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ARTICLE



## Refugees in Greece: the Greeks as 'refugees'

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### ABSTRACT

The state of economic emergency under which Greece has been put for the past eight years throws into relief the basic antinomy inherent in democracy. This pertains to the exercise of national sovereignty on the basis of borders whose safeguarding, however, implements a network of state practices of control and selection of populations both 'within' and 'outside'. In Greece, under the memoranda imposed by the Tetroika (involving four institutions: IMF, ECB, ESM and EC, not three as in Troika), extreme austerity has created 'superfluous' populations within their own country. The internal shifting of the borders that produces exclusion, sustained by parliamentary dictates and intense supervision because of the Tetroika's policies at the national level, goes along with the stiffening of external border control by the state in a strategy of deterrence against the entry of war refugees into the country. At the same time, the regulation of 'superfluous' refugee populations replicates the biopolitical model of EU governance introduced to the national 'body'. Therefore, the Greek radical Left has to demonstrate that both dispossessed Greek subjects and refugees are victims of globalized capitalism, distance itself from humanitarianism and politicize solidarity by creating the terms for a common struggle.

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### Introduction: the Greek case

Since 2007, as a result of the memoranda imposed by the Tetroika on Greece (involving four institutions: IMF, ECB, ESM and EC, not three as in Troika), state policies of internal devaluation and extreme austerity brought about the shrinking of the Greek economy to a level lower than that of Germany's during 1913–1920 (Laskos and Papadatos-Anagnostopoulos 2016, 22) and a humanitarian crisis unprecedented for a European country. Greece's economic demise and the abolition of popular sovereignty ignited a popular radicalism which brought down all the memoranda governments and made the lack of political representation a central issue for the first time since the Second World War. The people en masse no longer recognized in the old parties of the Greek oligarchy the moral and political right to represent them and, by consequence, the dual-party system consisting of the right-wing and social democratic parties was fundamentally delegitimized. This systemic crisis was produced by an intense class struggle between

the impoverished majority and the memoranda forces as well as their political representatives in the government. At this historical conjuncture, Syriza has managed to express the radical demand for Greece to be released from the bonds of severe austerity and for its people to regain their dignity. In January 2015, it was elected as the first Leftist government in Greek history.

Before the elections, Syriza had warned that the memoranda introduced not just a series of painful measures, but a monolithic and rigorous programme of extracting power and wealth from the working classes and shifting them to the rich. Strategies of profound redistribution of wealth are the case in the vast majority of major capitalist crises, but in post-memoranda Greece they are implemented in the context of a peculiar state of exception. This does not take the form of general measures that suspend the judiciary and affect the constitutional order. Neither does it produce a space – as suggested by Butler (2006, 67) in reference to Giorgio Agamben's well-known notion – where 'certain subjects undergo a suspension of their ontological status as subjects when states of emergency are invoked'. Instead, it is imposed by the emergency powers of 'the sovereign', the Tetroika, which targets the vast majority of the Greek population at all levels. In fact, the memoranda serves the needs of the most aggressive sections of capital, such as hedge funds, monetary financial institutions and others, while at the same time, the indigenous capitalists profit from the large-scale deregulation of the labour market.

It is the Tetroika that regulates an excessive debt crisis that amounts to 179% of the GNP (a level which has been recognized as non-viable even by the IMF), by depriving the government of fiscal policies. At the same time, it enforces on parliament a series of radical measures that target labour rights and introduce structural reforms at the level of the state in support of a violent and unprecedented redistribution of wealth. The extreme austerity and its dialectically related abolition of popular sovereignty are politically 'legitimized' by the debtors' argument that Greece's case can only be treated as an exception to 'the EU precedent', legal, social and economic, because of the Greek state's unreliability and disreputability. In the context of Greece's 'failed state' status within the EU, the memoranda are deployed on the basis of the specific state of economic emergency. At the same time however, as will be shown, they represent an extreme paradigm of governmentality that inheres in neoliberalism, which is experimentally imposed on a nation-state that has been jettisoned from the European boundaries demarcating 'normality'. They are essentially a meticulous reorganization of specific class interests on an everyday level in the guise of the common interest (Stavrou 2016, 216), effected by complex mechanisms of constant supervision and accountability; in brief, the memoranda signify the loss of popular sovereignty and the rise of neoliberal governmentality.

After six months in office and the signing of the third memoranda in July 2015, Syriza's political transmutation into yet another memoranda party is evidenced by its economic and social policies that implement the EU's model of biopolitical governmentality, insofar as they methodically restructure and regulate the populations on the Greek land (Stavrou 2015). On the other hand, Syriza in power makes a consistent though unconvincing effort to maintain the semblance of its original Leftist ideological characteristics centring on human rights and individual liberties which, along with its initial anti-memoranda stance, had formed its emancipatory agenda. Central to that was

its anti-racist and pro-immigrant ideological opposition to and fight against the right-wing's clearly xenophobic rhetoric and policies, and Golden Dawn's neo-Nazism.

