

Seminar: Gender and Migration during COVID19

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Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

ProGender

A Digital Hub on Gender,
the COVID-19 Crisis and its Aftermath

The project is implemented by:



Day two:

**“Border Control and
Transnational Migrant
Movements during COVID-
19”**

18.00-20.00 (Greece)
/ 17.00-19.00 (Norway)
/ 15.00-17.00 (Iceland)

Today's Seminar Program

18.00-18.10: Welcome and feedback from previous day

18.10-18.40: Presentation

18.40-19.00: Discussion-Questions

19.00-19.15: Break

19.15-19.45 Interactive session

19.45-20.00: Closing questions and remarks

Feedback from previous day: How can we think in more intersectional ways about the pandemic?

ADDING NEW CATEGORIES IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER

Not only men-women

But also sexuality, class, ethnicity, race, education, and religion.

Precarity of employment and legal status play also a key role in how subjectivities are formed.

CHALLENGE OUR ETHNOCENTRISM AND GENDER HETERONORMATIVITY

-Migrants lives transnational lives.

-They operate in transnational networks

-Gender fluidity may be part of crossing borders, whether that is in the form of men becoming more fatherly for their children or trans migrants coming our.

How can we think in more intersectional ways about the pandemic?

- Think of women and migration but also of **men and masculinities**, for example explore how gender relations are formed in different contexts, and how masculinities can change in terms of more involvement of men in care, men against gender based violence, teaching about sexism and patriarchy (see presentation of Aapta Garg in the video by SEEP Network's WEE Working Group).
- Think of how **gender inequalities in care are interconnected with migration during COVID-19**. For example how women in host societies have been used to resolve their work-life balance issues by employing migrant women and men for a very low cost and without employment guarantees.
- Think of how these **interdependencies** between national and transnational lives played out during lock downs. For example, live ins have faced enormous pressures because they were unable to take time off and return to their countries of origin for breaks.
- Think of **essential work as a gender and migration issue**. A large number of essential workers in hospitals, platform work, super-markets, agriculture and the food processing industry are migrant women and men.

How can we think in more intersectional ways about the pandemic?

Migrants in camps, people in poverty or in precarious employment might find it very difficult to access protective material and secure places to isolate. Respecting hygiene rules and avoiding overcrowding may be impossible for them, whether they are male, female or LGBTQ+.

Are we underestimating the vulnerability of male migrants especially in camps or crossing borders during COVID-19?

Not necessarily: migrant women and LGBTQ+ might be doubly impacted by the pandemic because on top of these vulnerabilities they are also **more at risk to sexism, gender based violence and sexual abuse.**

Moreover, especially women are more represented in **precarious employment (domestic and care work, nursing, agriculture)** and have taken responsibility for increase **unpaid care work** burdens that have emerged because of the lock downs.

How can we think in more intersectional ways about the pandemic?

- Think more broadly about **how migrant vulnerabilities are exasperated because of anti-migrant policies** that have been imposed during the pandemic. For example, during the pandemic the Greek government has stopped an EU funded program on the housing of refugees in order to deter them from settling in Greece. Also it has increased unlawful push backs to Turkey as many NGOs and international media are reporting. These may affect migrants of all genders, but they also make women and LGBTQ migrants more vulnerable to gender based violence.

Amnesty International (2021) “Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are de facto border policy”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/greece-pushbacks-and-violence-against-refugees-and-migrants-are-de-facto-border-policy/>

D.Trilling (2020) Greece has a deadly new migration policy – and all of Europe is to blame 27 August <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/27/greece-migration-europe-athens-refugees>

Gendering border crossings during COVID-19

Crossing national borders during COVID-19 became very difficult because of **travel restrictions** and health protocols. Migrant women whose border crossings already contained risks of gender-based violence became even more vulnerable.

Many migrants were forced to **remain in transit indefinitely** because of pandemic restrictions of movement. Being in transit meant that personal freedoms were lost, but also that life had to become much more precarious because it was not possible to leave the camps to search for employment and social and educational activities inside the camps were reduced or stopped (Morsheimer, Χατζηπαναγιώτου, Mykkänen και Hrishabh Sandilya 2020).

