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Navigating (in)visibility: the everyday lives of African women in crisis Greece

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Abstract

Migrant women in Greece are not often seen as independent, active agents. A prevailing tendency to focus on men and families among academic researchers and policymakers alike, renders them largely invisible. When it comes to African women, however, processes of gendered racialization operate to make them also hyper-visible in stereotypical ways: as oppressed wives and mothers, uneducated domestic workers, and sexualised and/or dangerous Others.

In a country in which national identity and belonging are strongly racialized, African women have long been subjected to processes of legal abjectification. In recent years, austerity, high unemployment and increasing anti-migrant sentiment have intensified their vulnerability in multiple ways. This thesis explores some of the more neglected aspects of economic crisis and migration in Greece. A feminist ethnographic enquiry that goes beyond traditional depictions of victimhood and dependency, it engages with the often hidden and complex lives of real women.

Adopting a translocational analysis that considers women's agency within contexts of social relations and structural power, the research illuminates how participants experience and respond to processes of legal abjectification and gendered racism in their everyday lives. Women are shown to deploy a variety of tactics aimed towards securing livable lives in terms of both material conditions and social intelligibility. They cope, adapt, negotiate and resist, often using – and sometimes disrupting – the modes of recognition available to them. The research illustrates how, in contrast to perceptions of them as 'bodies out of place', women create a sense of belonging in Athens. They do so not only through everyday home-making practices, but also by collectively mobilising to claim rights, counter processes of marginalisation and challenge who can and cannot belong.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

"*It is unfair. Why do they issue us with permits? There is no reason if they don't respect them. After 32 years in Greece, I cannot believe the kind of state we live in. My daughter couldn't believe it.*"

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 1st September, 2014. The women were stopped by police officers as they were leaving a theatre where they had just finished rehearsing a performance entitled "No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle" and, despite presenting officially certified copies of their residence permits, were promptly arrested and detained. When their fellow performers demanded the reason for their arrest, the police informed them that the women had been acting 'suspiciously'. When one Greek woman claimed that in that case she too should be arrested for acting suspiciously, the police officer informed her that "*only foreigners are suspicious.*" It was not lost on any of those present that none of the white Albanian 'foreigners' were asked for proof of legal residency, let alone deemed to be in need of arrest.

One of the detained women was Lauretta – President of UAWO. She explained what had happened:

> 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.

Upon arrival at the Aliens Division of Attica in Petrou Ralli, the women were locked in a room with 35 other detainees – all men, and all non-white. "*What we experienced was terrible. Ask me if I have a residence permit,*" Lauretta reasoned, "*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 35 men we were put together with were also brown-skinned.*" When Lauretta complained to a police officer that they should at least be held in a separate room for women, she was threatened. "*Shut up bitch,*" the policeman said. "*This is Greece. If you weren't a woman I'd grab you by the hair.*" Lauretta answered back and an argument ensued. Her fellow detainees could not believe her boldness. "*You know how they were looking at me?*" she recalls with amusement. "*Like I'm from the moon. Somewhere else, not in this world.*"

Pressure was soon applied by several 'friends of UAWO' who immediately called the police to object to the women's detention, as well as from a lawyer who had been present at the time of their arrest, and the women were released. Within hours UAWO had issued a statement denouncing the incident and asking the Greek state for:

> "respect for the Other, respect for our dignity. You cannot treat us as common criminals. 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!"

On this occasion, the women were released after a matter of hours – but theirs was a rather exceptional situation for several reasons. They happened to have not only more than 20 friendly witnesses, including a lawyer who went with them to fight their case, but also the support of the President of Amnesty International, Greece. Lauretta knows that things are very different for most women.

> I have the power now. You understand. This time newspaper were writing, everybody calling, blah, blah, blah. […] You know I was very much surprised. It seems like the whole world. And I was saying [to them] you know how many women they arrest and nobody knows about them? How many women and it's real – how many women they arrest in the street, they nobody know? […] This thing is happening every day here. They arrest women. They arrest African women – even with pregnancy they arrest them, they put them in prison for nothing.[1]

1.1 Introduction

The central research question of this thesis is 'how do African women navigate their everyday lives within the socio-political terrain of crisis Greece?' The aim of this introductory chapter is to set the scene for this research and to provide an overview of the thesis. First, it describes the research context and explains the rationale behind my focus on African women in Athens. It then gives an overview of the research questions, sub-questions and key findings, before concluding with a brief description of the thesis structure.

[1] 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 (who witnessed the incident) ("Θέατρο του Καταπιεσμένου στην….Πέτρου Ράλλη," 2014).

1.2 The Crisis

At the crossroads of East and West, Greece has over the last twenty-five years become a major gateway for asylum-seekers and migrants seeking entry to Europe. While simplified accounts of transition from sending to receiving country neglect a complex history of population exchange, migration and emigration, in recent years Greece has emerged as a combination of host, sending and transit country to a more diverse and larger population of migrants than ever before. The first major influx of irregular migration to Greece began in the wake of the geopolitical changes of 1989 and originated, by and large, in the Balkans, Central Eastern Europe and the former USSR, with particularly large scale arrivals from Albania continuing throughout the 1990s. Though small Asian and African populations (mainly from the Philippines, Vietnam, Sudan and Egypt) have been in Greece from the early 1980s onwards, it was not until early this century that growing global economic inequalities, climate change, political unrest and conflict saw increasing numbers of arrivals from the Middle-East, South Asia and Africa (Cavounidis 2013; CLANDESTINO 2009; Triandafyllidou et al. 2013). According to national census data, the registered migrant population increased fivefold between 1991 (when non-nationals constituted less than 2 per cent of the population) and 2011 (when non-nationals constituted 8 per cent of the population). This was the largest rate of increase in any European Union (EU) country during this period (SEE 2012). The Greek government was unprepared for these developments and has struggled to develop a comprehensive institutional and legislative framework in response.

When I began my fieldwork in the autumn of 2014, Greece was entering into 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 EU. At the time, Greece faced an unsustainable debt of 310 billion euro (£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' in 2010 and 2012, which included: drastic cuts and the freezing of salaries, pensions and benefits; loss of jobs and high unemployment; the dissolution of the public health care system; increases in

taxation; and, the privatisation of basic services and infrastructures.[2] All of the above exposed ordinary Greeks – particularly from low and medium income households – to enormous economic hardships. Given the bleak economic outlook for the country as a whole, and with youth unemployment hovering above 50 per cent, many young educated Greeks have sought opportunities abroad.[3]

Notably missing from much of the debate about the current crisis is the fact that the effects of austerity are unevenly distributed, inscribed as they are on inequalities that preceded it – 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, severe recession and government policy developments had a particularly negative impact on non-EU migrants. 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; Kasimis 2012; Cavounidis 2013).

Figure 1: *People queue at cash machines in Athens to withdraw the 60 euro per day allowed under capital controls introduced June 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

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

[2] The 'troika' refers to the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

[3] This is supported by anecdotal evidence and 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 uncomfortable with the term 'second generation' because I believe that it further distances people who were often born and raised in Greece from their rights as Greek citizens. However, I use it throughout this thesis because this is the term used by the children of migrants in Greece to refer to themselves, both privately and in campaigns for their rights.

through increasingly visible tactics of immigration control, effectively institutionalising racism through the actions of the state. On 4th 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]

Greece also took what was, at the time, an unprecedented policy innovation for an EU country, and established thirty 'closed hospitality centres' for unauthorised migrants (Smith 2012a). In addition, following several legislative changes, administrative detention of irregular migrants and asylum-seekers was raised to a possible maximum period of 18 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 emphasised 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

[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 18 seats in parliament.

Greek state as under threat (Swarts and Karakatsanis 2012; Zetter 2007). In 2012, at the height of anti-migrant feeling, Minister of Public Order, Nikos Dendias, called immigration, "*a bomb aimed at the foundations of society and of the state*" (Dabilis 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, and public and welfare services (HRW 2013; Sunderland et al. 2012; Swarts and Karakatsanis 2012; Zetter 2007; Zetter et al. 2006). Social tensions between citizens and migrants became a notable feature of 'the Greek crisis'. Data recorded by a network of Greek non-governmental organizations, coordinated by 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, Greece may have become an increasingly diverse society in recent years, but at the time of the research popular attitudes remained essentially xenophobic and anti-migrant, with a great emphasis on maintaining ethnic homogeneity. These attitudes had both deep long-standing roots in Greece's national experience, as well as more proximate, contemporary causes. They were both encouraged by anti-migrant policies and actions by the state, as well as serving to popularly legitimise and reinforce them (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003).

Figure 2: *'Oxi' [No] rally in the run up to the referendum, Syntagma Square, 3rd July, 2015.*
(photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

Already urgent at the time I began my fieldwork, these issues were compounded by developments during it. On-going political instability (there were two general elections and one referendum in 2015 alone) and deepening economic crisis sent the economy plummeting (see figures 1 and 2). 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). Yet very little research has been carried out which captures the voices and experiences of migrants already living in Greece in all this. How were people coping in this apparently hostile economic and political environment? How have things changed as the crisis has not only deepened but been overlaid with new crises? Has the crisis made things worse? Or has it simply made visible pre-existing inequalities, exclusions and issues, such as the precarity of legal status and employment? Has anything got better? And if so, how and in what way? These are the kinds of research gaps that this study begins to address.

1.3 African women in Athens

This research has grown out of my interest in some of the less debated aspects of migration to Greece. Rather than focusing on the 'bigger picture' of European migration flows, macro-economic indicators and totalizing state discourse, this is an analysis of the less explored everyday practices and experiences of people affected by migration. By engaging with the stories of individual women, the intention is to reveal not only how people live with irregularity, deprivation and rising anti-migrant sentiment, but also the ideological mechanisms that have made the lives of many women invisible (De Vault 1996). In so doing, the research aims to deliver an important corrective to essentialising identity constructs that homogenise social categories and do not attend to differentiations within. It also aims to prioritise the voices of women who have remained for so long excluded from, or at the margins of, public debate. By focusing on the everyday lives of these often excluded and potentially criminalised Others as active agents with specific needs, goals, resources, skills, experiences and perceptions, the research is in many ways intended to counter processes of othering, marginalisation and criminalisation.

As I began to investigate migrant women in the Greek context, I became aware of a tendency in public discourse and immigration policy to consider them only within narrow domestic and familial contexts, casting them always in supporting roles as wives and homemakers rather than as independent migrants. This was 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). Illustrative of this wider tendency to base immigration rules on the construction of the principle migrant as an individual male worker, the more or less explicit assumption in Greece is that women are either left behind or 'follow' 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). Traditional explanations based on the dichotomy of male producer/female reproducer have ensued, and female migration is usually defined in terms of dependency (Indra 1999; Kofman 1999, 2004a, 2004b).

In Greece, as elsewhere, state actors assume policies to be gender neutral. Consequently, female migrants' issues are framed as a deviation from the norm and are, therefore, addressed in a fragmentary way as part of either trafficking or family issues (Liapi and Vouyioukas 2006). There are provisions on family reunification, trafficking, mixed marriages, domestic violence and employment in the informal sector, but none for a number of other categories, such as unmarried or single mothers. The absence of married women's independent right to permit issuance and renewal has also been a problem for many women, particularly when marriages break down, when their husbands die or, as has been common in recent years, when their 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 legalisation, 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 dependents 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, discourses of victimisation "ostensibly pathologise migrant women as backward, traditional, underdeveloped, disempowered, imprisoned in the family or as objects of male desire" (Zavos 2010: 26). Such discourses not only strip women of all agency and reinforce racialized and gendered stereotypes that further inferiorise and exclude, they also operate to explain away and justify inequalities as a consequence of cultural differences of 'naturally' inferior groups (Veikou 2016). The 'victimisation' 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).

In Greece, for reasons that will be explored, national identity and belonging are racialized as white. Within this context, processes of gendered racialization render African women not only invisible in the ways discussed, but also hyper-visible due to the colour of their skin. This combined invisibility and hyper-visibility exposes these women to particular kinds of vulnerability and experiences, and further motivated my interest in investigating their lives.

When, in the summer of 2015, refugees started appearing not only on our TV screens and newsfeeds, but also in Athens' parks and squares, I became aware of this particular (in)visibility once more. Admittedly, the scale of the influx in 2015 was unprecedented; however, it was not lost on me that some of the women 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 judgments 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). This situation was compounded by recent developments, thereby making a focus on African women even more important.

I am aware, however, that naming an identity, as I have, risks essentialising and fixing individuals in ways that deny them the complexity, fluidity, multiplicity and ambiguity that we would 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'.[8] 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 nearly as much to how they are perceived and treated.[9] Furthermore, and crucially, the 'African woman' identity is one that is mobilised by the women themselves in important ways. 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

[8] 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.

[9] I say 'even' religion because Greek Orthodoxy is emphasised as one of the defining features of 'Greekness', though race – constructed as a visible marker of difference – usually supersedes this consideration (Chapter Five).

commonalities amongst and between both African and migrant women categories, as well as across both sides of the 'othering' divide.

1.4 Research Questions and Key Findings

In order to address these issues and gaps, the central research question this thesis asks is how do African women in Athens navigate their everyday lives within the socio-political terrain of crisis Greece? In investigating this question 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. The analytical 'lens' with which I sought to do all this, and more, is Anthias' translocational positionality which is discussed in the following chapter.

Investigating the everyday lives of African women in contemporary Athens from a translocational perspective requires looking at questions of both structure and agency – at the processes through which women are constructed as Other, and also at how those processes are felt, articulated, managed and resisted. Though these concerns are, of course, interlinked, for the purposes of the investigation, and for analytical clarity, I have broken them down into two broad sub-questions. Firstly, what processes of exclusion and 'othering' do African women face in contemporary Greek society? Secondly, what strategies (of coping, resistance, adaptation, and co-operation) do African women use to counter the disadvantages they face and secure livable lives?

In addressing the first sub-question regarding exclusionary and othering processes, the research sheds light on how processes of racialization intersect with gender and migration status to produce specific forms of complex disadvantage for African women in contemporary Greek society. As the following chapters illustrate,

gendered ethnic and racial frames set the limits of cultural intelligibility in Greece, such that African women are made Other in particular gendered and racialized ways. Bearing the external marker of racialized 'otherness' according to dominant normative definitions of Greekness, they are framed as outside national belonging and the rights and protections associated with it. Thus made visible in ways that heighten their exposure to discrimination, they are differentially exposed to precarity as a result (Butler 2009a).[10] Such constructions are shown to be operative in the politics of immigration also. The research identifies processes of legal abjectification that operate to keep the majority of African women in Athens in legal precarity, from which varying degrees of status (in)security and forms of vulnerabilities result (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011).

Though the normative constructions upon which these processes and boundaries are based existed long before the current crisis, conditions of austerity, high unemployment, and rising xenophobia have further constricted the already limited spaces previously afforded to these Others as temporary workers and tolerated guests. In Greece, as elsewhere, hardening boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are shown to be central in determining which bodies belong where, and which forms of social engagement, participation and claims of belonging are made possible. They do so by maintaining and by withholding privileges, and shaping differential entitlement to both rights and resources (Anthias 2006; Brah 1996; Konsta and Lazaridis 2010; Massey 1994; Yuval-Davis 1992; Yuval-Davis et al. 2006).

This has implications for the everyday experiences and types of encounters women have in many spheres of their lives. As the research findings show, the repetition of racialized and gendered stereotypes in women's lives works to establish, and re-enforce, distance between bodies whose difference is read off the surface (Ahmed 2004). Whether in their interactions with the immigration regime, in the workplace *vis-à-vis* employers and co-workers, in their neighbourhoods or as they move around the city, the implications of their visibility as non-Greeks are inescapable. Invisibility and/or assimilation is not a strategy available to them, as it has been for many white migrants of, for example, Albanian descent. It is far more difficult for them to become less 'foreign' by changing their names, learning the language and becoming Greek Orthodox. Thus, we see how racism operates at the

[10] Precarity is used by Butler (2009b) to describe the conditions of human life that social and political institutions are designed in part to minimise by ensuring that certain material needs are met (Chapter Two).

level of perception (Butler 2004b) with both symbolically important and practical implications for the women's everyday lives and ways of being.

How women experience, manage and respond to these processes will, inevitably, vary. Whether women deploy strategies of coping, resistance, negotiation, adaptation, and/or co-operation to counter the disadvantages they face – and when and how they choose to do so – will depend on a number of factors, relating to context, individual circumstance and their unique translocational positionality. As will be illustrated, different women manage their precarity and struggle for "greater livability" (Butler 2004b: 1) both materially and socially in a variety of creative and tactical ways. They do so at the material level, by deploying everyday tactics (de Certeau 1984) in order to get by; they do so legally, by managing documents and navigating status fluidity; and, they do so at the level of social intelligibility, by using (and disrupting) the modes of recognition available to them. Indeed, what emerges from this investigation is that, despite strong evidence that practices of control in Greece lean toward their subjection, abjectification, precaritisation and marginalisation, women do not live as abjects in many areas of their lives.

Though bound up with pre-existing social norms, 'othering' categorisations and processes (Chapters Four and Five) are shown to be not only enforced by, but also constituted through, prevailing accounts of agency and visibility (Nyers 2003). This has important implications for the research and, more importantly, for the women at its heart, because it means who qualifies as recognisable as a subject capable of living a life that counts (Butler 2004a, 2004b, 2009a) – and who does not – is open to challenge, contestation, resistance and change. With more opportunities to create new solidarities across boundaries in 'crisis Greece', the research shows how African women in Athens are constituting themselves as subjects with rights (and 'the right to have rights' (Arendt 1973)) through 'acts of citizenship' (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Isin 2009). With a particular focus on the work of the United African Women's Organization (UAWO), the research explores how women are collectively mobilising to claim rights and secure public recognition by leveraging accessible categories of social intelligibility. The evidence suggests, however, that it is not easy to balance critical distance with the fight for inclusion; to seek to transform the norms which you are both constituted by and dependent upon (Butler 2004b). Hence, it is by first making themselves recognisable as lives that are worthy of protection (and, crucially, by voicing those concerns for themselves), that African women are beginning to

unsettle the norms that construct their social unintelligibility and oppression in the first place.

In spite of these efforts, in the present context in which becoming fully integrated depends upon becoming assimilated and on looking and sounding 'native', these women remain mostly constructed as 'outsiders' in the public mind. However, the research reveals that, though they may be perceived as liminal and suspended 'in-between' homes, they do not necessarily experience their belonging as such. Instead, most women expressed a complex, if sometimes ambivalent, belonging to multiple home-spaces located in real and imaginary spaces both 'there' and 'here'. Through survival tactics, routine everyday home-making practices, acts of communal belonging, and collective mobilisation, women are shown to generate a relationship of belonging between person and place that is in direct contrast to their construction as 'bodies out of place'. The research thus illuminates how home is both constituted and claimed daily in ways that not only make women's lives more livable in material terms, but also enhance their recognisability as those with 'lives worth living'.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework used in the analysis of the research. It begins with an explanation of translocationality as the main analytical approach, before giving a brief account of Butler's livability theory as a complementary overarching conceptual lens. It then provides an outline of the theoretical frames used in each of the analytical chapters as they emerged from this analytical approach.

Using a translocational framework of analysis that foregrounds women's own perceptions of their situation, environment and experiences implies certain methodological principles. These are elaborated in Chapter Three which, in keeping with a feminist methodological approach, includes an account of my positionality, a description of 'the field' and an overview of the ethnographic methods I employed. The ethical concerns that informed my research throughout are also addressed in this chapter. Deploying this approach, several themes emerged as important to the women I engaged with, which are addressed in the remaining analytical chapters.

Chapters Four and Five address the broader structural processes that shape the context for African women's lives in contemporary Athens in important ways. Chapter Four describes the immigration landscape in terms of laws, institutions and practices as they have developed over the last 25 years. It then goes on to explore, through five women's stories, how this immigration regime in general, and the system of document allocation in particular, impacts women's lives. Revealing how women live with, and manage, status (in)security, the chapter challenges the overly-simplistic categorisations of institutional labels.

The theme addressed in Chapter Five is that of gendered racism. In particular, it focuses on how women are constructed as inferiorised, racialized Other in Greece both discursively and through everyday encounters. After a discussion of some of the particularities of the Greek context with regards to racialized notions of national identity and belonging, the chapter examines gendered everyday racism from the women's own perspectives in four areas of their lives: in bodily encounters, urban space, police practices and the workplace.

The focus then shifts from the structural to the agential. Given the context described in previous chapters, Chapter Six explores the economic survival tactics women use in order to secure livable lives in terms of material conditions. In so doing, women are shown to deploy a variety of tactics of 'making do', ranging from formal employment in the domestic sphere to ethnic entrepreneurial activities and alternative coping tactics, including social networks and accessing NGO support. The chapter argues that women's ability to strategize has been eroded in recent years, but that, already practised in the art of 'making do', women are deploying multiple, cross-cutting and creative tactics in order to survive.

Chapter Seven engages with the theme of home and belonging. The chapter problematizes the question of home to explore what home means to women living in contexts in which they are so often perceived as being not 'at home'. The themes of security, familiarity, community and hope are examined, revealing home to be a complex, sometimes ambiguous, affective construct and practice, involving multiple tempo-spatial sites. Despite challenges, and contrary to their perception as 'bodies out of place', women are shown to be creating a sense of belonging and 'at homeness' in Athens through everyday home-making practices and communal acts of nostalgia.

The final chapter moves from the material conditions necessary for livable lives discussed in Chapter Six, to the issue of social intelligibility. In so doing, it

hones in on the activism of UAWO. It first explores how this organization came into being, its ways of working and what forms of assistance and support it offers its members. The chapter then focuses on specific campaigns and examples of 'acts of citizenship' to illustrate how women are claiming rights and recognition by adopting, and sometimes disrupting, the categories of representation available to them.

Before addressing the methods employed in conducting this research, the following chapter outlines the theoretical framework that has informed the analysis throughout.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The main analytical lenses adopted in this thesis are translocationality and livability. Approaching this investigation into women's everyday lives from a translocational perspective while centrally engaging with the theme of livability, a set of complementary and connected conceptual theories came to have particular resonance. Those that proved most useful for understanding the issues that arose during the research are: legal abjectification, gendered everyday racism, everyday tactics, practices of home and belonging, and acts of citizenship. This chapter gives an overview of this theoretical framework.

2.2 Beyond intersectionality: a translocational approach

Early on in undertaking this research, I adopted the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) as a way to move away from essentialised notions of gender, culture, difference and belonging. I recognised that, by focusing on the intersectionality of social divisions and their inter-relations as analytical categories and categories of practice, this approach would enable me to develop a more integrated, situated analysis of the lives of African women in Athens.[11] 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 1994). 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-

[11] 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).

Davis 2006b; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).[12] 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, 2012, 2013), responds to these critiques. It is an approach that retains much that was 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 study, 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, translocationality is 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 naturalised binary ways (Anthias 2006, 2008; Brah 1996; Yuval-Davis 1983, 1992). This helps to ground our understanding of the lived experiences in which identification is practiced and performed, as well as the intersubjective, organizational and representational conditions for our existence (Anthias 2002b, 2006, 2008).

2.3 Livability

Butler's work on livability is applied in this thesis as both a concept and a question with ethnical implications. The question Butler asks 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:

[12] See, for example, McCall (2005).

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 maximise precariousness for some and minimise 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).

Adopting livability as a theoretical tool, as this thesis does, reminds us that we cannot take the concept of the 'human' or the idea of human life for granted. As such it is 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). From this perspective, it is not enough to merely highlight or describe specific forms of oppression and disadvantage through concepts like 'multiple layers of oppression' or 'hyperexploitation' (Kambouri 2008; Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003; Lazaridis 2000). Framing migration issues instead in terms of livability, social inequality and transformation, requires that we continue examining the violent, dislocating and 'othering' practices that groups are subjected to within specific historical contexts (Anthias 2006).

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), but also by conditions of social intelligibility – normative conditions which shape who may be recognised within contingent socio-political cultures as a subject capable of living a life that counts. Being recognised 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."

As a translocational perspective reveals, historically context-specific processes of exclusion and inclusion sustain boundaries of difference (to which discourses of race and ethnicity are central). 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 can no longer 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. 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.

2.4 Legal Abjectification

The concept of legal abjectification came to resonate strongly when analysing the impact Greece's immigration regime has on African women and their lives, as will be shown in Chapter Four. Originating in the work of Kristeva (1982: 1), the abject is neither subject nor object, referring instead to something beyond the subject: "It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated". As Lazaridis and Konsta (2011) have already argued in relation to migrant women in Greece in general, this speaks to how African women in Athens are held in legal precarity through the practices and mechanisms of document allocation. Migrant women in Greece are, they argue,

transformed by law, and through law, from potential legal subjects to legal abjects.[13] According to Rose (1999: 253):

> "Abjection is a matter of the energies, the practices, the works of division that act upon persons and collectivities such that some ways of being, some forms of existence are cast into a zone of shame, disgrace or debasement, rendered beyond the limits of the liveable, denied the warrant of tolerability, accorded purely a negative value."

Similarly, legal practices and processes in Greece appear to be always defining African women in Athens by that which they are *not* – as if by a lack or a failing: 'non-Greek', non-citizen, non-white, as *dis*located and *dis*placed (ibid).

Focusing on translocational positionalities, however, enables us to consider the movement of, and between, categories in the face of the fixity of normative notions of national identity and belonging (Anthias 2001, 2006, 2008). Boundaries are often blurred and processes of becoming are fluid, changing over time, influencing notions of 'us' and 'them', who should (and should not) belong, and who is entitled to which rights and who is not (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010). Hence, though the legal abject is often constructed in opposition to the social subject of rights, being abject is neither a uniform nor a fixed state (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011). It is, in fact, as Nyers (2003: 1074) points out, always a matter of 'becoming abject'.

This also alerts us to the fact that although African women in Greece are abjectified by discriminatory legal structures and institutions, they do not necessarily live as abjects in all areas of their lives. The inadequacy of a straightforward inclusion/exclusion binary becomes even more marked once we recognise that varying degrees of (il)legality are constituted in order not to physically exclude, but instead to socially include under imposed conditions of enforced and protracted vulnerability (De Genova 2002). Hence, although it is important to attend to the rigid and discriminatory structures that position African women in specific ways *vis-à-vis* the rest of Greek society, it is equally important to resist slippage into overly simplistic binary distinctions that reinforce the 'logic of exclusion' such that the characteristics associated with the 'excluded' serve to justify their expulsion (Isin 2002). Attending to the processes involved enables us to examine not only how

[13] See also Christopoulou and Lazaridis (2011) and Lazaridis and Veikou (2015).

women are abjectified, but also to view the ways in which they respond, resist, and manage such processes as part of the lived experience of abjectification.

2.5 Gendered Everyday Racism

Racism is a core theme that runs throughout this thesis, and is a particular focus of Chapter Five. Following Yuval-Davis (1991, 1997a) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), racist discourse is here understood as:

> "involving the use of ethnic categorisations (which might be constructed around biological, cultural, religious, linguistic or territorially based boundaries) as signifiers of a fixed, deterministic genealogical difference of 'the Other'. This 'Otherness' serves as a basis for legitimising exclusion of the members of the collectivity thus labelled."
>
> (Yuval-Davis 1997b: 193)

Evidently, the central problem of racism is not the existence of diversity and diverse people, but rather the performed inequality between them (Kilomba 2010). Racism involves modes of exclusion, inferiorisation, subordination and exploitation that constructs signifiers of collectivity boundaries (particularly when involving skin colour or other visible inherited characteristics) as immutable and hereditary, though in actuality they may shift, overlap and change over time (Anthias 1998, 2006; Yuval-Davis 1992).

As the thesis will illustrate, African women (and other migrant groups) in Greece are often talked of in essentialist ethnic and racial terms that make them appear to be naturalised as a taken-for-granted fixture of the migration landscape (Fox and Jones 2013). However, these discourses are revealed to be part of the construction of ethnic and racial collectivities that divide people into 'us' and 'them' (Barth 1969; Yuval-Davis 2006b). Involving exclusionary and inclusionary practices that maintain (and withhold) privileges along a number of different dimensions, such boundaries are critical in determining to a large extent which bodies belong where and which forms of social engagement, participation and claims of belonging are possible (Anthias 2008; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Vaiou 2012; Yuval-Davis 2009; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).

Analytically, it is difficult to determine the specific impact of either 'race' or gender because they are inseparable – always interlocked and intersecting. As a

translocational approach maintains, although discourses of race, gender, class, and so on have their own ontological bases which cannot be reduced to each other, there can be no separate concrete meaning of any facet of these social categories as they are mutually constitutive in any historical moment (Yuval-Davis 2013). Racism, therefore, does not function as a distinct ideology and structure; it interacts with other ideologies and converging systems of domination and oppression such as sexism (Kilomba 2010; Essed 1991; hooks 1989). To paraphrase Cockburn (2004), we are always not just a woman but a woman who has to deal one way or another with 'being' a Greek, a Nigerian, or a Sierra Leonean. Recognising the intersectionality between 'race', gender and racial power structures and the impact 'race' and gender oppression has on the experience of racism in women's everyday lives, this thesis speaks of 'gendered racism' (Essed 1991; Kilomba 2010).

A translocational perspective asks not only how ethnic and racial categorisations are gendered and intersecting with other social divisions, but also what the actual variable and contingent practices are that make them meaningful in some contexts and render them invisible and irrelevant in others (Fox and Jones 2013; Brah 1996). One way to address this question is to adopt an 'everyday racism' (Essed 1991) approach that specifies the practices and processes through which race and ethnicity are negotiated and reproduced (or undermined, resisted, rejected and rendered irrelevant) in the routine social contexts of everyday life. Considering racism thus emphasises the agency of "everyday essentialisers" (Fox and Jones 2013: 388) whose attitudes, behaviour and actions reproduce racialized modes of identification. It does so, however, while avoiding reducing racism to an individual problem in which someone is or is not 'a racist' (Essed 1991: 3). By highlighting the "systematic, recurrent, familiar practices" involved, everyday racism is shown to consist of repetitive practices that can be generalised and involve "cumulative instantiation" (ibid). Crucially, this reminds us that racism is not an 'epistemological category', but is instead – as Karen and Barbara Fields (2012) have argued – something made *in action*: a matter of doing not of being. From this perspective, we see that there is no unitary system, perpetrator or victim of racism, but rather different articulations within class and gender categories (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

Racism is thus infused into familiar practice, involving socialised attitudes and behaviour. It involves not just 'acts', but complex relations of acts and (attributed)

attitudes (Essed 1991). This is one way that the repetition of racialized and gendered stereotypes works to establish, and reinforce, distance between bodies whose difference is read off the surface (Ahmed 2004). Inter-subjective encounters are a crucial feature of 'everyday racism', not only because how individuals experience racism is an important aspect of racial oppression in and of itself, but also because such interactions are part of the processes that constitute people as Other in the first place. As Ahmed (2000: 7) writes, "it is only through meeting with an-other that the identity of a given person *comes to be inhabited as living*" [emphasis in original]. It is necessary, therefore, to engage both with the larger structures of hierarchy, race and prejudice that shape the social and cultural construction of the Other, as well as the ways in which specific bodies actively construct the world through interactions with others and place in particular contexts and environments (Krummel 2014).

2.6 Everyday Tactics

The concept of everyday tactics is used in Chapter Six to analyse women's economic survival. Deploying de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics, I argue that the idea of a more or less linear trajectory with all its implications of progress and of choice is not applicable to women who appear to live their lives in a context often characterised by instability, insecurity and fluidity. In de Certeau's conceptualisation, strategies are always the purview of power; they presume control and the power to implement them. In contrast, tactics are the ways in which the non-powerful adapt in order to navigate the environment created by the strategies of the powerful.

Tactics are used by those who, like African women in Athens, have "inferior access to information, financial means, and compensations," and so do not have "the same critical or creative elbow-room as the average citizen" (de Certeau 1984: xvii). For these individuals and groups, who experience marginality and unequal power relationships in their everyday lives, capricious circumstances require the improvisation of day-to-day tactics:

> "A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its

> disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances."
>
> de Certeau (1984: xix)

A tactic cannot count on a "proper" spatial or institutional location, but this can, de Certeau argues, be their strength. Strategies assume or at least have a stated outcome such that unpredictability can undermine or disrupt them, whereas tactics are in a constant state of reassessment – reacting to unpredictable changes and using spontaneity and improvisation as an advantage. Hence, de Certeau (1984: xix) concludes, "The place of a tactic belongs to the other."

The everyday struggle to survive not only elicits "an increased deviousness, fantasy, or laughter," it also contains within it moments of resistance that can challenge the system without loud acts of rebellion (de Certeau 1984: xvii). From this perspective, there are times when tactics of resistance may "short-circuit institutional stage directions," thus making small alterations to the system even as they appear to be conforming to it (de Certeau 1984: xiv). This focus on forms of cultural resistance and non-cooperation employed over time, rather than on observable 'loud' acts of rebellion, resonates with the idea of "everyday resistance" elaborated by Scott (1985) in *Weapons of the Weak*. In a context in which survival often requires the Other to at least appear to play by the rules, many opt for less visible everyday forms of resistance such as "foot-dragging, evasion, false compliance, pilfery, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage" (Scott 1985: 29). These "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups" (ibid) are part of the strategic deployments that de Certeau (1984: xvii) argues are "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong," thereby lending a political dimension to everyday practices.

2.7 Practices of Home and Belonging

Whether taken as the place people live in or the nation they belong to as citizens, home is, like any place, a varied, dynamic space inflected with issues of power (Massey 1991, 1994). It is, according to Massey, not only imagined in different ways, but also connected to layers of different sets of linkages and processes in which other places are implicated too (ibid). In today's increasingly globalised world, from the local to the global, people hold multiple allegiances to, and memberships in, all kinds

of national, ethnic and religious polities in which they participate in multi-layered ways (Yuval-Davis 1999, 2004; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Yuval-Davis et al. 2006). A translocational perspective problematizes home even further. It suggests that how individuals experience home is not merely a question of (dis)location and displacement/emplacement, but one of differential positioning and *trans*location in terms of a range of social positions, divisions and identities as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations (Brah 1996).

A translocational perspective also reveals the temporal complexity of home. To think of translocations, Anthias (2006: 28) writes, "opens up thinking not only of relocations but also of the connections between the past, the present and the future." Though the process of leaving and (re)making homes that migration represents is clearly a lived, embodied experience, it is also about the "imaginary possessions" people cobble together from the past and the present (Probyn 1996: 68). From this perspective, a nostalgic relation to past homes is understood to develop over time, allowing memory, imagination and multi-sensorial engagement (Svašek 2008) to enrich the present in ways that make bodies feel more 'at home'. Thus, it is through experiences associated with where we have felt 'at home' in the past, that a sense of home – of familiarity, ease, identification and belonging with others – can be recreated in the here and now, helping people to relocate themselves in their everyday lives.

This is not to suggest that such 'imaginary possessions' or 'acts of nostalgia' are the exclusive property of migrants. The affectivity of home is, for all of us, bound up with the temporality of home (Ahmed et al. 2003); we all engage in acts of story-telling that connect our present to our pasts and to our futures. When it comes to migrants, however, the tendency to interpret such undertakings as representing a refusal to engage with the present wrongly identifies these 'acts of nostalgia' as being the exact opposite of home-building, rather than as part of home-making in the here and now (Hage 1997). Recognising this is crucial when the individuals engaged in them are also struggling over rights because failing to do so both overestimates the role of 'the homeland' and underestimates investment in 'host' societies (El-Tayeb 2011). The risk is that, as a result, nationalist fears over difference will be fuelled and that those framed as culturally incompatible – as not 'at home' – will be further excluded from rights, jobs and resources.

Chapter Seven considers the question of home and belonging in all its complexity by adopting Hage's (1997: 2) definition of home-building as "the building of the feeling of being 'at home'." In his conceptualization of home as an affective construct, Hage identifies four 'affective building blocks' as necessary, either in themselves or in combination with others, for the "affective edifice" of home to come into being. These key feelings, which Hage argues it is the aim of home-building to foster and maximise, are: security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope. This approach enables us to engage with the ambiguities and complexities of belonging, and with home as an on-going affective and physical construct, without diminishing its importance in people's lives and minds.

2.8 Acts of Citizenship

The ways in which African women in Athens collectively mobilise to challenge and potentially transform the categories of recognition available to them are explored in Chapter Eight. How they do so by claiming citizenship rights for non-citizens creatively, performatively and in multiple spaces, resonates greatly with the notion of 'acts of citizenship'. This concept, formulated by Isin and Nielsen (2008), introduces the idea of citizenship as enacted performatively.[14] From this perspective, the fixity of the political subject is disrupted because there can be no determined subject that precedes acts (Hsu 2008). In Isin's words (2009: 371), 'acts of citizenship' are "those deeds by which actors constitute themselves (and others) as subjects of rights." Extending this line of thought, subjects who are not citizens may *act* as citizens, thereby constituting themselves as those with 'the right to claim rights' (ibid).[15] Crucially, this expands the idea of citizenship to include those acts through which claims are articulated in new sites of contestation, belonging, identification and struggle. No longer limited to traditional sites of citizenship, these acts are performed in and through bodies, in the media and on the internet, at the borders and on the streets (ibid).

[14] This echoes Butler's (1988: 519) conceptualisation of gender as an identity "instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" [emphasis in original], where 'acts' refers both to that which constitutes meaning and that through which meaning is performed or enacted.
[15] Isin (2009) argues that Arendt's (1973) 'the right to have rights' is too passive and possessive to capture the activist figure of citizenship.

‘Acts of citizenship’ are not intended to bring about a total break or a complete overthrow of sovereignty (Hsu 2008). The recognition that change can only be worked out or negotiated on the basis of the given order does not, however, make agency impossible. As Butler (2004b: 3) observes:

> “My agency does not consist in denying this condition of my constitution. If I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is ridden with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility.”

The struggle over what kinds of protests can be seen and heard is about more than symbolic forms of representation (Tyler 2013). It is about using common narratives to disrupt the reproduction of both symbolic and material hierarchies that regulate access to resources. For the challenge remains, that while a life for which no categories of recognition exist is not a livable life, so a life for which those categories constitute unlivable constraint is not an acceptable option either (Butler 2004b).

This thesis adopts a translocational perspective that centrally engages with the theme of livability throughout. The theoretical lenses discussed above – legal abjectification, gendered everyday racism, everyday tactics, practices of home and belonging, and acts of citizenship – are applied in Chapters Four to Eight, respectively. The following chapter (Chapter Three) describes the methodological strategies I employed in the field, including the research methods and any ethical concerns that arose.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

"Where is the Knowledge we have lost in information?" (T. S. Eliot, The Rock)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the feminist ethnographic methodology I adopted in order to investigate how processes of inclusion/exclusion are felt, reinforced, changed or lessened in the more or less noticeable 'moments' of women's daily lives. The chapter first addresses issues of positionality and reflexivity. It then briefly describes 'the field' and sets out the key principles of the feminist methodology used. The research methods are then described: participant observation, interviews, and a visual diaries project. Any ethical issues and concerns that arose during the fieldwork are addressed throughout the chapter.

3.2 Positionality and Reflexivity

My background clearly influenced my decision to research the lives of migrant women in Greece. As a child of the 'Hellenic diaspora' who has previously worked on gender issues in Africa, I became particularly curious about the experiences of African women in Athens. My positionality *vis-à-vis* the research context is, however, somewhat complex. As the child of Greek parents, born and raised in the U.K, I have always been conscious of being both insider and outsider to Greek society. I have grown up used to talking of 'the Greeks' as separate from myself – proud of my Greek roots yet more critical of what I saw as their shortcomings than I would ever dare to be of any other nation's people. I am also conscious that 'the field' is a city in which my parents were born and that had also, for a few years in my twenties, been my home. This brought certain advantages (familiarity, contacts, language proficiency, contextual understanding and so on), but it also had its pitfalls. I had to learn to see

Athens in a different way; to access social and geographical spaces that were unknown to me; to notice 'the little things'; and, to persuade people that, despite my Greek features, I was, in many ways, coming to the research as an outsider.

Shifting boundaries of belonging, and the different values placed on them, was something I experienced from a young age. 'Do you feel more Greek or English?' is a question I am still often asked. Even as a child I sensed just how charged and complicated this seemingly simple question was. I felt then, as I do now, and as we all do – I felt like myself. Over time I fine-tuned a response that I only now see the significance of. I ignored the 'feeling' part of the question and stated the facts: my parents are Greek, but I was born in England; I have Greek blood, but an English passport and education. I thus divided myself neatly between my ancestral/genetic ties and my education; between an emotional sense of belonging and my intellect and outlook on the world; and between my family's past (where I came from) and my present (where I was).

It did not take long in the field before I became aware of the irony that, after years of feeling I was being unfairly asked to define who I was in a way that could never fully reflect or represent my sense of self and how I experienced the world, that I went on to conceive of a project that imposes similar questions on others. During the course of my fieldwork I met many people (some African, some Greek, some African-Greek) with whom I discussed identity-related issues. In trying to probe the complex issue of identity, I realised how often we rely on the labels I had set out to undermine. Here, a translocational approach was instructive because it provided an alternative way of understanding questions of belonging and helped to shed light on the gap between the labels we use to describe ourselves and others, and how people actually organize, live and experience their lives. In so doing, it not only helped me to avoid simplistic categorisations, but also revealed how such labels can be used to mobilise across boundaries rather than in building walls.

With my background, I knew I was always going to be an outsider of the 'community' of women I was there to research. As a white, middle-class woman I was fully aware that I would face certain limitations in seeking to understand the experiences of the women of that community (Lazaridis 2000). Language and an absence of shared cultural references were obvious potential obstacles, but so too was my positioning in and amongst Athenian society, which was bound to be unlike theirs. I was able to move around freely without being reminded of my visibility,

without being made to feel Other and without fear of being stopped by the police and asked to prove my legal right to presence. My features are Greek, I speak Greek well enough and, though not as crucial for someone with both these characteristics, I also have a Greek identity card. As a child of parents born in Greece I even have the right to Greek citizenship and, during the early stages of my research, I became increasingly conscious of the unfairness of the fact that women like Lauretta, Hana and Ruth – women who had been in Greece for close to 30 years – did not. Blood trumps all – language, education, experience, contribution to, and knowledge of, the country and even, as I was soon to discover, being born in the place.

One of the many paradoxical consequences of being both insider and outsider is that there are times when one is more accurately described as being neither. I quickly realised, however, that this too can have its advantages. The African women I met in Athens openly criticised and commented upon the characteristics (both positive and negative) of 'the Greeks' without feeling uncomfortable. Not once did they show any sign that they considered me in the same category. I had not grown up in Greece, did not sound like a Greek and, unlike many of them who were trying to make a place for themselves within Athenian society, was only temporarily in Greece for a limited time and purpose. Perhaps more than most, they understood that neither nationality nor family roots could fully explain who I was, and we easily found a basis on which to talk of Athens and Greek society with a shared mixture of curiosity, affection and criticism. The time I spent amongst African women in Athens made me even more aware of the complexities of being insider and outsider, not only for myself, but also for many of these women who, despite being treated as second-class citizens by much of Greek society, took me into places and spaces in Athens where I was far more of an outsider than they were. The complex nature of these women's lives directly challenged these (and many other) static and overly simplistic either/or categories, and reinforced the need to re-examine such taken-for-granted assumptions.

I mention this personal history to draw attention to the fact that my personal background inevitably informed not only the research questions and their genesis, but also the relationships and information I was able to have access to during the research period. It also, I hope, gives the reader some sense of the situational lens through which I interpreted and dealt with the issues that arose during the fieldwork, and through which I have conducted the analysis and thinking since my return. As

Abu-Lughod (1993: 15) argues, "A story is always situated; it has both a teller and an audience. Its perspective is partial (in both senses of the word), and its telling is motivated." By addressing my personal motivations at the start, it is my intention to make transparent the grounds on which I tried to construct a 'critical ethnography'. It is I who has selected the stories and woven them into a pattern (ibid), but I have tried to do this based upon what interested the women and seemed most salient in their lives, as well as what I believed to be most important.

3.3 'The field': Athens

As the capital city, Athens was the obvious place to conduct this research. It is where most new arrivals, whether their intention is to stay or merely to pass through, go in search of shelter, work, compatriots and networks of support. As a result it has by far the largest proportion of non-EU migrants in the country: 132,000 comprising 17 per cent of the local population in 2011, according to the latest census.[16]

Going back to Athens in October 2014 to begin a year of fieldwork, I knew from my brief visits, from friends and from the many news stories coming out of Greece, that economic crisis had had a terrible impact 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 of this or that strike or protest were plastered on walls in ever-thickening layers of decay. I was shocked that people rifling through the large communal rubbish bins in the streets looking for food, things to recycle and clothes to stave off the coming winter cold had became a common sight. In these tangible changes, all the hyperbole and figures of 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 immediately evident on the streets of central Athens – particularly in neighbourhoods like Kypseli and Plateia Amerikis (see figure 4 for locations). These areas had become known as 'the migrant neighbourhoods' or, as one Greek man

[16] 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.

rather pejoratively called Kypseli, "*little Africa*" (ignoring the fact that there are many other, perhaps less visible, migrant groups living there). Preliminary visits confirmed a strong migrant presence – not only in terms of inhabitants hanging out in the squares, shopping and waiting outside school gates, but also in local businesses. Though the crisis was evident in the many boarded up shop fronts, there were still several African hair salons (see figure 3), Bangladeshi mini-markets and 'communication centres' advertising in various foreign languages.

In Athens, rather than the segregation by residential area that is common to many other cities, the marginalisation and 'ghettoization' of different ethnic and social groups takes the form of 'vertical segregation' (Maloutas and Karadimitriou 2001). In the large number of multi-storey apartment buildings that were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, the more spacious apartments of the upper floors are occupied by middle and upper-middle class locals, and the smaller and darker apartments on the lower floors, including basements, inhabited mostly by migrants (ibid). This is a trend that has accelerated with the onset of the crisis as increasing numbers of Greek homeowners have sought to supplement falling household income (badly hit by falling wages and pension cuts) with rental income by vacating these less desirable living spaces and squeezing into other family-owned apartments. As a result, though spatially concentrated in the densely urban core of the city centre, migrant groups do not tend to be spatially isolated from upper and middle-class groups (Maloutas 2007). Indeed, one of the most prominent socio-spatial characteristic of central city areas is its ethnically diverse composition (Kandylis et al. 2012).

Figure 3: *African Hair Salon, near Plateia Amerikis*
(photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

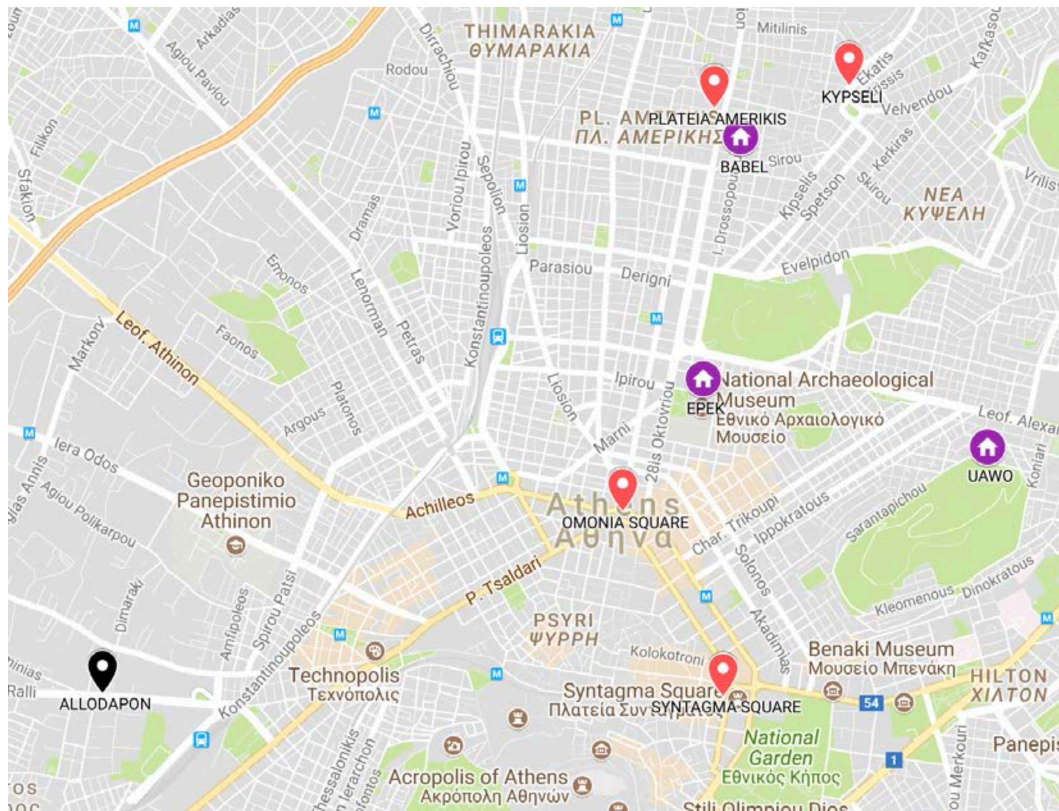

Figure 4: *Map of key fieldwork locations*

Despite this proximity there are, however, very few spaces in which migrants and Greeks interact. As one Greek resident of Kypseli, explained to me:

> There isn't a general mixing. I mean it's not that… Again, the Africans you see a little separate […] If you exclude the children who you see in mixed companies, amongst the adults I don't see shops and things… They might have them and I just haven't seen them, which is also characteristic of the Greek citizen.

It was striking to me that the woman telling me this is both a resident of one of the most ethnically mixed neighbourhoods in the city and a lawyer who has campaigned for, and represented, migrants. Yet she feels she does not really live *with* the Africans in her neighbourhood – not out of deliberate prejudice or choice; simply because their lives do not often overlap. This was an experience shared by many of the liberal, activist and NGO-worker Greeks who I met during my research. I mention this here not only because it is salient to the research, but also because it goes some way to explaining why the participant-observer roles I secured were so crucial. Without these entry points (described below), building relationships with African women, and gaining access to different areas of their lives, would have been far more challenging. This also raises another issue about what is hidden and invisible and to whom. We

often talk of 'hidden populations' in social science research, but this of course depends on where you are standing. In other words, as a white, middle-class woman of Greek origin these women's lives were going to be hidden to me – I could not simply arrive in Athens with the intention of 'doing research on' these women. Ethically, of course, but also practically I both needed and wanted to approach my participants in an altogether more interactive way.

3.4 Feminist Ethnography

> "the particulars suggest that others live as we perceive ourselves living – not as automatons programmed according to 'cultural' rules or acting out social roles, but as people going through life wondering what they should do, making mistakes, being opinionated, vacillating, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragic personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of laughter."
>
> (Abu-Lughod 1993: 27)

Broadly speaking, feminist methodology can be said to have three main goals: to reveal/represent the diverse experiences of women's lives; to show the factors that have been responsible for their invisibility by engaging with issues of power within the research process and the world(s) it engages with; and lastly, to seek a methodology that will lead to social change and better the situation of women (De Vault 1996). In pursuing these goals, a feminist ethnographic approach seeks to develop relations with people in interactive research processes that are based upon the principles of inclusion, participation and respect. It entails a focus on participants' actions, hopes, motivations, fears and perspectives, and a degree of self-reflexivity and flexibility during the research process: a willingness to constantly re-examine assumptions and findings, and to adapt to changing research conditions and evolving research questions. Finally, a feminist ethnographic approach rejects both the possibility and value of 'objective' distance from the individuals and communities involved.

A feminist ethnographic approach is well-suited to the understanding of migration in more than economic and/or political terms – as a sociocultural process mediated by gendered and kinship ideologies, institutions and practices (Mahler and

Pessar 2006). In contrast to the quantitative, positivist approaches that often fail to properly contextualize the data collected or address gender-biases in research design (ibid), ethnographic methods are here used to reveal "the actual practices of actual people" (Smith 1987: 213). My interest lies in capturing the complex reality of migrant women's lived experiences – the richness of "life as lived" (Reisman 1977, cited in Abu-Lughod 1993, 2002); in highlighting women's agency in the context-specific multiplicity of their lives; and in building on the voices of a very particular group of women in order to combine the uniqueness of individual experience with the search for commonalities and patterns across their accounts of the everyday (Bloch et al. 2009). Intended as research for women rather than about women (Allen and Baber 1992), my objective throughout has been not only to observe and describe women's lives, but also to draw attention to their political and social struggles – to challenge the invisibility of migrant women in public discourse and to break down the stereotypical ways in which they are often constructed.

Moving migrant women's experiences from the margins to the centre (hooks 1994), I did not view women as 'objects' to be observed and studied, but rather as co-participants in the research process. As such, they were encouraged to share their interpretations of their life-worlds as subjects with agency, history and their own idiosyncratic command of a story (Madison 2005). Approaching research in this way acknowledges that migrant women are 'knowers' (Kihato 2010). This epistemological stance had important implications for the specific methods I chose and how I used them in carrying out the research (Harding 1987). As knowledge-producers, women were given a political personal space in which to articulate their own experiences, in their own words and from their own viewpoints. 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.

The unequal power relations between researcher and researched have been much debated. While I recognise the inevitability that more power lies in the researcher's hands when it comes to identifying, analysing and reporting 'data' than in those of the researched, this recognition should not be allowed to undermine women's own efforts to take control over how they are represented. To do so would be to seriously misrepresent what took place during the fieldwork; it would obfuscate the ways in which they both implicitly and explicitly guided the research. Most

obviously, perhaps, women steered the research physically by inviting me into certain spaces of their lives if, and when, they chose. There were things they chose to share or to hide – either explicitly, by telling me they did not want to discuss them, or, less directly, by evading or postponing certain conversations indefinitely. In many instances, we made 'use' of each other. I took photos at family occasions (which I, of course, later gave them), helped them navigate unknown parts of the city and accompanied some women to appointments and meetings.

Drawing attention to my relationships with participants, which were negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research, is not intended as a distraction from 'the findings', but rather as a way to enrich the analytic approach. More than simply a necessary way of gaining access and establishing trust in ethnographic encounters, relationships are an integral part of the meanings attributed to those findings. Although less mentioned in much of the ethnographic literature, there is an emotional aspect that is always present in personal interactions in ethnographic work (Naples 2003) and, indeed, can form an important basis for understanding and analysis. The approach I took was similar to that outlined by Hill Collins (1990) when she emphasises individual uniqueness, the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues, and developing the capacity for empathy.[17] Rather than trying to keep a distance from my subjects and seeing emotions as an obstacle, I accepted them as a part of research processes. Under no illusion that keeping a detached attitude would create a more 'objective' analysis, I considered that emotional attachments was one way to break down power differentials and experiential differences between the participants and myself (ibid).

According to Haraway (1988) the interrelated issues of accountability, positioning, and partiality are central to any discussion of feminist objectivity. As already stated, this project inevitably derives from my specific positionality and, as such, is not intended to mirror an objective reality, or to be approached with 'scientific objectivity' and without some form of political agenda. As with all "ethnographic truths" it cannot be anything other than "inherently *partial* – committed and incomplete" (Clifford 1986: 7 – emphasis in original) and must remain, therefore, open and "provisional" (Mohanty 1991: 15). Inevitably, both what I am able to see and how I am seen by others influences how I conducted and

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[17] In *Black Feminist Thought*, Hill Collins (1990) challenges the distinct separateness of the faculties of emotion and intellect and describes these as interrelated components of 'the ethic of caring'.

interpreted interviews, which observations I was able to make and the kinds of interactions that were possible. As Abu-Lughod (1993: xv) observes, acknowledging one's own situated self can then be understood not as a personal confession of partiality but as an honest indication of what is always the case: "that we observe and speak from particular postitions".[18]

One way to acknowledge this partiality, and to avoid what Haraway so memorably refers to as the "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (1988: 581), is to adopt reflective practices that render visible, and enrich, the processes behind the collection, analysis and presentation of 'ethnographic truths'. Although self-reflexivity does not in itself resolve all issues, the hope is that it at least attains some level of methodological rigour and validity, while also accentuating the indeterminate, unsolvable and unstable aspects of what Wickramasinghe (2010) calls 'meaning-making'. In this regard, I kept a journal, which helped me to try to maintain a critical awareness of my own role in influencing the research process. These reflective practices provided valuable tools throughout the research and writing up process.

Though I am keenly aware that seeking to 'give voice' to migrant women in research and analysis cannot be taken to constitute a generous act on the part of the researcher, who 'releases' hidden, oppressed and marginalised experiences (Scott 1992, cited in Kambouri 2008: 8), I have tried to be as true to the women's voices as my abilities and 'inherently partial' view allows. Rather than taking the position of 'speaking for', as Alcoff (1991) argues against, I tried, wherever possible, to create the conditions for dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to, rather than for, others. This more interactive, dialogic approach informed how I related to women on an interpersonal level, conducting interviews, for example, as an exchange between equals. It also shaped how I have written up the research, using women's own words to recount their experiences and stories as much as possible. While there will always be a degree of selectivity and editing involved on the part of the researcher, I have tried to represent these complex and, at times, contradictory women as I came to know them. Aware of these constraints, limitations and dangers, I have written as I sought to conduct my research in the field; that is by starting from, and with, the women. Both in the field and in the analysis of my material I have gone

[18] It follows, therefore, that "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988: 581) that are acknowledged as partial are more trustworthy than partial knowledge presented as generally true.

where they led me. I have followed them into the spaces and places in which they live their lives literally (in terms of buildings, neighbourhoods, institutions and public spaces), as well as towards the themes and issues that seemed most urgent in their lives. Ultimately, it has been the responsibility and accountability I feel towards them that has continued to be the main guiding principle in the choices I have made in the writing up of this research.