The Syriza government showcases its humanitarianism by receiving a great number of refugees primarily from Syria and by juxtaposing this to the refusal of countries such as Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria and Slovakia to admit a single refugee into their territories. However, after the EU agreement with Turkey (March 2016), whose purpose is to end 'irregular migration' by removing the incentive for refugees to seek 'irregular' routes to the EU, Greece has turned into the EU's external border. Having fully accepted the EU's inhumane logic, Syriza's government enforces the harsh model of regulation, control and segregation of refugee populations, the logic of which ironically reproduces precisely the biopolitics imposed on the Greeks by the EU austerity agenda.

For the Greek radical Left, however, and irrespective of the current stagnation into which it has fallen, the refugee issue has to be problematized in depth. The great number of refugees arriving and staying in the country poses a formidable, unprecedented challenge which is present on several levels, all of them inextricably interwoven. I name only a few of them: dramatic geopolitical changes in the eastern Mediterranean; the issue of borders and Greece's assigned position as the EU's external frontier; the presence of thousands of refugees and the uncertain duration of their stay; as well as the country's pauperization and loss of popular sovereignty. At the same time, this dramatic situation poses a great challenge to the trajectory of the international radical Left insofar as the Greek paradigm starkly showcases the shifting and slippery ground upon which such issues as migration and political integration are to be tackled. More specifically, the radical Left is called on to perform the difficult task of negotiating its Marxian categories of critical analysis predicated on class, class conflict, labour and relations of production with a new theoretical agenda that might reconsider these basic notions in the light of the multiple cultural identities generated by globalized capitalism. The question is often posed in terms of a categorical (and facile) 'either-or', which signifies that either one sticks to what is usually perceived as economic reductionism or relinquishes the notions of class and production altogether for that of identities. However, the crux of the matter lies in the dialogue that the radical Left should initiate over the reconsideration of staple analytical categories including those that pertain to identity politics in a project that would be at once theoretically revitalizing and politically effective.

### **How not to approach the issue of immigration**

The presence of refugees and immigrants, that is, 'aliens', in a country offers a privileged terrain for the (re-)examination in-depth of the radical Left's politics because it severely tests certain myths or fixations which have been constitutive of its ideological identity for the past decades. These fixations derive from an indisputably correct rejection of nationalism because of its genealogical, and therefore intrinsic, associations with racism. This nonetheless tends either to denigrate or entirely expel from its ideological discourse the long-ingrained and resilient notion of national identity as fundamental 'belonging'. The complex interrelationship between nationalism and racism cannot be exhausted here, but it suffices to refer to 'the circumstances in which the nation-states, established

upon historically contested *territories*, have striven to control *population* movements, and to the very production of the “people” as a political community taking precedence over class divisions’ (Balibar [1991] 2002a, 48). The question that the radical Left has to pose to itself is whether and how one can disentangle ‘national belonging’ from the aggravating and problematic twin notions of nationalism and racism, especially since the nation-state produces ‘the people’ in a systematic manner through a variety of institutions and material practices. These constitute for each individual multiple, though not necessarily non-contradictory, positionalities (racial, economic, political, religious, linguistic, cultural, etc.) which coalesce in a common national identity.

For at least three decades, the nation as a problem was considered in the context of the influential idea of ‘the imagined community’, where, in its largely erroneous version, ‘imagined’ was misconstrued as ‘fake’, and became a post-modern orthodoxy that was however debunked by the resurgence of nationalisms especially in the Balkans, ignited by the war in former Yugoslavia. The notion of the imagined community was particularly appealing to the radical Left in its quest for a new ideological identity that would fill the gap left by the collapse of communism. It has been part of the search for a new subject of emancipation, which could no longer be interpellated as the international proletariat and thereby remains undefined. This *aporia* has generated a rich problematic as to what the new subject(s) of change is (are), after the working class ceased to function as the agent of the historical process (Keucheyan 2017, 289–423), and where the new sites of struggle could be located. Could both agents and sites be found in strategies of ‘localizing resistance’ around issues of everyday life, as, for example, David Harvey suggests? By underscoring Marx’s view of capital ‘as the contradictory unity between production and realization’ of value, he considers ‘the conditions of realization ... just as important as the conditions of production’: ‘class struggles over realization – over affordable housing, for example – are just as significant for the working class as struggles of wages and work conditions’ (Harvey 2015, 89). But this begs the question of what constitutes the working class today since that class which ‘traditionally’ the Left addresses primarily in terms of its position in production is perishing, at least in its Fordist paradigm. On the basis of the US experience, which registers a major shift from the industrial labour of the 1970s to the service sector (McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Walmart) that employs the working class today, Harvey (2015) argues: ‘The proletariat did not disappear, but there is a new proletariat which has very different characteristics from the traditional one the Left used to identify as the vanguard of the working class. In this sense, the McDonalds workers became the steel workers of the twenty-first century’. Harvey’s position is characteristic of productive ways of addressing the perennial problem of where the new proletariat can be ‘found’. However, the working class in ‘the service sector’ is only part of huge global enterprises that are deployed in new information technologies, biotechnology, robotics, etc. Furthermore, it does not solve the problem of from what position and how the Left could interpellate ‘deterritorialized labour, let alone organize it in the crucial absence of the factory’s concrete territoriality; this he himself (2015) also admits but in different terms: ‘the Left is not comfortable with the idea of organizing fast-food workers’.

