Introduction

MOVING MIGRANT WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE

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'It is unfair. Why do they issue us with permits? There is no reason if they don't respect them. After thirty-two years in Greece, I cannot believe the kind of state we live in.' [1] These were the words of one of three members of the United African Women's Organization (UAWO) arrested during a routine document check in central Athens on 1 September 2014.

The women had just finished rehearsing a performance titled 'No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle' when police officers stopped them as they were leaving the theatre. Despite presenting officially certified copies of their residence permits, they were promptly arrested and detained. When their fellow performers demanded to know the reason for the arrest, the police simply claimed that the women were acting 'suspiciously'. One white Greek woman protested that in that case she should be arrested too. The police officer replied coldly, 'Only foreigners are suspicious'. It was not lost on anyone present that none of the white Albanian 'foreigners' were asked for proof of legal residency, let alone viewed as potential criminals.

Among the detained women was Lauretta, President of UAWO. Known for her outspoken and direct nature, Lauretta did not hold back: 'What happened was a totally racist practice. We always move around with our residence permit. And instead of giving it back to us and letting us go home, they dragged us with them.' It was an entirely unnecessary response; a police officer could have easily made a quick phone call to verify the women's documents without resorting to detention.

Upon their arrival at the Aliens Division of Attica in Petrou Ralli, the women found themselves locked in a room with thirty-five other detainees – all men, and all non-white. 'What we experienced was terrible,' Lauretta recounted. 'Ask me if I have a residence permit, but don't swear at me, don't humiliate me. Because that's what they do. They have got worse. It is no coincidence that all the thirty-five men we were put together with were also brown-skinned.' When Lauretta insisted to a police officer that they should at least be held in a separate room for women, he threatened her. 'Shut up bitch. This is Greece. If you weren't a woman, I'd grab you by the hair.' Undeterred, Lauretta answered back. An argument ensued that left her fellow detainees astonished at her boldness. 'You know how they were looking at me?' she recalled with a chuckle. 'Like I'm from the moon – somewhere else not in this world.'

News of the arrests reached several 'friends of UAWO', who swiftly contacted the police to protest the detention. Their efforts led to the women's release within a matter of hours. This was a rare outcome. The women were fortunate to have more than twenty supportive witnesses, including a lawyer who accompanied them to fight their case, as well as the backing of the President of Amnesty International, Greece. Lauretta knows that this isn't the reality for most women. 'You know how many women they arrest and nobody knows about them?' she exclaimed. 'This thing is happening every day here. They arrest African women – even with pregnancy they arrest them. They put them in prison for nothing.'[2]

Within hours of their release, UAWO had issued a statement condemning the incident and calling on the Greek state for 'respect for the Other, respect for our dignity'. They protested against the treatment of African women as if they were 'common criminals', highlighting the irony that such action forces them into positions of illegality: 'We have women in UAWO, completely legitimate, with legal work, who are held for days. And when they release them they do not even give them an apology. That's how people lose their jobs. And afterwards, the Greek state, which is persecuting them, asks for [social security] stamps!' Bitter experience has taught these women – and many others like them – that being 'completely legitimate' offers no protection from persecution by the Greek state. Unlike the police officers, who wielded their privilege by refusing to give their names when asked, these women inhabit a world where their belonging is constantly questioned and never guaranteed.

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In Greece, African women navigate a society where national identity and belonging are predominantly racialized as white, and where migrant women are rendered largely invisible as active independent agents. In this context, processes of gendered racialization intersect with migration status, making African women not only invisible but also hypervisible in particular stereotypical ways: as oppressed wives and mothers, uneducated domestic workers and sexualized and/or dangerous Others. This combined invisibility and hypervisibility not only

obscures the rich complexity of their lives, denying them proper recognition, but also exposes them to particular kinds of vulnerability and experiences, as illustrated in the above vignette.

The economic collapse of 2008, compounded by years of austerity, soaring unemployment and increasing anti-migrant sentiment, further intensified the vulnerabilities of African women living in Greece. How these women navigate their everyday lives within this crisis-stricken socio-political landscape is the subject of my book. I examine the processes of exclusion and 'othering' they encounter in contemporary Greek society, alongside the strategies they deploy – strategies of coping, resistance, adaptation and co-operation – to counter the disadvantages they face and secure livable lives. Conducted as a feminist ethnographic inquiry, my research goes beyond traditional depictions of victimhood and dependency to engage with the often hidden and complex lives of real women.

The Crisis

When I began my research in Athens in the autumn of 2014, Greece was entering the seventh year of a debt crisis that many commentators believed threatened not only the collapse of the Greek economy and state but also the very existence of the European Union (EU). At the time, Greece faced an unsustainable debt of €310 billion (£225 billion), economic activity was down by 25 per cent, and some four million Greeks had been driven to the breadline (Pryce 2015). The escalation of poverty was in large part due to the austerity measures required by the 'troika' – the European Commission, the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund – in 2010 and 2012, which included: drastic cuts and freezes of salaries, pensions and benefits; the dismantling of the public healthcare system; increased taxation; and the privatization of essential services and infrastructure. As a result of these austerity measures, ordinary Greeks – particularly from low- and medium-income households – were exposed to severe economic hardships.[3]

Notably missing from much of the debate about the crisis was the fact that the effects of austerity were unevenly distributed, inscribed as they were on pre-existing inequalities – inequalities between places, women and men, locals and migrants, big and small employers, and secure and precarious workers (Vaiou 2014). Already a majority in lower-wage formal and informal sector work, non-EU migrants were particularly negatively affected by severe recession and government policy developments. A sharp increase in formal unemployment amongst non-EU citizens reached 40 per cent in 2013 and was accompanied by increased competition for informal work (OECD 2015).