The value of feminist methodology is not only in its partiality and specificity, but also in its accumulation and in its broader contribution to many diverse efforts "to find what has been ignored, censored and suppressed" (De Vault 1996: 32). My aim is, therefore, to contribute to the larger anthropological inquiry into migrant and refugee women's experiences in specific ethnographic contexts, while also shedding light on the specificity of particular African women's experiences in Athens. In so doing, I am hoping that this project helps women in their fight for greater recognition, better access to rights and resources, and inclusion in Greek society on their own terms. I share Abu-Lughod's hope that her book might "chip away at simplistic images" (1993: xvi); in this case, by representing the individual women and their lives as faithfully as I can, albeit through my imperfect situational lens. While the task is a difficult one, my hope is that there is at least some value in the attempt.

My methods could perhaps be critiqued for failing to be representative of the diverse experiences of the wider population of African women in Athens. However, breadth was never my primary goal; my aim was always to conduct a fine-grained study of particular women's lives within the particular spatial, temporal, social and political contexts in which I knew them. In pursuing the research goals, it was my belief that seeing the world through a grain of sand is sometimes the sharpest way to see it. Nonetheless, I do realise that there is a notable absence of men in this study, and so I want to make clear that this is not the result of either deliberate erasure or a conscious decision to 'leave men out'. Rather, it emerged naturally from my focus on women, from the methodological approach I took and the ways in which the women's lives unfolded during the investigation. This could potentially have led to more analysis of women's relationships (and differences) with men, but this is not what was revealed to me during the fieldwork. Indeed, the spaces in which we spent most of our time together turned out to be predominantly female spaces: UAWO, the Babel women's group, the Greek language classes for mothers and even our attendance at demonstrations and political events. In addition, as women went about

their daily chores, they often did so with other women. They spent time together looking after children, collaborating on income-generating or activist projects, and doing chores in and around their homes. Contrary to common expectations, many women had also migrated alone, and those who did have husbands often spent most of their days apart. When they were together after working hours in the evenings and on rare days off, they were usually at home and, therefore, in intimate familial spaces where I was not, understandably, included. Some women had sons, many of whom I met, but those who were grown up tended not to hang out with their mothers. A study on masculinity amongst African men in Athens that takes into account their particular gendered experiences and forms of vulnerabilities, strengths and exploitation, or a comparative study between women and men's experiences with regards to, for example, the police, immigration law, social attitudes and work opportunities, would undoubtedly be extremely interesting and valuable areas of study. They are not, however, either what this project set out to be, or what emerged in the field.

3.5 Methods

Participant Observation

For reasons described above, I knew that the first hurdle to overcome was always going to be that of access. I decided to tackle the problem by opening as many possible pathways as I could, in the hope that some – if not all – would lead to something. An obvious place to start was by contacting some of the many NGOs, local organizations and community networks that had proliferated since I had left Athens in 2008. In addition, because I knew that things often get done in Greece through contacts, informal networks and having '*ta mesa'* (literally 'the insides', meaning having contacts within), I pursued informal channels wherever possible.

My first break came when a friend, whom I had not seen in years, put me in touch with the woman who ran an organization called Ena Paidi Enas Kosmos ('One Child One World' – EPEK). Founded in 2009, EPEK is a Greek NGO whose central aim is helping the increasing numbers of families in Athens facing worsening socio-economic conditions (see figure 4 for location). Children are placed firmly at

the centre of a holistic approach (their motto is "each child is a whole world") that seeks to address a broad range of issues, including: welfare, physical health and wellbeing, psychological support, legal advice, job placement, integration of children in the school community, Greek language classes, counselling and 'psycho-educational' groups.[19]

My role with EPEK was somewhat unclear and is perhaps a reflection of some of the more general issues with the participant observant role. It was agreed that I would attend the Greek language classes they ran for mothers, but I was neither teacher nor fellow student and therefore not fully participant.[20] My Greek turned out to be much better than the women attending the classes and so I immediately dropped any attempt to take part in the classes as a student. Nor was I able to act as a researcher in anything more than a (mostly) passive observer mode. The class time was limited, often cut even shorter by late arrivals, and I was aware that I should not let my own research goals intrude upon this rare time women had carved out of busy lives in order to improve much needed language skills.

Despite these constraints (and frustrations), my time at EPEK was not wasted. It afforded me the opportunity to see how the organization worked, what kinds of needs African 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 classroom walls. These relationships were slow to develop, but eventually they did and my time at EPEK led to several interesting areas of research.

During my initial meeting at EPEK I was put in touch with another organization called Babel, which led to the second strand of my participant observation roles with organizations (see figure 4 for location). Babel Day Centre provides mental health services to migrant individuals and families. They take a comprehensive approach based on the key principles of respect for cultural diversity, collaboration and mediation, and a focus on individual strengths. Given the specialisation of the work done at Babel by a staff that includes psychologists, medical health care professionals, social workers and a psychiatrist, I did not feel that I had much to offer them in the way of professional expertise. On my first visit,

[19] EPEK website: http://www.paidi-kosmos.gr
[20] The classes were arranged into three groups (illiterate, beginners and advanced) and were held once a week, except for the advanced group who met twice a week. Class sizes ranged between two and six, although full attendance was unheard of.

however, I noticed a poster for a biweekly 'open migrant women's group' and eventually met with the woman responsible for running it. Once she was able to get confirmation from the group's participants that they would be comfortable with my presence, I began joining them on a regular basis.

The Open Women's Group was open in every sense: to any women who wanted to attend for any amount of time within the allotted two hour evening slot (one woman often popped in for a mere 10 minutes on her way home from work), and open also to any topic and discussion. The group had been set up to be as accessible, inclusive, responsive and respectful of women's needs and lives as possible. It was run by one of Babel's psychologists with the support of another Greek woman who had formerly worked at Babel but who was no longer part of the official staff. The group more or less ran itself, and the coordinator's main role was to encourage women to listen to each other instead of splintering off into private chats as was their tendency.

The group had six women who were regulars and during the six months that I attended, the number of women varied from a maximum of eight to a minimum of two. These women were from all over the world, from: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Serbia, Albania, Peru, Sierra Leone and Corsica. They communicated in a mix of Greek and English, rarely (though sometimes) slipping into their own language with compatriots. Most of the African women spoke very little Greek while the Albanian and Serbian spoke very little English although very proficient in Greek. This is, broadly-speaking, fairly representative of the general picture of migrants in Athens. Migrants and locals repeatedly told me that "Africans don't learn the language." This is, of course, a huge generalisation and I met many women who are evidence to the contrary (not to mention the often not so latent racism in such remarks). However, it is true that, on the whole, Eastern European migrants have been in Greece longer, have been integrated more fully into Greek society and do therefore tend to speak Greek with more ease. These language barriers invariably produced a bit of a challenge for the group coordinators as at times it led to inevitable fragmentation, with people translating to others or feeling bored that they were being excluded from the conversation.

Many issues were shared amongst this diverse group of women. Regular topics of discussion included: problems with document applications and renewal, obstacles to children's integration at school, racism and exploitation at work,

navigating Greece's cumbersome and slow bureaucracy and other issues such as violence, loneliness and depression. As the coordinator commented, I became a kind of 'in-between' member of the group. I was neither fully participant in the same way the other women were (never introducing my own ideas and experiences to the group unless initiated by a question directed toward me) and yet I was not a group coordinator either. I navigated this position with caution. I would assist with the setting up of the group space, help with clearing up and contribute verbally to the follow-up notes the coordinators wrote after every session. Yet I was conscious that I was not a co-ordinator, and it took time before I knew women well enough to comment on their participation, mood, appearance, and contributions, as the notes required. Gradually, however, my presence became not only tolerated but expected, and I felt reassured that I was neither inhibiting the conversation nor intruding on the safe space the group was carefully designed to provide.

The third strand of my more structured 'participant observation' roles was, in many ways, to become the most important. It involved the United African Women's Organization (UAWO) (see figure 4 for location). This small but active organization had come up repeatedly during my preliminary research. Two of its members had popped up being interviewed in a documentary on Greece's crisis and rising xenophobia, they were recommended by a friend who worked at UNHCR Greece, and it appeared in internet searches for 'migrant women Athens', 'African women Athens', or any of the other countless word combinations which I typed into my computer in the run-up to my fieldwork. Emails had gone unanswered, but once in Athens, I called the number on the UAWO website and immediately arranged a meeting with the organization's President at her home.

From that very first meeting I stayed in regular contact with Lauretta, spending a lot of my spare time hanging out at the office (see figure 5). We got on and I soon began to be invited to join them at events, meetings, and conferences. In my capacity as photographer, supporter, volunteer and friend of UAWO, I attended political rallies, demonstrations 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 members interacted not only with each other, but also 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 particular work to be done, I was able to witness the importance of the organization

not only in fighting for migrant women's rights, 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.

With a quickness I grew familiar with, Lauretta immediately saw that our relationship could be mutually beneficial. As someone who spoke both English and Greek, I could be useful to the organization and so she encouraged my involvement from day one. This both helped me in my research and sat well with an ethical position from which I wanted to 'give back' as much as possible. Over time, I also came to feel that Lauretta, amongst others, believed my research was important and so helped me not only from generosity and a sense of mutual gain, but also because we shared similar goals. As the days passed, my involvement developed naturally as my relationship with some of the more active members grew. My occasional contribution included writing articles, publicity material, and helping Lauretta to prepare speeches before events, which I would diligently print in a large font so she would be able read them and, without fail, ignore. Before I wrote anything for UAWO, I would sit down with the women involved and we would talk it through. I would then write it up, before reading it back to them for editing. This collaborative approach seemed to work and I was glad to be useful without taking complete control of the writing process. I wanted the content and ideas to be theirs, even if, ultimately, the writing style was mine.

Figure 5: *The United African Women's Organization, Athens* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

One of the many advantages of spending time getting to know the women I interviewed was that we had multiple conversations and group discussions over the course of the research. Snatches of conversations took place in a variety of locations: on buses and trains going to and from events, on shopping trips to the local market, at festivals and demonstrations, and in homes and at church. The vast majority, however, took place at the UAWO office. Many hours were spent at the office by

myself, Lauretta (for whom the office really was a second home), Ruth (who was retired and lived nearby) and a fluid contingent of other members, old and new. Concerned not to disrupt the ease and naturalness with which they were speaking by recording or taking notes, I would write up and reflect upon conversations in my research diary later in the day.

A smaller, more fluid and democratically run organization, there was more flexibility in terms of what I could do for UAWO (I was not, for example, consigned to stuffing envelopes or writing reports). As a result, more opportunities arose that gave me access to other areas of women's lives. Gradually, I became part of their social activities and opportunities to see women outside of the office grew. We would, for example, go to the local food market together and, as more of the women got to know me, I was invited to children's birthday celebrations at church, to attend Sunday services and to spend time with them and their families in other settings. This kind of interactive participant observation became a regular feature of my life in Athens and I often had to remind myself that I was researching and to jot down key words so that I could later write up notes on the days' events, comings and goings, and discussions and observations.

Besides the more obvious ways in which I was able to be of use to the women, there were other ways in which I soon realised that the flow of information was not always one way – from researched to researcher. I often found myself used as a potential source of information and insight into the behaviour of others. My regular presence in all three organizations, but particularly in UAWO, meant that I was also well placed to be the audience for conflict – I was sometimes literally addressed by people on different sides of an argument that had nothing to do with me. As a relative outsider, and as someone with a degree of perceived neutrality, I represented both audience and someone to convince. At other times, I was confided in, complained to and asked to take sides. This was not always a comfortable place to be in, but it is part of living amongst, and having relationships, with people and, if anything, I took it as a positive sign. I was seeing and sharing in some of their more intimate daily conflicts and struggles, as well as in the more public (though no less real) displays of unity.

Using Photography

In addition to the images taken by participants as part of a visual diaries project (see below), the thesis also includes a number of my photographs which were taken throughout the fieldwork. Initially, I took these photographs for my own benefit – as a useful way to document my research. It was not long, however, before my interest in photography was picked up on by participants, leading to a mutually beneficial arrangement. What began as the photographing of UAWO workshops, events and campaigns for general publicity (mainly for the newsletter and website), soon extended to include social occasions, such as naming ceremonies and birthdays. These more intimate photographs I shared with women privately via Facebook or email. After the more public events, I would put together a slideshow which we would watch together in the UAWO office. This was a way not only to share the images, but also to integrate reflexivity into the research – a way for us all to reflect on the events (and images of the events) together.

It should be noted that 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, the photographs should be understood as illustrations which, I hope, will enrich the narrative material (Taylor 2009). In his discussion of the use of photography in studies of migrant communities, Gold (2007: 142-3) states that "images can be effectively integrated with other forms of information to improve sociological work, even if the analysis of the visuals is not the central focus". Similarly, the photos here are not treated simply as data, but as "tools that facilitate the process of the research" (ibid). Recognising that the power of words is limited, using images (taken by participants as well as by myself) is intended as a way to deepen our understanding of women's lives (Kihato 2010).

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 (always after obtaining their informed consent). As such, they are not meant to be considered any more 'true' or 'objective' – or, indeed, as somehow validating – my written interpretations. They are, like the rest of my research, shaped by my own preoccupations, subjective viewpoint and aesthetic bias. As Susan Sontag (1979: 6) says, "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 later chapters will demonstrate, 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 can be understood as not only a complementary addition to my research, but also as a contribution to women's own efforts at counter-representation.

Interviews

I met the majority of key participants through UAWO and its members, although I also met some others through EPEK. This latter pathway proved to be a much more gradual process as there was not much time during the Greek language classes to build a more personal connection with women. In both instances, word spread that I was meeting women for my research and this seemed to both reassure and encourage others. From early on, I was struck by how many women were happy to be in a position to help me. It was not unusual, after interviews, for women to offer to help me further, introducing me to friends or family, inviting me to join them in church and at events or meetings they thought might be of interest to me.

The approach I took had elements of snowball sampling in that many of the interviews arose from a pre-existing network of women. Although I met several of the women at the same time and always approached them myself (and not through the more classic method of referrals associated with snowball sampling), there was a cumulative aspect to the way in which I met key participants. Furthermore, upon reflection, I found that the pathways by which I was able to access and approach women was indicative of their (in)visibility and degree of (non)integration into various areas of Greek society. I was able to come into contact with potential research participants through NGOs working with vulnerable groups in general, or migrants and African women in particular, at festivals and demonstrations around specific issues, or at collaborative meetings around shared interests. This, I would suggest, is fairly typical of the overall picture when it comes to Greeks and African women overlapping and sharing spaces in Athens. Even amongst those who work with African women or attend these events and celebrations of other cultures, I met

very few people who knew or socialised with African women (and men) beyond these fairly limited spaces. In this sense, as mentioned, despite a very particular visibility, the women were part of a 'hidden population'. Had it not been for time spent in participant observation roles at organizations, gaining access to them might have been impossible.

Informed by feminist ethnographic theory and my relationship with the participant, I would conduct interviews in as natural and conversational a style as possible. I had prepared a general semi-structured interview guide but never had it in front of me to avoid creating a formal atmosphere that might have been inhibiting for the women and a barrier to my own engagement with what was being expressed. Instead I would discretely check pre-prepared notes when I felt the interview was nearing its end to ensure that I had not missed anything. In this way I was as present and as flexible as I could be; balancing my research needs with the aim of giving women the space to tell me whatever they wanted to share. 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. This is not to say that the interviews were entirely free-flowing or without questions (they were not). It is merely to emphasise that a degree of flexibility allowed for dialogue and mutual participation to develop.

After all interviews I would write up additional notes as soon as I could, sometimes resorting to scribbling a few key words down on my bus journey or taxi-ride home so as not to lose any of my initial thoughts and impressions. These notes were on anything and everything: the interview location, the women's gestures and expressions, general observations and ideas, and a self-critical assessment of my role in the interview process, including things I had perhaps struggled to communicate or wanted to follow up on another time.

Although I always gave participants the opportunity to choose the location for interviews, many appeared to be reluctant to do so. I would gently encourage them however, insisting that I was flexible. I wanted them to select somewhere that was both easily accessible to them and where they felt comfortable. This was primarily out of consideration, but it also created better conditions for a more natural conversation. Many women were keen to invite me to their homes (in some cases even before I had broached the subject of an interview), although an equal number

of interviews also took place in cafés located conveniently for them. I would always pay for drinks and, conscious that this was a luxury most could not afford, would make it clear that I would do so from the outset to prevent any discomfort.

Other issues arose around the vulnerability of women who were undocumented and therefore anxious about being stopped by the police. In such cases I would either meet them in their homes or nearby, so as to minimise their time alone on the streets. Afterwards, aware that my presence would protect them from police checks, I would always make sure to accompany them wherever they needed to go. Though it was not my primary concern, by allowing women to pick the location of the interviews, I also unintentionally learned a good deal about their personal circumstances (economic, legal and domestic) and mobility (in terms of ease of movement and familiarity with the city).

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that some of the women who agreed to meet me were also (though not exclusively) in some vague way investing in the possibility of future gain. I represented a connection to 'Europe' and to Britain. For a couple of the women this manifested in requests for me to bring gifts back for other family members living in the UK. For others, I sensed that there was a hope that I might be well-connected, have access to resources, or be able to help with something one day. Aware of this, I was careful never to promise anything, no matter how vaguely, other than that I would try to represent them as truthfully and wholly as I could, while protecting their anonymity and privacy.

Participants

At the heart of this project are eighteen women from across Africa. Table One, which gives brief information on each participant, indicates just how diverse the group of women whom I have brought together in this study are.[21] Evidently, any notion of a homogenous 'African women' identity must be rejected from the outset.

[21] All the information in this table has been carefully edited to protect the identity of the participants. In addition, all personal data that has been gathered will be kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes of the research.

NAME	AGE	NATIONALITY	DATE OF ARRIVAL	REASON FOR MIGRATION	EMPLOYMENT	FAMILY STATUS	LEGAL STATUS	RESIDENCE
ADANECH	32	Ethiopia	2002	Married Greek man & moved to Greece with him (divorced)	Café/Pastry Shop – full-time employment	Married to Ethiopian living in USA. No children	Residence. Citizenship pending + applied US visa	Alone – rents
AISHA	33	Nigeria	2002/3	Fled Boko Haram attack alone	Restaurant kitchen work	Married to Nigerian met in Greece. 3 children born in Greece	Pink card – refugee papers for her and children pending	Family – rents
ANGEL	39	Nigeria	2003	For hairdresser work – trafficked and forced into prostitution	None. NGO & charity + support from son's father's 'brothers'	Single. 2 children. 1 in Nigeria. 1 son born here (undocumented)	Undocumented	Single-mum – rents with help
AYOBAMI	27	Nigeria	2005	To join family and finish school - education	Activist and student	Single	Residence permit & Nigerian passport (parents & 1 sister born in Greece have Greek citizenship)	Alone – rents
ESOSO	31	Nigeria	2010	Poverty and responsibilities of being eldest	None (supported by boyfriend)	Engaged to Nigerian in Greece. Pregnant. 1 child in Nigeria (unconfirmed)	Pink card	Released in 2015 from detention. Now with fiancée
FAITH	53	Zimbabwe	1994	To study embroidery – trafficked into domestic work	Domestic work (live-out) & makes/sells handicrafts	Widow. 4 grown-up children in Zimbabwe	Residence – 1 year	Alone – rents
GIFT	33	Nigeria	2004 (11 years)	For work – tricked by traffickers & forced into prostitution	None	Boyfriend in prison in Greece. 1 child in Nigeria	Undocumented	None – staying with friends
GRACE	??	Ghana	2007	For work. Fleeing worse domestic work conditions in Lebanon	Mostly live-in domestic work. Summer: café/restaurant/bar for short time	Married to a Ghanaian man met in Greece since deported back to Ghana. Children from previous marriage in Ghana	Residence (2 years) – just received after 8 years with pink card (renewed every 6 months)	Rents with two male flatmates
HANA	53	Sierra Leone	1986/7	To join husband (2 year old daughter joined later)	Live-in care for elderly Greek woman 6 days a week	Married to Sierra Leonean. 3 children – 2 born in Greece	Family stay permit for 5 years – indefinite stay was withdrawn	Family – rents
LAURETTA	51	Sierra Leone	1983	Europe, work, better life. Hardship under dictatorship	One night per week care/live-in for elderly + occasional cleaning, activist work	Single. One grown-up son born in Sierra Leone, living in Gambia	Residence permit (10 years) – expires in 2021	Rents – shares with male cousin
LAYANAH	33	Cameroon	2010	Fled. Didn't want to talk about it	None. NGO & charity support + assistance from friends & landlord	Greek husband disappeared. Met, married & had 2 children in Greece	Refugee residence + passport	Single-mum – rents with help

NAME	AGE	NATIONALITY	DATE OF ARRIVAL	REASON FOR MIGRATION	EMPLOYMENT	FAMILY STATUS	LEGAL STATUS	RESIDENCE
LILIAN	??	Nigeria	2000	To see boyfriend –got stuck due to probation after arrest	None	Married (separated?) No children	Residence – 10 years	Alone
LUCEE	29 or 31?	Nigeria	2007	Tourist visa. Alone. Plane. To Europe	None	Single – no children	Undocumented	Alone (male cousin in Greece pays)
NNEOMA	??	Nigeria	2010	To join husband	None (husband unemployed) – NGO, charity support	Married to Nigerian. 3 daughters born in Greece	Pink card (her children also – husband no documents)	Family – rent & bills paid by EPEK
PEARL	50	Nigeria	1990	Temporarily for work – to join brother	Ex-restaurant & shop owner. Informal food events	Divorced. No children	Long-term residence currently suspended	Alone – owns?
ROSE	37	Ethiopia	2004	Work – via restaurant work in Lebanon	House-keeper/cleaner for several houses	Married –Ethiopian husband living in USA. No children.	Residence – 2 or 3 years?	Alone – rents
RUTH	62	Nigeria	1992/3	Europe – away from husband and for better life	No formal employment. Sells food at festivals & events; plans to sell goods bought in Greece in Nigeria	Separated. Husband followed her to Greece. 5 children – 2 in Greece. 1 grandson in Greece (half-Greek)	Long-stay residence permit (10 years)	Family
SABA	42	Eritrea	2010	Europe – fleeing. Stuck in Greece.	No formal – occasional pop-up food events + disability benefit	Single. No children	Refugee residence permit & ID, but no passport	Alone – rents (owes)

Table One: Participant Information

Participants came from seven different countries across Africa: from Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.[22] Nearly half came from Nigeria, a common country of origin amongst migrant women in Athens. The key participants 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 women had left their countries of origin were no less wide-ranging. Contrary to prevailing gendered assumptions in much migration research which depicts women as mostly 'following men', a surprising number had migrated alone (11 of the 18). 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 undoubtedly 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 by seeing them only as 'victims of trafficking'. Already we see how complicated the explanations for people's movement across borders are.

Three women (Aisha, Saba and Layannah) had fled their homes in circumstances that have been recognised 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 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

[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.

these women. All referred to themselves as Christians, though how they interpreted this, which churches (if any) they went to and how often varied enormously.[23]

Contextual interviews

I also conducted a handful of contextual interviews with professionals involved with migration issues. These included interviews with the psychologist at Babel who ran 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. 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. 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 both collecting information on the 'migration landscape' in Athens and on how laws were implemented in practice, but 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. Although I conducted as many of these interviews as I could, due to inevitable time constraints and the frustrations of having more access to people towards the end of the fieldwork period, I chose to prioritise time spent with African women and their families.

Language, Translation, Confidentiality and Consent

Clearly, the primary responsibility in ethnographic research is to the participants. An ethical sensitivity includes ensuring that no participants are exposed to any negative

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

repercussions as a result of taking part in the research, particularly in terms of their safety. To this end, confidentiality, full disclosure and consent were vital. Though in reality this is a much more complicated thing to achieve when spending longer lengths of time with participants in relaxed and natural environments, I made every effort to remind women that I was, in some sense, always 'doing' research.

In order to guarantee total confidentiality, all but one of the participants' identities have been anonymised.[24] I have also changed any identifying descriptions when situations required it both in my field notes and in the writing up of my findings. Interestingly, my reassurances about privacy and anonymity at the start of interviews were often met with comments such as "*I'm not a criminal*" or "*I have nothing to hide*." This corresponded with all but one of the interview participants telling me they were completely at ease with being recorded. Participants usually displayed a sense of general good will and took the attitude that by helping me perhaps one day others would do the same for them or for their loved ones. Despite this openness, I have given all the participants pseudonyms (carefully chosen to reflect their nationality, religion, ethnicity and so on) and taken every precaution to protect the women's identity without altering the data or being 'untrue' to who the women are, as I saw and experienced them. All personal data that has been gathered will be kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes of the research.[25]

All photos have been included with the informed consent of the participants. In instances where I felt there might have been reason for caution – such as, for instance, the possibility that the photos would have placed the women or others at risk – I have not included them. I am aware, however, that women may be identifiable from their images and so, on the few occasions where I have used their (anonymised) names to reference particular images, I have done so only after lengthy consideration of all the material included in other parts of the thesis. This is also why I have not captioned images with women's names or referred to them in specific passages of the text in ways that would make women identifiable.[26]

Nearly all of the interviews were conducted in English. Three of the contextual interviews were conducted in Greek (with the lawyer, the policeman and

[24] Only one participant's real name has been used, and this has been done with her full, verified consent.
[25] This is in accordance with the SOAS code of practice regarding use of personal data in research.
[26] In light of this, the images included should be understood as illustrations of what is being said, rather than relating to the particular woman being quoted in the text.

the psychologist), although I did use English for ease of expression where necessary since all of them understood English but preferred to speak in Greek. Only one of the key participants spoke entirely in Greek, with the rest speaking in English, slipping occasionally into Greek for a more apt phrase or word, or when recounting things said to them in Greek. Where this occurred I have written the Greek phonetically in Latin characters with a translation into English.[27] The intention is to remain as true as possible to the women's voices and how they expressed themselves, but also to capture some of the texture of the women's complex positionalities and identities. Inevitably, however, there will always be some loss of meaning as contexts and words convey different meanings that cannot always be easily captured in translation.

3.6 Visual Diaries Project[28]

Before embarking on my fieldwork, I had considered some form of participatory action research (PAR) as one possible way to foreground the agency and everyday lives of African women in Athens. After discussing this possibility with some of the key participants, I decided that a visual diaries project (VDP) would be an interesting and effective way to allow participants' agency to shape the research process as co-constructors, and to learn how they see things through their own eyes. 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 allow 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.

The project that eventually took place involved a group of ten women (seven of whom were key participants) recording visual diaries of their everyday lives with disposable cameras. The questions I asked them to reflect upon when taking the

[27] All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.
[28] For further details, see the ethics proposal and ethics forms in Appendix I.

photographs were deliberately open so as to avoid imposing too many conditions.[29] They were as follows:

1) What happens in a typical day in your life in Athens?
2) What are the most significant moments/events in your day?

The hope was that common themes, issues and experiences amongst this politically, socially and economically marginalised group would arise from the images (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, the women came together to share, and talk about, their images. As they did so commonalities and differences emerged; things were verified and disputed, agreed upon and challenged. They shared joys and pains as memories were triggered and women told one another about themselves and 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. I have selectively included some of the women's images, as well as quotes from this discussion, where appropriate.

As already stated, the participants had complete control over which images should not be included in this thesis – though the selection from those they approved was, ultimately, mine. In addition to a two-stage consent process, at the beginning and at the end of the project, during the discussion I also raised the question of which images, if any, women would wish to remain unpublished.[30] I have also reflected since upon the use of the images and, using my own judgement and knowledge of the women's lives and current situations, where I had any doubts, I have erred on the side of caution and have not included them.

Often it was not what the camera 'saw' but what it could not that was particularly poignant. There were photos women had difficulty in taking for practical reasons. On one occasion, for instance, one women managed to take a photo in an

[29] These questions were inspired by a similar project conducted by Kihato (2010) with migrant women in South Africa.
[30] Three women were absent from this discussion. In light of this, I decided not to include any of their images, though they have provided material that has informed some of my analysis.

unemployment benefit office just after a disagreement over a rejected application, but was prevented from taking any more. There were also those photos that they could not take because there was something missing from their lives: a desperately wanted refugee passport, money, or the years lost with children left behind, now grown. There were also images women wished were not there: those taken outside the asylum directorate, for instance, or of workplaces they wished they did not have to go to so that they could stay home with their families.

These images speak of women's agency and everyday presence in Athens: they show women shopping, cooking, working, going to church and socialising – spending time with their friends and families and fulfilling everyday tasks. Looking at the images now, with a little more distance, I am struck by how, both knowingly and unknowingly, the images are subversive, challenging the trope of the suffering, fragile migrant woman (Kihato 2007). They tell of lives being lived as fully as possible and, as such, reject constructions of these women as in any way in limbo or 'out of place'.

The following chapter gives an account of the immigration landscape in Greece with regards to laws, regulations and practices as they have developed over the last 25 years. It then gives texture to these rather abstract institutional developments by recounting the stories of five women under the labels assigned them by state categories. In the analysis that follows, the concept of legal abjectification is introduced to examine how women experience and manage the fluidity and precarity of legal status, which appears to characterise the majority of African women's experiences of the immigration regime in Greece.

Chapter Four

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE IMMIGRATION REGIME:

Documents, status fluidity and abjectification

> "When you have a paper you can decide what to do. If you can go to an island to look for a job or you can look for a job in Athens with confidence. When you have the paper you have the mind and the confidence to work. You go to any office with boldness that you cannot be able to be afraid of the police in Patisseon, in the street… Of course, paper is everything."
>
> Lucee, from Nigeria, undocumented

4.1 Introduction

With citizenship virtually impossible for African women in Greece, the degree of formal belonging and (in)security they experience as 'non-citizens' depends largely upon their legal status – primarily whether they have it, but also what kind they have, under what conditions and for how long. Exploring the ways in which different African women live the often exclusionary structures within which they find themselves, this chapter asks how they, as 'non-citizens', experience and manage Greece's documentation regime.

In order to establish the legal context for these experiences this chapter first gives an overview of the immigration law and policy landscape in Greece as it has developed over the last 25 years. This is followed by five vignettes in which the status experiences of different women are described under the labels attributed to them by the document regime in Greece. These stories provide the starting point for an exploration that goes beyond labels to better understand women's lived experiences of document allocation and refusal. This includes a discussion of the processes of legal abjectification to which many African women are subjected in Greece, as well as

how different women manage the status fluidity and legal precarity that characterises many of their lives as a result.

4.2 The Immigration Landscape

1990s: Establishing Immigration Policy in Greece

Prior to the early 1990s, Greece had been predominantly a country of emigration. It was not, therefore, until 1991 that the first comprehensive legislative framework for regulating the conditions for entry and stay of 'aliens' was adopted. Faced with an institutional vacuum for dealing with immigration (previous Greek law on immigration dated from 1929), Law 1975/1991 was largely a reactive measure to the first major influx of mainly irregular migration in the wake of the geopolitical changes of 1989. Aimed at the prevention of illegal entry, the law strengthened external borders and facilitated the deportation of undocumented migrants already in Greek territory (Zigoura 2007). It did so by simplifying the expulsion procedure and penalising illegal alien stay in the country, giving a certain degree of autonomy to local police and judiciary authorities (Triandafyllidou 2009). In addition, as part of a general emphasis on restricting immigration, the new law introduced the policy of *metaklisi* for dealing with labour migration. This rather complex procedure allowed migrants to work in Greece only by invitation from a specific employer for a particular type of work, and only if a Greek citizen or a migrant already residing in Greece could not fill the position. Throughout the 1990s, Greek immigration policy continued to be exclusively concerned with controlling the entry of migrants which, combined with very narrow channels for legal entry and failures in bureaucratic processes, resulted in an increasing presence of undocumented migrants (Anagnostu and Kandyla 2014; Cavounidis 2013).

Policing immigration: arrest, detain and deport

Rather than being seen as a social and/or economic issue, the 1991 law framed immigration as a security issue that must be tackled by policing authorities. Indeed,

there was an almost naïve belief amongst politicians that migration could be dealt with through restrictive measures alone; faster and simpler deportation procedures were believed to be enough (Triandafyllidou 2009). Consequently, one of the main features of immigration policy in the mid-1990s was that of mass deportations conducted in public view. Deliberately carried out in public places where 'irregular' migrants were known to gather, these *skoupa* ('sweep' or 'broom') operations, as they became known, were intended to both deter 'irregular' migrants from entering Greece and to scare those already in the country into leaving. Reinforcing a common view of migration as a crime and of all migrants as criminals (Triandafyllidou 2009), these 'sweep' operations further embedded the image of the migrant offender, or criminal Other, in the Greek social consciousness. Locked up in police stations and detention centres, migrants were then released with a deportation notice, known as a *fige* amongst migrants (literally a 'go away'), giving the released detainee one month to leave the country. Alternatively, detention would often result in an application for asylum either as means of stalling deportation orders or as a way of securing a temporary legal status after a period of police detention, and not always because there was a need of protection (CLANDESTINO 2009). Apart from being inhumane and ineffective, the combination of these large-scale arrest-and-deport operations, with the introduction of harsh border controls, also failed to actually reduce the phenomenon of irregular migration (ibid).

The old asylum system: chaos and a lack of protection

It is now well documented that for many years Greece's dysfunctional asylum system denied many access to a meaningful assessment, resulting in thousands of people in need of protection becoming trapped in Greece without documents, assistance or the means to make a living (HRW 2008, 2013; Kopp 2008; Triandafyllidou et al. 2014). In violation of the right to seek asylum under refugee law, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for years the Athens Alien Police Directorate accepted only 20 applications per week (Aitima 2012). After waiting in queues that could number over a thousand in all kinds of extreme weather, sometimes for days and without access to food or toilet facilities, it was not unusual for people to be told to come back in two months (Kopp 2008).

This meant that many would-be asylum-seekers remained undocumented, without protection and, because they were regarded as 'irregular' migrants, vulnerable to arrest and detention (HRW 2013). Even for those who did gain access to the asylum system, once inside measures to protect vulnerable groups were non-existent and interviews were often conducted without interpreters (Kopp 2008).

Hovering at around 1 per cent for several years, Greece has had the lowest positive first-instance recognition rates in the processing of asylum applications in Europe (IOM 2008). On appeal however, the rate nearly doubled with decisions taking from one to seven years (Kasimis 2012). All asylum applicants were released with a temporary permit (the infamous 'pink card') allowing them to stay in Greece while their application was being processed, during which time (other than the pressure to renew every six months) applicants were left to their own devices (Triandafyllidou et al. 2014). Despite a presidential decree ensuring asylum-seekers accommodation and a daily allowance sufficient to cover basic needs (neither of which were forthcoming in practice), many quickly became *de facto* homeless and were left vulnerable to law enforcement abuse, inhumane and degrading conditions of detention and a hostile environment marked by increasing xenophobic violence (HRW 2013; Kopp 2008; Spathana and Papamina 2014).

Regularisation

By the mid-1990s, it became clear that the migration phenomenon was neither temporary nor manageable solely through stricter border controls and massive removal operations. After a lot of deliberation and lobbying from various pressure groups who criticised the government for ignoring the *de facto* presence of several tens of thousands of foreigners in Greece, a series of regularisation programmes was introduced (Lazaridis and Poyago-Theotoky 1999). Indeed, it is a particular feature of the Greek migration population (several women in this study included) that most migrants legally present in Greece today were previously on Greek territory illegally and acquired their permits through participation in one of these four regularisation programmes (Cavounidis 2013). The expansion of the undocumented population in Greece has, therefore, not only been the result of unauthorised inflows; it has also

been consistently linked to the difficulties migrants have had (and continue to have) in renewing their work permits.

Introducing Greece's first regularisation programme

The 1997 regularisation programme was the first official acknowledgment that migrants were in Greece to stay. However, it met with insurmountable organizational and practical difficulties. The requirement of proof of legal employment for a minimum number of days, combined with the reluctance of many employers to pay social insurance contributions (*ensima*), made it extremely difficult to meet the prerequisites (Triandafyllidou 2009; Triandafyllidou et al. 2009). Consequently, many migrants either continued to live under a clandestine status or, unable to pass the secondary assessment phase, relapsed into an undocumented status after a brief period of regularisation (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011; Triandafyllidou et al. 2009).

By the end of this programme, 371,641 migrants had been registered for a temporary residence permit (white card), but only 212,860 went on to receive a permanent residence permit (green card) (Kasimis 2012). Although significant in that it laid the first foundations in Greece for an institutional framework formulated specifically to deal with immigration (Triandafyllidou et al. 2009), it is estimated that less than half of the migrants living in the country were registered during this first regularisation programme (Kasimis 2012). Meanwhile, ill-conceived and poorly implemented legislation meant that immigration continued apace (Anagnostu and Kandyla 2014).

The 2001 regularisation programme

In 2001, migrants were seen by socialists and conservatives alike as a needed albeit temporary and dispensable labour force (Triandafyllidou 2009). Consequently, a new law (Law 2910) was adopted that sought both to combat irregular migration and to cater to the needs of the Greek labour market while also protecting Greek society from a deregulated situation of massive undocumented migration (ibid). Driven by a mostly instrumental view of migration, the 2001 regularisation programme was geared towards providing migrants with a temporary legal status, provided they could

produce proof of residence for at least one year before the implementation of the law (Kasimis 2012). The new law also established a complex administrative procedure for the issuing of stay permits for employment or education purposes, and continued with the principle of *metaklisi*, whereby Greek employers could issue a work invitation to foreign citizens. In other words, migrants were welcomed in Greece only so long as they were needed and had work.[31] As a result, permits were short-term, renewals were frequent and highly conditional, and checks were an ever-present threat in migrant workers' lives. Long-term integration was neither a priority nor a deliberate or accidental outcome of such policies. What is more, implementation was once again problematic. The programme went on for several years longer than intended due to the weakness of public administration, a lack of infrastructure, confusing bureaucracy, and waning public support (Kasimis 2012). At the end of the programme, 400,000 migrants had been regularised (ibid).

2005 and 2007: new immigration laws and further regularisation

Greece's penultimate regularisation programme was introduced under Law 3386/2005 which aimed to incorporate the EU Directives on the right to family reunification (2003/86) and on the status of long-term residents (2003/109). This time all undocumented migrants who had entered Greece prior to 31st December, 2004 were included. However, many of the problems characteristic of previous programmes continued to plague implementation, and only approximately 150,000 migrants applied for residence permits (Kasimis 2012). In 2007, Law 3536 was introduced in part as a response to these issues and included some positive changes, particularly for those who were not able to collect the necessary *ensima* in time.[32] To compensate for delays, during the 2001 and 2005 regularisations the government also introduced a 'semi-regularised' status by issuing a certification (*vevaiosi*) of having submitted an application for the issuance or renewal of a residence permit. This situation led to a condition of ambiguous 'legality' for migrants who are *de facto* obliged to have, as their only documentation, this receipt but not their actual permit

[31] Then Interior Minister, Vaso Papandreou, made a short statement on the voting in of the new law noting that migrants were welcome *as long as* they had (regular) jobs (cited in Triandafyllidou 2009: 166-7).
[32] These changes included the opportunity for migrants to pay for up to 20 per cent of the *ensima* required for regularisation and permit renewal, and an extension for the submission of required documents.

(Triandafyllidou et al. 2009).[33] Overall, the intention of both these laws was to give legal status to those who had lived in Greece for several years but had not been able to regularise their residence and employment.

Initially reactive and piecemeal, throughout the 1990s and 2000s Greek immigration policy remained short-sighted. A mix of nationalist ideology, lack of political will and free market laissez-faire principles meant that the immigration policy model in Greece was aimed less at legalising and regularising undocumented migrants, than at controlling their entry (Maroukis 2010; Triandafyllidou 2009; Zigoura 2007). Characterised by intensified (albeit not particularly effective) border controls, combined with relatively weak systems of labour market inspections, excessive red tape, a lack of coordination between police and other agencies, and the absence of organized and credible datasets (CLANDESTINO 2009) immigration was dealt with as a necessary evil and not as an opportunity (Triandafyllidou 2009). Furthermore, the discrepancy between informal practices and formal laws which seems to characterise the Greek polity as a whole has been particularly evident in immigration policy (Carras 2012). The ensuing gap between legislation and reality has been made even more problematic through lack of coordination and harmonisation. With three separate ministries dealing with different areas of immigration policy, there has been a serious lack of efficiency when it comes to funding, implementation and monitoring (Liapi and Vouyioukas 2006).

Immigration Policy in 'Crisis' Greece

Since the financial crisis began in 2008, migration flows to Greece have continued to increase at an unmanageable rate for a country already struggling to cope. Despite some improvements, such as immigration becoming part of the political agendas of major parties with some on the left (such as SYRIZA and KKE) advocating for migrants' rights, and a growth in the influence of NGOs, trade unions, migrants' associations and various anti-racist organizations (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011), current immigration policy has continued to be based upon previous *ad-hoc* measures

[33] As Triandafyllidou et al. (2009) point out, this situation runs counter to principles of fair public administration since foreigners have to pay 145 euro for the issuing/renewal of permits, which they never actually get to benefit from due to enormous delays.

that were inadequate in the first place. Greece lags behind European legislation; mature institutions with trained staff, established roles and responsibilities, and the resources to implement effectively are seriously lacking (Liapi and Vouyioukas 2006); and, there has been a continued reluctance to extend social protection to migrants.

Aborted efforts to reform citizenship law in 'crisis' Greece

Citizenship in contemporary Greece can be said to follow the Aristotelian *politeia* model, in which citizens of Athens were only those whose parents were born in the city (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010). Based upon the prevailing and historically entrenched principle of *jus sanguinis* (the right of blood), citizenship in Greece has been attainable almost exclusively by transmission from parent to child through blood ties (Baldwin-Edwards 2008). For people who cannot prove lineage through Greek parents, procedures are very difficult and very costly. Consequently, in practice naturalisation has been (and remains) an extremely difficult pathway towards integration (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014; Anagnostou and Gemi 2015).

In March 2010, however, there was a moment of progress that gave hope to migrants living in Greece that things could change for the better. The then Socialist PASOK government introduced major legislative reform (Law 3838/2010) that departed from the *jus sanguinis* principle in an attempt to facilitate Greek nationality acquisition for migrants (especially those who were 'second generation'). Besides facilitating nationality acquisition of first generation migrants, and providing citizenship acquisition to second generation migrants, the new law also extended to migrants the right to vote and stand as candidates in local elections. As such, the 2010 law was the most politically determined attempt to promote the social integration of migrants to date (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014). However, this major reform was subsequently suspended when, in 2013, the Council of State (Greece's highest court in administrative and civil law) declared the above two provisions unconstitutional (Decision 460/2013). It did so on the grounds that they undermined the national character of the state and diluted the composition of the legitimate electorate. Along with high costs and lengthy procedures, such attitudes have continued to discourage migrants from even applying for Greek citizenship, and acquisition has continued to be extremely limited with very few becoming naturalised

between 2010 and 2014 (Anagnostou and Gemi 2015).

The 'new' Asylum Services: improvements but already under strain

An overhaul of Greece's asylum system began with the introduction of a new asylum law in 2011. In order to prevent the new asylum service from being crippled from the outset, the 45,000 unprocessed backlog of cases under the previous system remained the responsibility of the police.[34] With the opening of the new asylum services in June 2013, the backlog was reduced dramatically and, at the time of the fieldwork, approximately 27,000 were continuing to renew their pink cards every six months under the 'old' system (see figure 6). However, the fair and effective completion of asylum cases remains a major challenge for the country – particularly as pressures on the new system have intensified with the dramatic rise in applications brought about by the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 onwards. Even before these developments serious deficiencies remained regarding the reception of asylum-seekers and vulnerable groups. These included a lack of economic and social support as well as access to the labour market (Spathana and Papamina 2014).

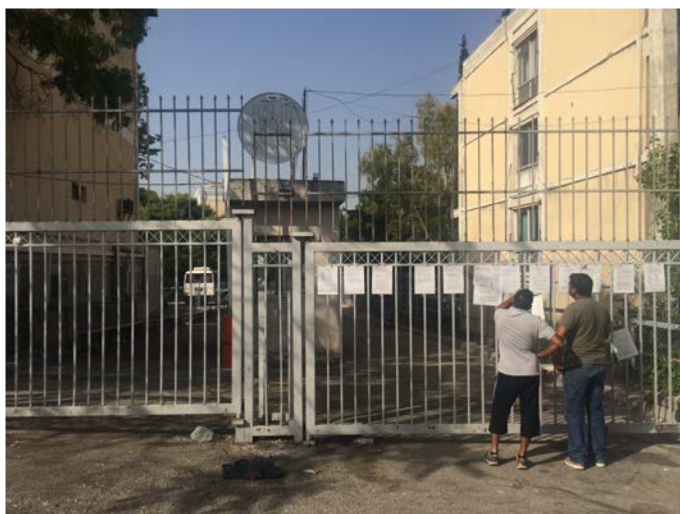

Figure 6:
The new asylum services.
Katehaki, Athens
(photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

[34] Law 3907/2011 harmonised Greece with the European Directives on Reception and Return, and, most importantly, took the asylum committees out of the authority of the Greek police. However, due to austerity measures and Greece's financial problems it was not until June 2013 that the asylum service started its operation and began receiving new claims of people who had arrived in the country after 7th June, 2013.

Policing immigration during the crisis: Xenios Zeus and intensified 'sweeps'

As part of a general crackdown on 'irregular' migration, crime, irregular trade and drug trafficking, the Greek authorities intensified the practice of routinely detaining irregular migrants and asylum-seekers for prolonged periods. In early August 2012, the New Democracy government launched a large-scale police operation entitled *Xenios Zeus* (rather perversely named after the Ancient Greek God of hospitality and guests). Measures were also brought in to allow the prolonged detention of migrants up to an extended period of 18 months (the maximum time allowed under Greek law) – a practice that has been widely criticised by international human rights organizations. A key tactic of the *Xenios Zeus* operation was the use of police powers to conduct identity checks to verify the legal status of individuals presumed to be 'irregular' migrants. While such police stops were frequent before the launch of the operation, official statistics indicate a significant intensification. Between 4th August, 2012 and 22nd February, 2013 police stopped almost 85,000 people of foreign origin on the streets of Athens, who were – even when they did have documents – taken to a police station for examination of their identification papers and legal status (HRW 2013).[35] Shortly after coming to power in January 2015, the new Syriza government pledged to end the police 'sweeps' in Athens. Nevertheless, recent reports suggest that the police culture of stop and search, harassment and detention is likely to take some time to reverse.

A new 'Immigration and Social Integration Code': little change

Due to a combination of both international and national factors, including mounting pressure from the EU, increasing migrant inflows and the presence of a vocal migrant population (bolstered by anti-austerity solidarity movements), a new immigration law was put into force in March 2014. Broadly speaking, the 'Immigration and Social Integration Code' (the Code) brought together existing legislative provisions regarding categories of residence permits and conditions for their issuance and renewal (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014; Triandafyllidou et al. 2015). On balance, this streamlining of legal provisions and attempt to fully align

[35] NGOs, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the Greek Ombudsperson have all highlighted the discriminatory and abusive nature of Operation *Xenios Zeus* (Amnesty International 2014a).

Greek legislation with relevant EU directives represented a positive step towards overcoming the shortcomings that have characterised immigration policy and practice in Greece from the outset. The Code does not, however, reform the main bastions of Greek immigration policy which has, as summarised in a recent report by the ELIAMEP research organization, for 25 years treated the phenomenon of immigration as "a lesser evil that has to be cushioned but that is not managed in any proactive way" (Triandafyllidou et al. 2014: 22).

The Code is primarily a management law that fails to take into account the ways in which the demographic composition of Greek society is changing (Triandafyllidou et al. 2015). As with previous laws, the Code does not include any provisions for the legalisation of a large category of migrants who lack residence permits either because they lost them or because they had no access to procedures and are, therefore, undocumented (Spathana and Papamina 2014). Overall, immigration has continued to be seen by many (and not only by those on the extreme right) as both a factor of economic upheaval and a threat to the perceived cultural and ethnic purity of the nation (Triandafyllidou 2009). Neither the Code nor the National Strategy for the Integration of TCNs (2013) that preceded it, make any reference to the rights of migrants to preserve their distinct cultural-ethnic or religious identity. While the Code has offered a certain security of residence to 'second generation' migrants (Article 108), it stops short of providing any legislative provision for granting citizenship to them (Spathana and Papamina 2014). Rejecting multiculturalism, the preferred model of inclusion in Greece appears to remain that of "structural integration" (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014). Migrants are expected to demonstrate a 'positive' and 'active' will to adapt to the dominant political and cultural frame of Greece, an adaptation that is seen to contribute to "social cohesion and *cultural homogeneity*" [emphasis added].[36] What is more, even these rather limited steps towards integration policy have, once again, remained mostly on paper (Triandafyllidou et al. 2014).

The next section tells the stories of five women that are emblematic of the kinds of encounters African women have with the immigration regime in Greece.

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[36] The National Strategy for Immigrant Integration (2013, cited in Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014: 18)

4.3 The Women's Stories

The following vignettes are provided as the starting point for an exploration of the ways in which African women in Athens manage the discriminatory and excluding structures of the state, often constructing flexible and innovative identities in the process (Vasta 2011). As Zetter (2007) convincingly argues, institutional needs transform a story into a bureaucratic label and ascribe an identity of the 'other', producing highly discriminatory labels designed to mediate the interests of the state to control and manage in-migration. The depiction here of five complex and unique individuals under the labels through which they are 'seen' and made visible by the Greek state is intended to undermine the stereotypes often applied to African women in Greece. At the same time, it also reveals how important these labels are not only practically, but also in shaping the women's own identities and senses of self. Such an approach exposes the mismatch between "convenient images" (Wood 1985: 1, cited in Zetter 2007: 173) and the lived realities of women's lives. These women are, of course, so much more than 'domestic worker', 'asylum-seeker', 'refugee', 'victim of trafficking', or 'long-term resident'; but the fact that they are 'seen' as these things has an impact on them and on their lives in ways that go far beyond mere semantics.

The Domestic Worker

Rose arrived in Athens on a work visa during the summer of 2004. The Olympics were in full swing, though this meant little to Rose. As a 'live-in' domestic worker, she worked seven days a week cleaning her employers' home and office, and went nowhere unsupervised. Even her diet was strictly controlled: toast for breakfast (but no tea or milk), nothing for lunch and a single plate of lentils for dinner. All for a measly wage of 200 euro per month.

One day, as she sat in the car waiting for her employers to finish arguing, Rose felt a strong impulse to escape. She opened the car door and ran.

Rose had lived in Athens for three months but the streets in which she now found herself were completely foreign to her. Realising she had no money, passport or friends, she roamed the streets looking for her 'people'. When she eventually

spotted an Ethiopian man, she explained her situation and he immediately took her to the home he shared with his Ethiopian girlfriend. In the months that followed, they gave Rose clothes, food and a place to stay – even helping her to find a new job. Amongst her people, Rose finally felt safe.

Rose's newfound sense of security was not, however, to last. Like many women whose documents are arranged for them by employers who consider such matters of no concern to the women whose lives depend on them, Rose was completely unaware that she needed to renew her permit. "*I arrived legal, but became illegal*," she explains, looking back. Going to and from work every day in the upmarket Kolonaki neighbourhood, her heart would pound as she passed the police-guard who sat outside a politician-neighbour's house. Every day she thought: "*Today is the day I will be caught.*" For a whole year Rose lived like this. "*It was hell. I would not wish this on anyone… If illegal you can't go anywhere, can't do anything. You are in the middle of nowhere. Stuck. You cannot do nothing. You cannot plan anything.*"

In 2005, the government announced a new regularisation programme and Rose, after a year of 'illegality', began the process of regularisation. She is still grateful for her then employers' help. She knows that she could not have managed the complicated and costly procedures without them. They took her to appointments with local authorities and lawyers, covered not only the 1000 euro application fee but also all costs, including expenses for an obligatory medical exam – and they did all this without deducting anything from her wages (as is often the case). Using her expired visa as proof that she had been living in Greece since 2004, Rose finally got her residence permit.[37] This was an important moment for Rose: "*I found my home.*"

Sitting with Rose today, however, it quickly becomes evident that her insecurity has far from gone. Although she no longer fears the police and feels able to move around the city, she is ridden with anxiety over the renewal of her residence permit. Good at her job and much sought-after, she does not lack for work, but only two out of her current ten employers are willing to pay the *ensima* upon which her permit renewal depends.[38] *Ensima* also expire, making the cycle of collection and

[37] The 2005 law stipulated anyone who could prove that they had arrived in Greece legally in 2004 or earlier could apply.
[38] Rose needs 100 *ensima* by the end of the year. Each one costs 11 euro or 25 per cent of her wages.

renewal never-ending. "*First day when I'm renewing my paper I'm thinking how long it will last and what I need to renew it.*"

To further complicate matters, requirements and procedures keep changing, which is all the more difficult if you do not speak Greek. Rose now speaks a little, but at times she still struggles to make herself understood, particularly when dealing with Greece's under-staffed and over-strained public services. "*It's a nightmare when you don't understand and they shout at you as if you are deaf… they treat you like you are nothing."*

In the generalised uncertainty and anxiety that accompanied the run-up to the referendum in July 2015, Rose became even more concerned about her future.[39] Two jobs had already been cancelled that week. "*People are panicking*," she explained when we spoke on the phone just days before the vote. "*They don't want to spend money on cleaning their houses.*" Without a contract or a regular salary, Rose felt increasingly vulnerable. "*There is no security,"* she explained. "*Security doesn't exist. Not in the country or at work*" That she should feel so vulnerable after 11 years living in Greece, clearly pains Rose: "*You don't feel either Greek or… You are in the middle of somewhere because you are living here but feel something may happen and you will have to go back... In the middle of somewhere.*"

When I speak with Rose eight months after the end of my fieldwork, she tells me nothing has changed, but she's not giving up. "*I'm just focusing on one thing at a time otherwise I'll go mad. If I was going to give up I would have done that a long time ago – it's either life or death so...*" Rose still wonders when she is going to start living her life. The endless cycle of work and permit renewal is "*no life*," she explains. "*Even to put on a nicer pair of jeans makes me think what's the point? To do what? To just get dust and dirt on them*?" Her life, she concludes, is "*all scattered and in bits.*" I asked if she has any future plans and she said no, how can she, the way the country is going? Unable to face going back to Ethiopia and being behind her friends and the life she feels she would have had had she not "*believed the advertisements*" and left, Rose feels she has no choice but to just keep going. But she is getting tired. "*If at this point in my life I'm not living*," she asks, "*when is it going to start? When am I going to start having a nice time and enjoying life*?"

[39] On 25th July, 2015, a referendum was held on whether Greece should accept the new bailout terms offered by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The Asylum-Seeker

"*Because when we were coming we fell inside the sea for two times. So every time, everything we were holding: our papers, our pictures, me I have my passport, my license…*" Grace lost all her documents at sea during the crossing from Turkey to Greece. Nearly drowning twice, she was one of the lucky ones who finally made it, on her third attempt, to the safety of the Greek shore. Grace remembers vividly what it felt like to arrive in the now familiar Omonia Square in central Athens, her clothes dirty and torn, her feet bare and caked in dust and mud. Thankfully, the Ghanaian friend who had offered to help her make her way in Greece was waiting for her. Within a mere three days of her arrival Grace had joined her friend's church community and, through the contacts she made there, had even found herself a job.

After a few months, Grace joined the tens of thousands of asylum-seekers in Athens at the time. She described the experience of applying for the infamous 'pink card':

> Pwaaaaah, for the first time, before we get the pink card itself we should go and queue from 12.30 dawn – early in the morning – go and queue at Allodapon.[40] Go and queue till morning. At 6.30 they will come and count you: 'go inside, go inside, go inside, go inside.' Because we were plenty! Too much people… Oh, I fell every time. Crush my body on the ground. Yes, pushing back. Pushing front, like this. So, what will you do?

Eight years' experience had not lessened Grace's anxiety about renewal. Each time the six month expiry date neared Grace's "*heart is panic.*" After an initial period of clandestine employment cleaning ships, Grace joined one of the large bus-cleaning companies that operate around Athens. This work, done at night, is physically gruelling and exploitative and would leave Grace just enough time for an hour and a half rest on one of the buses before going straight to the Aliens Directorate (Allodapon) to get in line before day break.[41]

> And for the renewal it's also another tough problem… 3.30 you go and stand there, waiting. At night. Early in the morning until 6.30 they will come and open you to go and queue for the line. And because there are many you see everybody is rushing. So, one time they push me. As I fell they were all running on me. They were laughing at me. If you see, here, here, all [shows me scars]… oh it's not easy. Many times, many times.

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[40] 'Allodapon' is the Greek name, often used by both Greeks and migrants, for the Attica Aliens Police Directorate at Petrou Ralli Street in Athens. Literally translated it means 'alien'. See figure 4 for location.
[41] Personal communication from a social worker who helps job seekers at PRAXIS day care centre.