The *aporia* remains, and as a result of this, the radical Left cannot construct a coherent ideological identity, but it does so in a 'negative' manner through the addition of the prefix 'anti' to a number of qualifications (anti-nationalist, anti-racist, anti-neoliberal, etc.). Ecumenical appeals of the kind 'proletarians of the world unite', and demands of catholic emancipation from exploitation, expressive of a different historical conjuncture and the general defeat of the Left have been cast away since the rise of identity politics in the US in the 1980s. It was then that one witnessed 'a general "re-codification"' of the social world in terms of identities (Brubaker as quoted in Keucheyan 2017, 49, my trans.), constitutive of post-modern ideological hegemony consisting of particularist and identitarianist discourses. It is indisputable that the 'moral panic' caused by the coexistence of people with a different cultural background that ignited the rise of the far right internationally is attributed to the 'liberal multiculturalists and Leftists', accused of ignoring 'natural' differences (Mishra 2017, 5). But if the Left focuses only on particularism as tantamount to universalism, extracting it from the general issue of inequality, the weakening of the welfare state and increasing precarity, then it is bound to be entrapped in the enemy's game. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999, 41) are very clear on this point: 'Cultural imperialism rests on the power to universalize particularisms linked to a singular historical tradition by causing them to be misrecognized as such'. They argue that 'the neutralization of the historical context' that results from the underplay or downright erasure of the 'originating historical conditions' of terms such as multiculturalism produces their 'apparent universalization' via the global circulation of texts and insistent media repetition (1999, 41– 42). What this 'apparent universalization' masks is that the recognition of collective identities has been specific to the historical conditions that generate them and, most importantly, it has always been the site of struggle. Not accidentally they see the above phenomenon as intrinsically connected with globalization:

We would need here also to analyse, in all of its presuppositions and implications, the strongly polysemic notion of 'globalization' which has the effect, if not the function, of submerging the effects of imperialism in cultural ecumenism or economic fatalism and of making transnational relationships of power appear as a neutral necessity. (1999, 42)

In the case of the nation, the flagrant dismissal of the complexities and the historical depth of the individual's interpellation in terms of his/her national belonging derives from the erroneous assumption that the imagined community, which the nation is posited to be, is unreal. In reality, as Etienne Balibar ([1991] 2002b) points out, 'only imaginary communities are real', since the populations in the nation-state 'are ethnicized – that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcend individuals and social conditions' (2002, 96). Likewise, in his Lacanian approach to the nation, Žižek (2002, 350) is downright dismissive of 'the discursive idealism' of terms such as that of the 'imagined community', by emphasizing *jouissance* as constitutive of the nation, which is materialized in specific social practices and afforded by the national myths that have constructed them. His argument is that the deconstructive emphasis on the nation as non-biological or non-transhistorical, that is, a mere discursive construct, constitutes a basic misrecognition of the specific non-discursive kernel of the *jouissance* it offers, the sine qua non for its ontological existence.

The dismissal of national belonging as a deeply reactionary idea is performed in the name of the Other, the embracing of which emerges as a politically radical alternative to national 'sameness'. While theorizing the complexity and contradictions inherent in otherness, this dismissal frequently results in its own subsuming under a basically essentialist appeal to a human nature common to all people in its various cultural manifestations, or rather irrespective of them. Butler (2006) alerts us to the dangers of this assumption when she draws attention to the need to interrogate 'human nature', especially when confronted with cases that seem to fall outside its prevalent definition (for example, terrorism). Her invaluable point is that when considering human rights, we always have to rethink the human every time its 'putative universality' is in effect disproved (2006, 91). The painful but necessary problematization of what constitutes the human is an urgent task for a Left prone to succumb to the moralism which for the past decades has dominated the terms in which the political is formulated and perceived. The invocation of the values of freedom, equal rights, recognition and respect of 'otherness', considered outside the specific forms of social conflict and theories of exploitation, simply depoliticizes the problem of political power. It turns them into a moral issue and/or a critique of deleterious aspects of neoliberalism within, however, its own terms insofar as its radical subversion is not possible. This also applies to the notion of human rights which 'can reclaim their redemptive role in the hands ... of those who return them to the tradition of resistance and struggle against the advice of the preachers of moralism, suffering humanity and humanitarian philanthropy' (Douzinas 2007, 293). But is this not essentially the idealist myth of bourgeois humanism that the radical Left is supposed to deconstruct? Therefore, slipping into a moralism that derives from a humanitarian empathy with the suffering of others brings Leftist sensitivities dangerously close to adopting a charitable attitude to the problem which is posed by the presence of the Other, the immigrant, and the refugee in one's country; the problem is acutely political and should be treated as such, as I hope to demonstrate later.

