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Entangling the Migration and the Economic 'Crisis'

Claiming What's Rightfully Greek

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It is late July of 2018. We (A and V) are sitting in the conference room of the Greek Migrant Forum offices, just a block away from Victoria Square – the square that became the locus and the symbol of the new migration wave in 2015.¹ Persistent phone calls often interrupt the flow of our discussion. Being a young woman of African background, who has nonetheless spent most of her life in Greece, A. has an abundance of stories to share over her experience of xenophobia and racism. Some are frustrating, some are preposterous, and some are surprisingly funny. But after one of these funny stories, A. seems to contemplate a realisation:

A.: I think that [racism] is always a matter of class – but this is just my personal opinion on the matter.

I believe that a person who has money, regardless of their colour and ethnicity, gets a different kind of treatment. Even if you conduct a social experiment, I mean, if I walk out the door wearing a fancy turban and I start throwing dollars around, and if I have a chauffeur who opens the door for me, people will be very nice to me. If, on the other hand, I go out with the pushchair, my kid, carrying grocery bags and so on and so on and I walk into a store... I think it has to do with the image

V.: So, if the racial aspect is an excuse, and the religious aspect is an excuse, then what is the truth of it?

A.: Xenophobia is the fear for something else. The fear that the 'Other' will come and take something from me. The idea that I am a tormented person

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who runs around all day just to make, like, five euros and ‘they’ [the migrants] will come... It’s not necessarily a bad thought, you know what I mean? The perception is that they will eat my food, there’s a quite subconscious [fear] underneath; they are coming to get something that’s mine. Whereas, if I see they have [money], that they will not claim something that’s mine, then I am fine – maybe I can even get something from them.²

In these few lines lies an arguably insightful account of the quintessence of xenophobia, racism and economic crisis in Greece. A society striving to balance between almost ten years of a relentless economic recession and close to four years of an, allegedly, unprecedented and unpredictable migratory influx is bound to become a fertile ground for various, particular and peculiar constructions of narratives of otherness, threat and fear. But how did we end up discussing money when the question was about xenophobia – and vice versa? To answer that question, a brief timeline of events is necessary.

Due to insufficient GDP growth, problematic budget compliance, lack of data credibility, high government debt, excessive government spending, tax evasion and corruption – to name a few of the reasons – the Greek sovereign debt crisis officially started in 2009.³ In the following years, the acute financial crisis inevitably led to a political crisis, with national elections held in 2009, 2011 and 2012. Amidst that climate of political instability, the extreme right party of Golden Dawn gained considerable momentum among the frustrated Greeks and claimed almost seven per cent of the national vote in the 2012.⁴ Golden Dawn’s electoral breakthrough,

although congruent with the rise of nationalist parties across Europe in the past decade, is particularly noteworthy in the case of Greece. Namely, it occurred less than 40 years after the collapse of the seven-year dictatorship (1967-1974) – commonly referred to as Junta, while the memories of the regime’s crimes were still relatively recent. In the period before its electoral success, Golden Dawn enjoyed increased visibility and media attention – an attention that the party’s representatives used to propel their anti-immigrant and anti-austerity narrative forward. In 2015, a record number of 856,723 people reached the Greek border by sea, while an additional 143,634 reached the Greek islands until March 2016. The EU Turkey Joint Declaration halted these flows, with less than 30,000 entering the country until the end of 2016 and as many throughout 2017.⁵

This chain of events and developments paints the image of a country torn by crises, constant change and unrest. In 2016, Zygmunt Bauman ominously predicted: ‘Signs are piling up that public opinion, in cahoots with the ratings-covetous media, is gradually yet relentlessly approaching the point of “refugee tragedy fatigue” (2016: 2). The discourse of ‘crisis’ results in a constant reliving of the ‘frame-breaking moment’ that ‘dismantles the certainties and normative narratives of nation, sovereignty, social bonds, and belonging’ (Carastathis et al. 2018: 31). As Myrto Tsilimpounidi (2017) argued, an etymological exploration of the term ‘crisis’ pinpoints to a pre-existing state of normality temporally breached by the developments which led to the current status of social abnormality. Moreover, it disregards that trouble has long preceded the crisis (Papataxiarchis 2017; see also Dalakoglou

2013). Referring mainly to the economic crisis, Papa-taxiarchis contends that generalised trouble was suspended in the sphere of the informal until 2010, when ‘trouble deserted the social and political margins where it was contained’ and transformed into an all-encompassing, pervasive condition of everyday life (2017: 230).

In these, equally discursive and lived, perplexed particularities of crisis, our contribution focuses on how the entanglement of the ‘debt crisis’ and the ‘migration crisis’ – as transformed since 2015 into a ‘refugee crisis’ – morphs the contemporary modalities of racism and xenophobia in the country. The aim is to focus on how the crises are negotiated, interchangeably and simultaneously – yet following correlating argumentations – to justify or even motivate hostile tendencies towards the ‘Other’.

Our analysis adheres to a twofold exploration and intends for a twofold, but interrelating, insight. On the one hand, the authors’ collaborative effort is of methodological and analytical interest. Our understanding of collaborative ethnography does not only involve an extra set of eyes in the ethnographic field, but also the potential for more than one perception and analytical capacities over the same or related events. The combination of said capacities entails a wider analytical lens, where focus is put in political and economic narratives of the intersecting crises as an integral part of an analysis over the experience of racism and xenophobia. Upon these methodological reflections, the analysis is divided in two parts. Firstly, Drymiotis focuses on how the economic crisis enhanced the prominence and expression of racism and xenophobia in post-austerity ‘mainstream’ politics before 2015 – as especially articu-

lated in the Greek context and chiefly instrumentalised by the extreme right. The second part of the analysis refers to the post-2015 period – when Greece entered the state of ‘experiencing a crisis within a crisis’.⁶ Gerasopoulos deals with the feelings of frustration experienced upon the realisation that refugees and asylum applicants are the recipients of a significant array of benefits. He contends that xenophobia and racism have become more nuanced and more specific than an opposition to a steady influx of strangers who ‘push down further the wages and salaries that already refuse to grow and lengthen yet more the already abominably long queues... for the stubbornly scarce jobs’ (Bauman 2016: 17). In the theorisation that ensues, informed by the methodological and analytical choices mentioned, we then co-explore how the entanglement of political and economic narratives of the two crises have come to substantiate and explain the rationale of contemporary racist sentiments by refuting deeply rooted perceptions of superiority of the ‘Greek’ over the ‘Other’. Our main theoretical argument is based on the idea that racism and xenophobia in post-austerity Greece is largely justified and negotiated on economic grounds rather than merely racial. In that sense, this contribution purports to discuss racism as experienced in times of economic instability by the one expressing it, it places the focus on the ‘culprit’ of racism rather than its ‘victim’.