Fed up with the renewal process and no longer sustained by the belief that she would one day get refugee status, when I interviewed Grace she was in the process of applying for a two-year residence permit. Several times I called to find her at Allodapon waiting to be seen, at the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) meeting with her lawyer, or on a bus, folder of documents in hand, on her way to an appointment at the Ghanaian Consulate.

When we finally met for her interview it was in the small flat Grace used to share with her second husband, but now, since his deportation and "*because of hardship*," shares with two young Ghanaian men who pay half the rent. Grace was exhausted, having only just finished her application at Allodapon that morning. But her relief shone through her tiredness: "*Ach! I am very, very happy. Very happy. I am relieved from this early morning wake-upping. You can see that maybe you didn't sleep last night very early – say 1, 2, and you must wake up maybe 5 or quarter to 5. You see? Very tedious. Especially when it is raining there is no time. Pwaaah.*" Released from the ordeal of renewing her pink card, to Grace two years seems like a lifetime.

The Refugee

Saba is stuck. Ask how she is and Saba will respond in a sing-song voice that does little to hide the suffering in her words: "*I am in prison, I am in prison.*" 41 years old, suffering from lupus and with constant pain in her leg, Saba is struggling to survive in Athens.[42] With five months' rent owing at 150 euro per month, she would gladly take work as a live-in domestic worker if it were not for her poor health. But jobs are scarce and life is tough in Athens for people like Saba: "*So difficult. Everything is difficult. I don't know people why he's coming [to Greece]. Better to die. Because the same.*"

Saba's family is scattered across the globe. Her seven surviving siblings live in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, Norway and the UK. After a period of several months living in Sudan illegally, Saba made her way to Turkey until she finally decided to follow in one of her brothers' footsteps and head to England via Greece. Like many before her, and even more after her, this is where Saba's story – and her life – sticks. Greece was meant to be a 'stepping-stone', a 'country of transit'; it was

[42] Lupus is a chronic, autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body (skin, joints, and/or organs inside the body).

never intended to become home. Saba clearly feels she has drawn the short straw by being the only one of her siblings to have ended up in Greece. Unlike many of the women I met, however, Saba's difficulties are not to do with being denied the right to remain in Greece. From Eritrea, and with a back-story that includes enforced army service and imprisonment, no one questions Saba's entitlement to refugee status. Appointed a lawyer by GCR and, crucially, having applied under the new, more efficient asylum services at Katehaki (and crucially not Allodapon), Saba got her refugee residence permit relatively quickly. As Saba explained, her problem is not that the Greeks do not want her. Her problem is that her request for a refugee passport has been rejected.

The first time Saba tried to leave Greece she had tried to sidestep the obvious migration routes out of Athens by posing as a tourist with a fake French passport leaving the island of Santorini. Though she was caught, she did, however, manage to evade actual arrest. A sympathetic border guard simply told her to get lost. When Saba tried again in 2013 – this time from Athens with a plane ticket to England bought for her by her brother – she was even less lucky. Saba was caught, arrested and detained. When the judge at her hearing asked her why she had tried to leave, Saba's reply probably speaks for thousands in similar circumstances. "*To make a life*," she said. "*Here I have nothing*." Saba was given three months detention for having no papers, at the end of which she was released with a deportation order instructing her to leave the country within six days. With her fingerprints registered in the EuroDac database, Saba knew that she no longer had any choice. She had to apply for asylum in Greece.[43]

Saba has been in prisons in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Greece. Four, I counted. "*Five*," she quickly added. "*Here now. Greece is prison too. Just a big one*." At the time I met Saba she had all but given up the fight to move on. She repeatedly said how tired she was, insisting that she was determined to leave legally or not at all. She could not and would not risk prison again. And then her refugee passport application was rejected.

According to Greek law, anyone with a criminal record cannot apply for a passport until five years have passed from the date of conviction. Saba would have to

[43] EuroDac is the European Union database in which the fingerprints of all asylum-seekers and 'irregular border-crossers' over the age of 14 are entered.

wait until 2018 before she could start the application process all over again. 2018. For Saba it may as well have been 2038. The news shattered her, sealing her sense of imprisonment. "*What is refuge*??!!", she snapped desperately. "*They don't pay my rent, I have no money, I have my leg, I can't work... What is refuge? They are killing my mind! All my life I been in prison. Even Europe – prison too.*"

The possibility of seeing her brothers in the UK or her brother in Norway had been keeping Saba going. And so now even the prospect of jail in Eritrea seemed a better fate – at least then her parents would be able to visit. "*If I go they put me prison but better to see my family and in prison… Better because now I am [in] prison[with] nobody to see me here.*"

The Victim of Trafficking

Angel was working at a friend's hair salon when a new customer – a respectable Nigerian woman with a husband and four children – started talking to her about Europe. Admiring Angel's hairdressing skills, the woman said she liked her and wanted to help her. Angel did not take much persuading. Her father had died when she was little and her mother had been struggling ever since to feed and clothe, let alone educate, Angel and her four younger siblings. Things moved quickly and Angel soon found herself with a new passport on a plane to Greece, where she was told a new job in a hair salon awaited her. She still remembers how excited she was on her first night in Athens.

> They take me to the house and I meet the other girls – there were so many! I was happy – I said look how everybody is fresh. And they give me food – a lot of meat. I said Jesus, now I find my life. I was too happy. I never knew anything. The girls they were celebrating with me. They were congratulating me that I'm here. I was so happy…

Angel became suspicious when the next morning came and no one got up to shower and get ready for work. By night fall Angel knew something was wrong.

> But in the night, they would make up. They would dress like a prostitute […] you would see very mini skirt. You would be seeing their pants. They would put on bra… […] The husband is the one that is doing the business but at times he can send the wife to Africa to find girls and bring. They were doing the business together. So I ask this girl [and she] said what salon? […] You are going to do the same thing we are doing. I said are you serious? I was very… I was about 27/28 [years old]. I was caught.

After a few days Angel decided to confront her 'boss', demanding to be taken to the hair salon so she could start work.

> He said he don't have shop. The business they are doing here is prostitution. You can go to bar, you can dance […] I said you supposed to tell me. Why can't you tell me the truth before you bring me here? He said I should close my mouth. He started being strange to me. Whatever I say he shout. He spat on me… do different things to me. You see? He said I am your boss – whatever I ask you to do you will do.

No longer in possession of her passport, which her trafficker had taken both to entrap her and to bring other women into Greece with, Angel felt she had no choice but to work towards getting it, and her freedom, back. She began work in a strip club. "*That is how I found myself, and that is how he destroy me and my documents, everything.*"

In 2007, two of the women in the house escaped to a local police station. A raid soon followed and, in the confusion, Angel took her chance to run away. In the months that followed, she survived by living with her boyfriend and various friends. This brief period of relative freedom did not, however, last long. In 2008 Angel was arrested and detained for being undocumented. Advised by her appointed lawyer to apply for asylum, Angel was eventually released and joined the tens of thousands of pink cardholders making their way in Athens. When her asylum application was rejected, Angel went back to living a life in the shadows.

Today, under 'the Code', Angel is legally entitled to a residence permit for humanitarian reasons or 'exceptional circumstances', but Greek bureaucracy likes a paper trail and that is something that Angel, like most victims of trafficking, is not in a position to have. To make matters worse, when Angel did finally manage to get her passport back from her 'boss', she was devastated to find another woman's face staring back at her.

> They should have believed that I am the owner of this paper because I go to them I tell them I am trafficking. Because I don't know how to claim this paper back. I told them different things so that they can relate the paper back for me. They don't believe it because I don't have proof. You understand? I don't have proof. It's very difficult.

Angel is now trapped. She moved to Greece to have her world expanded and instead it has shrunk. Without the means or the security to do so, she barely goes out. Both isolated and dependent on others Angel craves her freedom.

> There is something like freedom, you know. At times, every time you see yourself like you are under somebody, you are under somebody, you don't have freedom for yourself for a while. It's not a good thing, you understand? You need to live your life

> alone to see what things would look like. But if you don't have work, how can it be easy for you to live alone? Because I find myself – every since I come to Greece I'm not… I don't have freedom for myself. I always stay with people, people, people, people – different kind of people – because of no job, no papers. From one house to another, from one house to another. It's not a good thing. You understand? It's just like little different the time I'm with my boss. Little different. Because I don't have freedom for myself. Alone. Like this.

The Long-Term Resident

Lauretta has been in Greece for 32 years, has a long-term residence permit of 10 years (see figure 7), shares a flat with her cousin, has lots of friends, and countless acquaintances who would like to be her friends. A known figure in the Athens activist scene, often sought out by journalists for comment on behalf of 'migrant women' and 'the African community' in Athens, Lauretta considers herself fully integrated.

Despite this visibility and renown however, a closer look at Lauretta's life reveals that she faces many of the same problems and obstacles that other African women in Athens also face. She cannot get secure work, struggles financially, is vulnerable to racist attacks and prejudice, and has yet to achieve the security of legal status that only citizenship would give her. Lauretta insists that in "*all parts of the society I feel Greek*" – in all ways, that is, apart from "*the biographic way*," and only so long as she has a valid permit:

> when I have my residence permit I feel like I'm a Greek, like that. But the time when it's going to expire you know I feel like… Like now my Sierra Leone passport is expired, I always say that if they have given me the Greek I should not have been running back to Sierra Leone to find anything from Sierra Leone. You understand.

Like many African women in Greece, Lauretta also knows what it is like to live without documents. For 12 years she too was an 'illegal' migrant. It was an experience she will never forget.

> And the thing is so bad that it makes a difference even if you have the 'rose karta' [pink card] or you have… When people are desperate… My own experience about this paper: it doesn't matter which. If they have give you two days or three days paper, but for that three days you feel a little bit different than not having anything. You know there is always a difference. You understand. And when you have the two years you feel good. You said there is time. But when you don't have nothing, you feel very bad. You cannot imagine. If you are living in a foreign country, Viki, you don't have

> residence permit… You know what I pass? I came here in 1982 – '82 to 1994 before I can get residence. All these years, you know what I pass?

One experience in particular sticks out in Lauretta's mind: not the attempted rape by a former employer, but the threat of deportation that followed. Lauretta had no choice but to withdraw the charges and abandon the wages she was owed. Back then, though police checks in the street were rare, employers could hire (and exploit) 'illegals' with near impunity; the threat of deportation always at their fingertips.

> You know how many they deported? They go and arrest a lot of people in their job. They deport them. Do you know what we pass? You can work for people, they threaten you. You leave your job. You know how many I work they did not pay me? I did not even return to take it instead of them sending me to Sierra Leone. [Laughs]. It's a hell of time. I never wish to be illegal in any country again.

Lauretta eventually got her first residence permit in 1994 but, without enough *ensima* to renew, by 2004 Lauretta found herself "*in the street again without – with no papers, nothing.*" This time, however, instead of hiding until she could regularise her status once more, a sense of injustice at what was happening to her, and to so many others like her, jolted her into action – a reaction that eventually lead to the establishment of the United African Women's Organization (Chapter Eight).

Today, Lauretta describes herself as "*a misplaced Sierra Leonean*" to articulate a different kind of limbo. Greece is her home, and where she feels most 'at home', but without citizenship she cannot feel the full acceptance and secure belonging she so craves:

> Citizenship will mean that home at last. You know, I belong somewhere at last. Because for now I feel that I don't belong anywhere but my emotion is Greek emotion I have. But they never accept me. So I am like I'm there and I'm not there.

Lauretta evocatively describes Sierra Leone as her biological mother, whom she has given up (she knows it would take years for her to re-integrate into Sierra-Leonean society); and Greece as her adopted mother – the mother who has brought her up: "*the one who is there when you are walking, when you get up to walk. She is there when you have your first dance… You understand? So you more cling to your adopted mother than your natural mother.*" But Lauretta's affective ties to Greece are undermined by her legal status: "*I kept knowing that she is not my mother. She is not my mother, because why? I don't have their citizenship. You understand. But if they give me their citizenship now it makes me feel I belong somewhere.*"

There is a deep contradiction in Lauretta's life. Her status may be 'long-term' but there is still a finite number on it – a deadline that sits uncomfortably with her feelings of belonging and emotional attachment to Greece. Lauretta's permit is valid until 2021 – an almost futuristic sounding date – but it is not citizenship, it is not full participation and it is not the acceptance she longs for.

4.4 Status Fluidity: a defining feature of the Greek migrant experience

These five women's stories are representative of the fluidity between statuses (of 'illegality' and 'legality', but also of different kinds of 'regularity') that characterises most African women's experiences in Greece. They also demonstrate the ways in which varying degrees of (ir)regularity and a series of 'quasi-documented' and 'semi-regularised' statuses create different levels of (in)security from which different degrees of exclusion and forms of human insecurities result (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010; Lazaridis and Konsta 2011). In such a context, the already inadequate approaches that treat category labels, such as 'illegal', 'refugee', 'legal resident' and so on as undifferentiated, transhistorical fixtures become even more marked. As Malkki (1995: 495) has argued with reference to the category of 'refugees', each status supplies "a broad legal or descriptive rubric" that includes within it tremendous heterogeneity. Each label is, therefore, always insufficient.

All this is not, however, meant to suggest that a woman's legal status in Greece is without significance. Although the Greek context constitutes the Other such that those who are perceived as visibly 'non-Greek' are frequently seen and treated in similar ways irrespective of status (Chapter Five), different legal categorisations nevertheless have very real consequences on people's lives. A woman's status will not only regulate her access to rights, services and employment but also, as the stories illustrate, heavily impact her mobility and the kinds of relationships that are made possible in her everyday life. They are part of new social, legal and cultural environments that will, through a variety of daily interactions, contribute to the shaping of her identity. Thus, as Zetter (2007: 173) argues, an approach that looks

beyond the implied fixity of legal 'status' is necessary to better nuance an understanding which "recognizes both a process of identification and a mark of identity". This implies something that is independently applied and also chosen and amended. It has "a tangible and real world meaning, but is also metaphorical and symbolic" (ibid).

Documents are an important mechanism for constructing boundaries of who should and should not belong, and who is entitled to which rights and who is not. Those without them are, by definition, excluded – on the 'wrong' side of belongings and entitlements. As Lauretta explained, this implies that having any document is better than none: "*if they have give you two days or three days paper, but for that three days you feel a little bit different than not having anything*". However, as De Genova (2002) argues, despite being framed as blanket exclusion by those on the 'inside' of national projects of belonging, 'illegalisation' can be seen as an active process of inclusion and not merely defined as outside of the law. In Greece, as the women's stories illustrate, 'illegalisation' is a process that does not simply construct, differentiate and rank categories, but sustains women of varying statuses in a legally vulnerable state of being (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010). This state of affairs is further intensified by the fact that most African women will have experienced a period of 'illegality' at some point during their lives in Greece. (Much rarer was it to find an African woman who had arrived in Greece legally and maintained a legal status, uninterrupted throughout.) Thus, for many, the experience of being undocumented continues to haunt them even after they have been 'regularised', serving as a constant reminder of their underlying potential for deportation.

Figure 7: *A much sought-after ten year residence permit* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

Even for those who have never been undocumented, a general mistrust in Greek laws and the agents of their implementation produces a sense of insecurity

that is further reinforced by the anecdotal evidence of others. For example, long-term resident of more than twenty years, Ruth, had been granted the rare indefinite stay permit just before the crisis, only to have it revoked when she went to get a new stamp for her reissued Nigerian passport. The law had, she was told, changed and she no longer qualified. The lack of trust in the system and the inability to know with absolute certainty where one stands means that many African women in Athens live with an underlying sense of the "revocability of the promise of the future" (Carter 1997: 196, cited in De Genova 2002: 427). Denied what Yuval-Davis (2015) has referred to as the "right to claim a future", and unable to feel the safety and sense of having a stake in one's community that is part of belonging, many live with little more than transient and temporary belongings (Anthias 2008; Konsta and Lazaridis 2010). Lauretta captured this fragility of belonging when she described her experience of lapsing into 'illegality': "*What happen with me, I feel Greek until my residence permit expired. When it expired I completely foreigner. I feel foreigner. Every time…*" No longer formally recognised as having the right to be in Greece, Lauretta immediately feels foreign – and foreigners, by definition, cannot belong (Castles 2005).

4.5 Managing Fluidity of Status: negotiating, adapting and resisting

Seemingly impenetrable and rigid societal structures in Greece operate to construct African women as the unprivileged legal subject. In this sense, they are "victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility, and bereft of the comforts and customs of national belonging" (Pollock et al. 2002, cited in Nyers 2003: 1072). Nevertheless, within the processes that seek to silence and control, agency remains a determining factor as women invent strategies and find ways to resist (Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011). In Rose's 'rescue' by the compatriots who took her in and helped her to get a job, in Grace's adaptation of her story for her asylum application and in Lauretta's engagement with activist networks in order to counter her lapse into 'illegality', we see some examples of what Engberson (2001) refers to as 'residence strategies'. Engbersen argues that restrictive immigration policies in

Europe have led to certain categories of asylum-seekers and 'illegal' migrants developing old as well as new strategies aimed at hiding their illegal status or even using it to their advantage. This would certainly appear to be the case in Greece. Without any political and very few social rights, African women employ strategies aimed at preventing deportation and prolonging residence in the country. One such strategy evident in women's experiences in Greece is that of status jumping. Unable to retain a secure status in any one 'category', many women seek regularity in any form available to them, such that it is not uncommon for women to pass through a number of (ir)regular and 'semi-regular' statuses.

Women also manage the discriminatory structures set up by the state through the buying, renting and borrowing of documents (Vasta 2011). Documents may be shared to facilitate the crossing of national borders (sometimes without their knowledge, as in Angel's experience), or in order to ease everyday mobility. Upon first arriving in Greece many women use a photocopy of someone else's document in order to get work and as a safeguard against less rigorous police checks. Indeed, it is characteristic of the Greek case that *de facto* policies often appear to guide law enforcement with regards to checking documents (De Genova 2002). This is evident in the lax enforcement of earlier checks, on the one hand, and the heavy-handed policing of the *Xenios Zeus* operation, on the other. Alternative strategies to manage documents included the gathering and selling of information for asylum stories. In the days of the old asylum system, Lilian from Nigeria would spend hours searching the internet in one of the 'African cafes' near Omonia square in central Athens, compiling what she referred to as 'information booklets' for new arrivals, advising them on what to say in asylum interviews. Thus, as Foucault (1995: 280) observes in *Discipline and Punish*, "the existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices".

Vulnerabilities can also, however, increase dependency on third parties who facilitate mobility and/or residency through irregular channels, thereby leading some people deeper into 'spirals of precariousness' (Paugam 1995). Without documents, and terrified of detention and of passing on her 'illegality' onto her son (undocumentedness is hereditary in Greece), Angel used another woman's name when she registered at the hospital to give birth.

> Since I come to Greece everyday paper, paper, paper, paper, paper, paper – make me crazy. It's like I'm not reasonable […] It look crazy because this woman she have the document but me I'm 13 years I don't have. It look very crazy. That was why. I was not reasoning good. If I was reasoning good I shouldn't allow her to use it. I don't have choice. It's crazy. Maybe if I was reason good I should have stayed in the hospital to use my name, maybe they can call the police I go inside with my baby. It should have been better…

As immigration lawyer, Angeliki Serafeim, commented, "*everyone tries to do various things to get around things and solve a problem or to create better conditions for tomorrow and they create more problems…*" We see then how the securitization of migration and intensified policing of borders foster different forms of illegality, even as women attempt to overcome their vulnerability.

While the situation in Greece has clearly presented difficulties for those who struggle to navigate complicated procedures and hostile attitudes (Chapter Five), it has also undeniably allowed many to reside in Greece who may not have been able to do so otherwise. In Greece – perhaps more so than any other European country – there is what Heyman and Smart (1999, cited in De Genova 2002: 429-430) refer to as an ambiguity and duplicity of practices and processes "on both sides of the state/illegal practice nexus". As they note more generally, although legal formalism may imbue the state with an ideology of purity, orderliness, sovereignty and legitimacy, this disguises the ambiguous dealings of its agents. Dealings with office clerks, lawyers, social workers, police officers and detention centre guards are always, to some extent, negotiated. However, in Greece the "informality and plasticity" (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010: 27) in law implementation appears to be of particular benefit to more vulnerable groups. Despite the rigidity of structures of exclusion, whereby being 'non-Greek' and 'Other' allows only certain levels of security, alternative modes of (non)belonging at the 'margins' of Greek society do seem to be made possible. Greece's vast informal economy, for example, although undeniably beset with problems and worrying levels of exploitation does also provide work opportunities for those without the legal right to work in the country. Like many women I spoke to, Rose, before the crisis, was able to find work through informal networks even while undocumented, working for employers who had no problem

paying her ‘off the books’.[44] The widespread acceptance of a degree of informality in Greece even exists at a more formal level. Before it was codified in law, the ‘quasi-documented’ status of the *vevaiosi* (see above) was accepted as sufficient proof of being ‘in the system’ due to the known inefficiencies of permit issuance and renewal. Thus, women’s pathways to regularisation remained difficult while simultaneously making it easier for them to operate in the ‘grey zones’ of society, thereby maintaining them in an in-limbo position.

For those who would perhaps not meet the criteria of the Geneva Convention, the dysfunctionality of the old asylum service has also been advantageous. In mid-2013, as many as 50,000 pink cardholders were able to stay in Greece with not insubstantial rights: these included the right to remain, to be employed and to acquire a tax code (required for bank accounts and rental contracts) (Baldwin-Edwards 2014; UNHCR 2012). As with the *vevaiosi*, delays turned the pink card, in practice, into a type of residence permit document. Hence, many ‘economic migrants’ like Grace and others applied for it, if only to extend their stay in the country. Indeed, some have argued that, through its lax procedures and unenforceable decisions, the old asylum system directly facilitated and even encouraged ‘irregular’ migration (Baldwin-Edwards 2014). Alternatively, however, the use of the pink card as a form of residence permit can be viewed as a demonstration of agency by which migrants actively attempt to make their waiting time in Greece meaningful and useful (Lazaridis and Veikou 2015). Angel, for example, after being let down by a system that failed to recognise and protect her as a victim of trafficking, was able (for a time) to ‘semi-regularise’ her status by applying for asylum. Such actions, I would argue, can be interpreted as a rational response to a sometimes chaotic and often impenetrable system of regularisation. Thus, it is in the interstices of ambiguity that African women in Greece have found ways through their networks and communities to resist or get around exclusionary and contradictory regulations (Vasta 2011).

[44] The paradox here is that the same attitudes that help women who have no choice but to operate in the shadows also contribute to their vulnerability and precarity by denying them legal employment in the first place.

4.6 Processes of legal abjectification of African women in Greece

The mechanisms of document allocation, denial and withdrawal described above, hold the majority of African women in Athens in legal precarity. Transformed by law, and through law, from potential legal subjects to legal abjects, these women are held "at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject" (Kristeva 1982: 17; Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011; Lazaridis and Veikou 2015). The legal abject is often defined in contrast to the 'pure' citizen – the social subject of rights, obligations and freedoms who is recognised and treated by others as such (Nyers 2003; Gamba 2013). Legal abjectification is, however, not a linear process, nor does it describe a uniform or a fixed state (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011). As Nyers (2003: 1074) has pointed out, 'Being abject' is, in fact, always a matter of 'becoming abject'. Experiences of abjectification will, therefore, differ and one cannot assume the same effect or constellation each time. Recognising the above enables us to consider the different experiences of African women in the face of the categorical logic of national identity and belonging (Anthias 2001, 2006, 2008). It also reveals that even though discriminatory legal structures and institutions in Greece may abjectify African women, this does not mean that they are abjects in all areas of their lives. Lauretta, for example, finds ways to resist and contest her abjectification. No longer afraid, she challenges police officers when they treat her as a potential 'illegal' subject and, in her capacity as President of UAWO, frequently speaks in public on migrant rights and immigration issues.

Figure 8: *'Wishes' for legal documents.*
Document issues came up repeatedly in a UAWO seminar in which women were asked anonymously what would help them to overcome their fears. (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

In drawing attention to the rigid and discriminatory structures that position African women in specific ways *vis-à-vis* the rest of Greek society, it is important to resist slippage into overly simplistic binary distinctions that reinforce the 'logic of

exclusion' (Isin 2002). The inadequacy of a straightforward inclusion/exclusion binary becomes even more marked once we recognise that undocumented migrations are constituted in order not to physically exclude, but instead to socially include under imposed conditions of enforced and protracted vulnerability (De Genova 2002). As Jackson (1998) points out in her critique of the notion of social exclusion, women are not categorically excluded but integrated in particular ways, through, for example, reproductive labour. Similarly, African women can be said to be differentially integrated through the allocation (and withholding) of documents as migrant, non-citizen Others. Two such mechanisms through which processes of abjectification take place are the allocation of residence permits and 'pink cards'.

The introduction of requirements as a pre-condition for the renewal of temporary residence permits and strong links between status and work (through the collection of *ensima*) has continued to plague migrants and perpetuated residence insecurity ever since the very first regularisation programmes took place (Baldwin-Edwards and Kraler 2009). Consequently, the majority of African women in Greece have been granted little more than a temporary, transient status with many entrapped in a 'regularisation cycle' (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014, Triandafyllidou et al. 2015; Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011; Maroufof 2013). Delays in permit issuance and renewal leave women in legal limbo, with many receiving permits only after they have already expired. For those less experienced, and therefore unaware that they should (somewhat counter-intuitively) begin renewal processes *before* receiving their actual permit, lapses into 'illegality' invariably ensue. In this context, women who received their two-year residence permits with six-months left were considered lucky.

Although the *vevaiosi* was introduced in response to such issues, this quasi-regularised status also has the effect of prolonging the applicant's in-limbo status in which she continues to be deprived of entitlement to social benefits and freedom of movement (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011). As activist and researcher on immigration issues Anna Vouyioukas put it, such inefficiencies are "*a way to make people formally not invisible but not visible as well. It's between. Like it's a grey thing. And this is a steady aspect of most migrants' lives.*" Even for those women who have maintained a legal status for many years and have a good understanding of the necessary requirements, frequent

changes and lack of information about them exacerbate a general insecurity and anxiety. As Rose explained:

> They keep changing the law and so one year you need the health book and next year you don't – you need something else. Each year you don't know what you need! Right now I have a permit for three years and one year is gone… I am already thinking about what I have to do and what I might need.

Caught in a seemingly endless cycle of work, *ensima* collection and renewal, women have little time for anything else. Hana did not mince her words:

> You a slave! A hostage. It's just the time you plan your programme you cannot just... you just don't programme. You just don't programme. They just do you wicked thing. It is wickedness I would say. That has been our life all these years.

Rose may manage to visit Ethiopia most years, but the fact that she dare not go for longer than a week for fear of losing work and sliding back into 'illegality' is fair indication of the wider picture. Rose is one of the lucky ones. Most women have not been back to their countries of origin for many years, often due to financial reasons, but also because there is rarely a period of status security long enough for them to do so. Thus, even those with work and a legal right to freedom of movement are effectively stuck. Enslaved to the renewal process, the majority of African women in Athens, to borrow De Genova's (2002: 427) eloquent phrase, live their lives through "an enforced orientation to the present".

Complex procedures also cost women financially, exposing them to other forms of vulnerabilities. As Lilian, who has a 10-year residence permit which, after 16 years in Greece, she got "*just yesterday*," put it: "*you have to pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, till tomorrow you are still paying.*" Often in need of assistance when navigating complex bureaucratic procedures, women pay lawyers, accountants, labour recruiters and housing agents.[45] Stories abound of agents and middle-men who would promise jobs while taking exorbitant fees – uninterested in finding suitable work, let alone protecting women from exploitation.[46] Those who already had jobs would often find that the hours spent in queues at KEP (the Citizens Services Centre) and other local authorities was time off work that they simply could not afford. Employers would become impatient, suspicious that they had been gone so long and, when a return visit was required (as was nearly always the case), would refuse requests for another

[45] Castles (2005) refers to this as the 'migration industry'.
[46] As was Ruth's experience (see Chapter Six).

'day off'. Faith noted the contradiction in such attitudes:

> When they are looking for a girl they said they want someone who has papers, but when you say I have to go and renew my papers, they don't want you to go and renew your papers. So what do you want, you people? I don't understand what they want.

Often the difference between illegality and legality lies (as it did for Rose) in having an employer who was willing to offer not only moral, but also practical and financial support.

Yet another form of vulnerability arises when women do not have control over their documents, as can be the case when they are registered on their husbands' permits. Although the majority of women in this study, contrary to stereotypes of migrant women, had not 'followed' male relatives to Greece, two of the key participants had migrated to Greece in order to join their husbands. Although in neither case was there any suggestion of a marriage break-up, status-dependency remained a concern. Nneoma's husband had been unable to buy *ensima* after he used all his savings to pay smugglers extortionate fees in several failed attempts to bring her over from Nigeria. Sadly, soon after he finally managed to bring her legally on his permit as a family member, his papers "*died*" and they both became not only 'illegal', but also homeless and destitute (Chapter Six). Hana also entered Greece legally as a family member and has, somewhat unusually, managed to maintain a legal status throughout her 29 years in Greece. However, she would still prefer to separate her papers from her husband's because it remains "*a disadvantage*." She explained why:

> if my husband have to travel or go somewhere, I am completely zero. You know. If anything happen to him – depend on him. Any decision that he makes that is out of Athens I am zero. Yeah, out of Greece I am zero. He has to sign everything. Anything I want his name is there. Anything we want to do – any officialism his name is there, you know. There is some things ok they recognise because he is there – with his document – then I can enter with my own name, but everything is in his own name.

Women told me of friends and acquaintances whose husbands had died, suddenly becoming undocumented overnight. In such situations, despite some having spent years legally in Greece, women were forced to start applications "*from zero*" at what was already an extremely difficult time in their lives. Others had been (or, sadly, continued to be) victims of domestic violence, enduring years of abuse rather than leaving their husbands for fear of lapsing into 'illegality' – a pressure that was even greater for those whose children were also registered on their husband's permit.

The emphasis on deterrence and lack of differentiation between migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers noted above has also contributed to the abjectification of those who seek safety and security. Many who would be recognised as refugees in other countries have been turned into 'illegal migrants' in Greece either because they could not access asylum procedures in the first place or because they have fallen out of the asylum system due to the kinds of difficulties described by Grace. For those, like Grace, who succeeded in joining the 27,000 pink cardholders in Greece at the time of the research, the result was a precarious, semi-regularised, in-between status (Lazaridis and Veikou 2015).

Admittedly, this is, to some extent, the nature of having a pending asylum application anywhere; by applying for recognition as a refugee, the asylum-seeker establishes a temporary relationship to the state in which the right to stay is itself highly transitory (Geddes 2005). However, the situation in Greece suggests that thousands have remained suspended in this transitory status without the legal protection they need, not because they do not meet the criteria of the Geneva Convention, but because systems like Dublin II and Eurodac allow states to delay the examination of claims for months and years (Schuster 2011).[47] What is more, there are also those who are discouraged – distrustful of the system or kept in detention for too long while their application is considered, they decide not to take it further (Lazaridis and Veikou 2015). As Aisha cynically observed, this discouragement may not be altogether accidental: "*They will grant you – for them to grant that paper they will put it there. They will say 'aston na perimenei. Ama perimeni mia zoi tha varietai kai tha to petaxi' [let him wait. If he waits for a lifetime he will get bored and he will throw it away].*" Thus, in Greece, it would seem that policies of exclusion and discouragement of unwanted migrants who have already passed the border increasingly supplement border controls (Broeders and Engbersen 2007).

[47] The Dublin Regulation determines the EU Member State responsible for examining an asylum-seeker's application. Usually this is determined to be the state through which the asylum-seeker first entered the EU.

Extremely limited access to the rights and resources that asylum-seekers are entitled to by law, such as permission to work and free healthcare, further deepens levels of insecurity.[48] Today, many asylum-seekers and refugees remain completely excluded from the formal labour market and, despite the overhaul of the asylum services in 2013 and the adoption of the new immigration code in 2014, serious problems regarding asylum-seekers' and refugees' integration in Greek society persist (UNHCR 2014). Furthermore, although the law stipulates that refugees and those with residence permits for humanitarian reasons have access to social security and healthcare, the reality, as Saba's story shows, is that for those who do not know the system or speak the language, and who may face open hostility from public sector employees, it is virtually impossible to access those rights without assistance. According to a recent UNHCR report (2014), Saba's complaints are well founded: the lack of housing provision, together with the lack of employment opportunities, was identified as frequently leading to destitution and homelessness amongst asylum-seekers and people in need of international protection. Whether locked up in detention centres, staying in hostels or homeless, many in Greece cannot establish themselves in any locality, facing a "precarity of location" (Yuval-Davis 2015). All people may have certain rights on paper, but a closer look reveals that public authorities implement laws and regulations in a discriminating and marginalising manner (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010). As a result, many lack the opportunities and resources to actually enjoy the few rights they do have. It would appear that the absolute equality of human rights laid down in the instruments of international law, like the UN Charter, does not exist in social reality where hierarchy and relativism prevail (Castles 2005). Indeed, it has been argued that in Greece there is little purpose

Figure 9: *Applying for a refugee passport* (photo: visual diaries project)

[48] This was a problem even before the financial crisis due to issues regarding work permits and the issuance of the necessary tax reference number.

in analysing the various laws or presidential decrees, since the reality on the ground bears no relation to them (Kopp 2008).

4.7 The Undocumented: legal abjectification and social 'death'

As with other statuses, not all women will experience 'undocumentedness' in the same way. Translocational positionality, family circumstances, access to resources and support networks and a number of other subjective and contextual factors will shape the way individual women experience 'illegality'. As a category, however, to be undocumented is to experience the most extreme form of legal abjectification. The undocumented in Greece, as elsewhere, have not only been criminalised as "illegal" and subjected to excessive and extraordinary forms of policing; they have also been denied fundamental human rights and many rudimentary social entitlements (De Genova 2002). As Angel's story shows, to live without documents is to be consigned to an uncertain socio-political predicament, subjected to extreme forms of insecurity, with high risk, vulnerability, irregularity and informality characterising many areas of one's life – often with little or no recourse to any semblance of protection from the law (De Genova 2002; Konsta and Lazaridis 2010).

As citizens we are what Stonor Saunders (2016) calls the "biometric subject […] verified down to our eyeballs." We have ID cards, bank accounts, phone records, driver's licenses, and, most significant of all, we have passports. Physical existence is not sufficient and so citizens have an additional legal existence: "a juridical form of being that continues to be affirmed through birth certificates, death certificates, and the like" (Coutin 1993: 94, cited in De Genova 2002: 428). In contrast, the undocumented have been "thrown out of the family of nations altogether"; left with no more than "the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human" (Arendt 1973: 294, 300) they are reduced to being no more than the biodegradable subject (Stonor Saunders 2016). Some lapse into 'illegality' unable to keep their documents 'alive', while others arrive without them and remain unable to regularise their status. Sometimes documents have been lost or destroyed on the journey (as in Grace's case), or defaced and therefore invalidated (as in Angel's). Many are simply in

possession of the 'wrong' kind of documents. In what Vasta (2011: 188) refers to as a "hierarchization of documents," their proof of identification or certification of membership to a nation-state may simply be less valued or unrecognised by the Greek state. Mistrusted by agents of the state who often view African bureaucracies with suspicion, they are required to get extra layers of certification that confirm document validity – something that is often impossible (and always costly) as very few African countries have embassies or consulates in Greece.

Whatever their situation, women soon come to understand that a verifiable past is the condition of possibility for a documentable present, which is itself a condition of eligibility for a documented future (De Genova 2002).[49] Time and again a variety of encounters in Greece – with employers, police officers, administrative clerks in public authority offices, NGO workers and so on – remind women that "Without papers, one is officially dead" (Xiang and Bakewell 2006, cited in Vasta 2011: 188). Without any recognised documents they are, in effect, those whom Hannah Arendt (1973: 293-298) refers to as lacking even the "right to have rights." Undocumented women in Greece may have a few rights on paper, but they are usually blocked from exercising them in practice. Sometimes this is due to failures in the system, such that Angel, for example, has been denied the right to protection as a victim of trafficking. At other times, it is because women themselves fear arrest and deportation, such that they might, for instance, avoid seeking medical assistance – too scared even to take sick children to hospital.[50] Others who are confined to low-paid undeclared domestic work may, like Rose, feel they have no option but to accept some degree of exploitation simply in order to survive (Chapter Six).

The most common fear was that of being stopped by the police, as articulated by Esoso (who had already been detained for 16 months): "*Anytime I am going out from the house I always pray [that] I am coming back home because I don't have paper. That is my fear.*" Conscious of their visibility in a city in which police presence is strong (particularly in the downtown neighbourhoods where many migrants live), they are less able to move freely for fear of arrest and detention. The restricted physical mobility that ensues comes to signify a measure of captivity and social death

[49] In all four regularisation programmes, prior existence in Greece had to be proven through phone records, letters, expired permits, contracts, certificates, bills and so on.
[50] Undocumented minors are legally entitled to free healthcare in emergency situations.

(Coutin 2000). Unable to work, earn money or socialise – too scared to even spend time simply hanging out with others in their neighbourhood squares – women often used images of death to evoke the isolation and helplessness that accompanies life without a legally recognised status. Aisha described the knock on effect this has. Unable to work or provide for one's family is, she explained, a state worse than death: "*you will say dead person is better than you. […] You will go mad inside you, you become nervous.*" Lucee, who was undocumented at the time of the research, echoed this: "*When you don't have a paper,*" she explained to me, "*it is like you are somebody's dead. You think a lot. You cannot eat. A lot of things is in your head to solve. So you cannot be happy. This is it. So the environment is not so good.*" Similarly, Pearl who, when we met, was facing undocumentedness for the first time after 25 years in Greece, summarised it thus:

> It is the worst thing that can happen to any man or woman migrant, because the life of any migrant anywhere is the residence permit. The life. Regardless of your health situation. But if you don't have a residence permit **you are like dead but living**, because that one enables you access to a lot of things.[51]

Pearl here echoes Kristeva (1982: 4) who writes that "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection." Without a residence permit, you may be fit, healthy and physically able yet remain abject; unable to do or act, Pearl explains, it is as if you are no longer living your life. Paradoxically, though these women are constructed as that which *causes* abjection by disturbing "identity, system, order" (Kristeva 1982: 4), we see that they are in fact subjected to processes of abjectification by being denied a place in the system that would allow them order in their lives. Enforced clandestinity and restricted social mobility compound legal ineligibility and women withdraw further into "the twilight zone of society" (Coutin 2000; Engbersen 2001: 242). The language used to describe documents (in)validity also reflected what a lifeline they are. Women talked of the constant struggle to "*keep them alive*" and, conversely, of their papers "*dying*".

This shrinking of women's physical and social worlds suggests that 'illegality' is a distinctly spatialized social condition for undocumented migrants (De Genova 2002). It is also a racialized one, as the ethnic profiling implicit in the ramped up internal controls and 'stop and search' checks used as the main mechanism for the enforcement of this physical restriction makes evident. Particularly during the *Xenios*

[51] All emphases are mine, unless otherwise stated.

Zeus operation, such practices succeeded in amplifying the already well-established feeling that there are different classes of residents and that they are in the class that gets excluded routinely from everything. This resulted in an abiding sense of injustice, unfairness and a lack of trust in institutions that serves to perpetuate insecurity and fear (see figure 8), while also reinforcing the image of the migrant as criminal and deviant Other (Chapter Five).

The policy of making the lives of undocumented migrants particularly difficult is, however, no longer confined to national border-crossings and the official 'policers'; mechanisms of surveillance and control proliferate (Triandafyllidou et al. 2014). The reproduction of the physical borders of the nation-state in different spaces of women's daily lives affects all non-citizen women, and particularly those perceived to be visibly 'non-Greek'. As the women's stories demonstrate, practices that constitute individuals as 'citizens', 'legal residents', 'asylum-seekers', 'illegal aliens' and so on, previously exercised by immigration authorities, have been passed on to other state officials and administrators in a variety of bureaucratic capacities related to public education, housing, and welfare benefits. In addition, many charitable organizations are now also required to scrutinize immigration documents as a condition of their social service. Women without documents expressed frustration at being excluded from language classes for migrants, and at being prevented from receiving food donations from some organizations. Though I did not hear of anybody being reported on, legislation has moved towards making 'border guards' (Yuval-Davis 2015) of employers (fines, in theory, may reach up to 10,500 euro for hiring an 'illegal' domestic worker) and of landlords and hotel owners. The recent Code seeks to criminalise those who rent accommodation to 'illegal' migrants (Article 29), and hotel owners are obligated to inform the police about the arrival and departure of migrants. Thus, 'illegality' is constructed, and re-constructed, through the practices and social relations of everyday life, and those without documents gradually become used to the daily experience of dodging and weaving in the little space there is left for them.

4.8 Citizenship: formal belonging

Being a citizen is part of the 'common sense' of the modern nation-state; everybody in the country is meant to belong, while the rest of the world is excluded (Castles 2005). Citizenship has, in recent years, been shown to be deeply differentiated and highly ambiguous not only between modern nation-states but also within them (ibid).[52] As recent turmoil on the streets of Athens has demonstrated, the experience of those within the membership of the Greek nation-state may be felt very differently, such that some citizens may feel alienated also. However, the most difficult border to cross remains that between citizen and non-citizen. The distinction here is between "an inclusion that claims to be total" – the political body which Agamben (1995: 177) refers to as "the **P**eople" – and "the subset of the people as a fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies". In the current context of rising nationalist discourse and xenophobic attitudes (Chapter Five), African women of all statuses are reminded daily that they are not part of "the total state of integrated and sovereign citizens" that make up 'the **P**eople'; that they are, instead, members of "the excluded bodies of the wretched, the oppressed and the defeated" – the '**p**eople' (ibid). As Castles (2005: 216) concludes, "The worst thing to be in a world of nation-states is a 'non-citizen'."

African women in Athens know only too well that, at least theoretically, the strongest position from which to counter and resist processes of abjectification is that of citizen. However, very few meet the criteria for citizenship founded as it is upon the *jus sanguinis* principle. Long-stay residence permits are a requirement, which, as the above discussion has indicated, are neither easy to obtain nor to maintain. For those who do meet this requirement, a number of other hurdles remain. To begin with, procedures continue to be based on a highly individualised and discretionary assessment of all naturalisation applications (Anagnostou and Kandyla 2014). Applicants should be "smoothly integrated into the economic and social life of the country" and have adequate knowledge of the Greek language so that they "can fulfil the obligations stemming from Greek citizenship."[53] Other criteria taken into

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[52] See Lister (2004) on how women and men continue to stand in a different relation to citizenship – usually to the disadvantage of women.
[53] Greek Citizenship Code, Article 5A 'Substantive Conditions of Naturalisation'.

consideration include: familiarity with Greek history and culture; employment history; whether the applicant has "full ownership" of property to be used as residence; and, whether they have met a "consistent fulfilment" of tax and social security obligations.

Given the current climate, in which anti-immigration agitation is legitimised in public discourse and migrants are frequently portrayed in negative stereotypes that threaten the very fabric of society, the prospect of the permanent and formal inclusion that citizenship represents is neither something that is likely to be achieved nor something that many African women (or men) would even consider a possibility. This is reflected in the data for 2014-2015, which shows a significant decrease in the number of naturalisations, presenting the lowest rate since 2011 (Triandafyllidou and Mantanika 2016).[54] Furthermore, exclusion and abjectification in most areas of Greek life mean that African women very rarely have the language skills or the understanding of Greek national identity (history, culture and civilisation) that remain legal prerequisites for citizenship. The types and conditions of work women are mostly involved in – domestic work and ethnic businesses (Chapter Six) – do not require that they speak Greek and, very often, even encourage them not to (so that, for example, employers' children may practice their English with them). Even where free classes are available for migrants, time constraints make attending classes very difficult (and, as noted above, may exclude those without documents). The problems with paying social security payments, and the likelihood that women will have experienced illegality as a result at some stage, further increase the impossibility of citizenship.

Exclusion here operates by both making the criteria upon which naturalisation is based unattainable, while also encouraging migrants to see themselves as excluded 'non-Greeks', thereby pushing them further into the margins of society. Of all the African women encountered during the fieldwork, only Adanech had applied for citizenship.[55] She did so partly out of "*stubbornness*", but also because she is exhausted by the 'regularisation cycle' described above. Her determination to get citizenship was driven less by an emotional belonging than by

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[54] According to data obtained from the Ministry of Interior, in 2014 acquisition of citizenship on the grounds of birth or study dropped to zero. The total number of naturalisations of foreign nationals *not* of Greek origin was 2,019, as compared to 17,791 for *homogeneis* (foreign nationals of Greek origin) (Triandafyllidou and Mantanika 2016). Though total numbers have fallen, this disparity is not new: since the introduction of a new law in 2006 facilitating the naturalisation of *homogeneis*, naturalisations have been dominated by this group.

[55] Adanech was still waiting to hear the outcome of her application at the time of the research.

anger that, after so many years in Greece, she is still the most vulnerable at work (the first to get a pay cut and the last to be promoted), and has to waste so much mental and physical energy on permit renewal.

> For me it would be a victory. It doesn't change anything – identity for me – but it also does change something. The something is that you won't have the fear if you don't have work, you won't have stamps, if you don't have stamps you can't renew your residence permit so you're not legal and you have to leave. I won't have that fear.

Adanech is better placed than most to apply for citizenship. She has the long-term residence permit required for applying, was married to a Greek man, speaks excellent Greek (she attended classes when she was married), works in a café and so has more daily interaction with Greeks, and, although it will cost her two months' wages, has the means to pay the 700 euro fee.[56] Even so, because she knows the decision process is highly individualised, allowing for far-reaching administrative discretion in judging such nebulous concepts as 'the character' and 'moral standing' of applicants, Adanech greatly doubts she will be successful even though she knows she has met all the criteria.

Unlike Adanech (and somewhat unusually), Lauretta does feel a positive attachment that drives her to actively seek the rights and obligations associated with formal citizenship. Aware that the right to cast your vote is the ultimate symbolic act of belonging to a nation-state, Lauretta felt her exclusion particularly acutely in the run-up to the 2015 referendum. Moved by dramatic scenes on the streets of the capital (pensioners crying outside of closed banks, empty supermarket shelves…) and an overall sense of impending doom, Lauretta felt more than solidarity with the citizens of the nation that she considers home in all ways bar the "*biographic way*"; she felt she was one of them.

> I was surprised at myself. I was not expecting myself to be like that. Believe it. But I find out that I feel Greek. You understand. I feel Greek. Really. 100 per cent because it affect me directly. You understand what I mean. But when I think again, when I think I regretted it, because I am not having the Greek citizenship. […] So I am unable to help the country. But still I feel this – that I am a Greek citizen.

Lauretta's emotional response as a Greek was soon undercut by her inability to participate as a fully-fledged Greek citizen. Dejectedly, Lauretta explained how it felt to not be given a vote with which to make her voice heard – to be excluded from this

56 The new Citizenship Code passed in 2010 reduced the fee from 1,500 to 700 euro, and reduced the required years of residency from ten to seven years.

moment in Greek history, which every news channel, politician and person on the street excitedly proclaimed would decide the fate of the nation:

> Excluded. It makes me feel more annoyed. It makes me feel more desperate. It make me feel the unjust they are doing to us here. You understand, because over 30 years I am in their country but I don't have no voice. But right now, I don't have no choice. No choice! You know. It's like they close your mouth. They put you in a corner. You cannot say anything. You cannot do anything. You understand? […] It's just like they are abusing you, but you don't have the power or the means to do anything about it.

Lauretta can, and does, take part in as many demonstrations and anti-racist festivals as she likes, she can even attend debates on migrant rights in parliament (no small thing), but this sometimes appears to be no more than a selective and partial inclusion that merely serves to maintain the status quo. Exclusion from citizenship is another way to preserve boundaries with those bodies whose presence is perceived as a threat that could challenge, disrupt and potentially alter it forever (Chapter Five). Thus, even after decades of living in Greece, and inclusion in many ways and spheres of life, denial of citizenship is a way in which African women remain suspended as abjects. Framed as that which "does not respect borders, positions, rules," they are "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" that Kristeva (1982: 1, 4) explains may linger quite close, but cannot be assimilated.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how African women in Athens, as 'non-Greek', non-citizen Others, live and manage the often exclusionary structures of the Greek state. In Greece, as elsewhere, document allocation is shown to be an important mechanism for constructing boundaries of who should and who should not belong and, relatedly, who is entitled to which rights and who is not. As the stories narrated above illustrate, a woman's status not only regulates her access to rights, services and employment, but also constrains her mobility and influences the kinds of relationships that are possible in her everyday life. Thus, the research reveals that though women are, of course, much more than the labels assigned to them by the state, the fact that they are 'seen' as these things has an impact on them and their lives in ways that go far beyond mere semantics.

The depiction of five women's stories under the labels through which they are 'seen' in the eyes of the Greek state is intended to challenge the usefulness of rigid categorisations. In so doing, it also reveals fluidity of status to be the defining feature of most African women's experiences of the immigration regime in Greece. In their attempts to secure regularity in any form available to them, the research illustrates that it is far from uncommon for women to pass through a number of different ir(regular) and 'semi-regularised' statuses. As this chapter has argued, processes of legal abjectification sustain these women in varying degrees of (ir)regularity, from which different levels of (in)security and degrees of exclusion result. A pervading sense of mistrust in 'the system' and those who implement it is shown to contribute to women's sense of insecurity. No matter how many years they have lived in Greece, the sheer amount of work that goes into maintaining and keeping documents 'alive', and the ever-present possibility that the law may change, reminds women of all statuses that they do not fully belong – at least not like Greek citizens do. The cost, delays, complicated procedures, and constantly changing rules and requirements merely serve to exacerbate a general sense of anxiety even for those with relatively secure legal status.

Although largely a consequence of the discriminatory structures and institutions in Greece that shape the political, social and legal contexts of their lives, the lived condition of (ir)regularity is at the same time revealed to be constituted by women's responses to these structures. The research shows that women find ways to manage – and to resist – abjectification in multiple ways, inventing strategies and using ambiguities in the system to get around exclusionary and contradictory regulations. Furthermore, although legal formalism imbues the state with orderliness and legitimacy, the research shows that not only are dealings with its representatives in everyday life, in fact, always negotiated, but also that in Greece law implementation appears to often be characterised by 'informality'. On the one hand, this can be to the benefit of those seeking room to manoeuvre in the 'grey zones' of the economy and society. Women may, for instance, find work in Greece's vast informal economy or, unable to retain a secure status in any one category, they may 'semi-regularise' their status, borrow documents, 'status-jump' or hide their illegality in a variety of ways. On the other hand, the same failures and inefficiencies that, for

instance, enabled thousands to remain in Greece with the 'semi-regularised' asylum-seeker status, also failed to recognise many of those in genuine need of protection (and entitled to it under international law). Moreover, that the law can be applied in a discriminatory and exclusionary manner can increase the vulnerability of those perceived as 'outside' national belonging. This is particularly evident in times of crisis, as the research has shown, when even those with documents are more likely to be subjected to arrest and detention with no legal cause.

Overall, the research findings suggest that the effect of processes of legal abjectification in Greece are not so much to physically exclude, as they are to socially include under imposed conditions of enforced and protracted vulnerability. Recognising this reveals the inadequacy of a straightforward inclusion/exclusion binary, and reinforces the need to look beyond reductive labels, such as 'refugee', 'victim of trafficking' and so on, which may further exclude by portraying women in stereotypical ways that also hide facets of their agency. Furthermore, a translocational approach reveals that – though often portrayed as such – neither citizenship nor 'undocumentedness' can be understood as a uniform experience of full inclusion or total exclusion. These categories, like any other, will be differentially experienced depending on a range of personal, social and contextual factors. Women may continue to experience exclusions based on processes of racialization even with citizenship, while those without documents continue to live their lives as active participants, sometimes even working, having families and navigating the city, albeit with heightened anxiety and in conditions of intensified vulnerability. However, though these women do not live as abjects in all areas of their lives, the research does suggest that the immigration landscape in Greece with regards to laws and practices is such that the majority continue to be suspended as legal abjects – "quite close", but not "assimilated" (Kristeva 1982: 1).

The findings presented in this chapter have suggested that it is not only formal institutional structures and laws that operate to control and exclude African women from formal and secure belonging in Greece. Being perceived as visibly Other remains a significant barrier to the efforts of women of all statuses to overcome exclusion and create a place for themselves in Greek society. In light of this, the next chapter explores more fully the rigidity of ethnic definitions of

‘Greekness’ and the prevalence of public discourses that legitimise anti-migrant and racist sentiment. It also examines exclusionary ‘othering’ processes and practices from the women’s own perspectives to reveal how women experience gendered racism in their everyday lives.

Chapter Five

EVERYDAY RACISM

> "It's around everyday and has gotten worse... You can hear it everyday – on the bus, in the background like classical music […] If you haven't yourself experienced it, seen it and felt it, you won't understand. It's pain. Like if you have a headache, days later you don't feel the pain or even remember the pain as it really was. If you haven't experienced racism you don't and can't understand. The pain must be the same [to understand]. You must feel her pain in the same place."
>
> Rose, from Ethiopia, 11 years in Greece

5.1 Introduction

Listening to women's own accounts of their day-to-day experiences involving 'normal' people and 'ordinary' events, it quickly becomes evident that racism is not only about grand narratives, exclusionary state policies and heated debates on 'The Immigration Problem'. Nor is it only about exceptionally violent incidents. Woven into the fabric of women's daily lives across a range of different scales and registers, it also finds expression in a complex of cumulative practices – instances that acquire meaning in relation to the sum total of other experiences of everyday racism (Essed 1991). For Rose, and many others, it has become the soundtrack "*in the background*" to their everyday lives. Though they may often choose to ignore or forget it, it disturbs and, like a headache, leaves a lingering pain.

This chapter tries to understand and make visible the specific forms of racism that are unique to the lived experiences of African women in Athens. Taking a 'gendered everyday racism' approach that brings together the concepts of 'everyday racism' (Essed 1991) with that of 'gendered racism', it reveals how power operates in women's everyday lives, routinely 'othering' them in ways in which 'race' and gender are always interlocked (Kilomba 2010). The first section of the chapter, entitled 'Greekness and the Other', examines the different discursive levels at which African women are constructed as racialized and "ungrievable" Other (Butler 2009a: 23). The second section, entitled 'Everyday Racisms', engages with how racial and ethnic oppression is perpetuated in everyday situations. Adopting a gendered everyday

racism approach, it does so by exploring the routine experience of racism in four areas of women's daily lives: in bodily encounters, urban space, police practices and in the workplace. In so doing, a uniformity of practices is made visible that, through repetition, creates and reproduces everyday racism.

5.2 Greekness and the Other

Constructions of 'Greekness' and the Other: "You are not them"

> "Ahuh, they always make you feel different. You always know that you are not free. You are not them. A Greek lady was saying things like… what I understood she is a bit racist that woman. She say 'the Greek blood', 'the Greek blood' and I say what do you really call 'the Greek blood'? Can you really show me people these days that have full Greek blood? What is it that you are saying 'the Greek blood', 'the Greek blood'? What is it? And she started talking about some history, some of the heroes like this. And I said yes those are the heroes - where are the heroes today? Ancient Greece. I said now I met with so many Greeks – they are Turkish-Greek, they are American-Greeks – they are all mixed. They are all mixed, you know? I said they are all mixed. If you try to check pure Greek, no. You don't have pure Greek. They are all mixed. I said so what is it? Is it the colour? So you people have put a block that we don't mind we have Romanian-Greek, Albanian-Greek, but we don't want African-Greek. Cos that's the thing."

Hana, from Sierra Leone, 29 years in Greece

Hana is here referring to the idea that there exists a pure Greek 'ethnos'. This is an idea that dates back to 1830 and the birth of a newly independent 'Modern Greece'.[57] Based on the notion that modern Greeks were the physical (not just political) reincarnation of Pericles and Socrates, a racial definition of a 'real' or 'pure' Greek emerged in which what really counted was 'Greek blood' (Ascherson 1993; Carras 2012; Baldwin-Edwards 2008; Triandafyllidou 1998; Hirschon 1999).[58] Although mostly nonsense, as Hana observes (and many commentators agree), it created a myth of common origin that continues to define national identity to this day. Greeks are proudly committed to their own sense of collective identity and seem to know

[57] 'Ethnos' refers to a group belonging to the same race and nation.
[58] Modern Greece faced the problem of a scattered and diverse population – in language and religion as well as in geographical location. Many Greeks had been converted to Islam under Ottoman rule, more spoke only Turkish or Russian and most lived elsewhere: in Asia Minor, the Balkans and the Black sea coast (Ascherson 1993).

who 'we' are. Even today, asking 'who is a Greek?' tends to evoke the kinds of romanticised references to "*history*" and "*heroes*" that Hana notes in the quote above. Though seemingly vague, notions of bonds based on the idea of a common blood, overlaid with the importance of religion (Greek Orthodoxy) and a common language, remain a powerful force for exclusion and exclusiveness in contemporary Greece (Hirschon 1999). The explicit commitment to the conception of Greece as a 'natural' entity directly connected to an ancient Greek past appears to have produced a near-national consensus on Greek 'uniqueness' and a closed, rather than open, sense of national self-identity and belonging (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003).