Leftist moralism and humanitarianism have not solved the problem of the presence of immigrants, refugees and the various religious and ethnic minorities, as has been apparent in the past decades in Europe. Part of it pertains to the unproblematic relegation to the right of the people's need to belong in a national group as a constitutive category of experience. The increasing influence and popularity of a xenophobic and nationalist far right among the most powerful EU countries, such as Holland, France and Germany, has gained significant electoral support, or in others (Hungary) is in power, the election of Trump, and that section of Brexit which is right-oriented have dramatically shifted the agenda to the right. The reasons for this shift are numerous, complex and multi-faceted, and, therefore, they cannot be exhausted here. What needs to be pointed out, however, is that they could be found in the amalgam that basically consists of economic austerity, unemployment, the crisis of political legitimacy of supra-national formations and their institutions such as, for example, the EU, and xenophobia (the original etymology of this Greek word is the fear of the stranger). As the collapse of the French CP and the considerable fleeing of voters from Die Linke to AfD have dramatically shown, the working classes re-construct consciousness and shift allegiance from class to national belonging and bonding, which they deem protective of their threatened way of life. As Žižek (2015) makes emphatically clear,

[o]ne of the great Left taboos will have to be broken here: the notion that the protection of one's specific way of life is in itself a proto-Fascist or racist category. If we don't abandon this notion, we open up the way for the anti-immigrant wave which thrives all around Europe. ... Addressing concerns of ordinary people about the threats to their specific way of life can be done also from the Left. Bernie Sanders is a living proof of that! The true threat to our communal ways of life are not foreigners but the dynamic of global capitalism.

The radical Left's double bind is that, on the one hand, in welcoming and fighting for the rights of 'the foreigners', it alienates those classes (workers, unemployed, dispossessed, etc.) which it still addresses, and consigns them to extreme right-wing populist or neo-fascist ideologies and/or political representations. The current massive migration is a twofold phenomenon for the economically developed countries, to which the flow of both economic migrants and refugees is directed, that introduces a major social divide. For the entrepreneurial block, the flow of cheap labour is a beneficial situation. But for the depressed mass of a workforce, which already suffers from job precarity and psychological insecurity, it intensifies the competition on the labour market (Bauman 2015). The game will be lost for the radical Left if it addresses the workers, who are already victimized by neoliberal economy, or city populations, who feel threatened by denizens and 'foreigners', on the basis of a moral duty to include the dispossessed and the excluded in their lives. The post-modern notion of democratic pluralism has already anticipated the 'inclusion' of the Other in a hegemonic manner. The predominant liberal notion of democracy, as Žižek (2009, 55) forcefully comments,

focuses on their inclusion, as minority voices. All positions should be heard, all interests taken into account, the human rights of everyone guaranteed, all ways of life, cultures and practices respected, and so on. ... What gets lost in this is the position of universality embodied in the excluded.

I take it that 'the position of universality' to which he refers is common to both the overwhelming majority of the 'included' and the 'excluded', and is constituted by exploitation. The only way out of this impasse is a common struggle against the world of globalized capitalism in which only commodities circulate while the masses are either excluded or at best rarely enjoy the freedom of movement. However, this presupposes a clear understanding that 'the unified world' of globalization concerns goods and not human beings; in fact, it is a 'sham' as 'the conditions faced by workers from other countries provide living proof' (Badiou 2008, 38). Steering away from possible ideological taboos, the radical Left has to confront the issue that not only have the relations of production radically changed to the detriment of the labour force but also that neoliberal hegemony has consistently worked its way through political institutions, bodies and ideologies, affecting individual and collective consciousness at their deepest. The question is, therefore, how and on what grounds this common struggle could be deployed.

### **The refugee state of being is endemic to neoliberalism**

According to Kristeva (2004, 57), 'foreigner' is an essentially legal term designating a person who is deprived of the citizenship of the country where she/he resides. Citizenship psychologically inscribes the 'naturalness' of belonging in a nation-state whose limits have been internalized by the citizens to such an extent as to consider

