

<CN>Chapter 2

<CT>“Latvians do not understand the Greek people”

<CST>Europeanness and Complicit Becoming in the Midst of Financial Crisis

<CA>Dace Dzenovska

<HDA>Becoming European

In January 2010, Latvia joined the Eurozone. Europoliticians and Eurofunctionaries congratulated Latvia on this achievement and remarked that Latvia has now joined the “core of Europe” (Grundule 2014). Such use of the notion of the “core of Europe” suggests that today’s Europe is at heart a monetary union governed by the rules of finance capitalism. Moreover, it is not a homogenous but rather a differentiated entity, governed through hierarchically arranged distinctions such as that between the core and peripheries.

However, joining the Eurozone is no guarantee that one has become fully European. In 2015, Latvia’s Europeanness came into question in the context of Europe’s “migration/refugee crisis,” that is, the set of European states’ politically and ethically contested responses to the millions of people from Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and sub-Saharan Africa who, fleeing unlivable lives due to war and other forms of dispossession, crossed the Mediterranean in hopes of reaching Europe, many of them dying en route. This series of events, widely referred to as crisis, was also governed through distinctions. First, the people on the move were sorted into migrants and refugees with the aim of enabling the latter to enter or remain while keeping most of the former out. Second, European states and peoples were sorted according to their response to the crisis. Thus, for example, Central and Eastern European states, including Latvia, lost some of their Europeanness insofar as their peoples’ and politicians’ reluctance, even refusal, to accept

and welcome refugees left those states open to criticism of their apparent lack of compassion and undermining of European values (Krastev 2015; Simecka and Tallis 2015; see also Dzenovska 2018a, 2017, 2016).

This suggests that besides meeting the criteria of formal membership in political and monetary unions and fitting the identity-related markers of Europeanness, peoples and states can become more or less European depending on their political and ethical conduct in particular circumstances (Dzenovska 2013a; Böröcz 2006). Moreover, gaining and losing Europeanness is a relational process. Thus, Latvia—along with the rest of Central and Eastern Europe—was deemed less-than-European in the context of the migration/refugee crisis, relative to the moral superiority asserted by Sweden and Germany (Dzenovska 2017). In contrast, Latvia succeeded in becoming European in the context of the 2008 financial crisis by demonstrating exceptional fiscal discipline and implementing severe austerity measures—unlike Greece, which was widely thought of as failing the test of Europeanness because its citizens protested against the austerity measures instead of behaving as responsible economic subjects (Mufti 2014; see also de Genova 2016; Herzfeld 1987, 2013). Europeanness, then, is an unstable and relational articulation of often racialized identity markers, institutional membership, and political and economic conduct. Moreover, it tends to be distributed as a marker of civilization by those propelled to the position of proper Europeanness in particular historical moments (see also Loftsdóttir, Smith, and Hipfl this volume).¹

In this chapter, I analyze how Europeanness was negotiated in the context of financial crisis in Europe. In particular, I am interested in how moralized economic conduct played a role in the distribution of Europeanness, as well as in how always already marginal Europeans, such as Latvians and Greeks, negotiated Europeanness in relation to each other. For example, I trace

the emergence of a hegemonic subject position from which it was possible to claim that “Latvians do not understand the Greek people” in the context of Greek sovereign debt crisis. This statement was made by Jānis Reiris, Latvia’s Minister of Finance, but the sentiment was shared beyond political discourse. It emerged in response to the definitive “no” to austerity measures that Greek voters delivered in a referendum held on 5 July 2015.² Importantly, in tracing the contours of this subject position, I do not offer a representative analysis of the views of Latvia’s citizens and residents about debt, Europeanness, and the Greek sovereign debt crisis. Rather, I offer analysis of how the hegemonic subject position of “Latvians do not understand Greek people” was formed in the context of public debates about the financial crisis in Latvia and Greece. There may be dissenting voices among Latvians and among Latvia’s Russian-speakers that contest this normative subject position, but such dissenting voices were not heard in the mainstream public discourse at the time and did not translate into the sustained protest actions that occurred elsewhere in Europe, most notably Greece.

The bailout negotiations and debates about them within the European public and political space suggested that the Greek handling of the sovereign debt crisis was not thought of as merely an economic issue, but also as a moral and cultural one. Many commentators emphasized that no reform would be successful in Greece unless institutional and cultural practices changed (e.g., Paalzow 2015). Similarly, the primary concern of many Eurozone taxpayers who feared the burden of Eurozone solidarity was not whether the bailout was economically sustainable in the long run or whether people in Greece were able to withstand the debt burden, but rather whether Greece and Greeks behaved as proper economic, moral, and thus European subjects. In that light, the Latvian minister’s statement itself should be viewed not only as a commentary on the incomprehensible economic conduct of the “Greek people,” but also as an instance of *becoming*

European that reinforces forms of power that shape the material and discursive contours of Europeanness. Insofar as such becoming European reproduces hegemonic ways of distributing Europeanness via civilizational—and often racialized—hierarchies, it is a form of *complicit*—rather than radically transformative—becoming. To put it another way, the Latvian way of becoming European does not carry an inherently transformative potential in relation to history “as a set of preconditions that one leaves behind in order to ‘become’, that is, to create something new” (Deleuze in Biehl & Locke 2010: 317), but can be and often is complicit with history.

Latvian assertions of Europeanness in the context of the Greek sovereign debt crisis drew on recognizable civilizational hierarchies, but at the same time they were also aided by an unexpectedly lucky historical contingency: the stories that Latvians tell themselves about themselves coincided with the markers of Europeanness that emerged amidst the crisis. For example, the virtue of endurance in the face of harsh conditions (such as World War II, Soviet deportations, and poor economic conditions), which is central to the Latvian self-narrative, facilitated proper economic—and thus moral and European—conduct, namely living by the rules and within one’s means regardless of how constraining or devastating these rules and means may be. The financial crisis was, one might say, the Latvian moment to shine as proper Europeans.

