

A pixelated illustration of two figures with glowing heads. The figure on the left has a bright blue head and a black body. The figure on the right has a white head and a black body. They are set against a dark background with colorful, pixelated light effects. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent pinkish-purple rectangle.

Self-defenceIT

Migrant women
defend themselves
against violence
in new media

Imprint

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WE ARE MANY!



Foreword

The objective of the project **Self-defenceIT – Migrant women defend themselves against violence in New Media** was to encourage confident and critical interaction with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Self-defenceIT was concerned with supporting migrant women in guiding children and young people – particularly in relation to their use of mobile phones and the Internet.

The impetus to address this field arose out of the counselling work conducted by maiz, the autonomous center

for and by migrant women in Linz. It demonstrates one of the many aspects of political work carried out by autonomous organisations for migrant women.

In the first phase of the project, based on a political understanding of action research, we carried out interviews with migrant women (mothers and young women) in Germany, Greece, Austria and Spain. Central topics of discussion were the social and technical challenges relating to interaction with ICTs, along with the political and social concerns that result from these.

Structural and local conditions were incorporated into the analysis, along with the experiences of the participating women. In the second phase of the project, interventions took the form of workshops, learning programs and counselling services.

The pedagogy of Paulo Freire forms one of the central tenets of the work, and runs through the entire project and its services, alongside post-colonial and feminist theoretical approaches. These take the form of a dialogical relationship with migrant women, characterised by a reflexive, emancipatory reciprocity that is not solidified into hierarchies.

The third phase involved incorporating counselling

services with a tutorial and workshop series in order to facilitate a deepening of analysis and reflection.

This report is the result of a two-year collaboration between academics, trainers and consultants who themselves have experienced transnational migration.

Self-defenceIT INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are taking on a central role in everyday life in contemporary societies. However, in spite of the common euphoria about ICTs, it is clear that the conditions of their availability and their practical use vary strongly: People have different levels of access to ICTs. Therefore, they show different ways of voicing their social demands and thus (re)produce power relations accordingly. From this perspective, technologies can be seen as information systems, configured by complex inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms that run along intersections of class, gender, “race”, ethnicity, religion, age and physical ability. Within the context of migration, ICTs become useful tools facilitating the users to live transnational lives. Numerous

studies have delved into the question of migrants as pioneers of virtual social networks (Madianou and Miller 2012; Sun 2002).

Migrant women are deeply involved with ICTs both in private and public spaces. By challenging the distinction between private and public, cyberspace challenges traditional understandings of gender and national identities and overcomes borders (Ernst 2012). Even if we do not wish to uphold an image of migrant women as “cyber heroes”, we acknowledge that the experience of migration changes and influences the implementation of ICTs in everyday life. Depending on the context, ICTs may function as instruments which help to transcend national, social and gender boundaries, or as platforms for social control, or may provide opportunities for social mobility in training and work.

This report summarizes the research and activities which took place during the Daphne-Project **Self-defenceIT** (February 2011 to January 2013). This project was carried out by an international group of researchers, and focused on migrant women, their concerns and strategies towards ICTs in Austria, Germany, Greece and Spain. Because the project

included countries from “northern” and “southern” Europe, it dealt with different migration patterns and histories. Migration policies in Germany and Austria have been influenced by the introduction of the labour migration guest worker programs in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast, Spain and Greece have become receiving (as opposed to only sending) countries in the last two decades. Nonetheless, all these countries are currently involved in transnational migratory flows, and have been attracting migrants particularly from former colonized territories, border regions or regions with which these states have established trade and tourism relationships. The research participants of our project reflect these different patterns of migration which can be understood as being embedded in the European migration regime (Tsianos 2010).

The **Self-defenceIT** project analyzed the ways in which various forms of violence and discrimination are interdependent, but also the creative ways in which migrant women use ICTs. On the one hand, the project analyzed the participants’ accounts of discrimination, and specifically experiences with different forms of violence including sexism and racism. On the other hand, the participants’ ambitions and aspirations to engage with cyber culture were also analyzed. Our study addresses these aspects on two levels:

(a) by focusing on developing anti-discrimination ICT strategies, and (b) by enabling a strategic use of ICT tools to pursue career aspirations and personal, political and social goals.

The **Self-defenceIT** project included two phases of analysis and action. During the first phase, the project focused on the meaning of ICTs for migrant mothers. Through interviews, focus groups and expert meetings, the ways in which migrant women use ICTs and their demands and desires concerning ICTs were explored. In all four countries, the starting points of the women were different, as were their desires for further training. Generally speaking, the women reported that their ICT use is often private, centring on communication with family and friends in the country of origin or elsewhere in the world. Many interviewees expressed interest in attaining computer skills which would help them to find work, as well as addressing internet safety.

In the second phase the concept was readjusted in order to address the concerns of the participants and the activities were open to all migrant women, not just mothers. During this step a range of activities were developed – workshops, tutorials, and counselling services – that addressed the wishes of the

participating women. By doing so, **Self-defenceIT** has offered a forum for discussing strategies, analyzing the social meanings of ICTs and transmitting skills. Further achievements were to encourage self-confidence and to highlight collective strategies of participation.

ICTs help to establish and maintain transnational ties by enabling migrants to build and nourish relationships with regionally dispersed family members, relatives and friends, and by enabling them to participate in social networks. Virtual presence enables migrants to be involved in family decision-making processes or help to care for children, parents and other relatives. However, access to ICTs is uneven and remains dependent on economic status and influenced by gender divisions and age in the households. In spite of this, most of the women involved in the project are actively participating in social networks and online communication. Some participants were already using ICTs professionally or aiming to do so. For most women becoming literate in terms of ICTs was an important goal. The women were not only interested in developing strategies for protecting themselves, and in the cases of the mothers, their children, but they also had professional, social, political and personal ambitions. When addressing these ambitions, they come up against several forms of marginalization and social control due to their

legal status and/or due to issues related to identity politics. Although transnational fields of agency were addressed in the **Self-defenceIT** project, the activities focused on the experiences of migrant women in the countries of settlement. “Although mediascapes, dreamscapes and fantasylands always are part of our physical movements in space, there is a social and cultural elaboration, a sensuous massivity and redundancy in actually being there” (Löfgren 2001).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Linda Basch and Nina Glick Schiller (1995: 48) define transmigrants as people whose “daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state”. Accordingly, transnationalism is the “process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994: 6). The concept of transnationalism is a strong analytical concept for understanding cross-national agency both in the past and today. However,

as Ruba Salih (2003) underlines, the danger of an *aestheticization* of transnationalism is present when its deep ambivalence is denied: the reproduction of old and new hierarchies of class, gender, and “race” within the transnational spaces. On the other hand, transnationalism can become a way of living which goes beyond borders and a way to fight marginalization. Transnational fields provide spaces where power relations are challenged. Thus, migrant women can develop modes of autonomy in order to fight against discriminatory policies. Through transgressing borders, migrant women discover the fragility of national, gendered and cultural identities in a variety of ways. This enables them to fundamentally question their normative appeals (Balibar 2003: 31).