natural that there are foreigners, that is, human beings who have no equal rights (Kristeva 2004, 133), insofar as the 'egalitarian' state affords equality as a result of nationality (Balibar ([1991] 2002a), 49 – 50). Citizenship provides the legal ways to regulate the 'dark' feelings caused by the presence and penetration of the Other into a homogeneous group, and who, in turn, flaunts his/her position of otherness/difference from sameness as a mark of separate identity (Kristeva 2004, 57– 58). At the same time, however, the condition of foreignness triggers the desire for citizenship. But the question is what kind of citizenship? As has become obvious from refugees in southern Italy who do not want to stay there but to move mostly to Scandinavian countries, and those in Greece who consider it a route mainly to Germany, the desire for citizenship is dependent on the expectation that the foreign country can offer them a better standard of living, and not just this. There is a dream of a whole package of a future life in 'dreamlands rich in opportunities' (Bauman 2015), in 'idealized' EU countries which are, ironically, out of reach for most Europeans: 'precisely when people find themselves in poverty, distress and danger, and one would expect that they would be satisfied by a minimum of safety and well-being, the absolute utopia explodes. The hard lesson for the refugees is that "there is no Norway," even in Norway' (Žižek 2015). So, in pauperized states like Greece the refugees are trapped in a double bind: on the one hand, they are forced to stay for an indefinite period of time in a country inhabited by a depressed majority while, on the other, their presence conjures up the fear that they would demand Greek citizenship. Therefore, the perspective of becoming a citizen of a foreign country, even if it is an imaginary possibility, cannot be easily tackled if the potency of the nation-state is not taken into consideration. How can we speak of human rights, or the right to rights, outside the nation-state which, although declining as a result of globalized capitalism, is still as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues the locus of 'the abstract political structure' (Butler and Spivak 2007, 76). Is the disentangling of the notion of the refugee from that of the stateless foreigner in transit – that is, its deterritorialization and its relocation within the zones of economic deprivation inhabited by depressed nationals *within* the nation-states – a useful idea for the radical Left? And if so, what does the Greek condition under the memoranda teach us about refugees in Greece and the Greeks as 'refugees'?

In her critique of Arendt's identification of statelessness with the figure of the refugee, Butler (Butler and Spivak 2007, 17) argues that statelessness is possible within the state which, by enforcing the legal definitions of belonging via citizenship, not only includes but also excludes. In fact, it expels by containing 'within the polis as its interiorized outside' (2007, 16) categories of people, prisoners, illegal immigrants, etc., precisely by producing their 'statelessness'. At the same time, as Balibar (2004, 76) forcefully argues, citizenship always inscribes inequalities (class, economic, cultural and sexual) because its '*founding moment*' is precisely '*the practical confrontation with the different modalities of exclusion* (social, and thus political, for the two notions have never truly been separate)'.

Even so, the principle of exclusion by the state is still and predominantly identified with the (external) borders which designate the territories where national sovereignty is exercised and institutional violence is exerted. For the Greek radical Left, it is urgent to dissociate citizenship from territoriality so as to demarcate a common political space that pauperized and dispossessed Greeks could share with the war refugees and immigrants. Such an objective would expose the antinomy inherent in democracy,

namely, that borders are ‘the *absolutely nondemocratic*, or “discretionary,” *condition of democratic institutions*’ (Balibar 2004, 109) while, at the same time, relocating, and thus radicalizing, this antinomy inside the nation-state. What if institutional violence is not exerted only on the refugees through the institution of borders but also on the majority of the Greek people through extreme austerity policies? Is it possible to equate the victims of war and those of a harsh neoliberal complex of economic, political and social dictates? Such an equation may not be equally legitimate from an ethical and pragmatic point of view. However, a common terrain emerges, which is purely political and could contribute towards the construction of a shared identity: both are the victims of globalized capitalism and are equally subjected to state biopolitics. Civil rights are inconceivable outside the right to employment and, more importantly, to decent employment. If this right is violated, statelessness can be a condition of being within one’s own country. Butler points out that ‘the jettisoned life, the one both expelled and contained, [is] saturated with power precisely at the moment in which it is deprived of citizenship’ through ‘complex modes of governmentality’ (Butler and Spivak 2007, 40). Therefore unemployment, poverty and dispossession in Greece produce ‘jettisoned’ lives, that is, populations which, saturated with neoliberal economics of absolute austerity, in effect have lost their capacity as citizens to enjoy fundamental rights. This loss may not be the same as the lack of all rights that describes the refugee situation, but unemployment and extreme poverty more often than not feed xenophobia and racism. Greece is not the exception to the rule of many Europeans’ return to the nation’s genealogical comfort and security, as the rise of the Golden Dawn has shown in the past. Therefore, the stake for the Greek radical Left is to show that, in practice, differences between pauperized Greeks and refugees and denizens are essentially insignificant and could collapse to the degree that dispossession produces a new ‘people’ that could found a non-national community. Its bonding and solidarity will not originate in a common genealogical belonging but may be generated by a common fight against neoliberal capitalism.

Talking of neoliberalism, Foucault (2010, 206) argues that insofar as full employment is renounced as an objective

[a] society formalized on the model of the enterprise ... will be possible above the threshold, and there will be simply a minimum security, that is to say, the nullification of certain risks on the basis of a low level threshold. That is to say, there will be a population which, from the point of view of the economic baseline, will be ... a kind of infra- and supra-liminal floating population, a liminal population which ... will be a constant reserve of manpower which can be drawn on if need be, but which can also be returned to its assisted status if necessary.