In what follows, I draw on observations made during my ethnographic research on tolerance promotion in the context of post-socialist democratization, conducted between 2005 and 2010 (Dzenovska 2018a, 2013a), and that on outmigration, conducted between 2010 and 2012 (Dzenovska 2018b, 2013b), to consider how hegemonic forms of power were both reproduced and reinvented in Latvia vis-à-vis public reasoning about the Greek sovereign debt crisis.³ On the one hand, I show how the relation between Latvians becoming European and Greece’s sovereign debt crisis reinforced the hegemony of well-worn civilizational hierarchies of

people and places through which Europe is constituted as a normative and aspirational space. On the other hand, I suggest that in conditions of neoliberalization and financialization of capitalism, these civilizational hierarchies become visible in relation to economic conduct.

The problem of debt, whether private or sovereign, is not and has never been merely an economic issue. Rather, it has always been a moral and a civilizing question (see also Graeber 2011; Peebles 2010; Gregory 2012). Debates about the sovereign debt crisis in Greece have revealed how morality and economics intersect in the current historical moment, as well as how this particular intersection of morality and economics works to distribute credentials of Europeanness. This, however, obscures the operations of contemporary forms of capitalism. For example, Maurizio Lazzarato (2012) argues that the current form of finance capitalism, which depends heavily on debt as the source of capital accumulation, has produced the figure of the “indebted man.” The “indebted man,” first, considers debt to be part of a healthy economic life and, second, is willing “to assume the costs, as well as the risks of a flexible and financialized economy, costs and risks, which are not only—far from it—those of innovation, but also and especially those of precariousness, poverty, unemployment, a failing health system, housing shortages, etc.” (ibid.: 51). The “indebted man” is a Weberian ideal type and a figure that characterizes the tensions that animate contemporary forms of capitalism (Weber 1897, 1930). At the same time it entails normative elements, insofar as being in debt and living responsibly in indebtedness have become measures of proper economic and thus moral and European conduct.

In order to draw the historically specific contours of Latvian complicity with the civilizational hierarchies through which Europeanness is upheld and with contemporary forms of finance capitalism, and to point out the potential consequences of such complicity becoming, I

first discuss the intersection of morality and nationhood in the context of post-Soviet nation-building in Latvia. I continue with a discussion of morality and indebtedness in relation to Latvia's own financial crisis and its consequences, such as extensive outmigration. In the process, I trace the emergence of the enduring subject as the normative subject of the current historical moment in Latvia, a subject that perseveres through difficulties for the sake of the nation and in the name of a better future, a subject that "does not understand the Greek people," and, finally, a subject that facilitates Latvia's ascendancy to Europeanness in the midst of Europe's financial crisis.

<HDA>A National Way of Life

Latvia's post-Soviet transformations were characterized by two distinct yet related trajectories, namely nationalism and neoliberalism (Dzenovska 2007). To make sense of the claim that "Latvians do not understand the Greek people," it is crucial to understand how nationalism and neoliberalism not only coexisted in the political and policy domains, but also converged in the realm of ethical conduct. In the context of post-socialist democratization and liberalization projects, nationalism was widely thought of as a problem that manifests in the register of conventional politics (e.g., voting), or as a problem of exclusion of minorities from public institutions, spaces, or the body of citizenry. However, focusing on nationalism as a political and policy problem overlooks the importance of nationalism as an ethical framework that produces subjects who equate the good life to a life led within confines of the nation as a moral community. Thus, in Latvia, being national involves more than holding Latvian citizenship. It is also a way of being in the world that, first, assumes that a historically formed cultural community is fundamentally constitutive of the self and, second, posits a moral contract between such a

historically formed and embedded self and the state that guarantees the existence of the cultural community.⁴

Throughout the Soviet period, many Latvians cultivated a national way of being as an alternative to Soviet socialism. This way of being emphasized rootedness in place, care for language and culture, and, at crucial moments, privileging the collective interests of the cultural community over individual ones. Despite Latvians being the “titular nation” of a Soviet republic (Martin 2001), the absence of full political and economic independence was thought to be detrimental to the existence of the cultural community. It therefore fell to individuals to ensure the continued existence of the Latvian nation by cultivating themselves as national beings, that is, as individuals who see themselves as shaped by a particular culture and as aspiring to realize themselves and the collective in a political entity—the national state. Several generations of Soviet Latvians were socialized in this embattled sense of Latvianness. During that time, the virtue of enduring harsh political and economic conditions became central to the Latvian sense of self and to the collective effort to sustain the Latvian nation.

Many in Latvia perceived cultivating a national way of life during the Soviet period as an oppositional project necessarily at odds with Soviet socialism. This is not entirely accurate, however. The Soviet state did in fact explicitly cultivate cultural and linguistic difference, but the way this related to the Soviet state and the socialist project remained ambiguous (Martin 2001; Hirsch 1995; Slezkine 1994). In Latvia, for example, the Soviet state always struggled to enforce the boundary between nationalism as a national form with socialist content and nationalism as a dangerous aspiration for self-determination that threatened the Soviet socialist project. The national way of being, therefore, was solidified as an ethical orientation in a simultaneously complementary and oppositional relationship with the Soviet state. For many Latvians, the

“other” of this way of being was the Russian-speaking Soviet person, sometimes also referred to as the “migrant,” who was thought to be concerned with the socialist future and defined good life economically rather than via a relationship with place, culture, and history (Dzenovska 2013b).

The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the national way of life as an ethical orientation to converge with the political nationalism of the post-Soviet Latvian state, which in turn enabled the state to appeal to Latvian self-narratives, including the virtue of endurance, in an effort to forge popular consent for various policies, including the austerity measures following the financial crisis. The convergence of the national way of life and political nationalism after the Soviet Union’s demise also meant that something had to be done about the Russian-speaking Soviet person—the “migrant,” who was seen as a threat to the new political order and the national way of life. Thus, in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Russian-speaking residents became targets of the Latvian state’s “reawakening efforts,” an ethical and political project that aimed to recruit national minority subjects from among Soviet people in order to boost support for the Latvian state as a national state (Dzenovska 2018a). Importantly, becoming a national minority subject did not mean becoming Latvian, but rather becoming a subject who understands the importance of a national way of life and strives to be a good national minority subject, that is, someone who cultivates himself or herself as a member of a particular cultural community while recognizing this community’s political subordination to Latvians within a national state.