On methodology: reflections on team and collaborative ethnography

Greece, September of 2015. People continuously arrive either via the country's northern border with Turkey or they cross the sea from Minor Asia to the closest islands of the Aegean. From the islands they travel to Piraeus port, they take the Electric Urban Railway or a taxi, make a stop at Victoria Square in Athens' city centre, stay there for one or two days and then head to Stathmos Larisis (Central Train Station, Athens) to start their journey through the Balkans. During the last months of 2015, the authors resided in Athens, and, more specifically, in an apartment overseeing Victoria Square. Every day for three months we (the authors) would witness people arriving, people sleeping in tents in the middle of the square or at the nearby streets, people leaving and people arriving once more. The same pattern over and over again. During those months we were also following a similar pattern. We were spending hours observing the refugees and the reactions of the areas' residents from the balcony, walking around the square, discussing over what happens with neighbours, discussing over what happens with each other.

In a manner of speaking, we witnessed the same incidents. We were both present for people's arrivals, people's departures, clashes, gatherings, moments of solidarity, moments of anxiety whenever voices were getting loud, moments of separation and division. However, we soon realised that we shared the moment, the incidents, the situation, the time being, but we did not holistically share the understanding and meaning assigned to what we were observing; a realisation high-

lighting the subjectivity of the initial field experience. After hours of discussions we concluded that each of us was continuously but rather unconsciously, focusing on different aspects of the same 'image'. The one author tended to focus more on the structural dynamics of the refugee crisis (namely, Marilena Drymioti) and the other on the cultural (namely, Vassilis Gerasopoulos). On every discussion we stumbled upon points of intersection and points of departure. Despite the observational and analytic quandaries, instead of disagreeing over which aspect was more important and which was worthy of observational scrutiny, we became fascinated with the new image that was constructed after the combination of our different points of focus. The decision on what our approach would be, stood as a trigger and a challenge to practice ethnography while having more than one pair of eyes at the same field; what is also termed as 'collective ethnographic fieldwork' or 'team ethnography'.

Challenging the social scientific archetype of the 'lone ethnographer' and the 'cult of academic individualism', Erickson and Stull describe team ethnography as a cooperative and collaborative 'joint venture' (1998: 15, 26; Clerke and Hopwood 2014: 8). However, what the term 'joint venture' exactly means and what it actually entails is contested. For some scholars, 'collaboration in teams must become an explicit and deliberate part of both fieldwork and broader processes of research, interpretation and writing' (Clifford and Marcus 1986 in Clerke and Hopwood 2014: 8). This argument of what one might call a 'completely joint venture' is based on the idea that if the members of the team are not equally present and represented at every stage of the research, then one voice will sound louder than others.

Thus, reflecting a top-down approach subject to a negative ‘polyphony’ and ‘polyvocality’ where one author’s interpretation is automatically considered as representing the whole team (Erickson and Stull 1998: 47). As they further noted, it is ‘not whether to team or not to team; ethnography is by its very nature a team enterprise’ (ibid: 59). The question, then, becomes what would one want the ethnographic team to look like and whose understandings shall be included. In our case, the idea of having two researchers that teamed-up to ‘look or voice alike’ was consciously rejected. Per contra, we chose to maintain the difference in our views and voices and through the combination of our observations to synthesise a bigger and multi-faced part of the whole. The combined – still distinct – observations yielded during our first attempt to ‘team-up’ were presented at a criminological conference hosted by the University of Porto in May of 2016.⁷

Two years after, in 2018, and while both conducting our doctoral research projects, we decided to bring our observations together again. We are still working on the same context (Greece) while having two different topics, two different images – with one of us mainly focussing on the economic crisis (namely, Marilena Drymioti) and the other on the migration crisis (namely, Vassilis Gerasopoulos). However, the political dimension and social reaction related with both crises serves as a point of intersection. In order to profoundly understand the politics around both topics in multiple instances, we had to bring our two images together. This time, team ethnography was not really a possibility since we are working on two different topics and we are conducting our fieldwork at different timescales. However, what we did for the purposes of this paper

was to collaborate in analysing and theorising our points of intersection while using data from both projects. Thus, through this endeavour we aim to propose that researchers can also combat and oppose academic individualism in other stages of the research that precede or follow research design and data collection. For instance, to collaborate in analysis and theorisation; a research type that could fall into the realms of ‘collaborative ethnography’ or, as in our case, in the realms of ‘collaboration in co-theorisation’.

Collaborative ethnography acquires multiple meanings depending on the collaborative actors. One of the first to define collaborative ethnography is Lassiter, who describes it as the anthropological research where the collaborating actors are the researchers and the people who were traditionally regarded as the ‘subjects’ of study (Lassiter 2005). In collaborative ethnography the ‘subjects’ are not merely under research, but they are – as Lassiter put it – consultants, conducting research themselves, writing about it, reading about it, acquiring in that way a more active role in the process of research making.⁸ The collaboration between those two ‘types’ of actors, the academic and the non-academic, aims to consider and engage multiple audiences in the creation of knowledge. In our understanding, the co-creation of knowledge under the realms of collaborative ethnography does not always need to imply constant mutual engagement at every step of the process. Meanwhile, the collaborative actors need not to be strictly outside the confines of academic discourses. As May and Pattillo-McCoy noted: ‘By collaborative ethnography, we [also] mean those studies in which two or more ethnographers coordinate their fieldwork efforts to gather data

from a single setting' (May and Pattillo-McCoy 2000: 66).