Even if transnational connections are not a new phenomenon, contemporary transnationalism shows certain features: The extensive use of ICTs and the rapid means of transportation compress the space-time of migrants, and intensify transnational ties. Moreover, some features of contemporary capitalism, like the flexible accumulation system and the effects of the new global organization of capital, make transnational migration a specifically situated phenomenon. Migrants play a key role in the economic global reorganization and in the resulting crisis of the welfare state. Women

migrants are often employed in the care sector and are not addressed, or are insufficiently addressed by welfare policies (Salih 2004). Economic constraints concerning ICT access was also an issue addressed by the participants of **Self-defenceIT**. Access to ICTs depends on economic status. As our study demonstrates, migrant households are largely situated in the low-income rank. In our conversation with the research participants we were often made aware of the fact that most of their households only have one computer (and some have none), and that they often struggle to pay mobile and landline bills.

Structural Violence, Citizenship and Digital Participation

While the literature on ICT has addressed the shaping of identities and space within the context of virtual media, studies exploring the relationship between ICTs and migrant networks have only recently been carried out (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010; Fortunati, Pertierra and Vincent 2012; King and Wood 2001). These studies focus on ICT as an extension of migrants’ transnational networks. Few of them focus on migrant women and

their children (De Block Buckingham 2007). Children and women, in general, have been addressed by the literature on ICT as victims of harassment and sexist discrimination (Berlatsky 2012; Berson 2003; Chisholm 2006; Erdur-Baker 2010; Slaninova et al. 2011; Greenberg 2009; Hughes and Campbell 1998; Kelsey 2007; Kirsh 2006; Strasburger, Wilson and Jordan 2009). The focus of our research stresses on the one hand gender discrimination and the economic barriers to migrants’ participation in social life, and, on the other hand, the research participants’ ambitions and aspirations to engage with cyber culture.

Many migrants experience legal, economic and political barriers that place them in a subordinate position. For Johan Galtung (1969) such a subordinate position can be understood as structural violence, which is any constraint that limits the development of human potential due to economic, social and political structures. For Galtung, forms of structural violence can include the unequal access to resources, material and immaterial, to political power, to health care, to training or to legal standing (ibid.).

Migrant women experience even more exclusions in terms of living and working conditions than men do in

situations of migration. When girls and women, because of their gender, face limitations in their quality of life and a reduction of possibilities to live up to their human potential, we refer to this as patriarchal structural violence or structural gendered violence (Brock-Utne 1989). Structural gendered violence is linked with the economic globalized system: women’s care work – the basis for the reproduction of humanity – is often invisible and not paid. Even when it is paid, it is often considered of scarce importance and involves low wages and very precarious working conditions. We also consider the silencing of migrant women’s voices to be a form of structural violence which leads to further marginalization and further discrimination and racism. However, structural violence is often considered to be normal and thus is not even recognized and named as such.

Structural violence challenges our notions of agency and citizenship. Umut Erel (2011) suggests looking into the citizenship practices of migrant women in order to acknowledge agency, resistance and to become rights-claiming subjects: “Exploring the experiences and views of migrant women helps us understand citizenship from the point of view of those whose link with citizenship through national belonging is precarious” (ibid.: 696). By “reframing migrant mothers as citizens” Erel supports

a feminist perspective on agency that contradicts common normative approaches of citizenship. “Citizenship” doesn’t only refer to legal status, the right to vote, the learning of a language or the inclusion in the labour market, but also the enactment of active and immediate acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen 2008). This perspective includes the idea that these women can fight against the power relations they are suffering from (sexism, racism, job segregation etc.). The practices of migrant women in the context of ICTs form a further field for understanding the attainment of citizenship in unequal power relations and precarious identity politics. From this perspective, we understand ICTs as being thoroughly embedded in power relations.

ICTs and Power Relations

In many cases the migration process has influenced women to increase their use of ICTs and to participate in practices of transnational citizenship. ICTs offer a sort of techno-sociability (Escobar 1994) that informs migration experience. Migrant women who are separated from their families (spouses, sons or daughters, mothers and fathers) use ICTs even

more intensively.¹ However, ICTs represent a field of differential inclusion (Mezzadra 2007). Despite the celebration of the open character of the social web, ICTs (re)produce power relations, hierarchies and conflicts. Gender, social and economic positions, job characteristics, expertise, education and language affect the access and the use of the web.

Access to ICTs by vulnerable groups seems to be a preoccupation of national, European and international initiatives. ICTs are seen as solution for the digital gaps and policies aim at the digital alphabetization of specific groups. Simultaneously, political agendas support the idea of ICTs as tools for controlling citizens by the state. According to our results and other studies (Cabrera 2007), “technological objects” do not automatically change actions and knowledge: “technologies are not products but processes and [...] local knowledge has to be created by the users” (Lee 2006: 198f.). Aside from technological determinism, the question arises as to how migrant women use ICTs and how these new technologies can lead to an improvement in their living conditions.

¹ *There are differences between the ways in which fathers and mothers use ICTs. Rhacel Parreñas (2005) reports that mothers use ICTs in order to create more intimacy between themselves and their children. Fathers, on the other hand, use ICTs more for instruction.*

Research findings regard the access to ICTs as a positive step in the direction of social and economic development (Bosch 2011). Nevertheless, a transnational use of ICTs does not lead per se to subversive consequences for our understanding of society: “Transnational media, by its nature, escapes state controls and could become subversive to state powers. However, there is no such intrinsic necessity that all trans-border media will become subversive to the state” (Caglar 2002). In contrast to global-integrative assumptions, Örvar Löfgren (2001) adds that mass media create a platform for national identity to be disseminated and strengthened. He suggests resisting the euphoria of seeing media in general as a globalizing force that threatens national narratives. Although “space or rather place is no longer the dimension around which we organize our lives and construct our identities”, it is important “to look much closer at the complex micro-physics of taking place” (ibid.).

Empowerment strategies depend on realizing that social life is politicized through global forces and local contexts. Politicizing means questioning the established power relations by enabling subjects to name and challenge the social order and their own

social position in it, disposing them to the ideological process of naturalization (Ema 2007). Such a process cannot take place effectively on an individual level since the agency of a single person is limited. Agency is multiplied in a collective project. A political process in such a sense goes beyond the field of traditional politics that usually has do to with the public, and it comprises a rupture of the classical dichotomy between the “public” and the “private” (ibid.). Collectivity demands common identities. Although migrant women are not a homogeneous group, the concept of “being a migrant woman” can be used as a political place of opposition against racist politics and victimization (FeMigra 1994). What brings these women together is not the homogeneity of the group, but their situational and political concerns. The self-organization of migrant women is a significant core strategy for the struggles of migration.

Politicization processes and empowerment strategies cannot be analyzed separately from socio-political contexts. Ralph Grillo (2000) argues that transmigration both determines and is determined by the institutional structure of cultural diversity in European receiving societies and of the transnational migrants’ own experiences. The institutional status of migrants in the four partner countries, with different challenges

and historical experiences, offers a second layer of understanding of the different objectives of the project.

Contexts of Migration

In the current economic crisis, migrants, and especially migrant women, are the part of the population that most deeply suffers its consequences, such as unemployment and having to live in even more precarious situations, as well as sometimes being considered scapegoats for the whole situation. In Greece the political context is mainly characterized by racism against migrants. Further, the socio-economic crisis is used by far-right extremists for increasing everyday hostility. Access to ICTs is therefore not currently a priority issue, neither in research nor in policy.