Since 1979, when these lines were written, there has been an acute crisis of social reproduction – the capitalists, who own the means of production, may choose to destroy them if they fail to function as capital, that is, produce the desired profit. By the same token, they destroy the conditions for the social reproduction of the dominated classes by generating superfluous populations because of their permanent exclusion from the labour market. And this is the major difference from the labour reserve, a feature of capitalist normality in which floating populations are produced by economic fluctuations (Ioakeimoglou 2016). In Greece, for the last seven years since the

implementation of memoranda, the GNP has dropped by 30% and, as a result of extreme austerity policies, public expenditures and investments have shrunk by 33%. These policies have resulted in the creation of superfluous populations consisting of pensioners, unemployed and homeless people while, at the same time, a large and predominantly young precariat is condemned to live in the 'twilight zone' that has been shaped in the intermediate space between employment and unemployment. This radical polarization of the Greek society between the entrepreneurial block that also consists of sections of the indigenous capitalist classes, and the pauperized masses has insidiously shifted the borders within the country. It has erected walls of social exclusion supervised by the Tetroika through a complex mechanism of social and economic dictates and intense policing. In this sense, the 'national' picture mirrors and at the same time questions the Greek state's harsh refugee policies which reproduce the same logic at the borders. But this condition exposes precisely the essential arbitrariness of the opposition between the 'inside' and the 'outside', the 'national' and the 'foreign'. Socio-economic exclusion jettisons the unemployed, the poor and the sick from a state which is reorganized on the basis of the deprivation of the right to employment and the extinction of social welfare. Refugees, immigrants and dispossessed nationals are superfluous because they can function neither as labour force nor as consumers. It remains to be seen whether or not socio-economic exclusion will take the form of territorial segregation zones in Greece, as in other countries such as, for example, Brazil and India, demarcating wealth from poverty within the national borders, mainly in big cities, where redundant people, both Greeks and 'foreigners', would reside. Aihwa Ong (quoted in Roy 2011, 234) posits that 'the nation-state – with its supposed monopoly over sovereignty – remains a key institution in structuring spatial order' by creating 'a system of graduated zones' in which there is a 'differential deployment of state power'. In the context of this spatio-political graduation 'zones of "superior privileges" ... coexist and contrast with zones of cheap-labour regimes' (Roy 2011, 234). For the time being, the state's spatial system in Greece is not graduated within the urban environment, but it is definitely organized on the basis of zones of exclusion that incarcerate the refugees and 'illegal' immigrants in the islands' checkpoints and in the mainland's detention, i.e. concentration, camps.

Elias Ioakeimoglou's (2016) excellent point is that the extreme crisis of social reproduction in Greece and the refugee issue coalesce precisely in the increasingly powerful biopolitical model of administration of superfluous populations implemented in the country after the EU agreement with Turkey. In this context, the two parties decided that all new 'irregular' migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 would be returned to Turkey, deeming the latter a 'safe country', contrary to the objections by Amnesty International and the international community. The ostensive EU goal is to stop the smugglers' 'business model' that is held responsible for the drowning of hundreds of refugees in the Aegean, for thousands of unaccompanied children being lost in European cities, victims of all kinds of transactions, for the erection of barbed wire fences and many other things that have provoked the Europeans' moral indignation. But, as Bauman (2015) bitterly remarks, '[a]llas, the fate of shocks is their turning into the dull routine of normality – and of moral panics spending themselves and vanishing from view and from consciences wrapped in the veil of oblivion'. In reality, while the EU paid lip service to the 'common European ideals'

of humanitarianism and human rights so as to appease outraged sensitivities, however short term, it was actually catering to an overwhelmingly xenophobic electoral clientele by insulating itself against the 'waves' of immigration. The logic of the EU–Turkey treaty legitimizes the erection of the Europe fortress through the militarization of its borders by treating the refugees, the victims of the West's imperialist strategies, as invaders, and thus transforms the refugee issue into that of EU defence policy. In line with this, the closing of borders by the countries to the north of Greece, a frequent route to the West, has been effectively condoned by the EU, though officially condemned. But it is precisely the transformation of the refugee issue into a national matter and consequently a problem of national security that constitutes the reverse side of the abolition of human rights.

The Greek government, without objection, consented to turn the country into the EU's external and militarized frontier and became a massive concentration camp for the vast majority of the refugees to be returned to Turkey and for those who have already been trapped in the mainland (approximately 57,000–58,000 people, excluding the homeless and itinerant). In the East Aegean islands, at the checkpoints for what is actually the mass return of refugees and immigrants to Turkey, what is deployed perhaps more dramatically than in the mainland is the intensification by the state of the biopolitical management of these populations. This consists of their meticulous categorization, control, discrimination, deprivation of elementary access to a decent living and displacement. The suffering of the victims of these practices can only be hinted at: mass and indiscriminate detentions in the hot spots, systematic violations of human rights, poor food, accommodation in hastily erected detention camps, non-existent conditions of hygiene and medical care. Uppermost, however, is their actual incarceration, including that of unaccompanied minors, for an undefined period and their despair that they may never reach their intended destination.

