Greece, at the same time as it has been developing parallel activities. These have included organizing an annual Anti-Racist Festival, a high point and show-case for the anti-racist movement in Athens, running a migrants' liaison and support office, a greek-language school and fostering the development of organized migrant communities in order to establish migrant leaderships and processes of representation. These activities are organized and framed mainly by greek activists with occasional practical help from individual migrants and nominal support from migrants' communities. The group core consists of mostly greek leftists but also some foreign political refugees; migrants join on a more temporary and fluctuating basis. Here, I would like to consider some of the key issues that emerged from my discussions with other activists I worked with, members or participants of the group.

Representing or silencing our own differences? Conflict, harmonization, alignment.
What became immediately obvious are the significant differences that are present among group members. These differences, although not politically incongruent to the extent of hindering a common frame of action, still foster tensions that are not represented in the public profile of the group, which comes through as a rather homogeneous and 'tight' collectivity. Differences appear to be constellated, regardless of actual age, around 'first' and 'second' generation activists, who adopt strikingly distinct but common and 'generationally' specific narratives to represent their own and the group's activities. While all 'first' generation activists tend to fall back on illustrious historical accounts of the group's trajectory and the development of the migration movement in general, 'second' generation activists express greater concern with current complexities and impasses as well as their own, often ambiguous, engagement in anti-racist politics.

Some of these differences, which need to be understood as performative and discursive as much as they are substantive, can be grouped around following questions. These questions, although separated and coded for analytic purposes, are intricately interconnected, overlapping, and not necessarily occurring as binary oppositions either:
- Representing clear and stable political identities tied to ideological commitments or embodying fluid, contradictory and personally motivated involvements?
- Privileging consecrated political battles or developing situational activist mobilizations, or in an alternative codification, having a Political (capital P) or a movement-oriented outlook?
- Mass mobilizing against the state and its central institutions or creating smaller and dispersed interventions in various social and political locations?
- Managing migrant mobilizations or organizing with migrants, which is also sometimes signaled as the dilemma of paternalism vs. self-organization?
- Promoting migrant leadership and community representation or collaborating with a range of people who may or may not be politically or ethnically identified as members of a specific collectivity?

Reciting differences is not about finding a solution or resolution, or determining their respective validity, but as an occasion to consider the wider discourses they draw on as well as their legitimizing or invalidating functions. Thus, and contrary to any imagined 'essentialism' of these positions, different group members at times represented, alternating, one or the other of the above positions, depending on the question at hand, but more pertinently, depending on the particular constellation of group dynamics of the moment.

*Migration: the **common** political denominator?*
In all the discussions there was general agreement that migration is a central *political* issue of our times, not a human rights problem. It represents a process that affects and changes foundationally the nature of our societies - the social relations, institutions, economic political, socio-cultural processes that shape them - locally and globally. Whether migration puts into question the nation-state as a hegemonic, sovereign geo-political entity, a position taken by some of the group members, or if – as expressed by others - we should foreground the integration (i.e. assimilation) of migrants and migration mobilizations into national – if radical - politics, remains an open question. This relates not only to how migration is conceptualized but more substantially how radical and anti-racist politics in general are understood. A comparison drawn by a Turkish political refugee, also a member of the group, between leftist politics in Greece and in Turkey highlights the nationalist slips in leftist discourses. As he points out, greek leftists' references to social and political institutions are qualified by possessive pronouns (e.g. references to *our* constitution, *our* country, rather than the constitution of *Greece*, the country of *Greece*). This observation compels further questioning of anti-racist engagement with migration politics (migration politics by whom, for whom, for what, by which means, migration politics as national politics, and if not, then what?) and places the migration movement squarely in the center of debates on the need to challenge ethnocentric practices of political representation.

Who are the subjects? On the identities of 'greek', 'local', 'activist', 'migrant'.
In our activist discussions the terms 'greek', 'local', 'activist' were used interchangeably thus producing a conflation of significations and a shrinkage of meanings to a common denominator, namely that of 'greek', at the other side of which stands the 'migrant', as a national 'other'.