Inspired by multiple examples of two ethnographers gathering data from a single setting (see for instance Adler and Adler 1990), we used our collaboration 'as a space for the co-production of theory' based on data collected on related social phenomena taking place at the same context (Rappaport 2008: 2). Joanne Rappaport's (2008) discussion on the value of collaborative ethnography in terms of theoretical innovation is valuable for every 'team' that aims to collaborate in the production of knowledge, despite the fact that she refers to the 'traditional' notion of collaborative ethnography – meaning the collaboration of researchers with local communities. As she noted, the co-theorisation is fruitful for 'a space of meta-academic debate' in which intellectual work 'has implications for social life and for the practical significance of the exercise of citizenship' (Jimeno 2005 in Rappaport 2008: 4). Even though we definitely support the argument that collaborative ethnography, especially in its traditional form, has an immense meta-academic importance, through this paper we aim to highlight the value of collaborative ethnography in intra-academic debates. For instance, in this article we argue that the analysis on the effects of two related yet distinct crises by the authors results in a coinciding exploration of racism as a common effect. That conclusion came after constant exchange of insights and the duality of the analytical lens – either in the phase of analysis or theorisation of data. Through that process of exchange and collaboration, our points of intersection complemented the parts of the image that were missing on each distinct topic, synthesising in that way an understanding that was only possible to

be reached through the simultaneous 'oversight' of both topics. Thus, one might argue that what we propose could also be described as 'complimentary ethnographies'.

To conclude, team or collaborative ethnography should not strictly be understood in terms of co-experiencing, co-understanding, co-interpreting and co-writing. The point of 'teaming-up' and collaborating is not the promotion of a 'sameness' that eliminate the positive polyvocality of a field. Rather, the point is to enhance polyvocality, since transparency in terms of different 'eyes' on the field is more important than unity when it comes to research validity. Accordingly, researchers can also learn from each other through collaboration aiming to the production of a 'purer', multi-faced, polyphonic and non-individualistic production of knowledge. As Leary (2007) wisely maintained: 'When we remix...we remake!!!'.

On the economic crisis: the prominence of racism and xenophobia in post-austerity 'mainstream' politics

In 2001, when Greece adopted the single currency as a new Eurozone member, there was an expectancy that the inclusion of Greece to the 'hard core' of the European economies would accelerate the real convergence with the more 'advanced' European countries at both economic and social level. In the years that followed, the economy grew, but not on the basis of a market-oriented productive model that could deliver sustainable progress. Greek society, in accordance with the global trend of overspending and indebtedness,

followed a clear route towards consumption over production and savings, while strongly opposing numerous attempts to change the established structures and practices. However, the blame for the economic catastrophe that followed is surely not merely attributed to the Greek society's preference to overspending, since the already established politico-economic system of Greece was proved to be problematic and equally 'unwelcoming' to structural changes. As mentioned at the introduction of this paper, the five main causes of the Greek sovereign debt crisis as identified in 2010 by the Greek Ministry of Finance were: poor GDP growth, excess government spending and significant rise of budget and trade deficits, insufficiently monitored budget compliance and data credibility.⁹ The consequences of the economic crisis and the consequences of measures and decisions that followed involve a near total collapse in labour income and pensions, high unemployment rates, youth unemployment at the highest levels ever been, public health services unable to operate efficiently, high levels of poverty and almost a double rate in homelessness (see Mavridis 2018). All of the aforementioned socio-economic transformations have numerous implications. However, for the purposes of this paper, we focus on the emergence of a political game of justifying, even motivating, hostile tendencies towards the 'Other'. More precisely, the aim of this section is to present how the economic crisis and its consequences enhanced the prominence and expression of racism and xenophobia in post-austerity 'mainstream' politics.

In combination with the hardships that followed the first bailout programme launched in 2010 by TROIKA, the continuous and rather negative appearance

of the Greek case at international political sceneries as the symptom of an epidemic and an example to avoid, enhanced the feeling of being the problematic Southern counterparts of Europe while being publicly ashamed.¹⁰ The construction of the Greek crisis as a political trope insofar the persuasive 'story seed' (Carrithers 2007 in Knight 2013) it planted, was deployed in the political and everyday dialogue as a potent metaphor for the shocks and hardships experienced by the national population and capitalised on societal anxieties (Bauman 2016). As a result, the Greek political discourse started to change as well. While the negative judgements of the predecessors and previous administrations were still widespread at a national level, concomitantly a number of Greek politicians followed the tactic of othering and they infused the debate with a rhetoric of blaming and opposing 'outsiders' (see Knight 2013). Besides the many accusations directed against the European Union and its formal institutions, Germany, as the number one 'core' European country, stood as a target to oppose to many. For instance, on February of 2010 the former deputy prime minister, Theodoros Pangalos, publicly blamed Germany for the financial crisis while the former mayor of Athens, Nikitas Kaklamanis, openly accused Germany for being indebted to Greece since the Second World War (Knight 2013: 154). As Knight noted, 'the causes [of economic crises] cannot be realistically traced to a single state or political body alone, but blame can be transferred to numerous ambiguous sources where local and global historical narratives have merged (Miller 1995) [...] It is a complex sociohistorical milieu where the distinction between local and global forces and individual and collective responsibility is inevitably

blurred' (Knight 2013: 155). As this political game of 'naming, blaming and shaming' was still at play, especially during election periods, the situation in the Greek political scenery started to get polarised. As indicated from primary data collected for the purposes of Drymioti's doctoral research, any argument in support of the European Union and the endorsed economic measures is regarded as an 'act of betrayal' while any argument against them, bares the risk to be characterised as nationalistic and conservative.

It was during that particular time of rising Euro-scepticism that the far-right political organisation Golden Dawn gained momentum and was presented as the sole defender of the Greek state and pride. As Korre noted:

Golden Dawn has been undertaking the role of 'setting things straight' – espousing an alternative to a widespread European assumption, that the Greek people are inherently corrupted. Their celebration of Greek pride has presented us as a blessed and charismatic nation and is being offered to us as an antidote to our national humiliation (Korre 2016: 40).