While proof of Greek ancestry remains enough to qualify individuals for Greek citizenship, and converting to Greek Orthodoxy or speaking the Greek language undoubtedly goes a long way to securing tolerance and diffusing hostility, the construction of Greekness as a biological link that is racialized as white continues to operate to exclude all non-whites.[59] This is, as Hana concludes, "*the thing*". Since its creation, the modern Greek state has been devoted to the cultivation of a patriotic national consciousness (particularly through its education system) in which the creation of a coherent and constantly reiterated image of the national 'self' becomes the standard by which various national 'others' are defined (Avdela 2000). A strong sense of knowing who 'we' are appears to be inseparable from knowing who 'we' are not. The resulting emphasis on homogeneity and marginalisation of those who are different has long informed state policy and social attitudes (Karakatsanis and Swarts 2003). As the experiences described below illustrate, in Greece today, the construction of borders of 'outsiderness' continues to privilege ethnicity over religion, language, documents and even place of birth.

Framed as possessing the (visual) markers of 'otherness', African women are amongst those who become defined by a static foreignness which constructs them as 'eternal newcomers', "forever suspended in time, forever 'just arriving'" (El-Tayeb 2011: xxv). Definitions of 'Greekness' remain exclusively white and those who do not meet this criteria are seen as 'outside' national belonging and, consequently, are assigned a permanently transitory status (Chapter Four).

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[59] Converting to Greek Orthodoxy is extremely rare amongst African migrants. Only one of the women I met during my fieldwork had converted.

> The 'metanasti' [immigrant] label makes you uncomfortable. The difference between 'xenos' [foreigner] and 'metanasti' is that it depends on where you are from. Someone could come from the US for work and to live here and be called 'xenos', but if I come to work and live here I am a 'metanasti'. Some countries - the privileged countries (Europe, US, England, Australia) - are the ones 'xenos' people are from, the rest are 'metanastis'. It makes you feel like you are second - that you have less right to expect or ask for things where you live.

As Rose points out, the problem is not that they are constructed as outsiders, but that they are constructed as the kind of outsiders (*metanasti*) who are made to feel that they have "*less right to expect or ask for things*." In contrast, the invisibility of whiteness (note the examples Rose gives) is a mark of its privilege and looking black becomes a deviation from the normalised state of being white (Ahmed 2000). So much so that not only do foreignness and legal citizenship not map onto one another neatly, but also citizens and noncitizens alike are made foreign through racialization (de Noronha 2015). In Greece, even those legal citizens who fall outside of this restrictive definition, such as the Muslim Roma and Pomak populations, continue to be perceived and treated as non-citizen Others who should not be allowed to claim the same socio-political and economic rights as 'real' or 'true' Greeks.[60]

The Other in 'crisis' Greece: "Not the actual we"

Amidst deep social and political crisis, politicians and media in Greece have sought to enhance the "symbolic imperviousness" of borders by fuelling negative feelings towards the Other (Tsoukala 2011: 193). Rightly perceiving that an emphasis on issues of national pride and sovereignty (rather than on the perils of austerity) would prove an effective political strategy for attracting votes and distracting the population from the country's ills, discourses focusing on a threat to security and identity have been used as a form of crisis management (ibid). Public and political discourses have repeatedly associated migrant presence and activities with increasing degradation, devaluation, informality and criminality (Hatziprokopiou and Frangopoulos 2016). The following comments made by the leader of the New Democracy party, Antonis Samaras, during the 2012 election campaign (which his party went on to win) is typical of the kind of inflammatory discourse on immigration that has penetrated

[60] There have been no efforts to integrate these communities and they have been denied various rights protected under the Treaty of Lausanne (1920), including the right to be educated in their own language (see HRW 1999).

mainstream political rhetoric (New Democracy 2012).

> Greece today has become a centre for illegal immigrants. We must take back our cities, where the illegal trade in drugs, prostitution, and counterfeit goods is booming. There are many diseases and I am not only speaking about Athens, but elsewhere too.

Thus emphasising immigration (rather than race), racism is articulated as an explanation of what is not working in the country. Migrants are blamed for disturbing public order, health and safety. They are foreign intruders who have taken 'our cities', and are responsible for destabilising the well-being and prosperity of the nation (through crime, disease, 'uncivil' behaviour and so on). As Sara Ahmed (2016) points out in a blog post on 'post-Brexit Britain,' the underlying sentiment here is one of "If it wasn't for them," which allows a fantasy of happiness to be preserved. Without 'them', the thinking goes, all that causes happiness (jobs, wealth, health, stability, security and so on) could be 'ours'. Racism thus blames the presence of non-nationals as the cause of 'national ugliness' (Kilomba 2010). Naming of migrants as the 'source' of feelings of anger, disenfranchisement and impoverishment makes it possible to imagine not only that before their arrival the nation was 'beautiful', but that it could be so once more by expelling all foreigners and closing the borders, as espoused by Golden Dawn. According to this inflammatory narrative, this becomes the only course of action that promises to restore that which 'they' have taken from 'us', and which is 'ours' by right of blood. Urging Greek citizens to "*retake their cities*," Golden Dawn promised to "*clear the country from trash*" as "*Greece has become the rubbish dump of Europe*" (Pantzou 2013).

In response to the fragmentation and uncertainty brought about by the crisis, a recourse to the past (as (re)constructed in the nation's foundational myth) has proven to be a useful political tool. Anti-migrant rhetoric often draws on a rich imaginary of traditions, myths and collective memories provided by a history of national struggles against 'invaders' or 'enemies', real or imagined (Triandafyllidou 1998). In recent years, nationalists seeking to reinforce a particular ideology of (non)belonging in which bodies who do not fit dominant discursive constructions of 'Greekness' are constituted as threatening 'bodies out of place' (Ahmed 2000), have invoked the familiar narrative in which non-Greeks are cast as invaders. Take, for example, the following quote from a local authority official during the announcement

of Operation *Xenios Zeus*:

> We will go down... the whole country is sinking. The country has never witnessed such a massive invasion since the Dorian invasion 4,000 years ago... We are dealing with a bomb that threatens the very foundation of this nation.[61]

This is typical of alarmist portrayals of migration that merge stories of past external threats with present suffering and anxieties about the future to locate migrants as the sources of 'our fear' (Ahmed 2016; Andrijasevic 2003). Thus, the imagery of invasion reframes racial and religious diversity in Greece as less a reality than a threat to the nation's very existence – to "*the very foundation of this nation*." Similarly, in 2012, at the height of anti-immigrant rhetoric from political and media sources, Minister of Public Order, Nikos Dendias, called large-scale immigration in Greece, "*a bomb aimed at the foundations of society and of the state*" with another government official promising "*to defuse the migration bomb*."[62] In 2013, Prime Minister Samaras declared: "*Our country has suffered an 'unarmed invasion' of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants […] Our cities can no longer be under occupation*."[63] Once again creating associations between immigration and the loss of control, fear is intensified by the impossibility of containment rather than being contained in an object (Ahmed 2016). Thus, migrants become "*hundreds of thousands*," and descriptions of "*invasion*" and "*occupation*" mobilise fear through anxiety of being overwhelmed by the actual or potential proximity of the Other. As the previous chapter illustrated, this fear that the Other might pass their way into the community, and could be anywhere and everywhere, has justified a variety of mechanisms as self-defence – from increasingly exclusionary state tactics to the expansion of forms of surveillance, control and rights of detention (Ahmed 2004).

A strong feeling of not only 'us' and 'them', but 'us *against* them' appears to have been nurtured not only through political rhetoric, but also via an education system designed to do just that (Kakissis 2013). Children in Greek schools are taught that defeating foreigners is a way of protecting Greek language and culture, which has survived for centuries through wars and occupations. Jackie, an African-Greek with a Kenyan mother and a Nigerian father who was born and educated in Greece,

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[61] See Dabilis (2012) and Pantzou (2013).

[62] See BBC report, "Greece to deport 1,600 immigrants arrested in Athens," 2012.

[63] Ομιλία του Πρωθυπουργού και Προέδρου της Νέας Δημοκρατίας κ. Αντώνη Σαμαρά, στο 9ο Τακτικό Εθνικό Συνέδριο του κόμματος» ['Prime Minister's Speech at the 9th Regular National Congress of the Party'], 2013 [in Greek].

described it thus:

> I was always made to feel from the textbooks how the foreigner is always viewed as something negative, something threatening, something like, 'They're coming after us and we must defeat them'.[64]

The kind of rhetoric described above appears to be particularly effective in Greece where, since its founding, the nation's 'secure borders' have been (re)constructed in the hearts and minds of the Greek people as a pre-condition for the 'secure boundaries' of the national collectivity and its identity (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).

As is often the case, sensationalist media stories have both fuelled and been fuelled by the popular mood. The conservative press has sustained the association of migrants with an array of security-related problems relating to loss of control over public space, insecurity and fear-fuelling crime discourses (see Tsoukala 2011). There are three broad ways in which the Greek media depicts migrant presence as a threat to society: to Greece's already overburdened economy, by stealing jobs and straining resources; to Greek culture, by migrants maintaining their own cultural identity, religion and ways of life; and to its health, by contaminating individuals and neighbourhoods with diseases and dirt, downgrading areas and 'chasing away' locals (Veikou 2016). Ideologically charged headlines complement the inflammatory rhetoric of politicians noted above. Migrants are held responsible for political, social and economic disorder conveyed through the use of words like 'war', 'tsunami', 'occupation', 'containment', 'siege', 'bomb', 'collapse', 'infection', 'disease', 'clearing operations', 'threat' and 'insecurity'.

The degraded conditions in which many migrants are forced to build their lives in material, economic and social precarity are used to further reinforce racist stereotypes of the Other, particularly in the more contested urban spaces of central Athens. Here, media representations and political rhetoric have deliberately spread fear of contamination within neighbourhoods. Take, for example, the following quote from a government official in Athens in which migrants are associated with dirt, disease and 'unclean' behaviour:

> The problem is no longer constrained in the clandestine immigrants' ghettos and has penetrated the Greek society […] The situation in downtown Athens is hopeless.

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[64] Quote from Kakissis (2013).

> Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS have spread through sexual contact, drug use and also due to the horrible accommodation and living conditions.[65]

A similarly hysterical tone can be found in some media stories which shout about: "*Third-world living conditions in abandoned buildings and blocks of apartments accommodating large numbers of foreigners – Buildings that have turned into health bombs. Rodent urine and excrement everywhere. Foul smell. Risk of diseases. SOS*" (Pantzou 2013). This kind of language further reinforces stereotypical and racist perceptions of 'Africa' as a place of poor sanitation, disease, underdevelopment, and so on.

Meanwhile, positive representations of migrants and asylum-seekers in the media are scarce, leaving negative stereotypes largely unchallenged. There are very few articles relaying success stories of 'first generation' migrants, or presenting migrants as ordinary honest working people (Tsoukala 2011) – a tendency noted by Lauretta:

> They represent us in the way they feel like representing us. The way that suits them. You understand what I mean. Not the actual we. Not the actual we. They present because they want, for example, the television or the newspaper they want to write something different – something scary. So people can read and said 'poh, poh, poh'.

As Lauretta points out, hyper-visibility thus becomes another form of invisibility: "*not the actual we*." This highlights another important feature of racism: in the process of defining Others as that which 'we' are 'not', these figures are made alike through their 'unlikeness' from 'us' (Ahmed 2004). Words become detached from particular bodies and "accumulate affective value" (ibid: 123). As a result, labels such as "*illegality*" and "*threat*" stick to those who are differentiated from 'us' – even if they were born and raised in Greece (see below).

Similarly, through repeated association, the image of the 'migrant offender' or 'criminal Other' appears to have become deeply embedded in the Greek social consciousness; the thief becomes a foreigner and the migrant becomes a criminal (Ahmed 2016).[66] As one report (Pantzou 2013) found, practices such as always mentioning the perpetrator's nationality when *xenos*, stating the fact that s/he had no documents or references such as "according to police sources, the perpetrators were

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[65] Pantzou (2013)

[66] Michael Herzfeld (2011) wrote of an incident in which he was asked, after being mugged, whether his attackers were '*xenoi*' [foreigners]. The police chief went on to claim that 'statistically' 80 per cent of all criminals were foreign, unaware that this was likely, as Herzfeld points out, to be representative of an arrest quotient over-determined by the very assumption he was attempting to justify.

probably a gang of foreigners," further encourages xenophobic tendencies within Greek society. These not so subtle practices suggest that crime is origin-specific, or that delinquency originates from race and blood; from *who* we are, rather than from what we *do* (ibid). This alignment of the figure of the migrant with that of the criminal or thief operates further to suggest that the migrant is 'stealing' something from the nation. Thus, any misbehaviour seemingly confirms that the foreignness of these individuals is a threat to the nation (Ahmed 2016; Anderson 2013). Perpetually rendered suspicious because of their origins, skin colour or papers, migrants in Greece are constantly having to work to counter and disprove a narrative that criminalises them and delegitimises their very presence. These constructions are important not only because discourse others (Kilomba 2010), but also because it legitimises and finds expression in the actions of individuals and everyday inter-subjective encounters discussed below.

Gendering the Other: "This is the categories we have"

In Greece, as elsewhere, nationalist gendered and racialized stereotypes of masculinity and femininity seep into debates on migration such that representations of migrant men as dangerous criminals are complemented by those of migrant women as victims or sex workers (Kambouri and Zavos 2011). Such depictions have been accentuated by mainstream politicians who have been playing a dangerous game, gendering racism by giving prominence to "*foreign prostitutes*" purportedly bearing illnesses and contaminating Greek men (Carras 2012). At a conference on 'the promotion of public health', then Minister of Health, Andreas Loverdos, declared that Athens' "*big problem is illicit prostitution and its relationship to the problem of AIDS*" (Radio9gr 2012). Stressing that this had become a problem for the Greek family, as "*the infection passes from the undocumented migrant women to the Greek male customer, into the Greek family*," he concluded that HIV positive sex workers should be deported (Chatzistefariou and Vergou 2011). These statements were made after police conducted a 'sweep' in which they force-tested sex workers for HIV.[67] Following this, the identities and photographs of twenty foreign women found to be HIV positive

[67] Provision No. 39A was introduced in April 2012 allowing the police to detain people for the purpose of forced HIV tests.

were published in newspapers and online as part of a so-called 'warning campaign'. Headlines accompanying these images warned of "*the nightmare of Aids*" and "*infected prostitutes*" posing a "*death trap for hundreds of people*," and warning of thousands of "*married family men*" who could have been infected (MacDonald-Gibson 2012).

In this narrative, the figure of the foreign prostitute comes to embody the danger of impurity (Ahmed 2004). By construing these women as a public "*health bomb*" the monitoring and, when necessary, expelling of the alien 'foreign woman' is justified in order to sanitize and securitize the body politic for the sake of the nation (Athanasiou 2014).[68] The migrant woman has come too close; so close that she becomes a threat not only to the health, physical and moral wellbeing of 'our' men, but also to 'our' way of life, values and social norms. She is depicted as an infected and dangerous Other in contrast to the Greek woman who is cast as the privileged bearer of cultural authenticity and the faithful foundation of family and nation (Gamba 2013; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989).

While such representations of migrant women are not limited to non-white migrant women, racialized assumptions about the sexual nature, character and morality of African women contribute to their stereotyping as prostitutes and victims of trafficking. Lauretta summarized it thus: "*The view of African woman is that you are housekeeper. You are housekeeper. And – or, now that they have this trafficking… Sex workers. After that come house workers. This is the categories we have.*" Being seen in these stereotypical roles, as prostitutes or maids, symbolically reproduces the exclusion and marginalisation materially produced by their confinement to limited roles within the labour market (Chapter Six). As Phizacklea (1997: 3) argues, "these women's treatment is conditioned by embodied racisms which cast them as 'highly sexed' or submissive and subservient, devices which restore what are considered to be the 'proper' relations between genders and 'races'" (cited in Lazaridis 2001:75). Thus, the regulation of gender is part of the articulation of cultural identity and difference, and sexual conduct comes to constitute a crucial distinction between the nation and its Others (Kandiyoti 1991).

For African women in Athens, the association in the public consciousness of black female bodies with 'sex work' has become so strong that their invisibility

[68] The women in the aforementioned campaign were arrested on charges of causing bodily harm.

combines with their hyper-visibility, exposing them to a particular kind of vulnerability. Women described being followed on the streets, being asked '*how much do you want*?' and being called *poutana* [whore] not only by male passers-by but also by men in positions of power over them (such as police officers and ticket inspectors). Hana was somewhat surprised that, now a grandmother, she is still subjected to this kind of treatment from some Greek men:

> Even me. So many the times in Greece […] You cannot walk peacefully. You just cannot walk peacefully on the road. They make comments. One was walking, '*pame gia kafe*? *Pame gia kafe*?' [shall we go for coffee?] *piso* [behind me]. I didn't answer him. He started walking coming closer. '*Pame gia kafe*? […] He was moving. '*Poso perneis*? *Poso perneis*? [How much do you charge?] *Pame gia kafe*?'

Here, even the respect for your elders that is customary in Greek society appears to be superseded by the reading of the black female body as sexualised and criminalised Other.

While the negative impact of being treated in this way must not be underestimated, the women mostly appeared to have accepted such experiences as an unpleasant but inevitable feature of life as an African woman in Athens. Nneoma, implicitly noting the 'sliding' and 'sticking' of signs between bodies that operates in practice and not just discourse (see above), explained:

> if I am going out without my children a lot of men stops me, they think I am all these street girls and they harass me. '*Poso? Pame, eh, pame mazi*?'. [How much? Let's go, let's go together] […] they thought everybody is the same.

Note here the perception of a group in the body of an individual which is, Ahmed (2014) argues, involved in hate crime: "*everybody is the same*" and so every-body becomes a target. In a context in which prostitution is seen as a threat to societal order, and prostitutes are depicted as dangerous, unclean, vehicles of venereal diseases, the prevalence of such stereotypes further fence African women into social and economic racialized spaces from which it is increasingly difficult for them to escape (Lazaridis 2001; Psimmenos 2000).

Where they are not stereotyped as highly sexualised dangerous Others, African women (like Greek women) bear the burden of being accorded the task of symbolising their nation, or ethnic collectivity, and its boundaries (Kandiyoti 1991; Yuval-Davis 1997b). Thus, gendered narratives in which women everywhere are, in some sense, expected to biologically, culturally and symbolically produce the nation

or “imagined community” and those outside it (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997a) intersect with racialized narratives in Greece to situate African women somewhat paradoxically. On the one hand, as mothers they are respected as the embodiment of family values; on the other hand, their identification as boundary markers of their communities and ‘reproducers’ (not only of children, but also of culture, language, religious customs, and so on) constitutes them as a different kind of threat to the nation’s survival.

Although African men are seen individually as more ‘dangerous’ (stereotyped as criminals, illegal street traders and drug dealers), African women, because they are considered to be the custodians of cultural particularisms by virtue of being less assimilated both culturally and linguistically into wider society (Kandiyoti 1991), are perceived as a more destabilizing influence on racialized belonging. Thus, at a time of heightened ‘us-versus-them’ nationalist rhetoric, African women are unwelcome not only as dependents who add to the strain on public resources, but also as potential ‘diluters’ of the (fictional) purity of the Greek ‘ethnos’. Nneoma, who has given birth to three daughters in Greece, found that being visibly pregnant can attract even more hostility and aggression:

> And the worst part of it you know sometimes we will receive racist talk. ‘Go back to your country! We don’t want to see you! Fuck you! Go back to our country!’ You know, something like that. On the street. On the bus. You understand? Especially if I am pregnant they will tell you: ‘you have one, you have another one. Go back to your country!’ They even fight us. ‘Go back to your country, we cannot give them paper, they are not from here, they are not Greek, they are from Nigeria.’

Nneoma here is referring to the widely-held stereotype that African women have lots of children (“*you have one, you have another one*”). In the words of one middle-aged Greek man: “*all the women are pregnant! They come here and have lots of children – and back home they have another 15!*” This idea is so ‘sticky’ (to borrow Ahmed’s phrase), that even an African woman who has not yet had children, through her ‘could-be-ness’, becomes the symbolic and physical embodiment of the ‘invasion’ described by media and politicians, in which the nation is being overwhelmed and taken over. It would seem that Nneoma cannot win. If she goes out with her children she is accused of perpetrating an invasion; if she goes out without them, she is seen as a prostitute and a different kind of threat.

The 'Second Generation': "As if we just came yesterday"

The construction of nationhood as based on racialized belonging renders the situation of the children of African migrants in Greece particularly problematic. Irrespective of legal status and birth, those who bear the racialized signs of non-Greekness continue to be treated as newcomer-Other. As Katerina, who was born in Athens to a Ghanaian father and a Kenyan mother, put it: "*We were born here and the state treats us as if we just came yesterday!*" (Kapllani 2009). For many, of the so-called 'second generation', the discovery at the age of 18 that they must apply for documents in their own right in the country that they were born and raised comes as a huge shock. Some, like Katerina, who with no passport from her 'country of origin' is unable to even apply for a residence permit, face a life suspended in illegality:

> I'm illegal. I can't register for a tax identification number, I can't take entrance exams for the university. I can't go to college. Because I don't have papers. And I was born at the Alexandra Birth Clinic, in Athens, in the summer of 1988.[69]

The power of racialized notions of Greekness (as white and Christian) and, relatedly, its Other (as non-white and non-Christian) is so strong that even the logic of birth cannot undo or counter the associations of 'otherness' with those bodies who are already defined as 'out of place' by their skin colour. Indeed, documents and legal status are expected to fit this logic rather than the other way around and, where they do not, may even be dismissed as not to be trusted (as in the *Xenios Zeus* operation). In a fairly typical example of how legal rights can be obstructed in practice, Hana discovered that she could not enrol her youngest daughter at school without a birth certificate. However, in Greece, 'second generation' migrants though legally entitled to education, are not given birth certificates. Informed of this, the school administrator simply told Hana to "*get one from Africa*." The fact of her daughter's birth who, like Katerina, was born at Alexandras Hospital in central Athens, was thus cast as mere geographical accident. Instead, a forged birth certificate from a continent the child had never even set foot was somehow considered a 'truer' representation of her identity. (Not to mention the assumption, which was not lost on Hana, that it would be easy to get false documentation from corrupt African countries). It is thus, through sometimes unspectacular everyday encounters, that

[69] Quote from Kapllani (2009).

these children and their parents are reminded that they are not 'like', and certainly not equal, to 'us'. As the very term 'second generation' implies, they are supposed to permanently remain 'aliens from elsewhere' (El-Tayeb 2011).

To argue that the 'second generation' are caught 'somewhere in the middle', however, would be to reinforce restrictive models of 'Greekness'. Indeed, without exception, the children of African migrants I met identified themselves as Greek, even though their passports did not. Fluent-speaking, born, raised and educated in Greece, and often with little or no experience of their 'countries of origin', the presence of these African-Greeks is a direct challenge to the assumption that there are distinct and immutable cultures separating Greeks and 'eternal newcomers' (El-Tayeb 2011). However, they were also painfully aware that as non-citizens the exclusion that had begun for many with being unable to go on school trips to other European countries, would continue into adulthood; that they would not be able to vote, and would even be excluded from a number of professional associations (such as legal and medical). Where marginalisation and exclusion is not written in law, it often rears its ugly head in the racist attitudes of individuals. In one incident recounted to me, a young graduate was told that the patients at a clinic would be uncomfortable with a black assistant. He had to go abroad for his training. Another was refused an apprenticeship at several speech therapy clinics because she was told that they were looking for someone 'from here'.

For those desperately clinging to the idea of Greece as white and Orthodox, the mere existence of African-Greek children threatens the fiction of the Greek *ethnos* and can provoke racist hostility. When, for instance, during a bus ride in central Athens Ruth's half-Greek, half-Nigerian eight-year-old grandson said (in fluent Greek) that he wanted to be a doctor when he grew up, a sixty-something year old Greek man sitting nearby turned and spat out angrily "*na girisi stin patrida tou otan megalosi*" [he should go back to his country when he grows up]. Informed that the boy was Greek and was born here, the man's response was categorical: "*oi negres den einai Ellines*" [negros are not Greeks]. The continued legitimising of such attitudes by politicians, the media and school textbooks, reinforces a sense of entitlement for those on the 'right' side of the othering divide, while further excluding and marginalising those on the 'wrong' side.

Being told you cannot be from 'here' because you are black is another way in which inter-subjective encounters place as Other (Kilomba 2010). From being stopped on the street by police and asked to verify their presence, to being moved down a class because a teacher does not want to teach a black child, these children are constantly reminded that geography of birth is incidental and that what matters is their black skin. This exclusion also operates in another, perhaps less obvious, way. Not only are the children of African migrants treated as outsiders when it comes to Greek society, they are also presumed to have insider knowledge of 'Africa'. They reported being asked 'how is Africa?' or being expected to know how to dance African dances and wear their hair in traditional African styles. Thus, once again, the mobilisation of race discourse in unspectacular everyday interactions turns encounters into 'identity policing' (El-Tayeb 2011). Even when not meant deliberately to exclude, questions such as 'How do you speak Greek so fluently?', 'Where are you from?' and 'Where are you *originally* from?' operate to remind not only African women, but also their children that they do not belong 'here' – at least not like 'we' do. In the unambiguous discursive divide between Greeks and migrants, the 'second generation' remain both hyper-visible and invisible; invisible as Greeks because they do not fit the internal logic of 'Greekness', and hyper-visible because (according to the same logic) their black skin fixes them as *metanastoi*.

5.3 Everyday Racisms…

"Every time I am thus placed as 'Other', I am experiencing racism, for I am not 'Other'. I am self."

(Kilomba 2010: 45)

This section explores the routine situations in which power operates to perpetuate racial and ethnic oppression in the context of everyday life (Essed 1991). The women's experiences recounted here are examined not merely as examples of racist attitudes or solely as part of the performance of gendered and racialized identities. They are intended to reveal how everyday encounters – through vocabulary,

discourse, images, gesture, gazes and actions – are part of the processes that place them as Other.

… in bodily encounters

> "Greek people are very racist people [...] They don't want your body to touch them. Africa is more clean than Greek people so why are they doing like they are the cleanest people in this world? Sometimes you meet some people when you want to pass they will make like this [physically recoils]. Ahh, what is this? What is this? If you are talking about neat, it's Africa. Greek people they are not neat more than Africa. They will think maybe Africa because we have the black skin – they don't know this is our skin, natural, they think maybe it is dirtiness. So the way they are behaving I don't understand them […] they will think maybe Africa they are not neat, they are dirty people, they are like this, they are *poutanas* [whores]…"

Lucee, from Nigeria, 8 years in Greece

African women in Athens are routinely placed as Other through the actions and gestures of others. Being told to wait aside while Greeks are served first at the supermarket checkout or experiencing fellow bus passengers physically recoil from their bodies' touch may still upset and anger most women, but it no longer surprises them. Echoing Lucee's comments above, Gift matter-of-factly told me: "*it's common. If you are inside the bus they don't want to sit with you. They don't want to make their bodies to touch you*." Most frequently, these incidents take place on the city's overcrowded public transport system, perhaps because it is one of the few spaces in which Greeks and migrants of all nationalities are thrown together in equal and close proximity. Here, unnamed anxieties intermingle with anger at these 'out of place' bodies taking up space. Particularly since the onset of the crisis, and perhaps also encouraged by the discursive representations discussed above, an intensity of emotion aligns individuals with communities, and bodily space with social space (Ahmed 2004), such that open expressions of hostility in which women are told to "*go home*" or "*go back to your country*," are no longer unusual.

According to Kilomba (2010: 102), the perceived need to regulate the physical distance to black people and define the areas they can use relates to white racial fears, revealing a very important dimension of everyday racism related to "fantasies of racial contagion." On buses and trains the sound of foreign voices

talking "*too loudly*", somatic contact and even smells were read as an affront to the senses – a different kind of invasion. Aisha, who has been in Greece for 12 years, described one incident, in which a man started spitting as soon as she entered the train carriage with her children, saying: "*Mirizi, mirizi, mavro mirizi, mirizi, mavro mirizi" [it smells, it smells, black smells, smells, black smells].*" Open expressions of disgust of this kind are intended to signal to people that their bodies do not conform to Greek ideas of ideal standards of presentation. As Lucee points out in the quote above, the association of black skin with dirtiness may be used to denote bodily uncleanliness and/or behaviours that are considered unacceptable or 'unclean'.

Being seen as "*dirty*" was, for Saba, the same as being seen as "*not human*". "*Why? I am not dirty. They think I am dirty because of this*," she said, pointing to her black skin. "*What can I do? Cut it off?*" she concluded, referring to the offending leg that had touched a woman who had then vacated her seat to express her displeasure. Expressing disgust or discomfort at the proximity of bodies is just one of many small and unspectacular ways in which citizens seek to reassert what they perceive to be the order of things. Others include telling an African woman to give up her seat on the bus while younger, more able-bodied white Greeks sit nearby undisturbed. Or 'policing' taste, dress and other means through which 'we' differentiate ourselves from 'them' (see below). Such tactics are intended to ensure that the 'object' of fear (the migrant, the Other, the non-white) comes to fear the impact of fear and thus "takes up less space" (Ahmed 2004: 127). Instead, however, women like Saba often respond by refusing to be confined to an area defined by whiteness (Kilmoba 2010). Using the body that had been found so objectionable, Saba spread out her limbs and occupied the newly vacated seat more fully.

Gaze can also have a confining, constricting and othering effect. Faith was one of many women who described being stared at as they went about their daily business:

> some people they just look at you in weird way that… as if I am carrying *kaka* [shit] on top of my head. I don't know what's wrong with the Greeks. You know, in Africa we don't look people in the eye, something like that. When you enter the bus they all look at you like this. Is there something wrong with me or what?

The repetition of similar experiences reminds African women that the visibility of their 'otherness' means that there is always a danger of being seen (Ahmed 2000). Being

routinely stared as if there is "*something wrong*" with them, defines them, at the very least, as strangers as opposed to neighbours. Even where welcomed as guests, a process of (mis)recognition constitutes them as outsiders. Tourists are, for example, by definition, outsiders and so being treated as one is yet another form of misrecognition that angers Lauretta: "*No me I get annoyed. I said up till now you don't realise that I am here. You understand. It make me feel foreigner and I'm not a foreigner.*" Aware of the conditionality inherent to hospitality (Derrida 2000), it is not enough for Lauretta simply to be seen – the *way* she is seen matters. To be read as a temporary (albeit welcome) guest in the place that has been home to her now for over thirty years is a violence against her sense of self. It is also a reminder that she remains, and may always remain, a foreigner in the eyes of many Greeks.

Lauretta's experience is shared by many African women for whom routine encounters suggest that the visual marker of 'non-Greekness' nearly always takes precedence over all other possible readings. Where women do challenge their perceived 'outsiderness' by, for example, speaking Greek, as Lauretta does, they may be met with admiration for doing so; but, each encounter is rendered meaningless in the sense that it does little, if anything, to disrupt prevailing notions of 'Greekness' or its Other. Though Lauretta clearly enjoys disturbing expectations by "*closing*" many Greeks who have tried to make "*racist remarks*" ("*If you bring it to me I hit you with the Greek I know from the book*"), she despairs at the rigidity in such attitudes. "*How can they not used to it Viki mou*?" she asked me. "*How can they not used to it? We are here for over 40 years now, people are here. When are they going to used to it? Eh? Gia pes [tell me]. When are they going to [get] used to it*?" To paraphrase El-Tayeb (2011), there remains in Greece an inconsistency if not an invincible contradiction between an aural truth (the sound of native Greek) and a visual truth (the sight of an African). Thus, a non-white native speaker of Greek again and again appears as a curious contradiction, never quite becoming unspectacular or commonplace. There is a certain defensiveness to even well-meaning displays of surprise when African women do speak Greek (more than once I heard condescending exclamations of "*bravo, bravo*" at this perceived anomaly). Challenges to normative notions of Greekness are thus recast as unique. As an exception, Lauretta may indeed be met with applause as she 'closes' Greeks on busy buses, but by giving such incidents a spectacular character they are at the same time

made void of any lasting consequences (El-Tayeb 2011). Yet when African women do *not* speak Greek, stereotypes of them as uninterested in integrating, lazy, uneducated or simply 'too foreign' are reinforced, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and preserving the divide between 'us' and 'them'.

I have found no reliable data on what proportion of African migrants in Greece today speak Greek. However, by my own 'guesstimation' the key participants are fairly representative of the general situation. The majority (just over half) speak barely any Greek (though their understanding was much better), about a third speak it well and the rest manage somewhere in between. The common perception amongst Greeks is that African migrants cannot speak and are uninterested in learning the language, which is in itself interesting as it suggests both marginalisation and perceived unassimilability. This not only perpetuates ideas of African migrants as somehow 'too Other' to learn Greek, but also pushes them further into the margins of an unequal system where they are only permitted space as housemaid, carer, prostitute or exotic Other. However, there is a less remarked upon reason why women may not speak the language of the country they have been living in, sometimes for decades. For some women, refusing to learn Greek is a reaction to hostile treatment and a rejection of those who perpetrate it. Ruth, for example, feels so much anger and resentment towards Greeks for the racist and unfair treatment she has endured (particularly by her former employers – see Chapter Six), that she says she has no interest in learning 'their' language. It is the language of her oppressors and, therefore, not one she wishes to invest her time or energy in learning.

… in urban space

> "They accuse foreigners [in] generals. So this is racist because they don't have good hearts to foreigners. It's racist of course. A Greek man who will said for you that 'you go to your country, you are a monkey. What are you doing here?' He is a racist. General they are saying this to foreigners, you understand? There are some places you will go they will say '*Fige Afriki – ti kaneis esi edo*?' [Go away Africa – what are you doing here?] You understand what I mean. So they accuse foreigners in a bad ways that when you are there you will feel bad."

Lucee, from Nigeria, 8 years in Greece

In recent years, more and more Greeks have left downtown Athens in favour of less culturally diverse 'safe' neighbourhoods, while renting their properties to migrants. For the Greek locals who have remained, such ordinary occurrences such as Africans sitting on 'their' benches and the sound of them socialising in 'their' squares are transgressions of what are perceived as legitimate ways of being, moving and doing within space. That the stranger is no longer 'outside' the community but an 'outsider' within the community appears to create even more fear and hostility (Ahmed 2000). It is often the "'seeing them', that is, of them being present but distinct, which seems to be part of the issue" (Veikou 2016: 159). At times of insecurity, the anxiety Greek locals have expressed over what many feel have been dramatic changes in their neighbourhoods is easily manipulated, such that these 'foreigners' come to represent a destabilizing and unknowable presence; a threat to "the kinds of defensive and exclusivist place-loyalties" associated with nostalgic ideas regarding ethnic exclusivity and timeless stasis discussed above (Massey 1994: 121). Thus, rejection in the unremarkable encounters of daily life in the neighbourhood becomes an attempt to demarcate and enforce boundaries of 'this place' where 'we' dwell (Ahmed 2000). For these women, being treated as a different, inferior class of people daily by, for instance, shop owners and fellow bus passengers, merely deepens a sense of exclusion and further widens the divide. "*Once you go inside [the shop] as a black person they will not attend to you. They will just be looking at you,"* Ruth explained. Routine othering encounters of this kind, and the now-familiar sight of graffiti with phrases such as "immigrants out of Greece" and "Greece our homeland" scrawled around the city centre, are part of how, in Hana's words: "*they always make you feel different. You always know that you are not free. You are not them."*

That similar racist constructions to those in the media and rhetoric of politicians discussed above are also evident in encounters with neighbours reminds us of the interplay between discourse and everyday practices. Angel, for instance, was subjected to comparable confused associations between sickness, dirt and her African origins in the abuse hurled at her by a neighbour who objected to her (ironically) cleaning her balcony.

> I was just sweeping my balcony and he was shouting '*mavro*, *mavro*, [black] don't sweep sickness on my body. Africa *poli xalia* [very bad]. *Poli arosti*. *Poli arosti* [very sick]. Ebola.' He was just shouting like this. I don't even speak […] '*Exoume sedonia kato* [we have sheets down]. Don't sweep sickness on my *sedonia* [sheets]!'

Already constricted by her undocumented status, Angel's home is one of the few remaining spaces left in which she feels comfortable. However, even here the threat of verbal or even physical abuse has forced her to take up less space. Angel no longer goes onto her small balcony nor does she allow her one-year-old son to. As Kilomba (2010: 104) writes: "One cannot avoid associating one's own isolation with the white fear of being contaminated by Blackness and, consequently, with an introjected fear that one might be attacked, as one is phantasmally perceived as 'dirt' in 'their' territory." Thus, the racist complaints of Angel's neighbour (who also protests at the sound of her TV and the voices of visiting children) have been transferred onto her: "*I don't want a noise*."

Persistent racist representations of the kind discussed above are intended to either provoke mistrust or turn society against Others. The 'fixing' of identity in which African migrants are constructed as unworthy of equal treatment is mobilised not only to validate people's inferior symbolic and material status, but also to justify stringent immigration policies and random violent initiatives against them (Veikou 2016). In a sense, proclamations of 'crisis' in Greece have provided the grounds for declarations of war against that which is read as the source of the threat (Ahmed 2014). As Pantzou (2013) in a report commissioned by UNHCR observes:

> "War requires an enemy and that enemy was constructed in the faces of the immigrants. Moreover, war requires violence and use of unorthodox methods, shedding of blood and innocent victims and subtly legalises the so-called 'fight against the invaders', which is now being carried out in Greece through kicking and through the use of brass knuckles, bats wrapped in Greek flags and deadly knives."

Although none of the women had themselves been victims of organized group violence (of which nearly all those on record are male), an increase in attacks did perpetuate a generalised fear amongst them.[70] As Essed (1991) argues with regards to racism more generally, a substantial part of experience is shaped vicariously through friends, family and other Africans, through the media, and cognitively, through

[70] This is based on data collected by the Racist Violence Reporting Network (RVRN), which reported a serious escalation in racist incidents since the onset of economic crisis in Greece.

general knowledge of racism in the system. All the women knew or had heard of people who had been victims of physical violence, and several women had also witnessed incidents themselves. For instance, Hana described returning from work one day to find a group of Golden Dawn supporters attacking migrants outside her home. It was not just the violence that alarmed her – she knew such people and attitudes existed; what frightened her was the amount of support for it.

> When the group they came, they have stick […] that's the time I knew that in our area we have some – even the Greek that are living there they are part of them, you know […] So when they came, I saw some of these Greeks they all came out their balconies some came down they were singing their national anthem […] I know there were people like that but they were not recognise but now since they start political coming up and I see the way so many Greek are supporting them. So, when I see the amount of people following these people it makes me fear that, you know…

Hana's anxiety that "*you don't know where they are*" was shared by many women. As Ruth put it, "*My biggest fear here is Chrysi Avgi [Golden Dawn]. Why is it my biggest fear? Because me I don't know them […] Nobody knows them.*"

The women's visibility clearly intensified a sense of vulnerability amongst them. They feared being followed, looked over their shoulders and even avoided neighbours they suspected of being Golden Dawn sympathisers. As Adanech explained:

> It's the colour that matters. You might be a migrant but with white skin, he will not say the things to you that he says to me […] I have a different type of fear. The racism – that they see you are black or think you are a prostitute or that you are from the streets.

Being stereotyped and read as that which you are not (as, for example, a prostitute) is a form of racist aggression in itself; denied the luxury of invisibility, it follows them everywhere. This vulnerability involves a particular kind of bodily relation to the world, in which openness (or visibility) is read as a site of potential danger requiring evasive action (Ahmed 2014). As Adanech says, a "*different type of fear*" is born of the knowledge that you are always vulnerable to verbal attacks, racist slurs, being spat-on, sexual harassment, or worse.

Several women had been victims of physical violence from individuals (some known, others unknown to them) in attacks that were clearly intended as a violent rejection of co-existence. Angel was physically attacked by her neighbour, supposedly for having her TV on too loudly; Lauretta had her foot stamped on in Omonia

Square by a passer-by muttering racist slurs; and, Aisha had been struck on the back of the head while waiting at a bus stop. Though these attacks appeared to be triggered by routine irritations – the noise of neighbours, people getting in your way and so on – the women were left in no doubt that they were the result of hostile sentiments from locals who were reluctant to accept blacks on 'their' streets or in 'their' apartment blocks (Essed 1991). Even where attacks seem less severe because they do not cause physical pain or lead to injuries that require medical attention, RVRN (2015: 8) notes that they reflect the perpetrator's "contempt against the victims and have long term significant negative impact on the victim and the community." Sadly, in many instances, the desired effect of further isolation and marginalisation appears to have been achieved.

Encountering this level of discrimination and hostility can have a major impact on women's ability to work, their economic and personal security, and their health and well-being, all of which leads to further marginalisation (see RVRN 2015). Even without the almost daily experience of racist verbal abuse in which stereotypes are (re)produced, the mere threat of racist violence is enough to severely negatively impact the women's daily lives. As feminist approaches have shown, rather than an immediate bodily response to an objective danger, fear is structural and mediated (Ahmed 2014). From this perspective, the women's fear can be understood as a response to a narrative that constructs African migrants as 'targets'. As such, it is a response to the threat of violence caused by the fears of others (Kilomba 2010). As Elizabeth Sanko (1990, cited in Ahmed 2014: 69) argues, such narratives are also gendered: they circulate and intersect with narratives of feminine vulnerability in ways that further restrict women's access to public space. For some, the trauma of violence continues to oppress women. Angel described her fear from previous "*beatings*" thus: "*At times when I feel my heart flying I can feel headache through this. At times all my body will be weak. I don't know how to hide. My brain cannot think very well.*"

According to Ahmed (2014: 70), experiencing fear of 'the world' as the scene of a future injury works as a form of violence in the present. This "shrinks bodies in a state of afraidness, a shrinkage which may involve a refusal to leave the enclosed spaces of home, or a refusal to inhabit what is outside in ways that anticipate injury (walking alone, walking at night and so on)." Thus, even for those, like Adanech,

who do not stay home but live full and busy lives, women learn to contain themselves by disengaging from what is happening around them (Adanech puts on her sunglasses and turns up her music). Or, as several women described, by taking up less space on a bus seat so that their skin does not touch that of their fellow passenger. Being constructed as 'fearful' Other thus transfers fear onto the object of fear itself, and feelings of vulnerability and fear shape women's bodies as well as how those bodies inhabit space (Ahmed 2014). In Hana's words, "*You always know that you are not free*." Conscious of their visibility and their subsequent vulnerability to potential pain and injury, the women carefully managed their mobility accordingly. Women spoke of virtual no-go areas and, during the worst periods in which attacks were a daily occurrence, of not going out after dark because they feared attacks by black-clad groups of Greeks intent on violence (see HRW 2012). For many, though attacks have become less frequent, the fear remains. "*Whenever I see lot of boys with black*," Hana explained, "*I don't walk between them. I try to go away. So it's a fear for me now*."

… in police practices

> "We were coming from Halandri and coming to the centre, to Omonia, and we were walking and speaking Greek like normal young people do. Classic. And the police just stopped and asked me for identification and didn't ask my friend for identification. And my friend was like seriously? And he told her that 'maybe she is illegal'. She said 'did you hear her speaking Greek? Like what do you mean she is illegal?' But I have my passport with me – I have my driver's license with me so that was ok. […] I think it's essential to have something on you. And the funny thing is when they stop me every time and I bring my driving license which is a Greek-European license, they look at me again. And they continue – they are stunned, like 'but you are black!'..."[71]

Ayobami, from Nigeria, 10 years in Greece

Ayobami is a "*normal young*", educated, middle-class woman from a well-connected Nigerian family, whose parents have Greek citizenship and who has never, in all the 10 years she has lived in Greece, been without 'correct' documents. Ayobami is, however, also black and, therefore, in the eyes of the policemen who stopped her,

[71] Note here the defence of Ayobami's Greek friend – how can she be illegal if she is speaking Greek?

'maybe illegal'. It is her *potential* danger – her 'could-be-ness' – that extends the demand for surveillance of all Others who are already recognisable as strangers and opens up the power to detain as a form of self-defence (Ahmed 2016). With or without documents, the assumption is that blackness equals 'illegality' and, therefore, criminality. So, Ayobami's right to presence has to be proven and verified, time and again.

By constituting all non-white bodies as 'out of place' the policies of successive Greek governments, supported by the often heavy-handed implementation of its police force, have reinforced the narrative that these Others are to be mistrusted, feared and/or hated. Even in advance of their arrival, these figures are read as the cause of injury to the national body, which then requires defence (Ahmed 2004). As Lucee explains, the impact of such practices is that those constructed as 'fearful' become afraid themselves. The accusation of criminality is also, she explains, a public humiliation:

> I am afraid of the police. Sometimes they will just stop you, accusing '*pou einai xartia*' [where are your papers]. You know the way they will stop you it's like they will not even ask you a question in a normal way that they will put little respect. They will just ask you question in a way it's like accusement. When it's a Greek police accuse somebody they make you feel bad. When they stop you in the street, for example, people are looking thinking maybe you did something else. This is embarrassment of course.

Neither the "*accusement*" nor the high visibility of these 'checks' is accidental. They are deliberately conducted in busy public spaces because, as De Genova (2002: 436) points out, "The elusiveness of the law, and its relative invisibility in producing 'illegality', requires the spectacle of 'enforcement'." Overstaying a visa is not dramatic enough for a racialized migrant's 'illegality' to be made visible and lent the commonsensical air of a 'natural' fact. Hence, borders proliferate and police checks provide the staging for the spectacle of 'the illegal alien' (ibid). Through repetition, this logic becomes part of a 'common sense' that not only defines those who do not belong, but also harbours racist attitudes which justifies and even celebrates the incarceration, indefinite detention and forced expulsion of certain bodies (de Noronha 2015). Social perceptions of non-whites as (potentially) criminal and deviant Others is thus perpetuated, further constricting their lives in ways that culminate in both subjection and discrimination to organized control by the state (De

Genova 2002).

These state tactics were particularly evident during the height of the 'sweeps' under the *Xenios Zeus* operation, when only 4,811 (approximately 6 per cent) of those arrested were found to be residing unlawfully in Greece (HRW 2013).[72] According to reports, the police were casting an extraordinarily wide net targeting those who look 'foreign' (suggesting the use of ethnic profiling) and subjecting individuals with a legal right to be in Greece, including tourists, to treatment prohibited by international law (ibid).[73] I met many women (including those in the opening vignette to this thesis) who described being not only stopped by police, but also transferred to a police station despite having documents, where they were sometimes detained for hours pending verification of their legal status.[74] The spectacle of policemen conducting these 'checks' has a dual purpose. The very public display of controlling the mobility of non-white migrants as figures to be feared confirms their 'out-of-place-ness', acting as confirmation that even those already 'here' have committed a crime as invaders of national space. A feeling that borders have been transgressed or breached is thus sustained and defensive measures justified (Ahmed 2014). This simultaneously creates the impression that 'our' safety is being ensured, and acts as a deterrent, even frightening some migrants into leaving. Thus, the seemingly ineffective cycle of arrest, detention and release described in the previous chapter is perhaps not as much a failure as it might at first appear.

Increased police presence and 'sweeps' have been justified by the repeated link between the presence of migrants, physically deteriorating conditions and a sense of disorder (both literal and moral) in the city centre. These practices contribute to the constitution of certain bodies as, to borrow a phrase from Mary Douglas (1966: 36), 'matter out of place'. Once again, we see the strong association between (dis)order and dirt, as Adanech pointed out:

> And they call it *skoupa* [broom or sweep]. They collect them there and they say they are going to 'sweep'. People aren't rubbish to say that they are 'sweeping', firstly. No migrant is rubbish. They are all people. They mustn't use that word. It's an insult for a

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72 This fact alone raised serious concerns amongst human rights groups that police were using ethnic profiling in determining whom to stop. As one HRW report (2013) points out, were intelligence being used to determine these stops a higher detection rate would be expected.

73 In November 2012, the US Embassy in Greece took the unusual step of updating its country-specific information on Greece to warn US visitors about "confirmed reports of US African-American citizens detained by police authorities conducting sweeps for illegal immigrants in Athens".

74 See HRW (2013) and Amnesty International (2014a).

> person. Not for a migrant – in general for a person. They gather them up, they tire them, they put men and women in the same room, later they leave them to go out after three months and give them a paper telling them to leave the country after three months. No one leaves. They know that the same happens again and again. Why do they do it?

They 'do it' because, as Douglas (1966: 36) writes, "Where there is dirt, there is system." This allows, at the very least, for the fantasy of the possibility of taking back control, restoring order and securing boundaries. Never mind that most of those arrested during these 'sweeps' were found to be victims of ethnic profiling and subsequently released (see HRW 2013). Public displays of control define migrant illegality as 'the problem' and suggest state power and effectiveness in expelling these 'out of place' bodies from the purified space of the community, for the life of the good citizen (Ahmed 2000). It is no coincidence that there was an increase in such theatrics with the onset of the crisis in Greece. Let us not forget that "Cleaning the filth" was the main pre-electoral slogan of the Greek neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn, in the 2012 election in which they achieved an electoral breakthrough.[75] As discussed in the first half of this chapter, scapegoating visible Others reinforces the idea that some (i.e. non-white) bodies are more dangerous than others and pose a threat for Greek 'civilised' life (Ahmed 2000). This refocuses anger, bolsters unity and perpetuates, what De Genova (2002: 425) refers to as, "monolithic normative notions of national identity."

The emphasis on migrant 'illegality' in such public displays of control has the added intention of not only 'othering', but also disciplining all non-citizens (De Genova 2002). An abiding sense of injustice and lack of trust in institutions results from such policies, perpetuating insecurity even amongst those with legal statuses. As Lauretta explained:

> But I'm still afraid of the police in the street. I don't want to see them at all. Not that I don't have all the necessary papers, but, you know, they disturb me. You understand what I mean? They disturb me. They disturb me. You know, when I see them like that I just… I have the fear of them because whenever they approach me I used to abuse them, you know. And I'm afraid of myself not to be behaving like that to the police.

For 'long-term residents' like Lauretta, 'undocumented' women like Angel, 'second generation' migrants like Hana's daughter and even African-Greeks like Ruth's

[75] Golden Dawn secured 7 per cent of the vote and entered parliament for the first time with 18 seats.

grandson, their overriding status as non-white/non-Greek Others makes them targets for enhanced surveillance at both the borders of the country and in everyday interactions in the context of the neighbourhood (Ahmed 2000; Veikou 2016). As journalist Periklis Dimitrakopoulos observed, "In the homeland of *Xenios Zeus*, a *xeno*s will always remain a foreigner. Even if he or she is born here, even if he or she shares in our culture, even if he or she pays taxes" (Pantzou 2013). From the women's perspectives, constantly having to prove that their presence is legitimate leaves virtually no space in which their status of belonging is guaranteed or beyond dispute (El-Tayeb 2011). Being monitored by police as soon as arriving in the city centre, stepping off a bus or leaving home to go to work daily constructs African women, including those who, like Ayobami, consider themselves to be African-Greeks, as unethical lawbreakers who have no right to be in the country.

Women's fear of harassment and detention has been intensified in recent years by a common belief amongst them that many police officers are also Golden Dawn supporters. Indeed, in recounting the neighbourhood incident above, Hana commented that:

> The police then they were worse than the *Xrysi Avgi* [Golden Dawn]. They were really, really wild […] Then you see that some of the police were actually working with this *Xrysi Avgi* […] So that is why you have to afraid of these people because you don't know where they are. Who are you going to call?

This and other similar accounts were confirmed by RVRN (2015: 3), who stated in one report that "the involvement of law enforcement officials in incidents of racist violence remains alarming". Hana's suspicion (shared by many others) that strong links exist between the police and Golden Dawn was also confirmed by an anonymous police source who worked at the Aliens Directorate at Allodapon for eight years.[76] He explained to me that an internal affairs investigation had found that in as many as 100 cases where Golden Dawn was involved the police had done nothing.[77] It is not hard to comprehend why there is widespread mistrust of police officers amongst migrants, and also why victims of violence are often too frightened

[76] 'Allodapon' is the Greek name, often used by both Greeks and migrants, for the Attica Aliens Police Directorate at Petrou Ralli Street in Athens. Literally translated it means 'alien'.

[77] In 2012, the police were accused by NGOs, coroners and UNHCR of "indifference" towards the mistreatment of asylum-seekers and even of actual participation in racist attacks on migrants (Mason 2012; "Βασανιστήρια Με Πένσα Στα Νύχια Των Μεταναστών" 2012). Furthermore, polling data from the 2012 election suggested that as many as one in two policemen voted for Golden Dawn (Lambropoulos 2012; Phillips 2012)

to report attacks. Other obstacles include language difficulties and lack of information, though perhaps the most major deterrent, particularly amongst those who are undocumented, is the fear of arrest and detention noted above. This fear is, according to my police source, entirely justified. He explained how overstretched and under-resourced police officers would actively deter victims without legal residence papers from officially reporting attacks (see also RVRN 2012). Investigations are avoided primarily by discouraging or even intimidating already-scared victims. The attack thus goes unreported and, he concluded wryly, "*everybody wins*".

… in the workplace

> "They target African country for cheap labour, for abuse, because if you are working for them in the house they can call '*Ela re, ela re! Asto diaolo!* [Come, come! Go to hell!] you are crazy you supposed to do this job you did not do it!!!' They can do that to African people, they cannot do it to their own people because we, we don't understand, we don't know [that] if you are working they supposed to give you respect as a human being. So they treat us whatever way they like."

Ruth, from Nigeria, 23 years in Greece

When it comes to employment, processes of legal abjectification intersect with gendered everyday racism to expose African women in Athens to particular forms of exploitation, vulnerabilities and abuses. Positioned as marginal due to their legal status as migrants and inferiorised by racialized gendered stereotypes, African women in Athens suffer from both racial and gender disadvantages that intersect to create specific problems that restrict access to the labour market and, as Ruth's comments highlight, maintain segregation and discrimination within it (Tastsoglou and Hadjicostanti 2003). Several studies have shown that, regardless of whether migrant women are in possession of a work permit or not, they are always peripheral and outsiders, with various degrees of externality depending on their legal status, race and ethnicity (Tastsoglou and Hadjicostanti 2003; Andall 2000; Lazaridis 2000).

On the whole, the evidence suggests that, when compared to other nationalities, African women experience higher degrees of marginalisation and more

overt and prevalent discrimination.[78] Employers of domestic workers appear to rate African women lowest, women from the Philippines most highly and Eastern Europeans somewhere in the between.[79] As Gift said of her former employer's hostile mother: "*She said she prefer all these Russians. She love Russia. She don't like Africa…*" With the onset of the crisis, such attitudes appear to have intensified. Chrysanthe, a Greek social worker who browses job notices as part of her work, observed that more and more people were specifying positions for an '*Ellinida*' [Greek woman].[80] African women need not even apply. When Chrysanthe calls to inquire about vacancies for domestic work, prospective employers' questions usually centre around whether applicants have been tested for viruses. The prejudice accelerates according to blackness, Chrysanthe explained, with the assumption being that the more black they are, the more viruses they will carry. The preference from African nationalities is for Ethiopians who are generally perceived to be both lighter in skin colour and having features more similar to Europeans. It is telling that, over several years, despite having many Nigerian women looking for work, Chrysanthe has never personally seen any hired for domestic work.

Discriminations translate not only into fewer employment options and opportunities, but also into lower wages and more exploitative work conditions, materially reproducing exclusion on a daily basis (Tastsoglou and Hadjicostanti 2003).[81] During the time I spent in Athens, I heard many stories of exploitation and even abuse by employers who were fully cognizant of the power that the women's marginalised position in Greek society availed them. Some refused to pay wages owed and, so certain were they of their impunity, even reported workers to the police, as in Gift's experience:

> The man don't want to pay – he don't want to pay me my money. So I told him I am working, why you don't want to pay me? He say because I am black so he don't want to pay me. I say I work here one month, you say you don't want to pay me. The man called the police.

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[78] Kofman et al. (2000) also found black women in Western Europe to be the most exploited and least preferred in the racial hierarchization of domestic work.

[79] See Lazaridis (2000) on the stereotypes attached to workers' ethnic backgrounds during the 1990s in Greece which, she argues, are clearly linked to wages: 'the good Catholic girls' (Filipinos) earned more than 'the enemy at the doorstep' (Albanians).

[80] This is not her real name. The interview took place on condition of anonymity.

[81] My findings are supported by those of Tastsoglou and Hadjicostanti (2003) who tentatively conclude that European women are given preference in housework, though a hierarchy among them is likely to also exist.

Although this vulnerability was particularly acute amongst undocumented workers, even those with legal status were essentially at the mercy and whims of their employers. 'Low level' everyday abuses such as restrictions on food and mobility were common, as were passports and other documents being 'looked after' and, therefore, effectively confiscated.[82] Seemingly intent on inferiorising and diminishing the women, racist justifications would sometimes creep in: "*what do you need food, you people from Africa?*" Rose was told as the leftovers were thrown in the bin under her hungry gaze. Faith, who had grown up in a system of segregation, had not expected to relive the experience of being black in British-controlled Rhodesia while working in an Athenian household:

> She was not allowing me to sit on a chair that she was having a small *skabo* [stool]. That is where I eat sitting on the *skabo* and when I want to rest I just put my *skabo* in the corner there while they are watching television there. And when I am cleaning the floor I have to mop by hand, not using a mop. I was not using a spoon I was using... you know, separately. But I am the one who is cooking for her!