In Spain, where the economic crisis is deeply affecting the population, some attention is devoted to migrant concerns both at research and at policy levels. Nevertheless, the policies aimed at digital literacy are framed around ICTs as a means to increase the employability of migrant people, and in general of vulnerable groups, and as means of civic participation, characterized by a very channelized and narrow

concept of involvement in public life. In Greece, on the other hand, the state tries to discourage migrants from being politically active and from participating in the political sphere. In Austria and Germany, where policies for increasing ICT skills have been implemented, we encounter policies that push migrant women into caring professions, regardless of their skills.

The result, in the analyzed countries/cities, is an increasingly narrow space in which migrants can act, limited in most cases to local networks and certain segments of the labour market, thus reducing their participation in the country of settlement where they are considered merely as a segment of the labour force. Concerning the results of our research, in Greece (Thessaloniki), Austria (Linz), Germany (Freiburg) and Spain (Madrid) migrant women are nevertheless users of technology on different scales. Generally speaking, all participating women use ICTs as a medium for transnational communication in the private sphere, which is essential for maintaining ties and forming new ones with family and friends in the homeland and elsewhere beyond where they currently reside.

In Thessaloniki most of the participating women were domestic and blue-collar workers, or homemakers. The women in the project were more active in their communal networks than in Greek society as a whole,

and this in spite of long years as residents of that country (all of the participants had lived in Greece for at least eight years). Migrant women from the Philippines formed the main group participating in the project and the migration patterns of this group were particularly interesting. In 2004, 81.7% of all Filipino migrants in Greece were women (OECD 2005: 10). The children of 66% of the Filipinas live outside Greece. This fact explains the strong bond that these women have to the places where their families are residing. In contrast to the situation of Albanian migrants, Filipina migrants seldom have the possibility to have their partners follow them to the new country (Cavounidis 2003: 229f.). The participants in our project from the Philippines were women who came to Greece as a part of a state program. They came to Greece at a young age and were educated and worked there, staying, on average, ten years or longer.

In Madrid the activities of the project involved migrant women from Latin American countries. This region is significant in terms of the migrant population in Spain. According to 2008 statistics, 38.03% of the foreign population living in Spain at that time was born in Latin America (Ballesteros et al. 2009: 56). This population is particularly interesting for the project because Latin American women, especially those

from Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia and Paraguay, often migrate to Spain by themselves, leaving their children in the countries of origin until they have the chance to reunify the family. In general, the interviewed migrant women reported having different backgrounds and varying levels of knowledge and use of ICTs. There were some exceptions, but in general they were not very familiar with ICTs. The country of origin did not seem to be related to the differences in the ICT knowledge of migrant women. Research has shown that social class, gender, age, educational level and personal history are more relevant than country of origin in terms of shaping their technological skills (RedActiva, Mapes i Cartografies 2009). The project participants in Madrid were mainly employed as domestic workers, as was the case in Thessaloniki and Linz. However, some project participants in Madrid work as live-in workers and their education level varies a lot, but is generally not very high. Because of their working conditions, many of them had a lot of difficulties to participate continuously and had to find very creative solutions to problems related to being able to attend the activities.

Participants in Linz came from a wide range of countries, and many of them live together with their families in Austria. Their command of the German

language varied greatly and therefore the activities were designed for groups with similar levels of German regardless of the countries of origins or previous ICT skills. Most of the participants used ICTs frequently. Many of them were asylum seekers. Due to their legal status, they viewed ICTs not only in positive terms, but also regarded them as control tools used by the police. The project participants reported using ICTs intensively, and many had worked for a long time in positions involving various ICTs. However, after arriving in Linz they had been placed by the Public Employment Service (AMS) in jobs in the care sector, which pushed their use of ICTs into the private sphere, since ICTs are used much less in the caring professions than in other sectors. Although there were no women participating in the maiz group whose children live in their country of origin, using ICTs intensively in the private sphere was an important part of their everyday lives.

In Freiburg the group was also very diverse in terms of countries of origin, educational attainment, age, fields of employment and command of the German language. Most of the participants had older children (ages 9 to 25) and had been living in Germany for quite a long time (at least 5 years, and up to 25 years). In spite of the fact that many of the participants held higher education degrees, most were employed in social-work related

fields or in the service sector. Some of the women were self-employed in artistic fields, while others were working part-time or were looking for work. Some of the women already knew each other through local networks and regional projects of the City of Freiburg. Some of the women had already worked together on a previous project organized by the association “Kommunikation & Medien” (Communication & Media). These participants already had fairly good ICT skills. As was the case in Madrid, some of the participants did not have very much knowledge of ICT, while others reported having learned ICT skills at their places of work. In addition, some of the participants reported using the internet to keep in touch with their families and friends.

The participants were invited to attend all of the activities related to the project, but they were free to choose to take part in just one or a few of the activities. In Thessaloniki, after the first run of ICT tutorials, the Filipino women were joined by a number of participants from other countries of origin. This was possible due to the dissemination of brochures as well as word of mouth and also via the collaboration with “Odysseas”, the language school for foreigners which is located in the same building where the **Self-defenceIT** tool sessions took place. Similarly, the research group in Madrid collaborated with two migrant associations

that helped to contact women interested in the project: the Hispanic-Central America Center for Participation and Integration and the association “Rumiñahui”. Both organizations devote services to migrant people concerning legal, social and employment issues. Thus, the participant group in Madrid was mainly composed of women that use the services of such organizations.

In Linz the participant women were already involved in several activities of maiz. In Freiburg the **Self-defenceIT** team could reach possible participants by cooperating with the association “Kommunikation & Medien”, active in different neighbourhoods of Freiburg and that could count on an already established migrant women network. One of the trainers had previously taught an ICT course. Some of the migrant women who participated in that course were interested in learning more about ICTs and decided to become involved in the workshops. In addition, some other participants found out about the workshops through flyers and by word of mouth.

METHODO- LOGICAL APPROACH

Self-defenceIT is an action research project that demands the combination of collective practice, theory and methodology:

Action research aims to bring together theory, method, and practice as people work collaboratively towards practical outcomes and new forms of understanding. At its core, action research is about challenging and unsettling entrenched and sometimes invisible power arrangements and mechanisms that are enacted in everyday relationships, organizational and economic structures, cultural and institutional practices, large and small (Reason and Bradbury 2008; c.f. Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009: 13).

In action research, the people involved in a study generate relevance through participation. Participatory research represents a challenge: “This kind of self-reflexive participatory approach moves us closer to “truth”, but also transforms academic research into critical interventions in social, political and cultural life, with social change as the final outcome” (Bosch 2011: 29). As a research field, ICTs represent a particular challenge for action research, because the investigation of technologies means dealing with systems of knowledge acting in the intersections of class, gender, “race”, age etc. Micky Lee (2006: 198f.) refers to multiple studies and comes to the conclusion that “technological objects” do not automatically change actions and knowledge: “technologies are not products but processes and that local knowledge has to be created by the users” (ibid.). Therefore, in action research it is important to “legitimize” the knowledge shared in the research process (Fals-Borda 1991).