In 2012, due to the rhetoric it puts forward largely based on the promotion of a nationalist sentiment, Golden Dawn managed with a 6.92 per cent share of the national vote to officially enter the Greek parliament.¹¹ Since 2009 and the official entry of Greece to the austerity period, the changes occurred at the Greek political scenery were numerous and all of high importance. The reason why we focus on the succession of Golden Dawn is the mere fact that this organisation is

highly known and accused for its link to neo-Nazism. As highlighted by a former parliamentarian interviewed by Gerasopoulos:

Golden dawn, even before we saw it in the parliamentary seats, 'made a buzz'. Even in 2010 and 2011 in Agios Panteleimonas, it did the work of an ant, despite the fact that we, for multiple reasons, were not seeing that, right? [...] In the hard core of the Golden Dawn there are neo-Nazi theories, xenophobia and hate for anything different, and the economic crisis has been their vehicle to rise.¹²

From the aforementioned interview passage one can understand that the racist ideology and the xenophobic attitude of members of Golden Dawn was nothing new for the Greek context (see Dalakoglou 2013; Bampilis 2018). It has been years that this particular group is following a xenophobic and anti-migrant rhetoric – also practically expressed through various violent attacks against their political opponents, immigrants and other 'minority' groups. As Lefkadiou noted: 'since the early 1980s, the party had held a marginal and parasitic position feeding on nationalist hysteria and xenophobic agendas, while engaging in occasional but extreme acts of violence against leftists, LGBTQI persons, minorities and migrants' (2017: 330). However, the emergence of the economic crisis was extremely convenient for Golden Dawn which aimed to construct a political solitude and severance from any 'outsider'. Golden Dawn presented itself as the only authentic voice against austerity politics and the humiliation that followed at an international level. Below a few representative snapshots from the documentary *Golden*

Dawn: A Personal Affair on how voters justified their decision to support the organisation:

‘I am a leftist, but I support Golden Dawn because I don’t have money to buy food... what to do... I even asked people to roll me a cigarette’.

‘I went to Golden Dawn and they gave me food. And if it’s necessary I will go again... because at the municipality you have to provide papers that you are eligible to get from the food they prepare for the poor whereas Golden Dawn only asks for your Identification Card [in order to prove that you are Greek]’.

‘The reason why I became a supporter of Golden Dawn is crisis. The solution should be nationalistic. We don’t need the help of anybody’.¹³

Accordingly, Golden Dawn not merely offered to many citizens the support they could not get through official arrangements as a lure for their vote, but, it also offered to many someone to blame; someone to blame for the situation of their country both outside the borders of Greece (the disrespectful towards the Greek state Europeans) but also inside (the job-stealing immigrants). Even though racist rhetoric and violence was perpetrated by those in Golden Dawn for a long period before the crisis, after the organisation’s succession in parliament, the economic crisis worked as a means to capitalise on xenophobic sentiments and, ultimately, became a tool of legitimation for those who acted upon those sentiments. Similar sentiments were observed to rise in other countries that introduced austerity meas-

ures in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. As reported, in Britain austerity politics are interlinked with ‘forms of institutionally produced of hatred – hatred targeted at migrants and hatred targeted at welfare claimants’ based on a ‘war on benefits culture’ (Burnett 2017: 217). Thus, in times of austerity, the promotion of racism and xenophobia is largely capitalised on economic grounds through the promotion of the claim that ‘we cannot afford them anymore’. Referring to an official announcement found at Golden Dawn’s page: ‘In order to solve the monstrous problem of unemployment, illegal immigrants must be expelled immediately and at the same time re-organize our national production, rejecting the sad policy of the memorandum’.¹⁴ As the president of the Union of Immigrant Workers in Greece noted while commenting on Golden Dawn’s succession, the aftermath of mainstream political parties repeatedly blaming foreign workers for the country’s woes is that ‘then people start to think: that’s why I haven’t got a job’.¹⁵

For many, the succession of Golden Dawn was marked as a misguided and ‘out of anger and frustration’ response to the traditional political system and the inability to effectively respond to the crisis; an argument based on a hope that the succession of Golden Dawn to a parliamentary party was a transient incident that was soon to be over. However, the xenophobic discourse promoted by Golden Dawn was further echoed in mainstream politics by other parties as well – mainly the traditional right-wing parties – probably in an attempt to articulate an anti-immigrant profile that would appeal to the (potentially susceptible to Golden Dawn rhetoric) part of their electorate. To give an example, former Minister of Public Order, Nikos

Dendias, commenting on the 'issue of immigration' and on the operation of the Hellenic Police (EL.AS.) under the code name 'Xenios Zeus' aiming to combat illegal migration, infamously claimed in 2012: 'the country is lost. Since the Dorian descent, 4000 years ago, the country has never taken such a large-scale invasion [...] It is a bomb on the foundations of society and the state'.¹⁶ He further noted that:

The solution to immigration is a national challenge. We are on the verge of collapse. If we do not create a comprehensive immigration management network, we will collapse [...]. We are at risk of a complete transformation of society, immigration may be a bigger problem than the economic one.¹⁷

Through those passages one sees the deconstruction of any ethical or ideological barrier that before the economic crisis kept away from mainstream politics a rhetoric based on xenophobic sentiments and racism. We are not arguing that racist and xenophobic ideologies and attitudes were not present in the socio-political discourses in post-crisis Greece. Per contra, there are various studies proving that the manifested racist and xenophobic ideology was deeply rooted in the Greek society since (at least) the 1990s, mostly directed against Albanian immigrants (see Baldwin-Edwards 2004; Lawrence 2005). What we rather try to highlight, is the legitimisation of such an ideology and rhetoric through the succession of Golden Dawn in the parliament during the years of crisis. A legitimisation based on the negatively presented conjunction of economic crisis and migration did not merely justify for a respectable part of the Greek society the actions

of Golden Dawn, but also normalised any hostile attitude promoted either by other political parties or by the Greek citizens. As Carastathis noted:

From the onset of the economic crisis and the imposition of the socially fragmenting politics of austerity, in hegemonic discourses, migration and the crisis were, generally, related in one of two ways: first, in bluntly xenophobic allegations that migrants have caused, or worsen the crisis in Greece [...] Or, second, that the extension of 'hospitality' to 'them' [...] has become impossible due to scarce resources (2018: 145).