Once again, we see how irrational fears of contagion and racial prejudice function to justify and legitimise the exclusion of racial Others from certain rights, practices and spaces. It is when these 'out of place bodies' transgress the system of ordering that places them as marginal, that they become read as 'dirty'. "At the margins," Kilomba (2010: 104) notes, "they are not 'dirty', but because the system does not provide a place for them as equals, they become infectiously dirty as soon as they enter the centre, where they are outside their order and therefore perceived as 'dirty'."

Women working in the domestic sphere described how employers would sometimes conveniently fail to recognise the possibility that they may have interests, lives and relationships of their own beyond the workplace (Chapter Six). This failure to see the whole person (or 'complete' subject) beyond the employee was also evident in the way in which women were not permitted to exhibit tastes, style of dress or habits that were similar to those of their employers. Rose now dresses as simply as possible for work because her employers "*don't want to see me wearing clothes like them. I have to show them always that I have nothing – always to have to tell problem.*" Doing otherwise disrupts easy categorisations of the Other and may provoke discomfort, envy and/or suspicion. Women like Rose, who preferred to avoid

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[82] See Rose and Grace's stories in Chapter Four.

conflict, would respond by further constricting themselves so as not to attract attention (taking up 'less space' in another sense). The failure to acknowledge certain spheres of political, social and individual subjectivity is another way in which racism operates (Kilomba 2010). As Essed (1991: 10) observes, within racism individuals become "incomplete subjects" who are not equal to those complete subjects who hold the power to put into practice their own idea of superiority and their sense of being more deserving of certain rights and privileges.

Similarly, exhibiting the same tastes as employers can be perceived as a transgression of boundaries. Though he later apologised, Faith's employer made condescending remarks when she dared to buy herself the same balsamic vinegar, instead of using the (inferior) vinegar they had allocated her. This may seem mundane and insignificant, but as Essed reminds us, it is often in the routine 'normal' practices of the everyday that racism is transmitted. For the dominant group, making comments about 'Africa', implying women should be satisfied with 'simpler' things and making them feel uncomfortable for buying themselves a new handbag (Rose: "*Can't I buy a bag after 12 years?*") may seem 'normal', but for women on the receiving end such attitudes signal hidden currents and ambiguous meanings that inferiorise and other them. These 'rules' of hospitality are another way of letting women know that they remain outsiders. As Derrida (2000: Footnote 11) explains, "The stranger can pass through but cannot stay. He is not given the rights of a resident." It is perhaps precisely because these women have stayed that they must continue to be denied the rights of the resident in order to remind them that they are outsiders.

The presence of African women within the private space of people's homes appears to provoke another kind of anxiety related to their perception as eroticised Others. Andrijasevic (2009) makes the point that female sexuality in particular remains bound by socially 'acceptable' notions of femininity. Hence, the construction of African women as socially 'unacceptable' bodies who are sometimes associated with a perceived uncontrolled sexuality renders their presence within the realm of heterosexual domesticity a different kind of threat. According to Ruth, some female employers "*if they see the younger ones, they don't want to employ them because they are young. They feel maybe their husbands will be attracted to them.*" These readings can cost women increasingly scarce jobs. Take, for example, Lilian's experience:

> I go to agent and they find a work for me in the house, I remember one [Greek woman employer] coming to crying and begging me please don't come to work in my house. My husband likes you, my husband is looking at you. I say what is it my business? My business is go clean your toilets and clean your house, do your chores, and I will go back home. She say no, no, no, you will take my husband. You know insecurity.

As discussed above, so prevalent are stereotypes of African women as sex workers that, when answering ads for 'housekeepers', several women were met by men who treated them as if they were prostitutes – as if advertising for domestic workers was code for sex work. This woman's experience was fairly common:

> He called me, he said you are looking for a job. I said yes. So I went there. He didn't even tell me what he is looking for on the phone. When I get there he told me that you will taking me shower. I say are you sick? He said no. He said I need a woman who will take me a shower, who will treat me this. I said what has happened to you? Are you sick? He said no. I said do you break hand? He said no. Do you break your leg? I said you see my CV [and] what [job] I am looking for before you call me.

In other cases, male members of the household would harass and make inappropriate demands on female employees. May, for instance, was required to only wear mini-dresses as she went about her chores. Often a refusal to comply with these demands and a rejection of sexual 'advances' (i.e. harassment) would, one way or another, cost women their jobs. As another woman explained:

> The men, the young boys, even the old men, the *papous* [granddads] with the wife, they will just come to meet you - they are just coming to abuse you. But if you don't allow them they will tell the wife that this girl they don't like them: '*den einai kalo paidi*' [she's not a good kid]. That is what they are doing.

As these examples illustrate, Kilomba's (2010: 42) observation that within everyday racism "One becomes a deposit for white fears and fantasies from the realm of either aggression or sexuality" was born out time and again in the women's narratives.

5.4 Conclusion

With the onset of the crisis, politicians and media sources in Greece have sought to reaffirm a positive attachment to 'our' imagined community by adopting a discourse of pain and anger that has simultaneously targeted and constituted the Other. Even before these more recent developments, however, the research illustrates that

prevailing definitions of Greek national identity are such that non-white bodies become racialized as 'eternal newcomers'. As a result, African women in Athens are perpetually (re)constructed as non-citizen *metanastoi* by institutional processes, media stories, legal structures and inter-subjective encounters that continue to reduce them to bearers of foreign culture. The absolute link between skin colour and racial origin essentialises them such that their 'blackness' leads back to Africa (Ahmed 2000), and neither long-term residency, citizenship nor even being born in Greece seems to disrupt prevailing notions of (non)belonging. Consequently, however successful women are at navigating the documents landscape (Chapter Four), as the many examples portrayed here show, they continue to be subjected to attitudes that routinely place them as Other. As long as becoming fully integrated at all levels of society in Greece depends on becoming assimilated (on looking and sounding 'native') there can be little space within Greece's dominant normative socio-political community in which the women can be recognised without traces of an exclusionary 'otherness'.

As the research illustrates, these women's combined invisibility and hyper-visibility exposes them to particular kinds of vulnerability in several spheres of their everyday lives. Gendered and racialized stereotypes that misrecognise them routinely seep into their encounters with others as they go about the business of living their lives. They constrain their access to employment and, more often than not, shape the ways in which they are treated once they do manage to secure a job. The association of black female bodies with 'sex work' in the public consciousness appears to have become so strong that women are even subject to sexual harassment on the streets. Where they are not sexualised thus, gendered and racialized stereotypes operate such that they may be perceived, in their 'could be-ness', as a different kind of threat – as potential 'diluters' of Greek national identity. The gazes, words and gestures of people women encounter as they move around the city all too often other them, making them feel seen as inferior, dirty, or morally 'unclean'. An African woman's visibility in Athens not only makes her vulnerable to abuse, but also to police checks and detention. Her belonging is thus always open to dispute and police attitudes often construct her as in need of control, rather than worthy of protection. Overall,

these women's black bodies appear to continue to be reduced to their surfaces and to stereotypes that are constricting and false (Yancy 2013).

This chapter has sought to recognise, acknowledge and problematize the everyday, routine practices that often seem 'normal' to members of dominant Greek society in their treatment of African women. As Essed (1991: 10) argues, "Once we recognize that racial oppression is inherent in the nature of the social order, it becomes clear that the real racial drama is not racism but the fact that racism is an everyday problem." In a context in which being constituted as non-citizen, and racialized as such, remains a powerful force for exclusion, these practices are even less likely to be challenged other than by those on the receiving end who, very often, are not in a position to do so. Nevertheless, women are far from passive victims in all this. They are active participants in the on-going struggle between dominant legal, socio-economic and political structures meant to deal with their presence on the one hand, and the strategies they employ to manage (and counter) them, on the other. The next chapter explores the tactics women are deploying in order to navigate these othering structures and improve the material conditions of their lives.

Chapter Six

ECONOMIC SURVIVAL: Tactics of making do

> "Nobody can predict what is going to happen in any day. We just wake up in the morning, we just thank our God we are able to get up, to do something, to find something to do. And that job we are doing we don't really care how much they are paying us, provided we are getting something to live with. […] As foreigners we don't really have voice."

Ruth, from Nigeria, 23 years in Greece

6.1 Introduction

Already framed as outside the rights and protections associated with national belonging in Greece, African women in Athens have long been aware that they are part of a population for whom the persistence of conditions of life are "in no sense guaranteed" (Butler 2009a: 24-25). In recent years, however, the "politically induced condition" of precarity in which they live has been heightened (ibid). With a fall in total real wages of 10.4 per cent between 2007 and 2015, there has been intensified competition for informal work and a corresponding sharp increase in formal unemployment amongst non-EU citizens (reaching 40 per cent in 2013) (OECD 2015). This situation was made even more difficult at the start of the crisis when the issuing of new work permits was blocked, based upon the logic that there were many unemployed Greeks who should be prioritised over foreigners.[83]

The processes of gendered racialization discussed in the previous chapter intersect with migration status to limit women's choices in the formal labour market. As migrants they are associated with manual, unskilled tasks and, as women, they are largely limited to the confines of private, domestic activities (Kambouri 2008). Hence, though the assumption that domestic work is the 'natural' choice of women must be challenged, these constraints mean that only a few women in this study had worked in other areas of the formal labour market, whereas all had been employed in

[83] This also meant that asylum, in practice, did not include the right to work – a particularly significant problem in Greece because refugees do not receive an allowance (unlike other EU countries where you may be denied the right to work but will be given benefits).

domestic work at some point.[84] Hence, in addressing the question of how women are securing the basic socio-economic conditions of physical persistence necessary for lives to be livable (Butler 2004b, 2009a), this chapter addresses domestic work as an important livelihood strategy, but it does so by reframing it as a survival tactic (albeit the most common and readily available one).

Deploying de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics, this chapter explores how individual women manoeuvre in order to make ends meet. In de Certeau's conceptualisation, strategies are always the purview of power; they presume control and the power to implement them. In contrast, tactics use spontaneity and improvisation and are deployed by those who, like African women in Athens, are given different room for manoeuvre. As Ruth notes in the above quote, unable to "*predict what is going to happen in any day*," women focus instead on finding "*something to do… something to live with*." In a constant state of reassessment as people react to unpredictable changes, the use of tactics crucially implies cooperation as much as competition, reminding us that precariousness implies a "dependency on wider networks of sociality and labor" (Butler 2009a: 14, 24-5). Hence, in examining how women manage their lives and seek to manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities (de Certeau 1984: xix), this chapter contextualises women's tactics of 'making do' not only in the interplay between 'structures of constraint' and the exercise of agency, but also in women's wider networks of sociality and affective relationships (Kabeer 2001).

Moving people's everyday "ways of operating" (de Certeau 1984: xiv, 30) to the centre of the inquiry, this chapter identifies and examines three broad categories of survival tactics: domestic work; ethnic entrepreneurial activities; and alternative coping tactics. From this discussion, we shall see that the idea of a more or less linear trajectory with all its implications of progress and of choice is not applicable to women who appear to live their lives in a context often characterised by instability, insecurity and fluidity. Instead, women are shown to constantly assess, adapt and weigh up their choices, sometimes moving between categories and often deploying multiple tactics at once or over time.

[84] Aisha worked in a restaurant kitchen and Adanech worked in a café.

6.2 Domestic work

Ruth's Story: What can I do?

> What can I do? I need the money to train my children because I was the only person taking care of my children. My husband was not doing anything. He wasn't working so I have to take whatever I see there just to get the money to do whatever I want to do. You understand?

Ruth first migrated from her home in Benin, Nigeria when her husband lost his job. Unable to pay the rent and with five small children to care for, Ruth decided to go to the UK where she found work as a nursing assistant in a hospital. When her UK visa expired, Ruth returned to Nigeria. She both missed her children and wanted to escape her husband, who had become physically and emotionally abusive since joining her. After spending several months with her children in Nigeria, struggling to make ends meet, Ruth decided to return to Europe.

When a series of mishaps prevented Ruth from reaching Denmark as planned, she displayed the resourcefulness and determination with which she would tackle many of the challenges to come. Together with a young Nigerian man she had met on the journey who had a brother living in Athens, Ruth re-routed from Bulgaria to Greece. With the help of her compatriots, Ruth soon found work as a live-in domestic worker.

> I have very bad experience with them [the Greeks], you know, straight away. Like the agent I went to for job, they tell me ok if I give you job I will take half your salary. You understand. I said ok, I agree. They gave me the job. After working for one month they send another person to my employer and then told me they don't want me. You understand? So that they can collect that money again from me. They collect that half-salary from me and they ask me to come back to the office… My employer was surprised because she was not expecting them to call. She didn't complain to them that she doesn't want me. I was not legal. I cannot do anything. You understand? I have to go back home. That same agent did it twice. The other one they did not even pay me the salary at all. You understand? That time I was alone here. Believe me I was confused. I didn't know what to do. But I don't want to go back to Britain because of my husband I don't want to go there. I don't know what to do. I was thinking oh, whatever, however this place is I am going to manage here. I'm not making any attempt to go to any other place. Let me just stay here and see how this place will bring. This was how I stay here…

Despite feeling both exploited and legally vulnerable (her tourist visa had expired), Ruth was determined "*to manage here.*" Once again, she turned to her compatriots for help. The next step Ruth took is almost unheard of for an African woman in Athens:

she moved in with a group of young Nigerian men and began to work alongside them as a street-trader. At first they objected, telling her that "*this job is not good for women*," but Ruth insisted and soon began joining them on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, Ruth also employed a strategy common amongst migrant women and men the world over: she sought out a family member – a cousin who had been living in Greece for seven years. Still in the days before Facebook (it was the early 1990s), the only way to find him was to leave her name and address with the shops in Omonia where African migrants would go to buy goods to sell. Ruth recalls how, after just two weeks, her cousin appeared on her doorstep. *"He say 'my God look at you. How have you been? How have you managed to survive here?!' I say, 'what can I do? I don't have no choice'.*" Things immediately improved for Ruth ("*It changed a lot for me*"). She moved in with him and he immediately started trying to find her a job as a domestic worker, which he considered more appropriate for his older, female cousin. "*I was very pleased,"* Ruth recalls, "*because going out, at times when I come back in the night I'm shaking – during winter you are outside there… It's not easy. So, when I get the job I was very happy. I don't really mind the hours that time. I don't even really mind the money that time.*"

Ruth's experience thus far was, on the whole, fairly typical. Most women find work through co-national networks, or through employment agencies who, as in Ruth's experience, often take advantage of new arrivals' vulnerability. Live-in work is a practical strategy for women who have yet to establish themselves in Greece and for whom the advantages of working in the 'private' sphere are many. Employers are more likely to be lax about documentation than in other more regulated sectors of the economy, speaking English (which the majority of African women in Athens do) is seen as an advantage, and the material needs of board, food and income can be addressed simultaneously. It is not surprising then that nearly all of the African women I met during my research had been live-in domestic workers at some stage. Or, indeed, that it was a form of employment some returned to when things became increasingly difficult during the crisis.

Over the next 18 years Ruth worked for a Greek family as a 'live-out' worker and gradually become more secure. With a regular income and steady job she was eventually able to move out of her cousin's home and bring her children over from

Nigeria. But it was an experience that has greatly embittered her towards the Greek people and the country she now calls home.

> I call them chameleons because in your presence now some of them will just be looking at you, you think they love you whereas they don't have any love for you. I get that experience from the person I work for eighteen good years. I would go there in the morning and come back in the night. Six days a week. The first time I started it was seven to seven… For years. The thing is that I don't have hours. Normal hours supposed to be eight hours. Eight hours I supposed to work. They were paying me for eight. At times I do twelve hours, at times I do ten so I don't really have hours – fixed time. They are in Glyfada. It's almost two hours from here going and coming back everyday. I will go, if I get the bus early, maybe one hour. If I don't get the bus early I will spend more than one hour going. Coming back the same thing…
>
> That boy is like my son, you know. The mother knew very well the boy he loves me because she doesn't stay at home. From morning till night she's at work. Even if she's at home, she doesn't even care about the children. And the person taking care of that boy – maybe if he's sick I will give him medicine, I do everything for him. At times I can't go out, I will wait for the parents to come home before I will go home. […] Before I left there he was about 26. I saw him grow up…
>
> So I was there if anything is happening in the family, I took her as my own sister, you know. Like there was a time she separate with her husband, she's alone. She nearly go crazy if not for me. […] There was a time she did operation […] I stay with her for almost two weeks. I leave my home, I sleep there everyday. At the end of the month she didn't put for me anything *parapano* [extra] for me that… you know. I was just doing it as if she's my sister…
>
> Even when I am sick, that is when I begin to know that these people at times some of them they are heartless people. At that time I was always having problem with my leg. At times when I go to work, she would see my condition, how I am [but] it was that small boy who would look at me and say 'Ruth *fige* [go]. Go home, please.' I would say 'I have job to do…'

After eighteen years, the morning after what Ruth considered a fairly normal, if heated, exchange with her employer's older son, Ruth was fired. *"That is why I said maybe the more you stay with them, the more they don't like you, I don't know. I can't put my head to think of one thing that make her change."* I have heard Ruth tell this story many times and it is always a remark made by the son's girlfriend that appears to have stung her most. The young woman asked her boyfriend why he was listening to this '*iperetra*' [servant girl]. "*The son was very rude. I make him to realise that just as I am working in the house doesn't make me to be a slave. I am working as any normal human being to earn a living – that doesn't make me to be a slave. You don't talk to me any way you like.*" The next morning, after "*eighteen good years*" all relations between Ruth and the family she had been spending more time with than her

own ended. "*I am the person taking care of my family, paying my rent, paying school fees for my children so it was very difficult for me. I was lucky at that time she was firing me I was having indefinite stay. So I was not having problem with that.*"

Conditions of Employment

Ruth's story raises a number of issues that are common to many African women's experiences of domestic work in Greece. It also gives some indication of the complex processes underlying, and shaping, women's use of domestic work as a means of survival. For some, like Rose, domestic work may indeed be part of a pre-planned livelihood strategy (Chapter Four). For most, however, it is less a choice than the result of a tactical move in the face of gendered and racialized constraints – a way to meet material needs where other, perhaps more desirable options, remain foreclosed to them. As Faith, explained:

> What else can I do in Greece? That's the only job you can do. Even if you have a qualification there is nothing you can do. I am a qualified history teacher. But I can't teach in Greece. The Greeks they don't want to employ foreigners, you know?

Due to the fact that domestic work is arguably the most common form of employment amongst migrant women, there is a tendency to implicitly depict them as lacking other skills and qualifications, or as somehow predisposed towards performing this kind of work. This not only conceals, but also reinforces, the processes that stereotype, inferiorise and exclude them in the first place. It also obscures women's agency and fails to recognise diverse experiences of domestic work itself, as well as of other livelihood tactics.

Domestic work is characterised by a number of features that make it stand apart from other areas of migrant employment, many of which are evident in Ruth's narrative (see Triandafyllidou 2013b). Perhaps most obvious of these is that the work is performed in the 'private' space of people's homes (see figures 10 and 12). Considered beyond 'the gaze of the state', it notoriously escapes any form of public labour inspection (Vaiou and Stratigaki 2008). Consequently, despite a ruling by the Supreme Court of Greece that recognises the labour rights of every worker without

any discrimination (whether of irregular status or not),[85] in reality neither employers nor employees take the law into consideration.[86] Irrespective of legal status, issues such as when and how much salary is paid, working hours, tasks to be performed, holidays, sick leave and overtime are treated as a matter for negotiation.[87] While this may be no different to most employer-employee relations, in the realm of domestic work, the absence of a written contract, and a flexibility and unequal distribution of power that favours the employer, often results, as it did for Ruth, in women finding themselves in a situation in which chores proliferate, working hours lengthen and overtime goes unpaid.

The newfound diligence of Greece's infamously lax tax authorities has further disincentivised employers from hiring women with a formal written contract. According to experienced immigration lawyer, Angeliki Serafeim, this is because the increased likelihood that investigations will result from declaring anything that looks remotely like 'a luxury expense' (such as hiring a cleaner) further demotivates employers already disinclined to pay their share of employees' social security (IKA) costs. Employers, Serafeim added, would have to make 100,000 euro a year to feel that it is ok to declare 300 euro to a cleaner every month. This is particularly problematic given that *ensima*[88] [social security stamps] also relate to other rights, such as pension entitlement (where several thousand *ensima* are required) and gaining access to a number of benefits (such as a loan subsidy for buying a house).

Figure 10: *At work* (photo: visual diaries project)

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85 Decision No. 1148/2004 protects the rights of migrant workers irrespective of their legal status and Decision No. 1955/2007 concerns the right domestic workers have to leave.

86 This finding is supported by research done with NGOs and trade unions (FRA 2011). It is also replicated across several European countries (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2013).

87 For irregular migrant domestic workers in Greece, only right to remuneration exists. They do not have regulated overtime pay, fair wages, limitation of max working hours, sick leave or insurance against work accidents as they do in several other European countries (Triandafyllidou 2013b).

88 One *ensimo* represents one day of work (except for 'heavy-duty' work where it is two).

For those who are already vulnerable – who are, for example, ill and cannot work, or are simply too old to do so – the result is deeper precariousness and further exclusion. Despite recent attempts to turn employers into 'everyday border guards' (Yuval-Davis 2015) by threatening fines as high as 10,500 euro, employers continue to prefer to hire women completely 'off the books'. Such fines have yet to be enforced in relation to domestic work. In general, no official body has tackled domestic labour exploitation in earnest because it takes place inside the 'private' domain. The only possible way for an investigation to take place is for the domestic worker to make a complaint. This is incredibly unlikely not only given the precarious position most of these workers find themselves in, but also because it is generally assumed that IKA (the social insurance body) would refuse to investigate inside people's homes.

Women working without a contract are even more vulnerable to exploitation. For instance, the norm for both live-in and live-out domestic workers is to get one day off per week, which many women complain is already not enough. Many 'live-ins', however, are also expected to fulfil both morning and evening tasks even on their day off, and so the reality is that it gets whittled down to only half a day. "*This is not,*" Grace pointed out, "*a 'repo' [day off].*" Furthermore, that this day off usually falls on a Sunday means that (other than going to church) they are unable to take care of their own affairs. This is how Ruth explained the situation:

> It's not an easy job. The thing is that we are from Africa it's like we have that gift from God. We are very tolerant, we are very patient, we are very endurance that is why we are able… We know the reason why we leave our home to come outside so we have that endurance and the strength to take whatever we see. It's not an easy thing. Like if you are working in the house some of them stay there they don't go out. Some of them work Monday till Monday without any off. Some of them have only two hours to come out and go out. Some of them have one hour. Some have one day. So it's not an easy thing but that is the only way we can survive in the country.

The fact that in all other sectors workers are entitled to two days off only serves to intensify this feeling of exploitation (see Maroufof 2013).

In the context of Greece's current crisis, the high proportion of African women working in the informal domestic care sector has made them particularly vulnerable. Salaries for new positions have fallen to as low as 400-450 euro per month for full-time, with some employers advertising live-in positions for no wage at all, citing 'food and board' as sufficient remuneration.[89] High unemployment has decreased what little bargaining power women may, in theory, have had and, at a time when fewer domestic worker positions are available, a clear preference for women of other nationalities has further constricted demand.[90] Though, in the past, a common trend has been for women to 'progress', as Ruth did, from live-in to live-out positions, for many women the recent crisis has disrupted even this vague notion of a 'career trajectory'. Far from 'progressing' in the career she did not want to embark on in the first place, at 53 years old and a grandmother, Hana has been forced to return to working as a live-in carer six days a week. Hana echoed Ruth's comments, when she explained:

Figure 11: *Working as a live-in carer* (photo: visual diaries project)

> We are working just to survive. There's no favourite job here, you know. We just try to comfort ourself because when you don't have any option you just can't sit down beating yourself, you know. Now things is getting really hard. Really hard and it's really… Can you imagine after almost 30 years I'm coming in to do a live-in job because jobs are difficult?

With her husband now working only two days a week as a carpenter due to job cuts, a return to live-in work was the only way they could see to make ends meet.

When I bumped into Grace who, like Hana, had returned to live-in work due to "*hardship*" (her word) only a few months before, the physical impact that this kind

[89] Personal communication from a social worker at the Praxis Day Care Centre in central Athens.

[90] Lazaridis (2000) found that the stereotypes attached to domestic workers in the 1990s according to ethnic background were clearly linked to wages: 'the good Catholic girls' (Filipinas) earned more than 'the enemy at the doorstep' (Albanians). As Albanians have become more integrated and increasing numbers of other (non-white) Others have entered Greece, African women have remained at the bottom of this value-hierarchy.

of work had already had on her at this later stage of life was immediately apparent. Exhausted and thin, Grace explained that in addition to performing her regular cooking, cleaning and shopping tasks, she was also expected to care for visiting grandchildren ("*Feeding them, changing them, playing with them*") and to 'fill in' for absent co-workers (including watering the "*very, very big*" compound of fruit, vegetables and flowers). "*And my normal duty also is there for me,*" she added. "*Waiting for me. So later I finish work let me say two o'clock before I sleep. It's too much.*"

When conditions of work become unbearable and women are unable to negotiate better terms ("*What can I do?*" Grace despaired), women's main strategy appears to be to change employer. Well-informed and well-supported by UAWO (who put her in touch with a free lawyer) and the Greek Council for Refugees (who have helped her with her documents and finding employment), Grace soon quit. For others, however, a lack of access to public social safety nets and concerns regarding document acquisition and renewal mean that they will often go to extraordinary lengths to remain employed. Women who choose to leave their work risk being given bad references, losing unpaid wages and, in the case of live-ins, even homelessness. All of which can push women into illegal and/or dangerous working arrangements (see Kasimis 2012).

Legal status does not, however, appear to be a determining factor in shaping the living and working conditions of domestic workers in Greece. Barring the threat of deportation, I would argue that the following observations made by Karakatsanis and Swarts (2003: 249-250) regarding 'illegal' domestic workers apply more generally:

> "What 'choices' these women have are particularly unattractive. They can work at exploitative wages in potentially abusive conditions – running the risk that someday their employer might tire of them, refuse to pay them wages they are owed, and report them to the police for deportation as illegals. They can, if they wish, refuse to work under such conditions –and thereby go unemployed and probably back into the same potentially dangerous situations elsewhere."

Even with legal status women are essentially at the mercy and whims of their employers, who are fully cognizant of the power that the women's marginalised position in Greek society avails them.

This sense of insecurity and lack of choices is further intensified by the absence of formal redress. Unlike Grace, most women do not seem to feel that

effective help can come from NGOs, lawyers or the authorities. Nor do they perceive themselves as being in a position capable of bargaining or having their rights respected (see also Triandafyllidou 2013b). On the rare occasions when women do make formal complaints against their employers (where they are not put off by Greece's notoriously long and costly bureaucratic procedures), the likelihood is that investigations will be shut down under pressure from angry former employers – as was Ruth's experience. "*This place is even worse than Africa*," Ruth concluded. "*It's better for you not to go to the Labour Office because they are not active. You can go and report a case to them. Once the employer call them, the case is closed*." Even women who have not experienced this disappointment first-hand learn of the ineffectiveness of the system in ensuring justice for people 'like them'. This fuels a general sense that there is no point. Powerless and unprotected, African women are reminded, yet again, that the system is not 'for' them.

'Women's Work' and Emotional Labour

As feminists have long argued, the assumption that women perform the tasks associated with the reproductive sphere 'naturally' as opposed to 'skilfully' (which involves training and reward), depreciates the work women do as wives and mothers (Enloe 2014; Wong 2012).[91] It also devalues the work that women do as domestic workers. Assumed to already perform such tasks (voluntarily and unpaid) as wives and mothers, domestic workers are not recognised as 'real workers'. Consequently, a 'de facto deskilling' (Kapsalis 2007, cited in Triandafyllidou 2013b) occurs, which makes the lack of other employment opportunities particularly difficult for women who have given up 'better' jobs (of greater prestige and recognised skill) in their countries of origin. After giving up her job as a secretary in Sierra Leone's Ministry of Interior to join her husband in Athens in 1986, Hana found herself in a society that was not only relatively unused to migrants, but also perceived them as temporary labourers who were tolerated only so long as they were needed to do the jobs that

[91] Wong (2012) convincingly argues that traditional gendered ideologies construct domesticity as a feminine virtue, which can act to circumscribe women to the household and discourage men from doing 'women's work' as if it is inherently less valuable.

Greeks would not. Hana discovered that: *"you don't have any administration job for foreigners. You just go to this house-cleaning. This type of job… So it took me time to get adjust.*"

Several women described suffering a similar disappointment upon arrival in Greece. Lauretta remembers her feelings vividly:

> Like me when I came to Greece, I find my country people, the most thing that shock me when I ask them what they are doing for living they said we are working in houses. I was so shocked nearly drop dead.

Growing up, Lauretta's father would warn her that "*working in houses*" was the terrible fate that befalls girls who get pregnant before finishing school: "*You want to clean houses?!"* he would threaten when she misbehaved. A similar dismay was expressed by Adanech when she realised, soon after divorcing the Greek man she had left Ethiopia to marry, that she would have to work as a 'housekeeper' to make a living. Despite finding a job after only three weeks and working consistently for two Greek families over five years who were "*not good or bad,"* Adanech describes it as:

> the worst that has happened in my life because I never worked like that. As long as I was growing up I remember that the water glass I drank from I didn't lift it from there because we always had women in our house. And for me to show me how I should clean, iron, cook, to thrown rubbish out, to take the dog out it nearly drove me crazy. It was very difficult. Very, very difficult.

Thus the perception of domestic work as low status may be central to women's own understandings and experiences of it, and to how they feel about the 'choices' available to them. Indeed, some women come to embody what Anthias (1998, 2002) refers to as "contradictory locations". Migration to Europe may have raised their status back home (particularly when remittances are involved), but it may also have simultaneously confined them to a reality in which they have little option but to do menial, undervalued domestic work.

Another feature that characterises domestic work is that it involves tasks that are personal in nature, such as caring for the elderly and the young (see figures 11 and 12), cleaning homes and taking care of personal belongings (Triandafyllidou 2013b). Ruth's narrative, along with those of many other women in this study, suggest that a high level of intimacy between employer and employee is involved even where unwanted or merely implicit. When this leads to the development of "pseudo-family" or "quasi-family" (Maroufof 2013) relationships, the perception of many of the chores involved as 'naturally' feminine combined with a blurring of

private life with work is in danger of further obscuring women's labour. As a result, some women are exposed to higher levels of exploitation – particularly when the increase of tasks goes unnoticed or, as in Ruth's case, are recast as "emotional labour" (Hochschild 1983).

When her employer's son had a motorbike accident, it was Ruth who attended his hospital bedside for almost two months (filling yet another gap in the Greek welfare system). During this period, she not only worked longer hours than usual – arriving at the hospital at seven o'clock every morning, before attending to her normal work in the house, but also sacrificed time with her own children.[92] Ruth also describes the way she cared for her employer, supporting her through depression, illness and divorce, as worthy of her own sister: "*I just take her like my own sister*." Her employer, however, had nothing to do with Ruth's children and was, in Ruth's words, "*heartless*" towards her own physical suffering. Thus, the needs of her 'pseudo-family' were expected to take precedent over those of her own family. In other cases, women were also prevented from attending to their own needs and those of their loved ones by unsociable working times (night shifts, starting early and ending very late, working on Sundays) and inflexibility on the part of employers when women need to be absent for personal reasons (see also Triandafyllidou 2013b). There was often an expectation, in Ruth's words, that "*even if we are sick we manage to go to job. If we can wake up to go to toilet we can work*."

Figure 12: *Elderly women at work* (photo: visual diaries project)

[92] Ruth was legal at this time and so, according to Greek employment law, should be working only 40 hours per week with any extra hours considered overtime. In no instance did I hear of employees receiving official overtime pay.

Everyday Tactics of Resistance

Women find many tactical ways to cope with the challenges working in the domestic sphere presents. Rose, for example, deliberately suppresses modes of dress and style in order to avoid unwelcome comments. Experience has taught her that employers prefer her to behave "*as if I have nothing*" and so she presents herself accordingly. Others create ways to resist and rebel which stop short of outright defiance, deploying instead what Scott (1985: 22) describes as: "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups". During my fieldwork I heard many examples of such everyday 'tactics of resistance' (de Certeau 1984). A particularly gleeful account was given one afternoon at the UAWO office to myself, Ruth and Lauretta by Daisy, a petite, kind-faced Kenyan woman who become so fed up with being told how to water her employer's plants correctly that she took to putting a little bleach in the water, slowly killing them. This satisfied her desire for protest where she felt unable to voice any, while also ridding her of the problem. Another woman, May, bragged that she had managed to get out of having to take her employer's dog for walks by beating it so badly that from that day on it would cower in the corner whenever she entered the room. The employer, interpreting this as a simple aversion on the dog's part, never asked her to take the dog out again. Thus, May got her revenge for being given a task she considered beneath her, and manipulated the situation to suit her, all the while maintaining the illusion of compliance.

With less "creative elbow-room" than the average citizen, some women display what de Certeau (1984: xvii) describes as "deviousness, fantasy, or laughter". Lauretta, for instance, has a more open, yet equally mischievous, way of unsettling those who treat her unfairly, as the following anecdote shows.

> I remember one woman I was – they send me to her from the office to go and work for her. The moment she saw me she said 'poh!' She took the telephone and called the office. 'Why did you send me this black woman?!' I said '*stasou, stasou*!' [Wait, wait!] [Laughs]. I said 'who you are telling me black woman, they send black woman to you?' I said 'did I make myself so I have to pay for that? Or you made yourself, you have to pay for that? I don't mind your colour. Why do you mind my own colour, eh? Do you ask me if I know the job or not? If I can treat you more nice or what? You take telephone and start calling the people.' So, this woman she finally agree with me. Believe me, she change her mind and she employed me in the job. You understand.

Through frank but good-humoured confrontation, Lauretta secured herself the job. With a characteristic boldness rare amongst women who are dependent on

employers for their means of survival, Lauretta continued to use humour to challenge her employer's racist assumptions.

> And one day she was asking me, she said 'in Africa when people die, what do you do with the body?' I said 'you know what we do with the body? We take the body, we put it in this *Pasxa* [Easter] – you know the way you put this *arni* [lamb]… [laughs]… I said the way they put the *arni* [on the spit]. I said we have one big one [spit], we put it from the waist to bring it on the head and then we begin to roast it. We have our *krasi* [wine] – our local *krasi*. We begin to dance all night and sing and by the time they say the day break we finish everything'. She said 'ooooooh'. She said 'whaaat?!' I said 'yes, that is what…'

By concretising the warped racist fantasies, however ill-defined or implicit, that informed "*such kind of question*," Lauretta encouraged her employer to see how ridiculous they were. Acting *within* what Scott (1985: 33) refers to as the "symbolic straitjacket," Lauretta was able to teach her employer a lesson about racial prejudice and fear. These tactics of resistance (and revenge) are important because they serve to remind women that they have some power and control over their employment situations. As hooks (1984: 45) notes, "Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. They cannot afford to see themselves solely as 'victims' because their survival depends on continued exercise of whatever personal powers they possess."

In the current climate, and with other areas of employment foreclosed to them, more and more women are creating new ways to eke out a living. A range of activities that can, broadly-speaking, be referred to as 'ethnic entrepreneurship' are being undertaken, individually and collectively, within homes, in neighbourhoods and at the increasing number of public events taking place across the city. These are discussed in the following section.

6.3 Ethnic entrepreneurship in times of crisis

Pearl's Story: Floating on the air

I had heard about Pearl long before I met her – hers was a success story. For many years, Pearl had run a restaurant with her brother, which she eventually took over when he left Greece for the UK. "*I really enjoyed what I was doing – cooking and serving people.*"

Things were going so well that Pearl expanded her business to include a mini market and another store. After she was injured in an accident at work, her husband persuaded her to move the restaurant to a different, less central area. Pearl deeply regrets the decision to move. It led to a two year wait for a new license, during which time Pearl's residence permit expired. It was the beginning of her undoing:

> the debt, the rent, the *eforia* [tax], everything. So everything had clashed. And then I tried, I really tried, I fought to make the place work. Even when he [her husband] left in 2009, because he left when things started to go down. I tried, I tried to organize live music, which worked. I discovered that our people needed something to take them – to make them feel at home. But also the area now betrayed me. After the license came you know people were complaining of the noise. They reported me to the police. I was arrested on too many occasions. I mean even with the slightest noise police will come, with the live music license.

Pearl is now a businesswoman without a business. She used words like "*paralysed*" and "*stuck*" to describe her situation. Blocked from permit renewal (she has been given a 'temporary' permit) due to crippling debts she cannot even apply for jobs as that would require a change in her insurance status. Meanwhile her debts keep mounting.

> Rejection [of her permit renewal] now cannot allow you to go further. Makes you floating on the air. You cannot get a job. You cannot change the business status from TEVE to IKA because you need to be legal for you to do that.[93] You understand? […] You know they put you in a helpless situation where you cannot move, you cannot do anything. Yet you have so many things you can do to contribute and also pay your debt. You understand – paralysed. You cannot pay your debt, the debt is accumulating, you cannot renew your permit, you cannot work… I mean zero. Zero level. That is bad. And also it wasn't my fault. How can license of a shop take two years to come out? It's not also right. What takes it so long?

[93] IKA is insurance paid by employers to cover all employees. TEVE refers to the insurance scheme for self-employed.

No longer able to run her business, but with a talent for cooking and a wide network of friends and acquaintances, Pearl has turned to a more fluid, flexible form of ethnic entrepreneurship. She now holds informal events where she sells her Nigerian food and has set up a Facebook page to help advertise them.

Solidarity and The 'Exotic' Other

As Pearl's story shows, such is the positioning of an African woman in Athens, that even after 25 years living and working in Greece, successfully running several businesses, she can be left "*floating on the air*". Caught in a bureaucratic loophole, Pearl "*cannot do anything*". In contrast to the "proper" space of the citizen which "allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances," African women in Athens are increasingly resorting to the kinds of ethnic entrepreneurial activities that can be understood as what de Certeau calls the "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (de Certeau 1984: 36). All too aware that the options available to them are constrained and somewhat determined by their position as non-citizen Other, women like Pearl are drawing on "wider networks of society" (Butler 2009a: 24-5) to create new space for manoeuvre. In an environment of uncertainty and unpredictable change, the 'weak', lacking the presumption of control, respond – sometimes even succeeding in manipulating events "in order to turn them into 'opportunities'" (de Certeau 1984: xix).

Figure 13: *Nigerian food-stall at the Pan-African Festival, 19th April, 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

From the growing solidarity movement, a variety of initiatives have emerged either as part of organized events (such as the Pan-African Festival – figures 13 and 14) or as the result of increased networking and collaboration between different groups. For instance, several participants became involved with OneLoveKitchen while I was in Athens. This initiative, involving people from diverse international backgrounds, organized food events around Athens. Profits were split equally among the cooks who, at the time, came from Senegal, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Sudan.[94] Forced to navigate a terrain "organized by the law of a foreign power" (de Certeau 1984: 37), African women are thus finding a legitimate way of being through their participation in the growing number of events, demonstrations and festivals taking place across the city. Recognising an appetite for their 'exoticness' in what hooks (1992: 21) has appropriately described as "the commodification of Otherness", they are turning their ethnic and cultural traditions and identities into a unique selling point.

In addition to these collaborative efforts of 'making do' (which de Certeau calls 'bricolage'), opportunities also arise from women's "isolated actions" within the enemy's field of vision (de Certeau 1984: 37). An example of this is the Facebook page Pearl has set up to advertise the 'exotic food events' she now holds whenever, and wherever, she can. Paradoxically, the particularities of the Greek context that create problems for women who, like Pearl, are unable to secure either legal status or employment may also give them space to manoeuvre (as was also evident in the documentation issues discussed in Chapter Four). As Lazaridis and Koumandraki (2003) argue, it is the peculiarities of the Greek case (large informal economy, high rates of self-employment and multiple forms of exclusion) that encourage migrants to become 'survival' entrepreneurs, "to strive to create a business of their own in the 'twilight zone' of the Greek economy where they often carry out extra-legal activities in order to 'survive'". After 25 years, this is an environment that Pearl is familiar with and so, far from hopeless, she insists that by "*talking to the right people solutions might be found.*" In more recent years, the crisis has also opened up 'solidarity-spaces' like Nosotros – a 'free social space' in the centre of Athens – as venues for events like OneLoveKitchen and, later (upon my recommendation), Pearl's 'exotic food events'.

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[94] See http://options.limited/about/about-options/ for more information on this initiative.

Such spaces have proved vital for women's entrepreneurial efforts; as Pearl put it, "*The first thing is to have a place*." Thus, along with growing numbers of people who lack the "mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place" (de Certeau 1984: 36), Pearl is finding other ways to get by.

Flexibility and Claiming Recognition

Though women's entrepreneurial activities are first and foremost about survival, to frame women merely as "survival entrepreneurs" (Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2003) would be to deny both the wider significance of such activities and the complex identity processes that shape them. Thinking translocationally deepens our understanding of the complex processes behind women's ethnic entrepreneurial activities and the tactical choices they make. It reminds us that tactics exist in a highly political environment of restrictive immigration and employer controls that can constrain the use of other work as a livelihood strategy (Briones 2009). It also reminds us that tactical decisions are shaped by a number of intersectional factors. They are shaped by gender and racialization, as well as by age, stage of life, years in Greece, family status, education and so on.

What kinds of tactics of 'making do' women deploy will also be influenced by transnational identities and gender norms from 'back home'. This reminds us that, as much as they are determined by dominant material conditions, the tactics available to women are also regulated by power relations within households. It is not unusual, for example, for husbands to prefer that their wives not work outside the home – seeing it as a matter of pride (and perhaps also of control) that they be sole breadwinner. One way for women to meet these demands is to combine parental and conjugal roles with entrepreneurial activities conducted alone or with other women under the heading 'women's work'. The possibility for making handicrafts at home to later sell at festivals, events and online, also has many practical advantages. Faith, who supplements the income she receives for domestic work three days a week in this way, explained:

> you can do it in your house. Yeah. You don't need that we have to go to the office and do the job. Whenever time you are doing, whenever you are watching television, just do it. […] Thank God for technology…. I can't go and sit in the street, the police

> will catch me. […] I am scared. Yeah, so if anyone say he want something I just say this my card, go to Facebook. Or you can call me then I can do whatever you want me to do.

Thus, such activities satisfy women's own needs (material and otherwise) without putting them at risk, or contravening the gender expectations and responsibilities placed on them as wives and mothers. For older women, like Ruth, who are both reluctant and less able to do the physically arduous work required of domestic workers, a more flexible means of self-employment has several advantages. No longer the younger woman who, alone in Athens, was free, and physically able, to endure the life of a street trader, preparing food for one-off events, such as OneLoveKitchen, is better suited to Ruth's physical ability and to her responsibilities as primary carer of her eight-year-old grandson (whom she often has in tow).

Figure 14: *Handicrafts on sale at Pan-African Festival, 15th April, 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

This type of activity also appeals to the ideologies of Ruth's generation and place. Since losing her job, Ruth has become increasingly politicised and, with more free-time these days, welcomes the opportunity to simultaneously supplement her household income and address the injustices she has witnessed living in Athens all these years. Pearl articulated a similar aim in her desire to sell food that people "*in all capacity will be able to eat. Not like before when it was specific from ten euros. But this one if you have from three euro – if you don't have you can eat.*" These efforts may appear to be no more than 'making do', but they are also always political (Secor 2004). Recognising the connection between social recognition and redistribution (Fraser 2000), women sell exoticised goods and services as a way to not only earn a livelihood, but also claim rights and attain prestige (Petronoti 2010). Through tactical uses of 'traditional culture', African women in Athens are reminding those around them that theirs are lives worth living; that they are creative and skilful individuals with rich traditions,

cultures and cuisines; that they are not the threatening, dangerous Others the mainstream media and politicians would have us believe; and, that they do only merely exist to clean houses and look after the nation's sick, elderly and young.

Overall, women's experiences of ethnic entrepreneurship tell, once more, less of a progression over time in which they gradually 'move up' and accumulate money, and more of a holding operation, managing and juggling responsibilities so that they will be better able to provide for themselves and for their families (including those 'back home') (Cornwall 2007). Women's narratives were littered with words like "*fight*", "*surviving*", "*managing*", "*trying*" and "*struggle*" to describe their daily lives. This is how African women's ethnic entrepreneurship in Athens should be understood: as part of an everyday struggle to make enough money to survive and to feed, clothe and educate their children. "*Life is a continuous process*," Pearl explained. "[It is a] *fighting process – and you must fight until you get to where you are going. Until you achieve your dream.*" As Pearl knows, however, dreams can be achieved and then slip away, and so women's efforts should not be confused with strategic choices that always lead to 'progress'. They are, mostly, a series of tactical moves that are the product of dynamic tension between a series of constraints and opportunities (Briones 2009). Moreover, in the current climate, if successful they just about enable women and their families to scrape by.

Even in conditions that appear to be defined by dependency, women work hard, exercising their agency and deploying a variety of tactics in order to survive. These 'coping tactics', which include using social networks, forming tactical relationships with others and finding ways to access the support provided by Athens' growing number of NGOs and civil society organizations, are discussed in the following section.

6.4 Coping tactics

Nneoma's Story (part one): If I didn't tell you, you would not know

Nneoma remembers the exact date she left Nigeria to join her husband in Athens, where he had been working as a CD/DVD street seller for several years. It was 19th November, 2010 – a date she now looks back at with regret. At the time she knew little of life in Europe, or even what her husband had been doing there. All she knew was that he had been doing well. So well, in fact, that he had paid for her to finish school and thus fulfil the dreams she had had since the age of five, when she had started working, unpaid, in the misguided belief that her employers would one day send her to school. Soon after she arrived in Greece, however, things took a turn for the worse. Misinformed and taken advantage of by some compatriots, her husband had wasted nearly all of his savings on trying to bring Nneoma over illegally – before realising that he could do so legally, and at considerably less cost, on his residence permit. The timing could not have been worse. Economic crisis had hit Greece in 2009. People were buying fewer CDs and the police (who had previously been somewhat erratic in their attempts to stop illegal street trade) had begun to clamp down on street-sellers and migrants. These developments not only threatened his livelihood and, therefore, his legality, but also that of his new bride and the children they were soon to have.

> His paper die.[95] [In] 2011 March his paper was cancelled because he couldn't pay IKA. The same month I came to Greece I took in for my first daughter [became pregnant]. He was not working. I came new, I was not working. I don't know anyone. And so we are homeless. Don't have apartment. We were living from one *plateia* [square]. When it was night we would find a place to sleep.
>
> We don't eat but I can remember once in a while we can go to Carrefour [supermarket] to stand by, you know every night they throw bread. Maybe the bread that will expire tomorrow they will throw them away so we have to take it. At that time we have to go to those bin to pick for clothes to wear. But if we pick we will wash them. You understand? We will try –sometimes we will go to organization [day care centres] where we can pass for the day and we will come out. So this has been our experience.
>
> I think for months, for years I went to those bins – from one bin to the other and I pick. And I used to do it very late in the night so that people that know me will not see me and laugh.

[95] Interestingly, many of the women spoke of their documents in this way – as a living thing that needed to be kept alive. Once no longer fed with money and IKA [insurance] stamps, they would die (see Chapter Four).

> So when I had Adamma [her first daughter] a friend took us to his house. We manage to sleep in a room – me, my husband and him. A small room. One bed. So, we keep going till I have Chidera [her second daughter]. So when I have Chidera I started going to organization for a help because till then I didn't know there is something like organization that will help.
>
> I was still pregnant so I went to Allodapon to seek for asylum. So I was very lucky enough they give me pink card that enables me to go to the hospital without permit. Because at that time I cannot feed well because we don't have money to buy food. We don't have money to buy drugs [medicine]. We didn't know by then with a child I can go for Alexandra [Hospital] on the fifth floor to give me some medicine for the child. We didn't know. So things were so tough. Everyday my husband is crying, I am crying and we cannot go back because we don't have paper. You get it?

Social Networks and Relationships

By the time I met Nneoma at EPEK's Greek language classes, she had three daughters under the age of five and was still struggling to survive. Not that it showed. Now familiar with her new environment, and determined to provide as comfortable and secure a home as she could for her family, Nneoma had developed multiple coping tactics. As her narrative shows, first she tapped into her husband's social networks for information about other sources of support, and gradually, over time, she became increasingly proactive in building her own networks, primarily through NGOs and people she met through her church.

As for so many African migrants in Athens, faith has been a crucial blanket of support in adversity for Nneoma. She finds strength and solace in the belief that "*it is going to be ok […] God has been so faithful to us, I am telling you. He is with us to let me to be strong. Even when I am not supposed to be strong."* Though for Nneoma church is first and foremost an important spiritual space, the links she has formed through her church associations also provide a more worldly form of assistance.[96] For many African migrants in Athens, these churches provide rare social and communal spaces, and this includes the exchanging of favours and the sharing of practical advice and information about jobs, housing, changing laws and NGO services. For those most in need, collections are made for permit fees, rent and even burials. In recent years, however, the ability of these churches to provide help has waned under the economic pressures and insecurities brought about by the crisis. African churches

[96] The 'African Church' as a space of shared belonging is discussed in Chapter Seven.

continue to raise what money they can, but there is no longer the capacity there once was.[97] This depletion was reflected across migrant communities. For instance, though it was once common practice for new arrivals to be hosted by co-nationals, as both Ruth and Nneoma were, this has become increasingly rare in the current climate of struggle. As Pearl, who used to feed and also sometimes house new arrivals "*until they found their person*," concluded sadly: "*but now I cannot do that because I don't have it*."

Nneoma's story shows just how important networking and building human capital is in enabling people to counter the abjectifying structures of the Greek state, the negative reactions of some of its citizens, and a lack of other resources. Potentially vulnerable to different sorts of hostile and abusive treatment, Nneoma, like so many other African women, has found various ways to build her own security. These include the resident strategies discussed in Chapter Four (Nneoma applied for asylum so as to 'semi-regularise' her status and that of her children with the 'pink card'), ways of meeting practical needs such as food, clothes, accommodation and childcare, as well as less tangible modes of support. As Christopoulou and Lazaridis (2011) point out, as a latent mechanism of support, social networks provide a space of security and ultimate resort, if not in practice then at least in women's minds. The strength of these networks lies in their *ad hoc* potential to be summoned upon when necessity demands; it does not lie in its efficiency nor can it be measured by its capacity to deliver quantitative results (ibid). Thus, in their ability to improvise and respond, these social networks can be understood as a form of group 'bricolage' that are made up of individual women's (and men's) tactics of cooperation in order to help one another.

The more time I spent with Nneoma and her family, the more multi-layered I understood her coping tactics to be. I was surprised, for instance, to learn that she was a volunteer at an organization that recycles children's clothes for those who, like her, cannot afford new ones:

> the day I went there for them to help me, the woman love me too much. She said 'I like you. My spirit accepted you. Would you mind to be coming for once to help the organization?' So I started going there for one year now, but they don't pay me. But at

[97] This erosion of networks of support to new arrivals was confirmed to me by a psychologist at Babel. She described a 'domino effect' whereby people, who had often already paid vast sums of money to get to Greece, ran out of the little extra they had put by to cover them until they found work without having been able to secure a job. No longer able rely on compatriots to support them (as they are also struggling), these people are in an even more dire situation than in the past.

> least there I bring clothes for my children for free. So now she gave me key. I open there, I stay alone, I attend to people. It's a trust, you understand […] Sometimes the woman will give me 10 euro to cook my African food. Sometimes she will give me five euro to buy card [phone credit].

As I got to know Nneoma better, I realised that there were several people in her life who had taken a liking to her and her family and so did what they could to help. In addition to the small sums of money the owner of this organization occasionally gave her, she was also given free bread by the local baker ("*for the girls*"), and had even been sent a new mobile phone and laptop by an English woman she prays with over the phone. This woman was introduced to her over the internet by a Nigerian friend who suggested Nneoma help her through her difficulties by praying with her. "*When she have problem she will call me, I will tell her one or two things and the problem disappeared. So she bought this phone for me. She bought this laptop for me […] maybe send me 100 euro. She helps me a lot. […] She is very great.*" In today's increasingly globalised and connected world, social networks cross multiple transnational boundaries in ways that are far more complex than bilateral links between 'host' and 'home' countries. They can also, it would seem, include relationships with people never met who come together in mutually beneficial exchanges of material, spiritual and emotional support.

Nneoma also dabbles, where her limited resources and time allow, in the kind of ethnic entrepreneurial activities discussed above – reminding us once more that such categories are neither singular nor fixed. A recent plan involved buying a supply of *fanelakia* [vests] at 50 cents each from a Pakistani man she met, to sell for one euro at a local market in Halandri. It is worth noting that this is not only an example of how women tactically manoeuvre to make ends meet, but also of how the freedom and urgent necessity of new environments can result in shifts in gender roles and responsibilities. This was an enterprise that Nneoma's husband would almost certainly have undertaken were he not undocumented. Instead, however, it was he who stayed home with their three daughters, while Nneoma trekked to the suburbs "*to sell*". Nneoma's family thus finds ways to cope by working together. As women get older, adult-children become part of survival strategies by, for example, contributing to the household purse (as Ruth's daughter now does); but even at this young age, Nneoma's three daughters have their use – they transform their father from a 'dangerous, single black man' into a family man with responsibilities: "*They*

can't stop him with child," Nneoma explained, "*but once he is alone he may fall into danger so he always goes out with them*." When it comes to understanding women's coping tactics, husbands, friends, other migrants, pastors, sisters, brothers, children, colleagues and bosses are an essential part of the picture.

While instances of cooperation and collaboration are many, as the above section has shown, we must resist the tendency to romanticise this aspect of women's tactics. Women like Nneoma who live with extreme precariousness are acutely aware of their exposure both to those they know and to those they do not know (Butler 2009a). Relationships with other people can be supportive – sources of emotional and material support; or they can be a source of instability, threat and even exploitation (as her husband's fleecing at the hands of his compatriot 'friends' shows). As Cornwall (2007: 43) argues, rather than extracting women from "the webs of sociality" in which they live their lives, it is crucial to figure affective relations of love, friendship and care as well as jealousy, resentment and destructiveness into the frame. Indeed, one tactic women deploy is to minimise exposure to those who may cause injury on the one hand, and to associate with the 'right' kind of people on the other. This is a lesson life in Greece has taught Pearl. "*I select my friends*," she explained. "*You need to do a second check before talking, before giving your life to anyone*."

Nneoma is similarly wary of whom she trusts, reminding us that 'community' is not a natural entity of support, safety and belonging. Other people can also be sources of judgement, temptation and harm:

> The only friends I have is EPEK […] Like now Nigeria women I am supposed to join them. The Igbo community I am supposed to join them. The African community I am supposed to join them. But I don't join them because my husband is not working. You know our clothes, our traditional wear is a lot of money and they do competition. You have to buy the uniform. You have to join anytime we are doing a new occasion. So my husband cannot afford the money and I don't want anything that will lead me to chase another man… some Nigerian men they will tell 'here I will give you the money to buy you the clothes.' Many of them are like that. You get me? I don't want to lose my marriage because my husband gave me hope when I am hopeless so I don't want to betray him. You understand? And other friends they will come they will tell me 'go you are young. Go outside there, there are a lot of Greeks that are looking for young ladies. There a lot of men that is not even Greeks that are looking. If they have you they will give some money.' They are already keep telling me something like this. 'You are beautiful. It is not as if you have three girls so it is not written on your face. You can make a good money.' I say no. And if I see you as a friend and you tell me something like that I depart from you. So I decided to live alone with my family. If you see me I share with them, I play with them outside but inside me they are not

> close to me. Because many of them they are like that. So that is why I don't want to keep friends.

Situating women's 'choices' and responses to contingent circumstances in their webs of sociality is, therefore, crucial. It not only complicates an individualistic account of agency, but also reminds us that women's relations of sociality, intimacy and affect are part and parcel of what Cornwall (2007: 43) refers to as "the contingencies of 'choice'." As Pearl noted sadly, "*Maybe I have not been well-connected, maybe I didn't know where to go, because at this stage even to eat I must struggle. At a stage there was no means for food.*" Knowing lots of people, it would seem, is not the same as having people you can depend upon in times of crisis.

The suggestion that Nneoma should leave her husband for another man who would 'take care of her' and that she "*could make good money*" indicates another survival tactic deployed by some women – that of entering relationships with men for financial and material security. For some, marriage is itself a tactical way to cope with uncertainties, as Ruth explained:

> Most of these girls you are seeing most of them is force themselves into the man they are marrying – most of them […] So at the end of the day they are just there, 'what can I do?', they are not happy. Because after going to the street for years they have to look for somebody to settle with so most of them just force the man whether he like it or not to be with them.