In order to enable a participatory approach, the methodological design of this project was based on qualitative social sciences methods. The methodological objective was to understand the processes at work between social agents – also between the participating organizations and the migrant women, media and social structures. At the beginning of the project inputs

were generated through group interviews². Later, during several actions we worked with participant observation in order to support the reflection process in the teams. In parallel, there were written products (cards, evaluations, responses etc.), along with the video produced together with migrant participants, which also flowed into the analysis. The process of interpretation included the hermeneutical sociology of knowledge as well as Grounded Theory with the function of continuous comparison, iterative concept and theoretical sampling. Repeated interpretations and reflections took place in group discussions. Participants included project staff from the Daphne Project as well as experts from relevant fields.

An intersectional, feminist and anti-racist approach informs our methodology. This implies understanding the complexity of migrant women’s lives and their experiences with different and sometimes subtle forms of segregation such as gender, age, origin, “race”, ethnicity, religion and class (Baquero Torres 2009). Thus, from a feminist perspective, we are interested in

² *Group interviews were based on two sets of interview guidelines (for adolescents and for women). While the guidelines provided a structured context, the conversations were reflexive in that we picked up on the participants’ issues.*

how certain uses of ICT can challenge heteronormative practices and identities, and how a more varied and emancipatory participation can be facilitated using ICTs (Braidotti 1996). Apart from this perspective on women as agents of ICT, the study also looks at the experiences of discrimination in this medium. When feminist theory is applied to migrant women, it is not only patriarchal power relations that are significant – the violence of immigration laws, structural racism and class antagonism are also relevant (Gouma 2011). The legal residency has an impact on the possibilities of participating in society, and in particular, in cyber culture. Migration policies, thus, can circumvent the interactions and spaces in which migrants and refugees ICT practices take place. Taking into account the social status and its relation to citizenship, leads us to use the concept of “structural violence”, which is very fruitful in order to depict the social reality we encountered. One of the forms of such violence can be, for example, structural racism, a device of power that produces internal hierarchies within the social structure and functions to exploit labour and enhance social control.

Given these premises, the **Self-defenceIT** project aimed at developing a methodology which would first of all increase the media skills of women with a background in migration and secondly, to develop a broader and

more critical view of media in terms of the positive aspects of the new technologies (communication, networking, participation, etc.) and the potential for combating violence in and by ICTs (sexism, racism, mobbing, etc.). Central to our research was not only the application of methods in order to reach the objectives of the project, but also the process of adapting them to each context. In this process different techniques were employed and combined and adaptation took place continuously in the second phase. For this reason, and because the country contexts and the particular characteristics of the different participant groups were taken into consideration, each national team developed specific objectives.

From the First to the Second Phase

Using the mentioned theoretical and methodological premises as a starting point, the project adopted a participatory approach through its engagement with action research. The method of action research – in which the findings and discussions during the research process are fed into the research design and accordingly devices are developed which address the needs expressed by the research participants – was

embedded in a methodological framework of feminist anti-racist intersectional approaches (Erel et al. 2010). Thus, in the second phase of our research project we followed the principles of action research by working with the ideas generated during the research process and translating them into the teaching, counselling and support practices of the organizations involved in this project.

During the first phase of **Self-defenceIT** we gathered data on the use and knowledge on ICT by migrant women and the educational issues arising from the ICTs in relation to their children. This phase ended with the writing of the first national reports and a first international report which summarized the situations in all four countries. The second phase of the **Self-defenceIT** project was devoted to the activities. Concepts for the tutorials and workshops took into account the theoretical framework and practice of critical pedagogy (Freire 1970; Howard 2004).

In Thessaloniki the tutorials focused on migrant women within their families and aimed at increasing their skills as users of ICTs. The starting point was that they can be equal learners like their children and to let them use their expertise and knowledge

as protection mechanisms in the family. In Madrid the specific objectives went beyond the family realm to cover a wider sphere, entering the realm of the social role of migrant women. Along these lines, ICTs were approached as part of the technological realm and were recognized as part of their everyday lives, enhancing the development of self-confidence and self-consciousness for women in the migration context. Especially important was the development of consciousness in regard to social status and structural constraints of participants in the migration context, building spaces for common narratives and communality. In a similar manner, the specific objectives in Linz aimed at providing space and facilitating the raising of awareness of already existing strategies among the participants, as well as strengthening the participants’ self-confidence in dealing with ICTs. Another objective concerned the development of a critical look at ICTs. In order to ensure sustainability, material has been designed and disseminated in a form and language corresponding to the needs of the participants. In Freiburg the specific objective concerned the appropriation of public space by migrant women as a form of social participation as well as the development of empowerment strategies in the struggle against structural violence.

Translation of the Findings into Activities

Morten Levin (2012) describes action research as the connection between action and reflection. In this he perceives – following Charles Wright Mills (1959/1970) – a difference to conventional social science practices:

Action has to be followed by reflection, as reflection has to be accompanied by action. [...] This dual perspective (action and reflection) distinguishes AR [action research] from most conventional social science practices. These conformist social science practices are often rightly accused of engaging in disconnected empiricist work that lacks a relevant grounding in deep and genuine understanding of social relations in the field. (Levin 2012: 133f.)

Action research is not only about researching a field, but also about implementing the results, in the form of interventions and concrete practical measures, which in turn provide a basis for sociological reflection. The steps of the action research are a) identification of the problem area, b) collection and organization of data, c)

interpretation of data, d) action based on data and e) iterative reflection on the processes taken place.

The first phase of **Self-defenceIT** focused on the ICT use of migrant women. Intra-familiar relations, particularly with their children and their transnational families were the central focus of this phase, as well as the role of ICT in their lives. The second phase, the intervention and implementation phase, demanded a combination of tools and practices in order to a) conduct actions and b) to be able to reflect on these actions. During the second phase we focused on the development of actions for learning and appropriating ICT, based on the results obtained during the first phase. The activities that we conducted were conceived of as learning spaces. In order to put the findings of the first phase into practice, we developed workshops, tutorials and counselling services. From the sociological point of view we applied participatory observation in order to supply texts for analysis after the activities. Regarding the reflection processes in the different teams we used a tool of continuous assessment that we call

self-evaluation³.

More specifically, the activities organized during the second phase of the project were:

- * The tutorials were aimed at enhancing women's ICT skills.
- * Workshops dealing with ICTs and structural, social, and family issues such as transnational ties, empowerment in the social and labour field etc. In order to address these issues in a collective framework we used the method of Forum Theatre from Augusto Boal in several workshops. Forum Theatre supported participant learning by enhancing

³ *Self-evaluation is an innovative tool to understand the action research process itself and enhance our understanding of participatory research by providing space for self-reflection of the team. It is described as a tool for "data-based planning, analysis and assessment of own activities [...], i.e. systematic self-reflection, self-control, and self-professionalization" (Krondorfer 2005). This tool enables a close description and analysis of excerpts drawn from everyday professional activities and their effects on self-determined criteria. Working with self-evaluation requires the involvement of the team. Each team has set up own criteria in order to evaluate the activities. However, a central demand was common for all teams, being that of starting from participant women perceptions.*

communication skills, fostering creativity, building a cohesive group and enabling the participants to put themselves in other people's positions. Furthermore, the workshops involved several experts in different fields (theatre, ICTs, social research, pedagogy, migration and gender).

