States of Indifference: Administering Solidarity in Post-Crisis Athens

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Oxford

Russell Henshaw

Wolfson College

Contents

Word count: 84,245

Abbreviations

ECB	European Central Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KKE	Greek Communist Party
KEP	Citizen's Service Centre
PASOK	Panhellenic socialist movement; social-democratic party
SKAI	Conservative, private TV channel
SYRIZA	Political coalition of the radical left
TROIKA	Shorthand for: the European Commission; the European Central Bank; the International Monetary Fund
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Abstract

Characterised as the Solidarity Movement, the grassroots response that followed the Greek debt crisis has widely been understood as a challenge to neoliberal imperatives and an alternative to austerity. This thesis upsets such understandings by attending to the ironies of solidarity. Unpicking anthropology's moral attachments to the Solidarity Movement, it questions the limits of scholarship that presupposes resistance, and where solidarity collapses with the idea of the 'alternative'. Contrary to prevailing academic accounts, solidarity was not harmonious but rooted in fractured understandings of dependency, as volunteers struggled with their own habits of care and those of others. Driven by anxieties about corruption, the volunteers developed an administrative regime that limited how participants interacted with the space of solidarity. Through this proceduralisation, the volunteers displaced the indifference of the bureaucratic state with an indifferent rendering of solidarity. Egalitarianism had the further effect of compelling them to set themselves apart as the arbiters of equality. By cultivating themselves as disinterested agents, the volunteers concealed the ethical nature of their efforts and distinguished charity from solidarity. Pursuing solidarity thus led the volunteers to confront a number of ironies: that the space they created was not one of harmony but repeated conflicts; how a longing for the mundane was enfolded in radical aspirations; and that caring meant finding ways not care. In conclusion, the thesis considers the interplay of engagement and disengagement, offering a comparison between volunteers and anthropologists, by considering them as adjacent moral subjects. Interrogating the power rooted in the ability render ethical attachments, it reflects on how solidarity participates in a nostalgic desire for certainty in a moment, concurrent in anthropology, whereby potentials of self and engagement have become occupied by a politics of compassion.

Acknowledgements

So many people made this thesis possible, in ways both unexpected and unseen: I can never hope to thank them all, or enough. Of the gratitude that I am able to express, I would first like to thank my army of supervisors. Thanks to Bob Parkin for taking on the project, and to Marcus Banks who sadly passed away before the thesis was finished. Many thanks to David Zietlyn for stepping in, and to Manolis Prastinakis for his excellent advice and incredible support getting over the final hurdle.

Thanks to the Association of Social Anthropologists and the Royal Anthropological Institute for the award of a Radcliffe-Brown and Firth grant, which came at critical moment when writing up.

I would like to thank James Holman, without whom I never could have started the project. My thanks to Stefanos Gatsios for finding me when I was lost. Thank you also to Thalia Gatsios and the Gatsios clan for making me feel at home for the first time in Greece. Thank you to Konstantinos Konstantinidis for his humour, and endless patience with my many questions about everything. Also, for being a Pisces. My thanks to Stefanos Arxilleos for his friendship and understanding, and for the time spent living in his beautiful home, where one of these chapters was written and the thesis was, appropriately, finished. Thank you also to Xoufta and Bart who both kept me company while I was writing.

Thank you to Roza Perakis who not only taught me Greek but a great many other things. Luca Ranucci, mio fratello, thanks for living beautifully together in Athens. Thanks also to Guido Nador for his crazy friendship that kept me sane in the final years.

Special thanks to James Wright who not only endured my many complaints and read all my chapters, but also gave me somewhere to write when I needed it most. Equally, to Letizia Bonanno for her solidarity as a fellow mis-anthropologist (her words), who took the time to read all my work, and who has given me so much advice and support over the years.

Most of all, I would like to thank the volunteers, without whom this thesis would not have been possible: it is an echo of their hard work.

Preface

In 2015, when I arrived in Greece to prepare for ethnographic research on austerity, then Prime Minster, Alexis Tsipras, was embroiled in negotiations over bailout funds and associated austerity measures that the political party he represented, SYRIZA, had vowed to resist. The country had recently been shaken by the after-effects of the 2009-2010 Global Depression that sparked the Eurozone Crisis. The Greek state figured as one of the central actors in this latter crisis, dependent on European funds after it was locked out of private markets. Recession and austerity prompted mass protests, a political mood that had propelled the formerly fringe party SYRIZA into government. In June of that year, the anti-austerity government faced a stark choice: resist the demands of European creditors and potentially crash-out of the Eurozone, or capitulate and accept one of the strictest courses of fiscal austerity in modern history.

Pregnant in this international spectacle were competing imaginaries of governance that pitted austerity, and the (neo)liberal problematic it embodied, against a potentially radical alternative: solidarity. Faced with suddenly limited political and economic horizons, a kaleidoscope of grassroots initiatives coalesced into what came to be known as the Solidarity Movement. Among the forms it took were time-banks, direct producer-consumer exchanges, social pharmacies and dentistry, free heath clinics, food banks, educational classes, social cafes, and social supermarkets. More than a practical response to immediate needs, solidarity promised not only new ways of doing things but an alternative vision of civic life that departed from liberal narratives that postured Greece as a half-realised democracy, unable to shake off its corrupt past. At this same time, solidarity within Greece dovetailed with a spirit of resistance that, in turn, tested the integrity and solidarity of the European Union. As core states demanded that

peripheral counterparts conform to its fiscal agendas, Greece's uncertain future threatened the democratic ideals of the European Union.

The intended purpose of this thesis was to upset the assumptions that shaped how the Greek debt crisis unfolded, and how it was subsequently interpreted. Originally conceived as an enquiry into the meaning and consequences of austerity policy, it soon took another direction when it became clear that, beneath its radical surface, solidarity was not exactly an alternative to austerity but a co-participant in the imaginaries upon which austerity rested. In the rush to understand the sudden and novel changes in Greece, these overlaps between solidarity and austerity had been overlooked in favour of descriptions of a moral drama that presupposed a confrontation between the economic and the social. Problematising this idea, my argument instead attends to the ambiguities of solidarity, examining the practices made possible through the imagination of this ideological agenda. My ethnographic research took place over the course of a year in '*Το Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα* – The Bryonas Solidarity Network'. One of a variety of similar organisations, according to their own description the group was formed to substitute for a 'weak' state. Operated on a voluntary basis, the support offered by the group was given in the form of regular donations of food, distributed to those living in the neighbourhood who had been assessed as unable to support themselves financially. In the context of restricted unemployment benefits and contracting pensions, the *diktyo* offered a vital service to those who found themselves living in the political and economic margins of Greece. Yet those who ran the *diktyo* also lingered on these margins: mostly elderly volunteers who, for various reasons, had been attracted by the promise of solidarity. These novel engagements were not simply a space of giving but also defined by the need to help. In this space of conflicting needs *for* and *to* help, the idea of solidarity emerged out of existing habits and anxieties about debt, the state, and care. Pursuing solidarity ultimately led the volunteers to confront a

number of ironies: that the space they created was not one of harmony but repeated conflicts; how a longing for the mundane was enfolded in radical aspirations; and that caring meant finding ways not to care.

Thesis Outline

Introduction:

Engagement

Introducing the thesis, I address the motivations that prompted the research and situate these among the tensions that the research process elicited. Attending to the ethical and moral orientations of this research, I describe how the challenge of working as an ethnographer-volunteer prompted the central theme of the thesis: the moral politics of engagement and disengagement.

Crisis?

To establish background, I begin with a brief overview of the Greek debt crisis, and how the competing imaginaries of austerity and solidarity were imbricated in these events. Confronting the idea of crisis, I trace how competing accounts of the accumulation of Greek national debt were implicated in agendas that demanded Greece reform and accept austerity measures, and the appeal of the Solidarity Movement as a potential alternative to them.

1 – Solidarity

This chapter addresses the theme of solidarity directly, establishing the historical context of the idea and how this conceptual background translated into early treatments of the Solidarity Movement, which I argue romanticised a confrontation between economic and social forces. It asks what the limits of scholarship are, where it presupposes resistance, and when the idea of solidarity collapses into that of the 'alternative'. In face of these difficulties, I propose that solidarity be treated ironically, embracing the ambiguities it elicits. To further this critical stance, I reference literature

on humanitarianism in order to better provide a vantage point to think about solidarity and its relationship with affective politics.

2 – Debts Past

This chapter addresses Greece's past and how perceptions of solidarity formed in the shadow of historical debts and anxieties about dependency. It examines anthropology's sometimes contentious relationship to history and how Greece formed an uneasy border in treatments of Europe's past and present. Here, I argue that liberal attachments to history obscure the fact that Greece has always been a debtor nation and client state of the West. Both the 'Classical Debt' and state indebtedness have driven preoccupations with the country's uncertain liberal identity, thereby securing reformist agendas subject to extra-national approval. Interrogating this history of debt, I set out the conceptual terrain upon which the Solidarity Movement rested: a novel form of political engagement and break with past.

3 – Ironies of Solidarity

In this chapter, I introduce the ethnographic setting of the research: The Byronas Solidarity Network. I describe how habits of waiting and imaginaries about bureaucracy formed a battleground for competing imaginaries of solidarity. If the volunteers practiced solidarity in terms of an aspiration to reform the state, the beneficiaries treated it as an auxiliary of the state and repetition of the status quo. Solidarity was not harmonious but rooted in fractured understandings of dependency and care, as the volunteers struggled to manage their own habits and those of others. Despite its inclusive and egalitarian mandate, it transpired that solidarity, in practice, was limited and partial, a difficulty that the volunteers struggled to resolve.

4 – Administering Solidarity

Framed by the idea of antipolitics, this chapter details how the volunteers developed solidarity not as a radical political engagement but as a set of administrative practices. It describes the ways that the volunteers worked to place limits on solidarity through the management of space and administrative techniques, driven by anxieties about unfairness and corruption. It raises the ironies that the volunteers displaced the indifference of the state with an indifferent bureaucratic version of solidarity, and that egalitarianism meant setting themselves apart as arbiters of equality.

5 – This is Not Charity

This chapter addresses what was obscured by the actualisation of solidarity as a material practice, examining how a discourse of indifference and neutrality served as a moral critique that repudiated itself. Despite their disinterest, it shows how apparently mundane meetings allowed participants to congregate as a moral community and perform their identity as volunteers. Solidarity as practice emphasised self-control and discipline, which were important presentations whereby the volunteers signalled themselves as reliable conductors of solidarity. Concealing the ethical in this way, allowed them to neutralise personal interests and so distinguish charity from solidarity.

6 – Moral Subjects

Concluding the thesis, I present a comparison between volunteers and anthropologists, arguing that both participate in comparable moral projects. Framing the preoccupations of anthropology as a discipline in terms of the volunteers' motivations, I consider the power that resides in the rendering of ethical attachments, thereby reflecting on the politics of engagement and disengagement. Considering these attachments, I argue that solidarity expressed a nostalgic desire for certainty in a moment, concurrent in

anthropology, whereby potentials of self and engagement have become occupied by a politics of compassion.

Introduction

Engagement

When I initially proposed this research, my goal was to produce an ethnographic account of austerity. Having spent time studying economics, I wanted to confront the very different assumptions held in the two disciplines and thereby contribute to an anthropology of economics. In 2014, the project was timely, being set against the backdrop of a widespread implementation of austerity policy following the 2007-2009 Great Recession, a moment that indexed the increasing prevalence of market logic in modes of governance. Across Europe, governments of countries that included the United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Romania, and Bulgaria, adopted stringent courses of fiscal austerity. Among them, Greece was the most remarkable, providing an extreme setting for austerity on the geographical and sentimental borders of Europe. Despite this, locating austerity within Greece proved to be a challenge. As an ethnographic object, austerity was seemingly everywhere and nowhere. To apprehend it, I fixed on the Solidarity Movement, in the hope that it would bring me into contact with those directly affected by economic reforms. Solidarity seemed to present the opportunity to at once address the devolution of welfare to bodies outside the confines of the state, the contradiction of liberal values in Europe, and the moral complex of voluntarism. My academic motivation was to understand how belonging, rights, and obligations between states and citizens were being refashioned in relation to economic discourses of austerity as a marker of inclusion within Europe.

Accounting for these motivations, my point is to emphasise that, like the volunteers' engagement with solidarity, my research was prompted by anxieties about austerity. Concerned with the implications of these policies, we shared similar preoccupations: welfare, reform, radical engagement, alternative forms of social relation, the failure of

the state, and unease about the relationship between social and economic life. Given that such concerns are deeply rooted in the history of the social sciences, drawing a line between the volunteers' experiments in solidarity and my own ethnographic project was not straightforward. In fact, it was precisely the potential novelty of these engagements that drew us together. If my interest stemmed from an academic vantage, this was soon subsumed by the practical expectations placed on me by the volunteers. Most days, my hands were kept busy under their directions, not taking notes, but instead passing out bread. Working as a volunteer, I encountered the same choices and dilemmas as the people around me. Solidarity was not something abstract but consisted of daily personal confrontations between competing ethical demands placed on me by those who occupied the space of solidarity, volunteers and beneficiaries alike. Just as my ethnography problematises the terms of the volunteers' engagement with the beneficiaries, our mutual engagement warrants further consideration, and I want to highlight how the volunteers engaged with me, primarily, as a volunteer.

During research, my time was spent, predominately, volunteering, much as those around me. I attended the same shifts, collections, bazaars, festivals, and celebrations that the volunteers organised. Visiting them for the first time, like any other prospective volunteer, I was inducted with a quick tour and an invitation to attend the next weekly meeting. At these first meetings, tasks were assigned to me by the senior volunteers. Somewhat anxious to clarify my purpose as a researcher after these first few weeks, I arranged to explain the research in more depth at the next weekly meeting. Waiting for the meeting to begin, I chatted about the project with one of the established volunteers, Eugenia, who seemed to easily grasp my intentions. When the time came for me to speak, I stood and began to explain my aims. As I hesitated to express myself in limited Greek, Eugenia stood next to me and began to talk over me, explaining better than I was able, the purpose of the research. After acknowledging Eugenia's summary with a few

polite questions, the discussion quickly moved on. The volunteers were not openly interested in my research or, I argue, in my role as researcher. It was not I who defined the terms of our engagement but the volunteers who defined my role among them, specifically, as a volunteer.

Detailing these experiences, I intend to upset assumptions about ethnographic engagement and practice moral reflexivity as advocated by Fassin (2012: 5). Writing decades earlier, Geertz, in fact, prefigured Fassin's argument when he reflected on the ethical dimensions of research: 'the moral quality of the experience of working social scientists, the ethical life they lead while pursuing their inquiries, is virtually never discussed except in the most general terms' (1968: 140). Attempting to redress this by interrogating the ethical terms of fieldwork, he argues that the ethnographic encounter is a tenuous relationship that depends upon a fictive sense of belonging built willingly on both sides. Writing as an established voice in anthropology, and in the immediacy of newly challenging postcolonial contexts, his presentation of the terms of ethnographic engagement differs from my own as a junior researcher nearly fifty years later. Unlike Geertz, who assumed an unresolvable hierarchy between himself and the people with whom he worked, my own experience was one of deliberate inferiority.

For those new to the social terrain of their research, practicing ethnography in many ways resembles being a child. Unable to speak proficiently and without the social competence of an adult, budding researchers rely on those around them to learn appropriate ways of speaking and acting. In my own ethnography, this incompetence blended with my broader training as a volunteer. At 35, I was the youngest among the volunteers, the majority of whom were aged 50 or above. Through repeated references to my youth and status as a student, the volunteers highlighted and reinforced my situation as a younger dependent. In affectionate forms of address, they commented on how I should direct my future life and so fulfilled familial expectations dictating that

they should guide younger persons such as myself. My presence as a volunteer was itself an indulgence, as they accepted my limited capabilities and defined my role as an assistant. This dependency was often performed through food, a strong index of familiarity. Offering me snacks and treats during my regular shifts, at festivals and celebrations where food was present, they repeatedly extorted me to eat more. Anna, whom I usually assisted handing out bread, often invited me to eat small pastries or bread sticks, sometimes going so far as to put them directly into my mouth followed by the imperative: '*φάε*! - eat!'.