Hailing the victory of an economy that excludes all sacrifices that will not have a return in value allows for no space to the slightest peculiarity or difference. Since the last decade, the economic crisis stands as the pinnacle of 'grievance' for Greek people; and migrants stood as one of the main subjects that this grievance was directed towards and expressed upon. As discussed in this section, the role of 'mainstream' politics was major not only on the construction of such grievance but most importantly on the construction of the subject of its expression. Referring to Rancière, 'grievance is the true measure of otherness' and 'unless it is religious, otherness can only be political' (Rancière 1995: 104). Thus, in this apparatus of fragmented politics of austerity and migration, it seems that racism and xenophobia found the perfect soil to grow; a 'growing' amplified by the politics of austerity introduced in 2010 and, as will be discussed by Gerasopoulos, further enhanced with the politics of migration that followed in 2015.

On the migration crisis: the management of a new crisis through paradoxical negotiations

The vast numbers of individuals that reached Greece daily during 2015 promptly raised the need for regulating, controlling and managing the flows – and, simultaneously, revealed the flaws of the European migration policy nexus. The legal and policy framework of migration eloquently tells the story of asymmetric political and sovereign dynamics in the EU. In the questionably fair process of burden-sharing, Greece found itself in the epicentre of this imbalanced game of responsibility (Gerasopoulos 2018). In the wake of solidarity and amidst several policy impasses, the country – in order to prove its commitment and allegiance to the European Union – was expected to deal with, or magically solve the Gordian knots of, explicitly inefficient systems, such as the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration or the Dublin Convention.¹⁸

However, in that challenging political scenery, laid the possibility to circumvent the dominant relationship between migration and the economic crisis. The migration crisis did not necessarily have to be linked to a worsening of the economic conditions or constitute further proof that hospitality is nearly impossible, as Carastathis argued (2018). On the contrary, the combination of the crisis could prove to be beneficial for the country. Greece attempted to bargain a financial and symbolic gain in exchange for the consequences of its geographical predicament as the European periphery. This process was initiated with the Greek state linking the two crises in its public discourse, emphasising the need for assistance from European bodies in order to

properly deal with the hundreds of thousands of refugees arriving in the Aegean islands. In a way, the refugee ‘crisis’ suddenly became the vessel through which the country claimed its reinstatement in the European apparatus. Such purported reinstatement was articulated in multiple aspects.

From a political perspective, the SYRIZA government utilised the crisis to appeal to the European ideals of solidarity and humanitarianism, painting the image of Greece as a nation which, even in its most challenging times, foregrounds those ideals in theory and praxis – and is, therefore, worthy to be considered as an equally legitimate and included member of the EU.¹⁹ From a cultural perspective – adjacent but still distinct from the political, the Greek people were portrayed as hospitable, welcoming, willing to share their limited resources;²⁰ in short, they enjoyed positive associations, finally escaping (even briefly) their persistent characterisation as lazy, tax-evading, irresponsible money spenders.²¹ Combining the aforementioned two, the existential perspective of inclusion relates to the feelings of redemption, dignity and pride that the Greek people felt entitled to.

An intriguing dynamic is revealed with regards to the socio-political workings described above. As immigrants were traditionally considered the scapegoats for causing unrest and unsettling the peace of a nation state, Greece was similarly scapegoated and accused for the destruction of the ‘European’ state (see also Douzinas 2017). However, the balances in this ‘chain of exclusion’ are rarely rigid. The malleability of the societal and symbolic boundaries (cf. Bail 2008; Lamont and Molnár 2002) became evident in the years of the refugee crisis.²² Besides the political manoeuvres between the Greek

government and the European institutions, the flexibility of the inclusion/exclusion binary was demonstrated in the instrumentalisation of the term ‘refugee’ in public discourse (see Carastathis 2018) – and, therefore, in the arena of anti-austerity negotiations.

As regards this flexibility of inclusion and exclusion, Jock Young, in his seminal work *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference In Late Modernity* (1999), asserted that both processes occur concurrently in the context of postmodern societies. He later coined those societies as ‘bulimic societies’ where ‘massive cultural inclusion is accompanied by systematic structural exclusion’, advocating for their ‘strong centrifugal and centripetal currents’ (Young 2003: 397). These simultaneous absorbing and rejecting mechanisms are traced in the Greek situation if one considers the vast array of institutions that influence the inclusionary processes – the mass media, the labour market, the welfare state or the political system, to name but a few, and ‘each of these institutions is not only a strong advocate of inclusive citizenship, it is also paradoxically the site of exclusion’ (ibid: 397). The interconnected narratives presented in this section certainly seem to follow this pattern. The asymmetric political realm – torn between anthropocentric European ideals and anthropophagic defensive policies, and the insatiable media – flagrantly fluctuating from dramatic refugee stories to fear-mongering reports – have a significant impact in the flexibility of the boundaries of exclusion.

Yet, in this course of bargaining, there are consequences that cannot be disregarded. First and foremost, the refugee crisis is taking shape as a crisis of administrative and bureaucratic character – rather than being perceived and dealt with as a challenge for social inclu-

sion. The authors argue that the discursive and real effects of this misplaced focus constitute the most significant proponent of the current articulation and justification of xenophobia. The governmental choice to spend time and resources on political games while the EU-Turkey deal implementation effectively translates to the entrapment of close to 60,000 migrants in the Greek territory is indicative of a short-sighted political plan. Consequently, the economic crisis – insofar it has become entangled with the refugee crisis – also partakes in this ‘tug-of-war’ of compromises, gains and losses. This managerial approach and its ramifications have been the subject of speculation – more or less pragmatic – for years, but it was rendered quite explicit in 2018. In June 2018, it was rumoured that, within the EU summit between the German chancellor and representatives from several EU countries, Merkel secured ‘agreements from Greece and Spain to take back migrants previously registered in those countries’.²³ Before the summit, Greek media reports were pondering the undertone of reciprocity for these bilateral agreements, especially after the CSU urged the chancellor not to place the issue of financial alleviation for Greece on the negotiation table – which only further sparked the media discourse on the speculation of bargaining.²⁴ Such events clearly indicate the utilisation of the migration crisis in the austerity negotiations both on national and supranational levels. More poignantly, they signify the crystallisation of the unbreakable – yet risky – bond between the two crises in political discourses and public opinion.