Prior to the election of the populist leftist Syriza party in January 2015, Greek government policy had taken a strongly conservative turn. A consequence of meeting the requirements imposed by Greece's creditors on the one hand, and

a display of autonomy and control over an increasingly discontented society on the other, the result was the implementation of a series of draconian measures. These included the dismantling of public goods and services, new forms of securitization, emergency legislation curtailing workers' rights, the repeal of a law giving citizenship rights to so-called 'second generation' migrants and a more restrictive immigration policy (Athanasiou 2014).[4] Most prominently, the government sought to assert itself through increasingly visible tactics of immigration control, effectively institutionalizing racism through the actions of the state. On 4 August 2012, shortly after taking power, the New Democracy government led by Prime Minister Andonis Samaras launched Operation Xenios Zeus, a key tactic of which was the use of police powers to conduct identity checks to verify the legal status of individuals presumed to be 'irregular' migrants.[5] While police stops were frequent before the launch of the operation, official statistics indicate a significant intensification at that time.[6]

During this period, Greece expanded its use of detention practices, establishing thirty 'closed hospitality centres' for undocumented migrants – a policy move that, while not unprecedented in the EU, was notable for its rapid scale-up and formalization. In addition, following several legislative changes, administrative detention of unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers was raised to a possible maximum period of eighteen months, without an individual assessment (GCR 2014). Finally, in 2013, following a ruling by Greece's highest court, the Council of State, the government reversed a law that had been ratified by Parliament in early 2010, allowing those who had been born to migrant parents legally living in Greece for at least five years to be granted Greek citizenship, provided they had studied at a Greek school for a minimum of six years.

The visibility of growing numbers of a migrant population more diverse than ever before provided an easy scapegoat for the country's ills. This was evident in a strident political discourse that increasingly emphasized an ethnic definition of Greek national identity – a tendency that was accentuated by the centre-right's desire to win back voters from the extremist far-right party Golden Dawn (who entered Parliament for the first time in 2012 with an alarming 7 per cent of the popular vote).[7] Terms like 'ethnic purity' and 'racial unity' re-entered the public sphere (Karyotis and Skleparis 2013). Facilitated by a media that often depicted migrants 'swarming', 'flowing' and 'flooding' across Europe's permeable southern borders, politicians framed immigration not only as a potential threat to national identity and social cohesion but also as a security issue by regularly portraying the sovereignty of the Greek state as under threat (Swarts and Karakatsanis 2012; Zetter 2007). In 2012, at the height of anti-migrant feeling, the Minister of Public Order, Nikos Dendias, called immigration 'a bomb aimed at the foundations of society and of the state' (Boukas 2012).

Rising anger and feelings of alienation amongst a growing proportion of Greece's population, shifting migration dynamics and the political response to

these, fuelled anxieties about immigration and its impact on security, national identity, social cohesion, employment, public services and welfare programmes (HRW 2013; Sunderland et al. 2012; Swarts and Karakatsanis 2012; Zetter 2007; Zetter et al. 2006). It did not take long before social tensions between citizens and migrants became a notable feature of 'the Greek crisis'. Data recorded by a network of Greek NGOs, coordinated by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, showed that racially motivated attacks had been on the increase since the onset of the crisis (RVRN 2012). Put simply, while Greece has become an increasingly diverse society in recent years, popular attitudes at the time of my research remained largely xenophobic and anti-migrant, with a strong emphasis on maintaining ethnic homogeneity. These attitudes had deep, long-standing roots in Greece's national experience (explored briefly in Chapter 2), as well as more proximate, contemporary causes. They were both encouraged by the anti-migrant policies and actions of the state as well as serving to popularly legitimize and reinforce them (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003).

Already urgent at the time I began my fieldwork, these issues were compounded by developments during it. Ongoing political instability (there were two general elections and one referendum in 2015 alone) and deepening economic crisis sent the economy plummeting. In the summer of 2015, a sense of brinkmanship entered already tense negotiations with Greece's creditors. Meanwhile, another crisis unfolded in the Aegean as vast numbers of mostly Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees made the crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands. According to UNHCR, by the end of 2015 over one million people were estimated to have arrived in Greece that year alone (Clayton and Holland 2015).