Describing these interactions illustrates how the volunteers chose to place me in a dependent position. Yet it is the ambiguities of these acts of affection that stood out to me during fieldwork. As their junior, I was both protected and constrained. Inclusion through these terms of familiarity shaped our respective experiences of the ethnographic encounter. Towards the end of fieldwork, I was keen to try and communicate better the purpose of my research. With an improved level of Greek, I wrote and translated a brief ethnographic representation of a typical day of work at the *diktyo*. Before handing out copies at one of the weekly meetings, I asked friends to check the coherence of my text. Apprehensive about how the volunteers would receive my ethnographic portrait of them, I had not anticipated what would strike them as most important about it. After a brief reading, the volunteers began to correct the grammar of the text. A number of them found pens and began to make editions, correcting the syntax and suggesting more appropriate words. Apart from these corrections, they made little comment except for expressing amusement at some of the common scenes they recognised. Finally, in a commanding voice that everyone could hear, Dafni announced that my use of language was so bad that she would need to take a copy home and rewrite it. A few weeks later she returned the revised copy to me, now filled with a more advanced level of vocabulary that I was not familiar with. As a teacher of Ancient Greek, her command of

the language exceeded my own. If Danfi first set out to make a grammatical revision, the sense of the text underwent a concurrent translation. Where I had reported the ambiguous and sometimes fraught interactions that often characterised work at *diktyo*, Dafni glossed over these in her own account. Her rendering of my own description instead evoked a harmonious place of solidarity that resembled those descriptions found on the group's website. Her translation read as follows:

The Byronas Solidarity Network

> *The Byronas Solidarity Network is headquartered at number 36 Kiprou Street and was formed in 2012 by a group of volunteers with the goal of supporting fellow citizens struggling to cover their basic needs. It operates on the basis of decisions taken at a meeting that takes places every Monday evening at 19.30. Participating at the meeting are volunteers and some beneficiaries, discussing the issues of the past week and scheduled actions for the coming period.*
>
> *The Network operates from Monday to Friday 10.00-13.00 with shifts of five people. Usually, one person is responsible for the shift and sits at the desk where they oversee the documentation of each beneficiary arriving to take food. One or two people are positioned alongside the desk and distribute bread collected from the surplus of bakeries the previous day, and two people are inside where they prepare bags of food ready to be donated. The Network distributes long-lasting food (flour, sugar, pasta, legumes, rice, milk, conserved tomatoes, juice, and oil) on a regular basis to around 900 families resident in the municipality of Byronas. This number increases weekly from new registrations.*
>
> *The food is gathered from the offers of customers at supermarkets in the municipality. Every second Friday and Saturday, missions are organised by members of the Network, where they inform people about our actions with leaflets and collect food. However, because need is great, usually in the intervening period there are shortcomings that are covered by purchases from the supermarket. Money for these purchases comes from the*

donations of individuals in the shape of supermarket coupons, or from various actions such as bazaars and festivals. Furthermore, the volunteers make handmade jewellery, and along with used books, exchange them for olive oil, every month, at the Producer's Market organised by the Municipality of Byronas at Karaoli and Dimitriou park. For offering the Network one litre of oil, each person is given one book or item of jewellery. Moreover, available on a daily basis, there are bread and pastries from the previous day, offered by many local bakeries and collected by volunteers. At the same time, there are storage spaces that contain second-hand clothes, games, books, notebooks, household items, which are offered daily to all the beneficiaries.

With my voluntary work and experience of one year at the Byronas Solidarity Network, I can describe a day of work there. It is Friday 16/06/2017. Today, Dafni, who is responsible for the shift, arrives around 9.30am. In the following ten minutes, the other volunteers arrive, among them myself. We drink our coffee, chatting for fifteen minutes. At 10am exactly, the main entrance is opened and the beneficiaries, who have gathered outside waiting in a line, begin to enter. Dafni sits at the desk and opens the records that contain handwritten cards for each of the beneficiaries scheduled for today's date, verifies them, and makes a note for each new date for the receipt of food. At the same time, she answers the telephone, which never stops ringing, giving whatever information is requested. Sotiris and I give out bread, considering as much as possible, the preference of each person according to type and quantity of bread. Mirto can be found at the entrance and helps the elderly and mothers with babies to come down the stairs. In the inside space, Lena prepares bags with food that will be given away. We all work quickly, without rest, to be able to help today's beneficiaries. In this way, without our noticing, the clock approaches 1pm and the shift draws to an end.

Today a nice surprise awaits us. It is Sotiris' birthday and he treats us to some tsipouro[1] and meze. Of course, many times at the end of the shift we end the day with a

[1] A popular spirit distilled from grape products.

sip of wine or meze, usually brought by one of the volunteers. In this way, we add a happy note, come together, work better and effectively as one big family, solving both the most unimportant and the greatest problems that frequently arise.

The Byronas Solidarity Network demonstrates sympathy to our fellow human beings, supports mutual help and the unity of people, and tries to find solutions where the state is weak. For me, it was a great school that taught me the essential and real meaning of the word 'voluntarism' and 'solidarity', not only in theory but in practice. These two words within the Network acquire the flesh and bones of moral duty and demonstrate their universal value. In our eyes, now, these words will be two pure jewels that, whoever wears them, will be distinguished for kindness in offering love towards their fellow being, for selflessness, and humanity. I understand how voluntarism is not an opportunity for occupation, and solidarity is not repaid in return. It is a state of life that tries to solve economic, social, humanitarian, and political problems. In conclusion, the best reward for me was the thanks, the hope and smile that I received from powerless people.[2]

Dafni's reinterpretation of my ethnographic account complicates assumptions about our respective agency. Aside from the positive tone of her description, communicated through scenes of people supporting one another, the final paragraph stands out. No longer descriptive but analytic, the change in style reflects the fact that a comparable paragraph was not present in my original version. For Dafni, something missing from my text prompted her to expand upon it. I argue that the purpose of this addition was to teach me about solidarity. Her choice of the word school indicates that she saw my ethnographic experience as a learning experience, something consistent with my status as a student. In light of this, her choice to narrate my thoughts in the first person was directive, and a way to educate me about solidarity.

[2] For the original before Dafni's rendering, see appendix.

Our competing visions of the *diktyo* alongside the dynamics of dependency that defined our engagement, upset somewhat Geertz's assertion of the fictive bond that he argued masked a hierarchy inherent in ethnographic encounters. From the outset of my fieldwork, the volunteers actively challenged this assumption. At the end of my first shift, Sotiris took me outside and asked me if I needed any support from the *diktyo*. Like any other person volunteering there, I was entitled to a regular donation of food. Elaborating these complexities of our engagement not only exposes the blurred line between ethnographer and volunteer but complicates the assumption that places the ethnographer in an advantaged position. A student among mostly retired middle-class professionals, I was treated as a dependent by the volunteers who held little regard for me as a researcher. More important for them was to shape me as a young man under their supervision.[3] In this case, there was no fiction of ethnography because it was the volunteers who defined my agency among them not as an ethnographer but as a younger and less capable volunteer. In the grey area between ethnographer, interlocutor and volunteer, who had the power to define whom was less straightforward than in Geertz's portrayal: much as the volunteers found in their pursuit of solidarity, the premise of equality was ethically problematic in practice.

Exploring these ambiguities of interdependence is not an attempt to resolve any inequalities between the volunteers and myself but rather reflect upon this encounter reflexively, to better understand the moral politics entailed in the practice of ethnography and solidarity respectively. As well as stressing our differences, the things that we, and our respective projects, shared in common, these reflections complicate the idea that such relationships can be reduced to straightforward hierarchies. What stands

[3] Bonanno relates a similar experience in her ethnography of social pharmacies in Athens whereby fellow volunteers worked to fashion her according to their ideals of womanhood, aggressively and affectionately, through gossip (2019: 133-136).

out in this analysis is how the volunteers regularly patronised me in a setting in which patronage was, officially, repudiated. Where beneficiaries were largely set outside this sphere of intimacy, I was included and subject to personal obligations. This co-existence of liberal and 'illiberal' entanglements points to the complexities of subjectification in circumstances of solidarity and aspirations of equality. Relating these themes also illustrates how affiliations in my experience of the ethnographic encounter were ethically tense. With affection, the volunteers placed me in a position of dependency and obligation so forcing me, like them, to struggle with my own impartiality. As my ethnography goes on to address, the work of solidarity was rooted in ethical dilemmas: to break rules and disregard the wishes of the other volunteers in order to help people, and the recurring potential to disenfranchise others by offering or withdrawing help. In the conflict over solidarity between beneficiaries and volunteers, it was impossible to remain neutral when my dependence on the volunteers was clear. Like them, I was caught in a pull between obligation and neutrality as solidarity variously created connections or alternatively refused them, the experience of which elicited the central theme of my thesis: the moral politics of engagement and disengagement.

Working alongside the volunteers for a year, this dependency made it difficult to navigate writing this thesis. As Dafni's response to my writing illustrates, my ethnographic portrayal of the *diktyo* compromised the volunteers' self-image. As I go on to describe in Chapter 5, this carefully-maintained image was critical for the continued operation of the *diktyo*. To mitigate any negative impact, all names of those referred to in the ethnography have been anonymised. When deposited, the work will further be subject to a 3-year embargo, leaving almost a decade gap between field research and access to the thesis. This tension between the demands of ethnographic rigour and my obligation to the volunteers proved critical for shaping the direction this project has

taken. My position especially as a volunteer forced me to ask: what does it mean to be in solidarity as a researcher? This question was a constant presence as I conducted ethnographic research, and one that I return to address explicitly when concluding the thesis.

Oscillating between the role of ethnographer and volunteer forced me to consider the respective engagements provoked by both practices and so directed the course of my research. Practically, my ethnography took the form of participation observation, consisting of volunteering for regular shifts, helping out at supermarket collections, setting up and assisting at bazaars, and generally offering help when requested. Yet the balance of this activity, participating versus observing, in this ethnographic setting meant that my experience of research unfolded in very specific ways. Given how the volunteers situated me, as already noted, more as volunteer than researcher, had the effect of both opening up and foreclosing avenues of inquiry. My identity as a volunteer was a point of entry into the space of solidarity, focusing my attention on issues of access and inclusion. As the volunteers made my affiliation to them clear by virtue of this identity, they also limited my capacity to interact with the beneficiaries. Compelled to take sides in this way, forced me to consider the unevenness of solidarity and my ethnographic rendering of it, a split that ultimately gave rise to an interest in conflicting representations of solidarity.

As a volunteer, I was continually occupied with practical tasks: ordering, moving, sorting, tidying, storing, collecting, and distributing things. The nature of this work therefore focused my attention on the *diktyo* as a material space and set of practices that maintained it. Busyness further underscored the importance of time, and how it was used to order things and people. Equally, it limited my capacity to take notes, just as constant interruptions and the need to get things done inhibited discussion and

reflection, prompting questions about what kind of political space the *diktyo* represented. As thoughts and discussions were consumed in the activity work, my own role and experiences of volunteering thus became a more critical point of consideration, giving rise to the central themes of my research: the meaning of engagement and detachment.

Working alongside the other volunteers, I was confronted with same pull of dependency as people placed demands on me, and the same increasing detachment in the face of such claims. Situations that had at first surprised or shocked me, soon became banal. The initial thrill of research waned as solidarity and ethnography both merged as matters of routine. I thus accompanied the other volunteers on their journey of detachment and experienced the increasing proceduralisation of solidarity. Like them, I was caught in an uncomfortable space between compassion and indifference, as they struggled with the radical legacy of solidarity on a day-to-day basis[4]. Such contrasts between the mundane and ethical led me to contemplate the overlaps between my role as ethnographer and volunteer, reflections that ultimately prompted the final chapter of this thesis, in which I consider solidarity and anthropology as adjacent moral projects.

Ethical Connections

Setting out my ethnography as a form of engagement and thereby reflecting on my relationship with the volunteers focuses attention on one of the critical, but theoretically challenging aspects promoted by the study of solidarity: navigating the force of connection it implies. Juxtaposing Geertz's fictive bond with Dafni's rendition of my ethnographic portrait, focuses attention on how both anthropology and solidarity justify

[4] In this respect, the volunteers experiments with solidarity recall the ambiguities faced by activists following the transition to democracy in Serbia. Struggling with anxieties about power, activists were compelled towards proceduralism as a means to safeguard against personal interests, corruption, and accusations of being 'too political' (Greenberg 2014).

themselves ethically precisely through the idea of connection. In Geertz's case, the idea of a fictive bond diffuses anxieties about the latent hierarchy of the ethnographic encounter. Danfni's account mobilised a similar fiction, eliding conflict through descriptions of harmony and horizontality. If the ethnographic reality that I experienced was less straightforward, this comparison underscores what anthropology and solidarity often have in common: mediating connections among strangers or those potentially very different or distant from oneself. Ironically, as I will go on to argue, it was precisely that which the volunteers and I shared in common that made navigating solidarity a personal, ethical, and theoretical challenge. In many ways, this thesis is a response to that challenge, as I unpick not only our affinities, but the idea of connection itself. At the same time, solidarity implied not only things in common but that which was different, in the form of a break with the past embodied through alternative ways of doing things. It is from this vantage that I begin the thesis: how the potential alternative of solidarity was rooted in the idea of crisis and, in turn, the perceived breakdown of social connections.

Crisis

In 2020, the OECD estimated the debt to GDP ratio of Greece to be 236.5%, ranking it highest of all countries in the world.[5] In this section, I briefly recount some of the events whereby the Greek government and, by proxy, people living in Greece were left responsible for repaying this vast debt. Taking a critical view of the idea of crisis, I examine how competing explanations of Greek national indebtedness provided the basis not only for reformist agendas embodied by austerity, but how these same conditions formed the space in which ideas about solidarity developed and gave them saliency. I start not with the Greek debt crisis itself, but with an event seemingly far removed, situated almost a decade earlier: Greece's accession to the Eurozone.

A Greek Crisis?

When Greece joined the Euro in 2001, this event represented the culmination of a historical trajectory that bound the country to the West, both symbolically and financially. The political imperative that Greece be fully included in Europe, however, proved to be of greater importance than the government's fiscal standing. That the country did not meet the criteria for inclusion set out in the Maastricht treaty was an open secret in Europe. To overcome this hurdle, accounting techniques were employed to 'massage' key economic indicators and thereby permit the country to join the Euro. Once accepted, borrowing costs in Greece dropped as lenders took advantage of rates that converged with those in the central Eurozone. Germany, and the EU more broadly, had effectively become the guarantor of Greek debt. With access to cheap credit, the Greek government began to borrow extensively. Greece's successful bid to host the 2004 Olympic Games converged with its full integration into the EU, a global spectacle

[5] https://data.oecd.org/greece.htm [accessed 12/09/21]

affirming the restoration of Greece's ancient past and arrival as a modern, European country. Like the state, private banks also found credit suddenly cheaper, lending and borrowing extensively, activity that translated into a credit boom across the country.

While credit flows continued, this system of borrowing was sustainable but following the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, lending halted. Without expanding credit, borrowers found their debts were no longer sustainable: Greece had become over-leveraged. In 2009, when the global recession was beginning to be felt in Europe, the newly elected Greek government announced a revision to official debt statistics. The deficit was revised from 6-8% to 15.7% of GDP and the debt from 113% of GDP to 130% (Matsaganis 2013: 152). Already nervous markets became wary of lending to Greece, further pushing up borrowing costs and compounding difficulties in state finances. Unable to service its debt in the private sector, the government formally requested assistance from the EU in 2010.

Bail-out funds were granted but with conditions attached: Greece was ordered to undergo a strict regime of austerity measures. National industries were to be privatised, taxes adjusted, healthcare spending and pensions cut, welfare provisions streamlined, amid a broader program of reform designed to shrink the public sector and modernise the economy. The government accepted the terms and bail-out funds were subsequently distributed. Much of this money went to service existing debt and to prop-up the Greek banking system that was, by that point, effectively insolvent. If the solvency of the government and financial system were supported by the bail-out,[6] it was the general public that experienced the direct impacts of austerity. Rising taxes and welfare cuts added to the burden of recession. In 2012, unemployment reached 24.2% (Karafolas &

[6] Between 2010-2015, the majority of bail-out funds were dispersed to repay existing debt, service interest payments, and to recapitalise the banking sector (Rocholl & Stahmer 2016: 11-15). Less than 5% of funds went to support the Greek fiscal budget (Rocholl & Stahmer 2016: 16).

Alexandrakis 2015: 85), peaking at 27.5% in 2013 (Theodoropoulou 2016: 30). For those below 25 years of age, the unemployment rate was almost double in the same year, at 53.1% (Bell & Blanchflower 2015: 2). Falling tax-receipts, increased borrowing costs and the deflationary effects of austerity pushed public debt up further, until it reached 180% of GDP.

Combined pressure from austerity and recession surfaced in a series of popular protests as a second bail-out was approved in 2012. By 2015, building public resentment eventually upturned the political landscape when the anti-austerity party, SYRIZA, was elected to government in a snap election. Formerly a fringe party, its message resonated with an indignant mood in the country concerning perceived failures of governance embodied by the relationship with the European Union. The newly-installed government immediately contested the demands made by the so-called Troika[7], arguing that the size of the debt was immoral and the damage to Greece's economy and society unsupportable. Conflict in negotiations over a third bail-out, due in the summer of 2015, finally led then Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to call a referendum on whether the country should accept the bailout conditions. Although formally a technical question concerning the bailout, it was widely understood that if people rejected the proposed terms that Greece would be forced to leave the Euro. In the referendum that followed, 61% of people voted against the terms attached to the bailout. Only three days later, however, the government made a U-turn, accepting even more stringent conditions than those voters had rejected.