On the other hand, the term 'migrant' was used (in our discussions in the context of the anti-racist movement and more broadly) to indicate exclusively people from *non-western* countries frequently assumed to be manual labourers. In fact, the term 'migrant' is generally used across ethnic, cultural, age, gender, class, and status differences and, in this sense, it represents and/or constructs homogenized – as well as racialized, ethnicized and classed - subjects. One significant differentiation which continued be of salience was the term 'political refugee', which was mainly used to denote people who are forced to leave their countries because of their political convictions and action, as opposed to migrants who were forced to move for economic reasons. This persistent differentiation can be explained partly in relation to the Network's long history of support for various liberation movements and the assumed commonalities and solidarity drawn between greek and foreign leftists, and partly because 'political refugees' are already politicized subjects and

can be more easily assimilated into the Network's main identity, whereas migrants are politically more ambiguous and diverse subjects. Nevertheless, migrants themselves, often use the legal terms 'migrant', 'political refugee' and 'asylum seeker' interchangeably and strategically, depending on circumstance, to gain legal access to greek territory.

Nevertheless, during the course of the development of the anti-racist movement in Greece, the term 'migrant' has also been claimed as a political term and a political tool and has served to consolidate individual differences or trajectories into a common, political identity. In this sense, 'migrant' can refer to an outsider who suffers from oppression, exclusion, discrimination, illegitimization and fights for his/her rights. Thus, the migrant also is constituted as a political subject and agent, albeit one that is separate and different from 'us'. Another important differentiation is that in the first years of the anti-racist movement, when central weight was placed on forcing the government to proceed to mass legalizations, the term 'migrant' indicated people who are present in the country as *undocumented* foreign workers, or in bureaucratic terms 'illegal aliens'. Today the content has shifted to refer to non-greek workers who are *legally living* in Greece, more or less permanently, and are demanding equal rights of enfranchisement and participation as citizens of their country of residence[11].

Thus we see that, in the context of the anti-racist movement, when 'migrant' emerges as an identity discourse (be it social or political) it tends to reify (legal and social) status differences into properties of the self or the subject. Coupled with this is the ethnicization and minoritization of migrant subjectivities (stereotyped as 'albanians', 'bulgarians', 'pakistanis' etc.), which is linked to the progressive requirement for migrant communities to become organized, institutionalized bodies that can act as political representatives of migrants' struggles. These discourses and their resultant subject positions are appropriated by greeks *as well as* migrants. Participation in political events such as the Anti-Racist Festival or in administrative and policy 'dialogues' is premised on the bearing of a title designating group membership. Lack of such affiliations renders the participation of someone in public contexts problematic and results in their exclusion or marginalization.

And if not victims or instructees then what? Gendering the Cherry.
Migrants as *victims*, either of war, poverty, underdevelopment, and repressive social and political regimes or of neo-liberal policies of population and movement control and criminalization are a common feature in political discourses, whether anti-racist of other. This popular representation is to a large measure justified at the same time as it obscures two important aspects: on the one hand, migrants' own struggles and multiple practices of resistance, on the other hand activist political investments in a hegemonic manipulation and distribution of political agency and political surplus-value implicated in practices of paternalism, minoritization and feminization of migrant mobilizations.

According to the genealogical accounts of the development of the anti-racist and migration movement in Greece, as described by some of its founding members, one of the Network's objectives was to promote, guide, and supervise the organization of migrant ethnic communities that would function as representatives of migrants' claims and facilitate migrants' concerted mobilizations. Subsequently, according to this narrative, in 1997, the

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[11] Similar to German 'gastarbeiter' discourse.

current to develop migrant community representation was consolidated into the formation of the Greek Forum of Migrants (G.F.M.). The G.F.M. is a legally institutionalized collectivity, which comprises several migrant community groups, mostly organized around ethnic lines, headed by a male political refugee with long-standing activity in the civil rights movement of the previous decade[12]. Importantly, the first supranational group to emerge, in 2004, independently at first and joining the Forum subsequently, was the United African Women's Organization, a women's collectivity bringing together migrant women from several African countries. This was hailed by the Network and the Forum as a very positive step in the direction of migrant women's participation and representation, a token of the anti-racist and migration movement's gender awareness and progressiveness as well as migrant women's awakening. The G.F.M. today acts as the main representative body for migrants' affairs in Greece and is the main political interlocutor in both formal administrative discussions and anti-racist mobilizations.