- * Counselling services were provided in order to enhance the knowledge and strategies which were acquired or improved during the ICT tutorials and workshops. Space was provided for reflecting on the use of ICT in the family, for collective reflection, for dealing with family or social issues or problems such as violence, etc. and any problems concerning migrant women that could hinder their learning capacity regarding ICTs or their participation in workshop. The space provided also acted as a diagnostic space and referrals to other local services were provided. In Linz, the service took the form of a discussion round and of informal counselling during the workshops. The counselling took a similar form in Freiburg, where these activities took place during the workshops.
- * The organized activities were based on a) educational principles of the pedagogy for liberation (Freire 1970), b) tools appropriation (the content of ICT tutorials), c) self-evaluation, and d) key aspects of the analysis such as:

- * Power relations/empowerment strategies: Workshops provided spaces to highlight and address power dynamics in order to facilitate the development of empowerment strategies.
- * Relevance: Workshops provided spaces to facilitate migrant women's active participation in this project and thus generate relevance.
- * Collec-tive processes: Workshops provided spaces to organize existing knowledge and to recognize collective opportunities for act.
- * To promote the creative and participatory potential of ICTs, their value as:
 - tools for transnational ties;
 - playful interaction (i.e. the “fun-factor”);
 - self-reflective and narrative tools;
 - empowering tools within the family;
 - appropriation of technological tools and their use in public space.

Activities in the Context of the Local Situations

In all four locations, i.e. Thessaloniki, Freiburg, Linz and Madrid, the active involvement and critical input of target groups was considered to be the central perspective for action. In each location the content of the activities and the objectives were transformed and modified to fit the local context. In Thessaloniki, Madrid and Freiburg the migrant women who participated in the different phases of the project were not acquainted with the research team members beforehand. Because of this, these research teams were not aware if the women had expressed interest in ICTs before. In Madrid and Linz the participants stressed that ICTs are not the priority issue in their everyday lives. Learning German (Linz) and getting psychosocial support (Madrid) were issues which came up frequently during the workshops.

ICT-Tutorials and Workshops

In Thessaloniki, the team opted to combine the ICT tutorials with the workshops. The theatre workshops in Thessaloniki aimed to mobilize the creativity of migrant mothers, reflecting upon issues related to ICTs in the family. The Greek team combined ICT training

and theatre workshops in such a way that participants were nearly always in the same group. By doing so, the team could build upon what was revealed in the tutorial sessions and transform it into social acts in the workshops. The ICT tutorials were attended by 34 women (6-8 women each meeting). The participants in the first set of tutorials evaluated the sessions and in response to this the learning methods were modified in the second set of tutorials. In the second set of tutorials interactive games and online tools were employed in order to support more active training, and two facilitators assisted during these sessions. The theatre workshops attracted 26 migrant women. The trainer worked with the method of the Theatre of the Oppressed and dwelled upon self-reflection as well as skills to address issues relevant to family and ICTs. At the end of the workshop, two plays were presented in Thessaloniki in July 2012 based on Forum Theatre.

The team in Madrid opted for organizing the theatre workshops prior to the ICT tool tutorials in order to build a cohesive group. Forum Theatre helped to create trust in the group and promoted collective narrations based on shared experiences. Moreover, in this way the team could better understand the women's needs in relation to timing and conciliation. An average of 22 women took part in the ICT tutorials. The team organized a

system of coaching in which those who knew more supported those who knew less. With such a system it was possible to enhance the previous knowledge of the participants and to encourage collaborative dynamics. Some of the participants felt that their knowledge and teaching skills had been recognized and put to good use. However, others felt frustrated because they were not able to explain things as well as they would have liked to. The synergy among ICT trainers, psychologist and participants created a very positive environment. In fact, the women progressively lost their fear of ICTs, and they showed a more proactive attitude. These processes were reinforced also by the psychological counselling, in which the psychologist tried to sustain women's will to change and foster empowerment. The theatre workshop was attended by 15 women. Through theatrical activities, participants were involved in a critical analysis of their own situations and in the generation of ideas to improve their practices. Some of the women who distrusted ICTs and resisted using them showed stronger interest in them after attending these workshops.

In Linz a total of 50 participants were registered for the various workshops and tutorials. Many participants took advantage of several courses, while some only attended one. The trainers reported that the majority of

the participants were motivated and contributed a lot to the topics. However, similarly to the situation in Madrid, some of the participants showed a reluctance to engage with technology issues, and did not attend further workshops or tutorials. The workshops created space for the exchange of experiences. Issues of (structural) racism, sexism and strategies to deal with such phenomena were reoccurring issues in the workshops. maiz offered a broad thematic framework in the workshops so that participants could help determine the contents. During the introduction, the moderator asked the participants to reflect on issues raised during the group interviews. Each of the two sessions in Linz included a workshop each with a different focus: While Workshop I used Forum Theatre as a method, Workshop II was used to produce a mobile video.⁴

The Freiburg team organized two sets of workshops. Each set of workshops consisted of 5 meetings lasting 3 to 4 hours each. The focus of the first workshop was on ICT tools and counselling. The second workshop included tools, counselling and Forum Theatre. The decision to combine these different methods took into

consideration Freire's pedagogical view which stresses the basic interdependence between the production and reflection of knowledge. Each of the two workshops was attended by ten women. In order to encourage continuous participation, reflection sessions were organized. In these sessions the participants talked about negative experiences related to ICTs. The trainers and participants worked together to develop modules with different issues. The overarching theme of media and participation strategies was an integral part of the initial discussions. The workshops were designed to address different ICT skills. The first workshop aimed at empowering women through appropriating public space by taking pictures in and around the city. The second workshop aimed at developing personal media strategies using web 2.0. A book of photos was produced and published and served as a further step to strengthen the positive media presence of immigrant women. The second workshop used Forum Theatre as a method for highlighting the ambivalences in dealing with power/powerlessness in the context of ICTs and for developing strategies for countering these.

⁴ All videos produced within the framework of the Self-defenceIT can be viewed under the following link: <http://www.selfdefenceit.eu/?q=node/45>

Counselling

Counselling turned out to be the activity that had to be adapted the most, with major changes in each country aimed at meeting women's demands. Due to the poor response to offers of counselling in Thessaloniki, the team introduced reflection meetings following the workshops. These provided space for participants, trainers and facilitators to reflect upon project activities building upon the critical knowledge generated towards ICTs.

In Madrid the counselling service was highly appreciated and was used by 16 women. In the Spanish case, given the initial low levels of interest in ICT shown by migrant women, the counselling was developed as part of a multilayer process aimed at integrating all activities of the project. In the counselling sessions, a psychologist tried to sustain women's will to change and support empowerment beyond the ICT issues, since their demands were wider. Most attention was paid to personal problems, and on socially forced adaptation, as many of these personal difficulties are interconnected with unemployment, social exclusion at work, housing, precarious labour conditions, low incomes, etc.

In Freiburg personal counselling was offered by both of the trainers. One of the trainers, in addition to being an educational expert, is also a trained counsellor. Due to the trust that was established with the trainers, the participants were able to pose both personal and professional questions relating to uses of media. Problems stemming from the use of media were addressed in the workshops, particularly in the parts devoted to Forum Theatre, where issues like the protection of privacy and mobbing were focused on.