In independent Latvia, forming individuals into national subjects, be they minority or majority, is a project that spans the family, the school, and public and political space. National subjects are tied to each other and to the state through the moral framework of belonging to the Latvian nation as a cultural community that has realized itself politically. This political

realization, in turn, is seen as crucial to the cultural community's continued existence. This, then, is the moral bond that conjured up the enduring subject in the context of the 2008 financial crisis and the Greek sovereign debt crisis, inadvertently also facilitating the Latvians' ascendancy to Europeanness.

<HDA>Financial Crisis and Moral Bonds

Not unlike other states subjected to neoliberalization and fiscal discipline, the Latvian government implemented severe austerity measures to overcome the 2008 financial crisis, thus off-loading the burden of the crisis onto the public sector and the broader society (Paalzow 2015; Hudson and Sommers 2012). The government's exceptional fiscal discipline propelled Latvia into the international limelight as an exemplary apprentice of neoliberal economics. Latvia's success was celebrated in various international forums. Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis delivered lectures to international audiences and co-wrote a book about Latvia's success story (Åslund and Dombrovskis 2011).⁵ Success was measured by economic growth indicators and the government's ability to repay the IMF bailout loan early, that is, at the end of 2012. Interestingly, this early loan repayment enabled the government to cut public spending even further. Two weeks after repaying the loan, the guaranteed minimum income dropped to the point that even the IMF began defending the poor by criticizing the government's reduction of the guaranteed minimum income (Eglītis 2013, see also Eihmanis n.d.).

A less publicly discussed but more noteworthy measure of "success" was that there was no sustained protest in response to the austerity measures. One organized demonstration in January of 2009 erupted in violence when some youths began to vandalize cars and shop windows after a peaceful gathering involving speeches and singing in the Old City of Riga. The

incident was quickly contained both physically and symbolically, and politicians, intellectuals, and media pundits came together to dismiss violence by suggesting that it was not a Latvian way of expressing dissatisfaction, but rather something done by Europe's immigrants or by people with a "Mediterranean mentality," such as Greeks. Moreover, even though the demonstration had been organized by an opposition party with the alleged aim of protesting cuts in social spending, it led to the replacement of the old government—thought to be corrupt—with a new government lead by Valdis Dombrovskis, who shortly thereafter implemented even harsher, if transparent, austerity measures.

Enjoying public support, this new government called on Latvia's residents to express solidarity with the state in the midst of crisis. In making such an appeal, the government invoked the stories that Latvians tell themselves about themselves, that is, about enduring harsh conditions to ensure the continuity of the nation and achieve political self-determination in the form of their own national state. Thus, the government appealed to Latvia's residents to express solidarity with *their* state, the state that they had so painstakingly restored following the collapse of the Soviet Union—the state that guaranteed their collective existence as a people, that was *them*, as many civil servants emphasized, and that now was in existential danger. The crisis animated renewed efforts to assert moral bonds between the state, the nation, and individuals. From within this moral framework, solidarity was manifested as a "tightening of belts" for the sake of a collective future. Latvia's residents were called upon to sustain their lives with severely diminished resources—to persevere with living in the present—in order to enable a collective flourishing in a distant future. Many of Latvia's residents took up this call. A few pensioners offered to donate their meager pensions to the state to boost its budget. In internet commentaries and newspaper articles, one could encounter references to how Latvians, as a nation, "survived

multiple wars, survived the Soviet gulag, and thus will survive the crisis as well.”⁶ Most people, however, simply continued surviving as they had done before the crisis.

At the same time, Latvia’s residents did not wish to merely survive, but rather to lead “normal lives,” a concept widely used in post-socialist contexts to demarcate an aspirational mode of life (e.g., Fehervary 2002; Dzenovska 2014). For example, the interlocutors of my ethnographic project on outmigration differentiated between “living” and “surviving” in ways similar to those of the Sarajevans analyzed by Stef Jansen (2014) in a recent article on “not moving well enough.” They described “living” as a mode of being exceeding attempts to persevere, in which one was not constantly confronted with profound challenges to existence in the form of shortage of money, jobs, or time, or a sense of not going anywhere. During my fieldwork, the ability to survive and surviving itself—what I refer to in this chapter as endurance—variously appeared as part of a collective habitus formed in relation to a history of multiple foreign dominations. A necessary tactic for living in the present, it increasingly became a normative mode of conduct of living the crisis (see Hage 2009). Endurance, then, was part of the collective self-narrative of Latvians and a virtue that came to characterize a good national subject.

Not everyone was willing or able to endure in this way, however, and many people emigrated. When migration reached such a level that most everyone in Latvia knew someone who had emigrated, had family members who had emigrated, had themselves emigrated or considered emigrating, emigration erupted on the political agenda as a problem that needed to be addressed (Dzenovska 2012).⁷ The initial public and political reactions to the news that emigration was becoming a mass phenomenon interpreted departure as betrayal. Even prior to the crisis, in 2004, the then Prime Minister of Latvia Aigars Kalvītis had said: “Let them go, they

are consumers by nature anyway,” suggesting that the emigrants were failed members of the nation as a moral community because they related to it merely as consumers. Some years later, when it was suggested that people might be leaving because they felt the state had not created the conditions for building normal lives at home, Speaker of the Parliament Solvita Āboltiņa responded by saying: “I want to ask only one question of all those who are leaving. What have you—you in particular—done to make Latvia a different place?” These moral arguments juxtaposed consumption with production, suggesting that emigrants wished to consume and receive rather than produce and give. Such arguments entirely overlooked the fact that most emigrants left in order to be productive laborers, and many left to earn money with which to repay the debts accumulated during the pre-crisis period, when they were on their way to becoming proper economic subjects (see next section).

But as more and more people left, driven by onerous debt, job shortages, insufficient income, and general hopelessness about the future (Dzenovska 2012), the government realized that the Great Departure, as post-European Union accession emigration was colloquially referred to, was to have lasting effects. Working against the trope of betrayal that had saturated earlier reactions to departure, concerned government officials set out to govern Latvia’s mobile subjects through diaspora programs and re-emigration plans. They argued that the state needed the mobile subjects—formally all Latvia’s citizens, but especially cultural Latvians among them—in order to revive the economy, reproduce the cultural community, and legitimate the national state. This task initially proved difficult, as many of those who had emigrated also felt that the state had betrayed them, insofar as it did not create conditions within which they could craft “normal lives.”

