

Intersectional Discriminations and ‘Lessened’ Citizenship: Experiences of Asylum-Seeking Women in a European Borderland

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(Summary)

This presentation, based on the research project “Gendering Violence and Precarity in Forced Migration: Asylum Seeking Women in the Eastern Mediterranean (WASEM),” provides a feminist analysis of the dialectic relationship of intersectional discriminations to citizenship as depicted in the experiences of 35 asylum-seeking women survivors of Gender-Based Violence gathered through semi-structured interviews.

Adopting Benhabib’s approach (Benhabib, 2004), citizenship is perceived in this presentation neither as membership in state nor as rights and obligations accruing from a migrant resident status. It is discussed as a “humanitarian” citizenship applied to displaced and irregularly arrived women asylum-seekers. The aim is to interrogate how intersectional discriminations that occur through policy, practice and discourse against women who entered Europe after 2010 and sought asylum in Greece, caused “lessened” citizenship. It also tries to find out if and how the latter in turn, reproduces and consolidates reduced rights and generates gendered impacts.

The presentation draws heuristically on Yuval-Davi’s “situated intersectionality” concept (Yuval-Davis, 2015) and argues that intersectional discriminations occur at three levels: the *macro* (which is perceived as the global milieu where various discriminatory systems operate), the *meso* (defined as the national -Greek- state and social space where policies and practices are enacted), and the *micro* (seen as the personal one where everyday life is lived).

The findings of the research show that discriminations which operate at a *macro*, global level (geopolitical hierarchies of armed conflicts, patriarchy, racism and ‘othering,’ and pandemic restrictions) are transmitted onto the *meso*, national level, where they are performed through policies and practices, and end up at the *micro* level as traumatic personal experiences. Thus, intersectional discriminations occurring at all three levels, create constraints to asylum-seeking women’s path to citizenship (even the limited humanitarian one) and generate particular vulnerabilities. The presentation advances the argument that multilevel intersectional discriminations have gendered impacts hindering asylum-seeking women from accessing public services and goods (health, education/ training, and accommodation) and reproduce a “lessened citizenship” for them in terms of social and economic participation and sense of belonging. Asylum-seeking women narrate a complex system of intersecting discriminations that causes diminished citizenship which in turn exacerbates the already precarious status of the asylum-seeking women and leaves them exposed to Gender-Based Violence.

References

Benhabib, S. (2004). *The rights of others: Aliens, residents, and citizens* (No. 5). Cambridge University Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2015). Situated Intersectionality and Social Inequality. *Raisons Politiques*, 2(58), 91-100. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.058.0091>