In Linz maiz has already been offering counselling services for many years in order to give socio-psychological support to migrant women. However, women using this service do not exclusively address ICT issues, although it is a topic which is frequently raised. In order to focus on some central aspects of problems with ICTs, maiz organized further discussion rounds. It was also envisaged that the services would interact with the theatre workshops. The intention was to steer counselled women to the workshop series as an additional form of support. In turn, the workshop series was also intended to serve as a channel to communicate the existence of specialized counselling services. While the structures in place allowed for such a channel of exchange, it was not taken up by the migrant women it was addressing.

RESULTS

The experience of transnational migration influences deeply the media literacy and ICT relations of women. Departing from different skill levels the participating women showed strong interest in ICT tools that connect them to friends and family living in different distant and near places. Further, during **Self-defenceIT** the participants elaborated their positions towards ICTs by relating their meaning to the own locality: as migrants, women, mothers, asylum seekers, care workers etc. So far the results underline the motivation of participants to take part in activities that increase self-empowerment, their capabilities for communication and their social status.

The meaning of ICTs in the everyday life of migrant women was addressed through qualitative interviews and observations as well as through the feedback of the participants after the project activities. Although the diverse migration and social contexts reflect upon the project experiences in the different places, some analytical categories are presented which represent general issues for the participating women.

Localities: What Migrant Women Want

In Thessaloniki the participants showed a strong inclination to acquire information. Almost all tool tutorial participants started with a beginner to intermediate level of knowledge of ICTs. It was observed, however, that this was no obstacle to them being able to work with social media tools, in particular Facebook. Having a decent level of knowledge of ICTs for communication purposes was a strategy that the women pursued even before the project activities. The contents of the tutorials in Thessaloniki focused on Digital Alphabet, Internet Basics, Social Media Basics and safety.

In Madrid the trainers focused on the participants' concept of technology. The goal of the training was to support women to become more autonomous, and to learn about and use applications. In this way, the trainers worked with innovative concepts which integrated technological content and the social practices familiar to migrant women. It was important to address the use and perception of technology by women because ICTs are usually associated with a man's world: the cultural representations of technology still involve images of masculinity and power (Balsamo 1996).

In Freiburg workshops focused on active and productive ways of working with media and ICTs. Further, the workshops provided space for reflection and for the development of strategies for action. The participants used tools like Internet Basics and Social Media Basics and programs such as Irfan View and Movie Maker. Both workshops were attended by 10 women. The participants worked in groups of two or three, thus creating an atmosphere of trust in which all could participate actively in the process by contributing their ideas and learning from each other. This process was reflected in the final products which were a book and a video.

In Linz a total of two different workshops and four tutorials were carried out two times each. Because of the variety in language skills, groups with similar levels were formed. As in the other cities, the objective of the tutorials was to reinforce the participants' skills and also increase their confidence in interacting with ICTs. The thematic structure of the tutorial corresponds to the results of the first phase of the project: a) basic computer skills, b) basic Internet skills, c) email and Skype and d) fun with ICTs. The tutorial format was developed to facilitate direct hands-on experience. During the maiz workshops, the team discussed the role that media and ICTs play in the experiences of migrant women, especially in relation to other issues such as job-seeking, legal status, precarious living situations etc. Participants discussed the politics of representation in mainstream media. The representation of women migrants in (mass) media is something that is perceived to be difficult to influence. In contrast, however, several examples of ways in which to counter (structural) racism in "real" everyday life were discussed during the workshops.

In all four countries, ICTs and media coverage did not seem to be a priority in participant's lives. They were more preoccupied with making ends meet or obtaining documents which would enable them to reside legally. The women's interest and motivation to

invest spare time to learn more about ICTs grew over the course of the workshops because the women's own experiences was taken as a starting point. Situating technical knowledge in everyday life helped to enhance the process. Several of the teams adopted an integral perspective in order to overcome the low levels of interest in ICTs and to be able to address the women's situations at work and at home. The combining of technical and emotional content meant that the women felt supported in many aspects of their lives. Appreciating the complexity of participants' lives and experiences was an important part of the process. In more general terms, this perspective permitted us to overcome the segmentation that usually characterizes social intervention.

ICTs and Everyday Lives of Migrant Women

Designing and carrying out the ICT tutorials was the core activity aimed at reaching the first objective of the **Self-defenceIT** project. Women migrants' interaction with, and appropriation of, ICTs shapes not only their personal and collective trajectories and identities, but also the socio-cultural profile of the medium itself: migrant women are active social actors in the sphere of

digital communication, even if their citizenship status may be precarious (Williams and Baláž 2008). The creative and aware appropriation of ICTs technologies took different forms in each country context, which meant that the women became more aware of their position in different spheres: within the family in Thessaloniki and within the general society in Madrid, Freiburg and Linz.

During the first phase of **Self-defenceIT**, the research teams perceived that what ICTs meant to the migrant women varied, depending on their social position, education, legal status etc. Perceptions of ICTs are formed and shaped in complex ways, involving an interaction among social, economic and political factors. However there are some general categories that emerged from our analysis. Using ICTs is associated with: having better chances in the job-market, the ability to maintain intense transnational family and friendship ties, and having access to information about current events in the country of origin. As can be seen in these categories, through the use of ICTs, distinctions between private and public space are being strongly challenged.

However, only a few participants actively used the broad range of ICTs in their working environments due to social exclusion from many professions. The Internet, mobile phones etc., are used primarily in the private sphere. They serve the purpose of creating transnational spaces for interaction, in particular in relation to networks and relationships. Confirming the interview results, the participants use social media tools for communication purposes and to express themselves. The participants were interested in communicating with their friends, finding information connected with their interests, sharing music, photos and videos, and their desire to increase their capabilities followed from these interests. Further, ICTs also help the women to manage everyday life in areas such as shopping, finding information, coping with official institutions in the country of settlement, and taking a course.

Practices of citizenship through ICTs are very important to women that participate in social movements. This is an issue which came up during the group interviews. Women activists in Spanish organizations like Sedoac (Servicio Doméstico Activo – Active domestic service) and Territorio Doméstico (Domestic Territory) told us that they use the internet on a daily basis for both private and political purposes. The internet is their "right hand", as a Colombian activist said. These women were

motivated to learn in order to develop their activities: keeping contact with organizations, establishing alliances, exchanging materials, organizing activities and writing cooperatively for a public event.

Self-defenceIT treated the use of ICT as a set of social practices (not just technological ones) strictly interconnected with the real geographies experienced by migrant women. From this perspective, the experiences, histories and everyday practices of the participants cannot be separated from the digital spaces they inhabit. Thus technical knowledge cannot be separated from social practices, and the approach to research used in this project enabled us to explore these connections. This broad notion of technology as a culture or “material-semiotic practice” permits us to understand how the relationship to technology is intrinsic to the construction of subjectivity for both sexes (Haraway 1997), thus a gendered technological gaze is necessary in order to reach emancipation goals.

In opposition to a deterministic or neutral vision of technology, the project adopted a constructivist approach that provides a useful basis for feminist action involving the ambivalences which women experience with technology (Faulkner 2001). When talking about

ICTs often women and researchers do not take into account the technicalization of domestic labour. Besides, the participants who refused to use ICTs extensively had several reasons for doing so. These women had significant knowledge of what it means not to use or not to trust ICTs and how technologies and practices were related to their lives and social positions. Some women will refuse to have an Email or Facebook account even after participating in the **Self-defenceIT** project. Avoiding using ICTs in everyday life is a strategy adopted by some migrant women who do not have legal status and a way of avoiding unauthorized control by anti-migration movements.