These feelings of mutual betrayal suggest that imagined moral bonds existed between individuals and the state, and that they became most visible at the moment when they were thought to be broken. These bonds imagined by those who stayed and those who left alike, can also be thought of as relations of indebtedness. These relations of indebtedness link individuals in the present to a collective past and a collective future. Such relations might assume that individuals are indebted to the moral community and to its steward, the state; or they might assume that the state is indebted to individuals and the moral community, or that individuals are in debt to each other as members of the moral community. Appeals to the public to put up with economic discomfort in the context of financial crisis therefore assumed the state and individuals were united in solidarity as members of an enduring moral community whose well-being was at risk. In the name of this community one was summoned to become an “enduring subject.”

Importantly, this enduring subject was not only expected to survive the crisis, but also to use the crisis as an opportunity to unleash previously untapped creativity and contribute to the revival of the economy and thus to the flourishing of the community. To illustrate this type of conduct, political and intellectual elites introduced success stories (*veiksmes stāsti*) into the public discourse. For example, several publications and TV shows, including the popular weekly *Ir*, began to feature interviews with successful entrepreneurs who had either persevered through difficulties or managed to find a niche business that helped them thrive. Their success stories marginalized narratives of poverty, emptiness, and abjection, depicted these as products of negativist thinking rather than aspects of social reality. It was hoped, it seemed, that the success stories would counter negativist thinking, heal the collective psyche, and motivate people to help themselves and thus the nation and the state.

The success stories emphasized individual ingenuity, through which people could lift themselves out of collective misery. The message was that the crisis should provide an opportunity to capitalize on human creativity and entrepreneurship. To put it another way, while enduring, the good national subject was not supposed to just wait, but to do something, to keep moving, be active, become an entrepreneur. In policy circles, such emphasis on doing something and not expecting things from the state was considered a necessary remedy to the enduring Soviet legacy, understood here as state-dependency. Combined with this valorization of individual entrepreneurial activity, endurance amounted to withstanding hardship while working on oneself to harness the possibilities that the crisis might provide. Enduring subjects were loyal: they honored their commitment to the collective and worked to remake themselves as entrepreneurial subjects who contributed to collective well-being. But the enduring-cum-entrepreneurial subject valorized by the state was at cross-purposes with the indebted subject, an individual who, in order to honor a contractual relationship and repay debt, had to find work elsewhere to earn enough money to make the loan payments. While at cross-purposes, these two different subjects nevertheless converged in the ethical orientation of playing by the rules and working hard.

I now turn to a more detailed consideration of this indebted subject to consider how learning to live with and without debt—and financial indebtedness more generally—in post-Soviet Latvia came to be judged within the moral framework forged at the intersection of nationalism and neoliberalism.

<HDA>Learning to Live with and without Credit

One of the most characteristic features of the early post-Soviet landscape in Latvia was the *sadzīves tehnikas veikals* (household electronics shop) (Beliaev and Dzenovska 2009). People purchased irons, washing machines, mixers, juicers, kitchen combines, and whatever else they found appealing after years of beating egg whites by hand. Kitchens and bathrooms were overloaded with household technologies, many of which were rarely used. It was in the sphere of household electronics that people first learned to buy on credit. Competing for customers who were filling their small living spaces with Bosch, Electrolux, and Zanussi items of various sizes, stores advertised in-store credit with no down payment: you walked into the store with no money and walked out with the steam-spewing iron you always wanted. And want it you did, because back in the Soviet times you simply could not get it. As Krisztina Fehervary (2002) has pointed out in the context of post-socialist Hungary, Western household appliances and other items of material culture were part of the measure of a “normal life” in both socialist and post-socialist contexts. “Normal life,” in turn, constituted a horizon of aspirations and marked specifically post-socialist, if varied, understandings of the good life (Jansen 2014; Rausing 2004; Dzenovska 2014; Fehervary 2002).

The understandings of the good life forged during the socialist period facilitated the expansion of credit culture in post-socialist societies. By obtaining credit in relatively small amounts, people got used to the idea that the good life, a middle-class life, could be achieved through credit. Indeed, an explicit concern of the post-socialist transition was the creation of a middle class of young, upwardly mobile citizens, who would fulfill their aspirations to middle-class life by taking out mortgages and living on credit. As Mateusz Halawa (2015: 715, 719) has written with regard to mortgages in Warsaw, those who took out mortgages were thought of as coming of age, as maturing into responsible citizens. Eager to extend credit to un-indebted

populations, the banking industry also promoted these aspirations, for example by advertising credit as the road to a middle-class existence. As Halawa (2015: 720) notes, one bank advertisement read: “For all those who grew up (enough) to own a home” [sic].⁸

Similar processes took place in Latvia. Though much of the older generation acquired private property via privatization of their Soviet-era apartments (resulting in an unprecedented level of home ownership that does not accurately reflect overall prosperity or quality of life), this was not the case for their children.⁹ At the same time, post-Soviet individuals were instructed that renting was unwise because it meant throwing money away and not maturing into adulthood. Buying your own property was thought of as a wise investment and a way to make your money count. As Halawa (2015: 720) writes, such narratives of maturing into homeownership resonate with the hegemonic discourse of the post-socialist transformation, which promoted a new kind of model citizen: active, enterprising, and able to fend for him or herself. Since 1989, journalists, public intellectuals, and sociologists have been invested in looking for, or actively fabricating, “the middle class,” seen as a requisite for the new polity’s economic and political success and “a social anchor for liberal democracy.” Rooted in private property, consumer choice, and aspirations toward the lifestyles of the West, this new class was expected to develop individualistic, responsible, proactive attitudes. It was also expected to distinguish itself from the maligned *homo sovieticus*, who demanded things—including housing—from the government with an entitled, “clamouring attitude” instead of arranging for them on his or her own.

But credit did not just pave the way to post-Soviet adulthood; it was also thought to lay the groundwork for economic growth and development. For example, agricultural specialists acknowledged that extensive credit was needed to modernize agriculture (Cimdiņa and Raubiško 2012: 81). Farmers had not been able to accumulate capital in any way other than credit or

European Union grants (which nevertheless required co-financing)—credit was the only way for agricultural business to expand to the point of being able to generate profit. Credit was a crucial component of the post-Soviet middle class and post-Soviet market economy. It was also indispensable to the expansion of finance capitalism (Choonara 2009). Thus, capitalism needed indebted subjects as much as post-socialist subjects needed capitalism—and credit—to satisfy their aspirations for a “normal life.”