Indeed, a perilous consequence of the intersection laid in the granting of financial benefits to the asylum seekers or refugees. More saliently, it laid in the alloca-

tion of financial benefits to migrant population instead of Greek citizens. After the EU–Turkey deal, Greece entered the new reality: the reality of a nation-state that is no longer a transit country but also, at least, a *de facto* final destination. Christopoulos stated that the Greek state never fully grasped its shift from the ‘generous traffic police officer’ to the ‘humble warehouse manager’.²⁵ Christopoulos critically assesses the accommodation and cash schemes implemented by the UNHCR as a ‘dystopic mechanism of institutionalisation’ to the detriment of the refugees’ emancipation from benefits – and eventual independence. But Greek citizens worry little of the country’s complete lack of integration planning. They have found themselves in the most dire of financial circumstances, only to see a number of migrants receive money and housing from a funding mechanism that Greeks have no access or right to. A lawyer, who has experienced the crisis through her work both in Lesbos and Athens, ponders:

Yes, the emergency funding comes for the purpose of coping with a humanitarian crisis. But let me ask you a question now. The financial crisis that Greece experienced, with people losing their homes, with the deaths of homeless people, with the rise in suicide rates... how many people are indebted to banks for not being able to repay their loans, think of all the families that are literally close to living in the streets. Why isn’t this considered a humanitarian crisis? Think of the person who hasn’t got the money to feed their children. Why is it that this person doesn’t meet the standards for humanitarian support... Why wouldn’t a Greek citizen deserve a housing benefit?²⁶

Christopoulos notes that almost five million euros have been channelled in the cash program until July 2018, which is distributed among approximately 50,000 individuals.²⁷ One third of those beneficiaries are families of five members or more. According to the current subsidy scheme, these families are receiving 550 euros per month. Taking under consideration the plummeting of Greek average salaries, such an amount could realistically be the monthly income for a Greek family as well. In early 2017, former Minister of Migration Policy, Giannis Mouzalas, declared that the subsidy for a refugee family shall be one euro less than the corresponding minimum guaranteed income for a Greek family, ‘for symbolic reasons’.²⁸ His intentions might have been pure, but that exact ‘symbolic’ difference serves to bring forward generalised xenophobic tendencies by invoking an ill-considered comparison and underlining the fact that the difference is but minor and symbolic. Conferring a material value to the right of citizenship is already a risky endeavour – especially when the state has derogated that value, in pragmatic and discursive terms, throughout a decade of financial crisis, over-taxation, pension and benefit cuts. Explicitly acknowledging a miniscule superiority of the citizen over the non-citizen in financial terms is not only a slippery slope but a recipe for severe political turmoil.

On theory: claiming identity in 'economically' precarious grounds

An attempt to theorise on the consequences of the intersecting crises in the current moulding of xenophobia should embark from – and maybe result in – a reflection on the Greek rather than on the 'Other'. Namely, 63 per cent of Greek people consider migration from outside Europe to be more of a problem than an opportunity (Eurobarometer 2018).²⁹ Even more, the percentage of Greeks who view migration as an opportunity is at three per cent – by far the lowest among the 28 countries studied (for instance, the respective percentage is 45 per cent for Sweden, 35 per cent for the UK, nine per cent for the traditionally phobic Hungary and six per cent for Italy). We argue that these numbers partly attest to the failures in the management of both the economic and the migration crisis. More poignantly, they attest to the omission of addressing the core challenges of these crises either by providing fragmented, temporary solutions, or by utilising the discourses of the crises interchangeably for political or economic gain. Such poorly guided political choices, which resulted in a discursive – and, ultimately, pragmatic, in financial terms – overlap between economy and migration, influenced the mentality and the perceptions of Greek people towards migration.

Greek people have experienced an unforeseen existential pressure since 2009, with the austerity measures leading to a generalised sense of economic precarity. In that grim social reality, the outcasts who suspect they have reached the bottom experience the discovery of another bottom – whose fate is even more grim – as a realisation that redeems their human dignity and the

remainders of their self-esteem. Migrants have traditionally embodied the symbol of the 'Other' who is 'still more Other than the Others' (Benko 1997: 25). Employing Aesop's tale of the Hares and the Frogs as a potent allegory, Bauman describes the morbid satisfaction that is potentially felt by the precariat at the sight of thousands of refugees at their doorstep.³⁰ As cynical as it may sound, the refugee crisis presented itself as 'a welcome respite from the routine despondency of daily persecution' (2016: 11) of the Greek citizen. These nuances of otherness could explain the coincidence of the recent mass migratory movement with the rising trend in xenophobia, racism and nationalism.

However, as we stipulated, the management of the refugee crisis by SYRIZA as a logistical and administrative problem circumvented and disrupted these, already dangerous, dynamics. In the context of traditionally unequal 'immigrant-native power struggle', the financing of refugees uncomfortably defies dominant perceptions about the position migrants are expected to occupy in a given society (see Pratsinakis 2014). In the bulimic process described above, whatever discursive or real cultural inclusion of migrants came about promptly disappeared once the Greeks became aware that the refugees might face a reality easier than theirs. That awareness provided further proof that Greek citizens are not priority number one, that their needs are not at the top of the political agenda, than – in times of austerity – there is an 'Other' competing for the progressively vanishing resources. Consequently, a vehement process of othering and demonisation that facilitates and justifies violence is set into motion. Young (2003) discerned between the meritocratic notion of distributive justice (built on the principle that

rewards are allocated to merit), and the justice of recognition (based on the belief that a person's identity and social worth is respected). Infringement of the former equals to a form of relative deprivation and violation of the second leads to ontological insecurity (see also Fraser 1997; Young 2001). Amidst intersecting crises, Greece is the *locus* of both these processes that ultimately produce a sense of randomness, 'a chaos of reward and a chaos of identity' (Young 2003: 399). The explosive combination of economic injustice and existential uncertainty manifests in the mobilisation of aggression, as it engenders attempts to secure and harden identity (on any available criterion of distinction) towards the most suitable – or most vulnerable – enemy. This enemy ought to be considered responsible for a large part of our problems and to be perceived as 'intrinsically different' from us (ibid.: 400). Refugee claimants who are the beneficiaries of subsidies allocated to them and not to Greeks are, thus, morphed into the symbolic 'good enemy', as all migrants are becoming essentialised under that label of undeserving, free-loading outsiders in a land of austerity. Such a process of dehumanisation, Young stresses, provides a major technique for neutralising the use of violence, as 'unfairness provides a rationalization for violence' and 'dehumanization permits it' (ibid.: 403).

