Rethinking Migration, Discrimination and Multiculturalism in a Post-tourist Society

This special issue is devoted to interconnected issues that are key debates for the twenty-first century for Cyprus and other European societies and beyond. Issues relating to migration, integration, discrimination and multiculturalism are crucial academic as well as policy matters at the heart of the current political debates. The aim of this special issue is to bring together different dimensions that relate to one or more of the above themes in order to unpack them, taking into account the state of the art debates.

If one reflects on the history of migration to Cyprus over the past thirty years, the social, economic, cultural and political transformations that have shaped the current landscape are uncovered. Cyprus has metamorphosed from an agricultural economy to a kind of 'post-industrial society' based on tourism and services without ever really going through an 'industrial' phase. Although the key drivers for this transformation were the factors of production, 'embattled labour', as one scholar called the labour of Cyprus, was at the centre of the deep changes recorded: the massive economic development, particularly since the 1970s has allowed Cyprus to improve its standard of living and join the EU. The Cypriots – primarily displaced persons – originally made up the labour force that transfigured society.

In 1989, the Government, under pressure from employers, decided to change its policy. In the 1990s the slowdown in the growth of the economy in comparison to the late 1970s and 1980s, together with the rise of inflation, formed the basis for the abandonment of restrictive labour immigration policies practised up to 1990. In contrast to the restrictive policies, 1990 saw a radical change in government policy. For the first time migrant labour was allowed to enter Cyprus on a much larger scale in order to meet labour shortages in those sectors of the economy that were no longer popular with Cypriots. The reversal of the policy on 'foreign' labour was explained as the result of excessive demand and the near full exploitation of the indigenous labour supply: pressure from employers and the fear of inflation resulting from wage indexation made the change of policy possible. Other global factors that have influenced the policy to open up the Cyprus labour market are the following: geopolitical regional changes, such as the collapse of Beirut as centre of the Middle East, the collapse of the regimes of eastern Europe (with the resulting 'release' of investment in financial services), and the Gulf war; a world-wide growth in tourism and migration flows. Globalisation-related trends and arguments in conjunction with the socio-economic orientation of consecutive Cypriot Governments are the main reasons for increasing migration to Cyprus. The island is not atypical in southern Europe, who "function as the 'entrance hall' to the EU" as

Anthias and Lazaridis mention (1999, p. 3),[1] but can be compared to some South East Asian countries which are also undergoing seminal trends of development.

We can speak of Cyprus as a de facto divided 'post-tourist society' in the sense that it is shaped by the rapid 'tertialisation' of the economy and society based on a 'mass tourism model': the visitors to Cyprus outnumber the country's residents by a ratio of 3:1. The economic, social and cultural effects of this are profound.

In November 2006, a session of the Cyprus Sociological Association Conference (in honour of Michael Attalides) took place, entitled: "Social Change and Urbanisation': Does the Impact on Migration (external and internal) on Cypriot Society require a new 'Cypriot Consciousness'?" At that conference it was reflected upon how the transformation had occurred. In 1981, Michael Attalides' study, Social Change and Urbanisation, illustrated the trends taking place up to that point, but since then, massive population mutations have occurred mapping the sharp changes we have witnessed over the past thirty years. Some of the key debates that are included in this special issue draw on, and develop, the themes articulated in that interesting session. The debates have, however, moved on to exploit the wealth of new research that has taken place in Cyprus in recent years around the topics of migration, integration, multiculturalism and combating discrimination.

At a cultural level, during the 1980s and 1990s there were public debates over 'Cypriot consciousness', which were primarily shaped around the terrible encounter of ethnic conflict, the invasion and occupation and refugees' experiences. In the north, Turkish-Cypriots who, at least temporarily, had possibly felt relief at the end of their exclusion from public life and an existence under siege in the enclaves, then faced the reality of living in a sealed authoritarian regime not recognised by anyone but Turkey. Everyday life was dominated by Turkey as the ailing economy reflected the fate of the outmoded nationalist and anti-democratic leadership of Rauf Dentash; thus a new Cypriot consciousness emerged in the north as the way forward to meet the challenges of a re-unified federal country in the EU. This dream is yet to be realised.