While some Latvians behaved as good entrepreneurial subjects by buying family homes and taking out loans to develop their businesses, there also emerged rogue subjects willing to imitate the profit-making possibilities of finance capitalism to try to make a “quick buck,” or *uzvārīties* (to boil up, in Latvian). These people took loans and invested them for short-term returns. For example, some purchased apartments and sold them a little while later (renovated or not). Real estate prices were going up, so the returns were rewarding. One could wait longer, but it was better to sell quickly in order to generate profit, which could be used to make more money.

The real estate boom and the rising prices and wages of the early 2000s made the temporary seem permanent. These became known as the *treknie gadi* (fat years). People borrowed more and more money to finance vacations abroad, country homes, apartment renovations, and even medical operations, so much so that taking on debt seemed like an endless source of wealth—an end in itself. Both private and public entities seemed to be living on speed. Politician Ainārs Šlesers urged Latvians to “put the pedal to the metal” (*pedāli grīdā*), that is, to take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the free-market economy. People began to gain faith in living on credit. This did not necessarily represent greater certainty about the future, however. Instead, they developed faith in the permanence of the present—in the permanent cycle of credit-based existence (Lazzarato 2012; Halawa 2015; Beliaev and Dzenovska 2009).

And then came the crisis. When the housing bubble burst, many people lost their jobs and could not repay their debts. Banks repossessed their homes, and many left for Ireland or the United Kingdom to find jobs so as to make their payments. When I began fieldwork on outmigration in 2012, leaving had become the subject of public debates and private conversations. My interlocutors—those who stayed behind—often talked about debt-related departures in hushed tones: “You know, they took all those loans and now they have to leave. Thank God, I managed to repay mine.” Or, “I never took any loans; I knew no good would come of it.” Individuals who had taken loans and had defaulted as a result of the crisis, no longer seen as maturing into adulthood and a middle-class existence, were suddenly viewed as having failed to withstand the temptations of capitalism. Even as people understood that credit was a product that banks were marketing quite aggressively (some recounted how bank employees were given bonuses for selling more credit), in the end they nevertheless saw a loan as something one asks for, and thus always a matter of choice (Halawa 2015; Gregory 2012).

My interlocutors articulated insightful critiques of the post-socialist *pedāli grīdā* living as a systemic problem rather than an individual one. They also understood that financial institutions ultimately benefited from the crisis, or at least suffered less from it than the population did. Yet they still held the view that once individuals had entered into a credit-debt relationship—that is, once they had asked for and received loans—the responsibility for repaying the debt was not negotiable. For example, Inta and Aija, two small-scale entrepreneurs I met in Kurzeme, told me that they had not taken on debt because “debt must be returned, returned regardless of circumstances. Big, small, all wanted to be rich. Very tempting. Now they have to leave.” For Inta and Aija, taking on debt amounted to pretending to be rich. Though they, too, confirmed that loans must be given back regardless of circumstances, they did not elaborate on whether this was

so because it was morally or juridically right, or because banks would not have it any other way. Strikingly, in the midst of systemic crisis my interlocutors subscribed to the view that one has to manage oneself—that if you get into trouble, it is your fault and thus your responsibility to get out of that trouble. In addition to converging with the neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility, this was a historically overdetermined stance boosted by both the imperative to overcome the Soviet past, remembered as excessively reliant on the state, and a collective memory of suffering and resilience as the only reliable tactics of survival in such difficult moments as multiple wars, post-Soviet deportations, and the daily grind of Soviet socialism.

As Latvia's residents, recently crushed by their own economic crisis and the subsequent austerity measures, tried to make sense of the Greek sovereign debt crisis, many transposed the moral frameworks that governed their personal relations onto the sovereign debt crisis. In doing so, they affirmed the power relations of capitalism without allowing for political critique of capitalism and its underlying moral frameworks. In his acclaimed book *Debt: the First 5,000 Years*, David Graeber (2011) interrogates the now nearly universal moral premise underlying global forms of finance capitalism: "one has to repay one's debts." Drawing on Graeber, Deborah James (2015: 11) puts it as follows: "Something originally thought of as 'reciprocity,' in which gifts or favours, once given, are returned only after long delays or are transferred onward over generations, has been transformed by the modern financial system, backed up by the power of the state, into a relationship of unequal power and of enduring hierarchy in the modern world: between first-world and third-world nations, rich and poor."

By privileging the moral obligations of a credit-debt relationship over a critique of financial capitalism and its dependency on indebtedness, Latvians became complicit with the normative framework of finance capitalism. Moreover, by conflating the moral obligation to

repay debt with Europeanness, Latvians became complicit with its companion civilizational project. As I show next, the crisis proved an especially productive site for such a position.

<HDA>Proper Economic, Moral, and European Subjects

In July 2015 in Rēzekne, a small town in the southeast of Latvia, I found myself in a crowd watching a concert held as part of the Baltica International Folklore Festival. The people in the crowd, some dressed in folk costume, were in high spirits. I was standing next to a group of people engaged in light banter who all seemed to be near retirement age when I suddenly overheard someone declare: “Oh, this is so that the Greek pensioners could live better.” I had missed the first part of that exchange, but the response generated laughter and further exchange about how the Latvian pensioners were getting by on so much less, and how it was ridiculous that Greeks were protesting austerity measures that, in the view of those conversing, were aimed at mitigating a situation that the Greeks themselves had created.