Crisis Accounts

Attempting to account for these events, competing explanations for Greece's borrowing and subsequent fiscal crisis typically align with the political leanings of those who

[7] The International Monetary Fund, The European Commission, The European Central Bank.

advocate them. Liberal explanations situate the blame on a bloated public sector, corruption, and imperatives to reform stifled by inertia and vested interests (Papaconstantinou 2016). Those on the political left tend to locate the source of crisis in the structure of the Euro: economically weaker countries in the periphery attracted excessive credit due to converging interest rates that masked Greece's weaker economy (Galbraith 2016: 3). Complementing this, is the argument that the Euro caused prices to be overvalued in the European south creating a balance of payments deficit that could only be offset by borrowing (Krugman 2012). Without a sovereign currency, countries such as Greece could not redress these imbalances through devaluation. None of these explanations need be mutually exclusive. When Greece joined the Euro, it was locked into a market system in a way it had not been before. In the previous century, strong state sponsorship had insulated the country from international investment. The Euro, however, opened the country to unprecedented capital inflows via the direct relation it opened with the economies of other EU states. Overnight, the Greek economy had been liberalised, even if the effects of this change were not yet apparent. That incoming funds were consumed according to clientelist principles was obscured while the global economy was growing. When the flow of credit stopped, however, the country went bankrupt because capital inflow had not reorganised Greece's society according to market principles.

When viewed historically, the push to reform has always been accompanied by substantial capital inflows. Greece's two major periods of growth happened in the 1960s and 1990s, both stimulated by external capital, directly in the form of aid or indirectly in the form of lending, a history that I pursue in more detail in Chapter 2. In light of this, the adoption of the Euro was actually the most recent repetition in a series of European interventions in Greece's political economy. What distinguishes it from previous financial engagements was that that the process of liberalisation thereby entailed was

less transparent. This shift reflects a more general trend since the 1980s whereby increasingly opaque financial instruments have been at the heart of new forms of value extraction. Whereas in the past, exploitation was premised upon territorial control, power has since shifted to reside in the financial system itself. As more aspects of people's lives are commercialised, the frontiers for capital accumulation have thus become financial, allowing new possibilities of governance in the neo-colonial era.

Power in such novel techniques lies in their indistinct operation. Credit-default swaps, for example, were critical in the sub-prime mortgage scandal, obscuring the extraction of capital from the financial system and ultimately prompting the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. Although the Euro, and the strictures of transparency and accountability that accompany it, may appear to have little in common with such financial instruments, closer examination reveals significant continuities. For one, the Euro enshrines a liberal expectation that separates state and market: central banks should be run independently of the political arm of government. Operating at a supranational level, the Euro further bypasses national sovereignty. Yet I contend that power embodied by the Euro stems not only from its capacity to supersede sovereign states but in from its performance as mere financial infrastructure. Indeed, it is this very pervasiveness that allows it to encompass the finances of millions in the European project. The Euro is a tool of technocratic order, removed from the political sphere, and run according to a liberal logic of freedom: a quintessential neoliberal institution that blends aspirations for political and economic freedom.[8]

[8] As a political project in which freedom and domination have gone hand-in-hand, that anthropology is both a product and critic of the liberal tradition (Schiller 2015: 12), alongside the general reach of liberalism, makes a straightforward yet meaningful definition hard to pin down. I follow Mahmood who describes it as, 'a form of life with vast implications for how we imagine ourselves to be human and worthy' (2007: 149) according to understandings of self and governance anchored in the capacity of the individual to act freely. Neoliberalism can be distinguished as a narrower view of liberalism, used mainly by its critics, to describe the harnessing of the state to enforce freedom through economic mediums.

As I argue further in Chapter 2, despite its novel face, for Greece the Euro actually represents the continuation of historical cycles of debt and dependency. Credit lines have been repeatedly extended to Greece, either as loans, aid, or outright debt forgiveness: money that compelled the country to conform with the prevailing political order. Austerity reforms under the most recent bailouts are therefore not remarkable but typical. Nor is it the case that the EU could not afford to write off the Greek debt outright. During the height of the crisis, the European Central bank loosened monetary policy, printing 60 million euros per month. Private holders of Greek debt accepted a 50% write-down in 2011. As the crisis continued, the IMF actually argued that the debt burden was unsustainable, instead proposing an extension on the maturity on bail-out loans that would have amounted to an effective devaluation of the debt. In light of this the question remains: if sovereign loans and defaults are historically normal for Greece and the price of the debt is not at issue, why was Greece considered to be in crisis?

Anti-crisis

Crisis in Greece has been at once elusive and pervasive, composed of overlapping fragments: recession, the Greek debt crisis, staggered political crises, and the now entrenched refugee crisis. Each fragment of these staggered crises story participates in broader tensions: the Eurozone crisis, neo-conservative populism and European disintegration, fortress Europe. Each can in some way be traced back to the 2007-2008 global financial crisis that rocked the global order.[9] Despite Fukuyama's claim (2006), history did not end but instead entered a new cycle in which the tenets of liberal democracy have once again come under increased scrutiny. In this new, uncertain era, crisis discourses have proliferated: financial crises, refugee crises, the climate crisis. In

[9] The contraction of global credit that revealed the fiscal imbalance of the respective European states; recession, rising inequality and subsequent pressure on Europe's democratic imperatives; sudden oil price drops that inflated political and economic tensions across the Middle East.

anthropology, the increasing reach of crisis discourses is evident in now established debates on precarity (Allison 2013; Muehlebach 2013). But how can crisis become a way of life? Such questions have proved pertinent to those attempting to apprehend the sudden changes for people living in Greece. Some argue that crisis works to enact a state of exception (Kyriakopoulos 2013), and opens the possibility of intervention and forecloses resistance. Rakopoulos (2013) attacks the concept outright, arguing against the use of crisis as an analytical tool. Crisis, he insists, is necessarily complicit in the production of narratives that ultimately legitimise the implementation of austerity policy (Rakopoulos 2013: 193).

Others offer a more nuanced approach, working to emphasise the continuities and repetitions embedded in the idea of crisis. The shock of recession and austerity, for example, belies the fact that market liberalism had been unfolding in Greece for decades. Money flowing into Greece as foreign capital via the Euro and European development funds fostered a wave of consumerism and conspicuous spending during the 1990s and early 2000s (Chatzidakis 2017; Placas 2008). Meanwhile, a spike in the historically low suicide rate in Greece has become an often-cited indicator and emblem for social breakdown. Despite this, Davis (2015) contrasts the sudden shock of suicides with the slow trajectories that precede them. Like the individual cases she describes, the national shock of suicide obscures the breakdown of practices of care that laid the foundations of these critical moments. Powers and Rakopoulos (2019: 2-3) remind us that austerity policies in Greece have a history rooted in structural adjustment programs practised in the Global South of the 1980s. Crisis thus depends on a gradual unfolding of events as much as it does a sudden break with the past. Complex layering between past and present, and the potential for future crises prompts Knight to reject a linear account of crisis (2018: 166). Rather, he argues, that past and present crises become folded together and reference one another. Crisis moments are more akin to orientations

between the past and present (Knight and Stewart 2016) that help order and understand moments of collective trauma (Alexandrakis 2016: 42).

Tensions between explanations and counter-explanations of the crisis, and the insistence that *in reality* there is no crisis further points to the explanatory power of crisis discourses: whosoever succeeds in defining the terms of crises ultimately controls the proscriptive actions deemed appropriate to resolve them. As academics working on 'the crisis' this raises a problem in terms of reflexivity. Critiques of crises are always, in some sense, complicit in their production, and like the narratives they set themselves against, elicit particular kinds of responses and interventions. Attempting to resolve this dilemma, Roitman's (2013) '*Anti-crisis*' invites us to examine not the veracity of claims to crisis, but the very idea of crisis itself. Pointing out the pervasiveness of crises, she asks – how can crisis be simultaneously a point of change and a perpetual condition? In answer to this question, she argues that crisis is a master trope paralleling critique in modern discourse. Like critique, crisis supposes a difference between what is and what might be, and a concomitant difference between what is true and what is not. Further, crisis, as a claim to truth, presupposes a state of normalcy, where things are imagined as they ought to be. Drawing upon the work of Koselleck on historicity (2004), she further collapses crisis with modern notions of history itself. When people identify themselves as actors, situated within a progression of historical events, the condition of modernity, 'is experienced as problematic – riddled with crisis or in permanent crisis' (Roitman 2013: 17). In other words, in this idea of historicity, the self is forever in a state of becoming, and therefore contingent, and it is only through contingency that the self, and other forms of truth, can be known. Discourses of crisis, both for and against, can thus be read as truth-making and locus of explanatory action. Crisis overlaps with narrative as a medium of self-knowledge and agency.

Yet in this contest to define normalcy, Roitman argues both crisis and anti-crisis narratives operate as two faces of the same problematic. This is theoretically challenging because it affects the questions that social scientists are capable of asking in relation to crisis narratives, what Roitman refers to as 'a blind spot' (2013: 39). As she writes, 'we can only have crisis and anti-crisis, not crisis and something else' (Roitman 2013: 92). In the context of the recent global recession, Roitman argues this quality of crisis deflects attention from the situated context through which these events emerge, in this case the 'specific technical practices, such as underwriting, accounting, and risk management, allowing debt to be figured as a fungible asset' (Rotiman 2013: 94). In fact, she argues, crisis is a tautology because it does not illustrate what led debts, previously considered assets, to be refigured as liabilities (Roitman 2013: 11). For Rotiman, crisis is not merely a distraction but unapproachable in critical terms. In response, she calls for a 'non-foundational' form of thinking (2013: 95), something akin to 'questioning' rather than posing questions that impose explanatory forms and imply states of normalcy. However, although she alludes to dreaming as an example of non-linear thinking, she fails to demonstrate what shape a non-critical form of critique would take. Despite Roitman's objections, ethnographies have provided precise accounts of the ways that practices and techniques of finance generate crisis (Ho 2009, Holmes 2009). Described as a salient and concrete ethnographic object, crisis cannot easily be understood merely as an empty, analytical trope. Meanwhile, Engel (2014: 270) points out that Roitman's own work emerges out of the very narratives she claims restrict our capacities for analysis.

If Roitman's conclusions are flawed, her analysis remains useful for thinking about the idea of crisis. It focuses attention on how apprehensions about crisis, and critique, are entangled in the generation of actualities and possibilities. Crisis engenders subjectivities that open possibilities for intervention through implied states of normalcy.

What shape such interventions take is contingent upon which explanations for crisis are accepted as legitimate. Discursive strategies, analytical and ethnographic alike, are thus linked to power as they render visions of the future. With these critical reservations in mind, I now consider how crisis narratives have been mobilised in support of austerity policy.

Liberal Crisis

For political leaders and policymakers in the EU, the crisis in Greece was fundamentally fiscal and public in nature. Consider the following statement by John Lipsky, acting Managing Director of the IMF in 2010:

> '*The Greek economy has been shaken by adverse market sentiment in the past few months. These pressures reflect concerns about unsustainable public finances and weak competitiveness. Initial attempts to address these problems failed to restore market confidence, with adverse spill-over to the banking sector. The Greek authorities have now developed a bold program with strong upfront policies to re-establish credibility and regain market confidence. The program focuses on: (i) restoring fiscal sustainability, (ii) boosting external competitiveness, and (iii) safeguarding financial sector stability*'[10]

Upon first reading, the emphasis appears to be on stabilising government finances thrown off balance by excessive public spending and low economic productivity. Closer inspection, however, reveals that fiscal stability depends not merely on the management of financial targets, but on *perceptions* of how the Greek state's economic agenda is being managed. Use of the words, 'unsustainable', 'weak', 'failed', immediately followed by 'bold', 'strong', 'upfront', and 'credibility', dovetail the cited reforms themselves, persuading an international audience of commitments to reform.

A similar message is present in the following statement made by Jean-Claude Trichet, then head of the European Central Bank:

[10] https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr10187 [accessed 13/09/21]

> '*Now it's clear in the eyes of all public opinion and governments...the fact that one particular country behaved very improperly has an impact on the full body, the full college [of Europe]. That is why proper surveillance by peers is so essential*'[11]

The Prime Minster of Greece, George Papandreou, reiterated the importance of this 'economy of appearances' (Tsing 2000), shortly after the first bail-out was agreed:

> '*I know we'll be judged on whether we can smash the bureaucracy and corruption that deter foreign investors and high-quality business and leave the country open to plunderers*'[12]

From these statements, we learn not only of Greece's fiscal but moral failure – a country eaten from within by those willing to stifle the growth and freedom of the country in favour of selfish, personal interests. Corruption and bureaucracy, implicitly, are related to excessive public spending that pushed the government into fiscal crisis. Reforms were necessary not simply to free up productivity and reduce spending, but to demonstrate to an international audience that Greece was a safe harbour for investment. Greece's public debt, paradoxically, locked the country out of borrowing in international markets. Debt was an impediment to debt. Put clearly, excessive public debt prevented the flow of capital, that according to these political accounts, formed the lifeblood of the economy. These constrains were embodied by the nationalised industries, generous state salaries and pensions and political remunerations in which capital pooled. Rather than stimulating productivity, money in the hands of the state resulted in the stagnation. Privatisation, cuts to state pensions, freezes to state salaries, limits on welfare spending, new taxes and programs of tax collection were all necessary reforms to free Greece from an inward-looking, self-interested state.

As Athanasiou puts it, 'crisis necessitates the realism of constant management' (2017: 16). Necessarily, the crisis first had to be narrated. Like the economy more broadly

[11] https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/21/business/global/21trichet.html [accessed 13/09/21]
[12] https://www.ft.com/content/9be5a598-592e-11df-adc3-00144feab49a [accessed 13/09/21]

(Holmes 2009), this narration was performed through the statements of policy markers and political leaders such as those presented above. Indeed, the start of the crisis has been associated with the statement given by George Papandreou when he first announced the revision to public debt figures. External investment evaporated once robust accounts of Greece's economy were challenged. To 'revive' the Greek economy the European institutions generated their own representations. Attached to the first bailout agreement were stipulations that reinforced the neutrality of ELSTAT, the Greek national statistics agency (IMF 2012: 162). Statistical authenticity was the first step in the management of the Greek economy by making its 'true' nature legible to financial institutions in the European Union. Yet these positive representations did not simply displace but were dependent on earlier, 'failed' statistics. Intervening to generate 'correct' statistics depended upon these earlier ones that acted as the proxy for the failure of the Greek state's fiscal mismanagement. The legitimacy of European accounts of Greece was thus contingent upon failure. That austerity policy embodied liberal, rational order required Greece to stand as its other: deceptive, political, and corrupt. Statistics illustrate the point perfectly, as truth-making locus and the essence of technocratic governance: political agendas obscured by the obvious neutrality of numbers.

Crisis: solidarity versus austerity

The consequences of these narrations of Greece's economy rapidly became clear: between 2007 and 2015 the economy shrunk by 25%. In the years that followed, the government boasted positive figures of growth but, again, these had been edited to exclude economic indicators that factored in the weight of public debt. Not captured in these numbers were losses to pensions, some written off completely and others drastically reduced. High family saving rates were eroded by new taxes and ongoing unemployment. Employees were compelled to work harder and supress complaints as

employers reminded them of the many without employment willing to replace them. In the same moment that livelihoods became more precarious, state welfare was fugitive. Between 2014-2015, at the height of the crisis, access to public healthcare was restricted to those in employment and those who had been unemployed for no more than year. Those working outside the formal economy were excluded entirely.

As channels to public and private healthcare closed, free health clinics opened. The same doctors who worked in public or private services by day, volunteered in social clinics at night, sometimes operating out of the same premises. This alter-system of healthcare was supported by social pharmacies that redistributed medicines donated by people with no further use for them. Without money, people formed co-operatives and social markets. Time-banks, alternative currencies, social supermarkets offered alternatives to those unable to participate in the formal economy. Social welfare services were replaced or taken over by volunteers who organised soup kitchens and other forms of food distribution. Solidarity collectives organised squats for refugees, as an alternative to state-run camps and receptions centres. Other groups organised the mass collection, storage, and distribution of donations to support refugees. Groups set up cafes, social spaces, and social centres that organised activities that included film nights, free dance classes, language classes, and operated night schools for those now unable to afford the heavy fees for these supplementary classes that form an effectively mandatory but unofficial part of the Greek education system.

Concurrently, this array of solidarity groups inherited a political structure that coalesced in the May 2011 protests that occupied Syndagma, the central Athenian square that faces the Greek parliament. Sparked by a similar protest in Spain, the two-month occupation objected to the austerity measures lately agreed between EU creditors and the Greek state. The protest was characterised by open assemblies and driven by an ethos of direct democracy that contested the political status quo formed by the

historically dominant right and left political parties, New Democracy and PASOK: 'political parties were not welcome in the squares' (Karaliotas 2017: 66). This rejection of mainstream politics and logic of collective action visible at the protests later diffused into local neighbourhoods as participants in the protests sought ways to enact lasting alternatives to the failures of the Greek state (Arampatzi 2017b: 728). One participant in the Exarheia Network for Social Solidarity described the transmission of these ideas clearly: 'officially speaking there are no political parties and whoever participates does so under their own name' (Cappuccini 2018: 94).