Interestingly, all this is performed by a state which is weak (or so it appears) because of the loss of its sovereignty and which has been reduced to the condition of a peculiar EU protectorate. Greece's membership in the Eurozone has been consistently questioned by powerful EU 'players' such as, for example, the 'emblematic' German former Federal Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schäuble, and the whole country is considered a border-case for its failure to meet the economic criteria of belonging to the 'European family'. So, while there is a subtle shift of the internal borders of the EU insidiously 'expelling' Greece as a pariah state, the country is obliged to serve as the apartheid frontier of the Fortress-Europe. But this is not the only irony. Greece has itself turned into a biopolitical paradigm within the EU. As such, it has been thoroughly saturated with policies whose purpose is the disciplining and controlling of the population in every aspect of life so that it may fit into the straightjacket of the neoliberal economic orthodoxy. The most salient features of this twofold aspect of biopolitics are the massive flow of Greek economic emigrants, mainly young scientists, to 'developed' countries such as Germany and the UK, and the drop of the population's life expectancy. Consequently, it is a tragic irony that Greece itself, which has undergone all the measures that have been most painfully inscribed on its own body, now applies them to the administration of the refugee populations: classification, discrimination, displacement, distribution of death and survival.

But is the memoranda state as exceptional as the loss of its popular sovereignty suggests? My argument is that it would be more useful to see it as a grotesquely magnified picture of the nation-state in globalized capitalism which has undergone gradual abolition. The general logic, according to Alain Badiou (2015), is that insofar as capital has become transnational, it holds no longer a 'direct and intrinsic relation to the subsistence of the nation-state'. As he claims, '[t]his is a fundamental phenomenon today, even if it is masked by the preservation of rather powerful state poles for a probably long historical period' (my trans.). The memoranda state, by virtue of its extraordinary and glaring dependency on the Tetroika's policies for its subsistence, throws into relief precisely the transformation of states into the local administrators of globalized capitalism. What is fully deployed in the Greek paradigm is the loss of political sovereignty as a result of the full domination of *homo oeconomicus* who emerged in the eighteenth century as 'someone who pursues his own interest, and whose interest is such that converges spontaneously with the interest of others' (Foucault 2010, 270). In the classic narrative of economic liberalism, the government is prohibited from obstructing economic processes, and the invisible hand of the market is precisely what, as Foucault (2010, 283) argues, 'disqualifies' the political sovereign from interfering. As a result, a condition emerges for 'either the sovereign's abstention, or the subordination of his rationality, his art of governing, to a scientific and speculative rationality' (2010, 294). What the Greek case amplifies is the shrinking of government, intrinsic to liberalism, by its reduction to a mere engine, not for 'enlightened self-interest', but for the application and, more importantly, the political incontestability of an extremist neoliberal economic orthodoxy that has proved to be non-viable. However, this weakening to extinction of the state in terms of sovereignty is accompanied by the intensification of biopolitical governmentality which measures all activities of the public domain in terms of their cost-benefit effects (health, education, public land, administration of populations, etc.). And in this case, too, Greece is paradigmatic of the deeply political experimentations with issues of national and popular sovereignty that a Germanized EU may have in store for other states too, always under the rubric of the strict adherence to austerity rules.

### Conclusion: re-inventing communism?

Therefore, the weakening of the state's sovereignty and the strengthening of governmentality is only a seeming contradiction. In fact, both are twin notions in the context of globalized capitalism, but the dramatic form of this dynamic interaction in Greece is precisely what could enable the radical Left to put into practice new forms of coexistence for both nationals and foreigners. The refugees' confinement in camps and/or their extradition to Turkey are performed by a non-sovereign state whose mandate destabilizes the hegemony of the democratic paradigm of social organization in the context of an all-inclusive community. In the early stages of the mass arrival of thousands of refugees, this promising destabilization was already inscribed, albeit in an instinctive manner, in the wave of popular solidarity for the victims of war. This popular feeling essentially derived from shared memories of war, exile, poverty and racist discrimination since the first decades of the twentieth century when Greek populations were expelled from their homes in the former Soviet Union and Turkey. It was further fed by the massive Greek emigration to the prosperous countries of the West, starting in

the early twentieth century and now resumed in terms of the 'brain drain' to economically powerful countries. This structure of feeling has so far forestalled the explosion of a mega-refugee crisis in the country. It was also materialized in and reinforced by a resolute and indefatigable volunteer movement and grass-roots organizations that have constructed a network of reception, services and care for the refugees and immigrants.