Be that as it may, in the south the debates on identity that began before the arrival of migrant workers and continued after the arrival of migrants, failed to grasp initially the profound effect that migration would have on Cypriot society in less than twenty years. Today, it is estimated that there are about 160,000 third country migrants and 60,000 EU citizens who reside in the Republic, whilst there is probably a similar number of non-Cypriots to the north of the barbed wire. Migration has had a massive impact on society: economic, social, and cultural. Since 1990, Cyprus, a small country divided by ethnic conflict, has evolved from being a net exporter of migrants into a country of immigration destination. An economy based on tourism requires labour to service this tourism.

The arrival and presence of migrants, together with the island's accession to the EU in 2004 and the failure so far to resolve the Cyprus problem, are factors that have shaped the institutional and political climate since. Moreover, Cypriot society is faced with new challenges such as problems of racism and discrimination towards migrants as well as other vulnerable groups. The question of multiculturalism is now a vital element in educational reform; questions around hybrity and inter-ethnic marriages have emerged. Furthermore, there are questions that require scrutiny of the structural, socio-economic and political institutions to address discriminatory patterns. Accession to the EU has brought about new challenges and a new institutional framework demanded by the EU Acquis to combat discrimination, to integrate migrants and to effectively combat 'illegal migration'. Finally, questions relating to the population, settlement and migration in the northern part of the country require special attention as they impact directly on the unresolved Cyprus problem.

In the past The Cyprus Review has dealt with some aspects relating to matters that are discussed in the current issue. However, this is the first time that a special issue has been devoted to the subject and the editors hope that this volume will contribute to the debates at an academic, research and policy level.

This issue begins with an article by Cetta Mainwaring who looks at the "edge of exclusion" and places the Cypriot migration experience and the changes recorded, in a comparative perspective with another island economy: although about thirty times smaller in size, Malta faces similar dilemmas and the debates seem kindred to Cyprus.

Next, we have Elena Papamichael's article, which unpacks the practices of educational multiculturalism by exploring Greek Cypriot teachers' understandings of "intercultural education" in what is apparently an increasingly diverse society.

The next paper by Nicos Trimikliniotis and Corina Demetriou considers the socio-legal dimensions of the new institutional framework that has resulted from the transposition of the anti-discrimination Acquis (the EU law and principles). The article evaluates the current anti-discrimination law and institutional framework in the Republic of Cyprus. Following on, Mihaela Fulias-Souroulla's article examines questions of marriage and migration by exploring Greek Cypriot representations and attitudes towards inter-societal marriage.

The final paper in the article section examines the population question in the northern part of Cyprus. The population issue is a major political, social, economic and cultural affair that affects inter-communal relations and attitudes, particularly as regards the negotiations for a settlement. It is also a major political issue in current diplomatic debates in Turkish-Cypriot politics. Mete Hatay's paper discusses how

discourses on persons from Turkey are ingrained in Orientalism, as the rhetoric of the 'local' expresses a deep-rooted xenophobia in Turkish-Cypriot society. A very different perspective on the same subject is offered by Muharrem Faiz in his commentary paper. He illustrates that the discourses on the population issue must be located within the context of a "radical demographic change" that can only be explained by structural factors over-determined by Turkey as well as super-exploitation of irregular workers in a capitalistic system.

The final commentary article by Nicos Philippou returns to the south to look at migrants, social space and visibility, and explores the transformations undergoing (Greek)Cypriot society over recent years: migrants are part of our very own social landscape, performing vital functions of our society and economy.

Finally there are three book review essays by Floya Anthias, Nicos Trimikliniotis and Hauke Dorsch that examine some relevant migration books.

Nicos Trimikliniotis

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1. Anthias, F. and Lazaridis, G. (1999) 'Introduction: Into the Margins: Exclusion and Migration in Southern Europe' in Anthias, F. and Lazaridis, G. (eds.), Into the Margins: Exclusion and Migration in Southern Europe. Avebury, Ashgate, pp. 1-12.