In Greece, many migrant women and girls were forced to remain locked in overcrowded camps where they could not even isolate or cover basic hygiene and medical requirements (water, sanitation, spaces of isolation, access to doctors and medicine) including those related to sexual and reproductive rights (Αποστολαρά, 2021). Children residing in camps lost access to education and activities for women stopped for long periods of time because of the pandemic. Although there are no accurate statistics, gender based violence rose in the camps as safe spaces were no longer available to protect survivors. (DIOTIMA, 2020 and Μαραγκίδου 2020,)

What Borders?

-**National borders:** borders are not open for migrant asylum seeking people on the move. Prohibition to enter usually means deportation or illegal. Borders may open (they are like filters) for those who are granted asylum or residence permits, but this is only part of the story because even when national borders open migrants face also multiple other types of additional borders.

-**Borders of gender and labour:** migrant women are concentrated in informal sectors of the labour market, most notably in care, health, agriculture, industry. LGBTQ+ migrants are even more restricted in the sectors, in which they can find employment because of stereotyping both in migrant communities and in destination countries. Sex work is an option for many migrant women and LGBTQ+.

--**Borders of legal status and citizenship:** migrants face uncertain legal status that is often ongoing. Even if they are granted residence permits or humanitarian leave to stay they have to renew it and this requires them to be employed. Recognised trafficking victims are only granted temporary residence permits, which are renewed after some years only if they have employment. The temporary nature of legal status causes the condition of what Nicolas de Genova has termed the condition of deportability.

N. De Genova Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 31:419-447 <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085432>

-**Social Borders:** migrants who are precarious lack access to social protections. Especially during COVID-19, access to social protection was severely restricted and many were excluded from social support but also access to health, education, sociopsychological support that citizens enjoyed.

Transnational migrant movements and gender during COVID-19

Thus the impacts of COVID-19 on the gendering of borders were broader. According to the report of Cymant (2020), transnational migrant movements across the world have been severely affected by:

- controls, lock downs, restrictions of movement to contain the spread of COVID-19
- by the rise of xenophobic, sexist and racist policies exasperated by the pandemic.

These had negative impacts on migrant women and LGBTQ+ persons which differ across continents although there are global continuities. The report observes the following phenomena per region:

(1) Magrheb and the Middle East (MENA):

- deportations of women in transit without appropriate protections against COVID-19
- rise of xenophobia stigmatising migrant women as vectors of the disease, especially in North Africa
- dismissals of migrant domestic and hospitality workers especially in the Middle East

Transnational migrant movements and gender during COVID-19

(2) Asia and the Pacific

-Some domestic workers were dismissed and were forced to return to countries of origin where they faced stigmatisation and unemployment, for others the workload increased enormously as they had to carry the burden of lock downs and hygiene measures.

-Undocumented migrant women were targeted as dangerous for spreading COVID-19. In Malaysia, where the government carried out crackdowns against migrants to reduce the spread of the virus. Especially undocumented domestic workers lost their jobs and were not allowed to move around because of government raids against migrant workers.

Transnational migrant movements and gender during COVID-19

(3) The Americas

- Increased levels of socioeconomic insecurity and violence by the state against undocumented migrants. For example the Trump administration intensified deportations, without following the legal procedures. There were reports that they deported even when they had the virus.
- Economic and labour violence against migrant essential workers in care and medical professions, but also in agriculture and meatpacking where they did not even have access to protective material and priority vaccinations.

Transnational migrant movements and gender during COVID-19

(4) Europe

-Undocumented migrant women avoided going to hospitals even when they were infected and seriously ill to avoid identification and deportation.

-Some of them also lost access to essential services that moved online because of the digital divide.

-Many migrant women in informal sectors lost their jobs. They were not entitled to unemployment and social benefits and were excluded from public relief responses to the pandemic, such as cash transfers or basic income schemes.

-Migrant women essential workers in the care sector continued to work, but they were often forced to spend lock downs in the houses of their employers and increased workloads.

What do we observe about gender and borders across the world?

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT WOMEN, AND LGBTQ+ WERE STIGMATISED, SCAPEGOATED, DEPORTED



WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ESSENTIAL MIGRANT WORKERS WORSENE



What do we observe about gender and borders across the world?