When refugees started appearing not only on our TV screens and newsfeeds but also in Athens' parks and squares, I became aware of the particular (in)visibility of African women in Greece once more. Admittedly, the scale of the influx in 2015 was unprecedented; however, it was not lost on me that some of the women who were taking part in my research had made the very same journey months, even years, before – away from the media spotlight, perhaps, but with no less trauma or risk to their lives. Yet their journeys and stories had gone unheeded. Largely due to the colour of their skin, these women were assumed to be 'economic migrants' and not refugees, and so were also subjected to all the judgements that come with such labels. Nor had I heard it being sympathetically said of them, as I often had of the Syrians, 'they're just like us'. Once again, these women became defined by that which they were not: not Syrians, not refugees and not 'like us'. Even before these crises, African women in Greece appeared to be trapped in an economy, society and polity that afforded them little support. Processes of gendered racialization constructed them in inferior and precarious positions, which were seemingly reinforced, rather than countered, by the provisions of national immigration law (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003; Lafazani

et al. 2010). Recent developments intensified this situation, making my focus on African women even more important.

The (In)Visibility of Migrant Women

The (in)visibility of African women in Greece stems in part from a wider tendency in public discourse and immigration policy to consider migrant women in general only within narrow domestic and familial contexts, casting them always in supporting roles as wives and homemakers rather than as independent migrants.[8] With immigration rules based on the construction of the principal migrant as an individual male worker, the more or less explicit assumption in Greece was, for a long time, that women are either left behind or 'follow' male relatives through family reunification (Cavounidis 2003; Kofman 1999, 2004a; Ryan and Webster 2008; Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky 2006). As with the social welfare system as a whole, the result is that immigration laws in Greece act to reproduce traditional notions of women's dependency on men by assuming that the latter are the breadwinners and, therefore, the heads of households (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003; Kofman 1999; Mahler and Pessar 2006).[9]

In Greece, the assumption that policies are gender neutral has long framed female migrants' issues as a deviation from the norm. Addressed in a fragmentary way as part of either trafficking or family issues, there are provisions on family reunification, trafficking, mixed marriages, domestic violence and employment in the informal sector, but very few and poorly implemented provisions for a number of other categories, such as unmarried or single mothers. As I was to discover during my fieldwork, the absence of married women's independent right to permit issuance and renewal can also be a problem for many women, particularly when marriages break down, when husbands die or, as had become common during the years of economic crisis and austerity, when husbands become unemployed and, therefore, unable to meet conditions for renewal.

By operating in a gender-discriminatory way that introduces asymmetrical access and rights to legalization, the Greek legal system produces and reproduces the (in)visibility of migrant women both in policy terms and, all too frequently, in broader public discourse. Made visible as mothers and wives who are dependants of men, as enslaved domestic workers or as victims of trafficking and domestic violence – rather than as active initiators of migration plans – these unskilled, weak and oppressed women appear to lack all ability to shape their own fate (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003; Lazaridis 2001; Liapas and Vouyioukas 2006). Promoting representations of migrant women only as a specifically vulnerable and dependent social group in this way not only denies the diversity and the autonomous character of migrant movements, it also fails to address migrant women's needs. It silences their voices and further strips them of their rights.

As one report from the European Network of Migrant Women (2011: 2) concluded, the status of migrant women in Greece is 'characterized by a lack of social recognition', reflecting a 'multi-faceted problem concerning migration, gender and human rights'. Overall, migrant women's specific needs, motivations, diverse characteristics and varied migration experiences are very rarely taken into consideration, amounting to direct or indirect discrimination against them.

While it is impossible to ignore the gendered aspects of migrant exploitation that render some migrant women (and some men) victims, as Zavos (2010: 26) observes, discourses of victimization 'ostensibly pathologize migrant women as backward, traditional, underdeveloped, disempowered, imprisoned in the family or as objects of male desire'. Such discourses strip women of all agency and reinforce racialized and gendered stereotypes. In turn, these stereotypes not only further inferiorize and exclude, they also justify and explain away inequalities as a consequence of cultural differences of 'naturally' inferior groups (Veikou 2016). The 'victimization' implicit in prevailing depictions of migrant women thus stands in curious complicity with negative perceptions of migration as a 'threat' to the security and social cohesion of host societies (Andrijasevic 2003).

On Naming 'African Women'

I recognize that naming an identity, as I have with 'African women', risks essentializing and fixing individuals in ways that deny them the complexity, fluidity, multiplicity and ambiguity that we ascribe to our own individual sense of ourselves (Cockburn 2004). I am also aware that the category I have chosen to focus on is a particularly vast and diverse one. 'African women' are, of course, no more a unitary category than 'migrant women'.[10]

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the common-sense social categories that people use to define themselves and others. My justification for this focus, therefore, lies not only in the constructed nature of all categories but also in the specific context under study. In Greece, African women (and men) are on the whole racialized as Black, such that national, tribal, ethnic and even religious differences do not contribute much to how they are perceived and treated.[11] This homogenizing identification is so pervasive that women described arriving in Greece and discovering themselves as 'African', whereas before migration they had thought of themselves in various ways – as Sierra Leonean, Nigerian and Ethiopian, or more simply as Lauretta, Ruth and Adanech – but never as 'African'.