All this proliferation of activity – to a large extent in the direction of establishing institutionalized structures of representation - would appear to signal, and to some extent it actually does, a growing – and independent – momentum of migration-focused politics developed by migrants themselves. A closer look reveals these processes as intricately linked to and determined by the political 'management' of dissent practiced by the greek Left, which regulates political participation in the anti-racist movement, and reproduces relations of dominance and dependence. In fact, the construction of migrants' groups *as dependent members* represents the reproduction of a dominant/masculinist – subordinate/feminized political culture. In this sense, migrant groups' participation is always premised on the support of a greek patron-organization, e.g. the Network, which determines the political objectives, the terms of public enunciation, the legitimate spokespeople, the language and means of political action. These directives are not only addressed to migrants but shape the internal priorities and consecrated practices of the Network itself[13]. These *same* dynamics are further reproduced within migrants' groups, which attests to the hegemony of local political culture[14].

*But where **are** the 'migrants'?*
This is a question that bears on the organization and negotiation of spatial-temporal as well as social-political aspects of urban space. Firstly, a few words on the socio-political signification of location: While migrants' residence and work span the whole urban complex of Athens, there are still certain neighborhoods in proximity to the city center that exhibit a larger concentration of migrant populations, some with distinctly ethnic characteristics[15]. For that reason the offices of the G.F.M. and of other migrant

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[12] "The Greek Forum of Migrants (G.F.M.) or, the greek forum of migrants' organizations is an alliance of migrants, which has agreed to apply a collective program of action as a basis for continuous deliberations aiming at a viable structure, which will unite all migrants and enforce specific programs of action in order to succeed in its goals and purposes" (translated from the G.F.M. Web-page http://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/page2.pl?arlang=greek&argenkat=Parousiasi%20EFM&arypokat=Poioi%20Eimaste).

[13] E.g. the Network decided that the issue of migrant women's domestic labour was not political or inclusive enough to constitute a *central* topic of the July 2006 Anti-Racist Festival discussions.

[14] This was observed, among other instances, in the assumption of organizational leadership of the United African Women's Organization by a male migrant, or in the general disapproval of the 'aggressive' visibility of an Albanian woman activist, who strongly claimed the right to represent migrant women's voices.

[15] For example, 'Africans' live mainly in the neighborhood of Kypseli, 'Bulgarians' in Pangrati, both of which are old middle class neighborhoods. In these areas, migrants live in ground or lower floor apartments,

associations are primarily located in these neighborhoods, which are also easily accessible by public transportation.

The Network on the other hand, housed in an old two-story building that hosts several leftist political groups as well as the 'Migrants' Joint'[16], is located in a central area of Athens, Exarheia Square, marked as the epicenter of radical leftist and anarchist political activity. This was the main reason for choosing this particular space for its premises. In fact, according to the account of two of my discussion participants, when the question arose a few years ago about relocating the 'Migrants' Joint' and the Network to a downgraded inner-city area of Athens frequented mostly by migrants, the suggestion was rejected as politically unsuitable. One of the arguments – with a decidedly xenophobic twist – was that the area would be unsafe for women at night, a familiar way in which feminist and anti-racist struggles are set against each other, as well as saddle the Network with the requirement of intervening in erupting local disputes between migrants.

The point of this account extends beyond the spatialization of social-political relations into the subject of migrants' participation in political anti-racist spaces more generally. One of the recurrent complaints and concerns voiced during my discussions with the activists was the absence of migrants and migrant communities from anti-racist mobilizations, which were portrayed as 'abandoned to the hands of greek activists', in particular to the hands of the Network, which was therefore strained to fulfill its political 'commitment' (or, in some accounts, 'obligation' and 'duty'). Migrants were considered unmotivated to carry on political struggles, now that their most pressing needs were addressed through the three consecutive legalization procedures of the past 8 years, a story reiterated as much by greek activists as by migrant community leaders and representatives. While there is some merit to this interpretation, side accounts brought up certain other, less common, explanations, such as the fact that Network meetings always take place quite late in the evening on weekdays, an arrangement that makes it prohibitive for most migrants, who have to wake up very early in the morning, or can only use time-limited public transportation, to attend regularly. Others noted that migrants prefer to participate in activities that are less 'political' and more 'social' or more relevant to their daily lives, such as the greek-language classes that provide a space not only for learning but socializing as well and having a good time. These activities however cannot claim political status and are therefore considered 'less serious and important'. Yet others wondered whether migrant leaders themselves were in contact with the 'common' migrants who are not organized in communities. Development of a political bureaucracy and the professionalization of activism seem to have counter-effects as far as attracting mass participation goes. At the same time, (spatial, temporal, ideological) entrenchment of anti-racist practices in traditional spaces and well-rehearsed repertoires appears to stifle rather than encourage new initiatives.