Likened to a wave which spread across the country, this patchwork of responses came to be known as the Solidarity Movement. Among its many faces were groups consisting of a handful of people co-operating to support neighbours, to formal organisations operating as a national network. All were encompassed by the idea of solidarity: a state of unity in crisis, spirit of resistance, and attempts to forge alternatives to perceived failures of state and market. Solidarity represented a break with the self-interested political order of the past and demanded a deep-seated change in the order of community, governance, and economy. In the context of crisis, solidarity thus emerged in answer to austerity. Opposing the liberal separation between politics and economy, it advocated the opposite: that political and economic domains should be harmonised as part of a full socialisation and humanisation of the economy. Carving out this new political horizon, the idea of the Solidarity Movement thus rested on the intimation of novel ways of people relating to one another in an alternative space to neoliberal imperatives of austerity (Arampatzi 2017a: 2156). Arampatzi describes it thus: 'a broader project of social transformation, constructed in a bottom-up fashion, is being modelled, through alternatives that aim to challenge the neoliberal order and touch upon multiple levels of the social and economic life' (Arampatzi 2018: 6). Leontidou iterates precisely how feelings evoked by this imaginary were situated: 'a new shared space is

revealed after the shrinkage of the centralized and hierarchical public realm of the 20th century, a space managed by the grassroots rather than the state' (2020: 269). Solidarity thus occupied a space not merely beyond the Greek state, but beyond politics itself. In this respect, Papataxiarchis points to the essential attitude that characterised the Solidarity Movement by describing it as 'pragmatism against austerity' (2018: 236). As he goes on to write, '*the determination to act* prevails...*pragmatism triumphs*' (2018: 245, emphasis in original).

Conclusion

Responding to pubic and policy narrations that managed how shocks to the Greek economy unfolded, various critical voices have pointed to the agendas latent in the idea of crisis. Doing so draws attention to how crises, 'exceed or defeat the expectations of 'structure', or routine—the sphere of what is anticipated under normal circumstances' (Knight and Stewart 2016: 4). Austerity participates in such critical moments, placing what is taken for granted up for renegotiation. Although solidarity has been situated as an alternative to the crisis, this belies the fact that it too emerged from critical moments of breakdown in which the prevailing order of things was rendered unstable. If solidarity, like crisis, hinges on an alleged break with the past, it has not, however, been subject to the same level of critique. In the chapter that follows, I therefore propose an interrogation of the idea of solidarity, tracing its intellectual roots, and realisation in the Greek context. Questioning the potential alternative it implies, I trace the imperatives whereby solidarity demands a rebalancing of economic and social life, and how these imperatives have diffused academic treatments of the Solidarity Movement.

1 – Solidarity

Introduction

Solidarity is at once a radical but familiar concept. Establishing its meaning is therefore a challenge, as this very familiarity can make it difficult to distinguish. Referencing feelings of unity, mutual support, and agreement, social scientists have tended to treat the concept positively. In this chapter, I examine how this face of solidarity has attracted people and social scientists alike, and what is obscured by these positive engagements. Starting with the milieu of ideas in which it first formed, I then chart how the idea of solidarity translated in the Greek context, passing from radical fringe groups to frame a popular imaginary. Next, I address how anthropologists have participated in these narratives of solidarity, arguing that solidarity and anthropology are rooted in the common conceptual framework. Highlighting these overlaps, I pinpoint an uncritical response in early ethnographies of the Solidarity Movement, and consider the limits of liberal discourse, finally questioning how solidarity can be approached critically given these constraints. In response, I present various ethnographies of humanitarianism as a vantage from which to better reflect on the idea of solidarity.

Solidarity

Appealing to ideals of solidarity, the grassroots response to crisis in Greece has drawn upon an idea with a long and diverse history. If solidarity has been much wielded as a term of political and theoretical engagement, its past is often overlooked. Originally, the term solidarity stems from conservative French legal usage, itself derived from Roman law, whereby individuals were held liable for common debts.[13] After the 1750s, its usage shifted to refer to common responsibilities and soon became imbricated in a

[13] http://www.davidroediger.org/?p=323 [accessed 13/09/21]

diverse range of discourses ranging from political treaties to Catholic social ethics (Stjernø 2009: 26). Cited in support of the French Revolution, it was also mobilised in the conservative backlash that followed across Europe, when national authorities stressed the restoration of harmony and social integration (Stjernø 2009: 39). It was in this period that the first references to 'European solidarity' emerged (Schmale 2017: 856), an idea now enshrined in the European constitution. At the same time, the idea of solidarity travelled from France to England and Germany (Stjernø 2009: 27), where it was embraced by then burgeoning labour movements. In these political contests, solidarity was refigured in relation to class struggle adding a further layer of meaning to the term: the idea of differences united in resistance, connotations were restated again in the 1980s during the conflict between the Polish trade union 'Solidarity' and the repressive government it opposed (Pearce 2009).

When solidarity was translated into the Greek context, it drew upon these diverse and sometime contradictory senses that the idea had accrued in previous centuries: harmony and co-operation, struggle and resistance. However, unlike its usage across much of Europe, the term in Greek does not derive from the French. Rather, solidarity was rendered in Greek as '*αλληλεγγύη*', which breaks down etymologically as the exchange of things held in common. In the 1990s, the term was mainly mobilised by anarchist groups, but by the 2000s it was increasingly adopted by a broader collection of activists, who used it describe the sudden and rapid increase in undocumented immigrants and the persecution they faced by authorities (Rozakou 2017: 189). Accompanying the rise of SYRIZA, the term solidarity eventually became normalised as its sense was expanded to include Greek citizens who found themselves, like refugees and migrants, marginalised by the state (Cabot 2016: 158).

This transition of solidarity from radical left to political mainstream underscores one of the idea's essential characteristics: how solidarity can be used to dictate boundaries for inclusion and exclusion. Solidarity, as much as a locus for political action, is equally a forum for alterity. In her work on the Solidarity Movement, Rozakou (2016b: 186) points out that demands for solidarity draw on, 'existing patterns of relatedness and, at the same time, broadens them'. In the case of Greece, the dominant prism through which otherness has been theorised is hospitality. Yet Rozakou posits that by problematising acts of giving, solidarity reworks these expectations by challenging an innate hierarchy of patronising gifts. Despite this, solidarity she argues has also been engulfed by the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis so that conflicting logics of reception and giving inform one another (Rozakou 2017b: 102).

Religious variants operated by the Orthodox church that preceded the crisis further complicate the picture. The far-right fascist party *Χρυσή Αυγή*, Golden Dawn, organised their own solidarity initiatives, distributing food exclusively to those who could prove themselves to be 'authentically' Greek. Against this backdrop, the Greek media channel *SKAI* ran its own campaign to collect and distribute food framed with implicit conservative political messages. In this case, solidarity cannot be understood as solely radical. As Chatzidakis puts it, 'for most Athenians, solidarity therefore failed to channel itself into more politically progressive realms. If anything, it was the family institution and the notion of intergenerational family solidarity that took center-stage to firefight the gaps left by the dramatic cuts in standards of living and the demise of the welfare state' (2017: 186). Douzina-Bakalaki recounts a similar ambiguity in her own ethnography of a religious-solidarity soup kitchen, a site she described as governed by a longing for normality (2017: 14).

Solidarity's subversive rhetoric has thus been incorporated into a range of discourses that serve conflicting political agendas whereby familiar notions of family, religion and hospitality are reworked. Yet for the most part, ethnographers of solidarity in Greece have focused on its radical content. Describing solidarity in relation to the protests that accompanied it, Theodossopoulos and Kirtsoglou state, 'local peripheral actors imagine themselves as part of a larger, international community of discontent' (2009: 7). From this discontent arises the possibility of reordering the political and economic landscape of Greece. Rakopoulos writes, 'what is being proposed in the anti-middleman movement is not cheap food, but an alternative politics' (2017: 207). In the 'anti-middlemen' movement, activists organise exchanges whereby farmers bring produce directly to markets, cutting out profits made by intermediaries. Rakopoulos describes how in this congregation of people buying and selling, markets blurred with political debate. He reports how activists insisted that, more than emergency provisioning, these exchanges enacted a deeper change in economic relations in which anonymous market relations became personal and ethical (Rakopoulos 2013: 105). In their account of activists on Lemnos, Margomenou and Papavasiliou adopt a similar standpoint: 'these newly formed collectivities and networks are not strictly economic; rather, they express ideologically complex social…and in some cases, spiritual concerns' (2013: 525). Elsewhere, activists described in other ethnographies articulate sophisticated political analyses, debating the ethics of their work, leading Theodossopoulos to argue that it is not simply the practical assistance offered but the political education accompanying it that gives solidarity practices their meaning (2016: 178). In these accounts, solidarity is presented as an ethically ambiguous dilemma that demands careful thought: 'whether formula to an infant or escorts to the hospital, all offers requires significant self-reflection on behalf of the group, who considered gifts as a threat to their vision of a society of equals' (Rozakou 2016b: 190).

Like the activists, solidarians, and volunteers with whom they worked, for anthropologists the ethical ambiguities of engaging with solidarity have become a central focus of debate. Theodossopoulos expresses this concern in the title of his article, '*Philanthropy or solidarity? Ethical dilemmas about humanitarianism in crisis afflicted Greece'* (2016). This title captures an unease that has proved foundational in ordering the political and moral orientation of the Solidarity Movement, and hence its entry into academic debates: the difference between charity and solidarity. As an ethnographic object, such distinctions are situated among various imaginaries, principal among which is the idea of a weak civil society in Greece, commonly reproduced in academic literature (Frangonikopoulos 2014: 608), and concurrently that charity is merely a cover for elite agendas, particularly of church and state. Suspicion of the motives behind charity work (Huliaras 2014: 12) has informed a polarisation of charity and solidarity whereby the two can be distinguished according to the manner and intent of giving. In this schema, charity can be determined as a kind of giving downwards: things given not freely but with an expectation of obligation of allegiance, and therefore aligned with corruption, clientelism, and, by proxy, crisis. Alternatively, solidarity works as a kind of mutual support, horizontally organised, and with no expectation or obligation imposed by the giver on the recipient.

The question that Theodossopoulos poses thus goes to the heart of the anxiety felt by solidarians, volunteers, and ethnographers alike: is the Solidarity Movement truly radical, or is it the product of neoliberal agendas whereby welfare is devolved to individual responsibility? Commenting on the issue, Green and Laviolette suggest that, 'inevitably perhaps, some aspects of those responses will appear to reinforce the logic of neoliberal ideals, while others will appear to contradict that logic' (2016: 136). Cabot (2016) therefore calls solidarity 'two-faced', because it both emerges from and participates in conditions of crisis and austerity. Rakopoulos (2016) suggests that

solidarity is a 'bridge' concept – it offers the means to bypass charity and lead to a new state of political engagement. The anxiety that solidarity will slip into charity explains why those in the Solidarity Movement treat their involvement hesitantly but are sometimes equally forced to disregard these reservations out of immediate necessity (Rozakou 2016b: 196). Theodossopoulos concludes that solidarity and charity need not be mutually exclusive: 'in everyday life, the de-politicising effect of humanitarianism does not preclude the politically empowering potential of humanitarian solidarity' (2016: 181).

Ethical dilemmas are essential in order to understand how solidarity works to mobilise political engagement to effect change. However, I argue that at the same time, the above accounts face limitations through their dedication to the analysis of solidarity ethics. Foremost among these is the problem of securing critical purchase when elaborating dilemmas and debates within the Solidarity Movement itself. If solidarity is a 'bridge', this is discreet way of describing the possibility it offers for making social connections – but in what sense can it then be considered unique? What distinguishes it from other sites of relation making such as charity, the family, the state, or religion? If solidarity can be at once empowering and disempowering, why and how is that the case? Exploring solidarity as primarily an ethical dilemma, in fact, obscures the moral schemas it entails. In her ethnography, Douzina-Bakalaki reports her puzzlement over a question posed by a friend to study an Orthodox church-run soup kitchen: 'why did you choose to study philanthropy (*philanthropia*) at a time when (*alilegii*) is taking over the country?' (2017: 2). This 'failure' informs us about the moral hierarchy implied by solidarity work whereby it is positioned above, or perhaps more accurately beyond, charity. Yet accounts of solidarity have struggled to draw away from the assumption that solidarity is essentially 'good', in contrast with philanthropy that is essentially

'bad'. As a result, how solidarity itself operates as a moral discourse remains unexamined.

I argue that the difficulty in treating solidarity critically is rooted in the fact that ethnographers of solidarity share many of the same preoccupations as their interlocutors. Before I address this point directly, however, I want to consider how attention to ethical makeup of solidarity, especially in terms of its relationship with philanthropy, make sense given the conditions under which this research took place. Early contributions to debates on the Solidarity Movement reflect an attraction to the topic that suddenly demanded the attention of researchers connected with Greece, but often working in adjacent fields of research.[14] I argue that the ethical dialogues in which these earlier studies of solidarity engaged reflect a precarious moment when the future of so many lives in Greece were threatened and the affective power of solidarity as a potential for protest and change was at its strongest. This explains why the primary concern of this first wave of research focused on the radical, novel, and unsettling implications of solidarity. In contrast, my research reflects a different time, when the momentum behind the Solidarity Movement was dissipating. I arrived in Greece just days before the referendum that asked whether people would accept the conditions of the latest bailout. When SYRIZA, the anti-austerity party in power, and political face of the Solidarity Movement, disregarded the referendum result and capitulated to the demands of international creditors, the radical potential of solidarity and its associated hopes for social, political, and economic rejuvenation began to fade.

[14] Cabot's primary research, for example, concerns asylum seekers in Greece (2014), while Papataxiarchis has published on a broad range of issues that touch on the mediation of race, inclusion, and cultural difference (2006, 2014). Others conducted research further afield: Dalakoglou (2017) on infrastructure in the Balkans; Theodossopoulos (2013, 2016b) on tourism and ethnicity in Panama; and Rakopoulos on cooperatives in Italy (2017b).

How the timeliness of these respective periods of research on solidarity matters is underscored by the contributions of Rozakou, who had been researching the theme of solidarity before its popularisation (2011, 2012). This unique position is reflected in the sensitivity with which she tackles the theme of ethics and the relationship between solidarity and humanitarianism (2017). As she reminds us, 'the question is not to examine the ideological purity of solidarity initiatives' (2017b: 104), but rather interrogate the moral schema upon which such understandings of solidarity rest. This nuanced view reflects her long-standing interest in solidarity as part of a broader research agenda that addresses voluntarism, affording her a unique perspective on ethical tensions and the sudden pull of solidarity. In contrast, as a piece of doctoral research first proposed when the idea of solidarity was at its zenith, but conducted after the referendum, I had longer to contemplate the changing moods of solidarity. In this respect, my ethnography can by situated as part of second wave of research conducted by doctoral students[15], that stresses the practice of solidarity more than an interrogation of its ideological basis. My ethnography contributes to debates on solidarity, in part, due to this temporal situation, that gave rise to themes of disengagement and proceduralisation, directing attention to how the idea of solidarity was adapted amid fading radical aspirations.

Solidarity, Anthropology

Difficulties in apprehending solidarity are understandable given the pull of the ideas it implies: unity, inclusion, and belonging. For ethnographers, these sentiments are compounded by a further obstacle, that is, the common ground and understandings upon which both anthropology and solidarity rest. To demonstrate this, I want explore a parallel between the discourses of solidarity and anthropology. If at first the similarity

[15] See Bonanno (2019), Douzina-Bakalaki (2017).

appears distant, upon closer inspection the resemblance becomes striking. Like activists in the Solidarity Movement, anthropologists have long accepted that 'society' and 'economy' are not separate spheres but rather mutually constituted. While such ideas took hold in the 1960s and 1970s, the intellectual conversations in which such notions are rooted stem back much further. Indeed, solidarity and sociology emerged in tandem: 'the notion of solidarity was so foreign at this time that the new discipline of sociology rapidly became the companion of this new ideology' (Fournier 2005: 52). Durkheim would later solidify this relationship by formalising the idea of solidarity in his work on modernisation. Writing amid the changes that followed industrialisation and social revolution, Durkheim adopted the idea of solidarity when he attempted to theorise what bound people together in 'modern society'. With increasing division of labour, he argued that people were no longer tied to one another through local similarities but instead through mutual independencies premised upon differences, what he called mechanical and organic solidarity respectively (Lukes 2013). Such ideas would later prove crucial to Weber's writings on rationalisation although here the stress was not so much on solidarity as on the life of institutions, the routines that characterised them and how they engendered specific forms of power (Weber 2015). Both, however, shared anxieties about modernity as they perceived it. For Durkheim, *anomie* was an ill of the modern world as solidarity was eroded: 'alienation was the opposite of solidarity' (Miller 2012: 3). Weber, meanwhile, was more pessimistic about solidarity. Greater specialization, and the institutions that accompanied them, gave rise to an increasingly restrictive social order in that the possibility for personal freedom was curtailed (Weber 2015: 73): modernization meant people were bound too tightly by the forces that Durkheim called solidarity.