Active use of ICTs Beyond the Technical Aspect

Self-defenceIT involved participants in a number of activities and facilitated critical debates by providing space for self-reflection and collective strategies. In Freiburg the participants produced film portraits and worked on further strategies in order to gain presence in public media by building teams. Working together on a product (such as a book of photographs) enabled women with different levels of ICT skills to collaborate in a creative process and to learn from each other while

doing so. In this way the participants were involved in a collective process.

The team in Thessaloniki focused on ICTs as empowering tools in the family. Migrant women expressed interest in becoming active ICT users and took a proactive parenting role by becoming as literate and skilled in this area as their children already were. Critical discussions on boundaries of information and power of ICTs took place. The participating women questioned why they had not taken advantage of the possibilities offered by ICTs more in the past, in some cases in spite of having one or more computers or laptops in their households. The level of agency is mobilized within the household addressing the power relations in the family, at the same time it exceeds such a realm. The increased level of knowledge due to participation in the project and the activism of the participants themselves strengthened the social positions of the women in a way that was not related to their employment status and/or their status as migrants.

In Madrid increasing levels of knowledge of ICTs was viewed in this project as a way of getting women out of domestic or labour caretaker roles and enabling them to recognize the value of their contributions and knowledge. This was an underlying aim of all the

activities implemented during the project. In Madrid an empowerment process took place in the ICT tutorials, where migrant women shared their knowledge with others who were less familiar with ICTs. The discussions revealed that migrant women’s interest in ICTs is much broader and not limited to parenting duties.

In Linz during the workshops there were often discussions in which the women reassured each other that they were “not alone”. Implementing a sense of collectivity in practice and through campaigns was a significant part of the work for this team. It is also a topic which will be discussed further in this location. One of the final products which were produced by this team was a mobile video aimed to stimulate further public actions for claiming rights as migrant women. An important topic for the future also concerns fighting against the surveillance of migrant women with ICTs. As a participant observed, “We migrant women, we’re like cats. We stand on four legs and resist.”

Positioning and Fighting Against Structural Violence

Within the general framework of fighting against structural violence, each of the four project teams developed different approaches depending on the inputs received from the participating women. Concerning collective strategies for fighting against structural violence, **Self-defenceIT** supported the production of common narratives. Participant women explored their situation and shared positions and concerns in the group. They built commonality in order to raise their voice in the future. A process of raising awareness took place in the workshops. The participating women became conscious of sharing common positions – ones which are not only related to individual characteristics, but also connected to their gender, nationality and colour of their skin and which result in a position of structural inequality compared to autochthonous women and the population in general. Some participants defined themselves as migrant women who have undergone a difficult path in order to achieve a social position similar to the local people, for example, by gaining citizenship. A live-in domestic worker from Ecuador demonstrated an awareness of her situation when she talked about the family she works for: “I love them, but not in the same way I love

my daughter or my grandchildren. I just work for them. I know they can fire me tomorrow and then I will not see them anymore.”

Working together on media products such as mobile videos, photo stories or film portraits provided space for self-reflection but also for discussing the “othering” in the (mainstream) media of the countries of settlement. Interventions involving pro-active media strategies were discussed. In this context, attracting public attention means being able to express yourself and your position in the media. Although the desire to become more involved in the production of knowledge in the media was strong, women expressed concerns about being able to do so without having proficient language and journalism skills. In spite of these concerns, during **Self-defenceIT** several ideas for action were discussed and carried out.

In many cases, the project has worked as multiplier concerning political action, participation and visibility: after the **Self-defenceIT** activities many participant women attended further workshops in the partner-organizations. Relevant information about different networks and supporters was exchanged. This helped women to improve, for example, their professional

and economic positions. Moreover, some migrant women had to negotiate with their employers in order to participate in project activities. A live-in domestic worker, for example, made special arrangements with her employer in order to obtain some free time on Saturday afternoons (a day on which she normally worked) to take part in the workshops.

ICTs, (Anti)Racism and Strategies

Within structural violence, racism and sexism and the ways in which they are connected to ICTs was one of the main issues which was analyzed and taken into account in this project. During the workshops and tutorials, different strategies and positions for dealing with these phenomena were exchanged and discussed. Participants exchanged knowledge and experiences. Their “place in the community” was an issue that the participants deal with in everyday life, and something they were aware of before the project. Together, both trainers and participants discussed individual and collective strategies to deal with racism and social inequality. Collective knowledge about racisms, media, ICTs and everyday realities were discussed intensively.

The focus on racism and sexism as forms of violence in the ICTs was addressed in the workshops and tutorials in Linz. The participants’ perception of themselves as one interest group was facilitated by the existence of strong group dynamics and the continuity of antiracist work in the different maiz courses. The women in Linz emphasized during the different project activities that “no one is alone” in dealing with racism and sexism. The strong demand for collective positions and supportive actions was reflected in the media products (mobile video, photo stories, etc.) which were produced. In Madrid, Thessaloniki and Freiburg these processes were supported through the method of Forum Theatre in the workshops. The use of drama in the workshops contributed to the enjoyment of the women, and in this way barriers that could hinder processes of collectivization were reduced.

The issues of racism and sexism were given a lot of attention during **Self-defenceIT**. Many women consider it important to counteract racism in their daily lives. The desire to act against victimization was discussed in depth. There were different views of head-on strategies to counter racism. Several participants consider the active countering of racism in the internet (and also in, for example, buses and other public spaces) to be a negative strategy, and one which takes a lot of energy.

Other participants are in favour of immediate action against racism and sexism. When discussing different experiences and strategies, some participants pointed out that “counter-attacks” do not have to be written in the official language of the country of settlement. The fact that engagement with ICTs relies heavily on written language often discourages women from expressing themselves, and the participants favoured action regardless of the language chosen. In this way, priority was given to the women’s desire not to be speechless when facing violence and not to the audience’s desire to understand. This tactic was also adopted for the mobile video.

Migrant women discussed further strategies for self-representation in the mainstream media. The need for better media, language and journalistic skills, however, can be an obstacle to further action. The women agreed that media campaigns and actions could be also delegated to and/or coordinated by migrant organizations that have built up resources and expertise in this area. The discussion about media violence helped us to de-contextualize the idea that taking action against racism means taking action against, for example, “Austria” as a whole. Reflecting on racist reports in the media of the countries of origin has contributed to the definition of racism as a distribution

problem rather than a “national characteristic” and stereotype. Dealing with one’s own racisms appeared to be an important step towards formulating anti-racist positions in the countries of settlement and carrying out anti-racist actions.

An important input regarding structural racism and ICT strategies came from asylum seekers who have experienced the deportation of family members. One participant explained that she had neither an email account nor a computer as strategy for not coming into conflict with Austrian asylum law, since the authorities regard private computers as a material good that asylum seekers cannot afford legally. All asylum seekers confirmed that they have to justify the possession of ICT devices. The experience of unjustified deportation of family members causes many asylum seekers to distrust the relevant authorities. Further, in light of efforts to introduce data retention, asylum seekers regard ICTs as providing technological channels for immigration authorities to monitor their privacy in unauthorized ways. It is important to keep such cases in mind when trying to understand how the local context shapes the meaning of ICTs for migrants. In this example distrusting ICTs is a survival strategy for fighting against structural racism and deportation.