Amidst this academic dialogue, we argue that the relational dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, bordering and ontological security (representing a sort of collection of components) should be placed under the very grounded and very real lens of an egocentric, financial precarity of the Greeks (to be seen as a figurative resultant) that mainly concerns the self – rather than the 'Other'. In that sense, we focus not on the

'national subject' (Carastathis 2018: 14) but on the impoverished citizen-turned-denizen, who saw the advantages of possessing citizenship or nationality materially undervalued and the foreign figure of the non-citizen taking precedence. That foreign figure is, of course, not fully consolidating the vast array of the Greeks' hostile tendencies. Indeed, blame is regularly directed towards the authoritarian external Others, such as the EU or ΤΡΟΙΚΑ, for forcing austerity, but also towards the Others within – the corrupt politicians who dance to the tune of foreign demands (Knight 2013: 150). Accordingly, it is conceivable that Western interference has stirred and will continue to stir anti-globalisation sentiments, resulting in a degree of resistance to cosmopolitanism as a political undertaking (Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2010; Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018). However, while the symbols of the state and the supra-national institutions – politicians, European technocrats, public property or the parliament building itself – are indeed enemies, they are fairly less accessible than the asylum seekers living next door, frequenting in the neighbourhood square and buying their groceries (with money they were awarded 'just' for being asylum seekers) from the same local store. Therefore, the battle of reclaiming what is left of a wavering identity is an individual struggle, performed on the arena of mundane circumstances – in city streets, buses and trains. Our emphasis is, thus, put on the Greek citizens and the lengths they might go to in order to claim what they consider to be rightfully theirs. That is exactly why the tale of the financial benefits is an eloquent one: the concept of money – or the lack thereof – is a palpable manifestation of what is at stake in the comparison between the Greek and the

'Other'. In the realm of xenophobic and racist narratives, money is both the façade and the essence, the justification and the sensible reaction.

Finally, a point to be stressed is the notion of individualism in this egocentric precarity hinted above – and its interconnectedness with the 'identity wars' (Young 2003) currently taking place. The contemporary Greek is abandoned to his or her own devices and scarce, individual resources, that are 'all too often found sorely inadequately – or feared soon to be found as such' (Bauman 2016: 59). The citizen is but an individual attempting to construct a sense and a narrative of self-worth and dignity. But the more these attempts prove futile, the more agonising becomes the effort to assert some sort of superiority over the migrant subject.

Superiority has been the cornerstone of racist sentiments. In the past years, research has indicated that, in the Greek case, superiority has been articulated as cultural intolerance towards the perceived 'intrinsic' cultural features of the 'Others' (see indicatively Triandafyllidou and Kouki 2013), or as boundaries, rigidly separating Greeks – those of 'common ancestry, tradition and religion' (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009: 962) – from non-Greeks. As the correlation and intersection of the economic and the migration crisis progressively becomes more and more explicit in public discourse, the understanding of superiority – and hence the experience and articulation of racism – is largely framed in economic terms. But what happens when that expected financial superiority is not supported by reality? Young (2003) predicted that an existential pressure would lead to a narcissism of minor differences. Yet, recent changes and developments create uncertainty over – or even refute – these narcissistic,

minor differences. In the example of the financial benefits, these differences are virtually non-existent. Namely, the government negated the Greek citizens' feeble feeling of superiority and deprived them even of their, admittedly trivial or mean, opportunity to revel in the otherness of the newly settled migrants. If neither nationality nor citizenship can provide an existential refuge of certainty, then the only alternative is a war of identities – both discursive and material – in a constant attempt to reclaim what the Greeks feel was wrongfully lost and rightfully theirs.

Coming back to the words of A., racism has been articulated as a division between those who have money and those who have not. In Rancière's terms, the economic crisis stands as the pinnacle of 'grievance' for Greek people (1995). Grievance provides the 'true measure for otherness' (ibid.: 104), the filter through which the Greek people perceive threat. As suggested, the subject of this grievance has progressively been the economic immigrant, the refugee, the migrant from outside EU, the poor, destitute outsider. And it is the passionate attempt for the dissolution of said subject that 'creates a wordless victim, object of an unquenchable hatred' (ibid.: 105). In that sense, we argue that the fear over the 'strangers' that will claim non-existent jobs and antagonize the Greeks' claim on scarce welfare has left the realm of xenophobia and has been gradually embedded in the very notion of racism. A racism based on economic capacity, founded on a political narrative that consistently sought to inextricably bind migration with economy.

Conclusion

The methodological and analytical collaboration between the authors allowed for the analysis to explore the Greek context from multiple perspectives and holistically grasp the context dynamics. The result of this collaboration culminates in a common theorisation on the contemporary configuration of racism and xenophobia as an experience heavily influenced not only by fear or unwillingness to co-exist with the ‘Other’ but by the discourses that link the processes of the economic with the migration crisis.

The analysis presented in this paper is built on two tenets. We started our discussion reflecting on how the economic crisis was an intensifying factor of the precarity of inclusion-exclusion at both national and international grounds. Our main argument was that gradually, xenophobia and racism sought its justifications in the economic crisis and vice versa, having as a main means of ‘communicating’ hostile attitudes the rise of far-right and nationalist ideologies in mainstream politics. The emergence of the refugee crisis demonstrated how the remnants of trust and certainty are wavered when a second crisis becomes a reality. Our point of departure was that the interrelation between the financial and the migration crisis amounts to much more than the sum of its parts. More specifically, the combination of our analyses showcased that the current articulation of racism does not only relate to the scarcity of jobs and limited benefits due to the economic recession and the increased influx of ‘Others’ brought about by the migration crisis. Rather the political discourses of the last decade, as we argued in our theoretical

section, have morphed both these processes into one perplexed narrative of uncertainty and hostility.