Mauss responded to similar concerns: that something essential had been lost in the transition to modernity. He mobilized ethnographic examples to discover the 'secrets' of 'wisdom and solidarity' they contained (Mauss 2002: 83). Nor were these merely analytical endeavours but concerns intimately connected with each writer's personal beliefs and politics. Mauss was an active socialist (Graeber 2001: 156) and, despite the strict division he maintained between his political and academic writing (Hart 2014: 35), his conclusions in '*The Gift*' can only be understood in terms of his personal interest in cooperatives and socialist politics. Weber too drew on his own experiences in politics when writing on charisma, power and formalization in his essay, '*Politics as Vocation*' (Weber 2015b). Durkheim's very emphasis on the social was itself a retort to the interest-driven individualism and 'sordid commercialism' (Miller 2012: 4-5) that for him constituted a modern crisis (Miller 2012: *xviii*). Solidarity was thus the answer to a fragmented world upset by individualistic economic interests.

In this, these writers were influenced by a milieu of ideas that developed in response to industrialisation and social change amid revolutions unfolding in Europe between the 18th and 19th century, and the increasingly apparent contradictions of liberalism. Liberalism was a novel political philosophy of freedom, which postured itself in terms of liberation from established dogmatic and aristocratic modes of authority. In its economic guise, liberalism's promise of a self-regulating market offered prosperity not dictated by a centralised political authority. Yet as industrialisation became established, privatisation uprooted many who had formerly resided, for better or worse, within the spheres of aristocratic protection. It was in relation to these changes that the first sociologists orientated themselves. As they pursued the idea of 'society', they sought to define what would bind people together as the reach of market economy became increasingly pervasive. Accompanying the idea of the social was that of the 'social problem'. As Polanyi himself put it, 'pauperism, political economy, and the discovered

of society were closely interwoven' (2002: 89). Poverty and disruption became a new prism through which to understand the world, an inverse to liberal ideals of progress and competition. Reform, formerly a narrow economic ideal, became a more expansive liberal aspiration as embodied, for example, by the rise of Fabian socialism (Therborn 1980: 236) and concurrent socialist movements. The social scientist played a leading role in defining this new vision of the liberal order: 'the search was not now for social laws but the principles on which social policies should be based' (Therborn 1980: 230).

The idea of society emerged, then, as a moral rehabilitation of utilitarian liberalism, which has lately recurred in the critique of neoliberalism. Notably, in this its first incarnation, this critique was scientific in nature. Opposed to the deductive reasoning of political economy, the sociologist dealt with facts and data. In this, sociology was influenced by the German historical school as represented by Schmoller, for example, who advocated an 'ethical economics' that he argued was achievable by analysing the economy in relation to its historical context (Therborn 1980: 242). Schmoller's demand for context neatly summarises the central sociological development of the mid-19th century: the individual, which had dominated early liberal philosophy, was no longer sufficient to describe the turbulence of the market economy. Durkheim's legacy was therefore to theorise context for the individual and that specifically, the economy 'must be regulated by a pre-existent moral community' (Therborn 1980: 252). It was in the context of these novel ideas of society and reform that the concept of solidarity emerged as it is widely recognised today. As Fournier puts it, 'the notion of solidarity was so foreign at this period of time that the new discipline of sociology rapidly became the companion of this new ideology...it was 'a third way' between liberalism and collectivism' (2005: 52).

Born of the same perceived antagonism between society and economy, the overlap between the social and solidarity has since lingered although rarely directly articulated. After Mauss, it was perhaps Polanyi who did most to carry on these assumptions through his work on what he called 'market society' in '*The Great Transformation*' (2002). According to this thesis, the emergence of a market society following industrialisation was a unique turning point in history. Never before had society been organised around the market. Rather, he argued that pre-industrial societies had been organised according to principles of reciprocity and redistribution. Unlike those forms of political economy that preceded it, market society was fundamentally unstable due to an inherent contradiction between the demands of the market and requirements for social reproduction. The market necessitated privatisation of land, money and labour, what Polanyi refers to as fictitious commodities. He argued that when the market dominated these elements, the stable reproduction of the social order became unsustainable. As an act of self-preservation, the social would attempt to reassert itself, the so-called 'double movement' whereby non-productive forms of value could be protected.

Essential to this argument was the key assumption that the economy was naturally embedded in society. Here, Polanyi echoes the same assumption that made Mauss' '*The Gift'* so influential: that the social and economic were indivisible and represented a total, social fact. It was the validity of this assumption that came under scrutiny in the substantivist versus formalist debate, which dominated economic anthropology in the 1960s. Indeed, it was Polanyi himself who triggered the debate when he insisted that the formal and substantivist notions of economy had been conflated (1957). Here, the formalists insisted that the economic rationalism was a universally appropriate form of analysis, whereas substantivism insisted that the economic only made sense contextually. Simply put, Polanyi objected to the universal application of utilitarian

economics as these terms of analysis had little bearing on the workings of non-market economies, which could not be considered rational in the strict economic sense. Indeed, much of the debate came to rest on the extent to which industrial and non-industrial economies could be considered similar. But as anthropological theory moved into the 1970s, and the distinction between West and rest faded, the salience of this debate also receded: the issue of subjectification *within*, rather than comparison *between*, markets became more critically pressing (Hann & Hart 2011: 83-86).

Chronicling this shift, Hart and Hann ponder the following: 'we could claim that the cultural turn has fulfilled the substantivists' aspiration to transcend the pseudo-universalism of bourgeois economic categories by demonstrating through ethnography that they constitute just another local model' (2011: 98). I take the point further. The substantivist position did not fade away because it ceased to be relevant but, rather, because the assumptions it represented became so pervasive as to no longer be visible. The opposition between economy and society ceased to matter as both collapsed into one another through the general critique of culture. Furthermore, the fact that the same themes of privatisation, exploitation and equality that framed Polanyi's research now figure so centrally in anthropology is not coincidental. In an era where markets continue to expand into new frontiers and anthropologists themselves find themselves increasingly marketised, a firm distinction between economy and society has been difficult to maintain.

The concept of solidarity has indexed these shifting assumptions and positions, but unlike its cousin society, with less theoretical surveillance. Not merely a field of theoretical analysis, solidarity differs because it simultaneously represents a byword for political action. This has been most clearly stated through the idea of the social economy, which calls for a re-embedded economy in harmony with the interests of the

social. The sentiment of this position is clearly expressed in the following statement: 'neoliberalism has been wounded, but it is not yet defeated. In the meantime, what can we, the people, do about it' (Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010: 1). This opening gambit from '*The Human Economy: A Citizen's Guide*' proposes an alternative vision of the economy, mobilising social theory as a manual for political comprehension and potential action. Highlighting this, it is not my purpose to object to such examples of applied anthropology, but instead to ask what happens when theory serves simultaneously as political manifesto. How is it possible to study solidarity when it is evidently so caught up in our political and moral aspirations, both personal and public? To answer this question, I begin by considering treatments of the idea of neoliberalism and various reservations concerning its usefulness as a theoretical anchor.

Neoliberalism

Although widely employed in anthropology, the very pervasiveness of theories of neoliberalism has become something of an obstacle or burden. Ganti, for one, questions whether the neoliberal critique has become so universal as to be really useful (2014: 89). Schwegler suggests that, 'perhaps neoliberalism has been a little too convenient. It has become a handy way to bracket the global political economy without actively engaging it' (2009: 24), a sentiment echoed by Ferguson who describes it as, 'a sloppy synonym for capitalism' (2010: 171). Given these reservations, others have tried to pin down neoliberalism to specific definitions. Harvey (2007) has famously described it in terms of class. Specifically, a political project that seeks to reassert the power of elites following the shift to the welfare politics in the post-Second World War era. Alternatively, various scholars have tried to further refine definitions by organising existing approaches and thereby triangulate how neoliberalism operates. Hilgers distinguishes between studies that interpret neoliberalism in terms of culture, as a

system, or a form of governmentality (2011). Collier (2012: 186) ponders whether neoliberalism should be treated as an analytical matrix in which ethnographic objects should be interpreted, or an ethnographic object in its own right, drawing attention to the how methodologies are implicated in the production of neoliberal critiques. In contrast, Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008: 123) argue that treatments of neoliberalism have been too definitive, attending instead to how it is not uniform, but incomplete and not totally coherent. Persuasively, Wacquant describes neoliberalism as, 'an *articulation of state, market and citizenship* that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third' (2012: 71, original emphasis). In doing so, he clarifies how neoliberalism departs from early economic liberalism, by requiring not a minimisation of the state but its reconfiguration in support of market imperatives. Ganti adopts a similar position, arguing that neoliberalism demands the rehabilitation of the state in service of personal freedom (2014: 92).

Neoliberalism can thus be understood in terms of both an intentional propagation or indirect spread of market logic into new social arenas. Financialization, structural adjustments, and welfare reform, the indices by which neoliberalism are commonly identified, point to a concurrent reshaping of selves and subjectivities. As the same time, neoliberalism has been accused of a closing down of democratic politics in favour of technocratic forms of governance: a political body managed like the market. Yet Schewegler cautions that this does not mean an end to politics: 'although it is no doubt true that neoliberal frameworks neutralize certain types of political decisions by rendering them technical, they have not eliminated politics altogether' (2009: 24). Rather, under neoliberalism the articulation of politics entails a shift that privileges personal responsibility above collective attachments. Regarding the self as the primary political orientation leads to another critical index of neoliberalism: (a)political mandates that unfold outside the confines of the state. Development work, charity and

the spread of NGOs have all been interpreted in terms of diminishing state influence. Yet this ostensible retreat from the public still articulates state power: 'what people are really being empowered to do is to solve their own problems at zero-cost to upper-class taxpayers...making resistance more "manageable" (Gledhill 2018: 7).

Concerns about definitions aside, for the purpose of this ethnography theories of neoliberalism pose a further problem. Anthropology inherited assumptions about neoliberalism from resistance movements in the 1970s and 1980s, fermented particularly in oppositions to structural reform in Latin America (Ganti 2014: 93). By way of the *indignacios* protests in Spain, a similar set of ideas about neoliberalism were absorbed by the Greek Solidarity Movement. These common legacies obscure the conceptual workings of the Solidarity Movement as it pictures itself as an alternative to austerity, and makes unpicking anthropology's own engagements with these topics a delicate matter. As Harvey himself notes, neoliberalism has become hegemonic in anthropology (Ganti 2014: 98). Necessarily, the idea is therefore entwined with the theoretical and ethical registers in which anthropology speaks. As Elyachar puts it, 'referring to neoliberalism has become a shorthand way of signalling all that is wrong in the ethnographic present' (2012b: 76). If Ganti argues that, 'some key questions and assumptions about the state, markets, privatizations, and collectivities go unexamined in much of the anthropological scholarship on neoliberalism' (2014: 99), I further his point in terms of the moral orientations that critiques of neoliberalism imply. Neoliberalism, via its proxy austerity, therefore overshadows solidarity, and so, this thesis. In light of this, I choose not to rely on the neoliberal critique as a primary analytic lens, while being aware that many of these ideas form an absent present throughout my argument.

Solidarity

Despite these in-depth debates concerning the concept's usefulness, the same has not been true of neoliberalism's other: solidarity. Rather, solidarity has become a shorthand

for the social, evading the same problematics associated with terms like 'culture' and 'society'. Moreover, whereas in the study of economic fields anthropologists have disputed a simplistic division between the economic and social, accounts of solidarity effectively reinforce this binary. Consider the following statements from early ethnographic accounts of the Solidarity Movement in Greece:

> '*Greece, it seems, is a perfect mirror for the way in which the amorality of neoliberalism cloaks its depredations in a rhetoric of morality*' (Herzfeld 2016: 201)
>
> '*Solidarity operates as the opposite of austerity within an overall condition of crisis'* (Rakopoulos 2016: 147)
>
> '*In contrast to the atomising effects of neoliberalism and austerity, solidarity reaches outwards toward the other, resituating people in active social relation*' (Cabot 2016: 162)
>
> '*The aim of this book is to provide a qualitatively different approach from that of the international media discourse, one which is empathetic and in solidarity with the dynamics and the everyday life of the structurally excluded, the weak and the victims of the crisis*' (Agelopoulos & Dalakoglou 2017: 4)

Here, the anthropologist's position exactly mirrors the moral sentiments of activists in the Solidarity Movement. For his part, Rakopoulos, explicitly aligns himself with the movement's agenda, which reflects his broader interest in the future of co-operatives (2013: 107). In the introduction to the edited volume '*Critical Times in Greece',* Agelopoulos and Dalakoglou situate this work as an alternative to mainstream discourses:

> '*one which is emphatic and in solidarity with the dynamics and the everyday life of the structurally excluded, the weak and the victims of the crisis'* (2017: 1, my emphasis).

Meanwhile, Arampatzi advocates solidarity as a simultaneous conceptual and political device:

> *'in both scholarly analytical, and politically meaningful, terms it can serve as a useful emancipatory toolbox, employed to deconstruct (discursively and materially), the always incomplete, unstable and frail nature of neoliberalism(s)'* (2018: 7).

Dwelling on this association between anthropology and political action, Papataxiarchis questions whether solidarity should be theoretically 'unwrapped' (2016: 209), essentially asking if the political importance of the concept outweighs its critique. Rightly, the ethical dilemmas that solidarity prompts lead Cabot (2015) to ask where ethnography ends and politics begins in such circumstances. Yet beyond identifying this dilemma, her insight provides no reflexive clarity, that is, how to account for solidarity ethnographically.

Mamoulaki takes the position further, essentially arguing that neoliberalism has eclipsed the ability of scholars to even apprehend solidarity (2017: 39). Reporting her research on historical solidarity between native islanders and political exiles on the island of Ikaria, she expresses disappointment with the academic skepticism towards the possibility of solidarity. Greek historians contested that co-operation between the islanders and exiles was anything more than a partisan affiliation. Meanwhile, the Anglo-American audience insisted co-operation was self-interest guised as solidarity. Finally, she concludes:

> 'it appears that, particularly in the age of fiscal crisis and abusive capitalism...even anthropologists struggle to keep an open mind in order to inhabit the logical structure of their informants' (2017: 52)

For Mamoulaki, the problem is that scholars do not share *enough* similarity with those who practice solidarity in order to even recognise and therefore understand it. Following an ironic path of analysis (Bähre 2020), I, alternatively, argue that this assumption can be inverted entirely. It is not an alleged neoliberal ethnocentrism that makes it impossible to speak meaningfully of solidarity but rather, an ethnocentrism about solidarity itself.

Assumptions about solidarity are most apparent in treatments of the far-right party Golden Dawn. Like the Solidarity Movement, members of Golden Dawn responded to the crisis by organising a concurrent set of actions that included medical care, employment programmes and food distributions. Contrary to the inclusive mandate of the Solidarity Movement, however, access to this support was restricted to those able to demonstrate themselves as 'Greek'. Koronaiou and Sakellarious thus conclude that Golden Dawn exploited the crisis, 'adapting community organizing methods (but not their principles) to *perverse* political and social objectives' (2013: 332, emphasis added). The strong moral register employed by Koronaiou and Sakellarious polarises activities of the Golden Dawn, situating solidarity solely as the domain of the political left. Rather, I argue that Golden Dawn occupied a similar imaginative space as the Solidarity Movement, responding to the idea of crisis, counter to the mainstream, and according to their own statements, a substitute for 'the increasingly absent Greek state' (Koronaiou and Sakellarious 2013: 333). My aim here is not to defend the far-right, but highlight how different incarnations of solidarity appeal to the desire for inclusion and protection. Uneven treatments of the Golden Dawn fail to take seriously these desires and how moral attachments to solidarity make it a problematic ethnographic topic.

That solidarity can only be understood as synonymous with left politics acts to flatten solidarity's potential meaning. The practices of Golden Dawn speak of another face of solidarity, motivated by nationalism and a desire for unity in opposition not simply to liberal elites, but also migrants and refugees. Yet this flattening of solidarity applies not only to the political right, but applies equally to the political left. Applied uncritically, the idea of solidarity as a domain of left politics, has the effect of lumping together an array of groups of conflicting sentiments. Radical, anarchist, and anti-capitalist groups that reject formalised authority, as represented by the state, refer to a very specific political imaginary in which mutual aid is cited as the essence of humanity. Contrary to

these extreme takes on solidarity, mainstream groups aligned more closely with the political vision of SYRIZA, have often worked in tandem with the state, sometimes ambivalently, substituting for it. If the support offered by Golden Dawn is excluded from what can be considered solidarity, this also bears the troubling implication that ethnographers must be in sympathy with the people and topics they research, a question that I return to in the conclusion of this thesis.

