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Migrants, Work and Social Integration

Women's Labour in the Turkish Ethnic Economy

Saniye Dedeoglu

Muğla University, Turkey

palgrave
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To my beloved family, Ayşe Defne, Sabriye and Murat

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Preface

I have always aimed to bring out women's voices and views by using the research tools provided by interdisciplinary fields such as gender and migration studies. This pursuit has also tended to centre on women's work practices and gender relations, which shape the very nature of the practice of earning a living. Having this vantage point has also enabled me to analyse not only the life worlds of women, but also the ways in which women shape the political, social, cultural and economic changes taking place in the societies in which they live. Thus, it is always important to understand not only the socio-economic transformations of European societies through the lenses of gender and migration studies, but also the role women play in these grand transformations. That is why this book chooses to focus on one segment of economic life, i.e. ethnic economy, in which women seem to be quite invisible, with an aim to unleash the gendered aspect of habitus, even in the least expected areas. In this way, I have aimed to grasp the changing meanings attached to women's work and the major implications of immigrant women's roles in European societies. I claim that migrants have contributed enormously to the well-being of their host societies, and this is most evident in the case of Turkish women in London. While portrayed as the source of social exclusion and instability of their communities, and as the most disadvantaged group by political discourses, which try to put up entry barriers for immigrant women, especially for Muslim women, Turkish immigrant women find ways of positively contributing to, and socially integrating into, British society. By listening to the least heard voices of women, I have concluded that political discourses on the social integration of female migrants have essentially helped to conceal the most persistent structural problems, leading to inequality, poverty and discrimination, as well as persistent gender inequalities between women and men. Therefore, the policies addressing migrants as the cause for social ills only contribute to further escalating the negative perception of migrants, and to seeing them only as 'welfare spongers'.

Working on this book has led me to the fact that the act of migration is itself a journey lived not only individually but also collectively. At the individual level, it is a discovery of a new society, coupled with the realization of an aspiration to be in an advanced modern society.

The collective journey, on the other hand, is further characterized by a desire to be a part of that society and be recognized and accepted. This book is the story of the migration journey of Turkish people to Britain, told through the voices, lives and stories of women and written by a woman. Thus, this is the migration journey of 'other' voices.

Saniye Dedeoglu
Muğla, Turkey

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Serap Özen in Muğla made plenty of time to listen to my progress almost every day and I thank her for her patience. I am grateful to Selmin Kaşka for her support and friendship. David Smith and Margaret Greenfield were a part of the research process; I thank them. Çisel Ekiz Gökmen took some of my day-to-day work off my hands to free up more time for writing. My student, Aslı Şahankaya, helped greatly with practical matters. The technical wisdom of Recep Kapar proved to be very handy. Gerard's offer to correct the English was a great relief. My utmost appreciation goes to all these people.

Finally, to the women in London who generously opened up their homes and hearts to me. No words of thanks are enough. I only hope that I have managed to remain somewhat true to their perspectives and stories, and that these perspectives will find their way into broader debates about the issues of immigrant women and social integration, and strategies for advancing women's interests in general.