Whether or not this solidarity and the forms of sharing that have emerged from the people's care for the refugees will be maintained in the future remains to be seen. If solidarity derives from and is limited to the spontaneous empathy with the Other's suffering on the basis of a shared human essence or a common predicament, it could be reduced to philanthropy, at best. But, it could also evaporate and turn into xenophobia, especially in crowded cities where the majority of the native population remains exposed to the hostile, heterogeneous urban environment that could easily be attributed to the presence of the foreigners or their phantasmatic existence. Solidarity is meaningful when it turns into 'the "material constitution" of the modern working class movement and its alliance with other exploited and oppressed social groups' (Thomas 2011). This does not simply mean that 'a "tradition of the oppressed"' should be restored but also – and as importantly – that solidarity should be organized 'as a potential alternative political programme and principle of socialization' (Thomas 2011).

All these issues bring us to the core of the problem which is the (re)consideration of class struggle on the basis of the objective conditions in the present conjuncture determined by unemployment, labour precarity, psychological insecurity and value crisis. This presupposes the search for certain axioms whose catholicity has been either ideologically deconstructed or simply suppressed by the hegemonic neoliberal paradigm. A crucial example is the notion of identities as related to difference. Badiou (2008), using 'the Moroccan worker' as an example, argues that identity is both difference and invariance, whose affirmation has both a negative aspect – in that it claims its differentiation from the other – and a positive one – that is, 'the immanent development of identity within a new situation'. In this sense, the Moroccan worker will not relinquish his individual identity but he will expand it ('a Moroccan worker in Paris'):

The political consequences of the axiom, 'there is only one world,' will work to consolidate what is universal in identities. An example – a local experiment – would be a meeting held recently in Paris, where undocumented workers and French nationals came together to demand the abolition of persecutory laws, police raids and expulsions; to demand that foreign workers be recognized simply in terms of their presence: that no one is illegal; all demands that are very natural for people who are basically in the same existential situation – people of the same world. (2008, 40)

Being 'basically in the same existential situation – people of the same world' is a universal axiom that has to be restored if the Left is to regain its lost hegemonic call. The restoration of humans in place of commodities in a globalized world, however, has to be premised on the emancipatory demand for social justice and equality that necessarily signifies the overturning of neoliberal capitalism; otherwise, it is inscribed as a call for a humanitarian ethical mission. This can be performed in the context of class

struggle through which the proletariat, while maintaining their different characteristics, develop solidarity in a common struggle that exceeds specific identities.

Harvey (2015) argues, however, for a new form of class struggle that does not require (the difficult) sectoral organizing for better wages or labour conditions, but instead shifts the terrain from workplaces to neighbourhood structures where all kinds of deterritorialized labour, such as delivery drivers and house workers, could be better organized. He uses the Gramscian notion of the neighbourhood councils which, as '[Gramsci] said, have a better understanding of what the conditions of the whole working class are compared to the sectoral understanding of workplace organizing'. Could organizing in neighbourhoods for both 'foreign' populations and the 'nationals', in Gramsci's neighbourhood councils or other structures of common participation and decision-making, materialize 'a potential alternative political programme and principle of socialization', that Thomas (2011) calls for? Most likely so, but its presupposition is that democracy is detached from constitutional formalities and parliamentarism and is performed as an everyday complex of material practices that constitute the difficult but necessary synthesis of deep differences, and a common emancipatory project against injustice and exploitation. Common organizing of superfluous populations, both native and immigrant, within the same neighbourhood, therefore, could be a workable solution depending on the politicization of spontaneous affective reaction to the plight of the 'foreign' other. That requires that the radical Left launches an important ideological battle to assert that the nation-state should no longer provide inclusion, protection and equality only to the 'people' that it genealogically produces, and that national-belonging should not legitimate political representation. Communities could be '*any place where individuals and groups belong, wherever they "happen" to live and therefore work, bear children, support relatives, find partners for every sort of "intercourse"*' (Balibar 2004, 132).

This call for an alternative non-national community, however, would be just another idealist gesture without a form of economic and political organization that is radically different from neoliberal capitalism. Does this mean that we have to reinvent communism, as Žižek (2015) wonders? Perhaps so, but until then we have to learn to live with the others, the refugees, in the same neighbourhoods, go to school with them and work with them. We have to create together structures of self-organization and employment, alternative and positively antagonistic to the dominant structure of a profit-oriented society. Only by constructing different systems of socialization, and the popular institutions that produce it in everyday life, can we build, not a network of solidarity, important but essentially limiting, but an anti-capitalist paradigm of life. That would result, among other things, in striking at the core of the cult of individualism, which idolizes freedom as consumer choice and exalts antagonism as human essence. Demystifying the 'pleasure' of the egoistic subject of self-interest, as promoted by the dominant ideology, is a very significant move. It is a process of constructing alternative definitions of pleasure, which derive from ways of relating to (different) others, such as sharing, co-deciding and fighting together, which are far more emotionally rewarding and could be potentially more attractive than the dominant paradigm of individualist 'happiness' of possession. But this indeed conjures the phantasm of communism that still haunts the world even if, and especially when, it is exorcized.

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