*And where are the **politics**? Inside or outside the 'Movement'?*

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whereas 'greeks' higher up. 'Albanians' on the other hand live in working class neighborhoods and on the outskirts of the city.

[16] Migrants' Joint (Στέκι Μεταναστών) is a communal café-bar run on a daily basis by different groups and collectivities, none of which are migrants' groups!

In the words of one of the Network group members: "We (meaning the migration movement) are at an impasse. While up to now we (meaning the Network) were in the forefront of migration mobilizations, we were setting the tone for radical anti-racist politics, now we are in decline, we don't have new people joining and we don't know what the next step is, politically".

While it is true that the Network did play an important role in mobilizing other leftist groups, political parties and migrants' groups to jointly force the government to proceed with the first and second legalization processes[17], and campaigned extensively for migrants' and refugees' 'right to stay'[18], still, it also became apparent in hindsight that legalization was imminent, since at the time, and without pre-existing immigration laws, it was the only possibility for enforcing some kind of regulation. In the meantime the setting for migration politics has changed completely and has put political groups such as the Network whose principal point of reference has been the state, in a dialogue vacuum. The proliferation and institutionalization of various social agents (such as NGOs, private and public institutes, organizations, academic departments) all of whom are busily dealing with migration on different levels (administration, policy enforcement, research, services) constitute new points of conception and enforcement, production and reproduction of formal migration policies. In this sense, 'migration', as a political and administrative project, is no longer primarily produced by a central (monolithic) state apparatus, but in a multitude of diffuse and dispersed locations, which to varying degrees take on the work of government, as its extensions.

For this reason, the next step cannot but involve the changing co-ordinates of migration politics in the face of the new practices and technologies of government. Nevertheless, this is still not recognized within the 'Network', whose statist orientation seems to be a core part of its leftist identity, as a legitimate direction. Whether or not anti-racist and radical migration politics are possible, how, and in what spaces are questions which may occur in the context of the Network, but also exceed its scope as a national political formation. They join and are reflected in the very center of globalized debates around the politics of identity and difference, the demise of multiculturalism and the question of citizenship (Balibar 2004) and cosmopolitanism. For some (Mitropoulos 2003, Tsianos 2003) the struggles of migration are not happening in anti-racist groups or other political spaces of formal migrant political representation; rather, they are happening at the borders, internal and external, invisible and visible, personal and national, at all those points and moments when migrants cross the lines between legitimacy and illegality / clandestinity.

IV. Looking for the inter-connections: Local issues, global debates

Researching migration in Greece presents certain challenges and opportunities. First of all it offers the possibility of expanding and re-negotiating debates around multiculturalism, hybridity and postcolonialism, which sofar have been mainly produced in countries with a

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[17] Which took place in 1998 and 2001 respectively, following the resolution of the corresponding legal frameworks that set the terms for legalization, residence and work of foreign nationals in Greece.
[18] Note here that talk of rights at that time did not refer to equal rights, but rather to rights in a general and abstract sense.

clearly defined colonial history and present[19]. The history of contemporary migration in Greece starts with the demise of the Eastern Block in 1989 (Kasimis and Kassimi 2004, Πετράκου 2001, Μαρβάκης et al 2001) and is connected to the ensuing socio-economic and political transformations in Europe, but also extends to include global movements of population from the Middle East, Asia and Africa linked to economic and military developments around the world. As Greece, a country which only comparatively recently has entered the list of desired 'western' destinations, consolidates its claim of inclusion into the lobby of the 'powerful and developed', it also recasts the *conceptualizations* and the (collective and subjective) *territories* of the postcolonial condition.