The final point of connection we established, which is the rise in xenophobia due to the granting of benefits to refugees rather than Greeks, has not yet been expressed in incidents of racist violence of such *mens rea* – as far as we know. This contribution, thus, is putting emphasis in the dangerous imbalances that are created through an ill-advised, short-sighted system of management by a government who acts as if temporary solutions of outsourcing – with significant political and economic cost, whatsoever – can be stretched in perpetuity. The particularity of the Greek context, a point of academic interest and social concern alike, is that, even though incidents of racist violence have been decreasing since 2014, the underpinnings of racism have been built in the period prior to 2014 – and the consequences of the intersecting crises become more and more visible every day. The proliferation of xenophobic discourses – spread as shown, along a significant part of the political spectrum – that legitimated the racist acts of Golden Dawn supporters are still holding strong in Greek society, eager to find new narratives and techniques of rationalisation on which they can capitalise.

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Notes

- 1 A. = respondent, V = Vassilis Gerasopoulos.
- 2 Member of the Greek Migrant Forum, interview on 19 July 2018.
- 3 For more detailed information, see the report *Stability and Growth Program 2010* published in 2010 by the Greek Ministry of Finance retrievable at http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/economic_governance/sgp/pdf/20_scps/2009-10/01_programme/el_2010-01-15_sp_en.pdf.
- 4 *The Guardian*, 18 June 2012, retrievable at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/18/greece-far-right-golden-dawn>.
- 5 For more data and statistics on arrivals see <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179> or <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/3/56e9821b6/million-refugees-travel-greece-since-2015.html>. For a brief review of the *EU-Turkey Joint Declaration*, see *DW*, 18 March 2018, retrievable at <https://www.dw.com/en/the-eu-turkey-refugee-agreement-a-review/a-43028295>. For a more critical perspective on the joint declaration, see: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/paradox-eu-turkey-refugee-deal>.
- 6 Former Deputy Minister of Immigration Policy Tasia Christodouloupoulou in *The Guardian*, 18 August 2015, retrievable at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2015/aug/18/greek-island-leros-europe-migrant-crisis-video>.
- 7 *Common Sessions of the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology*.
- 8 In recent years, in major anthropological journals, there has been a growing call for collaborative research in an endeavour to further promote 'public' and 'activist criminology'.
- 9 See note three.
- 10 TROIKA is a committee consisting of the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund, formed to provide financial support and guidance to the Eurozone members mostly struck by the Financial Crisis of 2008.
- 11 See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/18/greece-far-right-golden-dawn>.
- 12 Former parliamentarian, interview on 26 July 2018.
- 13 See <https://goldendawnpersonalaffair.com/>.
- 14 *Xrysh Aygh*, 31 August 2012, retrievable at <http://www.xrysh-aygh.com/deltiatypou/view/oi-luseis-ths-chrushs-aughs-gia-thn-anergia>.
- 15 *The Guardian*, 18 June 2012, retrievable at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/18/greece-far-right-golden-dawn>.
- 16 *To Vima*, 1 July 2013, retrievable at <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=520357>.
- 17 *To Vima*, 1 July 2013, retrievable at <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=520357>.
- 18 The Dublin Regulation – firstly introduced in 2003 – establishes the member state responsible for the examination of an asylum application. Amidst criticism over the unfair burden imposed on countries of the European periphery (as the regulation indicates that the country of first entry is responsible for handling the application), the Dublin Regulation has been repeatedly reformed. Currently, Dublin III (Regulation No. 604/2013) is in effect, while a further reform (Dublin IV) is proposed. See also https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en.
- 19 SYRIZA, an abbreviation for the Coalition of the Radical Left in Greek, is a political party founded in 2004. Since 2015, it is the largest party in the Greek parliament after receiving 36% of the votes in January's national elections. See also: <https://www.syriza.gr/page/who-we-are.html>.

- 20 In late 2016, the Greek Prime Minister was stating that ‘No matter the fiscal surplus that some countries might achieve, they could never achieve the “surplus” of soul achieved by the Greek people’ (our translation). *I Avgi*, 22 December 2016, retrievable at <http://www.avgi.gr/article/10842/7758945/altsipras-anoigoume-ten-ankalia-mas-stous-prosphyges-megalo-to-pleonasma-psyches-tou-ellenikou-laou>.
- 21 Such narratives are however still strong and prevalent as they are reproduced even by those in the higher echelons of European institutions, see indicatively Dijsselbloem’s comments in *I News*, 21 March 2017, retrievable at <https://inews.co.uk/news/world/jeroen-dijsselbloem-southern-europeans-spent-money-drinks-women/>.
- 22 Symbolic boundaries can be understood as ‘conceptual distinctions made by social actors [that] separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership’ (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 168).
- 23 *Independent*, 30 June 2018, retrievable at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-eu-migration-angela-merkel-asylum-seekers-refugees-christian-democratic-union-a8424686.html>.
- 24 *Protagon*, 21 June 2018, retrievable at <https://www.protagon.gr/epikairota/44341643152-44341643152>.
- 25 *Tovima*, 21 July 2018, retrievable at <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=1006415>.
- 26 NGO worker, interview on 13 June 2018.
- 27 *Tovima*, 21 July 2018, retrievable at <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=1006415>.
- 28 *Kathimerini*, 2 January 2017, retrievable at <http://www.kathimerini.gr/890084/article/epikairothta/ellada/moyzalas-apoton-martio-to-voh8hma-stoys-prosphyges>.

- 29 *Special Eurobarometer 469: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union*, retrievable at https://Ec.Europa.Eu/Home-Affairs/News/Results-Special-Eurobarometer-Integration-Immigrants-European-Union_En.
- 30 See <http://www.taleswithmorals.com/aesop-fable-the-hares-and-the-frogs.htm>.

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