Furthermore, and crucially for my purposes, the 'African woman' identity is one that women themselves actively mobilize in significant ways (discussed in Chapter 5). Consequently, the question becomes how this group is named and constructed in Greece, and by whom; and how this shapes women's subjectivities,

belonging, strategies, choices, relationships, feelings and possibilities. Thus, to paraphrase Brubaker (2004: 9), the 'African woman' category belongs to my empirical data and not to my analytical toolbox. It is a starting point from which questions of identity and belonging are explored, revealing commonalities amongst and between both African and migrant women categories, as well as across both sides of the 'othering' divide.

Theoretical Framework: Translocationality and Livability

Beyond Intersectionality: A Translocational Approach

From the start of this project, I knew that it was crucial to adopt a theoretical framework that would engage with issues of social justice and power within specific socio-political and economic contexts. This required an analytical lens that would shed light on the structural terrain as well as on how women experience it; and that would do so while remaining open to discovery, without rendering women's agency or other identities, experiences and potential contradictions invisible. Above all, I wanted an approach that would engage with women as active agents in the creation of new and powerful forms of identity, belonging and politics.

Initially, I adopted the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) as a way to move away from essentialized notions of gender, culture, difference and belonging. By focusing on the intersectionality of social divisions and their inter-relations as analytical categories and categories of practice, I recognized that this approach would enable me to develop a more integrated, situated analysis of the lives of African women in Athens.[12] This was primarily because intersectionality usefully views categories of discrimination as overlapping and intertwined in ways that mean individuals suffer exclusions on the basis of race/gender/class and other combinations (always mediated by other social divisions and hierarchies, such as class, age, able-bodiedness and so on) (Crenshaw 1991). However, as several critiques have pointed out, when intersectionality is applied in practice, there is a danger that intersections become focused upon in ways that construct people as belonging to fixed and permanent groups (Anthias 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006b; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).[13] This was a concern. I wanted to draw attention to the construction of ethnic and racial collectivities that divide people into 'us' and 'them' (Barth 1969; Yuval-Davis 2006b); I did not want to reinforce them.

'Translocationality', as formulated by Anthias (2001, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012a, 2013), responds to these critiques. It is an approach that retains much that is useful about intersectionality, but moves away from the concept as an interplay of people's group identities in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and so on, towards seeing intersectionality as a process. 'Translocational positionality',

therefore, references both social position as *outcome* and social positioning as *process*, involving practices, actions and meanings (Anthias 2001, 2006, 2008). A translocational approach thus speaks directly to the complex nature of positionality faced by those who, like the women at the heart of this research, are 'at the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialization' (Anthias 2008: 15–16).

Referring to the situated and political nature of belonging, I understood translocationality to be a way to rethink 'identity', on the one hand, and to conduct a dynamic analysis of social stratification on the other (Anthias 2006). As a heuristic tool that entails a dynamic focus on social locations within broader social contexts, it sheds light on the concrete social relations, practices and processes that construct identities and differences in naturalized binary ways (Anthias 2006, 2008; Brah 1996; Yuval-Davis 1992). This helps to ground our understanding of the lived experiences in which identification is practised and performed, as well as the intersubjective, organizational and representational conditions for our existence (Anthias 2002b, 2006, 2008).

Livability and Precarity

Throughout this book, I apply Butler's work on livability as both a concept and a question with ethical implications (Butler 2004b, 2009a, 2009b). That question is: how can we have more viable and livable lives (Lloyd 2007)? Engaging with this question, livability emerges as intimately connected to the notion of precariousness. According to Butler (2009a: 25), precariousness is an ineradicable part of human life, emerging from the fact that all lives are vulnerable to the possibility of injury and destruction: 'their persistence is in no sense guaranteed'. In this sense, precariousness suggests a fundamental dependency on (and exposure to) those we know as well as those we do not know. It implies, Butler (2009a: 14) explains, 'living socially, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other'.

Yet it is important to note that precariousness does not merely gesture towards an existential condition. Instead, it is 'a social condition from which clear political demands and principles emerge' (Butler 2009a: xxv). This is because which lives are viable and flourish in particular socio-economic contexts relates to the norms, social and political organizations and other institutions that develop in contexts of power to maximize precariousness for some and minimize it for others (Butler 2009a). The conditions of human life that result are described by Butler as conditions of 'precarity'. This is a 'politically induced condition' (Butler 2009b: 2) in which certain populations are differentially exposed to vulnerability and are at heightened risk (of disease, poverty, injury, violence, displacement and death). So, while all life is equally defined by precariousness, it does not follow that all lives are equally precarious (Butler 2009a, 2009b).