Unspoken attachments thus impede efforts to make out what solidarity really does. If, as I argue, ethnographies of the Solidarity Movement in Greece have struggled to interrogate solidarity because they share fundamentally similar premises, how it is possible to work around these assumptions in order to approach solidarity critically? To answer this, it is necessary to reconsider solidarity's affinity to the political left and contest the assumption, that it can only be morally positive, only reflect the domain of political action, and crucially, that solidarity is only the opponent of neoliberalism.

Alternative solidarities

Much of the force behind the idea of solidarity in academic and political discourse rests on the potential alternatives it poses: alternative ways of thinking or alternative ways of doing. But if as Roitman (2013) points out critique and crisis have a problematic relationship, might we also say that solidarity represents a 'non-alternative alternative'? Is solidarity an analytical dead end, or, to put it differently, are there other ways to think about solidarity? Bähre (2020) offers one answer to this in his ethnography of life, medical, and funeral insurance in South Africa. Upturning the idea of solidarity as an alternative to the market, he instead asks what solidarity looks like *within* the marketplace. Bähre argues insurance represents, 'a kind of solidarity where people contribute to a collective in order to compensate a specific person's loss' (2020: 22). In doing so he upsets the idea that solidarity must necessarily be either political or personal. Rather, he documents how insurance actually offers an escape from the burden

of solidarity between kin, as allowed them to insulate resources against claims from relations. In the ethnographic context, however, he goes on to describe how these financialised forms of insurance created the conditions for conflicts with kin and new kinds of risks for those purchasing and selling insurance products. Drawing on the philosophical work of Rorty (1989), Bähre calls these the ironies of solidarity. By this he means that solidarity is not simply one thing or another, it can be simultaneously both within the market and beyond it, work both positively and negatively. In fact, it is this very ambiguity that he argues lends solidarity such conceptual and practical purchase.

Unlike idealistic accounts, Bähre's ethnography prompts a more complex, conflicted, and potentially productive, means to think about solidarity. Bähre states explicitly that his approach was inspired by Rorty's distinctions between ideal and practical forms of solidarity. Indeed, it was precisely the unresolved tension between these aspects of solidarity in the ethnographic literature that drew me to this topic. My thesis can be situated within an emerging second-wave of solidarity studies conducted a number of years after the peak of the Solidarity Movement and ethnographic attention that accompanied its initial emergence. I arrived in Greece in June 2015, just a few weeks before the decisive referendum in which Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras conceded to demands in negotiations over terms of the EU bailout. My research was thus conducted in a period of disillusionment when the hopes for a renewed form of government were receding and people in Greece had already experienced five years of recession and austerity policy. I contest that it is precisely these ambivalent feelings that offer more critical purchase to unpick the tangle of solidarity.

Douzina-Bakalaki reports a similar ambivalence in her work on solidarity in an Orthodox church supported soup-kitchen in Xanthi (2017: 19). She argues that the soup kitchen functioned as a quasi-domestic space that expanded upon wider expectations of

women's work as caregivers and homemakers (Douzina-Bakalaki 2017: 18). Solidarity was not so much radical, but reflected a desire for belonging that reworked traditional expectations about social reproduction, observations that Bonanno (2019: 153) also reports in her ethnography on pharmaceuticals in a social pharmacy in Athens. Here, solidarity was not a clean break with the past but extended, and modified, pre-existing contingencies and possibilities of care. As she puts it, 'pharmaceuticals were able to create bonds and affective responses among people in light of the persistent imagination that their circulation across households and among people contributed to the creation of a sense of belonging to the same community' (Bonanno 2019: 217). According to Bonanno, recycling of pharmaceuticals at the social pharmacy merely instituted the circulation of medicine between households that, in fact, preceded by the crisis, and reflected a long-standing battle about inclusion into receding public healthcare (2019: 161). Solidarity was not exceptional or written onto a blank slate but, rather, ingrained in decades of the shifting currents of governance, liberalisation, belonging, and care.

What these studies of solidarity share is an attention to solidarity in context, each looking beyond ideal and political claims to the apparently mundane practice of solidarity. Such solidarity is not only harmonious and positive but complex and conflicted. Yet if Bähre traces these conflicts productively his strategic choice of topic provides no way to interrogate the relationship between the political and practical aspects of solidarity. Likewise, Bonanno bypasses solidarity altogether and instead foregrounds care in her effort to understand changing modes of dependency: 'it seems to me that reliance on solidarity as an interpretive lens tends to reduce those tensions, contradictions and conflicts' (2019: 31). My ethnography builds upon these studies, the direction of which resonated strongly with my own experiences of research. Indeed, it was precisely the ironies and conflicts that were immediately apparent in my own ethnographic confrontation that inspired much of my later analysis. Unlike the

harmonious, co-operative and politically discursive scenes reported in early ethnographies of the Solidarity Movement in Greece, what I found was a more fraught, argumentative, yet routine and, sometimes, indifferent, realisation of solidarity. Following Bonanno, I propose to draw on anthropological debates surrounding care but also pursue the irony that solidarity, in my ethnographic experience, was as much about finding ways not to care. With these insights in mind, I would like to briefly return to the idea of crisis and how it responds to themes of solidarity, austerity, caring and indifference.

I propose that solidarity, like austerity, serves as an explanatory trope of crisis. Much like anthropologists, solidarity activists look to the interplay between market and society to explain the conditions of crisis. While those in the Solidarity Movement blame alienating market forces and individualism for precipitating crisis, for policymakers these same forces represent the solution. Meanwhile, for those in the liberal camp collective action and domination of the economy by politics are at the heart of the crisis whereas politicisation of the economy is precisely the demand of the Solidarity Movement. Both, however, seek to represent the crisis in ways that elicit specific responses. Describing global protests over austerity measures, Narotzky suggests that 'what is at stake is reclaiming the political structure of responsibility' (2016: 86). While true, both liberal supporters of austerity and solidarity activists who protest against it, engage in a politics of blame. In so doing, both work to reconfigure accountability and responsibility, albeit according to different premises. The semantic error ethnographies of solidarity have sometimes made is to treat solidarity and austerity as opposing poles rather than as similar claims of moral order.

In reality, austerity and solidarity practices co-exist and interact. Neither prevails but interrupt and participate in one another. Solidarity activists are well aware of the irony

that their work allows the state to devolve welfare to individual responsibility, just as states are willing to cultivate collective action as a means of indirect governance. Accounts insisting that solidarity can humanise markets into political spaces further imply that, in their present form, they are not. Yet ethnographies of finance demonstrate that market arrangements are imbricated in complex epistemologies that draw upon hope, aspiration, belonging and accountability, all situated in the day-to-day lives of its practitioners (see Didier 2007; Holmes 2009; Ho 2009; Oursousoff 2010; Røyrvik 2013; Tsing 2000; Zaloom 2009). What those in Solidarity Movements therefore mean by dehumanisation, in fact, is the devaluing of *certain* kinds of claim – such as that between citizens and EU policymakers in which the latter refuse to pay for welfare services in Greece. In this example, economic rationales bypass humanitarian ones, but both types of discourse are fundamentally moral in terms of their implications. Economic arguments may attempt to legitimate such moral claims by naturalising them as objective phenomena but naturalised claims are not restricted to the economic field – human rights, for example, represent a similar set of claims that are equally naturalised through appeals to universal ethics. By insisting that market relations are impersonal, solidarity rhetoric thereby obscures precisely those structures of feeling and affective dimensions that make possible the inequities it attempts to redress. That is to say, market imperatives demand the cultivation of specific moral subjects, which is different from the claim that it produces an absence of moral subjects. Without this clarity, ethnographies of solidarity have failed to recognise how markets objectify some subjects by empowering others and leave the question open as to what the (re)socialisation of the economy really means: a redistribution of power claims. This line of thinking also misunderstands austerity policy, which works not only through discourses of rationalisation but also through affect. Fear, loss, profligacy and uncertainty are instrumental to acceptance of austerity, dressed as a responsible and

rational response. The Solidarity Movement and austerity policy thus share moral imperatives to intervene, gathered through affect.

Ethnographic work, as it explains and represents crisis and its responses, may itself be drawn into and provoke affective responses. Han puts it succinctly, 'representations of exclusion and suffering mobilize moral sentiments of compassion, indignation, and care, and these moral sentiments have political value which entails specific forms of intervention' (2012: 23). Indeed, it is precisely the emotional appeal of solidarity that makes it such a powerful imaginary, at once engaging and challenging. Ethnographers must therefore unpack their own distance and affective engagement in accounts of austerity, crisis, and solidarity, exploring the latent moral claims they imply. To illustrate how affect operates as a site for agency, I now turn to anthropological literature on charity, humanitarianism and volunteering as a lens through which to better understand solidarity.

Between compassion and indifference

Distinguishing charity from solidarity, ethnographies of the Solidarity Movement have struggled to further analytical insights beyond reiterating existing ethnographic categories. According to this schema, charity and solidarity differ in the intent and manner of giving: the former creating a sense of obligation, and the latter offered freely. Looking beyond this frame, I instead consider the overlaps in these forms of giving, the ways that they may diverge or alternatively, participate in a concurrent logic. Indeed, it is precisely the moral ambiguities elicited by such practices that have led those within the Solidarity Movement to bundle humanitarianism together with charity, a tension which has been amplified by, but predates (Rozakou 2012: 563), the debt crisis in Greece. Objections to the terms of charitable and humanitarian engagements gravitate around the assertion that they, despite intentions, imply a hierarchical distinction

between those who give and those who receive. Solidarity is positioned as an alternative to charity as a source of support that is horizontal: mutual help. In Greece, the state has tended to treat charities and NGOs as its auxiliaries (Frangonikopoulos 2014: 609), partly explaining the anxieties of those in the Solidarity Movement concerning these forms of engagement. Likewise, charities in Greece have historically been aligned with specific interest groups, acting as vehicles to lay claims on the state rather than advocates of impartial human rights.

In this context, hard distinctions between solidarity and charity are somewhat blurred. That charities have been strongly influenced by the demands of party politics and subject to EU policy imperatives, their apolitical character is harder to maintain. At the same time, the combined effects of an influx and refugees, recession, and austerity led to a rapid expansion of charitable, humanitarian and solidarity engagements. In this melting pot of activity, the respective logics of charity and solidarity have informed one another. Unclear boundaries between what constitutes solidarity or humanitarian action in the context of discourses of crisis and suffering has meant that despite their ostensible differences both have unfolded in similar ways. Indeed, both humanitarianism and solidarity are founded in the compulsion to intervene. If solidarity responds to perceived failures of governance, humanitarianism tends to bypass the causes of such failures and tackle their effects directly. In relation to her ethnography that considers the overlap between religious and philanthropic giving in India, Bornstein provides a useful way for thinking about humanitarianism when she calls it giving, or care, between strangers (Bornstein 2009: 23; Bornstein and Redfeld 2011: 3). Entanglements from her role as an ethnographer-wife-mother-daughter allowed her to consider the distinction between giving to those to whom she was related and those to whom she was not. Approaching the topic in this way is helpful because it illustrates how humanitarianism, much like solidarity, summons ideas about relatedness. Both are matters of obligation formed not

on the basis of immediate, intimate and personal claims but rather universal ones directed towards collective, albeit more distant, forms of belonging. Laqueur locates the development of such universal claims in the 18th century with the emergence of the idea of the human as a protagonist in ethical narratives (2009: 38). Humanity as a biological fact was 'superseded by its elaboration as a category of universal solidarity' (Feldman and Ticktin 2010: 4). Ideals of solidarity, humanity, and society, it seems, were formed in the same ferment of ideas whereby the self was reconfigured in relation to overarching imaginaries that explored the possibility of kinship among strangers.

If solidarity and humanitarianism are both founded in claims to a universal order of relatedness, Feldman and Ticktin (2010: 3) point out that such claims ultimately only make sense in relation to the frictions that arise when they are put into practice. Human rights are a case in point. In principle, human rights imply universal equality but in practice require, 'making all sorts of distinctions within humanity as categories of vulnerability identified as proper subject of human rights are produced' (Fassin 2010: 239). That these ideals of equality invite inequalities perhaps makes more sense considering the role of those who practice humanitarianism. Aspiring to a universal ideal of equality, 'practitioners of humanity' (Ong 2006: 198) find themselves in the position of making claims on behalf of those excluded from the category of humanity – those whose humans rights have not been recognised. In effect, the aid worker becomes an arbiter of humanity negotiating who can be included in this category as they assess, and thereby produce, subjects in need. Concurrently, such claims bypass national sovereignty. In humanitarian discourse, this is referred to as the 'humanitarian space', which adheres not to politics or policies but to the practical administration of human rights. Yet by side-stepping the state, NGOs ultimately come to exercise alternative forms of apolitical governance: 'humanitarian organisations often find themselves in the

position of governing...the populations they seek to aid' (Feldman and Ticktin 2010: 14).

In seeking to provide aid, humanitarian practitioners occupy a powerful position to define need. Rozakou puts it succinctly: 'care is at the core of the biopolitical management of life' (2012: 573). But in this dynamic where humanity trumps politics, many ethnographers have documented how medical care actually works to displace political rights (Malkki 1996; Caple-James 2012). Varma, for example, describes how, 'humanitarian NGOs encourage Kashmiris to imagine themselves as 'patients' and 'victims', rather than as political subjects' (2020: 26). At Médecins San Frontières, Ticktin frames this in terms of a broader trend whereby aid workers have increasingly turned away from radical philosophies founded in protest movements of 1960s and 1970s. In more recent times, they, 'embraced the belief that it was only possible to address individual suffering' (Ticktin 2014: 76). Elsewhere she describes a similar mood within nation states that have come to internalise humanitarian principles. In her account of asylum seekers in France, Ticktin argues that a politics of compassion premised upon bodily suffering ultimately displaced political rights to asylum (2006). In these cases, de-politicisation accompanies, and stems from, the vulnerability and precarious life that humanitarian actors respond to. In the face of liminal states, uncertainty and crisis, humanitarian actors are therefore often compelled towards opposite values such as order and prosperity as they attempt to secure life. Feldman and Ticktin (2010) summarise this in their edited volume, '*In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care*', which addresses not only the 'positive' qualities implied by ideals of humanity such as compassion, but also 'negative' qualities including fear and insecurity (2010: 5). Here, Feldman and Ticktin describe how the politics of intervention that drives humanitarianism increasingly overlaps with discourses of national security as governments appeal to human rights to justify wars

abroad. Such tensions find their most apt symbol in the placement of refugees who find themselves bordering not only states but ideals of humanity itself. As Fassin puts it, 'the line between dangerous categories and categories in danger, between those destined for repression and those who inspire compassion is thin and permeable' (2015: 2).

Compassion and suffering intermingle through the potential for intervention, and oppression, that these forces sometimes entail. As Varma points out, 'care's opposites – refusal, neglect, disinterest, and harm – emerge *in* and *through* practices of care' (2020: 13). Suffering here is something akin to sickness, which for the greater good must be managed and controlled. If the point resonates with classic arguments on governmentality and the management of 'populations', the dynamic between suffering and compassion has also provoked novel configurations at time when markets are competing with states in matters or governance. Elyachar's (2012) account of 'poverty markets' that seek to capitalise poverty, and Adams' (2013) account of 'affect economy' where charitable giving in the wake of Hurricane Katrina was enfolded by markets, both point to the power of sentiment in summoning and ordering resources. It is for this reason that Bornstein reminds us to examine not only the effects of humanitarian and charitable endeavours but the intentions that drive them (Bornstein 2012: 29). Indeed, attention has shifted to encompass not only the subjects of humanitarian encounters but their agents: the aid workers, volunteers, government officials, lawyers and various other practitioners of humanitarianism (Bornstein 2012, Griffiths 2015, Parreñas 2012, Rozakou 2016, Song 2009). In particular, Malkki (2015) manages to capture the ambiguities of compassion in her book, '*The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of Humanitarianism*'. Pointing to the neediness of volunteers and aid workers she deliberately inverts the assumption that beneficiaries are passive recipients of care. Rather, she underscores the neediness of aid-workers and volunteers themselves

whose desire to escape loneliness and isolation ‘at home’ drives them to experiment with mediums of humanitarian connection.

If humanitarianism can be framed as a kind of giving between strangers, Malkki rightly forces us to think about what happens when the politics of compassion comes home – about giving to strangers who may be similar but remain distant in other ways. As forms of exceptionality become more commonplace, the demand for moral intervention has accompanied it. In many settings, this reinforces the logic whereby the state has been displaced by other actors. Civil society, for example, has become an accepted moral compass for ‘corrupt’ states, especially in the context of the liberal inclusion of eastern European states into the European Union (Dzenovska 2018, Vetta 2017). In this evolution of ideas, states have increasingly repositioned themselves away from belonging simply through recourse to political rights to encompass what Muehlebach refers to as ‘ethical citizenship’ (2012). In her ethnography, Muehlebach describes how the state in northern Italy appropriated the rhetoric and practices of cooperatives founded in historical labour movements. By appealing to voluntarism, the state reconfigured citizenship in terms of emotional labour, asking citizens to care for one another as surrogates for state welfare. To draw out the meanings of this kind of care work, Muehlebach contrasts the paid work of immigrant care workers and Italian citizen-volunteers, each of whom cared for the elderly. She describes how care provided by immigrants was denigrated as materially motivated, an inversion of the familial care that should ideally by offered to the elderly. Care was further layered in reference to expectations about the material needs of carers, with the result that care-workers from South America were considered the least affectionate due to the assumed poverty of this region: care and profit oscillated as opposed referents. In contrast, volunteers asserted that their work was a form of emotional labour because it was offered for free. Care

freely given, although by strangers, more closely resembled that which was expected amongst kin.