Despite the suggestion that she could do better elsewhere, Nneoma's marriage remains a source of strength: "*We love each other. We don't quarrel. We live like brother and sister. We keep going.*" For others, strategically exploiting relationships with men who can provide for them may be the only, or the most appealing, way for them to survive. Such relationships may appear to be externally coded as exploitative, but may be subjectively construed as mutually beneficial (Kihato 2007).

As I observed Nneoma in more areas of her life (not only in EPEK's Greek classes, but also at church, at home with her children and husband, and at her volunteer organization) I was reminded of hooks' (1984: 45) comment that "in their daily lives most women are not continually passive, helpless, or powerless 'victims'". As hooks notes more generally, survival for Nneoma appeared to depend upon the continued exercise of whatever personal powers she possessed – and not only as a means to accessing food, clothes, shelter and so on. The emphasis Nneoma places on

the care and pride she takes in the appearance of herself and her family, seemed a particularly important everyday assertion of control over circumstance.

> There's an organization - they open every Wednesday and give clothes for adult. That is where I brought all this my clothes. So if I bring them, I will wash them, iron them very well, I dress well. If I didn't tell you, you would not know. I keep going. I keep going… unless I open my mouth and tell you my experience you will never know. Even my people – even Nigerian people they don't know how we are living. Because I don't share with them because they will laugh at us. Yes that is how Nigerian people are.

Washing and ironing second-hand clothes until they look new and changing her daughters' hairstyles with a regularity that defies the time and hard work that goes into it, is about more than vanity for Nneoma. It is a protective shield against the judgement of other people and a source of strength. She takes pride in her daughters, of course, but also in her own abilities to present an image to the outside world that hides her suffering and maintains standards against the odds. These efforts are also, I believe, a rejection of passivity – an assertion of effectuality from someone who has to rely on charity for survival and an antidote to the objectification (and abjectification) involved in being labelled a 'victim'. Lacking the power to change her family's circumstances, Nneoma's expression of creativity (and agency) is, in a sense, also an act of resistance against the disempowering effect that being labelled a 'victim' can have and which, Kihato (2007: 91) argues, renders women's "lives, feelings and humanness […] invisible and transformed into stereotypical cardboard characters."

Nneoma's Story (part two): We have to accept anything they give us

> A friend in the *plateia* [square] told me 'you can go to a place they will help you'. So the first place I went was Caritas and they gave me two things of milk. I was like they gave me the whole world. And I accepted it with tears, tears of joy. At least I can see the milk for Chidera today. Then she don't have pampers. I used to use my wrapper to make pampers and she will wear. Here in Greece. So at a time some people introduce me to Ena Paidi Enas Kosmos (EPEK) and they were so kind to us.
>
> So, they brought us here and we are here. And now they are still backing us up. They give us shelter. We are not paying here. I am not paying for light. I am not paying for water. We didn't even know how much they pay for the month. At least if I say I regret there is still good things in Greece.
>
> As you can see it's not as if it is good enough. If you check the toilet – the toilet pipe is from here is leaking in the kitchen. Sometimes the water will drop and it will go into the food. I see – one day Adamma call me 'Mummy I don't like here. We go to other

> people's house its fine but our own is not good'. I told her we don't have money. I am not working. Your father is not working. And we have to accept anything they give us.

NGOs and Civil Society Organizations

In a crisis context, in which communities have become increasingly dispersed and fragmented, and the capacity of social networks has been eroded, NGO support has become even more vital for the most vulnerable. As Nneoma's story shows, for some it can be the only way to access food, medicine, clothes and shelter. This is not the end of struggle, but these kinds of support can, as in Nneoma's experience, enable people to create a base from which to work towards a better future. Without it, the feelings of security and possibility that are so fundamental to livability, are likely to be even harder to realise.

I witnessed this first-hand as part of my participant observation roles at EPEK, Babel and UAWO. Over time, I came to understand just how rare and important these spaces were. For example, Babel's biweekly open group for migrant women was a space in which women could not only give each other emotional support, but also exchange valuable news and information: from the latest government benefit programme to supermarkets currently offering deals. Completely unstructured, sessions often began with women making inquiries into whether newer arrivals had managed to secure a place to stay or followed up on the advice and tips given at the previous meeting, regarding, for instance, where to find second-hand furniture or cheap internet cafés. A more established member of the group – an Albanian woman who spoke and read Greek fluently – would spend sleepless nights on the internet and arrive armed with information on the latest government benefits. For those with legal status these included a new family allowance and a housing and electricity supplement for people

Figure 15: *NGO waiting room, central Athens* (photo: visual diaries project)

with low income.[98] For women who had no internet access, who could neither speak nor read Greek, or who simply did not have the time or patience to wrestle with the intricacies of Greek bureaucracy, this woman and this space provided invaluable guidance and support. Attending the group can, therefore, also be understood as part of women's coping tactics: a way both to stay informed, and also to experience a rare transversal feminist space of inclusion and support in which women could gather across ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic and national boundaries of difference.

It is important to note, however, that NGO and 'charity' spaces do not exist in a vacuum. Racialized and gendered discursive structures that inferiorise and stereotype African women are sometimes in operation here also. I should emphasise that I am not here speaking of either EPEK or Babel, but of other organizations where several women described encounters in which they felt they were discriminated against because of their skin-colour. As an HIV-positive single mother of two small children, Layanah is effectively excluded from the job market: the blood tests required as part of the hiring process would, she explains, prevent potential employers from even considering hiring her. She therefore relies heavily both on her social networks (including the goodwill of her Greek landlord who even pays for her son's nursery) and on the support provided by the city's NGOs (see figure 15). As Layanah's comments show, this is in no way an easy option. Aside from the constant anxiety about putting food on the table ("*Some days you get up in the morning you don't see food to eat. […]It make me to cry, but what can I do? At the end of it, God always make a way.*"), the actual experience of going to organizations to ask for help can be extremely stressful, particularly when racist attitudes are encountered:

> When you go there you will find out that the type of food they give us blacks is not the type of food they give the white people and sometimes they give you what has expired […] So it really stress me sometimes to even go. When I even think of going… if I go now maybe they will see me I am black, this colour. They will just give you things that are not valuable. They know they cannot eat it again. That's what they will give you. So it's really stressful with the Greeks because they are really… I don't know how to put it. With the blacks they are very racist.

Other women described being ignored or pushed to the back of the queue. It was also not unheard of for younger women to be 'read' as prostitutes and refused

[98] Official housing contracts are now online, which means that in order to access some of these benefits you need a 'key number' from the tax office. This can be an obstacle for people without internet access (and skills), the ability to read Greek and an email address where the access codes are sent once you've activated your account.

support because of it. "*Sometimes if we go to any organization for help they will think we are one of them*," Nneoma explained. "*They will insult us […] so that is the problem.*" Riddled with assumptions, racial stereotypes and moral judgements, categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' womanhood (Connell 1997) thus operate to limit the access some women have to vital modes of support. Deemed 'underserving' of assistance, women are racialized as less entitled (particularly since many Greeks now need the same support services), or are assumed to have experiences that do not fit neatly into prescribed models of victimisation.

Victim or Agent? Mobilising Vulnerability

Navigating, and sometimes manipulating, common stereotypes may also become part of women's coping tactics – as a way to manage difficult situations and minimise precariousness, but also as a way to maximise access to support. Doing so is, however, no straightforward matter. As Nneoma's experience illustrates (and as discussed in the previous chapter), stereotypical constructions of African women as sex workers 'stick' to these racialized and sexualised bodies. What is more, the discourses surrounding sex work and trafficking conflate so many experiences and prejudices that women are simultaneously depicted as victims deserving of help (and rescue) and as a threat to 'decent' society. What this means for those like Angel and Gift (both of whom were trafficked from Edo State in Nigeria and spent years working as sex workers to pay off extortionate 'debts' to traffickers), is that when they approach organizations for support, stereotypical representations often prevail such that they are seen as the 'wrong' kind of victim. As Andrijasevic (2009) reminds us, there are different categories of victims, such that failing to perform the 'proper' victim can lead to women falling out of structures of support and protection. That Gift and Angel, amongst others, continue to go unrecognised as needing support demonstrates that it is not enough to have suffered victimisation. Stereotypical representations of what a victim should 'look like' mean that women who do show agency or strength, for instance, may be called into question and accused of seeking to exploit the system.

As a result, women learn to use the 'victim' label tactically. For instance, finding themselves undocumented and unemployed as a result of their trafficking experiences, Angel and Gift would speak of themselves as victims only in order to claim their right to stay in Greece.[99] Crucially, this reminds us that citing victimisation, exploitation and abuse is not the same as internalising these experiences such that one then identifies oneself as a victim. Furthermore, recognising that women may use these experiences in order to make claims must not in any way lessen the validity of those claims, nor can it be allowed to lessen the horror of experiences on which such claims are based. Equally, it is important to note that there is a wide range of experiences often subsumed under the category of sex or 'hospitality' work in ways that hide facets of both victimisation and agency. Aside from prostitution, women talked of other women working in bars and clubs in ways that implied sex work was involved. As the example of just two women in this study who were involved in sex work shows, one cannot assume that certain categories imply choice while others do not. Angel was forced into strip club work that led to prostitution and Gift, at a later stage of her time in Greece, saw no other option but to return to street prostitution. It is important, therefore, to problematize sharply dichotomous categorisations of either exploitation or choice, to recognise that women might use sex work as a tactic of survival in a variety of different circumstances, and to do so without somehow denying the trauma individuals experience as (and not only as) victims of trafficking.

The victim label further fuels racist stereotypes of African women as passive individuals with no control over their lives. 'The African woman' thus becomes known or 'seen' through the limited framework of the abused or abandoned woman (Barry 1979), which is part of the gendering of the criminal/victim binary in which the 'good' single mother stereotype finds legitimacy along with its counterpart – that of the 'dangerous', promiscuous, irresponsible black male (de Noronha 2015). This appears to be so prevalent in Greece that Nneoma was explicitly told by an employee of the Athens Council to *"Go to declare yourself a single mother."* Nneoma was horrified by the suggestion:

[99] At the time of the research both women were in the process of applying for asylum on the grounds that they were victims of trafficking but were facing problems because they had previously had, as is so often the case, other legal statuses, including the pink asylum-seeker card (i.e. they had already applied on different grounds).

> I felt bad. I look at the lady. So I ask her 'you want me to lie because you want to help me. I am not a single mother. Me I cannot deny my marriage because you want to help me'. So that day I was coming back and I was shedding tears and I feel so rejected.

Hemmed in by masculinist discourses that construct migrant women as passive, non-political and lacking in agency, performing either the victim and/or mother role can be the only tactic available to many women. In this instance, however, Nneoma refused to establish legitimacy in the eyes of those who decide the criteria for legitimacy (Ahmed 2016). It cost her and her family six months' worth of food coupons.

Experience has taught these women that aid in Athens is often most available for those seen as 'good' and unthreatening, and that this is commonly epitomised by the 'good single mother' figure (de Noronha 2015). As a result, they learn to navigate the NGO landscape accordingly. For instance, Angel is both 'single mother' and a 'victim of trafficking'. Yet when she goes to organizations that distribute clothes she will present herself as the former so as to not risk arousing judgement and/or suspicion by presenting herself as the latter. With more support available for mothers those who, like Pearl, are childless are aware that they have fewer opportunities for support: "*you know since I don't have a child there is nowhere I can know.*" Layanah similarly observed that motherhood even has the power to transform the racist attitudes she previously noted: "*when you are with a child they treat you very good. Not that bad. Even the Greek they will respect children. They treat you good.*" From this perspective, women's self-portrayal as needy mothers, or, indeed, as the bearers of ethnic traditions and compliant domestic workers discussed above, can be understood as a form of self-presentation according to "the necessity of the moment" (Harris 2004: 22). Recognising that victimhood, passivity and vulnerability can be used to portray agency is important because it collapses the conceptual boundaries of these terms (Kihato 2007). We then come to better understand how women manipulate common stereotypes as a tactical way to navigate difficult situations and minimise precariousness.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how African women in Athens are meeting the basic socio-economic conditions necessary for livable lives. In so doing, it has revealed the working lives of many of them to be shaped less by a measured sequence of choices than by ways of coping. With the onset of the crisis, the already-constrained ability of women to strategize – that is, to plan ahead with some degree of certainty and stability of outcome (and income) – appear to have been further eroded. Without a base from which to capitalize on advantages, women's struggles for success and survival are shown to be waged increasingly in domains where their positions as agents are, above all, provisional (Cornwall 2007). Consequently, tactics to manage uncertainty take pragmatic precedence over the pursuit of deliberate strategic 'choices'. Already well-practised in the art of making do, rather than becoming passive victims of the excessive power of the state and repressive institutions (as Foucault (1995) suggests in *Discipline and Punishment*), women are shown to have responded with the flexibility, resourcefulness, spontaneity and, sometimes deviousness, that characterises (and is made necessary) by their position as Other.

In exploring the "ways of operating" (de Certeau 1984: xiv, 30) women adopt in order to get by, the research findings disrupt the assumption that domestic work is a 'natural' livelihood strategy for African women in Athens. For many, both before and during the crisis, it has simply been the most pragmatic way for them to survive. It may be a temporary survival tactic – a stepping stone – used by women who recognise that Greek society affords them few work opportunities, as it was for Adanech, Hana and Faith. Or, it may be a conscious career strategy, as it was for Rose. Or, indeed, domestic work may be an impossible dream, as it is for Angel who longs to have the documents and freedom to undertake such work. Reframing domestic work, as this chapter has, as a tactical response to a context in which few other options are available is crucial as it hints at complex identities – some used strategically, some worn heavily – as well as at the possibility of other outcomes.

In a climate of high unemployment and heightened anti-migrant sentiment, even opportunities in the domestic-care sector have become more scarce. The research illustrates how women exercise their creativity to eke out new ways to make

a living. Taking part in a range of activities that can, broadly-speaking, be referred to as 'ethnic entrepreneurship', women are turning their hyper-visibility as 'exotic Other' to an advantage – managing to navigate challenging, and sometimes, hostile, environments by manipulating common stereotypes. While illustrating this, the research also reveals that though women may, at times, conform to the identity labels ascribed them (subservient domestic worker, exotic other, sex worker and single mother, amongst others), these categories are wholly inadequate in understanding women's lives and the tactics they deploy in order to survive. As the above stories have shown, women may be none or all of these things; sometimes using identities tactically to their own advantage, and sometimes moving between categories.

By focusing on translocational positionalities (rather than fixed identities), the research reveals the tactics women consider viable for managing the situations they are in to depend upon a number of individual, contextual and social dynamics. A woman's tactics of 'making do' will be shaped not only by her social positioning in terms of class, race, gender and ethnicity, but also by other personal factors (such as age, time spent in Greece, legal status, access to financial and social resources, educational levels, skill-sets and character). As much to do with wider networks of sociality as with 'social structure', how women survive is revealed to always relate to the inter-subjective and relational dimensions of the various domains of association in which they live their lives: from their homes and workplaces, to their social spaces and places of worship (Cornwall 2007).

In recent years, as the capacities of more established modes of community support have been eroded, the research findings suggest that informal networks have proved vital in their flexibility and responsiveness. In this context, women's information-sharing networks and 'cultural' activities, as well as informal economic practices and entrepreneurial enterprises, have become more important than ever. So too have the support services provided by the city's growing number of NGOs and civil society organizations. Even in these circumstances of dependency and vulnerability, however, the research has shown that in their daily lives women are not powerless 'victims', least of all when they are presenting themselves as such. Always an agent, a woman will weigh up her choices and how she feels about them, creating tactics and finding ways of making do in order to manage uncertainty today and

create a better tomorrow for herself and her loved ones. The ways in which women 'make do' in order to get by are part and parcel of home-making processes. As such, they are also part of how women create a sense of belonging in Athens. These, and other related issues, are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven

HOME AND BELONGING

> "They will ask you something like 'when will you be leaving,' because they think that ah, she is just visiting – you are going. But when they see that actually yes, you are not going, you want to stay, they have some question they ask you: 'Why do you choose to stay here?' 'Why can't you go to your country? Because no place like home.' I say 'we know that no place like home but nobody will be comfortable in a home and move to somewhere else'… To me a home is where you feel comfortable. It doesn't mean where you are born or raised up but where you are happy and you feel comfortable."
>
> Hana, from Sierra Leone, 29 years in Greece

7.1 Introduction

In our contemporary world the question of home has become increasingly complicated for more and more people. The meaning of home appears to be especially complex for those who, like the women at the heart of this project, find themselves at the interplay of a range of locations in relation to class, racialization and national belonging (Anthias 2008). In a context in which, at present, full integration depends upon being assimilated (on looking and sounding 'native'), these women remain mostly constructed as 'outsiders' in the public mind. As Hana's quote above illustrates, 'The home question' (Mohanty 2003: 126) reminds them daily that they are seen as liminal in Greece – at best temporary guests who are "*just visiting*", at worst intruders who do not belong.

The aim of this chapter is not to 'solve' the many-layered puzzle of home and belonging. It is to explore home as a fluid yet meaning-*ful* and meaning-*making* idea and practice from the women's own perspectives; to explore the social processes and everyday practices through which a location becomes (or fails to become) a home; and to examine the ways in which women who have left, or lost, former homes deal with the complexities and ambiguities that often result. In so doing, the chapter adopts Hage's (1997: 2) idea of home as an affective construct, focusing on how women build a feeling of being 'at home'. The analysis is structured around the four

key feelings of home that Hage identifies as central to home-building, namely security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope.

7.2 Security

The feeling of security is, according to Hage (1997: 2), one of the most basic feelings we aim to foster in our homely space. It derives from the absence of harmful threatening otherness and the availability of what we consider as necessary for the satisfaction of basic needs. Both of these elements are necessary for livability and both are hindered by the processes of legal abjectification and gendered everyday racism discussed in previous chapters.

It is clear that satisfying basic needs is not enough to create a feeling of home. As Adanech commented:

> I may have work but I don't live for today. Tomorrow if I don't have work what will I do? I have started to live with a fear. And so I've lost the ball, as they say. I don't enjoy anything. It starts from the residence permit, it starts from racism – it scares you, it starts from work where they judge you next to a Greek man or woman and they reduce you. If something happens at work, the first person who will leave is a migrant woman. All of that makes you scared, to not live in the today, to start thinking from today about tomorrow and you lose the today. I didn't have that before. I have it here.

Adanech has relatively secure residence status, a full-time job, rents a flat by herself and is making ends meet in ways that many African women in Athens can only dream of. However, the deeper security which Hage says emanates from where we do not just have, but *feel empowered to seek* the satisfaction of our needs and to remove or exclude threatening otherness, is palpably absent from Adanech's life.

As a black migrant woman, Adanech says she will be the first to be fired and the last to be promoted; she continues to be stopped and harassed by the police; and, conscious of her own threatening 'otherness' in the eyes of the authorities and/or locals as she moves around the city, she feels neither secure nor fully empowered to protect herself. As a result, Adanech experiences a failure to fully belong in the present space and to comfortably inhabit Athens as home (Ahmed 1999). Unable to plan against limbo and precarity for tomorrow, which is part of living a livable life

(Tyler and Marciniak 2013), Adanech says she cannot "*live for today*" – she cannot "*enjoy anything*".

We can feel secure where the law of the Other rules, but we cannot feel 'at home' because home is, Hage (1997: 3) argues, a place governed by what we consider to be 'our laws'. Many women were unequivocal that Greece was a 'better' place to live than their former homes. They cited better healthcare, free access to education and higher standards of living as evidence of at least the possibility for more livable lives. However, this was frequently undermined by the feeling that the law in Greece was not 'for' them and, possibly, even against them. This was most obviously conveyed in their descriptions of encounters with police (Chapter Five). Though there were instances in which police officers had been of assistance to women in difficult situations *vis-à-vis*, for example, employers withholding pay (Gift) or abusive neighbours (Angel), there was a generalised fear and mistrust of Greece's police and legal institutions that extended to even those, like Adanech, with recognised documents. After being harassed by policemen at 1.30am on her way home from work, Adanech's conclusion about the state of the Greek police was fairly typical:

> At Manolada there was a woman who went to the police after for protection and every day a policeman would have sex with her.[100] I mean, she goes to get protection and the police rape her. Can you tell me where a migrant can go to shout for help? There's nowhere. It may be possible in other European countries, but in Greece the law stays on paper.

The prevailing belief amongst migrants in general appears to be that the police are there not to protect, but to control and harass them. The experience of having police officers telling them something along the lines of: "*this is Greece, not Africa. If you don't like it, leave*" was extremely common amongst the women I met. Meanwhile, stories of police abuse like the one referred to by Adanech further perpetuated a feeling of vulnerability amongst them. It is not difficult to comprehend how this feeling of generalised mistreatment and the insecurity it perpetuates undermines the feeling of being 'at home'.

However, being 'at home' in terms of location is also no guarantee that women will experience the sense of security and well-being associated with feeling 'at home' (Brah 1996). Indeed, for many African women in Athens, it was the experience of

[100] Manolada is a town in Greece that has become synonymous with an incident in 2013 when a crowd of 200 migrant strawberry pickers were shot at by Greek foremen in a dispute over unpaid wages (Smith 2014).

home that drove them to migrate in the first place. Several women had fled in extreme circumstances: Aisha had left her village in Northern Nigeria following a Boko Haram attack in which most of her family had died, and Saba had escaped from the Eritrean army under the threat of being sent back to prison. For many others, it was protracted situations of extreme poverty and "*economical war*" (Lauretta) as much as the 'dream' and "*advertisement*" of Europe (Rose) that led them to leave home. For these, and many other women, the notion that home always provides the supports of stability, oneness and security simply has no basis in real life (Massey 1994).

Taken together, the women's narratives reveal home to be a place of ambiguity and contradiction, of resistance and conformity, and of fear and safety (Kihato 2013). Consider, for example, the following unedited extract from a discussion during a UAWO workshop.

Ruth:	When a woman isn't submissive in home countries they will be mistreated.
Mary:	Abused and called names.
Daisy:	Beaten.
Adanech:	And ignored.
Ruth:	A separation will occur and problems will start.
Mary:	She will be called names. They will say she is the devil.
Daisy:	She must then consult with the elders.
Ruth:	She should get a job and become independent.
Mary:	She can't consult elders - they made the laws and tradition.
Daisy:	But if you want to save a marriage... [Ruth and May interrupt simultaneously]
Ruth:	You can't save the marriage. You need to get out.
Mary:	Everyone marries through tradition and tradition says that woman will carry baby, while pregnant, with food on her head and when she gets home she has to go and get water for the man.

Even at home it would seem that many women did not feel the laws (or traditions) were 'for' them. Feminist writers have long argued against conceptualisations of the

home as an assumed place of security, harmony and freedom. "'Home' of course," Burman and Chantler (2004: 377) write, "as well as being where the heart is, is the traditional site of women's oppression under heteropatriarchy." Sadly, this too was borne out time and again in the women's narratives.

Consider also Lauretta's experiences of home, where she and her sister were treated like "*goat children*" due to ethnic divisions in wider Sierra Leonean society:

> I don't think about the Greeks who don't like me to stay here. I have been used to it. And even the way I was born – my mother was an illiterate woman and she is from the country Sierra Leone. My father – who is the slave they bring – their generation they were British-style, like they educated. He leave my mother like that […] He will not marry my mother because they have that discrimination. He married an educated woman like him, you understand. And in that community – that Krio community – they look down on me because my mother is that, you understand. So I'm used to all those *malakies* [stupidities]. […] I was born that way. I don't know any other life – it's only that life I know. So I don't care about the Greek who don't like me. I don't have that feeling bad because I am used to it from childhood to be discriminated you know. Because this Krio tribe I'm telling you, they were very discriminating people. […] And the one who the father is Krio, the mother is Krio, they look less on me. They cannot play with me because my mother is a native. You understand. So, I grow up with… This is what I know Viki. It's that life I know only. I don't know another life.

Experience has taught Lauretta that homes, like all spaces, are varied and dynamic – inflected with issues of power and always situated within wider social, temporal and spatial contexts (Massey 1994; Panelli et al. 2004). Nor has she forgotten that even 'back home' she was looked down upon – looked "*less on*" – by others who felt themselves to be superior due to their 'purer' ethnic identity.

Taken together, the women's narratives challenge sentimentalised notions of home and undermine the idea that everyone once had a place called home which they can look back on and where they can securely root their identity (Massey 1994). Rather than mourning this as a loss, Lauretta claims the fact that there is nowhere where everyone would 'want her' ("*even in my country not all the Sierra Leonean want me*") as a strength – she sees it as the freedom to belong (un)equally anywhere. For others, however, the feeling that they are not wanted and discriminated against by wider Greek society leads to a deep insecurity that often undermines their ability to feel 'at home' in Athens.

7.3 Familiarity

The second 'affective building block' that Hage identifies as necessary for home to come into being is familiarity. The feeling of familiarity here includes the possession of maximum spatial knowledge and practical know-how. As such, it is generated in a space where the deployment of our bodily dispositions can be maximised (Hage 1997). Similarly, Rapport and Dawson (1998: 10) argue that:

> "One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one's identity best mediated – and homeless when such a cognitive environment is eschewed."

This sense of implicit familiar knowledge – of knowing almost unthinkingly where one is, and where one needs to go for specific purposes and how to get there – implies spatial and practical control (Hage 1997), which is distinct from (although related to) the sense of security discussed above.

Inevitably, a sense of familiarity grows as people spend time in a place – going to and from work, running errands, visiting friends and so on. For some of the women I met, however, the mere act of negotiating their way around a city in which they were hyper-visible Others (and often did not speak the language) was a source of great discomfort, anxiety and insecurity. Confronted with these difficulties 'outside', where they often felt vulnerable to forces beyond their control, the domestic spaces of home acquired even more significance (Kihato 2013). They became not only important protected spaces of inclusion, but also spaces in which women are able to exercise some agency – where they could create a sense of familiarity, ease, and belonging.

Most of the women lived in apartment blocks from the 1960s similar to those I had been visiting family and friends in for years. I quickly recognised their cramped lay-outs, crumbling pastel-coloured bathrooms and tiny kitchens. What was less familiar to me were the "tangible mementoes" (Berger 1984: 64) with which women had merged current homes with past homes, making these home-spaces both more habitable and more *homely* places (Hage 1997). The walls were decorated with photos of the women's younger selves posing with relatives or friends in Africa, Eritrean baskets sat nestled in corners (Saba), and Nigerian music videos played on a TV

screen (Angel). Sideboards displayed keepsakes that reflected complex belonging: a miniature Sierra Leonean and Greek flag (Gloria), the scarf of an Athens football team (Layanah), and a Greek Orthodox icon (Lauretta). These flats may have been far from women's ideal homes, but even to me – an outsider – they provided "*intimations of homeliness*, hints of those feelings, and the possibility for more" (Hage 1997: 4 – emphasis in original).

After spending time with these women as they struggled with the complexities and ambiguities of inhabiting multiple homes, I came to understand how important these home-spaces were to them. Indeed, domestic spaces and the tasks associated with them were often key protagonists in women's discussions and narratives. Initially these topics, which largely centred in or around the home, struck me as commonplace and uninteresting – as too mundane to explore analytically. They also troubled me: I felt resistant to the emphasis they placed on women's gendered roles as housekeepers, nurturers and cleaners. After all, I had set out to challenge stereotypical representations of African women, not reinforce them. Upon reflection, however, I soon realised that although the labour of re-producing homes is often designated (and, consequently, devalued) as 'women's work' (Young 2005; Ahmed et al. 2003), it represents a process whereby a belief in connectedness and rightful belonging to a place is engendered (Taylor 2009). So, though it is tempting to leave out the many conversations women had about ordinary domestic tasks, to do so would be to deny not only the "crucial human value" (Young 2005: 125) of such labour, but also its meaning in the women's lives.

Figure 16: *Food shopping in downtown Athens* (photo: visual diaries project)

The significance of domestic routines and spaces was reflected in the images women took as part of the visual diaries project (VDP). These images illustrate that routine chores are a large part of women's lives both in terms of hours spent and in

giving meaning and structure to their days. These daily rituals of home are part of the processes of emplacement through which, by generating a relationship of belonging between person and place, home is both constituted and claimed (Hammond 2004; Appadurai 1996). Particularly for women who feel the burden of their liminality, the habits and daily rhythms of routines, such as food preparation, grocery shopping, cleaning, eating and caring for relatives can be very rooting. An important source of stability, they provide an opportunity for women to establish a sense of continuity, to sustain the rhythms of life and to exercise agency at a time of destabilization. These sometimes mundane daily tasks provide "the raw material of repetition" through which a shelter can be built (Berger 1984: 64).

Figure 17: *Doing each other's hair at home* (photo: visual diaries project)

Though easily dismissed, practices and performances of insider knowledge such as where to buy the best and cheapest tomatoes (Ruth), which bus to take into the centre (Lauretta), or which organizations offer free clothes (Nneoma) are an important dimension in establishing a sense of familiarity and belonging.[101] These acts establish women as 'insiders' (as opposed to 'outsiders'), thereby enabling them to assert their "in placeness" (Piacentini 2014: 176). After all, if being at home is about the familiar and the possession of maximum spatial knowledge and practical know-how, as I would agree that it is, then it is also about the ordinary.

Taken together, the women's images and their accompanying narratives demonstrate the centrality of the home. Their photographs capture the daily routines of: work, hanging out at home, doing each other's hair, bathing children, cooking and shopping (figure 16 and 17). These rhythms are also, however, punctured by moments of pleasure and pain. The images capture the joy of a daytrip to the beach (Lauretta) and a rare visit to a restaurant (Ruth); as well as physical suffering (the

[101] Conversely, a lack of emplacement goes some way towards explaining disorientation amongst newer arrivals in Athens, as well as how women became estranged from places that once were home – addressed below.

steps where Saba fell), ill health (Ruth), homesickness (Angel), and anger after an upsetting phone call (Aisha). For better or worse, the impression created is one of a being part of a social fabric, which is incongruous with the idea that the lives of these women are liminal, unrooted or suspended in Athens. Indeed, even the images that remind us of the precarity of women's legal statuses by depicting asylum services (see figure 9), local authority offices and waiting rooms are accompanied by narratives that invoke a familiar routineness; battling with bureaucracy is, after all, part of the experience of being a Greek citizen.

The gendering of home-making suggested by the VDP images was supported by references women made to being "*treated like a slave*" within the home and to men being more "*in the world*". Comments such as "*When I am at home, I'm still doing for people else*" suggest the sheer amount of labour that women do within domestic spaces. In spite of this, the images and narratives do not fit into dominant feminist discourses that frame women's domestic roles and the housework they do as patriarchal oppression (see also Kihato 2010b). Rather, the home emerges as a complex site in which (patriarchal) control and labour mix with care, pride and stability. The activities women chose to capture suggest they are not only a source of pride, but also an expression of their identities as African women, as mothers caring and providing for their children, and as creative and skilful individuals. This is how the women chose to represent themselves to me and 'the world'.

Figure 18: *Making dinner* (photo: visual diaries project)

This was further confirmed by the discussion we had about the images. For example, Angel told us that her favourite picture is the one in which she is cooking "*African food*" for her son. "*I am so happy*," she explained, "*because when he is not hungry – after he eat he play. I have joy. Because when this baby don't have food he start crying everyday. I can go crazy.*" At stake here is Angel's identity as a mother who is coping, nurturing

and caring for her son. Even though she struggles to put food on the table, often turning to the friends of her son's absent father for help, Angel favourably compares her situation in Athens to the one she left behind:

> You can see people dying with hunger in Africa because they don't have the money to buy this food. That is why we live here now, we are fresh. At times when I send photograph to my big auntie say 'ah sister, my sister you are fresh. Look the way you are pretty. Look the way you are shining.' Because I can go to supermarket I take yoghurt, I take coca cola, I can drink it, I feel fresh. But if I'm in Africa you can't see my skin like this. It's true. It's true. Too much difference.

Thus, activities that may appear to the viewer as 'everyday' or 'mundane', acquire a new poignancy. The most ordinary task – cooking dinner – creates a sense of home not only because it is familiar and routine (see figure 18), but also because it is a "meaning-making" activity (Young 2005: 124). The current home emerges, through the devotion of time and labour, as the centre of these processes.

The women's images, activities and feelings of 'at homeness' disrupt the binary opposition between 'home' and 'away'. So too do women's descriptions of the disorientation they experienced on return visits to their home countries. As a non-linear process, familiarity can be both gained and lost as people move between, and inhabit, different spaces. As Madison (2006: 248) observes, "though there seems to be a desire for the home country to remain frozen in time and unchanging, the inevitability of change means that home also becomes a foreign country, while simultaneously deeply familiar (stranger in a familiar land)." Homes, it would seem, do not stop evolving simply because we no longer inhabit them on a daily basis. Consider, for example, Lauretta's description of visiting Sierra Leone after nearly a decade away:

> You know what I find out about myself? I was having that nostalgia for my country. I'm thinking about my country. I feel I am from Sierra Leone. I'm a Sierra Leonean. I'm a foreigner in Greece, you know. But when I visit my country – when I was in my country I realise that I am… what I mean – I am no longer belong to Sierra Leone. You understand? In Sierra Leone I feel not – not even me – my actions and I was not in… I was out of track, you know what I mean? Out of time. I don't know what is going on. You know, sometimes I used to go… Let us just say, for the common thing, I just go and buy coca cola. And when I return home, they ask me how much you buy this coca cola. I say this. They say they steal all your money! [Laughs]. Or I take a taxi, you understand, I take a taxi. When I come home: how much you pay the taxi. I said… 'Oh! They take your money!' [Laughs] No idea. No idea.

No longer in possession of the maximum spatial knowledge and practical know-how

referred to above, Lauretta describes experiencing a temporal dislocation from her former hometown, in which she is "*out of track*" and "*out of time*". Similarly, after 25 years in Greece, Pearl was literally lost when she visited Nigeria. "*Everything seems different*," she explained. "*Even I can't find my way to my house. Somebody needs to take me.*" That Pearl no longer possesses maximum spatial knowledge and practical know-how in Nigeria leads her to reassess where home is. "*Greece is really home*," she concludes, "*because when I went to Nigeria last year it was like I am in a different place. But coming back to Greece I felt a great relief. Though it shouldn't be like that. Maybe because all the youthful years I spent it here.*"

Home is not a place that exists apart as an empty shell for our belonging; "being-at-home", Ahmed (1999: 341) writes, "suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other." Thus, the lived experience of being-at-home involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside them such that Lauretta feels different – "*not even me*". This experience leads her to reassess not only where she belongs, but also who she is in terms of her identity:

> Yes, yes, I feel more Greek. Yes I feel like I'm a Greek. Believe it. It's strange but it's true. Yes, yes, I was – how do they call it – misplaced – how they say that – from my country to, you know, staying in a country whether I like it or not. My whole structure – how they call it – characteristic is changed with not my knowledge, you understand. It happens. [Laughs] You see? It happens. You become somebody. You become somebody. That is the problem.

Separated from the place of her birth, and inhabiting a new place that has acquired meaning through daily practices (Hammond 2004), Lauretta considers herself "*misplaced*" from 'her country'. With time, Lauretta's new home had become inscribed on her skin and in her body – her "*whole structure*" had changed. The immersion of self in locality is, therefore, not simply about inhabiting an already constituted space (from which one can simply depart and remain the same). Were this the case, as a Sierra Leonean by birth, Lauretta would feel more at home in Freetown despite her time in Greece. Instead, and contrary to her own expectations, because the home is not exterior to the self but implicated in it, Lauretta, like Pearl and many others, discovered that it is impossible to return to a place that was once lived as home (Ahmed 1999). Migration thus involves not only spatial but also temporal dislocation. 'The past' becomes associated with a home that no longer exists except in the imagination, and so is impossible to inhabit (and be inhabited by) in the present. In

this sense, migration is a process of estrangement – of becoming estranged from that which was once inhabited as home (ibid).

In women's narratives, visits to former homes in which they were no longer "inhabited in the same way by that which appears as familiar" (Ahmed 1999: 343) appeared to invoke a kind of discomfort in the body. They described having become used to a different way of life and cited the need for vaccinations, no longer being able to drink the water, and being kept awake by things once familiar (the noise of neighbours and generators, the darkness of power cuts) as evidence of 'no longer belonging-ness'. As Garrett (2011: 58) observes, "Nothing kills a warm, nostalgic feeling for a place like visiting it in real time". After ten years of being away from Ethiopia, Rose explained that "*the system has changed – so you go home but you don't feel you belong.*" Adanech felt this so strongly when she went back to Ethiopia after separating from her Greek husband after only one year of marriage that she soon returned to Greece. Though Adanech continues to feel an emotional or even ontological attachment (Yuval-Davis 2011) to her home country, she, like Lauretta, recognises that the experience of migration and the inevitable passing of time means it's "*like you become another person […] to pick up your life where you left it is very difficult. To go and be a worker for someone else it's very difficult. I have other requirements now. I've got older, I've lived another way of life.*"

Despite missing her country deeply, Adanech is painfully aware that the experience of actually being there might not be *felt* as home – that there too she may "*feel foreign*". So, in spite of believing themselves to be intimately connected to the spaces they are revisiting, returning after so many years makes individuals feel out of place as they no longer 'fit' with their surroundings (Taylor 2009).

> And the other thing is it's a little bit difficult to coexist with them. I can't get into their thinking, because I've grown distanced a little. I think differently. They see this water – its water. They are far more innocent people there. And I was once upon a time. Now I'm not. Because life makes you much harder. So I've become a little bit suspicious, I don't know. I will have a glass of water and after the water I begin to think. So it's a little bit difficult… I don't have the same opinions or thoughts about life anymore. It's not little, thirteen years – it's a lot. Here people change or get used to something after six months or seven months. Thirteen years is like you become another person.

Here we see the splitting of 'Home' as place of origin and 'home' as the sensory world of everyday experience (Ahmed 1999). Estranged from the community she

left behind, the 'we' of Adanech's former life has become 'they'. Estranged from that which was once familiar (things are now "*a little bit strange*" for her there), Adanech is now familiar with a life in Greece from which she feels continually excluded. As a result, Adanech lives her life with a feeling that she is "*sto pouthena*" [nowhere]. Navigating a life lived between homes, and the divide between familiarity on the one hand and emotional attachment on the other, prevents Adanech embodying and experiencing either place fully as home. Without the security she feels when she is with 'her people', where "*the joy is real, the sadness is real, nothing is fake*," Adanech cannot feel the "stability of self" that Anthias (2008: 8) argues is necessary for an individual to feel she belongs to any social or geographical place. As Adanech expressively explained, it is too difficult to "*scrape together*" all of her "*pieces*" in order to feel "*this my home*".

The experience of spaces, places, locales and identities to which we feel we no longer belong often prompts us to ask where we *do* belong (Anthias 2006). This can lead to a sense of loss and liminality in which belonging is no longer felt in either home, as in Adanech's case; or, it can reinforce a greater sense of belonging in new homes, as Lauretta explained: "*But when I here I know every bit. Nothing is strange. You understand what I mean. I have my key, I open my apartment, I come home. You know, I feel home. I said I finally reach home.*" Consequently, for Lauretta, as with Pearl, the experience of returning to a home no longer experienced in the body as such seems to have inspired a greater sense of belonging in Athens: "*I feel different*," Lauretta recalls. "*When I come back I feel home. I feel that I am home.*" After the disruption of vising her "*own country*," Lauretta regains a sense of familiarity upon her return to Athens. With the return to the normal rhythms of her daily life, she regains the feeling of being emplaced in the everyday context of her existence. After all, it is in Athens that she now knows how much a taxi-fare should be and the price of a coca cola. Crucially, this is in direct contrast with the old idea that migrants experience the period of migration as a suspension of their real life, which will be continued after the final return home (El-Tayeb 2011). "W*hen I come home*," Lauretta explained, "*all that confusion that I was having in my own country… when I return to Greece I feel I arrive home now. Life goes on. I arrive home.*"

7.4 Community

The feeling of community is crucial for feeling at home. It involves, above all, living in a space where one recognises people as 'one's own' and where one feels recognised by them as such (Hage 1997). This was something women often felt, at least initially, was lost with migration. Even Lauretta, who experienced arrival in Athens as a positive change was made fully aware that she was no longer amongst her own. Lauretta now chuckles as she recalls hearing excited cries from a balcony in downtown Athens: "*Maria! Maria! Ela na deis! Come and see! There's a black woman passing by!*" Her lack of familiarity with the language, her evident visibility (and novelty) in the eyes of Athenians and a range of new experiences – from seeing her first transvestite (she thought she was seeing a ghost) to attending a Greek Orthodox church at Easter – left little doubt that she was a foreigner in a strange land (and a stranger in a foreign one). "*I was like a villager freshly arrived in the big city*," Lauretta observes, with affection for her former self.

Yet when Lauretta was finally able to visit her "*own country*" she was surprised to discover that people there no longer recognised her as their 'own' either: "*I was not the Lauretta they know before.*" Lauretta's explanation for this, more than 30 years later, reminds us of the performative nature of identity (Butler 1988).

> Yes, I was behaving like Greek. Everybody see me I was behaving… Not that I wanted to behave like a Greek, because by the, you know by the feedback of the people who see you, because you went in the community now. You understand. You don't know how you are behaving. You never know your behaviour. I was not totally – I was not behaving like the Lauretta they know before. Everybody say that I am change. My movement is change. I used to… maybe when they talk to me, when people are talking to me like we used to say 'bravo'. I was just saying '*bravo*, *bravo*' and everybody was looking at me.

A friend, who finally located Lauretta's house in Sierra Leone after being told by neighbours that "*one stranger woman lives there*," summed it up when she told her: "*Nobody knows you.*" From this moment on, informed by the "*feedback of the people who see you*" that she was no longer recognised by those she considered as her own, Lauretta felt "*more Greek*".

Place changes us, Massey (2005: 154) writes, "not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the practising of place… place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us." No

longer practised in the place of her birth, Lauretta soon realised she was now also read as a stranger by locals in Freetown.

> They are looking you and they will start talk. The only difference [with Greece was] I understand the language. They said 'oooh, this one she is not from here. She is a foreigner.' They used to gossip, the women. But most of them don't even think if I can speak the language. You understand. [It was] the way I was dressed, my behaviour, everything, you know.

Thus, the experience of going 'back home' disrupts essentialist notions that one simply or ontologically 'belongs' to the world or to any group within it (Bell 1999). Unfortunately for Lauretta, and other African women in Athens, these are the very same essentialisms that prevent them being accepted as 'at home' in Greece. Lauretta had become 'a foreigner' in both Athens and Freetown.

A similarly complex positioning was highlighted by Ayobami who, at 27 years old, is the youngest of the participants and, after ten years in Greece (during which time she finished high school and attended a Greek university) considers herself 'African-Greek'. Ayobami is comfortable with her dual-identity; others – on both 'sides' of her identity equation – seem less so:

> when I hang out with Nigerian people they don't count me Nigerian enough. And when I go to the Greek they don't count me Greek enough. And I'm like who… I'm not even a biracial so… I understand you doing that to somebody who is biracial, it's normal. But like the Nigerian people think my mentality is much more Greek than being Nigerian. And the Greek think that I have a Nigerian side of me that they don't understand.

Ayobami's observations remind us that the way in which one's belonging is defined both by ourselves and others is often not only relational and situational, but also relative. This, as Lauretta's experience also demonstrates, suggests that our sense of who we are in the world shifts according to our location (social as well as spatial), and that sometimes this is a question of difference and not belonging as much as it is about belonging. Thinking of our identities as relational to location in this way, is not simply a matter of identification; it is about our lived experiences and the different contexts in which our identifications are practised and performed (Anthias 2002b, 2006, 2008). When it comes to being recognised as 'one's own', this may, however, lead to an absence of recognition – or to feelings of rejection – and, therefore, to a failure to feel 'at home'.

The affective dimension allowed by the notion of belonging, which includes the sense of security and well-being associated with feeling 'at home', is, for many of us, experienced when we are with family and loved ones. For some women, like Nneoma, who lives with their husband and three daughters in Athens, this feeling is strongly associated with domestic home-spaces as the centre of family life. This was reflected in the VDP where children featured strongly and were nearly always represented in the home – hanging out with friends, playing, posing for the camera and being bathed.[102] When recognition from the wider community is largely experienced as *mis*recognition, the smaller units of family and close friends are likely to become an even more important sources of feelings of belonging.

For women like Adanech, Rose and Saba, who live alone in Athens, the affective dimension of being 'at home' is largely experienced in their daily lives as absence. Adanech explained that it's not a lack of children or the fact that her husband lives in the U.S. that prevents her feeling at home in Athens – it is missing her family "*in general*".

> I feel that I don't belong here. You, do you want this to be home, here, but a lot of things are missing – a lot of pieces – and it's difficult to gather all of your pieces to feel 'this my home'.[103] So for me whether good, bad, rich, poor, whatever – it's the people who love you without wanting anything in return from you. Without you offering them anything. They don't hurt you. They accept you as you are. Those people for me are my family. I don't mean my country – I mean my family. I might also be in my country and feel foreign, you don't know, because the things there are a little bit strange. But whether my family is I feel secure, that I'm at home, even if we gather in a café, family, to laugh, the joy is real, the sadness is real, nothing is fake when you're with your people. That's what it is.

Emphasising that it is the people not the place that enables her to feel 'at home', Adanech, like Lauretta, recognises that she may "*feel foreign*" in 'her country'. She is clear: "*I don't belong to my country – I belong to my family.*" The feeling of ease and comfort Adanech experiences when with her family was similarly expressed by Hana: "*You know when you are with your family you feel different. You have the, you know, the communication is different…*"

When women leave their Homes they not only move out of the contexts of familiarity discussed above, they also face the loss (or alteration) of networks,

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[102] I have chosen not to include any of the many images of the women's children.

[103] Interestingly, Adanech here used the Greek work 'symazepso', which means 'to gather' or, when used in the context of tidying one's home, putting one's belongings – one's house – in order.

relationships and socially familiar environments (Taylor 2009). Though the loss of the homely feeling of community is more common among new arrivals, it can also be experienced by women at particular moments in their lifetime. After all, integration is not a linear process, and feelings of belonging change over an individual's life course in complex ways (Zontini 2015). Older women like Ruth, for instance, missed the absence of care an extended family would have given her in her later years had she stayed in Nigeria. Echoing Adanech's comments, Ruth described the impact of this as a kind of incompleteness:

> Yesterday as I was cooking I was so tired. I say I wish I was in Africa now. I would just sit down and somebody else would say 'Mommy what are you going to eat?' They will just – I will say this is what I want to eat they will go to the kitchen and cook it. It's like this place we are now it's… There are many days it doesn't make you happy. You feel empty somehow. You feel that you are not complete.

Here, Ruth's nostalgic experience, and the fantasy prompted by it, is essentially a depressive one and as such is an example of what Hage (1997: 5) refers to as a "negative intimation" triggered by an experiential absence. It is the accumulation of this type of nostalgia that can lead to states of homesickness of the kind Angel describes experiencing and also captured in her VDP images (ibid).

As Ruth reminds us, community is also a space where one knows that at least some people (family, friends, neighbours…) can be morally relied upon for help (Hage 1997). The creation of support networks is particularly important not only for more vulnerable and older women, but also for those who have migrated alone and are missing the supports of extended families. The research suggests that these women find ways of coping day-to-day through everyday interactions and chance encounters, and that it is often thus that the challenges of homemaking come to be understood, met, and overcome (Piacentini 2014). The importance of the support provided by other women was corroborated by the amount of images women took of friends (often with their children) as they went about their daily tasks together. As discussed in the previous chapter, women's relationships and social webs are part of their tactics of survival (see figure 19). Saba's pictures, for instance, show friends helping her to prepare her hugely labour-intensive Eritrean cuisine for an event she was catering. These relationships also, of course, have an emotional value that goes far beyond mere practical support; they provide the affective bonds that are an

important dimension of feeling 'at home'. When younger women referred to Lauretta and Ruth as 'Mommy' it was often more than a sign of respect – it was a term of endearment.

Community is also, crucially, a feeling of shared symbolic forms, morality, values and language (Hage 1997). A home is imagined, according to Hage, as a space where one possesses maximal communicative power (in Bourdieu's sense) – meaning the capacity to speak appropriately in a variety of recognisable situations.[104] This was something women claimed through their "supra-national" African identity (Waite and Cook 2010). There was an ease of understanding, Hana explained, and a shared context both past and present, between African women: "*we see ourselves all the same, whether we are from Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, we are all just the same. We all have something common*." Although not the givens they often appear to be, notions of 'origins' and 'roots' can take on added significance as individuals experience the disruption and displacement of migration – particularly when women experience everyday racism, legal abjectification and social exclusion.[105] As Ruth explained, strong identifications with Africa are not just about a shared nostalgia for the 'then-and-there'; they are also a reaction to living conditions in the 'here-and-now' (Senoçak 2000, cited in El-Tayeb 2011: 51).

Figure 19: *Cooking together for an event* (photo: visual diaries project)

> What make us feel more Africa is like the society we have is not accepting us. That is the one reason that makes us feel more African every day. Since the place we are they are not accepting us let us believe that this is where we come from. In that place they will not refuse us. You understand. This is the reason why we feel more African.

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[104] This is according to Bourdieu's (1977) conceptualization of home as a place where a 'well-fitted habitus' operates to create spaces of maximal bodily, spatial and communicative knowledge.

[105] Massey (1991, 1994), Brah (1996) and Malkki (1992) have all convincingly argued against the natural connection between people and a particular place.

In a context in which they are excluded and made to "*feel more African every day*," asserting one's cultural identity and cultural 'sameness' becomes a way to affirm alternative identities both publicly and privately (Piacentini 2014). Lauretta echoed Ruth's words:

> Everyday it makes me feel more African because when you are trying to integrate to a society, you understand, and you see many tumbling blocks, you don't have no choice than feeling yourself, you understand. Because no matter what I do, I am from Africa, you understand. And I feel more African. I like the smell, the taste, the culture, the music, you know. There is many thing that make me feel more African inside Europe, yes.

Viewed in this way, evocations of 'Africa' can be understood as a tactic of emplacement as women try to re-orientate, form new social networks, and learn to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities (Brah 1996). Neither about 'going back' nor escaping the present, claiming the African identity is a way to shore up a sense of self against othering forces that define women by that which they are not – by their 'non-Greekness'. As Lauretta put it: "*by rejecting you all the time, you find your roots, you understand. Because you cannot stay without no identity. So you have to stick to your feel African*." Doing so makes the present more habitable and women are better able to face what Young (2005: 143) has referred to as "the open negativity of the future."

The resources of a 'supra-national' identity provide a cultural and ethnic identification through which belonging can be constituted, symbolised and claimed. For people living in highly precarious and insecure circumstances, as many of these women are, the temporality and ephemerality of music and dance in particular allows for opportunities of security and moments of freedom (Lewis 2015). There can perhaps be no more powerful example of this from my research than when, during a visit to Ellinikon Detention Centre to celebrate the New Year, a performance by a group of African drummers gave the detained women a rare opportunity to dance. In this, and many other instances during my fieldwork, I understood that women used music and dance not only to express themselves freely, but also to break down barriers with others and create a sense of shared belonging. This was evident not only that day at Ellinikon, but also when Lauretta and Adanech stopped in Monastiraki Square to dance spontaneously with a group of busking African drummers, and when the women helping Saba cook for an event danced among the pots and pans in her tiny basement flat. As these examples suggest, for women

constrained by legal abjectification, economic hardship, insecurity and racialized 'otherness', the immediacy and temporality of dance is key. It allows a spontaneity, which Lewis (2015: 54) refers to as "momentary, ephemeral engagement with a 'now community'" that escapes the insecurities, precarity and depersonalising effects of racialized constructions. Music and dance also provide women with the opportunity to escape both the everyday experience of social exclusion as well as the drudgery, daily boredom and stress of managing the immigration system (ibid). It also costs nothing and can be indulged in more or less anywhere, as the Ellinikon experience made plain.

Another support for personal and group identity, and for building a feeling of community without accumulation, certainty, or fixity (Young 2005) is provided by food. Paradoxically, it is the mobility of food that enables women who have left the place of their 'roots' to establish continuity with the past, thereby creating a sense of familiarity and stability in the present (Petridou 2001). This was illuminated by the prominence of food in not only women's everyday discussions but also their VDP images. Once again, I had to re-evaluate my initial lack of interest every time the discussion turned (as it frequently did) to what women were going to prepare and eat that day. Though taste and smell may appear to be rather superficial, the visceral associations created by food appear to build a more solid bridge between an idealised home and the lived experience of locality than even a house can do (Philipp and Ho 2010). Hence, as with the objects, habits and routines discussed previously, not only food-related activities (grocery shopping, cooking and eating together) but food itself appears to counter feelings of estrangement and dislocation.

The communal and reciprocal dimension of food preparation and sharing are central to its role in establishing a sense of home. As already mentioned, women would help one another prepare food to sell at events, as well as for special occasions and rites of passage, such as naming ceremonies, weddings and birthdays. Pearl, for instance, provided the food for Nneoma's baby-naming ceremony and Gift had been up all night helping Angel to cook for her son's first birthday celebration. Food also provided a way for women to come together and learn about one another's country of origin. Lauretta told me: "*They cook differently. We cook differently, you know. […] I talk to many of them, they talk to me, they tell me about their culture…*" However, African

ingredients in Athens may, at times, be either prohibitively expensive or simply impossible to find. In such cases, rather than 'bridging' homes through food, a sense of the distance *between* homes increases and food is experienced as a "negative intimation" (Hage 1997: 5) of the kind mentioned above.

As the importance of food, music and dance suggests, the nostalgic homely feelings that are part of creating a sense of belonging are not only shaped by interaction with other people, imagination and memories, but also by multi-sensorial engagement (Svašek 2008). They can be sought, as in examples of 'food nostalgia' (Philipp and Ho 2010), or they can be triggered accidentally as the senses become the conduit for unexpected connections between past and present, as the following extract from my research diary shows:

> On the way home I played Bob Marley's Natural Mystic album. Lauretta's face lit up; she said that it was the soundtrack to her teenage years in Sierra Leone. I was pleased she was enjoying it so much. She said that she also liked it because it was "activist music". I listened as she began to tell me about those years under the dictatorship. Music was banned, she explained, and so she would get together with a group of friends and listen to it during blackouts as they talked politics. It was through music that they became aware of what was going on in the country.
> She remembers going outside of Freetown to a farm at weekends and listening to music, smoking the weed that they grew on the farm and cooking, eating, dancing... She said she was seeing snapshots of those years now as she listened to the music. She told me about Junior, a boyfriend she was very much in love with - as you fall in love when you are young, she said, innocently and with no 'plan B'! She and Junior would stay at his, and on Sundays would spend the whole day smoking and eating... I asked what happened to him and she said she didn't know, adding that most of her friends from then are dead – that they either died in the war or from sickness. Or moved on to other countries.
> We talked about memory and how different things trigger or unlock it. Lauretta said, in an uncharacteristically melancholy way, that she was thinking of people she hadn't in a long time. Sometimes, she added, when she is walking in Kypseli it smells like Africa and reminds her of Sierra Leone because the food they cook is the same.

Here, embodied memories and imaginations have been triggered, evoking the presence of absent others, through multi-sensorial engagement (Svašek 2008). This voyage into another place and time inhabited by people from Lauretta's past is an example of the kinds of positive encounters with a smell or sound, a person or a situation, that offer what Hage (1997: 6) refers to as "an intimation of an imagined homely experience in the past: an experience of 'back home'." Such encounters, Hage explains, operate like "imagined metonymies" in that they are fragments which are imagined to be traces of an equally imagined homely whole, the imagined past

'home' of another time and another space.[106] In contrast to having 'too many homes' and therefore no home, a simultaneity of attachments to different places thus becomes possible to which we are blinded when we "plot only 'places of birth' and degrees of nativeness" (Malkki 1992: 38; Waite and Cook 2010). Here, transnational belonging and emotional attachment are revealed to be not a belonging to two separate places, but an intensification of experience in which new connections are forged even as old ones are nurtured (Svašek 2008).

In Athens, one of the main sites in which the reconfiguration of home for those who have left home (Ahmed 1999) takes place is in the growing number of 'African churches' in the city centre. Here, through collective acts of remembering, an 'African' identity and feeling of community can freely, and regularly, be (re)enacted. The creation of an imagined community and feelings of 'at homeness' articulate with multi-local terrains of belonging to create what Fortier (1999: 41; 2006: 65) refers to as a form of "ethnic intimacy". Deeply rooted in Africa, the traditions and practices collectively performed create an important Athenian space for the manifestation of a community and the 'reterritorialization' of cultural identity.[107] Connections are formed, as Ayobami put it, through bringing "*the culture from home back here.*" Singing familiar songs together or practising the "call-and-respond discursive mode" (Hill Collins 1990: 264) of sermonising (which I witnessed as one congregation responded intermittently to the pastor's sermon by shouting "*the fire will scatter!*") are acts that resonate with past homes, with other people (both present and

Figure 20: *Women on their way to a blessing ceremony, Polygono neighbourhood, Athens.* The church was leant to the Ethiopian community by the Greek Orthodox church (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

[106] Song and music, Hage (1997: 7) argues, are often most appropriate in facilitating such voyages into this imaginary space of feelings, due to their sub-symbolic meaningful qualities.
[107] According to Fortier (1999: 42), cultural identity is 'deterritorialized' and 'reterritorialized' in processes of migration.

absent) and with other times and spaces. As with the examples of dance discussed above, they also provide rare moments of freedom and release. What is more, we all need a world we can inhabit comfortably and where we know instinctively how things are 'done'. As Saba explained, church provided a "*good, safe place*" that contrasted with the daily experience of the outside. Indeed, in these spaces, it was I who was the hyper-visible outsider who had to learn when to stand, sit, sing or dance.