In considering what kinds of conditions need to be promoted to advance the flourishing of life, the idea of livability comes into view as the ability to sustain a viable social life in conditions of inherent precariousness and the socio-political operations of precarity. The possibility for livable life is affected by basic socio-economic conditions of physical persistence (such as warmth, shelter and food) and also by conditions of social intelligibility – normative conditions which shape who may be recognized within contingent socio-political cultures as a subject capable of living a life that counts. Being recognized thus is crucial because, Butler (2004b: 3) argues, it relates to questions of agency; it is not only about being seen as worthy of *being* but also about *doing*: 'If my doing is dependent on what is done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an 'I' depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me.' From a translocational perspective, historically context-specific processes of exclusion and inclusion sustain boundaries of difference, with discourses of race and ethnicity playing a central role. Recognition thus relates to how racism operates to produce different versions of populations, some of whom are 'eminently grievable, and others whose loss is no loss, who remain ungrievable' (Butler 2009a: 23). This is important because it means that migration issues cannot be thought of in terms of culture and identity in the conventional sense of essentially constituted nor undifferentiated categories. Instead, we must ask what the processes are through which precarity and grievability are differentially distributed across different bodies and groups.[14] As Butler puts it (2004b: 39), 'When we ask what makes a life livable, we are asking about certain normative conditions that must be fulfilled for life to become life.' By questioning these conditions, livability becomes a way to critically challenge dominant socio-political structures, discourses and practices.

Approaching this investigation into the everyday lives of African women from a translocational perspective, with a focus on the question of livability, several complementary theoretical concepts emerge as particularly resonant. They include: legal abjectification, gendered everyday racism, everyday tactics, practices of home and belonging and acts of citizenship. These theoretical concepts are discussed and applied in Chapters 1 to 5, respectively.

The Fieldwork

The Field

The main body of my fieldwork was conducted over an eleven-month period between 2014 and 2015. As the capital city, and the place with by far the largest proportion of non-EU migrants in the country, Athens was the obvious

place to conduct this research.[15] When I returned to the city in October 2014 to embark on a year of intensive fieldwork, I was already aware, from brief visits, conversations with friends and the numerous news stories coming out of Greece, of the devastating effects the economic crisis had been having on the city and its inhabitants. Signs of crisis were everywhere. There were homeless people on the streets where there had been none; graffiti expressed rage, despair and solidarity; and posters notifying the public about strikes and protests were plastered on walls in ever-thickening layers of decay. I was shocked to see that people rummaging through large, communal rubbish bins on the streets, looking for food, things to recycle, and clothes to stave off the impending winter cold, had become a common sight. In these tangible changes, all the hyperbole and reports on destitution and suffering were given a texture they had lacked from the comfort of my London home.

The much remarked-upon 'diversification' of Greece's migrant population was quickly noticeable on the streets of central Athens, particularly in neighbourhoods like Kypseli and Plateia Amerikis, which had become known as 'the migrant neighbourhoods'. Unlike many other cities where segregation occurs by residential area, in Athens the marginalization and 'ghettoization' of different ethnic and social groups takes the form of 'vertical segregation' (Maloutas and Karadimitriou 2001). In the numerous multi-storey apartment buildings from the 1960s and 1970s, the more spacious apartments of the upper floors continued to be occupied by middle- and upper-middle-class locals. It was the smaller and darker apartments on the lower floors, including basements, that were increasingly becoming inhabited by migrants. This trend began before the crisis, but accelerated with it as increasing numbers of Greek homeowners, badly hit by wage and pension cuts, sought to supplement falling household income by renting out these less desirable living spaces and squeezing into other family-owned apartments. As a result, while migrant groups are spatially concentrated in the densely urban core of the city centre, they tend not to be spatially isolated from upper- and middle-class groups (Maloutas 2007).[16]

Despite this proximity, at the time of my research there were very few integrated spaces in which migrants and Greeks interacted socially, making access a difficult first hurdle to overcome. To address this, I began reaching out to the many NGOs, local organizations and community networks that had proliferated since I left Athens in 2008. My efforts eventually paid off and, over time, I was able to attend three very different kinds of NGOs on a regular basis with varying degrees of involvement.

At Ena Paidi Enas Kosmos ('One Child One World' – EPEK), an NGO whose central aim is to help the increasing numbers of families in Athens facing worsening socio-economic conditions, I was given permission to attend a weekly Greek-language class offered exclusively to mothers.[17] This afforded me the opportunity to see how the organization worked, what kinds of needs

women and their families had, what forms of support they were receiving and, perhaps most importantly, it provided another space in which my life could overlap with theirs, leading, eventually, to relationships beyond the class-room walls.

The second NGO that opened its doors to me was Babel, an organization that provides mental health services to migrant individuals and families.[18] Here, I regularly attended an Open Migrant Women's Group, held fortnightly, which had been set up to be as accessible and inclusive as possible and more or less ran itself. In this space, language differences were overcome, and many issues were shared amongst a diverse group of women.[19] Regular topics of discussion included issues with document applications and renewal, obstacles to children's integration at school, racism and exploitation at work, navigating Greece's cum-bersome and slow bureaucracy, and various other challenges such as violence, loneliness and depression.

It was the third organization, however, that was to play the most pivotal role in shaping the direction of my research.[20] From my very first meeting with Lauretta Macauley, President of the United African Women's Organization (UAWO), I began spending time at the organization's office and was soon invited to join them at a variety of events. In my capacity as supporter, volunteer, photographer and friend of UAWO, I attended political rallies, demonstrations, meetings, con-ferences and festivals. Here I saw women 'in action' as part of the wider and growing activist scene in Athens, and was able to observe the way different mem-bers interacted with each other as well as with others outside of the organization, including activists, politicians, journalists and other migrants. By spending as much time as I could with members of UAWO, even when there was no par-ticular work to be done, I was able to witness the importance of the organization not only in fighting for migrant women's rights and recognition but also as a space in which women could come for help, support and company. Amongst a population made up largely of individuals who are often socially, politically and economically isolated, the importance of this last dimension should not be underestimated.

