

West meets East: mobility of people, exchange of knowledge. Female migration in Europe from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century

Mobility calls for a continuous interaction between individuals, but also between individuals and institutions enforcing a cultural exchange and a societal transformation. The aims of this book are two: 1) to study female migration from Western Europe to Eastern Europe and vice-versa in the long run, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century; 2) to follow the alterations that took place in both spaces through the lens of the influence that the newcomers brought to the local structures.

Gender, ethnicity and class are the factors that shape women's identities and their integration as individuals in the new socio-economic context. Cultural representations preceded and came along with women in their mobility attracting an initial confrontation between the 'other' and the local 'us'. However, this process also made room for a proactive approach from both sides. The goal of the book is to highlight the important exchanges of people and knowledge within these two European areas in an historical perspective.

Since the 1990's, after the end of the communist era and the opening of Eastern Europe to the rest of Europe, as well as the entrance of some Eastern European countries in the EU, newspapers and televisions have given great resonance to migration flows arriving from the Eastern Europe in the Western European labor market. However, a superficial approach to the topic and situations of tensions or conflicts in Western Europe have fostered stereotypes and prejudices about people coming from Eastern Europe, often supported by populist movements. Single nationalities have been associated to specific negative or ambiguous phenomena in the labor market, such as the so called "Polish plumber syndrome" in France and UK, or the fact that in Italy "the Romanian (woman)" is now used a synonym of "badante", the word employed to indicate a woman in charge of care of elderly people. Thus, while ethnicity comes as a form of cultural belonging, it is recontextualized in connection with gender and the labor market on the negative line. This has led to a distorted understanding of migration phenomena between Western and Eastern Europe, and to an undervaluation of the relevance of these migration flows. It is necessary to look more in depth at those groups of migrants that had a constructive importance for the local labor markets. Such an approach will bring into the fore the socio-economical dynamics and pressure factors, local economic agendas and the different policies of migrant integration.

This book aims to bring a fresh contribution to the phenomena of labor migration between Western and Eastern Europe by focusing on female migrants as independent migrant and/or in the context of family migration. It will show the complexities and the variety of situations well beyond stereotypes. Secondly, it aims to highlight that, contrary to a common contemporary perception, mutual flows between the two geographical areas have existed at least since the early modern age, and well before the birth of the contemporary nations, in multiethnic empires, such as the Ottoman empire or the Habsburg empire.

Ultimately, by adopting an historical and interdisciplinary approach, the book will highlight how these mutual migration flows contributed to shape the identity of the contemporary Europe. Awareness on the entangled histories of migration between East and West will help to better understand the developments that took place in certain fields. The volume will foster a dialogue between different research areas, including the history of migration, the history of knowledge, gender & women studies, labor and economic studies, demography etc. and will adopt an intersectional approach.

The volume takes a special focus on the following axes of inquiry, although various others are not excluded:

- Law and institutions. This aspect intends to highlight the connections between law, local customs and female migrants' experiences of the norms. In this context, law is seen as a dichotomy: contradictory sets of obstacles and constraints vs. opportunities and rights to which women respond to. Case studies in which labour migration is considered as a process and entangled with the use of networks of institutions, agencies and individuals as a way to manage the law regime are welcomed. Therefore, this axis of inquiry intends to shed light on female migrants' experiences of the law and their agency in handling it.
- Academic / educational mobility. Training for a profession is often a prelude in entering the labor market, acquiring recognition among the peers and a higher social status. Both female students and teachers are part of an academic mobility that often empowers them, especially if the educational process took place abroad. Therefore, academic / educational mobility can be discussed as a path of transferring knowledge, acquiring skills and as a manner to break in into a male dominated arena. Economic factors such as salaries and work conditions might differentiate between men and women / young and experienced, while cultural factors argue for a different type of pressure for the newcomer. This axis will explore the modes of knowledge production and their transfer between female academic migrants and receiving countries.
- Labor markets. This axis will study specifically migrant women (and men) and their employment patterns in agriculture, industry and social care services. It is a well-known fact that Eastern Europe has become a sort of 'reservoir' of unskilled labor for Western Europe in certain domains. While contemporary female migration is dominant with reference to social care services abroad, this book aims to broaden the perspective and to study (beyond the service and the care sector without excluding it) the role of women in agriculture and industry. This axis will explore also the 'feminization' of specific economic sectors of the labor market throughout times and following a long durée approach.

We invite specialists that deal with these aspects (and others) from a gendered perspective to send an abstract (max. 500 words) and a short CV by 15th February 2021 to the editors Beatrice Zucca Micheletto (University of Cambridge & University of Rouen-Normandy) and Nicoleta Roman ('Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History & New Europe College, Bucharest):

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Selected participants will discuss their papers in an online meeting and submit their final texts by November 2021.