Self-defenceIT found that structural violence is very present in participating women’s lives and also in their ICTs practices. Being aware of their position in society, the participants shared their positions, opinions and experiences with other women, and realized that their situation is not only determined by individual circumstances, but depends on structural inequalities that put them in a subordinate position. Some women expressed the wish to continue being visible in the media, even beyond the scope of this project in order to continue fighting against structural inequality.

Transnational Families and “Doing Family”

ICTs strongly influence family life and are used intensively to enable the members of the family to interact. Moreover, families which live together often make big efforts to overcome the distance to other members of the family which do not live in the same country or at the same place as they do. It remains important for participants to protect themselves and their families from sexist and discriminatory content, i.e. in the internet. In some cases isolation caused by spending time in front of the computer was interpreted as the manifestation of an egocentric society, and was

rejected.

Intergenerational relationships and the ways in which ICT creates a divide between the generations were central topics during the project. The intense discussions about communication difficulties between the women and their children concerning dealing with ICTs enabled the participants to recognize and name these problems. Furthermore, and more importantly, they had space to develop new and alternative strategies for dealing with them. Such a process took place, for example, in the two theatre pieces in Thessaloniki. The main themes of these theatre pieces were the addiction of parents to the internet and the effects on the children and the household. They also dealt with the way in which the desire to own ICT devices awakens dreams of consumption irrespective of the family’s ability to afford such expenses.

CONCLUSIONS

Although ICTs are not a priority issue for many migrant women they are an important perspective for understanding practices of citizenship and strategies for resistance. They enable us think of political agency without using a state-centric perspective. ICTs stress our notions of the local and the national and link agency with the transnational. Yet, such practices of citizenship do not automatically ensure the official recognition of people subjected to migration policies and defined as outsiders to the nation (Cabrera 2007). In addition, enactments of citizenship do not obliterate or diminish the processes of subalternization produced by migration policies. ICTs can either support or function as tools against isolation from social rights and suppression of people's rights.

In conclusion, the **Self-defenceIT** project sought to understand the social conditions around the axes of class, gender, "race", ethnicity, age, education that lead to differential use of ICTs for migrant women and at the same time to support agency and collective strategies. Further, this project relied on a participatory methodology that allows a process of appropriation of ICT by the participants without overlooking the fact that they are officially excluded from many social and state rights as migrants. The different local and national contexts that were part of the project produced different demands, needs and desires. Furthermore, the structural conditions that assign diverse political locations for the agency of the migrant women were always included in the discussions and insights into the everyday lives.

Many of the migrant women involved in **Self-defenceIT** showed a digital gap at the beginning of the project. Such disparities are not only digital, but involve a number of aspects that are mutually connected. Social and educational structures correspond with the economic situation of the migrant women, and go hand in hand with available opportunities. The dominant perception of migrants—not as "cosmopolites" but as cheap labour—drives migrant women away from prestigious (IT) jobs and pushes them into precarious

working conditions. ICTs are experienced by many of the participants as being a part of their private rather than their public or professional lives.

In all member countries of **Self-defenceIT** the structural inequalities faced by migrants, and in particular by migrant women, remain a critical phenomenon in the reproduction of social power relations. These conditions are obvious in the precarious working conditions, the difficulty to access work and the precarious legal status many migrant women experience. Taking into account the structural conditions faced by migrant women, the **Self-defenceIT** project provided local spaces for appropriation, supporting self-confidence and designing and undertaking collective actions. The participants were partly experts in the area of ICTs. Partly they demanded tutorials and information in order to improve their skills and networks. In spite of the different skill levels, the workshops, tutorials and counselling provided support and created spaces for questions, discussions and the creative handling of ICTs. During the workshops methods such as Forum Theatre facilitated the translation of private experiences into collective demands and actions.

RECOMMEND- ATIONS

The **Self-defenceIT** project was developed for and by migrant women. Migrant women, in their role as experts in matters concerning their everyday lives, came together to develop, test and evaluate the activities of this project. Measures for supporting interactive and professional media education were used to improve the lives of women and indirectly those of their children as well. The divide between the generations was reduced and strategies for literacy empowerment were developed. In this way forms of structural violence, such as racism and sexism were countered.

Based on our experiences, there is a need for diverse and flexible strategies in the fight against (structural) racism. This project, with its innovative method and approach showed how ICTs can be used as a political tool in the struggle against sexual and racial discrimination. In addition, the focus was expanded beyond protecting children and into the area of prevention. Unfortunately there has so far been little research on this type of strategy and therefore there are also very few educational sources which can be consulted. In order to reduce racism and further form of violence and in order to support societal participation and demands of migrant women, we would like to conclude with some general recommendations:

1. Political actors need to develop further action for facilitating the access to ICTs for migrants and migrant women and in general for social groups with less economic resources. Migrant organizations have the structure and networks needed to function as a basis for promoting and enabling such actions.
2. Social actors such as migrant organizations should be involved in political decision processes in order to introduce positions that are less known in mainstream research.

3. Political actors have to implement measures for legal support in order to combat racism and other forms of violence involving ICTs.
4. Social and legal actors have to undertake action to end the ICT surveillance of migrants and asylum seekers.
5. More action research should be conducted in order to understand how forms of violence are becoming embedded within ICTs and which strategies can counter them.
6. More effort should be put into the dissemination of research and practical information concerning migrant issues and the use of ICT as a political tool. It is necessary to further develop curricular and educational concepts which not only concentrate on providing knowledge about ICT, but also support the development of skills which are related to the everyday lives of women.
7. In order for this to be achieved, it is necessary for migrant women to be perceived as valuable partners in the process by enhancing previous knowledge, thus developing projects that are connected to their own experiences and practices.
8. Projects in this area demand open methodological approach-one which centres on the needs and

wishes of the women and their empowerment, and addresses topics which are of importance to them. Only in this way can steps be taken to avoid negative stereotypes and a focus on protection toward positive developments focussing on media competence through empowerment.

9. Migrant organizations should be provided with the necessary resources and be encouraged to support migrant women in relation to their experiences with ICTs.

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Afterword

Self-defenceIT was initiated by maiz, the autonomous center for and by migrant women in Linz. It was implemented together with partners from ESCODE in Madrid, ANTIGONE in Thessaloniki, the University of Education in Freiburg, the University of Manchester and FOSSBOX in London.

In addition, numerous local organisations in these countries provided support and endorsement for the content of the project.

The project received primary (80%) financial support from the European Union's Daphne Program, and was co-financed by the province of Upper Austria and the partner organisations themselves.

We would like to thank all those who have supported and enabled our work.

The following products were developed during this two-year collaboration, and can be found on the accompanying DVD as well as on the project website: <http://www.selfdefenceit.eu>

- * Self-defenceIT research report
- * Mobile video modelled on the concept by Lisbeth Kovačič
- * "Self-defenceIT in Greece" video by ANTIGONE
- * "Self-defenceIT in Spain" video by Laura Schettino
- * "Greetings from Freiburg" photo book (exclusively for internal use)
- * Blog
- * Workshop materials
- * Tutorials for independent learning

Self-defenceIT
Migrant women
defend themselves against
violence in new media

A project by



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