Gradually, opportunities to spend time with women outside of these more formal, organized settings grew. We began visiting local food markets together and hanging out in one of Athens' many neighbourhood squares. Before long, I was invited into more private spaces – into their homes, to children's birthday celebrations and even to Sunday church services. Despite being treated as outsid-ers by much of Greek society, these women took me into places and spaces in Athens where I was far more of an outsider than they were. As we shall see in the following chapters, the complex nature of these women's lives directly challenges static and overly simplistic either/or categories, such as insider/outsider, reinforc-ing the need to re-examine such taken-for-granted assumptions.

The Women

At the centre of this research are eighteen women[21] from six different countries across Africa: from Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.[22] These women had been in Greece for a range of four to thirty-two years (though I also met others who had arrived more recently). The reasons they had left their countries of origin were no less wide ranging. Contrary to prevailing gendered assumptions about migrant women, which portray them as mostly 'following men', a surprising number had migrated alone (eleven of the eighteen). Many of these women had migrated for economic reasons – in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones. At least three (Esoso, Lucee and Angel) were first-borns and felt it their responsibility and duty to migrate (they were, in many ways, their families' investment for the future). Some of these women had been trafficked – tricked into believing they were migrating for work, only to become enslaved in different ways (Faith as a domestic worker, and Angel and Gift as sex workers). Though these women were unquestionably victims of trafficking, they were also, in a sense, economic migrants – motivated by a desire for a better life. For this reason, they have stayed – an explanation that would be lost if we saw them only as 'victims of trafficking' – reminding us that the reasons behind people's movement across borders are complex and often resist easy categorization.

Three women (Aisha, Saba and Layanah) had fled their homes in circumstances that have been recognized by the Greek authorities as qualifying them for refugee status. Others were economic migrants, five of whom had migrated to join family members who were already established in Greece (Nneoma, Ayobami, Hana, Pearl and Adanech). As many as eight women had left children behind with family members; some bringing them over when they were able to, others continuing to send remittances home to support them there (though this had become difficult for all of them). Fewer than half now lived with family members in Athens. Educational levels also varied enormously. Though it was not always easy to gauge, over half had completed basic secondary school and several had gone on to do vocational college courses. Religion was perhaps the least diverse criterion on which to group these women. All referred to themselves as Christians, though how they interpreted this, which churches (if any) they went to and how often varied significantly.[23]

The Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews with all eighteen women, who, as knowledge-producers, were given space in which to articulate their own experiences, in their own words and from their own viewpoints. Informed by feminist ethnographic

theory and my relationship with them, I would conduct interviews in as natural and conversational a style as possible. Overall, adopting a 'non-directive' (Abu-Lughod 2000: 23) and more flexible approach enabled me to form my inquiry around matters that the women found most interesting and most central, rather than imposing a preconceived agenda. This approach had the added advantage that I remained open to the themes and issues that were important to the women and their lives as perceived by them, and so did not attempt to steer the conversation to meet any preconceived notions I may have had about them. It also meant that a degree of flexibility allowed for dialogue and mutual participation to develop.

In addition to these less structured interviews, I also conducted a handful of contextual interviews with professionals involved with migration issues. These included interviews with the psychologist at Babel who supported the Open Women's Group, a Protection Officer at UNHCR (Greece), a lawyer and member of the 'Lawyers for the rights of migrants and refugees group', a policeman who worked at the Department of Political Asylum Aliens Directorate of Attica, a social worker who helps migrants find work at one of Athens' biggest day care centres for vulnerable people, and a researcher and feminist activist on migration issues.[24] All of these interviews were more formal and questions were prepared beforehand based upon the interviewee's specific role and experiences with migrants in general, and African women in particular. These contextual interviews were all, to some extent, two-tiered: aimed at collecting information both on the 'migration landscape' in Athens and on how laws were implemented in practice and also on the perceptions of the interviewees as Greeks who had contact with migrants in their professional and personal lives. In this sense, I sought their opinions and general impressions as much as I collected relevant data and questioned them on their professional roles.

A Note on Photography

After exploring the possibility of engaging in participatory action research with the women I had been working with in Athens, I decided that a visual diaries project (VDP) would be a compelling and effective way to allow the women to actively shape the research process as co-constructors. As a tool, the camera has the potential to challenge hegemonic discourses and stereotypes of migrant women through what they choose to reveal and how they project themselves to the world. The idea was, therefore, not only to give participants control over how they are represented but also to potentially provide new ways of 'seeing' women who are so often hidden from view or known only through how 'outsiders' perceive and represent them.[25]

The project that ultimately unfolded involved ten women using disposable cameras to create visual diaries of their everyday lives. I posed intentionally open-ended questions for them to reflect upon when taking the photographs, aiming to avoid imposing too many conditions.[26] The questions were: what happens

during a typical day in your life in Athens? And what are the most significant moments or events in your day? The hope was that common themes, issues and experiences would emerge organically from the photographs – as well as, possibly, from the act of taking them – around which a group discussion could be held at a later date.