I overheard many such conversations in the summer of 2015, when the Greek sovereign debt crisis was used as a rhetorical device to point simultaneously to Latvian pensioners’ resilience on the one hand and the unfairness of Greek demands on the other, given the perception that Greek living standards were much higher than those of Latvia’s pensioners. Similar discourse was reproduced in the media. For example, following the pattern of using Latvia as an exemplary case of fiscal discipline, one Latvian and one Lithuanian journalist wrote a piece for *The Guardian* headlined: “In Latvia and Lithuania, pensioners and other poor people wonder why they are being asked to pay to bail out their far richer Greek counterparts” (Černiauskas and Raudseps 2015). The article quotes Milda, a Latvian pensioner who is surprised that Greeks cannot get by on €120 per week in a climate where people need not heat

homes or buy winter boots, and where vegetables and fruit must be cheaper. The authors of the article note that Milda's pension is €293 per month, well under half of current Greek levels. They go on to explain the results of the even harsher austerity measures imposed by the Latvian government: the country suffered 20 percent unemployment, output fell by a quarter, and the "population left in droves." Now, the authors continue, Latvia is well on its way on recovery. Yet they cite GDP growth and export growth without so much as touching upon the social costs incurred. According to the journalists, most Latvians want to know: "If we did it, why can't the Greeks?" It is here that they quote Latvia's Finance Minister Jānis Reiris as saying, "Latvian people do not understand the Greek people." Milda ultimately concludes: "Anyway, if they borrowed all that money, they should pay it back, that's the way I see it." Nowhere does the article even raise the question of whether Greeks alone are to blame for the current situation, or whether Latvians could perhaps have done things differently themselves. The message is clear: We tightened our belts, suffered even more than the Greeks are suffering right now, and are now asked to show solidarity to bail them out. This is unfair.

Articles republished on Latvian Internet sites from the foreign press—for example, Slavoj Žižek's take on the Greek referendum—generated a slew of critical, often offensive commentary ("Slavojs Žižeks par Grieķijas referendumu" 2015). Here, too, the sovereign debt crisis was discussed through analogies with personal relationships. Someone rhetorically asked whether a neighbor would lend a cent to a severely indebted and unemployed Žižek, if he were unprepared to find a job and prove he was able to pay it back. "Does finding a job amount to Eurozone terrorism or loss of Žižek's independence?" the commentator asked.

This popular sense of unfairness fed into political demands that Greeks take on responsibility and play by the rules. In July 2015, in an episode of the weekly TV show

Sastrēgumstunda (Rush Hour), financial consultant Gundars Kuļikovskis pointed out that “the EU is a club of countries based on rules. And now Greece says: we will not play by the rules.”¹⁰ Sitting next to Kuļikovskis, Ilmārs Rimšēvics, the president of the Bank of Latvia, stressed that “the responsibility lies only with the government of Greece.” He continued: “Latvia has positive experience with austerity measures. We did it in two years. You have to involve all sectors of society. We regained trust, and the economy recovered. All those who borrow money know the rules. And if you do not follow the rules, there are consequences. One has to be very responsible on the large Euro ship.” Andris Sprūds, Associate Professor of International Relations at the Riga Stradiņš University, tried to broach the possibility that responsibility might be shared, but even this mild attempt met with absolute denial and reiteration that Greeks alone were to blame.

Furthermore, in an article published on the Internet site *Delfi.lv*, Inese Vaidere, a Latvian member of the European parliament, suggested that Greeks have something to learn from the Latvians. She pointed out that Latvians cannot understand why Greeks refuse to be frugal, because “we are used to saving and living within our means. Germans, too, are used to spending as much money as is within their means. Similarly, if borrowed, the money has to be returned within a foreseeable period of time. But Greeks want it otherwise: they think they can borrow all the time and not repay.”¹¹ Moreover, Vaidere continued, “tightening of belts corresponds to European values. Why is it so difficult for Greeks to do it? Perhaps it is lack of information, perhaps it is tradition, perhaps it is the Southern sun, which makes people more relaxed than in Latvia. But within Europe and within the European Union, all have to adhere to the same rules.... European rules stipulate that debt has to be repaid. Not repaying debt amounts to theft.”

This is not a uniquely Latvian stance (in fact, Latvians soon turned away from upholding the community of rules in the context of the refugee crisis). References to a community of rules

resounded in a variety of European and global forums, so it is noteworthy that a commentator for the *New York Times* invoked precisely Latvian and Lithuanian politicians to make these points. Rankin (2015) quotes the Lithuanian president as saying that for the Greeks it is always *manana* (tomorrow), and the President of the Bank of Latvia as ironically referring to the “brave Greeks” who had voted themselves out of the eurozone. Latvian government officials, politicians, and pensioners seemed to provide quotes that aptly illustrated the conduct of proper economic, moral and European subjects. What could be a better validation of Europeanness than its endorsement by aspiring Europeans?

<HDA>The Shining Moment of Europeanness

In any historical moment of asserting or distributing Europeanness, competing and contested notions of Europeanness are at play. In the context of the financial crisis, Europeanness took on a very particular form, namely following rules, adhering to financial discipline, and tightening belts. It so happens that the Latvian historically formed self-narrative (one of suffering, resilience, and putting up with things) aligns quite well with this currently hegemonic vision of Europeanness. The moment of crisis was Latvians’ moment to be European; indeed, to be better Europeans than the Europeans themselves. The collective memory of suffering, in conjunction with the neoliberal call for the post-Soviet nation to endure for the sake of the collective, had prepared Latvians to heed the call of a Europe in crisis and to become exemplary economic subjects.

From street conversations to media articles to policy discourses and political statements, Latvia’s residents seem united in asserting their momentarily acquired Europeanness against the Greeks’ failure to conduct themselves as proper economic subjects and thus as proper Europeans.

This articulation of proper conduct and Europeanness obscures the forms of power that govern European public and political space. Insofar as experts, political commentators, and ordinary people in Latvia reproduce these powers in their critiques of “the Greek people’s” handling of the crisis, they are complicit with them.

Another element of the Latvian self-narrative might also be interesting to consider in relation to this instance of complicity with hegemonic forms of power. It is common to hear references to something called “serf mentality” in debates about Latvia’s stance toward Russia in the international political arena, and in the public and political attitudes toward Russian speakers at home. The notion of the serf mentality is meant to refer to a submissive disposition produced in contexts of domination—for example, under the Baltic German administrative, economic, and cultural rule of the territory of today’s Latvia from the thirteenth until the early twentieth century, or under the Soviet regime in the twentieth century (e.g., Matīsa 2005). Believed to be passed on from generation to generation via socialization, the serf mentality is thought of as a postcolonial mentality that prevents Latvians from becoming mature political subjects who are independent, rather than submissive.

