

“Low status work and decollectivization: The case of Egyptian immigrants in Athens”

Dr. Theodoros Fouskas, Sociologist of Panteion University Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Greece.

Abstract

The paper focuses on the repercussions of work and employment in low status services upon the collective organisation and representation of immigrant workers. The micro-sociological research analyses how far the nature of work that Egyptian immigrants in Athens concentrate affects their labour collectivity and prevents them from labour rights claiming. Several Egyptians work as painters and kebab broilers in grillrooms. Others are also occupied in constructions, craft occupations and as manual workers in technical companies and enterprises. Moreover few are working as street vendors selling certain traditional Egyptian souvenirs. With regard to their labour rights the Egyptian workers experience excessive instability. At the same time despite the formation of the “Union of Egyptian Workers in Greece, El Rapta” the majority of Egyptian interviewees were not members in the association. They believed that the association was unable to assist them with reference to work problems and claim rights for them. Evidence from in-depth interviews showed that the places of religious worship and residence gatherings replaced every effort of collective organisation and organised demand. The majority of Egyptians is supported by friendly and relative networks in search of solidarity as well as they develop individualistic behaviours and alternative solutions, perceptions of survival and protection.

The first part of the paper examines the endistancement of immigrants from collectivities due to the frames of their work and employment according to the international research. The second part refers to the case of immigrants from Egypt and to their employment conditions in low status jobs as well as how these affect their participation in work associations.