After several weeks and multiple delays, we all came together to share, and talk about, the women's images. As the women discussed their own and each other's images, commonalities and differences emerged; things were verified and disputed, agreed upon and challenged. As memories were triggered, women shared both joys and pains, exchanging stories about their lives, past and present. The discussion ranged from the intimate and detailed to the broad and general – from who cooks at home to how African women and men are treated differently in Greek society. Many of the themes that emerged from this discussion became central to the chapters that follow. Where appropriate, and with their consent, I have selectively included some of these images, as well as quotes from this discussion.

In addition to the images taken by participants of the VDP, this book also includes a number of my photographs taken by me. These images are, of course, of my own making: I not only took the photographs that interested me from my particular viewpoint but also selected which ones to include. As such, they are not meant to be considered any more 'true' or 'objective' than my written interpretations – or, indeed, as somehow validating them.[27] They are, like the rest of my research, shaped by my own preoccupations, subjective viewpoint and aesthetic bias. As Susan Sontag (1979: 6) writes, 'despite the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness, the work that photographers do is no generic exception to the usually shady commerce between art and truth'. That the visual is also a space for resistance, as Sontag goes on to argue, was something the women I met in Athens understood only too well. As I demonstrate in later chapters, women have adopted particular modes of visibility as a political tool with which to counter negative representations – often with the intention of being captured in photographs for dissemination. In light of this, including these images here can be understood as not only a complementary addition to my research but also a contribution to women's own efforts at counter-representation.

Book Overview

I begin, in Chapter 1, by providing an overview of the Greek immigration landscape as it has developed over the twenty-five years since the turn of the millennium. This context sets the stage for the stories of five women that highlight how the immigration regime, particularly the system of document allocation,

impacts on their lives. Through these narratives, I explore how women navigate processes of legal abjectification that produce not outright exclusion but conditional inclusion, characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability. Ultimately, women are shown to manage the precariousness of their legal status in ways that challenge simplistic inclusion/exclusion binaries, revealing both citizenship and 'undocumentedness' to be complex.

Racism is a core theme that runs throughout this book, and is a particular focus of Chapter 2. In this chapter, I examine how women are constructed as inferiorized, racialized Other in Greece, both discursively and through everyday encounters. After a brief discussion of the concept of 'gendered everyday racism', I explore the particularities of the Greek context with regards to racialized notions of national identity and belonging. In the remainder of the chapter, I examine gendered everyday racism from the women's own perspectives with a focus on four key areas of their lives: bodily encounters, urban space, police practices and the workplace.

Given the context described in Chapters 1 and 2, in Chapter 3 I investigate how women secure livable lives in terms of material conditions. Using de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics, I argue that women's ability to strategize has been eroded in recent years, but that – already practised in the art of 'making do' – women deploy multiple, cross-cutting and creative tactics in order to survive. From formal employment in the domestic sphere to ethnic entrepreneurial activities and alternative coping tactics, such as social networks and accessing NGO support, women are shown to adapt to uncertainty, using creativity and resourcefulness to secure basic socio-economic conditions.

In Chapter 4, I engage with the theme of home and belonging in all its complexity. After first problematizing the question of home, I go on to explore what home means to women who are so often perceived as being not 'at home'. In so doing, I draw on Hage's (1997: 2) definition of home-building as 'the building of the feeling of being "at home"', focusing on the themes of security, familiarity, community and hope. Despite the challenges they face, and contrary to their perception as 'bodies out of place', African women are revealed to be creating a sense of belonging and 'at homeness' in Athens through everyday home-making practices and communal acts of nostalgia.

In Chapter 5, I explore the importance of social intelligibility for livability by focusing on the activism of UAWO and their collective mobilization of African women in Athens. In this chapter, I argue that the ways in which UAWO claims citizenship rights for non-citizens creatively, performatively and in multiple spaces resonate greatly with Isin and Nielsen's (2008) concept of 'acts of citizenship'. After providing a brief overview of UAWO, I examine several of the organization's campaigns which, as 'acts of citizenship', demonstrate how women are claiming rights and recognition by both adopting and, at times, disrupting the categories of representation available to them.

In the Conclusion, I summarize and reflect upon the key findings of my research, highlighting the central themes that shape the women's lives. I offer insights into what these women's experiences suggest for future research and reflect on the broader significance of my findings for understanding migration in contemporary Europe.