Against the backdrop of the debates about economic crises such as those faced by Greece and Latvia, it might be argued that the two elements of the collective self-narrative—namely endurance and the serf mentality defined as a postcolonial disposition to submit to the dictates of powerful elites—work at cross purposes. In emphasizing the virtue of endurance, politicians, policymakers, commentators, and ordinary people overlook that in a context of economic crisis, this amounts to adhering to dominant economic ideologies and, in the context of the Greek sovereign debt crisis, to reproducing what Ulrich Beck (2013) has called the German Europe. Not unlike the way Latvians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries strived to show

the Germans that they were cultured people by imitating German song festivals (now a major part of Latvian public performances of identity) (Ījabs 2010), Latvians today who claim “not to understand the Greek people,” are once again imitating a dominant power in a quest to approximate Europeanness. The Greeks’ refusal to tighten belts, to implement austerity measures, or to endure, and their contrary stance of protesting the austerity measures, must therefore remain incomprehensible to Latvians. This incomprehension is the ultimate performance of Europeanness, a becoming more European than the Europeans themselves.

<BIO>Dace Dzenovska is Associate Professor of Anthropology of Migration, University of Oxford. She writes about re-bordering and migration in the context of European Union enlargement, as well as tolerance promotion and the post-socialist democratization agenda in Latvia. Her book *School of Europeanness: Tolerance and Other Lessons in Political Liberalism in Latvia* is forthcoming from Cornell University Press. She is also preparing a book manuscript entitled *The Great Departure: Staying and Leaving after Postsocialism* for Berghahn Books.

<HDA>References

Aslund, A., and Dombrovkis, V. 2011. *How Latvia Came through the Financial Crisis*.

Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Beck, U. 2013. *German Europe*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beliaev, A., and D. Dzenovska. 2009. “Some Reflections on the ‘Global’ Crisis in Latvia.”

Newsletter of the Institute for Slavic, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies, University of California, Berkeley 26(2): 3-6..

- Biehl, J. and P. Locke. "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." *Current Anthropology* 51(3): 317-351.
- Blyth, M. 2015. "A Pain in the Athens: Why Greece Isn't to Blame for the Crisis." *Foreign Affairs*, 7 July. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/greece/2015-07-07/pain-athens>.
- Böröcz, J. 2006. "Goodness is Elsewhere: The Rule of European Difference." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48(1): 110–138.
- Černiauskas, Š., and P. Raudseps. 2015. "Poorer than Greece: The EU Countries that Reject a New Athens Bailout." *The Guardian*, 9 July. Retrieved 22 November from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/09/poorer-than-greece-the-eu-countries-that-reject-a-new-athens-bailout>.
- Choonara, J. 2009. "Interview: David Harvey—Exploring the Logic of Capital." *Socialist Review*, April. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://socialistreview.org.uk/335/interview-david-harvey-exploring-logic-capital>.
- Cimdiņa, A., and I. Raubiško. 2012. *Cilvēks un darbs Latvijas laukos: sociālantropoloģisks skatījums*. Riga: Zinātne.
- De Genova, N. 2016. "The 'European' Question: Migration, Race and Postcoloniality in Europe." *Social Text* 34(3): 75–102.
- Dzenovska, D. 2007. "Neoliberal Imaginations, Subject Formation and Other National Things in Latvia, the Land that Sings," in *Representations on the Margins of Europe: Politics and Identities in the Baltic and South Caucasian States*, ed. T.. Darieva and W. Kaschuba, 114–138. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

- . 2012. *Aizbraukšana un tukšums Latvijas laukos: Starp zudušām un iespējamām nākotnēm* [Departure and emptiness in the Latvian countryside: Between lost and possible futures]. Riga: Biznesa apgāds Turība.
- . 2013a. “Historical Agency and the Coloniality of Power in Post-socialist Europe.” *Anthropological Theory* 13(4): 394–416.
- . 2013b. “The Great Departure: Rethinking National(ist) Common Sense.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(2): 201–218.
- . 2014. “Bordering Encounters, Sociality, and Distribution of the Ability to Live a Normal Life.” *Social Anthropology* 22(3): 271–287.
- . 2015. “Refugee Crisis, Compassion, and Eastern Europe.” *COMPAS* blog, October 6. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2015/refugee-crisis-compassion-and-eastern-europe/>.
- . 2016. “Eastern Europe, the Moral Subject of the Migration/Refugee Crisis, and Political Futures.” *Near Futures Online* 1(March).
- . 2017. “Coherent Selves, Viable States: Eastern Europe and the Migration/Refugee Crisis.” *Slavic Review* 76(2): 297–306.
- . 2018a. *School of Europeanness: Tolerance and Other Lessons of Political Liberalism in Latvia*. Forthcoming from Cornell University Press.
- . 2018b. “Maintaining Life and Seeking Futures Past: Staying and Leaving as Tactics of Life in Latvia.” Forthcoming in *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*.

- Eihmanis, E. n.d. "An Ever Wider Gap: The Ethnic Divide in Latvian Party Competition," in *European Party Politics in Times of Crises*, eds. Hutter, S. and H. Kriesi. Manuscript in preparation.
- Eglītis, A. 2013. "Latvian Austerity Fervor Outstrips IMF After Loan Payback." *Bloomberg Business*, 3 January. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-01-02/latvian-austerity-fervor-outstrips-imf-after-early-loan-payback>.
- Fehervary, K. 2002. "American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a 'Normal Life' in Post-Socialist Hungary." *Ethnos* 67(3): 369–400.
- Graeber, D. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. New York: Melville House.
- Gregory, C. 2012. "On Money Debt and Morality: Some Reflections on the Contribution of Economic Anthropology." *Social Anthropology* 20(4): 380–396.
- Grundule, L. 2014. "ES augstākās amatpersonas noņem cepuri Latvijas priekšā" [EU's highest functionaries tip their hats to Latvia], *Diena*, 10 January. Retrieved 10 January 2015. <http://www.diena.lv/latvija/zinas/es-augstakas-amatpersonas-nonem-cepuri-latvijas-prieksa-14039553>.
- Hage, G. 2009. "Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality," in *Waiting*, ed. G. Hage, 1–9. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Halawa, M. 2015. "In New Warsaw." *Cultural Studies* 29(5–6): 707–732.
- Hazans, M. 2011. "Latvijas emigrācijas mainīgā seja 2000–2010," in *Latvija. Pārskats Par tautas attīstību. 2010./2011. Nacionālā Identitāte, Mobilitāte, Rīcībspēja* [Latvia: Human development report 2010/2011; National Identity, Mobility, Agency], ed. SPPI. Riga: Institute of Social and Political Research, University of Latvia. Pp. 70-91.