Regardless of these differentiations, the work of immigrant-carers and citizen-carers overlapped as both kinds of carers laboured to feed, administer medicine, and clean the elderly (Muehlebach 2012: 209). Citizen-carers thus engaged in boundary work whereby they distinguished their emotional labour from the material labour of paid-carers (Muehlebach 2012: 208). They did not simply 'make beds', but provided a care that penetrated deeper than the material: comfort, support, and affection. Yet these distinctions belied the ongoing intimacy between immigrant-carers and those they cared for. Living together in close quarters some were bequeathed jewellery or even the apartments in which they had once lived with their former employers. Conversely, if citizen-carers felt the elderly they cared for had become too attached, they reacted by setting limits to their visits, citing the emotional demand of their own families as justification (Muehlebach 2012: 224). By inverting intimacy and distance, the logic of voluntarism elevated moral above material labour. Reflecting on this, Muehlebach concludes that the ability of volunteers to include themselves as ethical citizens of the state rested on the exclusion of immigrant-carers. As many of the volunteers were already past retirement age themselves, ethical labour allowed them to demonstrate themselves as valuable members of this moral-political community at precisely the moment when their claim for inclusion within it had become tenuous (Muehlebach 2012: 228).

The uncertain value of certain kinds of work and persons resonates strongly in post-crisis Greece. But the reconfiguration of citizenship in terms of volunteering reflects pan-European trends that predate the crisis. In Greece specifically, historical narratives of the country's Oriental past resurfaced. Combined pressure from the EU as well

internal reform movements collectively diagnosed Greece with a deficiency of civic engagement that 'constructed voluntarism as the epitome of European citizenship' (Rozakou 2011: 11). Greece's inclusion as a liberal member of the European community thus required it to engage in moral work that would foster civil society, in effect, the national equivalent of the volunteering undertaken by Italian citizen-volunteers. Now, as in the past, Greece's position at the border of Europe depended upon those people set upon its fringes: refugees.

Rozakou (2012) relates two examples of attempts to manage refugees and other migrants through the idiom of '*φιλοξενία* – hospitality'. In the first case, third-sector organisations, sponsored by the Greek state, ran 'reception' centres in which refugees were accommodated. While people elected to live in centres, Rozakou describes how in order to do so they were required to submit to an intensive system of management (2012: 567-568). Internal facilities, food and laundry, were locked and administered by volunteers. Armed security guarded the entrance to the compound, accompanied by surveillance with security protocols admitting entry and exit. Material management of their lives, was accompanied by advice from volunteers on domestic issues such as childcare and sanitary practices. The importance of regulating an ordered, healthy domesticity according to Greek expectations of the household, was reflected in the medical examinations required to enter the centres. Thus, by modelling immigrants as guests, Rozakou argues that 'asylum seekers are produced as passive recipients of a biopolitical humanitarian project in the name of hospitality, wherein the beneficiary is an object of control, education, and care' (2012: 573). Exactly as Ticktin and Feldman argue, vulnerability and security burred in these encounters (2010: 25).

Rozakou contrasts the formal, state-run centres with the informal help activists offered to unregistered migrants and refugees living in squats (2012: 570-571). Approaching

refugees in the street they strived to build a rapport through repeated encounters. With time, the volunteers began to offer support in the form of advice on housing, bureaucratic processes or legal and medical matters. If they were invited to migrants' homes, the volunteers would emphasise that there themselves were guests, thereby inverting norms of hospitality that would position themselves as hosts. Unlike the hospitality centres, positioned at the fringes the city, activists embedded themselves in the lives of migrants within Athens. Finally, describing their activities as taking place 'in the street', they referenced public space, an imaginary that is strongly associated with politics and protest in Greece. Despite this, Rozakou argues that the efforts of street volunteers to avoid patronage in their interaction with migrants were not entirely successful (2012: 572). By connecting refugees with the street and not the home, they nonetheless implied a state of homelessness, as reflected in their attempts to find homes that they considered acceptable according to Greek notions of domesticity. Although the street volunteers were aware of these ambiguities, like volunteers in the reception centres, expectations of home and hospitality still dominated their interactions, ultimately reconfirming those migrants as outsiders in Greece.

For volunteers in Finland, Italy, and Greece, the domestic frame was a recurring reference. If they saw their work as a bridge to distance and difference, this is not surprising: the home is amongst the most fundamental referents of belonging. The moral labour of care, even at a distance among strangers, can therefore be said to often recall the domestic, and expectations attached to it. Solidarity too can be considered in such terms, as a site for sorting inclusion and difference. Like humanitarianism, solidarity is rooted in an appeal to connection. But as anthropological work concerning humanitarianism demonstrates, such desires respond to vulnerability, which can easily slip into dependency and control. While many anthropologists have described the power and anxiety that suffering elicits, I would like to conclude this chapter in reference to

Robbins' (2013) influential article, '*Beyond the Suffering Subject: Towards an Anthropology of the Good'*. Here, Robbins argues that a gap was left in anthropology as the previous paradigm through which difference could be understood, the so-called 'savage slot', lost its analytical significance. Appeals to common humanity displaced an exotic other as the key referent in anthropology. In this shift, difference was no longer sorted according to that which was considered different, but rather according to that which was considered *similar*. The figure of humanity, 'united in its shared vulnerability to suffering' (Robbins 2013: 450) became the central trope in anthropology. Robbins describes it thus: 'the subject living in pain, in poverty, or under conditions of violence or oppression now very often stands at the centre of anthropological work' (2013: 448).

Robbins' insights speak not only of the overlaps between motivations that drive anthropology and humanitarian endeavours, but are useful in clarifying the analytical distinction between charity and solidarity that looks beyond the intent of giving. In the sense that solidarity references crisis, suffering, and social breakdown, it expresses a similar moral claim present in humanitarianism, that is, one founded in a universal appeal to humanity, further layered by a reference to underlying social unity and belonging. In the sense that these moral claims, orientated according to ideals of fairness, mutuality, equality, and dignity, unfold outside the judicial authority of the state, solidarity occupies much the same imaginative space. Yet the Solidarity Movement can also be said to draw upon explicitly political referents, taking the form of radical engagements and disagreements with the state, whereas humanitarian claims effectively bypass government. In light of the theoretical analysis presented here, and the ethnography that follows, I contend that the form of solidarity I observed in the course of my research cannot be categorised according to moral and political referents

alone. Rather, as my ethnography shows, moral discourses were pregnant in solidarity as a political project, and directed it in surprising ways.

Crisis, Suffering, Solidarity

With this in mind, I have laboured to show in this chapter how, as representations, ethnographic accounts are enmeshed in the ethical ambiguities of the topics they approach. As a final comparison, I want to liken suffering and crisis discourses. Both demand explanation and, consequently, intervention. Solidarity forms part of this terrain, and any ethnography that purports to explain it enters into a discourse of moral order about rights, obligations, and accountability. This requires a fine tread in order to trace the steps and moral moves latent in the ethnographic project. If anything, ambiguities of care made visible by ethnographies of charity, volunteering and humanitarianism should caution us against being advocates of 'need'. Suffering dehumanises as it represents people variously as victims or saviours. Crucially, in this moral schema both parties are simply good but it is precisely this innocence (Malkki 2010) that empties these encounters of situated, political content. Perhaps controversially, I want to suggest that, in contrast, 'neoliberalism' or 'the market' have tended to be treated in the opposite way. The self-interested, accumulative or economic has become shorthand for the villain in moral narratives of anthropology, at the heart of how suffering is represented. Regardless of the fact that this thinking is simplistic, the idea that neoliberalism is essentially 'bad' ultimately obscures how it operates. Tensions exposed in this contest between the idea of solidarity versus austerity express much the same dilemma and so are accompanied by the same problematic. Solidarity, with its close association to anthropological assumptions and the moral high ground, has escaped critical attention unlike its compatriot political ideologies: socialism or communism. This, then, is the purpose of my ethnography – to explore the ambiguities

and ironies of solidarity, the moral discourse it entails, and the practices that it elicits. Not to ask what solidarity *is*, but what rather, what solidarity *does*. In order to set up this interrogation of solidarity, I first confront how imaginaries of the past framed the Greek debt crisis and the Solidarity Movement's response to it, attachments rooted in ideas about Europe and Greece's uncertain place within it.

2 – Debts Past

'It's a historical moment. The Greek crisis comes to an end tonight here in Luxembourg'[16]

June 22nd 2018

With these words Pierre Moscovici, then EU commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, officially situated the end of the European debt crisis, not in Greece but at the political heart of continental Europe, 1,900km away in Luxembourg. His statement marked the receipt of Greece's final bailout payment, showcased as official proof of the Greek government's solvency. Despite the finality of Moscovici's assertion that the crisis was over, the national debt remained. Accompanying it were the austerity measures and their continued aftereffects to which the Solidarity Movement responded. This chapter returns to the idea of crisis, mapping its alleged beginnings and endings onto competing accounts of Greece's past. Interrogating the dual history of debt and clientelism, my argument starts by addressing the knotty relationship between anthropology and history, before examining how these tensions have translated into the context of Greece, sitting as it does on the border of Europe's past and present. Next, I describe how this past has been stamped onto the city of Athens. Finally, I propose the idea that Greece has always been a debtor nation and client state of the West: debt, reinforced by the weight of the past, has been used to orientate Greece as a clientelist, illiberal state and so bind it to the European project. Unpicking the past in this way provides critical background for the ethnographic content of the thesis, demonstrating how the Solidarity Movement was burdened by these imaginaries.

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[16] https://www.ft.com/content/b1cba7c4-75a2-11e8-a8c4-408cfba4327c [accessed 13/09/21]

Anthropology and history: past and present

Introducing this thesis, I began by questioning the idea of crisis and how it has shaped responses to the indebtedness of the Greek state. Here, I further this critique in relation to discourses of the past. As it implies cause and effect, the use of time draws upon a rich tradition of history in Greece according to which responsibility for the crisis has been contested. Essentially, whether Greece has been the victim of European policy or its own profligacy. Kostis (2018) adds a further dimension to these senses of liability in his controversial yet influential book: '*History's Spoiled Children: The Story of Modern Greece'*. According to his argument, people in Greece have been victims, not simply of their own corruption or foreign exploitation, but of the very idea of history itself. For Kostis, the ambiguous weight of the classical past is a burden that stands between Greece and modernity. Such a claim warrants further interrogation to trace the paths of vulnerability and dependency not only wrought *into* history but, as Kostis rightly stresses, by ideas *of* history. Nevertheless, Kostis' assertions participate in the very narrative he pinpoints as problematic: the unfulfilled promise of modernity. In this respect, his ideas feed into a broader imperative that Greece should liberalise, effectively restating a long-standing argument that the country's unique past hinders democracy and development. If austerity policy can only be read in the shadow of these historical assertions, unpicking them is further complicated by anthropology's own ambiguous attachments to the past.

The disciplines of anthropology and history share an interwoven legacy, having been at times seen as closely bound together and at others distantly related. In anthropology's early years, the disciplines were considered two sides of the same coin. Social Darwinism charted cultural and physical evolution geographically: the past was written, literally, in traces that remained of it in the present. By travelling to distant, exotic

locations, anthropologists could document vestiges of social evolution and thereby reconstruct humanity's past. As the force of colonialism began to falter, however, increasing doubt emerged concerning this 'progressive' paradigm. In the 1930s, anthropologists began to stress function over cause. Present circumstances took precedence over past contexts, giving rise to, 'forms of description that were not only synchronic but very often also atemporal, taking neither temporality nor social dynamics into account' (Naepels 2010: 875).

Sahlins (1993) was among the first to voice such complaints by drawing attention to unbalanced assessments of history. According to colonial beliefs, the West possessed history, whereas those outside the West were regarded as having 'tradition'. In the post-colonial context, however, Sahlins argued that tradition was appropriated by the people it once excluded. Formerly the means whereby colonial authority elided the historical claims of people it sought to rule, tradition was ultimately subverted into claims for independence. Sahlins further objected, however, that when anthropologists dismissed tradition as invented or lamented acculturation to modernity in their ethnographies, they participated in a form of academic imperialism. By not treating such claims to the past as legitimate, they effectively undermined the agency of those people described in their ethnographic work (1993: 5-7). Indeed, it was through this critique of colonialism and its undeniable historical impact (Faubion 1993: 43) that anthropologists came to recognise ethnographic accounts as fundamentally historical entities (Wolf 2010; Comaroff and Comaroff 2019). Following these reconsiderations, those outside the West were no longer considered passive participants in the 'march of history' but active agents who helped broker its production. At the same time, agency was at the heart of another critique of the uses of tense in anthropology. In, '*Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object'*, Fabian (2014) argued that the subjects of ethnographic research were displaced from historical contexts, suspended in a timeless 'ethnographic

present'. Intersubjective dialogue was transcribed into a voiceless academic authority through the use of tense: anthropologists spoke *for* interlocutors rather than *from* engagement with them. If anthropology had first denied that non-Western people had their own history, they were nonetheless part of global history. Structuralist and functionalist accounts, however, effectively placed people outside of history entirely, focusing exclusively on the present.

Both Sahlins' and Fabuion's critiques put the use of tense at the heart of how agency is mediated and demand that ethnographic representations be situated as temporal events. In response, history has again become a common partner to ethnography, not to reconstruct the past but to help contextualise the present. Other histories, ways of making history, and historiography have been used to expanded history might mean ethnographically. Palmié and Stewart (2016: 208) argue for a broader understanding of history as 'past relationships', not confined to writing but equally constituted through other mediums such as dance, performance, or monuments. They question the linearity of historical time, contrasting linear causation with karmic causation, as well as referencing other ways of knowing the past such as mantic knowledge, inspiration, and revelation (2016: 211).

Faubion cautions against a casual acceptance of history in anthropology for precisely these reasons, mobilising Ancient Greek conceptions of time as 'infinite repetitions' to problematise the understanding of history as a linear set of events (1993: 45). Despite his objection, this critique is troublesome considering Faubion's otherwise careful attention to the entanglements of history and anthropology. By looking back to Ancient Greece, Faubion echoes the very nostalgia for the classical world upon which Western imperial accounts of history accumulate. Angé and Berliner, have problematised a concurrent nostalgia in anthropology, that they argue was essential to the discipline's production: 'anthropologists in the West were building a science on nostalgia for

disappearing Otherness' (2014: 4). Separately, Berliner further argues that ethnography continues to engage with sentimental attachments to the past: 'participant observation functions precisely as a nostalgic quest for intimacy and sincerity with locals' (2014: 29).

Nowhere are discourses of history, agency, and nostalgia more relevant than in Greece, sitting as it does on the cusp of both Europe, and its history. Given these tensions, it is understandable that the passage of time and memory are some of the central themes that have emerged in the ethnography of Greece (Hirschon 1998, Karakasidou 2009, Knight 2018, Stewart 2017, Sutton 1998). Herzfeld has conducted extensive research on the past and its uses (1984, 1991, 1997, 2002), explicating how the Western tradition of history drew upon a classical revival that postured Western Europe as the heir to Ancient Greek democracy and philosophy. As the boundaries between history and anthropology became again more permeable, the idea of Greece naturally found itself at the centre of these debates. That is to say, recognition of the invented tradition of Western history went hand-in-hand with the 'discovery' of European anthropology. However, this discovery of anthropology at home did not resolve the conflicted relationship between European ethnography and history but rather elicited further dilemmas about how to apprehend histories of Greece.

In his ethnography of heritage in Crete, Herzfeld notes that the idea of invented traditions implies an authentic past (1991: 12). While this insight has mainly been used to think about the dismissal of histories outside the West, it also focuses attention on the uses to which authentic Greek histories have been put, what counts as history, and who gets to define it as such. Greece's classical past continues to be restated through heritage practices as people resist, and ultimately participate in, the construction of what Herzfeld calls 'monumental time' (1991: 6). History in the singular does not exist, but is rather composed of a bundle of histories, each entering into a battlefield of sometimes

contradictory and complimentary claims to authenticity. To understand this requires intensive treatment of historical material, not to determine what is true, but how truth is established.

It is in this sense that the account offered here is an alter-history. Not a theory but a provocation, a working through of history to lay bare how validity gathers as pressure on the present. Its purpose is to reveal the workings of history rather than establish it, and destabilise prevailing accounts of the Greek debt crisis by casting them in a different light. When Faubion insists that anthropologists cannot simply embrace history (1993: 50), this reflected his background in the Greek context. He reminds us that history is the force whereby nation and ethnos were, and continue to be, brought into being. Any ethnography conducted in alleged times of crisis must be mindful of how history's disjunctures and continuities are politically charged.

