

## **DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

### **Migrant Women and Economic Justice:**

#### **A Class Analysis of Anatolian-German Women in Homemaking and Cleaning Services**

Esra Erdem

Challenging the widespread perception of Anatolian-German women as economically inactive, the thesis presents two detailed case studies of sites where they figure prominently as economic subjects. Using a Marxian theoretical framework, the study renders visible Anatolian-German women's economic contributions and underlines exploitation as an economic justice concern to migrant women in Germany.

The first case study scrutinizes the Anatolian-German household as a site of unpaid labor. Feminist scholarship has established the migrant 'home' to be a highly contested terrain, where women's homemaking activities reflect struggles over the ethnic and gendered marking of belonging. The thesis contributes to this field of research by introducing class as a contested process that overdetermines how 'home' is lived in the Anatolian-German community. Struggles over the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor in migrant homes are explored, using data from the researcher's survey of homemaking practices among Anatolian-German women. The discussion points to myriad economic, socio-cultural and political factors that trap migrant women in exploitative household constellations. Self-appropriation is critically assessed as a non-exploitative alternative encountered across household types (among singles, single mothers and in nuclear families).

The second case study focuses on Anatolian-German women's paid work in cleaning services. In-depth interviews explore the effects, which the outsourcing of janitorial services by public institutions and private enterprises has had on the exploitation of the female migrant janitorial workforce. It analyzes the value flows characterizing the highly fraught economic relations between capitalist enterprises specialized in the provision of janitorial services, clients purchasing such services as well as janitorial and non-janitorial employees. Anatolian-German's collective and individual struggles against exploitation are critically assessed. Finally, the study

explores why, contrary to global trends in migrant women's employment, jobs as domestic workers in private homes remain unattractive to Anatolian-German women and evaluates the implications from a Marxian perspective.

What emerges is a complex portray of Anatolian-German women as economic subjects. Against the spectacle of oppressed Muslim migrant women dominating popular and academic discourse in Germany, this study urges feminists to rethink their understanding of migrant women's emancipatory struggles and recognize class as a crucial dimension of economic justice.