NO ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION,
HOSPITALS, EDUCATION, BENEFITS



UNEMPLOYMENT, HEALTH INSECURITY,
HOMELESSNESS ROSE



Activities: Comment on the following passages

1. University of Birmingham Report (2020) “Understanding the Impact of Covid-19 on Forced Migrant Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence” (link in padlet).

“Victims were finding themselves locked in with perpetrators, with no access to shelters or advice organisations, and as a result were having to suffer abuse”.

“Some women and their children are going hungry and without medical care – they are entirely destitute and reliant on the generosity of neighbours, themselves struggling. Social isolation is exacerbating multilayered traumas – no distractions mean women are reliving abuse episodes, increasing anxiety levels, sleep problems and leading to suicide ideation”.

“There had also been a knock-on effect due to the cancellation of therapeutic services and self-help groups. Digital poverty confounded this issue, excluding many from participating in online meetings, resulting in many migrants spending long days alone.”

Activities: Comment on the following passages

“Individuals feared going hungry and struggled to receive support due to pandemic restrictions, which included suspension of some projects. Work previously available in the informal economy disappeared and losing income opportunities increased economic hardship.”

““Forced migrants living in shelters, shared accommodation and overcrowded housing with shared kitchens and toilets were unable to self-isolate – creating health risks and anxiety about contracting the virus. Legal status introduced a range of barriers – from no access to public funds and services to not being allowed to work or open a bank account.”

Activities: Comment on the following passages

2. Πρόληψης της έμφυλης βίας, δουλεύοντας με άνδρες πρόσφυγες και μετανάστες (REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2018 -856614) https://www.focus-on-men.eu/fileadmin/WWP_Network/redakteure/Projects/FOMEN/qualitystandards/FOMEN_Quality_Standards_EL.pdf

Το σύστημα των φύλων χαρακτηρίζεται κυρίως από έντονες ανισότητες λόγω των παραδόσεων της πατριαρχίας. Οι κυρίαρχοι πολιτισμοί συνήθως διακρίνουν μόνο δύο φύλα και απορρίπτουν άλλες δυνατότητες σεξουαλικού αυτό-προσδιορισμού. Οι άνδρες/η αρρενωπότητα ανατρέφονται σε αυτά τα δυαδικά συστήματα και διαθέτουν ισχυρότερους πόρους (πολιτική εξουσία, οικονομικό κεφάλαιο, κοινωνικό στάτους και συμβολικούς πόρους) από τις γυναίκες/θηλυκότητα.³ Ωστόσο, είναι σημαντικό να γνωρίζουμε ότι η απόκτηση του στάτους του «πραγματικού άνδρα» και η κυριαρχία συνοδεύεται από κόστος (όπως η ανάληψη κινδύνων, οι ανθυγιεινοί και μερικές φορές βίαιοι τρόποι ζωής). Τόσο το κόστος όσο και τα προνόμια ισχύος των ανδρών αντικατοπτρίζονται στις εκπαιδεύσεις.

Activities: Comment on the following passages

Ωστόσο, η συζήτηση πρέπει να εμβαθύνει και να διαφοροποιηθεί: Όχι μόνον η έννοια της έμφυλης βίας καλο είναι να πάει ένα βήμα παραπέρα από τους ορισμούς της βίας των ανδρών κατά των γυναικών, αλλά να συμπεριλάβει τις έμφυλες ρίζες της βίας των ανδρών κατά των ανδρών, την ομοφοβική και τρανσφοβική βία και ούτω καθεξής. Είναι επίσης σημαντικό να αναδείξουμε τους άνδρες όχι μόνο ως πιθανούς δράστες, αλλά και ως δυνητικά θύματα και μάρτυρες με ευθύνες και ανάγκες (και, αντίστροφα, να μην αναδείξουμε ως δράστες μόνο τους άνδρες). Ταυτόχρονα, καλό είναι να αποφευχθεί η παγίδα της σχετικοποίησης του γεγονότος ότι υπερέχουν οι άνδρες δράστες και της άρνησης της ηγεμονικής αρρενωπότητας. Παρουσίαση κατάλληλων γεγονότων και αριθμών σχετικά με την έμφυλη βία