Notes

1. This title intentionally echoes bell hooks' (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, where she powerfully critiques mainstream white feminism for failing to include the diverse experiences, needs and voices of women marginalized by intersecting systems of race and class oppression.
2. This vignette is based on an account given to me by Lauretta, with additional information from the UAWO Facebook page, a newspaper article (Kleftogianni 2014) and a statement released by the Theatre of the Oppressed (whose members witnessed the incident) ('Θέατρο του Καταπιεσμένου στην Πέτρου Ράλλη', 2014).
3. Given the bleak economic outlook for the country as a whole, and with youth unemployment hovering above 50 per cent, many young educated Greeks sought opportunities abroad. This anecdotal evidence is supported by several media reports. See, for example, Smith (2015) and a study by the Endeavour Group ('Emigration, the Only Solution for Young Greeks', 2015).
4. I am not keen on the term 'second generation' as, in my view, it implicitly fixes the children of migrants as perpetual outsiders. By tying children born and raised in Greece to their parents' migration status, their belonging is made to seem contingent or partial. Nevertheless, I use it here because it is the term favoured by members of the second generation in Greece who have reclaimed it in ways that positively assert their mixed cultural heritage and right to belong.
5. The irony of this name has been much commented upon. Not only does it translate as 'Hospitable Zeus' but also, in Greek mythology, Zeus was the God called upon to avenge wrongs done to strangers.
6. Statistics available from the Hellenic Police database ('Αστυνομική επιχείρηση «ΞΕΝΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ» για την αντιμετώπιση της παράνομης μετανάστευσης – Υπ. Εσωτερικών και Διοικητικής Ανασυγκρότησης – Ελληνική Αστυνομία').
7. Golden Dawn's popularity went from 0.29 per cent in 2009 to 7 per cent in the 2012 elections, giving them eighteen seats in Parliament.
8. This observation is in line with a growing body of gender and migration literature that has shown more generally that the prevailing trend in immigration policy formation and implementation has been one that adopts a male-oriented, patriarchal approach towards migrants (Indra 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Kofman 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Pessar and Mahler 2001; Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky 2006).
9. See Indra (1999) and Kofman (1999, 2004a, 2004b) for more on how traditional explanations based on the dichotomy of male producer/female reproducer have all too often resulted in female migration being defined in terms of dependency.

10. Where I do refer to 'migrant women' it is in order to refer to a broader category of women in Athens to which the African women I am focusing on belong. In so doing, I use the term, as the women themselves did, to include women of all legal categories from all regions of the world who are non-Greeks (though some may be citizens) and who are likely to share similar positionings politically, socially and economically vis-à-vis dominant Greek society.

11. I say 'even' religion because Greek Orthodoxy is emphasized as one of the defining features of 'Greekness', though race – constructed as a visible marker of difference – usually supersedes this consideration. See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

12. Although there cannot be a singular definition of an intersectional framework, as there is a great deal of diversity in the way intersectionality is both theorized and applied, it can perhaps be loosely defined as a fundamentally 'nonadditive', mutually constitutive way of understanding social inequality (Anthias 2013).

13. See, for example, McCall (2005).

14. Reminding us that we cannot take the concept of the 'human' or the idea of human life for granted, livability thus becomes a way to think critically and ethically about the ways in which 'the migrant', 'the African woman', 'the citizen' and so on are produced in contexts of precarity, power and the ever-present possibility of unlivable life (McNeilly 2016).

15. According to the latest census, it had 132,000 non-EU migrants, comprising 17 per cent of the local population, in 2011. It should be noted that census figures are notoriously unreliable due to data collection issues and the large number of undocumented migrants who go unrecorded. The actual figures are, therefore, likely to be significantly higher.

16. According to Kandylis et al. (2012), one of the most prominent socio-spatial characteristics of the Athens city centre continues to be its ethnically diverse composition.

17. http://www.paidi-kosmos.gr.

18. https://babeldc.gr/en/who-we-are/.

19. During the six months that I attended, the number of women in the group varied from a minimum of two to a maximum of eight, with six regular attendees. These women were from all over the world: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Serbia, Albania, Peru, Sierra Leone and Corsica.

20. https://www.africanwomens.gr. At the time of my research UAWO's membership was made up of approximately 70 women from 14 nationalities: Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Seychelles, Somalia, Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Cameroon and DRC. Some members had left due to the economic crisis, but it was unclear how many. I discuss UAWO, and the important role it plays in many women's lives, in more depth in Chapter 5.

21. To ensure complete confidentiality, I have given pseudonyms to all but one of the women (at her request) and have taken every precaution to protect their identities without altering the data or misrepresenting them as I experienced and understood them. When necessary, I have also changed any identifying descriptions or details.

22. Other women I met, but who were less central to my research, were from these and other African countries, including: Kenya, Seychelles, the Congo and Tanzania.

Nearly half came from Nigeria, a common country of origin amongst migrant women in Athens.

23. One woman, Hana, had been brought up a Muslim in Sierra Leone but had converted to Christianity after her arrival in Greece.

24. All these participants were happy to be recorded and identified, apart from the social worker and the policeman, who spoke on condition of complete anonymity.

25. I owe a huge debt to Kihato (2010), whose work with African migrant women in Johannesburg (in particular, her use of images as a way to deepen our understanding of women's lives) provided inspiration for my own VDP with African women in Athens.

26. These questions were inspired by Kihato's (2010) project in South Africa.

27. Following Taylor (2009), these photographs are not part of a systematic attempt to document the women's lives visually for the research and so, rather than being the primary object of analysis themselves, should be understood as illustrations which, I hope, will enrich the narrative material.