There is a large body of greek literature, spanning several decades of sociological, political economic and socio-historical research (Βεργόπουλος 2005, Βούλγαρης 2002, Καραμπελιάς 1989, Τσουκαλάς 1987, Φίλιας 1974) that has tried to account for Greece's asymmetrical, wavering and contradictory relationship to the West, through models of unequal capitalist development between center and periphery and the study of national integration and national identity formation. The problem is represented as one of dependent development, faulty enforcement, or incomplete integration. The West, in most cases – even in its failures which are signaled as misfired attempts not as inherent impasses - is seen as a force of progress and emancipation; the best available model of rational development and sustainability. Underlying these accounts are western notions of progress and sovereignty as both desirable and inescapable conditions. Greece's own historical trajectory is measured against these hegemonic western standards. In today's globalized world, Greece faces a further impasse: its will and attempt to belong to the lobby of the powerful nations of Europe is premised on the adoption and enforcement of neo-liberal doctrines of government and economic development. Yet by doing so it not only contributes to the domination of neo-liberal globalization, it also becomes its dependent member, which imports and uses yet does not determine the tools of domination. Greece becomes part of the neo-liberal order, from a subjugated position, partially profiting and partially oppressed by it. This accounts for the hybrid forms in which various, including migration-related, practices or policies are realized and their often (ir)rational (in)effectiveness. Migration needs to be written into the particular trajectory of greek development (Parsanoglou 2004) and this development needs to be written into the articulation of global geo-political and economic order.

In the era of globalization, trench lines of domination/subordination/resistance, entitlement/conditional inclusion/exclusion are redrawn not only around but also across and within national borders (Massey 1999). As the local and the global are continuously implicated in and co-constructive of each other, there is a need to confront global hierarchies and their local performances, as well as critically evaluate local re/actions and their global appropriations. This involves locating specific analyses in global debates, with the aim of developing a critical appreciation of the debates and possibilities forged inside and out of them. What do multiculturalism, hybridity, sovereignty, integration mean in a 'greek' context and how can discussions of postcolonialism be extended to encompass these diverse experiences in different locations?

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[19] Literature on these issues is vast. Here I will only reference some resources I have found helpful in gaining a critical overview of the politics implicated in these debates; e.g. Ahmed 1999, Anthias 2002, Brah 2000, Μαρβάκης και Παρσάνογλου 2005, Mezzadra and Rahola 2006, Papastergiadis 2005, Spivak 2005.

From a critical geographic and feminist perspective (Sheppard and Nagar 2004, Mohanty 2003, Pieterse 2000) neo-liberal globalization involves creating and sustaining inequalities at a global scale. In this analysis, women, indigenous peoples and otherwise marginalized groups, in both the developed and the developing world, are posited against the powerful transnational elites of post-industrial capitalism. The sustainability of the dominant socio-economic neoliberal paradigm, with its ideological and militarized parameters, is questioned. Practices developed by the marginalized, on a collective level, in reaction to neo-liberal globalization, are welcomed as viable alternatives. Migration, not only a consequence and aftermath of global restructuring, can fall within this range of resistance and re-appropriation strategies and is considered to challenge dominant enforcements of sovereignty, in which the nation-state figures as a bounded and homogeneous entity. As Sassen (2003) has argued sovereignty of the nation-state has been undermined on a global economic and political level. In this sense its boundaries have been 'violated' by other processes long before migration and the integration of the 'others' became a problem for the imagined cultural and ethnic cohesiveness of its population. Still, migration today brings to the foreground once again issues of citizenship, integration and rights but also issues of 'belonging' and 'home' (Yuval-Davis et al 2005).

From a social movements perspective the migrant emerges and is claimed as a political subject and an agent of/for social change (Μαρβάκης et al 2005a, b). Yet I would argue that, in particular political contexts, the construction of migrants as particular kinds of subjects capable (or incapable) of (certain kinds of) agency, rather than reflecting actual potential, represents attempts to police the borders of political imaginaries and activism so as not to destabilize dominant configurations of power. In other words, as I have tried to illustrate in my analysis of anti-racist activism in Athens, migrants can be political actors in so far as they accept and enter the political game as it is cast. Political spaces such as the Network can then strategically and selectively 'integrate' designated 'migrant activists' and 'speak for' migrants as a whole as part of an extension of its political repertoire and influence. This is another way in which migration is 'managed'. However, migrants' own performative appropriation of the available terms of enunciation – their use of 'victim' imagery to represent their cause – also becomes a way for them to gain public presence and visibility as well as a position from which to speak. I will mention two examples: first, the participation of migrants in the Anti-Racist Festival in Athens can sometimes undermine and subvert dominant political imaginaries, by creating a certain dissonance, discomfort, and strangeness through the speaking-positions they occupy and perform[20]. This can be exoticized and thereby rendered predictable/manageable as 'other', or it can be used to push the boundaries of accepted political discourse. Second, migrant women's fierce claims to be included in debates not only around migration and migrant women specifically, but women and feminism in Greece in general, is another example where 'our' legitimacy to represent 'them' is questioned. At the same time, because of their marginal position, migrant women are more acutely aware that they also need to form alliances *across* differences, an awareness which escapes many greek activists who

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[20] For example, by speaking in English rather than greek, which is the 'correct' language for publicly addressing political audiences; or, by appearing in traditional ethnic costume, or by implicating greek society, and not only the state, in racist discrimination.

are mobilizing for the welfare of migrants, as if they are not implicated in the same processes of precariazation and 'othering'.