Going to church marks a different quality of time and space in otherwise difficult lives. For many women, it was the highlight of their week. "*Sunday is different day for me*," Saba simply stated. Many shared Lilian's feelings of almost debilitating loss should something prevent them from being able to attend:

> I hold it dearly to my heart. If I don't go to church I feel I have lost something. If I don't go to church on Sunday I feel maybe I am dying. Even if I am very sick I try – I believe if I get there and I will see people and just get there I am ok. So I try… it gives me joy. And I believe Africans we find joy in going to gather in the presence of God.

Even for those who do not have a strong religious belief, the routine of going to church gives shape to their weeks. It provides a rare opportunity in busy lives to "*gather*" and "*see people*"; to wear one's best clothes, share experiences, and show off one's children. Even going, as Pearl did in the past (before she became "*crazy about church*") "*just to fill the chair* […without] *even hearing what they are saying or what they are preaching*" has its value in building a sense of 'at homeness' with others.

Figure 21: *African Church, Athens*
(photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

It was not the physical spaces of these churches that were of significance. Those characterless 'event' rooms, some of which reminded me of bland conference halls, were imbued with meaning through collective ritual. The bodies and movements that inhabited them brought them to life. Common histories, experiences and places were created, imagined and sustained in what Bell (1999) calls 'the performativity of belonging'. Importantly, rather than simply giving symbolic expression to a 'we', the African identity is formed

within these locations as an *effect* of events, rituals and practices (Fortier 2006). As Fortier discovered in her study of Italian migrants, these churches are better understood as performative sites for the construction and display of a particular version of African ethnicity. Here, in contrast to the examples discussed in the following chapter in which visibility is key, women and men could be 'African' without being concerned with the "majority gaze" (Zontini 2015: 335). These spaces were hidden in the centre of the city and, as I was to discover, often near impossible to find without guidance. The displays that took place within them were meant for the benefit of the *insider's* gaze. As Fortier (2006: 68) writes, "it is turned inwards, 'we show ourselves to ourselves'."

It is important to note, however, that these are imperfect, dynamic sites of belonging and that the communities they create, and of which they are a product, also have elements of exclusion/inclusion. There will be those who are considered insiders, and those who are not; and even amongst those insiders, as with any group, there will be boundaries, hierarchies, and elements of competition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Nneoma keeps members of the congregation at a distance for fear of judgment about the poor conditions in which she and her family were living (Chapter Six). What is more, inevitably, the meaning of church and the rituals practised therein will have different meaning for different women at different times of their lives, as Pearl's changing feelings demonstrate. Put off by the social pressures (and costs) which being a member entails Lauretta no longer goes: "*they are gossiping themself if you wear the same clothes two times. They gossip themself which shoes you wear, all those, so you have to…. This our African church.*"

Though the feelings involved in being part of a community may not always be positive, for the majority of these women church appears to be a hugely significant piece of their home puzzle. The communities and networks they create (and are a part of) not only provide practical supports, but also enable women to experience the comfort of being amongst 'one's own'. Such collective spaces are rare for African migrants in Athens, yet they can play a vital role in helping people to confront the challenges that life in Greece is likely to bring. As the women's narratives illustrate, these spaces and the communities they represent help people both practically and

affectively to build a shelter from social and political crisis, from which they can better grasp Greek (and European) opportunities (Hage 1997).

7.5 Sense of hope and possibility

"*I don't understand what you are getting at*," Lucee, a straight-talking 31-year-old woman from Nigeria said to me, irritated by the complexity of my question.

Lucee:	I think you are talking about Africa. My home you mean?
Me:	I don't know. That's my question: where is it? Is it Africa?
Lucee:	Normally I don't understand the point. So home is… you mean what home?
Me:	So it means different things to you depending on what we are talking about?
Lucee:	No this words natural I don't understand it. What home you are talking about?
Me:	The place where you feel you belong.
Lucee:	Here.
Me:	Despite all the problems and difficulties?
Lucee:	Yes. But normally Africa is my place. It's my country but for now I am busy in Greece. So it doesn't mean that Greece is my country, you know. I am just based in here but normally Africa is my country. This is for sure.

Lucee lives alone in a small flat in Kypseli paid for by a male cousin who also lives in Greece and is the only relative she has seen since arriving nine years ago. When, after our interview, I accompanied Lucee to a local shop so that she could buy a calling card to speak to her family in Lagos, I was surprised by how 'at home' she was. She navigated the labyrinthine backstreets with ease, greeted other (African) residents, and chatted (in a language I couldn't understand) with the owners of the 'African shop' we had stopped at so that she could collect a skin-lightening cream she had ordered specially. Once again, it was I who was the outsider. Yet Lucee's life is characterised by precariousness. She is undocumented, unemployed and, at present,

lacks the tangible hope or possibility for the future that Hage (1997) argues is also necessary for home to come into being. As Hage points out, this is an important yet often forgotten point in theorisations of home. It is also one that acquires a new poignancy in the daily reality of crisis Athens which, for many, lacks the conditions needed to advance the flourishing of life (Butler 2009a).

Possibility is, according to Butler (2004b: 31), a normative aspiration that has to do with "the ability to live and breathe and move." For those like Lucee, for whom these freedoms are not only in no sense guaranteed but socially insecured, the lack of possibility in their lives prevents them from feeling 'at home'. Many women, particularly since the onset of the current crisis, have neither the opportunity of personal growth or to develop certain capacities and skills – nor, more generally, the availability of opportunities for 'advancement' (Hage 1997).[108] Other than visits to lawyers, church gatherings on Sunday and occasional (somewhat half-hearted) appearances at UAWO events, Lucee has very little to occupy herself with. Bored and isolated, and with her mobility constrained by her 'undocumentedness' (she asked me to accompany her to buy the calling card to protect her from police checks), her situation makes it hard for her to envisage a future, or indeed a "*place*", for herself in Greece. The reality is that women may devote a lot of time and labour to making homes more secure, familiar and communal, and they may succeed in doing so. However, in the current Greek climate it has become increasingly unlikely that this will allow for as many opportunities as women yearn for. As Adanech articulated above, fear and a lack of hope for tomorrow prevents many from living for today.

Lucee's reaction to my question indicates the splitting of 'Home' as place of origin and 'home' as the sensory world of everyday experience (Ahmed 1999). The research suggests that this is something that often occurs in migration experiences though, as the women's narratives also illustrate, individuals may respond very differently. Indeed, in contrast to conceptualisations of personal identity as attached to a singular and bounded place (in particular, 'a place called home') (Massey 1994), some women articulated migration as an experience that has enabled them to inhabit more of the world as familiar and knowable terrain. This is not to say that identity becomes detached from the particularity of places and therefore fetishized (as

[108] This 'advancement' can be understood as upward social mobility, emotional growth, or accumulation of symbolic or monetary capital (Hage 1997).

Ahmed (1999) warns us against), nor that a new imagined home and community are automatically created. Rather, it is to recognise that for some migration leads to feeling of broadened horizons and an expanded ability to adapt and pursue other options. As Lauretta explained: "*For me, what I have gained from travelling out of my country is a lot of experience. You know, about life, about people, about… You know, it makes me – it makes a change. I left Sierra Leone as a different person. Now I am a different person. A lot of experience, you understand. So, I think I gain a lot spiritually.*"

Though admittedly more unusual in Greece's current climate, Lauretta was far from alone in responding positively to the complexities migration often brings. For some women, the resulting 'in-between-ness' represented a space of transition or possibility – a freedom to interpret and position oneself differently (Ortega 2014). Ayobami, for instance, described a similar feeling of personal enrichment, which she expressed not as spiritual growth (as Lauretta did), but as a sense of being un-bounded from the nation-state form.

> I feel that I am the citizen of the world, because I have lived in so many countries and I have experienced life in so many countries that I love. Right now I came to Greece when I was seventeen so most of my friends that we are still like close and have a good connection of Greeks or people I meet here so when I say I am going home I always mean I am going to Greece. So I feel Greek. Home for me feels – Greece is home for me. But I know that my parents come from Nigeria and that's my roots, but I have never, like, lived in Nigeria.

Expressing an expanded belonging that refuses to recognise the confines of borders, Ayobami declares Greece to be her home because it is the place to which she has the greatest emotional attachment ('home is where the heart is'). However, she also articulates a fluidity and openness that suggest this may change depending on her future life experience. Perhaps precisely because the place of her 'roots' and where she has lived were never one and the same, Ayobami declares herself to be a "*citizen of the world.*"

How women respond to the question of home after migration is also a matter of their unique translocational positionality. Experiences will differ according to a woman's age, legal status, nationality, ethnicity, class, and so on – as well as her family situation, character, attitude and life experience. Individuals will have differential access to resources and support, varied levels of education, and different abilities, ambitions, tastes and temperaments. Ayobami evidently feels she has

options – a feeling that Lucee is struggling to hold onto and that Saba, who describes Greece as "*a big prison*", palpably does not share. This reminds us that there are huge differences within this diverse group of women. Ayobami and Saba's migration stories and current situations, for instance, could not be more different. Ayobami moved to Greece to join her family (who were already well-established there). She can come and go as she pleases with her Nigerian passport (and valid residence permit), speaks six languages and has studied in at least four different countries. It is therefore easier to understand how she feels able to claim her status as a "*citizen of the world*" than it is for someone like Saba, who is not only struggling to survive in Greece as a refugee, but is also trapped there without any family, speaks very little Greek, has a disability that prevents her working full-time and has been imprisoned (both literally and metaphorically) in at least four different countries.

> I don't know where my home, I don't know. I am not comfort. I cannot sleep. I don't know where is my home. I need home. For long time, but this is not home. If you say home you don't have stress, must you pay [the rent], the owner he don't disturb you. Comfort I mean. I have a house but I have too much problem. I fight until now. I don't stop. I fighting to where is my home. When I enter here [Greece], I think it's good. First safe. I think it's good. I say 'oh, it's good'. When I see again I don't see home, I don't see anything – again I start to fight again to look home.

Without secure housing, a stable legal status, access to healthcare, welfare support and education for their children, the material conditions for a livable life remain elusive to many. This leads Saba to declare herself "*a prisoner*" in Greece – sadly something she already knows far too much about.

Saba's narrative also highlights that the conditions for a livable life include being able to have a home that is an affective and relational construct involving sociality and emotions. Women, she explained, need to have a family but she cannot, "*because if you make a relationship must your mind is free. If it's your mind is… you cannot. Because inside you not ok. Why I disturb another?*" Having a residence, as Saba does at present, is not necessarily evidence of a home. When Saba stays in her flat, she feels depressed: "*nothing – black. Must you like your house but I don't have my house what I want, so I not comfort in my house. Better outside I stay.*" By way of contrast, Nneoma's rat-infested, leaking basement flat managed to convey a degree of 'homeliness' because it was a place of familial warmth and affection. Crucially, no matter its conditions, it also provided her and her husband a centre from which they were able to imagine, and

plan, a better future. Whereas Saba, with four months' rent owing, no job and a rejected refugee passport application, does not have the comfort, security or sense of hope necessary for "the building of the feeling of being 'at home'" (Hage 1997: 2). Living a life bereft of warmth or security, Saba is unable to even imagine the possibility of a better future for herself. She has discovered, as the banished Greek philosopher Diogenes did, that "Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business […] a kind of exile – from the comfort of local truths" (Nussbaum 1996: 15). So much so that, she confided to me, even being in prison in Eritrea would be better, because at least there her mother could visit her.

Evidently, not everyone who travels and crosses boundaries will experience the world as encompassing multiple potential homes. Many women, like Saba, remain trapped, frustrated in their non-belonging and unable to move either forwards or backwards. Others have made their peace with it. "*I belong nowhere*," Hana told me matter-of-factly, "*that is why I am pleased that when I die, I know that I will be somewhere I belong*." For these women, "The narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home" (Ahmed 2000: 78). Adanech, however, frames her non-belonging to any place as independence: "*I don't feel I belong anywhere. I belong to myself. That's what I believe. No social place. Everyone belongs to himself. I belong to me*." Whereas Adanech turns inward, claiming belonging only to herself, Ayobami, faced with a similar split between 'Home' as one's 'roots' and 'home' as the lived site of everyday experience, expands her belonging to the world. Paradoxically, this leads these women to a similar position: home, detached from place, is internalised (Ahmed 1999).

7.6 Conclusion

Though African women in Athens may be perceived as being suspended 'in-between' homes, the research has revealed that they do not necessarily experience their belonging as such. Instead, most women in this study expressed a complex, if sometimes ambivalent, belonging to multiple homes located in real and imaginary spaces both 'there' and 'here'. Home, in all its different permutations, appeared to be

never far from their minds. It featured in women's narratives as a domestic space, as the countries, communities, localities and families they had left behind, and as the current context in which they live their lives, yet are often made to feel not 'at home' in. Even for those who perceived their spatial home to be a place of fixity, slippage between 'home', as the space of domestic activities, and 'Home', as country or continent of origin, reflected a multi-scale, multi-spatial, multi-tiered and multi-layered belonging in process (Yuval-Davis 2011; Waite and Cook 2010).

Taken together, the women's narratives disrupt essentialist and sentimentalised notions of home as always secure places of 'authentic' belonging. Indeed, many women come to feel at home in Athens despite facing difficulties that often hinder them from being able to foster even a basic sense of security. The research reveals that there are many ways in which people come to feel 'at home' in a place. They do so through things associated with where they have felt at home in the past, through the repetition of everyday home-making practices, through communal 'acts of nostalgia' and through building feelings of ease, identification and belonging with others. Home-making is thus shown to be an important on-going physical and affective process. It is a meaningful and meaning-making idea and practice that helps individuals not only to shore up a sense of self against fragmentation and displacement, but also to establish a base from which to resist exclusionary processes.

Although the right to mobility is much emphasised in debates about migration, it is often the rooting or 'being at home-ness' of migrants that is controversial (Chapter Five). Thus, in a context in which women are reminded daily in numerous subtle and not-so-subtle ways (by law-makers and enforcers, neighbours, shop-owners, co-workers, employers and fellow commuters) that they are perceived as not 'at home', home-making activities acquire even greater significance. So too does the capturing of them in the VDP images. There is a performative aspect in the choice and composition of the women's photographs, which, in a climate of general hostility towards migrants, resists exclusion, liminality and social abjection (Kihato 2013). These images actively 'talk back' (hooks 1989) to stereotypes and, consciously or unconsciously, counter dehumanising and derogatory representations of migrants. They do so by capturing an ordinary everyday 'at home-ness' that challenges perceptions of these women as 'bodies out of place'. Thus, the women's images (and

the activities they capture) can be understood as a defiant response to being repeatedly told to "go home".

Problematizing home, as this chapter has, is not, however, meant to imply that to leave a place in which one has felt at home in is of no consequence. Rather, it is intended to usefully draw our attention to the *processes* involved. This enables us to see how belonging and 'at home-ness' are neither given nor permanent, but actively claimed, contested and fought over locally, nationally and transnationally. Belonging is, after all, as Vikki Bell (1999: 3) reminds us, "an achievement at several levels of abstraction." Within the highly charged 'crisis' context of contemporary Athens, this is not merely a theoretical point, it is also an important political one. In the current climate, no matter how much time and labour women devote to making homes secure, it has become increasingly unlikely that this will allow for as many opportunities as women yearn for. Narratives of 'authentic' belonging continue to consign certain bodies permanently outside the national community of which they are a part. In order for people to be recognised as subjects capable of living a life that counts (Butler 2004b), we have also to understand the many ways in which they belong, contribute and invest, both emotionally and practically, in the places in which they live. In light of this, the following chapter examines how women collectively mobilise to create a sense of belonging in Athens, and how these efforts are connected to their struggle for greater livability. It does so by focusing on UAWO, which has played an important role in helping African women feel more at home in Athens, and which Lauretta so aptly described as "*the house Lauretta built.*"

Chapter Eight

COLLECTIVE MOBILISATION: "United We Stand"

"There's no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."

Arundhati Roy

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how African women in Athens are collectively mobilising to resist, and manage, the exclusionary and othering processes described in earlier chapters. In particular, it focuses on the activism of UAWO and its mobilisation of the 'African woman' identity in the fight for greater livability in terms of both material conditions and social intelligibility. In so doing, the chapter illustrates the ways in which UAWO seeks to challenge, and potentially transform, the categories of recognition available to African women in Athens by collectively mobilising to claim citizenship rights for non-citizens. How it does so creatively, performatively and in multiple spaces, resonates greatly with the notion of 'acts of citizenship'. This idea, formulated by Isin and Nielsen (2008), introduces the idea of citizenship as enacted performatively to refer to the acts by which actors constitute themselves as subjects of rights. Thus, subjects who are not citizen may *act* as citizens, thereby constituting themselves as those with 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2009: 371). Crucially for our purposes here, this expands the idea of citizenship to include acts performed in and through bodies, in the media and on the internet, at the borders and on the streets (ibid).

The first section of the chapter describes UAWO: how the organization came into being, who its members are and how it functions. The decision to focus on UAWO is not only down to my involvement with them as the only pan-African women organization in Greece; it is also due to their prominence on the migrant activist scene in Athens in general. The second section of the chapter applies the 'acts of citizenship' framework of analysis to examine four areas of UAWO activism. In so

doing, the chapter illuminates how UAWO appropriate stereotypical representations of African women to collectively resist and counter processes of marginalisation.

8.2 The United African Women's Organization, Greece

The United African Women's Organization (UAWO) is not like other NGOs in Greece. Nor is it like the 'national women's associations' it so often gets grouped with, but which tend to focus their energies on cultural activities. It is the first supranational group to emerge independently. Run *by* African women *for* African women, its membership is 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.[109] With a small but active core group of members, UAWO can perhaps best be described as a bridge between the informal social networks women have developed and depend upon in their everyday lives, and the more formal NGO-governmental landscape. It does self-advocacy work, political campaigning, promotes the positive image of African women through cultural activities, is an access point to other support services and also has an important social dimension.

Yet it does all this with no formal structure as such. At the time of the research UAWO had one permanent staff member who has since left because the programme she was hired under came to an end. This programme, a combined EU and government funded Action Plan on gender-based violence (GBV) entitled 'Get Out of the Cycle', was UAWO's main source of funding at the time.[110] The Greek employee not only arranged six seminars on GBV issues for the programme, but also ran the office and took on many other responsibilities. As a native Greek speaker with contacts in other organizations, she was an invaluable resource to many women. She helped them with letters, forms and phone calls, referred them to other organizations for food, legal aid and medical help and advised them on where to look for employment. Other than this source of funding, UAWO appeared to sustain its

[109] Some members have left due to the economic crisis, but it is unclear how many.
[110] The programme was co-funded by the EU's European Social Fund and the Greek Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism (with the support of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality).

very low-cost operations through private donations made by "*friends of the organization*" who contributed to running costs (primarily, at the time, the office rent and utility bills).

At the time of writing, the organization is homeless – a situation it has faced before and will no doubt resolve soon. Yet despite this somewhat precarious existence, both financially and residentially (a condition it shares with many of the women it represents), it remains, by all accounts, the most active organization promoting not only the rights of African women in Greece, but also those of migrant women in general.

The somewhat hard to pigeonhole character of the organization stems in part from its beginnings – emerging as it did from the struggles of real women living in difficult and changing circumstances. Rather than adopting a more rigid organizational structure, UAWO continues to be guided by the needs of its members. Maintaining this flexibility of approach is both a strength and a challenge. Fiercely independent yet open and collaborative, UAWO continues to juggle the complex needs of its diverse and sometimes diverging membership.

How UAWO came into being

In 2004, Lauretta was fired from the place she had worked as a domestic worker for 11 years. Like so many migrant women before – and perhaps even more after – her, Lauretta was dismissed without warning, compensation nor the *ensima* [social security stamps] she needed to renew her residence permit. This was not the first time Lauretta had found herself both jobless and undocumented, but this time she refused to go into hiding.

> So I was in the street again with no papers, nothing. Let me tell you. I determine this time. I said 'why?' No. That time I was not scared at all, I'm telling you Viki. That is the first time in my life I said something is wrong here. We have to put stop. This time I jump. I begin to find women organization. I begin to talk, talk, talk to people and because I did that I get my papers again. Because those people that I was talking, talking they just contribute money, they pay for my paper and then I get my paper again. Do you understand what I mean? But this time I was determine. Because Viki I think about that. I remember I was how many years without residence permit and then how I lose the residence permit and I remember what I pass the first time. I said no. […] Believe me, I become popular in Greece. This time, African woman, who was thinking? Nobody think about that. It's on that part, I begin to recall that Lauretta you

> are not the only one. There are some people like him but they cannot talk and I know African women they don't just go outside to talk. I said so it's better for us… I thought let us have our own organization. Our own voice that will speak for us. So I decided to form the United African Women Organization.

Determined to fight against the injustices she knew many other African women were also facing, Lauretta decided "to cry out for help and for her rights".[111] She did so by becoming involved with various Greek NGOs that offered support to migrants. This experience eventually secured Lauretta her residence permit. In the process, it also taught her that a different kind of visibility was necessary if African women were to claim their rights. On 27th February, 2005, Lauretta called a meeting of (mainly) African women in downtown Athens, and the United Women's African Organization was formed. Building on the strong social networks African women in Athens employ every day to maximise their livability, the women quickly organized into a formally constituted group with members, aims, and objectives. These aims remain unchanged, and are:

- to create awareness of various issues concerning the African women and their children living in Greece;
- to support and fight for the rights of especially our second generation and at all levels;
- to create mutual bonds of solidarity between Africans and our host the Greeks; to explore and incorporate the rich African woman heritage into the rich Greek heritage;
- and, to work hand in hand with various social, NGOs and other Organizations that stand for justice, non racial and friendly society for all.

Mobilising 'African women'

Prior to the formation of UAWO no organizations existed that African women felt sufficiently included their voices. Though a Greek Forum for Migrants (GFM) had been founded in 2002, African women did not feel that it adequately represented them or their needs. UAWO did eventually join the GFM, but it resists being

[111] Quoted on UAWO website: https://uaworg.wordpress.com/

subsumed under it and remains protective of its independent position. According to one UAWO member, GFM is run by "*mafi*a". Another angrily said that she did not understand why women should not do something for themselves without being part of the umbrella organization. There was a sense that GFM represented the past: "*Greece is changing*," she added, "*and the Forum will stay behind*."

As a group, African women had also been largely excluded from the two main sources of organized political activism: labour unions and political parties (both dominated by white Greek men). Even the women-led cleaners' union was felt by most African women to have failed to represent them.[112] The union's primary focus on demanding legal contracts in the public sector for cleaners and other temporary workers excluded migrant labourers from non-EU countries by default (not to mention undocumented workers), because under Greek law neither can be employed by the Greek state.[113]

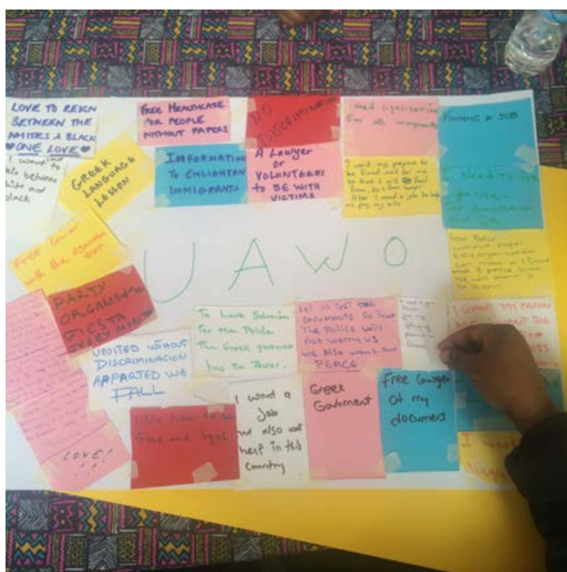

Figure 22: *Wishes*. UAWO members share their needs and wishes anonymously during a seminar (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

Nor were the more radical anti-racist and feminist movements of the time considered by the women I met to be spaces in which they could easily articulate their own experiences and interests. Despite having contributed significantly to the politicisation of migration by drawing public attention to migrant rights and the adverse conditions many migrants experience in Greece, the anti-racist movement has a history of largely excluding migrants (and, most notably, migrant women), from substantial and equal participation.[114] According to Zavos (2010), this is, at least in part, because anti-racist discourses reiterate the assumptions of the nation-state and

[112] The cleaners protest movement began in 2013 when, in a cost-cutting drive, 595 janitors at the Ministry of Economic Development, Inland Revenue, and Customs offices were placed on 'reserve lists'. This meant that for eight months they would be paid only three-quarters of their salaries of 300-650 euros a month, and would then be sacked.
[113] Though this was later remedied when the Union remanded legal state contracts for all cleaners regardless of nationality or migrant status, their divergent interests had been brought to the fore and African women, once again, felt that neither themselves nor their interests were being represented.
[114] See Zavos (2010) for further discussion on this.

of national identity as natural, self-evident and unambiguous ontologies and, consequently, maintain and regulate hierarchies of entitlement and participation.[115] As proponents of intersectionality have similarly argued, African women's experiences of discrimination as female, non-Greek and racialized Others cannot be assimilated into the experiences of either Greek women or male migrants.

UAWO emerged from a recognition that, despite inevitable differences, as 'African women in Greece', they occupied a particular position of intersectional disadvantage *vis-à-vis* Greek society and state. "*We have been suffering for long time*," Lauretta explained. "*We have our own austerity measure for long time.*" Since long before the current crisis African women in Athens have been dealing with what Emejulu and Bassel (2017: 186) have called "routinised crises". These are the ordinary, everyday and institutionalised social and economic inequalities based on race, class, gender, religion and legal status that Lauretta is here referring to. Thus, the emergence of UAWO can be understood as a historically specific response, organized around the category 'African women', to marginalisation and precarity, and to being racialized. "*The Greeks they are seeing women all Africans*," Lauretta explained. "*They call them 'mavri' [black], they call me 'mavri'.*" Hence, while many of the issues this thesis has brought to light predate the current crisis (even though they may appear 'new'), the asymmetrical impact of the crisis and ensuing austerity measures have disproportionately fallen on already-marginalised groups. As Lauretta also observed:

> It will be more worst for us. You understand. Things will change for the worst, not for the best. Why do I think that: because when you eat the boss is that are going to employ – our employers – it's a domino something. It will fall on you. But when it start, it will start from the bosses and then it will end up in us. So [in] the end we are going to pay the worst.

Economically hard times have compounded the difficulties these women already faced due to precarious employment, legal status or greater reliance on public services. Yet, paradoxically, the crisis has also provided new opportunities. It has brought greater recognition, publicity, and support from other quarters of Greek society (as well as internationally) and has become the basis upon which to build new solidarities with other 'victims' of austerity.

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[115] They also, Zavos (2014) argues elsewhere, reproduce sexist and racialized borders that place migrants in subordinate and dependent positions *vis-à-vis* Greek male, political patronage and represent migrant women as passive, backward and dominated subjects (as in descriptions of victims of trafficking as passive victims of male violence with no voice, agency or resistance).

Founded upon a shared identity, UAWO is both a rejection of essentialised constructions that frame marginalisation, unemployment, poverty and so on as consequences of either individual failure or the result of belonging to a somehow naturally 'inferior' group. Even within the solidarity movements of recent years, there is a danger that the very 'ordinariness' of the women's disadvantage, combined with the construction of their positionings as particularly problematic, will exclude them (or differentially include them) in wider social movements and struggles (Emejulu and Bassel 2015). Thus, as Emejulu and Bassel (2017: 197) argue with regards to minority women more generally, African women in Athens need "to navigate *both* material *and* discursive obstacles—about whose crisis counts, who is a legitimate interlocutor and who can mobilise for social justice" [emphases in original]. "*Greece is a country*," Hana explained, "*that is somehow show you that you are nobody, just stay where you are, you know. So this door is not – it really don't help most of them to come out.*" In this context, self-advocacy becomes even more vital. As the UAWO website urges, African women must "come together with one voice and fight for their rights and all the privileges they are deprived of, for so long."[116]

At one level, the founding of UAWO can be understood as being about creating a sense of belonging to make life more livable and deal with practical challenges together. At another, however, it was also crucially about creating a public identity in order to claim rights. This is especially important in Greece where participation in political events (such as the Anti-Racist Festival) or in administrative policy 'dialogues' has been premised on having an officially designated group membership, and where lack of such affiliations renders participation in public contexts problematic and can result in further exclusion or marginalisation (Zavos 2008). Hence, by calling on a cultural identity and the collective affects of belonging, the African woman could officially become a social subject who could then become a subject of rights (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). This was also about building and politicising a conscious understanding of a shared social position. Recognising that only then can conscious strategies develop to engage with relations of power, UAWO deliberately creates a sense of 'groupness' with others that has the potential to transform how women are able to question and resist as active subjects (Piacentini

[116] http://uaworg.wordpress.com/about/

2014). Part of this arises from, as it did for Grace, a strengthened sense of one's own possibility: *"When I get there, I can see that I have a potential because their motto is you are not alone. I can see that I am not alone.*"

However, many obstacles continue to plague women's involvement. The paradox is that hard times bring increased material obstacles to participation and greater politicisation simultaneously. Inevitably (and understandably), there are those who come to the organization in their hour of need never to be seen again. Not everyone has the desire or time to be involved in activism – the potential obstacles are many. Live-in domestic work leaves virtually no spare time for involvement; transport costs to attend meetings and events across the city can be prohibitive; and, struggles with documents and lack of employment can be all-consuming. Pressing needs and commitments mean that many will choose to focus on their own and their family's survival during hard times. Furthermore, the gendering of domestic roles often means that women assume so many domestic and job-related responsibilities that they lack the time (and possibly the inclination) to become more politically active, whereas men have greater contact with others (hooks 1984). Hana explained:

> They [men] are the one that will go and do the paper, while the woman is at home. The woman just goes to the kitchen and cook, eat, you know. I have seen some African women they don't even know where to pay light bill. They don't pay water bill. They don't know. They don't communicate with landlord even to pay rent. So you find out that the men they make their way, because when you start integrating, doing things on your own, you are more wiser than the person that have never done it.

An "*isolating mentality*," according to Hana, has meant that women have not had "*that strength or that knowledge to approach other Greek organization with their problems*." This has made a specifically African women's organization all the more necessary. Adanech agreed, adding that women are much more likely to talk about their problems to other African women, who will also much more easily "*see her 'vlema' [the look in her eye] and understand the woman*."

'The house that Lauretta built'

UAWO can be seen as an identity-based group in that it is a space of similarity and safety, born in part in order to fulfil needs of recognition, belonging, solidarity or inclusion (Carastathis 2013). Being amongst others 'like you' and having one's

experiences affirmed is an important need fulfilled by UAWO. As the previous chapter illustrated, it is also an important part of feeling 'at home'. As Lauretta told one new member of the organization: "*make yourself at home. This is the house that Lauretta built for you!*" That UAWO has contributed to women's ability to build feelings of 'at homeness' in Athens was reflected in the way many members talked about the organization. Take Hana's comments, for example:

> as Africans we have our culture – we are somehow closed up. We prefer to talk about ourselves, our problems within ourselves. So with African Women Organization it has helped many women to… it's like our refuge home. You know, we feel comfortable when we… We safe. We can come, we see ourselves all the same, whether we are from Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, we are all just the same. We all have something common. So we able to relate and say our problems you know in one word that we understand and we feel safe. Because I think all of us here, we are here because of some poverty back home that drove us here and we know the problems back home with our families looking up to us, so we understand immediately somebody will start saying their problem we know.

The double common bond of shared experiences 'back home' and as African women in Athens, contributes to a clarity and certainty of identity that life in Greece cannot provide (El-Tayeb 2011). Thus, as a space in itself, and in the creation of other spaces, UAWO contributes to the creation of what Seaman (1996: 53) refers to as a "community of strangers"' (cited in Ahmed 1999: 336-7). Here, shared experiences provide an anchor and UAWO serves as an organizational structure that channels personal experiences into common action (Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011). Women pool common experiences and share information, they find suitable solutions to problems and offer insights and support, and they create and expand networks and coping strategies (see figure 22).

Women talked of UAWO as "*home*", a "*refuge home*" and a "*safe place*" where they "*feel comfortable*", yet it was simultaneously a hub of activism and a place from which many political actions were born. This reminded me of hooks' (1991: 385, 389) writing on homeplace "as a site of resistance and liberation struggle..."; as "that space where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole." Lauretta echoed this in a speech she made in 2009 to mark International Women's Day:

> We say 'united we stand' and we mean it. We stand and we endure because we have something that makes us strong and helps us stand upright. And this is our organization, which is our home and family…"

In a context in which the mere presence of African migrants has been constructed as a threat to the nation, this statement of togetherness alone can be seen an expression of resistance to the nonintegrative, othering policies of the state. As hooks (1991: 384-5) writes:

> "For those who dominate and oppress us benefit most when we have nothing to give our own, when they have so taken from us our dignity, our humanness that we have nothing left, no "homeplace" where we can recover ourselves...."

Thus, coming together as a group in ways that create a sense of belonging by bringing together 'there' and 'here' (Chapter Seven) is deeply political. It resists negatively ascribed categorisations and seeks to counter the processes and practices that seek to keep these women in a state of permanent impermanence and insecurity and helps women to claim a sense of "in placeness" (Piacentini 2014: 174). Even for women where there is no immediate material gain from joining, this constitutes important social change in the conditions of living as an African woman in Athens (ibid). Gift has found neither legal status nor work through UAWO, but she has gained something else, altogether more intangible but no less important: "*they are my family now*."

The African woman identity

As mentioned, feelings of inclusiveness are maintained by the assertion of an African cultural identity and cultural 'sameness' (Piacentini 2014). 'Africa' becomes an authentic-but-static point of reference for identifications, but it does so without flattening out difference (as processes of racialization do). Calling upon a supranational identity enables UAWO to work 'above' and 'across' differences, as Lauretta explained:

> We have a lot of division in Africa, you understand. And this division doesn't take us anywhere. It just make us to be always African. You understand what I mean. We have divisions. You are from this tribe, you are from that tribe. Even in my country we have about fifteen tribe in five and a half million people. You understand, so we have that division.

Understanding one's identity as a coalition (Crenshaw 1991) enables UAWO to cross boundaries imposed by systems of oppression (Carastathis 2013).[117] As will be discussed further in the following section, UAWO also form strategic alliances with many other migrant and non-migrant groups.

Such an approach also creates more space, allowing for divergences and inevitable differences *within* the African woman identity category. Less absolute, it recognises that in any group mobilisation, whether identity-based or not, there is "a negotiation of various political interests, conflicting though they may be, that exist within an identity category" (Crenshaw 1995: 12). Mobilising the 'African woman' identity thus requires on-going curiosity and work, as Lauretta recognises:

> I want to bring African women together to know, you know, to try to learn about different, different part of Africa. About our divisions and what will make us be together, to make us know that we are from the same – no matter the division – but we are still Africans.

As bell hooks (1984: 55-56) similarly argues, "Divisions between women of color will not be eliminated until we assume responsibility for uniting (not solely on the basis of resisting racism) to learn about our cultures, to share our knowledge and skills, and to gain strength from our diversity." By providing a space in which women can exchange stories, traditions and experiences of 'back home' (Chapter Seven), UAWO continues to pursue the organization's aim of exploring and incorporating "the rich African woman heritage into the rich Greek heritage". Satisfied with neither the 'universalistic' politics of the Left, which have proven to be ethnocentric, masculinist and exclusionary, nor the identity politics of national associations, which essentialise and reify boundaries between groups (Yuval-Davis 1999), UAWO practices a 'transversal politics'. It looks for commonalities without being universalistic, on the one hand, while affirming difference without being transfixed by it on the other (Cockburn and Hunter 1999).

Without hindering a common frame of action, the differences amongst members still foster tensions that are not represented in the organization's public profile of a rather homogeneous and 'tight' collectivity (Zavos 2008). Take Adanech, for instance, who insisted on huge differences between Ethiopia and "*the rest*" of

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[117] I was struck by this when, during a workshop we were told to stand next to the woman you felt you had most in common with, Lauretta, in a room of about ten African women, stood next to me. She explained this as being down to my 'Britishness' which she felt was most similar to her upbringing in Sierra Leone.

Africa (whose "*black*" inhabitants she distanced herself from). Claiming Ethiopia as a more developed and progressive country, she said that Ethiopians were generally more advanced and have a "*different mentality*". Despite all this, Adanech still insisted on the importance of unity in Greece. First and foremost, she explained, they are all migrants. So, even though in Ethiopia she would not feel the same unity with the other women – would not even be able "*to coexist with them*" – in Greece they are all fighting racism and so to join, for instance, the Ethiopian or Eritrean Association, she argued, would be racist too. Furthermore, Adanech told me, "*if they raise their voices and act a certain way I will understand and know why. I will understand Africans better than you.*"

As with any group of people working together (particularly when they work so collaboratively) there were differences of opinion, disagreements and clashes over priorities, responsibilities and agendas. Some women felt that there was an 'in-group' from which they were excluded, and others felt side-lined when new members came in and became more involved. Over time, I came to realise there was far more politics and negotiating going on than one might at first assume. When Lucee fainted (after a panic attack brought on by document-related anxiety) and I went to visit her to see if she was ok, Ruth, upon learning of my visit, informed me that I should have gone "*on behalf of the organization.*" She explained that now next time Lucee is asked to take part she will use the fact that no one went to visit her from UAWO as an excuse not to. "*I know Nigerian women*," she emphatically concluded. It was then that I realised how much conscious effort there was to make women feel supported outside of the organization. Some of the acts I had interpreted as the expression of friendship were more deliberate and calculated than I had realised – no less supportive or kind, but not always part of an intimacy I had assumed. I also witnessed what happened when women did not feel there was enough give and take – particularly when it came to persuading women to attend events. Without an immediate gain, monetary or otherwise, some members did not feel they could or should put precious energy and time into participating. Some newer and younger members also suspected more established members of making money from voluntary events where they danced, for instance, and so felt exploited. They failed to see, as one older member put it, that "*you have to put in to get out.*" Ruth added that "*it's not about dancing for the organization – being part of it will lift self up.*"

Free from the rigidity of institutional, legal and governmental categorisations, UAWO is better able to represent more women. Perhaps most importantly, it does not need to concern itself with document status, except when other organizations require that the women UAWO sends to participate in their programmes have legal residence permits. Furthermore, UAWO represents and stands for those who occupy particular intersections of disadvantage that may not fit the image of migrant women as victims of local, national and transnational networks of exploitation. A particular kind of invisibility afflicts women who are not easily identifiable according to prevailing categories of victim identities or who do not fit homogenised ways to be marginal members of a specific social category (Yuval-Davis 2006b). For instance, you do not, as Lauretta pointed out, need to be a victim of trafficking to need saving.

> Like these trafficking women – they are more prone to be saved than those women. And these categories of women, nobody talk about them, they are not exist. They just don't exist. You understand? So that is one of the reason we have African women organization to bring out such kind of problems that is… you know… hidden.

Lauretta described women who become caught in Greece, trapped in relationships with men who "*are so wicked that they don't even try for these women to have a residence permit. But at the same time these women are giving birth to children and at the same time they are like slaves*." Unable to return home because, given "*the poor conditions we are living in Africa*" and the odd 50 euro the husbands send back every couple of months, they are unable to talk to their families who will "*react very bad to her. They will say she is luck – she is kicking her luck*." Rather than face the "*disgrace*" of returning home, these women feel they have no choice but to remain in Greece. "*These women don't have anybody to save her*," Lauretta concluded. This idea of women not existing if they are not recognisable to NGOs who focus on stereotypical notions of victimhood came up repeatedly in women's narratives. They talked not only of exclusion, but also of isolation and helplessness: being unable to "*do anything without your husband. It's like you are in a bondage*." These are the women that many of the members I spoke to felt UAWO was particularly well-placed to help, and who they believed would benefit most from coming together as African women.

Ways of working: reciprocity, advocacy and voice

As previous chapters have shown, processes of gendered racialization produce particular intersections of disadvantage that result in particular experiences, and give rise to particular claims and needs. Lauretta put it thus: "*As African women, our problems are vast problems. You understand? It's vast. A lot of things are inside, because one thing is their problems that people don't understand about African women.*" As Hill Collins (1990: 203) argues elsewhere, because "the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power work together to produce particular patterns of domination" that also serve to justify their oppression, African women's activism must demonstrate a comparable complexity. Accordingly, UAWO empowers women and reinforces a sense of shared experience and commonality in ways that strengthens both their individual and collective capacity to resist. Their collective efforts seek to create positive change in women's lives – by securing legal status for their children, by increasing their mobility and ability to speak for themselves, by countering negative racialized representations, and by improving their conditions of work. Through an approach that combines welfare, self-advocacy and collective action, UAWO enables individuals to see how their current or potential everyday activities contribute to and participate in women's activism (Hill Collins 1990).[118] From this perspective, the contributions of individual women – whether of Nneoma caring for her children or Lauretta talking back to racist comments on the bus – represent the essential, if often unacknowledged

Figure 23: *Rehearsals for a performance on document issues at UAWO* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

[118] This is important because, as Hill Collins (1990: 202) has argued more generally, a focus on public, official, visible political activity, misunderstands the meaning of political activism and resistance in women's lives.

actions taken by countless women to resist negative representations and enhance the possibilities of their survival.

UAWO emerged from, and continues to be part of, what Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013: 190) refer to as "the world of the mobile commons." This is the wider world of information, knowledge, tricks for survival, mutual care, social relations, services exchanged, solidarity and sociability through which migrants manage their lives. Actions such as accompanying individuals to appointments, sharing information, advocating for others, and engaging with other support groups may not make headlines, but they are crucial to how women navigate the contexts described in earlier chapters. As many previous examples have shown, sharing experiences, planning entrepreneurial activities, learning about rights and trading information on lawyers, services, government benefits and jobs, is critical to how women secure greater livability. As a collective space in which these activities not only take place, but are nurtured, UAWO is a "knowledge and affective reservoir" (ibid) that strengthens women's capacities to counter the differential distribution of precarity, grievability and vulnerability.

UAWO also engages in a transversal politics that resists the kinds of autocratic decision-making mechanisms in which certain individuals take it upon themselves to 'represent' their communities (Yuval-Davis 1999). Though Lauretta has been 'the face' of UAWO for a long time, she encourages other women not only to participate, but also to take a lead role. This, according to prominent researcher and human rights activist, Anna Vouyioukas, distinguishes UAWO from other organizations:

> I think there is a major difference with the African Women's Organization because they have this approach, you know, of new members again and again and also empowering women, which is really important. And it's, you know, so feminist to me. So anti-male or macho, anti-patriarchal attitude because you can see it – there's a different story there. You can see men they are very well informed. You know, they lobby, they keep the network members close together, they work hard, they know what the situation is all about, blah blah blah, which is great. But on the other hand they will not abandon their seat. There's no predecessors. There's no new people coming in, you know what I mean? With the male dominant pattern of political participation. Which is stopping not just women, but men as well. This is very often the case.

When Lauretta described her leadership-style, she did so in similar terms, explaining that life under a dictatorship (in Sierra Leone) had made her determined to run the organization not only as a democracy, but also as a feminist one:

> women give chance to other women […] Believe it, it's real – it's rare to see a woman that just want to be there and block the other women. No, believe it, it's true. It's feminist. The men have that, you know, if they are the President, they want to be the President. To be the leader. But women… let us just say women like to work together. You understand? We like to work together. That is feminist life.

Recognising the danger that exceptionalism or celebrity could obscure discussion about socio-economic and political conditions by making it about a unique individual, Lauretta emphasises again and again that this is not about her: "*Let the public see that oh no this is not about Lauretta. You understand. So that why we put different, different, different women.*"

Through this feminist mode of leadership, UAWO has avoided some of the pitfalls of other organizations, where they speak "with a unified cultural voice" (Yuval-Davis 1993: 627). By sustaining a more open and inclusive membership, by bringing new members in and encouraging them to speak, UAWO adopts an anti-exclusionary practice that is at once more democratic and looser in structure and, ultimately, enriches the organization as a whole. This is largely, according to Anna Vouyioukas, down to UAWO's leadership: "*You are not a gatekeeper, to use this term. You are a gate-opener. That's what Lauretta is.*"

Lauretta has also been motivated by a strong sense of justice and the need to "*keep fighting for the voiceless, because you have many voiceless women here that they cannot say or do anything. They are mix up.*" According to the UAWO website, Lauretta was moved to set up an organization for African women because she saw that they "lack the ability to express their problems." Countering the silencing of African women's voices in politics and in wider society has continued to be one of UAWO's central aims. Indeed, the powerful (empowering) experience of public-speaking led Lauretta to believe strongly in sharing the microphone, wherever possible, with other women:

> That is what I am giving to other women. […] I give them chance. I give them the microphone, you know. You know how powerful this tool? Somebody to give you a microphone? It's a power. This microphone that I am using, I give to them. Another weapon, you understand. I just don't use the microphone for myself. I said come and use it. Don't be afraid.

Speaking for oneself as a member of a group opens avenues for women both individually and collectively. It gives them the power to "talk back" to authority and challenge the politics of domination (hooks 1989) not only through political events and campaigns, but also in their everyday lives. *"When you give them that – empower them to meet the public, it's something like integrating*," Lauretta explained, "*So they begin to open. You know, they begin to feel free. […] it's empowering them to integrate little by little in the society*." Talking about and sharing one's own vulnerability thus becomes a way to assert oneself. It demands recognition as actors with the ability (and right) to speak and be heard. These everyday acts, in turn, disrupt prevailing assumptions of them as voiceless, helpless individuals. They are acts of citizenship that chip away in often imperceptible ways at prevailing power relations and can, over time, effect important social change (Piacentini 2014).

African women engaging in public speaking in Greece is particularly radical because, though migrant men may also be seen as 'unwelcome Others', they are not entrapped under the expectation of silence in the same way that migrant women are. Silence, in exchange for being 'here', is a precondition for being marginally, and partially, accepted within a predetermined and delineated space (Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011). Contributing to the production of vulnerability, this is a silence that is conditioned by the expectation of further silence, permitting neither integration nor acceptance (ibid). Gender thus functions as a signifier of vulnerability and victimhood, and of oppression and backwardness, as well as of 'otherness' (Zavos 2010, 2014). In this context, the sight and sound of African women speaking in public remains somewhat subversive, as if they are breaking an unspoken contract of silence by doing so (particularly when they speak of their own experiences and even more so when they do so in Greek).[119]

As Zavos (2014: 231) argues in her illuminating discussion of migrant women's public performances, the public presence of migrant women in Greece crosses several normalised and normative boundaries: the gendered inscription of the public domain, and of politics, as a masculine domain where only universalizing narratives are considered 'properly' political; and, the racialized/nationalised culture

[119] As argued previously, African women speaking Greek challenges assumptions about their inability or lack of desire to learn Greek. Indeed, this is perhaps the one criterion that could be a potential obstacle to women speaking in public as UAWO felt it was important for women to speak in Greek wherever possible to counter the image of African women as too lazy, uneducated or foreign to learn the language.

of political engagement, where – if women do engage in public politics – it is mainly native (Greek) women. So, when African women are publicly present, when they stand up and talk of their own experiences, they are doing more than challenging prevailing notions of migrant women as backward, passive victims. Even though it takes place mostly within prescribed spaces, collectively speaking out in protest in this context is a deeply revolutionary act.

Prioritising authenticity of voice and the experience of speaking out for oneself, rather than qualifications, eloquence or language skills, is a radical departure from the way conventional politics are 'done'. UAWO's approach is in stark contrast to and, indeed, challenges, those that seek to conduct politics in generalised terms and neutralised language – in ways that avoid the individualised or personal account. Consider Anna Vouyioukas' comments:

> I'm touched to be honest because sometimes she might have a person who she knows is not the right person and I've told her this. I've told her 'Lauretta I don't think she did well – you should have somebody else.' She said 'no Anna, we should have her, because only this way they will learn.' […] So she will let a woman who has suffered speak publicly about what participation is all about or what her working conditions are all about. Speaking from her heart, being very individual, being very "sentimental" (quote, quote, ok?). Speaking with passion. And she thinks this is political. So, she's not, you know, radicalising the agenda but she is bringing a lot of new elements in.

At conferences, political meetings, parliamentary debates and so on, many of these women, as marginal Others, lack the authority of political, academic or institutional discourses. What they do have, however, is the passion of experience and remembrance. Not "the authority of experience" which, hooks (1994: 91) warns, is all too often used to silence and exclude, but the "spirit that orders those words, that testifies that, behind them – underneath, every where – there is a lived reality."

When women get up to speak about their own experiences, they are claiming to know their truth. Theirs is the particular knowledge that comes from suffering that is, according to hooks (1994: 91), "a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it knows, what has been deeply inscribed on it through experience." It is this passion of experience and remembrance that Hana refers to when she says "*you really feel the voice. The pain. The cry*":

> They have so many organization out there that are mostly the Greeks. Even representing African communities, things like that, which they never really go into because I don't think that… what will I say? Somebody representing somebody and

> being that person is two different to be. Because when we have the Africans, we really – it's like a story written. We don't go out, go and search, go, go to know what is happening Sierra Leone, to know what is happen, to see the life. Even when we are not there we feel it because our families are going through things there. We are losing family. Like now in Sierra Leone, this ebola, we have lost people. People are crying there because they are losing their families, they are losing their children so it is – we are inside the problems. We are the ones facing. We are the victims, you know. So, we really feel it and we know it more than any other group that will represent us. Just reading it and saying it, you know, because sometimes the African Women Organization when someone will try to force women to talk, when they stand there to talk, you really feel the voice. The pain. The cry. That this is really the victim of what is you know. Even if you are not first-hand but you are there from family members, you see. So, it's really UAWO that is why we are.

Far from non-political, the women's testimonies, grounded in felt and lived experiences, give them a power and an authority that theorizing alone could never carry. Insisting that this is the most important location from which one can know, UAWO challenges what it means to be political, who has the right to speak, when, where and to whom. Crucially, articulating experiences of victimisation, exploitation and abuse for themselves, is a display of agency that simultaneously counters the tendency to view these women as backward and voiceless. Using the victimhood narrative as an effective way for women to access the public sphere and highlight inequalities as a public issue requiring policy action, while rejecting the role of passive and vulnerable objects, UAWO performs a tricky but necessary balancing act.[120] As Sassen (2002) points out, there is, after all, a distinction between powerlessness and the condition of being an actor even though lacking in power. For African women in Athens seeking greater livability, this is a crucial difference and one they work hard to highlight.

UAWO has been at the forefront of the struggle for greater social intelligibility amongst African women in Athens. In the following section I look at some of the campaigns and events through which UAWO have collectively mobilised to resist the exclusionary processes discussed in previous chapters.

[120] This can be the high price paid by minority women in order to be seen and heard by policy-makers (Emejulu and Bassel 2015).

8.3 Claiming Visibility…

Recognising the connection between visibility and rights, UAWO seeks symbolic gains in order to secure a foothold in public debates from which they can make claims. In the struggle over what kinds of protests against the prevailing regime of citizenship can be seen and heard (Tyler 2013), UAWO have identified and mobilised collectively as mothers on behalf of their children, as activists, as 'exotic Others', and as women mobilising international discourses of equality and women's rights. The following sections discuss these four, sometimes overlapping, examples of 'acts of citizenship'.

… as mothers: No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle

UAWO launched its first campaign in late November 2005, with the support of anti-racist, feminist and other migrant groups. This campaign, entitled 'No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle', began with a demonstration in central Athens. Posters were prepared appropriating the well-known Benetton advertisements that depicted a group of babies of different skin colour (see figure 24), and leaflets were handed out demanding legalisation, the right to birth certificates and citizenship rights for children born in Greece to migrant parents.

Figure 24: *Campaign poster for 'No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle.*

The text reads: "We return with the demand 'NO to racism from the cradle'. Birth certificates should be issued to migrants' children born in Greece and they should be registered with the municipality".

Conceived by individual mothers who had been contesting policies harmful to their children on a daily basis, the campaign proved to be an extremely effective way to mobilise women who had previously been uninterested or unable to participate. Hana's response was fairly typical. Tired of "*facing this discrimination*" at her children's school alone, she immediately understood that "*I cannot fight alone. It's something we have to come together, bring this out because maybe there are things some people take advantage because it's not known*." Starting with this campaign was particularly effective because the issue was shared by all migrant parents and so provided solid grounds on which to build strategic alliances with other migrant groups. Mobilising the mother stereotype as a way to demand recognition and respect for themselves, as well as papers and citizenship rights for their children was also a clever political move. It appropriated the most 'benign' of the gendered stereotypes through which African women are commonly 'seen', which was also one that Greek parents and those sympathetic to children could relate to and, crucially, be moved by.

Figure 25: *UAWO pose for journalists with then Minister for Immigration, Tasia Christodoulopoulou, at a rally for 'second generation' rights outside parliament on the eve of a vote on changes to citizenship law. 24th June, 2015*
(photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

As noted above with regards to the organization's changing circumstances, UAWO is not only a flexible, but also an evolving entity. Where possible, they experiment and try to learn from what works and what does not. They cannot afford to waste precious resources, time and energy on repeating mistakes; and, when successful, they build and repeat. Widely considered a success, this campaign proved formative in that it established several ways of working that have continued to characterise UAWO's approach. Firstly, they formed alliances with other groups from the outset. The campaign was launched with the support of the Pan-Hellenic

Network of Women Immigrants, and went on to create a broad 'initiative committee' made up of trade unions, other migrant organizations, and municipal government representatives. Secondly, understanding the importance of media coverage, UAWO ensured that all demonstrations and events were covered widely by newspapers, radio stations and TV channels.[121] Thirdly, the campaign adopted a multifaceted approach, including a petition, a series of public events (later to include concerts, debates and press conferences) and the establishment of a website to coordinate members, spread information and raise awareness.[122] Lastly, although the campaign was issue-led, it also looked to broader, longer-term goals: aiming towards wider social intelligibility, mobilising increasing numbers of migrants, building networks of solidarity and gaining the support of the Greek public. These were reflected in the two main campaign aims which, according to a leaflet published in 2006, were:

1. To gain the support of the Greek public, thereby creating a feeling of solidarity towards migrants more generally.
2. To encourage second generation migrants to come out of isolation, find a voice and rally for their rights.

This campaign had a significant impact, not least in that it succeeded in its stated goal of mobilising a whole generation. Many 'second generation' activists today acknowledge the debt they owe to UAWO and this campaign, bringing the issue as it did to the attention not only of other migrant groups, but also to large sections of Greek society (see figure 25).

The 'No to Racism from the Baby's Cradle' campaign also marked a significant departure from the way things had previously been done on the Athenian activist scene. Instead of Greek activists taking leadership roles with migrant groups in support, this campaign was initiated, orchestrated, and organized by the women themselves.[123] Moreover, the presence of African women and their children at the front of these demonstrations was, at the time, a completely novel sight. Previous demonstrations were usually dominated by Greek activists and migrant men (Zavos 2014). Understanding the power of their collective presence and visibility on the streets of Athens, the children of women from different African countries were

[121] The first demonstration was held on 3rd December, 2005, the second on 7th October, 2006 and there have been many since as the issue has evolved. For instance, during my fieldwork there was a rally outside parliament in 2015 as a vote was taking place on a new citizenship law for children of migrant parents (see figure 25).
[122] This website no longer exists.
[123] See Zavos (2010, 2014) for further discussion on how things were previously done.

instructed to sing Greek Christmas songs. Bringing together linguistic and religious signifiers in this way was a powerful statement of belonging. It also marked the beginning of what has become a significant movement in Greece.

In a context in which certain bodies being seen as political is a display of power and agency that can provoke anxiety, fear and resistance from some quarters, politically 'coming out' as mothers in this way proved to be an extremely effective strategy. Though it may appear to reinforce stereotypes, the women adopted the pre-written scripts according to which they are normally 'read' in Greece in order to subvert such representations. By speaking in public spaces for the first time 'as mothers', they were able to voice their own claims in ways that contrasted with prevailing representations of victimhood and backwardness and marked the emergence of new political subjectivities and discourses (Zavos 2014). As Zavos (2014: 232) observes, "Identifying migrant women's agency in such acts of performative appropriation of available discourses and terms of address is important for recognizing the different ways in which they actively wield power and recast national and political imaginaries." Constituting themselves as the mothers of those with 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2009), they were speaking to the norms within which they lived, rather than operating outside them. Acting as citizens by proxy on behalf of their children they were thus able to claim social intelligibility within common and culturally legible discourses.