- Herzfeld, M. 1987. *Anthropology through the Looking Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2013. “The European Crisis and Cultural Intimacy.” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 13(3): 491–497.
- Hirsch, F. 1995. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hudson, M., and J. Sommers. 2012. “Latvia Is No Model for an Austerity Drive.” *Financial Times*, 21 June. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/73314cbe-baee-11e1-81e0-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3goIQ67wG>.
- Ijabs, I. 2010. “Strange Baltic Liberalism: Paul Schiemann’s Political Thought Revisited.” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40(4): 495–515.
- James, D. 2015. *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Jansen, S. 2014. “On Not Moving Well Enough: Temporal Reasoning in Sarajevo Yearnings for ‘Normal Lives.’” *Current Anthropology* 55(S9): S74–S84.
- Knight, D. 2015. *History, Time, and Economic Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Krastev, I. 2015. “Eastern Europe’s Compassion Deficit.” *New York Times*, 8 September.
- “Latvia Home Ownership Rate 2007–2015.” n.d. *Trading Economics*. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/latvia/home-ownership-rate>.
- Lazzarato, M. 2012. *The Making of the Indebted Man: Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Martin, T. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Matīsa, K. 2005. “Latvieši – kalpadvēselesvairerevolucionāri?” *Neatkarīgārītaavīze*, 17 January. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/292944-latviesi_kalpa_dveseles_vai_revolucionari.
- Mufti, A. 2014. “Stathis Gourgouris Interview, Aamir Mufti.” *Greek Left Review*, July. Retrieved 22 November, 2014 from <http://greekleftreview.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/stathis-gourgouris-interviews-aamir-mufti/>
- Paalzow, A. 2015. “Latvian Lessons: Here’s How Riga Overcame Its Own Economic Crisis—and What That Says about Greece.” *Foreign Affairs*, 20 July. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/latvia/2015-07-20/latvian-lessons>.
- Peebles, G. 2010. “The Anthropology of Credit and Debt.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 225–240.
- Power, S. 2015. “To Understand the Eurozone Crisis, Consider Culture.” *Capital Ideas*, 17 June. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.chicagobooth.edu/capideas/magazine/summer-2015/to-understand-the-eurozone-crisis-consider-culture>.
- Rankin, J. 2015. “Eurozone Tells Greece Not to Expect Debt Relief in Near Future.” *The Guardian*, 7 July. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jul/07/eurozone-calls-on-athens-to-get-serious-over-greece-debt-crisis>.
- Rausing, S. 2004. *History, Memory and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia: The End of a Collective Farm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Simecka, M., and B. Tallis. 2015. "Fighting the Wrong Battle: A Crisis of Liberal Democracy, Not Migration." *Eurozine*, 4 September. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/michal-simecka-benjamin-tallis/fighting-wrong-battle-central-europe%E2%80%99s-crisis-is-o>.
- "Slavojs Žižeks par Grieķijas referendumu: 'grieķi izdarījuši pareizo izvēli.'" 2015. *Delfi Bizness*, 8 July. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <http://www.delfi.lv/bizness/pasaule/slavojs-zizeks-par-griekijas-referendumu-grieki-izdarijusi-pareizo-izveli.d?id=46193343#ixzz3fln89TDE>.
- Slezkine, Y. 1994. "USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53(2): 414–452.
- Weber, M. 1897. "'Objectivity' in Social Sciences." *Marxist Internet Archive*. Retrieved 22 November 2015 from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/weber.htm#s2>.
- . 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parson. London: G. Allen and Unwin.
- Zavisca, J. 2012. *Housing the New Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Parts of the section "Learning to Live with and without Credit" were previously published in Beliaev and Dzenovska (2009). Material included in this chapter was authored by Dzenovska, and is reprinted with permission.

[Text credit to come for material reprinted from *School of Europeanness: Tolerance and Other Lessons in Political Liberalism in Latvia*, forthcoming from Cornell University Press]

<HDA>Notes

1. For example, Beck (2013) has recently suggested that today's Europe is a German Europe.
2. Despite the vote, the bailout package, which demanded implementation of severe austerity measures and privatization of public assets, was approved by the Greek parliament in the early morning hours of 16 July 2015. Much of the package was likely to go toward financing the unsustainable public debt (acknowledged as such even by the IMF), built up through a combination of government mismanagement of financial affairs and the Eurozone's refusal to let Greece default in 2011, instead providing more unsustainable loans with which to pay back private creditors. For background, see Blyth (2015), Knight (2015).
3. It should be noted that I did not conduct ethnographic research on debt; these reflections are based on the observations I have accumulated in the course of other ethnographic projects in Latvia and on analysis of public discourse.
4. The Latvian state is often referred to not as a nation-state, but as a national state (*nacionāla valsts*), that is, as a state that gains legitimacy from ensuring the existence and flourishing of the cultural community of Latvians.
5. It should be noted that Valdis Dombrovskis took over the post of the European Commissioner for financial stability, financial services, and capital markets union after the Brexit vote and the resignation of Jonathan Hill.
6. See Power (2015) for resonant observations of the Irish response to the crisis.
7. About 10% of Latvia's residents are estimated to have emigrated in the last ten years (Hazans 2011).

8. The collapse of Soviet and Eastern European socialisms enabled an unprecedented expansion of finance capitalism, not only in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but also in other places, such as South Africa (James 2015), where the 1990s introduced watershed changes,.

9. Statistics show an 80.9% home ownership rate in Latvia (which peaked at 87% in 2009), which is well above that of the Euro currency zone (66.6%), USA (63.7%), and UK (64.6), but about the same level as Russia (83.50) (Latvia Home Ownership Rate 2007–2015 n.d.). See Zavisca (2012) for an extensive analysis of housing in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

10. The title of the broadcast was “Who Will Be the Last Sirtaki Dancer?” The show is available here in Latvian: <http://ltv.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/08.07.2015-sastregumstunda.-krize-griekija.-kurs-dejos-sirtaki-pedejais.id52470/>.

11

http://financenet.tvnet.lv/viedokli/567005grieki_varetu_pamacities_no_latviesiem_dazas_noderi_gas_lietas