Criticizing universalizing western narratives, postcolonial and critical feminists (e.g. Ong 1988, Spivak 1988, Mohanty 1986) have argued that knowledge production is *not* a western (or white, or male) privilege. Different knowledges are produced in different and multiple locations and need to be acknowledged and engaged with. This is what a situated, reflexive analysis can offer and where my own specific position as a 'greek' researcher, with the privilege of transversing freely the unequal intellectual and material spaces of Greece and the UK, can be both resource and challenge. Constructed through general and particular power dynamics, this position itself illustrates the tensions between the local and the global and reveals the hierarchies of social scientific knowledge production. This brings me, by way of an example, to my second and final point.

Developing a critical analysis of migrants' positions in Greece necessitates attention to the intersections of gender, class, 'race' and ethnicity, as they manifest in their historical geopolitical specificity but are also articulated to global economies of privilege, in the production of 'entitled insiders' and 'threatening outsiders'. However, such analysis simultaneously calls into question the usefulness, relevance and implications of these analytic categories and their ideological baggage. I am referring here to the problem of transferring, imposing or adopting conceptual and linguistic categories, and their content, across intellectual, linguistic and social spaces. These are spaces which are not equal, similar or interchangeable, but rather hierarchically ordered sites, institutions and practices of knowledge production, which reflect economic and political hierarchies, with Eurocentric and Anglo-Saxon social science at the apex (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Rather than cosigning dominant assumptions of what counts as knowledge and who produces it, as well as common sociological representations of Greece as a panting late arrival to scientific and cultural trends, I am concerned to explore how to develop conceptual tools specific to this context, acknowledging the debts and influences of various other traditions, such as western and postcolonial feminism, as well as their incommensurability.

Conclusion

To return to and problematize my initial proposition, one of the leading questions framing our understanding of migration is whether or not it really is, by default, a force of social change, whether or not it engenders processes of hybridization, whether or not it calls forth a redrawing of cultural, social, national boundaries that organize relationships of entitlement, privilege and sovereignty and the differential distribution of resources and legitimacy. As I have shown in my brief analysis of the political climate of the leftist anti-racist movement in Athens, Greece, researching and mobilizing on migration issues does not automatically place us on the other side of dominant conceptualizations and practices, but reproduces them within our 'radical' contexts. In order to confront this contradiction we need to understand that what is at stake here are not only global relations of power conceived in the abstract, but also the material and ideological parameters of our own investments and locations. I too found myself being caught up in, suffering from *and* reproducing the dynamics of power I described, becoming on occasion a 'victim' of sexist discrimination and masculinist repression, a 'rebelling' subject, or a 'patronizing' and

'authoritarian' coordinator. In fact more often than not, I found myself feeling over-determined by these discourses and subject-positions, unable to produce new meanings, perspectives or interactions.

What became obvious to me during my fieldwork, is that gender – so absent, so present - needs to be inscribed in our discourses and practices, not as a tribute to 'political correctness' as is usually done, but through a foundational re-conceptualization of the ways in which implicit gender assumptions and practices legitimize, naturalize and obscure dominant hierarchies of power, be they articulated in the greek anti-racist movement itself, or towards migrants. This, among other priorities, could perhaps effect a much needed re-evaluation of anti-racism, premised not only on what 'we' do for those 'others' who are marginalized, discriminated against, or prosecuted. Primarily though it shows how we can question our own established identifications and investments towards a proliferation and blurring of subject-positions between 'us' and 'migrants'/'others' and the subsequent development of new kinds of relationships, mobilizations and objectives.

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Correspondence
Alexandra Zavos
e-mail: azavos@otenet.gr

Author Biography
Alexandra Zavos, PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University, has been doing research on activism and gender and migration issues in the antiracist movement in Greece and Europe.