Strategically, this was a relatively unthreatening way for women who had been constructed as Other to announce their arrival on the political scene without provoking a backlash. By politicising the mother stereotype, they were able to push the political agenda while simultaneously validating their claims for respect and understanding, and justifying their reasons for migrating to Greece in the first place (Zavos 2012). As Anna Vouyioukas commented:

> They were there for their newly born or young children's rights. So they sacrificed – this is a narrative which comes up very often among migrants – that you sacrifice (and not just migrants in Greece, Greek migrants elsewhere) you sacrifice, you put aside your aspirations, your I don't know plans for the future for your children, and then you realise – this is the situation in Greece – they were for nothing, because they are in a worst position than you! They do not have some kind of an identity. They belong nowhere. There is this no-man's land thing in the legislation so they don't – they are not from Nigeria because they were born in Greece, but they are not Greek because they are not given some kind of an identity or citizenship. So no matter what you have

done in order to have a better future for your children, or give life here, give birth to your child here, it's for nothing!

Invoking the narrative of parental sacrifice is a way to tactically build alliances by appealing to commonality with Greek women. It also deflects criticism, justifies migration (for the future of their children), and evokes sympathy while allowing women to be seen as non-political and, therefore, somehow less threatening (Zavos 2012).

Refocusing attention away from 'dangerous' Others and onto their children, the campaign also disrupted the easy pigeonholing that often accompanies stereotypes. The tendency is, for instance, to treat victims of trafficking separately to mothers, failing to recognise that women may be (and often are) both. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter Six, the families of domestic workers are often rendered invisible so that women are not hampered from performing their roles (see also Andall 2003). By claiming visibility and rights on behalf of their children, African women were reminding Greek society that they are more than domestic workers, prostitutes, victims of trafficking and exotic Others; that they are worthy mothers struggling to feed, clothe and educate their children, just like 'us'.

Crucially, the campaign also played to the sympathies of the Greeks. Although it was not an issue that Greek citizens shared a direct concern for, it was certainly one that they could be moved by. Anna Vouyioukas explained that they were "*touched*":

> because the Greek people are very sensitive when it comes to children. Instead of claiming citizenship for themselves or long term residence for themselves or indefinite time residence, they claimed citizenship for babies born in Greece. And the slogan was amazing. And it touched Greeks because they made you realise this child was born here. They attend the Greek school. They speak Greek. They feel Greek. They want to hold the flag, whatever. And you don't recognise this? So this was amazing. And they were pioneers because then other migrant communities and NGOs followed them.

By invoking the common language of parenthood and, specifically, motherhood, the campaign strategically connected this 'universal' theme to other issues. The campaign tackled racism (not least with its memorable title), raised the issue of residence permit renewal and highlighted the precarity living as a 'foreigner' in Greece entails. They did so by pointing out that, despite being born and raised in Greece, at the age of 18, these children would suddenly become "foreigners" and "economic immigrants"

who must enter into the cycle of resident permit renewal. Introducing a discourse that would become part of other struggles for rights, they argued that their children belong to a "grey zone" of illegitimacy, without basic rights, marginalised and socially excluded. Furthermore, the situation in Greece was, they claimed, worse than any other country "on the planet".[124]

UAWO thus entered the political landscape with a multi-layered strategy that mobilised important forms of embodied resistance as a way to call attention to the unjust effects of precarity. By using already legible cultural codes surrounding motherhood, they were able to cross other racialized and gendered boundaries and so enter the political field. Using new forms of embodied political interventions, they engaged a vocabulary that breaks with masculinist models of autonomy because they showed that vulnerability is part of resistance and that modes of alliance are characterized by interdependency and public action (Butler et al. 2016).

… as anti-austerity activists

Alongside the narrative of financial crisis and social *anomie*, there has also been a more positive commentary on the crisis in Greece pointing to a shift in values towards a more democratic and inclusive form of politics. Protest, dissent, non-compliance and outrage has been expressed on the streets by increasing numbers of people demanding to be heard. Quick to recognise an opportunity for visibility of a more positive, agential nature (Zavos 2012), UAWO has taken its place in the endless demonstrations, occupations, festivals, performances, solidarity meetings and events taking place across the city. The crisis has thus

Figure 26: *UAWO attend an anti-racism demonstration, Syntagma Square 21st March, 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

124 These quotes are all taken from a campaign pamphlet.

brought UAWO not only increased publicity and greater recognition, but also opportunities to articulate their grievances and demands alongside those of others and to form new alliances in broader struggles for social justice. As a form of protest, demonstrations are popular in Greece and during my fieldwork year I joined members of UAWO on several occasions to march the familiar route, usually terminating in front of parliament in Syntagma Square. Thus asserting their presences and disrupting the everyday rhythms of the city by bringing the centre to a near-complete standstill, these women, alongside others, claimed their right to the city they now call home.

This growing movement has included anti-austerity protests and rallies, politically themed festivals (most notably the Anti-Racist Festival) and a proliferation of 'international' days (such as international refugee day). The displays of diversity at such events, even if they are somewhat transient and do not extend to other areas of the women's lives (as previous chapters have shown), are nevertheless important and mark a significant and positive change in Greek society. Tsilimpounidi (2012: 549) argues that "diversity is one of the strong elements of the Greek social milieu since 2008: such protests had created a faceless, borderless, multicultural and polyvocal movement." This 'facelessness' is an altogether more positive kind of invisibility for African women. I observed that, for many women, being part of a multitude collectively mobilised in resistance was both empowering and liberating. It was as if in these spaces of protest, a reversal took place; citizens took their places alongside, and sometimes even identified with, non-citizens to claim rights they now felt they too were being denied. Thus, citizens and non-citizens acted together *as* citizens.

Interestingly, as these women (and men) were enacting citizenship in these ways, some more radical citizens were claiming the migrant label to highlight their experiences of marginalisation. In Exarchia, the traditional anarchist stronghold neighbourhood of Athens, street art with faceless figures and the tagline 'we are all immigrants' began to appear in 2011.[125] While this was a powerful statement of solidarity, it was primarily about highlighting the marginalisation and feelings of non-belonging among citizens under the crisis. The positioning (in terms of experience, needs, relation to the state and so on) of a marginalised Greek citizen is qualitatively

[125] See Tsilimpounidi (2012) for further comment on this.

different from that of a non-citizen migrant; invoking similarities is in danger of unintentionally obscuring this fact. This is a constant struggle for UAWO and its members: how to form allegiances with others and still be seen and heard. There is, UAWO has learnt, sometimes a price to be paid for forming alliances. For instance, the VAW Action Plan mentioned above was proposed by Greek "*friends of the organization*" who were better placed to fulfil the requirements of form-filling and project applications – they had the fluent Greek, bank accounts and experience necessary for accessing funding. However, the failure to identify issues that were perceived to be most pressing in the women's lives by the women themselves (namely, documents and protection for domestic workers) led to tensions, frustrations and a feeling of not only wasted opportunities, but also of being used.

It remains an open question how far these seemingly inclusive spaces will sustain solidarity with African women's interests and activisms, and whether they will extend to, and bring greater recognition and rights in, other areas of their lives.[126] Nevertheless, taking up space in the city, being part of performances of solidarity and becoming visible as political agents alongside others is an important way for women to "talk back" (hooks 1989) to modes of inferiorisation. In these acts of citizenship, women are fighting for a democratic transformation from below; they are actors rather than subjects (Tsilimpounidi 2012) which is a powerful statement of belonging. In contrast to their everyday experiences on the streets of Athens, within these transient spaces women appropriate social narratives of difference in ways in which they are celebrated for their non-Greekness. I witnessed how empowering an experience this is in and of itself. The hope is that, over time, through regular visibility and presence of this kind, women will carve out more space for themselves in Athens and become recognised as subjects that count in other areas of their lives also.

[126] Emejulu and Bassel (2015: 93) raise similar concerns in their study on minority women's rights in Scotland, England and France.

… exotic Others: detoxified difference

Amidst the growing anti-austerity movement, women have been creating new pathways to greater livability not only in terms of social intelligibility, but also in material terms. They have organized and taken part in events where they assert their 'African-ness' on their own terms and as something to be celebrated. By taking ownership of the 'African women' identity thus, UAWO uses it as a way to build a common bond (see above), to counter prevailing notions of them as negative Other, and to earn some income. As discussed in Chapter Six, identifying an appetite for 'exotic' cuisine and handicrafts, women use their skills and creativity to earn both money and positive recognition as 'exotic' Others. Thus, as bell hooks (1992: 21) writes in her chapter 'eating the other', through the commodification of Otherness "ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture." I saw women dance at events (figure 27), turn up in full eye-catching 'traditional' dress (figure 28), and sell their 'exotic' food and handicrafts (figures 13 and 14). In contrast to the negative value remarked upon in previous chapters, in these spaces women found ways to be appreciated for what they were, rather than feared for what they were not.

Figure 27: *UAWO dance group performs at a fundraising event for Sierra Leone* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

Increasingly, however, I found these events somewhat problematic. There was something reductive about the ways in which the women were seen even in these liberal, diverse spaces. The paparazzi-like attention they received when they wore their African dress, although it represented an opportunity for visibility of a positive kind, troubled me. This attention, though superficial, also, in theory at least, raised women's profiles and gave them a chance to articulate their concerns to

journalists, TV channels and so on. This was all 'a good thing'. Perhaps, I reflected, it was the contrast between these events and the exclusion women experienced in their everyday lives that bothered me – a lack of connection between these and other spheres of the women's lives. I had, for instance, spoken to several liberal activist (white) Greeks who confirmed that they did not socialise with any migrants outside of these events.[127]

The problem, however, also lay with the reduction of the stranger to the level of 'being'. By emphasising the association of being with the body through food, dance and dress in these limited spaces, the African woman stranger comes to be assumed to be knowable (Ahmed 2000). Rather than being "Different to the point of being unknowable" (Berger 1975: 254), visibility of this kind allows for the perception of being 'known' as exotic Other and creates a distance that makes proximity less threatening. The "detoxification of one's neighbour," Zizek (2010) has argued, suggests a "clear passage from direct barbarism to barbarism with a human

Figure 28: *Members of UAWO in traditional African dress attend a fundraising event for Sierra Leone* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

face."[128] Difference thus "decaffeinated," to borrow Zizek's phrase, is safe for appropriation and consumption, along with other products stripped of their malignant qualities (such as cream without fat, coffee without caffeine and beer

[127] Equally, at these events, migrant groups remained in their community groups with very little interaction between them.

[128] In the article Zizek (2010) argues that "a closer look reveals how their multicultural tolerance and respect of differences share with those who oppose immigration the need to keep others at a proper distance […] This leads us to today's tolerant liberal multiculturalism as an experience of the Other deprived of its Otherness – the decaffeinated Other."

without alcohol) (ibid). It is also far less threatening than claims to equality, similarity and/or co-presence on the buses, in the workplace and in the neighbourhood. In contrast to the dangerous stranger who transgresses boundaries by wearing the same clothes, shopping in the same places and eating the same food (signs that she may even be seeking to become 'one of us' (Lazaridis and Wickens 1999)), in the 'other spaces' of festivals, bazaars and cultural events the Other is made known in specific ways that ultimately operate to maintain both her marginalisation and the status quo. Reinforcing her position as temporary guest, Greek culture is (re)constructed as dominant and the Greek tradition of hospitality acts a form of defence, enabling both fears of loss of 'purity' as well as demands for recognition to be temporarily ignored (Veikou 2016).

… as women: International Women's Day[129]

Another campaign which provided alternative images – counter-representations – that make women visible while trying to minimise the risk involved in visibility was the photography project Lauretta devised in 2015 to mark International Women's Day (IWD). The idea was that four African and four Greek women would wear each other's traditional dress, and that together these eight women would symbolise the 8th March (IWD) and female solidarity. Consider the following, in which Lauretta calls on the "*mutual bonds*" of oppression and motherhood amongst women:

> The project is one of our struggles for immigrant rights and especially women's rights so that's why we did the photographs because we are women and for women's day we wanted to give a message to Greek society that we should have that mutual bonds between us. They should understand that we are living in their country – and especially women – women are the ones who give birth to children and women are the ones who are more oppressed in this society. Especially immigrant women.

Though highlighting oppression in this way can be seen as a reductive and stereotypical form of legibility, oppression is itself, as Butler points out, a sign of intelligibility (Lloyd 2007). Hence, by making themselves recognisable as lives that are vulnerable, grievable and worthy of protection, they have successfully gained a foothold in public debates. Calling upon 'women's rights', and using the platform of

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[129] The accompanying article (see Appendix II), which I helped write, was sent out to UAWO's mailing list and posted on its social media sites.

the much publicised IWD, UAWO were thus able to align themselves with feminist organizations in Greece and beyond.

According to Butler (2004b: 14), one way for those who are deemed illegible and unrecognisable to resist normative constructions and hierarchies is to insist on being 'like you', and to speak "in the terms of the 'human'." The IWD project was very much about this – about talking back to discriminatory binaries to emphasise commonality and humanity over stereotypes and dehumanisation. As Lauretta explained:

> The idea behind this is we have to inform the Greek people – to remind them that we are here ourselves, as women. And as women we need to have that mutual bond with the Greeks in general, and especially the women […] it's something that is a symbolic something to gain public opinion that they can see that no matter the difference between us, we can fit in the same clothes or shoes or whatever it is so that we can fit in the society, you understand. That I can fit in your clothes and you can fit in my clothes so we have to work together to make a better society.

Simultaneously a proclamation of presence, commonality *and* difference, the project was intended to remind the Greek public that 'we' are 'like you' and that we can work together, across differences, for the good of all. The project was thus also a manifestation of UAWO's aim to work "hand in hand" and "create mutual bonds of solidarity between Africans and our host the Greeks." In this way, strategic alliances were formed not only with other Others who occupy similar positions of disadvantage (like migrant women who "*face the same problems like job, like residence permit*"), but also with Greek women. Recognising thus that there are different levels of common political work, from tight formal organization to a loose informal network, from an ideological alliance to a single-issue based coalition has been one of UAWO's strengths (Yuval-Davis 1999).

Normative conditions shape who may be recognised within contingent socio-political cultures as a subject capable of living a life that counts (Butler 2009a). Hence, by leveraging the modes of recognition available to them in order to assert their humanity through commonality, UAWO was doing more than claiming public recognition as being 'like us'. They were fighting the misrecognition, stereotyping and dehumanisation that permit all kinds of violence. Inverting expectations – by putting a black woman in a Greek costume and a white woman in an African one – Ruth explained that they were deliberately challenging racist inferiorisation:

> So it was very, very important and like what happened yesterday – it looked strange to them, but a lot of them can get the message that we are sending message that everybody we are one. There's no difference – the colour, no matter where you come from, no matter the colour you have – we are all the same thing. We think the same way. There's nothing different from us as a human being. So they have to learn that. It's very, very important for them to know that one and change their ways of treating people, when you are with them.

The assertion of equal humanity – that "*there's nothing different from us as a human being*" – is crucial because, as Athanasiou points out, when a life that does not figure as normatively human is violated, this violation remains unrecognised, misrecognised, or recognised in an injurious way, through terms that enable derealizing violence (Butler and Athanasiou 2013).

The technique of unsettling the order of things by juxtaposing things not usually found together (here, an African woman in an Ipirot costume), is one UAWO has employed before. Putting on short theatrical performances in which "*the Greeks play the African – the immigrants- and we play the Greek*" to show "*how they treated us in the office – bureaucratically*," UAWO have made powerful statements about prejudice and inequality.[130] Role-reversal disrupts expectation within the realm of the familiar, thereby shedding light on women's experiences in ways that make it harder for others to turn away. Thus employing modes of representation that deliberately confuse, the opportunity is created for women to behave in ways not prescribed, and perhaps not always sanctioned, by dominant norms (Hetherington 1998). By challenging dominant ways of being, the IWD project created "a space of illusion" that highlighted the constructed nature of national identity thereby exposing every real space of assumed national belonging

Figure 29: *Participants in the International Women's Day project, 8th March, 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

[130] In one theatrical performance a white Greek is shown struggling with African office workers at a local authority/bureaucratic institution (Life In Greece Now 2014).

as "still more illusory" (Foucault 1986: 27). Without offering resolution or consolation, these tactics disrupt and test our customary notions of ourselves (Johnson 2006) – and, in doing so, those of others. Thus, UAWO is widening possibilities and creating a little more space for themselves.

Figure 30: *Women pose outside parliament for the International Women's Day project, 8th March, 2015* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

As with many UAWO actions, the IWD project operated at multiple levels. On the surface, it was presented as the opportunity to exchange cultural traditions (which remains one of the organization's specified aims and objectives) and, as such, was a very positive experience for all the women who took part (figure 29). Ruth beamed as she told me how happy it made her when the Greek participants enjoyed wearing her daughter's clothes. Despite being looked at strangely by some members of the public, the visibility she experienced gave her a sense of belonging.

> It was something unusual. Some of them just look like 'what is these people doing?' It look strange to a lot of people. A lot! A lot of people who saw us yesterday they are thinking 'are they crazy?' Or 'what are they doing?,' you know. It looks very strange yesterday to a lot of them. For me yesterday I feel belong, you know? In a positive way yesterday I feel. Because they looks at me… what are they going to say about me? I'm just a Greek woman. Normally, without the dress, I feel I'm a foreigner. Yesterday I don't feel that…I feel like them [the Greeks], you know? It make me feel belong.

Lauretta agreed: "*it make me feel I belong more*," she said, though this was soon undercut by sadness at her lack of citizenship, which she felt would allow her to be able to feel that much a part of Greek society every day. The location of the exercise was also hugely significant in this regard. Most of the photographs were taken in front of parliament – a potent symbol of the Greek nation-state from which these women are, on the whole, politically excluded (figure 30). Appearing so publicly in Syntagma Square amongst the hordes of passers-by, and by taking control of their image themselves, the African participants experienced a feeling of hyper-visibility in ways

that contrasted dramatically to their everyday experiences of "visible invisibility" (Kandylis 2017: 478) as Other. In a context in which even everyday routine activities like travelling on buses, working or living in the city are transformed into forbidden and illegal acts (Lafazani 2013), it is not difficult to see why, in Lauretta's words, "*The pictures says a lot of… it has a lot of meaning to us.*"

The location also signals another, considerably more controversial, level at which the project acquired meaning both *vis-à-vis* Greek society and for those taking part. Remaining within the bounds of gendered constructions of women as bearers of tradition and reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989), the project deliberately subverted national and national*ist* symbols. The traditional Greek costumes the African participants (from Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria) wore represented three regions that are part of the narrative of Greek national identity and the formation of Modern Greece. By dressing in costumes from Thrace, Asia Minor and the island of Ios, they were claiming – albeit temporarily – an identity they are told daily, both implicitly and explicitly, can never be theirs (figure 31). By deliberately transgressing normative notions of 'Greekness' in this way, the women mounted a new means of resistance to dominant, seemingly natural forms of identity and belonging.

Figure 31: *A member of UAWO in a traditional Thracian costume prepares for the IWD project* (photo: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi)

Rewriting the script of what it is to be an African woman in Athens they had, for a time, unsettled definitions provided by Greek socio-political discourses and widely propagated as truth (Wearing 1998). By appearing as Greeks in front of one of the main symbols of state power alongside white Greek women in their own traditional dress (a 'version' of themselves widely accepted and even celebrated), the

women disrupted "what has become settled knowledge and knowable reality" and used, as it were, their "unreality to make an otherwise impossible or illegible claim" (Butler 2004b: 27). Far from being intended as a 'passing as white' (which would support the national desire to assimilate difference), this was a deliberate disruption of the 'face of the nation' (Ahmed 2000). By subversively appropriating tradition – by fusing and *con*fusing the difference between traditional images of Greek and African femininity – the women were presenting a challenge to established norms and concepts. Highlighting the constructedness of identity and national belonging denaturalises 'fixed' social categories. After all, as history tells us and the 'Greek' costume from Asia Minor illustrates, there is nothing fixed, given or natural about the boundaries of the nation-state.

In these cracks, openings begin to appear and new lines of alliances and solidarity emerge. For when African women demand to be recognised as equal to Greek women, even if this effort fails again and again, there is value in the calling into question of "the normative horizon in which recognition takes place" (Butler 2005: 24). This crisis puts the current norms of recognition into question, establishes a critical point of departure for the interrogation of available norms and sets up the possibility that a new set might be developed (ibid). This is perhaps what gave Ruth, Lauretta and others such a boost that day – the feeling that they had rattled the norms they were so often excluded by and that they had suggested the possibility of alternatives. "*It's a historical thing that we did yesterday*," Lauretta told me. "*These pictures that we took now other people will be taking it from our site, because I remember when we start the children campaign, they were taking it and doing it for other things. You know, using it. So it's a very historical something.*"

8.4 Conclusion

By focusing on UAWO, this chapter has illuminated some of the ways in which African women in Athens are collectively working towards increasing their livability. In so doing, it has demonstrated that although being constituted even before their arrival in Greece as Other may constrain women's agency, it does not entirely disable

it. Indeed, UAWO's very existence represents the affirmative practical response of active agents to the oppressive mechanisms and lack of protection described in earlier chapters (Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011). UAWO has successfully created a public profile (so much so that the organization is well-known to high-ranking politicians – figure 25), and continues to demand that the state assumes its responsibilities towards African women in Greece. It also continues to develop actions that both create and use alternative structures of support. Overall, UAWO plays a crucial role in improving women's livability in terms of both material conditions and social intelligibility. It provides an important collective space from which women can make rights-based claims for themselves, address practical needs, and perform a kind of affective politics that not only counters isolation, but also collectivises problems and their possible resolution (Zavos et al. 2017).

Recognising that change can only be worked out or negotiated on the basis of the given order – that there is little to be gained by indulging in the "fantasy of godlike power" in which they can remake the world (Butler 2004b: 3) – UAWO works towards improving the situation of African women in Athens incrementally. As the chapter has shown with examples from a range of campaigns and activities, UAWO works within dominant scripts – it appropriates available modes of recognition, even sometimes using gendered and racialized stereotypes as resources, in order to present its members in recognisable ways. Thus appearing to stick (more or less) to the categories available to them, women are able to articulate their own claims and perform acts of citizenship in ways that present themselves as lives worthy of public recognition and of protection. Using their bodies to claim presence and a more positive visibility in the media, on the internet, and on the streets, women are constituting themselves as citizens – as those with 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2009). This is about more than symbolic forms of representation; it is about using common narratives to disrupt the reproduction of both symbolic and material hierarchies that regulate access to resources (Tyler 2013).

This chapter has argued that social intelligibility is crucial to living a livable life. Recognition does not, however, in and of itself lead to a redistribution of rights and

resources.[131] As several of the examples discussed in this chapter illustrate, hierarchical binaries of difference may be reinforced even as a more positive recognition and sense of belonging are attained. By conforming to the notions Greeks may already have about 'Africans' and 'Africa', the danger is that stereotypical representations confirm that these women are of 'another place' such that they remain strange (and estranged) yet become familiar in their unfamiliarity. Hence, whether women's efforts to unsettle norms that construct them as 'ungrievable' or 'out of place' bodies to be feared will also lead to more rights and resources in the longer-term remains an open question.

Nevertheless, when women constituted by that which is "before and outside" themselves (Butler 2004b: 3) in ways that often deny them a voice take control of their image to represent themselves as actors, an altogether different kind of visibility is made possible. Attempts to restore the African identity on a more positive footing, through their own initiatives and with pride, are, at the very least, a form of self-representation that contributes to the empowerment of women who are all too often ignored, inferiorised and excluded in many areas of their daily lives. The hope remains, therefore, that by continuing to provide counter-narratives to their 'out of placeness' (Piacentini 2014), these women will achieve a more positive and, gradually, less stereotypical visibility that will lead to their wider acceptance in Greece's changing socio-political landscape.

[131] See Fraser (1995, 2000) on the relationship between struggles for recognition and the redistribution of rights and resources.

Chapter Nine

CONCLUDING REMARKS

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored some of the more neglected aspects of economic crisis and migration in Greece. It has done so by exploring how African women navigate their everyday lives within the socio-political terrain of a country undergoing severe economic, social and political crisis. In particular, it has explored processes of inclusion/exclusion and othering, as well as the strategies women adopt in response. In so doing, it has engaged with several dimensions of women's lives: legal documents, everyday racism, economic survival, practices of belonging and collective mobilisation. This chapter is organized thematically and summarises the main findings of the research. Following a discussion of the key themes highlighted by the thesis, the chapter briefly addresses the current situation in Greece and outlines some policy recommendations. The chapter concludes with an exploration of possible ways forward for future research.

9.2 African women in crisis Greece

In recent years, austerity politics, high unemployment and increasing anti-migrant sentiment in Greece have subjected increasing numbers of people to conditions of precarity and uncertainty. As elsewhere in Europe, these developments have inspired defensive, nationalist reflexes that have scapegoated migrants and intensified the vulnerability of Greece's increasingly diversified and visible migrant population in multiple ways. As examples throughout this thesis have demonstrated, a climate appears to have developed in which foreignness has become grounds for suspicion – a question you can ask anyone (Ahmed 2016). As a result, those perceived as bodies 'out of place', including the women at the heart of this project, have found it increasingly difficult to secure livable lives.

African women are amongst those already marginalised groups who have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. They are more reliant on welfare services that have undergone severe cuts, are more vulnerable to unemployment (which affects their ability to secure and maintain legal status) and are more likely to be exploited within the workplace even when they do find jobs in the limited spheres available to them. Furthermore, prevailing stereotypes of African women as oppressed wives and mothers, uneducated and unskilled domestic workers, or sexualised and/or dangerous Others, deny these women visibility in all their complexity and variety (Lewis 2006). This not only exposes them to particular forms of vulnerability in many areas of their lives, but is also a form of invisibility that further marginalises them.

In order to counter stereotypical representations of African women, this study has drawn on women's own interpretations, voices and self-representations to focus on the experiential level of exclusion. In so doing, it has shown women to be active participants who tactically manage their situations in order to survive under conditions of oppression. However, the 'strong Black woman' (Connell 1995) is yet another racialized and gendered stereotype that not only has the same dehumanising effect as the portrayal of women as victims, but also reproduces a limited conception of agency that belies the actual lived experiences of women (Kihato 2007). It obscures the struggles and, sometimes, the failures involved even when women do manage to rise above their circumstances to transform their living conditions. Hence, though this study has shed light on these women's resilience, it has done so without erasing experiences of suffering and victimisation, or ignoring the oppressive structural conditions that exclude these women and mark them as 'targets' for over-zealous policing, exploitation and the vented anger of frustrated citizens.

By applying frames of analysis that allow for the complexity of women's everyday lives to emerge, this research collapses simplistic binaries of inclusion/exclusion, subordination/resistance and victim/survivor. The translocational approach adopted made it possible to engage with the complex (discursive, institutional and structural) processes that intertwine to position African women in particular inferiorised ways within Greek society while, at the same time, also engaging with the individual translocational positionality of each woman as being unique. African women's

everyday lives and experiences in Athens are shown to be not merely defined by wider structures of insecurity and vulnerability, but also by their own actions, choices and the meaning they themselves attach to them (Christopoulou and Lazaridis 2011). The research has thus revealed questions of freedom, oppression and control to be complex, relationships to be hierarchical and riddled with unequal power relations, and experiences of victimhood and agency to be often intertwined (Nyers 2003). It is my hope that by highlighting women's vulnerabilities and struggles, while also rejecting discourses about their victimhood and passivity, this study will contribute to the women's own, far more important, efforts to challenge exclusionary tendencies, promote resistances and bring about greater social justice.

9.3 Exclusion and Othering

From the perspective of the women at the heart of this study, Europe is experienced less as an open and pluralist society, than as shaped by ethno-nationalist structures that exclude them along with other racial and religious minorities (El-Tayeb 2011). They are reminded daily in numerous subtle and not-so-subtle ways, that they fall 'outside' of strongly racialized normative notions of national identity and belonging. As the many examples in this thesis have shown, the possibilities of an African woman in Athens – her life and the means by which she is able to survive and the ways in which she attempts to transform her situation – are likely to be mediated by multiple oppressions, including a restrictive immigration regime and experiences of gendered everyday racism.

This thesis has identified processes of legal abjectification which operate to sustain African women in Athens in varying degrees of (ir)regularity, and from which different levels of (in)security and degrees of exclusion result (Konsta and Lazaridis 2010; Lazaridis and Konsta 2011). The research findings also reveal, however, that women deploy a number of creative tactics in order to manage their legal status. They status jump, share documents and seek to 'semi-regularise' their status in any way they can. In their attempts to secure regularity in any form available to them, women often pass through a number of different ir(regular) and 'semi-regularised'

statuses, such that the lives of the majority of African women in Athens appear to be characterised by a fluidity of statuses.

As a result, even those who navigate the immigration landscape with some degree of success are sustained in varying states of vulnerable being. This is in part the result (unintended or not) of the inefficiencies of an underdeveloped institutional and legislative structure for managing immigration. It is also, however, a way to supplement border controls with policies of exclusion and discouragement (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). Thus, as a mechanism for controlling access to rights and entitlements, and reinforcing boundaries of belonging, processes of legal abjectification operate not to physically exclude, but to differentially include. They are a way to ensure Others are present but invisible or, as one woman put it, "*there, but not there*."

Overall, there appears to be a well-established feeling amongst African women in Athens that there are different classes of residents in Greece and that they are in the class that gets routinely excluded from everything. Life in Greece has taught even those with legal status that the system is not 'for' them, that the rules can change and that, due to their hyper-visibility, they will always be subject to 'checks' and vulnerable to abuse. Even people who have been in Greece for decades, like the women detained in the opening vignette of this thesis, constantly have to prove that their presence is legitimate. Neither long-term residency nor being born and raised in Greece seems to disrupt prevailing notions of national identity and belonging. Sadly, as a result, there are very few spaces in Athens that these women can claim as their own and in which their status of belonging is undisputed (El-Tayeb 2011).

The finding that African women's lives in Athens are shaped not only by boundaries relating to legal rules regarding membership entitlements and rights, but also by those inscribed on the body and the skin (Anthias 2002a) may come as no great surprise. However, by using the concept of gendered everyday racism the research has illuminated the specific ways in which racism and gender intersect and are made manifest in women's everyday lives (Essed 1991, 2001). It has done so at structural and discursive levels, and also by giving an account of how these women are routinely 'othered' through taken-for-granted practices and procedures in several spheres of their daily lives. The thesis has described how, with the onset of the crisis

in Greece, an intensified nationalist rhetoric was adopted by politicians and media to cast these women as invader-outsiders, potential carriers of disease and unclean behaviours, and would-be diluters of Greek culture and identity. (Re)constructed thus in the public mind – as threatening bodies in need of control, rather than as worthy of protection – women have felt particularly vulnerable to both intensified policing tactics and hostility on the streets of Athens.

For the women I met during my research, racism emerged as a collective experience that transcends national, ethnic, class and social differences between them. It is something they experience in the attitude of the state, as represented by its administrative bodies, politicians, and law enforcement officers; and it is something they face with habitual regularity in their everyday lives. As Essed (2001) cautions, however, the everydayness of this racism does not make it a problem of a more humane kind. Although 'everyday racism' may sound as if it concerns relatively harmless and unproblematic events, the psychological distress due to racism on a day-to-day basis can have chronic adverse effects on mental and physical health – as expressed in Rose's description of a constant headache. Felt persistently, every new experience of racism resonates and re-configures the accumulation of earlier events (ibid), shaping what individual women are able to do and who they are able to be with whom and where. It will influence not only a woman's daily interactions and relationships, but also her mobility, how she can earn a living, what rights she can have, which resources she can access, whether she can feel secure and how far she is able to plan for tomorrow.

9.4 Tactical responses: coping, negotiating, conforming and resisting

Women are, however, far from passive victims in all this. As the research findings show, women respond in a variety of creative ways in order both to minimise precarity and maximise livability for themselves and for their loved ones. Lacking the security to assume a guaranteed sense of progression in their lives, women deploy multiple tactics – sometimes used simultaneously or at different times of their lives,

as and when opportunities arise and circumstances dictate. Crucially, by contextualising women's tactics within broader structural constraints and within the wider contexts in which their lives are embedded, this study rejects the easy pigeonholing of women as 'domestic workers', 'prostitutes', 'housewives' or, indeed, as 'victims' or 'survivors'. By reframing women's roles and choices as tactics (albeit ones shaped by external racialized and gendered constraints), the research unsettles prevailing inferiorising assumptions about these women, including their construction as being somehow predisposed to (devalued) domestic labour. This also enables us to comprehend the many other tactics women deploy in order to get by, from becoming ethnic entrepreneurs to mobilising the 'victim' label in order to access charitable modes of support.

There are countless examples in this study of the kinds of tactics women deploy in order to secure greater livability and minimise precarity and they are by no means restricted to those centred on economic survival (Chapter Six). For instance, as mentioned above, women also tactically navigate Greece's bureaucratic procedures to manage their legal status, and resist or get around exclusionary and contradictory regulations (Chapter Four). A variety of ways of coping also emerge in the ephemeral daily concerns of everyday life. Women may conform to recognisable stereotypes, tactically adopting roles such as 'exotic Other' or 'subservient domestic worker', or they may perform the 'right' kind of 'victim' in order to regularise their status or access charitable support. Other everyday tactics may be more concerned with easing mobility and minimising exposure to violence and abuse. These may take the form of shrinking, avoiding contact with those who do not wish to touch them, or constraining their movement around the city, as many women did during the years of heightened anti-migrant violence and increased police 'sweeps' (Chapter Five).

As the exploration of home and belonging illuminates (Chapter Seven), though women's home-making practices are most urgently about sustaining life, they are also part of creative, inventive and tactical responses to the 'othering' strategies of the dominant order (and its norms, laws and practices). Sometimes, simply aiming to overcome institutional obstacles standing in the way of survival is a 'tactic of resistance' (de Certeau 1984). The ways in which women (and men) collectively build a sense of belonging with people 'like them', as well as the ways in which they form

strategic alliances of solidarity with others, can also be viewed as tactical (Chapters Seven and Eight, respectively). They represent collective responses to challenging conditions through which people improve their living conditions both materially, by pooling resources, information and shared experiences, and affectively, by creating a sense of community and belonging with others.

9.5 Practices of belonging

The women's narratives illustrate that it is impossible to understand the ways individuals think about and experience home and belonging as being determined only by their legal status or by having specific ethnic, national or racial identities. Indeed, it is one of the central findings of the research that – contrary to perceptions of them as 'bodies out of place' – African women create a sense of belonging in Athens even as they suffer exclusions and discriminations. There are many ways in which people build a relationship to place and to others. They do so by engaging in 'acts of nostalgia' that are often less about yearning for former homes, and more about creating a greater sense of belonging in the here and now. They also do so through the repetition of everyday home-making-practices and by creating feelings of security and familiarity in their home-spaces. Hence, though 'belonging' relates to the formal rights, obligations and duties from which these women are, on the whole, excluded, it is shown to also be about informal experiences of belonging.

Though often perceived as being suspended 'in-between' homes, African women in Athens do not necessarily experience their belonging as such. Most of the women in this study expressed a complex, if sometimes ambivalent, belonging to multiple home-spaces located in real and imaginary spaces both 'there' and 'here'. As the research findings show, a sense of collective identity and a feeling of belonging in the country one lives in are neither necessarily coterminous nor mutually exclusive (Anthias 2006). Several participants, for instance, identified with the Greeks (particularly since the onset of the crisis), but did not feel that they 'belong' in the sense of being a full (or fully accepted) member of Greek society. By contrast, others emphasised their 'Africanness' while also claiming they belonged in Greece and had a

right to be there. Others still, particularly after many years living in Greece, felt that their allegiances and belonging were split, sometimes experiencing this as enrichment and, at other times, as liminality and loss. Belonging is thus revealed to be both deeply personal and shared with others; neither given nor permanent, but actively claimed, created and sometimes lost in complex ways.

9.6 Navigating (in)visibility

Without citizenship African women in Greece lack the basic social, labour and political rights that would make them visible in the eyes of the state. As a result, the majority of them have tended not to put pressure on the government to recognise them and their rights by undertaking collective action. The state, therefore, pretends not to 'see' them (Anagnostou and Gemi 2015). Yet, as argued throughout this thesis, African women in Greece are made visible in discourses of the Other. Framed as outside national belonging and constructed in particular gendered and racialized ways, the experiences of the women in this study suggest that they are expected to display certain behaviours, perform particular roles and occupy specific spaces in the socio-economic and political terrain of Greek society. Normatively defined according to that which they are not, as if by a lack – as non-Greeks, non-citizens, non-white, and non-Europeans – African women in Athens are amongst those who Nyers (2003: 1074) argues suffer from a form of purity that demands them to be "speechless victims, invisible and apolitical" (in contrast to the purity of citizenship). Hence, when, for instance, a Greek citizen demands that an African woman vacate her seat on a bus, or when a policeman, for no apparent reason, demands to see identity documents, a superior right is being asserted, and women are expected to accommodate this demand silently and play their role. For these are the terms of the unspoken agreement according to which their presence will continue to be tolerated.

Consequently, visibility is, for these women, all too often experienced as the violence of misrecognition. Comprehending that they are constituted even before their arrival in Greece by that which is "before and outside" themselves (Butler 2004b: 3), some African women in Athens have decided that livability is best secured

by using existing discourses to claim social intelligibility on their own terms. Largely excluded from dominant scripts of living and being (Butler 2009b), and aware that they are likely to remain 'outsiders' in the public mind, they are mobilising difference as a resource. Though not ground-breaking in terms of the forms of visibility this brings them ('exotic' Others are, after all, still Others), this is nevertheless a way in which they can at least begin to unsettle, disrupt and resist negative and inferiorising constructions.

Visibility is critical for subsequent recognition of rights for these women because, as Lewis (2006) has argued, lack of visibility is intimately linked to long histories of racialized exclusion. By making themselves recognisable as lives that are vulnerable, grievable and worthy of protection, African women in Athens are beginning to call certain fields of normativity that construct their social unintelligibility and oppression in the first place into question. When they voice their claims, speak out and claim recognition they are not only challenging their position as abjects, but also what it means to be political. In the process something transformative can occur for, as Butler (2004b: 27-8) observes, when the 'unreal' lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place. "The norms themselves can become rattled, display their instability, and become open to resignification" (Butler 2009a: 23).

9.7 Acts of citizenship

The crisis appears to have been experienced as a crisis of livability for many citizens and non-citizens alike. Indeed, as the social turmoil, demonstrations, riots and anger displayed on the streets of Athens in recent years attests, even those on the 'inside' of hegemonic formulations of belonging may experience feelings of alienation. One particularly poignant piece of graffiti in central Athens reads: "I feel I'm a stranger. You?" [Translated from Greek]. As a translocational perspective also reminds us, hierarchies exist both *within* and *across* boundaries (Anthias 1998, 2001, 2006; Brah 1996). Hence, even as the crisis has produced new social divisions and exclusions

(and made visible old ones), it has also provided greater grounds for solidarity. Particularly in the densely populated urban spaces of the capital city, attempts at a more inclusive, 'bottom-up' form of politics based on dialogue and collaboration are being made. Recognising this as an opportunity to perform 'acts of citizenship' alongside legally entitled citizens, groups of African women in Athens are taking to the streets, the squares and the internet to constitute themselves as those with 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2009).

Yet there is a somewhat paradoxical dimension inherent to these acts of citizenship in that they constitute an attempt to transcend exclusionary binaries (us/them, citizen/non-citizen and so on) even as they draw attention to them. Most obviously, a tension is produced by claiming 'citizenship' rights within the frames of perceptibility that effect their exclusion. Though these moments of 'coming together' reflect a momentary convergence of on-going personal and collective struggles towards common goals, they do not necessarily create clear, attainable alternatives (Zavos et al. 2017). What is more, when struggles focus on cultural identity (as several of these actions and campaigns do), there is a danger that static, ahistorical racialized constructions and hierarchies will be reinforced. This may be a form of social intelligibility, but it is one that may serve to fix the identities of migrants (and their children) as 'eternal newcomers' (El-Tayeb 2011). Thus, even as 'otherness' is celebrated and difference accommodated through appeals to solidarity and togetherness, there is a risk that hierarchical relations of power are maintained and that divisions between 'us' and 'them' are, ultimately, reinforced.

Consequently, how far this is a recognition that is based on "*the actual we*" (to borrow Lauretta's phrase), and how far it will lead to securing rights, greater livability and inclusion in other areas of the women's lives remains an open question. Nevertheless, by politically mobilising their shared vulnerability, these women are at the very least signalling a desire to change the terms of their livability and are performatively unsettling the gendered, classed and racialized norms that constrain their possibilities in the first place (Butler and Athanasiou 2013; Athanasiou 2014).

9.8 Current situation and policy recommendations

At the time of writing, Greece continues to face serious challenges on multiple fronts. Though the country's position in the EU appears to have stabilized, for the majority of its inhabitants the crisis is far from over. Unemployment has decreased but remains high at 22.5 per cent, and the situation remains particularly difficult in health and education sectors. Meanwhile, the refugee crisis continues to unfold as boatloads of people (albeit in far lower numbers) continue to risk their lives daily in a desperate attempt to reach European shores.

There have, however, also been some more positive developments that are likely to impact the women at the heart of this project. Firstly, since the completion of the fieldwork, the leadership of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party has been charged with running a criminal organization operating under the mantle of a political party. Though the judicial investigation into the party's activities was triggered not by the many attacks on migrants it has been implicated in, but by the murder of a well-known (white male) Greek leftist activist, this still represents a positive step towards combating racist violence. It is also one that is hoped to shed light on Golden Dawn's role in other violent hate crimes. Such developments suggest a socio-political climate may be developing in Greece that is both more respectful of migrant rights and more proactive in holding those who violate them to account. However, anti-migrant sentiment does still persist. In particular, hate speech and 'low intensity' racism remains widespread, and there has been growing concern over violence against people held in the country's many detention camps.

Another development worth noting is that, despite strong opposition from its junior government coalition partner, the SYRIZA government has kept its election promise to reform the law in order to facilitate citizenship acquisition for so-called 'second generation' migrants.[132] This has been considered a victory by many migrant rights activists, although unfortunately there are still no provisions facilitating the naturalisation of first generation migrants who have lived and worked in the country sometimes for decades. Indeed, despite some attempts at immigration reforms, Greece's institutional and legislative framework as a whole remains both

[132] Law 4332/2015 was passed in the summer of 2015.

stringent and highly bureaucratic. In this regard, though it has not been the aim of this thesis to provide policy recommendations, I would like to mention, in general terms, some of the steps the research findings suggest should be taken.

1. Further law reform to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship for migrants who have lived in Greece for a substantial number of years.

2. Steps should also be taken to facilitate how people navigate immigration rules and procedures, including:
   - Simplification of regularisation, renewal and social security procedures.
   - Provision of translation services at local authority offices.
   - Training for clerks and officials.

3. Measures to improve migrant women's status should be taken, including:
   - The development of gender-specific indicators (currently lacking) for monitoring migrant and gender equality.
   - Increased representation of migrant women's interests and needs in professional, social and political spheres.
   - Legal reform to make migrant women visible as autonomous individuals, and to address their specific social and work conditions (rather than 'seeing' them only as family members and victims of domestic violence and trafficking).
   - Building on progress already made with regards to improving women's independent access to residence status. (Positive steps already taken include in cases when permit renewal is jeopardised by husband's unemployment or when women are victims of domestic violence.)

4. Changes to immigration law that reflect the diversity in Greek society as a permanent and not a temporary feature, including:
   - Simplified procedures for changing employment status so women can access the formal labour market more easily.
   - Supporting and promoting entrepreneurship amongst migrant women through initiatives to help them overcome barriers (such as language, special training and skills development programmes, and access to financial support).
   - Provisions for the legalisation of a large category of migrants who lack residence permits, either because they lost them or had no access to procedures.
   - Training of police officers to ensure that new anti-racist laws are properly

implemented and do not remain on paper.

5. Trafficking legislation must be restructured in order to prioritise the protection of victims of trafficking and counter their criminalisation. Recommended steps include:
   - Campaigns and education to raise social awareness and prevent the stigmatising of victims of trafficking and sex workers.
   - More state-run shelters and the provision of specialised counselling and support (currently lacking in anti-trafficking policy).

6. With regards to securing the rights of domestic workers, revision of the regulatory framework on domestic work should include:
   - Structural changes in the country's policy approach to address social perceptions of domestic work as low-status and low-pay labour.
   - New regulations that establish the minimum requirements to protect workers, such as fixing regulated overtime pay, sick leave, insurance against work accidents, a minimum wage, and maximum working hours.
   - Steps to empower and encourage victims of employer abuse to speak out (irrespective of status) and provisions to hold employers who abuse and exploit workers to account.
   - Financial or tax incentives to encourage employers to hire domestic workers legally.[133]

Last but not least, for policy interventions to be both better targeted and more effective, we must move beyond discourses that frame African women (and other marginalised groups) as powerless and voiceless to see how they can, and do, participate in Greek society. Through greater knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, support can be offered that builds on people's strengths and does not undermine their own attempts to improve their lives (Kihato 2013).

[133] See Zervos (2015) and Angeli (2016) for more extensive details on trafficking and domestic work issues.

9.9 Ways forward

As an investigation into the often hidden and complex lives of real women, this research has inevitably touched upon issues that it has been beyond the scope of this study to explore more fully. One such area that would benefit from further research is African women's involvement in sex work and the so-called 'hospitality and entertainment' industries. From the limited contact I had with women who had either worked as sex workers themselves or knew others who had, it is clear that many varied and diverse experiences are subsumed under these headings, often in ways that obscure both complexity and variation. In my small sample, I met women who had been trafficked to Greece to work as prostitutes or who had turned to sex work later, as well as women who, I was informed, had been involved in organizing trafficking themselves (reminding us that women's involvement may not always be on the side of the 'victim'). Though not nearly as many women are involved in sex work (across the 'victim-agency' spectrum) as stereotypes of them would suggest, it is clearly a reality in people's lives – yet one that remains largely under-explored and insufficiently understood.

As I have argued more generally, research is needed that goes beyond traditional depictions of victimhood and dependency to situate these concerns within the broader contexts of women's lives. Women may be sex workers, but they may also be wives, mothers, refugees or, indeed, traffickers – simultaneously or at different stages of their lives. It is important, therefore, to situate women's roles, choices and strategies within the contexts of structural power and webs of sociality in which they live their lives. My limited research in this area suggests that more nuanced analyses that include women's own perspectives and view them as active agents are needed to replace simplistic and racialized accounts of victimisation and criminality. Only by shedding light on experiences of victimisation and exploitation in ways that avoid reinforcing inferiorising stereotypes of women as helpless victims can greater understanding lead to more effective protection.

As stated at the beginning of the thesis, I believe there is value in conducting women-centred research. Having said that, a similar or comparative study of African men would be an interesting, and complementary, lens through which to explore

gender, migration and race intersections within the Greek context. The research suggests that some overlaps will inevitably exist – for instance, both African women and men may be racialized as 'invaders' of national space. However, the ways in which men are racialized will also be gendered. For instance, stereotypical representations of African women as victims, sex workers and oppressed wives are often complemented by those of African men as dangerous criminals involved in drug-dealing and trafficking, or as oppressive patriarchal husbands. There were also suggestions that men have been affected differently by the recent crisis – particularly in the employment sphere because the industries typically associated with male migrants have been much harder hit than those associated with women. All of which suggests that any of the questions addressed here, regarding legal status, everyday racism, belonging, tactics and so on, could be fruitfully investigated in a male-focused study.

From the outset, I had a very specific interest in investigating African women's lives as situated within their immediate contexts. However, at both the individual and wider structural levels, the research suggests that many women's lives are conducted in ways that stretch beyond national borders. Investigating to what extent, and in what ways, women engage in transnational identities, obligations and activities is another possible line of inquiry for future research. Though this study found that economic crisis does not necessarily have the often assumed effect of 'sending' people home, changing conditions are likely to impact, for example, 'transnational mothering' and familial strategies, including their ability to send remittances. Or, perhaps transnational ties are overemphasised. How much do people maintain links and participate in the social and family life of their home countries? And how do material and affective connections change as people build new homes and get older? If the idea of home is shifting and fluid, as this thesis has argued that it is, then different homes are likely to gain significance at different times of women's lives (Fortier 2000). A transnational and/or longer-term study would certainly be illuminating with regards to these and many other related issues.

Though this research has focused on a particular group within a specific context, it is part of a growing body of literature with a much-needed focus on new forms of racialization and exclusion in contemporary Europe. In the current

European climate, it is not only people fleeing wars, poverty, famine and persecution who are being met with nationalistic and xenophobic reflexes. As this study has shown, ethnicised and racialized boundaries are being used to justify exclusions and delegitimise the claims to rights of people who have long inhabited, invested in and contributed to European societies. With those who threaten binary identifications being further disempowered and alienated in order to maintain them, studies that tell of a more textured version of people's lives, struggles, and strengths, based on how they, as autonomous actors, interpret their own experiences, are even more vital.

By placing the lives and experiences of these potentially excluded Others at its heart, this study contributes to research that considers issues of migration and settlement in terms of social inequality and transformation rather than essentialist notions of difference, culture and identity (Anthias 2006). Instead of framing the inability to belong as either individual failure or cultural incompatibility (El-Tayeb 2011), such an approach draws our attention to a range of experiences of enablement and hurdles (Anthias 2006). Furthermore, focusing on the experiences of migrants challenges discourses of 'us' and 'them' by revealing 'their' common concerns to be very similar to 'our' own. It also highlights the agency, resourcefulness and skilfulness of those who, like the women in this study, become part of the daily life of the communities and nations in which they live even as they suffer exclusions and meet with endless obstacles in their everyday lives.

Though this project is in part a response to the depiction of African women as stereotypical, socially excluded and criminalised Others, the approach I have taken also, I believe, simply makes for better research (Taylor 2009). As the women's experiences demonstrate, structures of gender and racism intersect in dynamic and context-specific ways, making everyday injustices often difficult to pinpoint and, therefore, hard to counter. This makes the perspectives and testimonies of people like those on the receiving end an even more important and rich source of information (Essed 2001). It is only by examining how such processes and discourses are manifest at local levels, through inter-subjective encounters and within specific sites, that we can begin to understand and resist broader patterns of exclusion, violence and marginalisation. Hence, while recognising that the experiences of African women described in this thesis are diverse, divergent and particular, it is the

aim of this research to contribute to our understanding of how particular forms of disadvantage are distributed, experienced and resisted. It is my hope that in so doing, the theoretical insights offered here will, in some way, enhance our understanding of our social worlds so that we can transform them.

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APPENDIX I

Visual Diaries Project Proposal: ethics form, information sheet and consent form

I am proposing to do a small visual diaries project as part of my research on migrant women in Athens. The objective is to give a small group of approximately 5 women disposable cameras with which they can record visual diaries of their everyday lives. I will ask participants to reflect upon two deliberately open questions so as to avoid imposing too many conditions. The women will then select some of the images around which a group discussion can be held. The hope is that common themes, issues and experiences arise from the images (as well as, possibly, from the act of taking the images).

Ethical considerations

Firstly, I will discuss the idea in more detail with a small group of potential participants, in order to:

1) Ask for their input/suggestions and answer any questions or concerns they may have
2) Ensure that they are fully informed about the project and my intentions (within the context of my research in general)
3) Discuss any potential risks/issues/problems the participants think may arise, including ways to avoid and/or deal with them
4) Make it clear that they can withdraw consent and participation at *any* stage of the project, including afterwards
5) Attain their consent (*if* they still wish to participate after the discussion). Verbal consent will be offered as an option as not all the women can read and write. In addition, I am wary of asking participants (some of whom are in Greece without papers) to sign a formal document of any kind.

Potential risks/measures

Potential risks include issues related to the following:

1. Anonymity – although I am taking precautions to protect the identity of participants (use of pseudonyms, changing any identifying descriptions, etc.), if the photos are published in my thesis or used by UAWO in some way they would be publicly available. This will be discussed with participants at the initial stages of the project (before any photos are taken), but also once again after the photos are taken and before the photos are put into the public domain in any way. Participants' statuses may have changed, new risks may have arisen or participants may have simply changed their minds.

2. Vulnerable groups – many of the women I have met are either undocumented or of precarious legal status (e.g. subject to the withdrawal of legal status and vulnerable to detention). The risks associated with visibility in public spaces will be discussed and participants will be made fully aware of the potential risk of drawing unwanted attention to themselves. The questions posed will be open so that participants do not have to take pictures in public should they wish to avoid doing so. Again, the freedom to withdraw from the project at any time will be emphasized throughout.

3. Sensitive topics – some of the issues and themes that may arise may be sensitive and some may require expertise and resources that I do not have. I now have several contacts that work on migration issues in Athens (such as legal aid, mental health, social services…) so feel confident I will be able to refer individuals to the appropriate organisations for further support.

4. Data storage – as an additional precaution I will code sensitive data, keep it password protected, and upload it onto the SOAS server instead of keeping it on my personal laptop. All related interview and field notes will also be annonymised and password protected.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

I would like to invite you to participate in this visual diaries photography project. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, discuss it with others if you wish and ask any questions you may have.

If you agree to participate, please either sign this form or give verbal consent if you do not want to put your name on the form. Please note that even if you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the project at any time and without giving a reason.

- Project Aims: This project aims to discover more about the lives of migrant women living in Athens. The plan is to give a small group of migrant women disposable cameras with which they can record visual diaries of their everyday lives.

- Selection Criteria: You must be available to take photos over a two week period and to attend a one-off group discussion/workshop that will last approximately two hours. A disposable camera will be provided for you.

- Risk: Before beginning the project all potential risks and concerns will be discussed as a group. If you prefer, you can also meet with me to discuss the project in private. Please note that you will get final say over which photographs are chosen for the project and how much personal information is included.

- Anonymity: All participants will remain completely anonymous throughout the project unless a participant specifically asks for personal information to be included.

- Withdrawal: Please note that you can leave the project at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. You can also change your mind and withdraw from the project at any time up to January 2017, in which case photographs, notes, transcriptions and recordings will be destroyed.

Contact

The researcher or research supervisor may be contacted at any time with questions about this project:

Name: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi

Email: 134490@soas.ac.uk Phone: +30 6978134547

Name: Dr. Anna Lindley

Email: al29@soas.ac.uk Phone: +44 (0)20 7898 4690

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for considering taking part in this visual diaries photography project. Before signing this form, please ensure the researcher has fully explained the project. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher or her supervisor before signing. Please ask if you'd like a copy of this consent form.

Working title of study: Life at the Margins: Migrant Women in 'Crisis' Greece

Researcher: Viki Zaphiriou-Zarifi, PhD Candidate, SOAS, London, UK

Please tick or initial

- I understand that my photographs will appear in Viki's PhD thesis and may be included in presentations and further publications based on that thesis. ☐
- Please select one of the following three options:
  - I agree to allowing the photos that I select for Viki to be published in her thesis as they are ☐
  - I agree to allowing the photos that I select for Viki to be published in her thesis with faces blurred so as to be unrecognisable ☐
  - I do not agree to allowing any of my photos to be published ☐
- I consent to the group workshop being voice recorded.
  [Please note that recordings will only be used by Viki and will not be heard by anyone other than Viki and, if necessary, her supervisor.] ☐

Participant's Statement:

I ______________________________ confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in the photographic project described above. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to take part in the project.

Signed *Date*

Researcher's Statement:

I ______________________________confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed project to the participant.

Signed *Date*

APPENDIX II

UAWO Article to mark International Women's Day, 8th March 2015

IN CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Make It Happen

This year's theme for International Women's Day is '*Make It Happen*'. As an organization fighting for the recognition of migrant women's rights we at the United African Women's Organization (UAWO) have together been trying to 'make it happen' since we formed in 2005. Our organization was founded on the belief that in order to make it happen we must join together; that by working together far greater things can be achieved than by fighting and struggling alone. On this International Women's Day UAWO would like to take the opportunity to call not only on African migrant women, but on women and men across Greece to join in solidarity for greater gender equality and recognition and respect for migrant women's rights.

Sadly, the reality in Greece today is that public attitudes, the media and the law are all too often dominated by traditional male-oriented, patriarchal depictions of migrant women as dependents of men or as victims – rather than as independent migrants who are active agents in their own right. This more traditional focus on men or, at best, families, means that migrant women – despite representing 46 per cent of the total migrant population in Greece in 2013 (according to official UN

figures) – continue to be largely neglected. As a result, migrant women's specific needs, motivations, diverse characteristics and varied migration experiences are very rarely taken into account. This amounts to direct or indirect discrimination against them.

It is our experience that, despite some efforts made by a few small organisations (such as our own) to challenge such tendencies, many of the issues that affect women's lives on a daily basis remain ignored. Greece continues to lag behind most other EU members with respect to the rights of migrants in general and female migrants in particular. Too often serious abuses go unchecked because of insufficient legal protections – a condition made worse by law enforcement agencies that fail to provide adequate protection for migrant women, particularly those who are undocumented.

Today, as part of the International Women's Day celebrations, we are publishing this photography project in order to demonstrate how we can transcend our differences and to express our solidarity with women all over the world who continue to fight for their rights.

Through these portraits we hope to remind everyone – migrants *and* Greeks, women *and* men – that beyond the traditional identifications of motherhood, dependency on men, vulnerability and victimhood we, as migrant women, face complex and often hidden realities. The photographs are intended as a celebration of all that has been achieved regarding the social, economic and political rights of women, but they are also a reminder that much remains to be done and that in order to face the challenges ahead we must face it together – as women and men, but above all as human beings with a shared common humanity.