Athens: past and present

In a country where the weight of the past sits heavily, history permeates ways of knowing and being, collected in feelings and stories that accrue in the places (Stewart 1996). Athens itself is a city that was built on historical capital. In the period of my research, the past shadowed everyday life. It was echoed in the people and streets whose names recalled ancient heroes, or could be glimpsed when the Acropolis emerged above the sea of concrete buildings, sometimes hidden and sometimes coming into view. Immediately below these ruins that overlooked the city, the streets were fossilised and picturesque: the only part that remained of Athens before it was named capital of the foundling country and suddenly burst into life. This area was known as Plaka, which, fittingly, can mean plaque of flagstone: both testament and stepping-stone to the Acropolis. Over the years, the neoclassical streets that surrounded Plaka emptied of occupants, replaced by tourists curious to visit Greece's past. Open-fronted buildings

revealed shops filled with trinkets: sea-sponges, wooden phalluses, t-shirts and caps with logos: ‘I love Greece’, or ‘Modern Day Spartan’. Lining the streets were racks of keychains, olives, honey and sweets, sandals, and for the more refined, artworks and archaeological replicas: fragments of Greece, rustic and ancient, available for a fee.

Further down the hill lay the true heart of the city, Monastiraki, named after a long-vanished monastery. Since then, the area centred on a small plaza, fronted by one of the city’s primary metro stations. People congregated there, standing around the entrance to the metro or sat on entrance steps, trying to spot people for whom they were waiting. Nearby stalls sold fruit at prices hiked for tourists, who also navigated street peddlers, immigrants mostly, who tried to sell them wristbands. Children offered roses for sale, disregarded by locals with a hushed ‘no’, click of the tongue, or upward tilt of the head. People gathered and dispersed but the plaza was rarely empty. At night there was bongo music or street performers who vied for attention. In the background, people sold drugs as the police watched indifferently. Even at dawn, the activity continued: streetcleaners washed the square, avoided by partygoers or those arriving for work.

Across from the metro, the city’s central street, Ermou, led up to Syndagma Square. Overlooking the plaza, the rose-coloured parliament building was sometimes visible in the distance. Crossing these streets was perilous: taxis, mopeds and cars wove past, not always stopping to respect traffic signals as pedestrians danced between them. Horns sounded; people called to one another. Sound reverberated in the heat, bouncing back and forth between dense office blocks of concrete buildings erected in the 1960s. To the north, such buildings had long since engulfed the once grand promenades built in Greece’s neoclassical style, once a tribute to the ancient past. Photographs of the demolished streets offer a stark contrast with the anonymous apartment buildings erected in their place. Post-war redevelopment, rural to urban migration, and poor

planning laws, combined to allow these building to engulf the city: Greece's economic miracle came at a price. Omonia, Kato Kipseli, Plateia Amerikeis (Unity, Lower Beehive, American Square) became the home to immigrant communities, abandoned by urban elites who moved to the far north and south of the city. Unlike the dense patchwork in the centre, the streets of the rich outskirts were broad, smooth and lined with trees. With the short-lived affluence that preceded the debt crisis, however, some of the decaying post-industrial areas in the heart of the city had become trendy: Pssiri, its small residences and quirky streets; Gazi, its industrial buildings refashioned as arts venues and nightclubs.

If layers of the past weighed heavily on the city, its future was less clear. The effects of the debt crisis and recession were written in the streets. Neoclassical buildings owned by the state stood empty, with signs in front that declared them for sale. Red and yellow 'for rent' stickers tagged entrances to apartment buildings and the dusty windows of vacant shops. Rubbish accumulated on the kerbs of even the most affluent neighbourhoods, and the streets were filled with potholes. In residential areas, poorly maintained balconies with closed or decaying shutters betrayed the lack of occupants. Then, as at other times of crisis, a steady stream of emigrants left gaps in the city. In spite of this, life was abundant – a bustling kind of life that went on without direction. A life of repetitions and uncertainties. The city itched with traffic, the countless coffee shops were packed, and in the evening the city's central streets filled with people taking a walk in the failing light that covered everything in warm hues. People were proud of survival in the face of difficulties, proud of their spirit, passion, and sense of '*κέφι* – joy'. Greece is the most beautiful country in the world, I was told on numerous occasions. Happiness in depression, in a crisis that was everywhere and nowhere, with an uncertain end. When the country exited the period of its third bailout in 2018, the austerity measured attached to it remained. Life in Athens had been 'restructured', and

the government was, technically, solvent. If the crisis was officially over, this belied a long trajectory of foreign interventions. Greece was, and has always been, a debtor nation.

Debtor Nation

> '*This study tells a tale of Greece, not of the Greece of classical grandeur and bygone glories, but of modern Greece, which today lies prostrate under the brutalizing jackboot of ruthless conquerors and despoilers...its central theme is the growth of the Greek external indebtedness and the periodic interference which sovereign and private lenders resorted to in order to force an impotent debtor to discharge solemnly contracted obligations*' (Levandis 1944: *ix*).

Published while Greece was occupied by the Axis powers, this account could easily have been written at the height of the Greek debt crisis. In it, Levandis enjoins the reader to draw a parallel between the German occupation and Ottoman rule, just as today austerity measures have been considered the latest link in a chain of historical exploitation (Knight 2018). In Greece, the past is always present through such repeated imaginaries: foreign interference and exploitation; indirect German rule; governments vacillating between protectionism and libertarianism. Yet popular understandings of the Greek debt crisis belied these historical continuities. In contrast with Levandis' account, consider the following statement from the Financial Times:

> '*EU leaders are negotiating a deal that could see unprecedented outside intervention in the Greek economy, including international involvement in tax collection and privatisation of state assets, in exchange for new bail-out loans*'[17]

[17] https://ftalphaville.ft.com/2011/05/31/579761/greece-set-for-severe-bail-out-terms/ [accessed 13/09/21]

Taking this statement as a springboard, the following account of Greece's historical indebtedness places it not only at the centre of national history, but the essence of the Greek state itself.

Prior to 1832, Greece was not a sovereign country, but rather a domain of the Ottoman empire. It was only in the late 18th century that the idea of an independent Greek state first emerged, as the spirit of revolution in Western Europe collided with the classical ideals of the Enlightenment (Koliopoulos & Veremis 2009: 4). In its eastern expression, the Greek Enlightenment was first advocated by the Phanariots, a perceptibly Greek merchant class whose trade links traversed the Ottoman Empire, connecting it with the developing European polities. Their studies in classical revival were not initially reactionary but it was their ideas that laid the foundations for the revolution of 1821. Internal dissent was further cultivated by outside influences, particularly Russia, that had long been expanding its borders at the expense of Ottoman dominance. Indeed, despite nationalist rhetoric about the Greek insurrection, Kostis insists that the revolution would ultimately have failed without French and British military intervention (2018: 56-67). In the aftermath of the uprising, revolutionaries struggled to solidify a formal Greek state. The first elected Governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, soon fell into conflict with local power brokers. Again, in 1832, the European powers intervened, this time to install Otto of Bavaria as head of a constitutional monarchy in place of the non-functioning republic. Soon thereafter he declared himself absolute monarch, souring public favour until he fled the country as a formal democracy was declared in 1843.

Against this backdrop of political turbulence, the post-revolutionary authorities struggled to fund the nascent state. Unable to repay interest payments for war loans taken to fund the revolution, the government defaulted just a few years later. This

process was repeated again, twenty years later in 1847, when the country defaulted on loans to fund further wars with Turkey. Between the years 1844-1878, Greece found itself unable to borrow on international markets (Freris 1986: 25). It was only then that a settlement on the unpaid debt was reached in an effective write-down as the debt was restructured (Levandis 1944: 26). Thus, even before it had formally coalesced, the Greek state was premised upon debt as it aspired to be recognised as part of Europe. In practical terms, this left the government beholden to foreign interests that profited from sizable interest payments, while allowing them to discreetly fund wars against the Ottoman Empire: political and financial oversight of Greece went hand-in-hand. Attached to the instalment of Otto were sovereign loans from France, Britain and Russia, with stipulations allowing for their direct involvement in Greek affairs to enforce repayment (Levandis 1944: 35). These interventions were later repeated after the 1847 default, when an International Financial Commission of Inquiry was established between 1857 and 1859 to make assessments of Greece's financial standing.

Before the funds were even disbursed, however, much of the money had vanished. A series of creditors skimmed off shares as it travelled to Greece from London so that the final amount that the borrowers received was considerably less (Levandis 1944: 18). Interest payments were subsequently so large that soon much of the debt was devoted to repaying its own interest: 'in the first ten years the interest and sinking fund consumed the entire third instalment' (Levandis 1944: 41), while the ministry of war and burgeoning state bureaucracy consumed what remained. For the later sovereign loans: 'the Commission of Inquiry discovered that the government agencies charged with collecting and administering public revenues had entirely failed to exercise proper surveillance and control...the accounts actually produced by the administration were inaccurate and lacking in authenticity' (Levandis 1944: 52). Here, past and present resonate again. In the most recent debt crisis, much of the bail-out funding distributed

went to supporting the financial system and paying off interest on existing debt.[18] Following the Greek government's request for help, the EU set up its own investigation into how public funds had been put to use following the apparent revelation that public accounts had been in financial parlance 'massaged' (Manolopoulos 2011: 52-58). Less talked about is military expenditure, which remains twice the Eurozone average as a percentage of GDP (Athanasiou et al 2002: 2).[19] High public debt, high interest repayments, alleged mismanagement of funds, and military spending, are therefore not exceptional but historically normal in the history of the Greek nation-state.

From the late 1870s, this now-established pattern continued when Greece returned to international financial markets. When lending became available once more, Charilaos Trikoupis, then Prime Minster of Greece, began to borrow heavily. A committed reformist, the money was spent on public works programmes in keeping with his belief that infrastructure was essential for modernisation of the country (Freris 1986: 25). Between 1879 and 1890, the Greek government took on seven loans equal to a total value of 630 million gold francs (Levandis 1944: 72). Again, the cycle of debt was repeated: soon the government was spending approximately 30% of its revenue servicing the national debt, just as it had in the 1850s (Freris 1986: 28). By 1893, debt repayments were suspended entirely. Subsequent debt negotiations between 1894 and 1896 collapsed, in part because German demands were more stringent than those of their French and British counterparts.[20] In 1897, Greece defaulted again, which opened the way for its creditors to establish the International Commission for Financial Control

[18] Of the 240 billion euros received in the first two bail-outs between 2010 and 2012, approximately 48.2 billion went to support the Greek banking sector and a further 140 billion was spent servicing existing debt payments. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/29/where-did-the-greek-bailout-money-go [accessed 13/09/21]

[19] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/19/greece-military-spending-debt-crisis [accessed 13/09/21]

[20] Another repetition: in bailout negotiations Germany pushed for more stringent austerity measures than France or the United Kingdom. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/30/world/europe/how-germany-prevailed-in-the-greek-bailout.html https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/19/greece-military-spending-debt-crisis [accessed 13/09/21]

(ICFC) in the same year. The commission had a direct say in national spending, diverting state revenues from monopoly industries towards the repayment of the debt, as well as making any changes in taxation subject to commission approval (Levandis 1944: 90-109).

Against this backdrop of government reform and borrowing, a continuing influx of refugees from the Ottoman Empire compelled reforms in land ownership as formerly Ottoman-owned estates were dismantled (Beaton & Ricks 2009: 158). Larger lands were broken up and allocated as small-holdings under the guardianship of the state that, in place of an aristocratic class, became the de facto patron for a rapidly expanding population. These events, however, created the conditions for a perfect economic storm that would later engulf the country. Already a stable product, currants were easily grown on small-holdings. In 1878, the currant market was saturated, but a blight on vineyards in France created a sudden resurgent demand. Wine makers shifted production to currant wines (Burlumi 1899: 634-635), so that by the late 1890s almost a quarter of all agricultural land in Greece was devoted to currants (Freris 1986: 24). However, between 1889 and 1896, France introduced a series of stringent protective tariffs (Burlumi 1899: 636) with the effect that currant imports dried up. Dependent on currant exports, the Greek economy collapsed, prompting waves of emigration to America and Australia – a trend that would become established during subsequent periods of crisis.

Just as some people flowed out of the country, others flowed in. The ultimate cause of the wave of incoming refugees was ongoing wars with Turkey. Already burdened with debts to fund war and modernisation, the total collapse of the economy following the currant crisis put the state in an unsustainable fiscal position. It was at this point that the ICFC exercised its powers, forcing the government to withdraw 2 million drachma

banknotes in order to combat runaway inflation. Initially, currency stabilisation was successful, but when Greece continued wars with Turkey the currency was thrown off balance once again. These difficult circumstances were further compounded after the election in Greece of a pro-German monarchist in the 1920s, with the consequence that the Allies refused to back loans extended to fund the previous war effort. In response, the drachma was devalued twice, in 1921 and 1927. In the wake of this financial instability, the government was unable to support the roughly 1.2 million refugees that had entered the country and sued European governments for loans to assist them. The League of Nations set up a commission to allocate a loan, upon the condition that Greece form its first central bank in 1928. Ironically, the effect of this was to tie Greece formally to the gold standard, and therefore the dollar, on the eve of the Great Depression.

As Greece entered the 1930s, the turbulence produced by these various economic instabilities ultimately led to a backlash against liberalist policies. Freris writes:

> '*the first half of the decade leading up to the war was dominated by the monetary and fiscal effects of the depression on the Greek economy. The memories of these events in 1922-1926 were still fresh in the minds of the public and of the Government. This was evident by the tenacity with which the authorities stuck to their stabilisation programme of the drakma so that they pursued it to the point that it resulted in yet another official default on the external debt*' (1986: 97).

This default occurred in 1932, and as the Great Depression gained momentum, like many other countries Greece began to pursue a series of protectionist trade policies. Where just six years earlier the government had introduced subsidies on capital imports, now it reversed course, adding tariffs as economic policy looked increasingly inwards. Economic insularity was matched politically by the election of the fascist Metaxas regime in 1936.

At the advent of World War II, many on the political left were dead or in exile following rounds of persecution by the fascist government. In this period, a communist

movement had taken root in Greece, as those in the country had been influenced by Russian politics. Soon the country was occupied by Nazi forces, itself a response to Greece's conflict with an expansionist Italy. Greece's own authoritarian right-wing government went into exile. Resistance to German occupation came from the underground left, dominated by communist groups that set up a rival, unofficial system of government. The strength of this resistance was intelligible in terms of the hundreds of thousands who died in 1941 from a famine caused by Germany's extractive economic policy. When the Germans withdrew in 1944, Greece faced a power vacuum. Nominally, it had been agreed between Russia and Britain that Greece would be under British influence, but politics on the ground led to violent conflicts between various factions competing for control. A three-year civil war ensued in which the communists initially had the upper hand. Ultimately, however, the right took control thanks to financial sponsorship by the Western powers (Freris 1986: 121) and tacit political agreements between Churchill and Stalin (Hatzis 2018: 9).

After the civil war, financial support was to continue as the country received 554 million dollars between 1944 and 1947 (Vetsopoulos 2002: 18). Initially, British forces distributed aid to Greece under the 1946 London Agreement (Vetsopoulos 2002: 14) but in June 1947 the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) body was formed to organise the allocation of 415 million dollars in aid. The nascent government wanted to handle aid directly but the UN was reluctant to acquiesce and maintained the privilege of allocating the funds itself (Freris 1986: 123). Meanwhile, old war loans and the bail-out administered by the ICFC in 1897 had been written off only one year prior to the UNRRA aid. This debt forgiveness was conditional, however: 'in return the Greek government agreed to control wages and prices, to cut the budget deficit and to set up a much tighter administrative system over its credit and monetary policies' (Freris 1986: 124). Shortly thereafter, a Currency Commission was set up with

a three-board membership comprising representatives from Greece, the UK and the US, effectively giving the two counties a veto over monetary policy (Vetsopoulos 2002: 15). Western influence was further consolidated as the Marshall Plan came into effect in 1948. The Economic Co-Operation Administration (ECA) was formed to distribute the funds and, like the various external financial commissions that had preceded it, had direct supervision of the Greek national budget (Freris 1986: 130). Ostensibly, the emphasis was on reconstruction and development, particularly of industry. In reality, however, the Truman Doctrine meant funds also went to military spending due to rising political anxiety in the Cold War era (Freris 1986: 136).

To summarise, for almost 150 years, Greece had been a debtor nation dependent on external funds, either as loans or explicit aid. It had suffered one major financial crisis and had repeatedly defaulted or been granted debt forgiveness. The money had been spent primarily on servicing debt repayments, funding wars, and dealing with their aftermath. Meanwhile, the price tag of these funds had been direct interference in national policy, both politically and economically. Where initially, influence was exerted from Britain, France, and Germany, as global power shifted to the US, so too did the source of these funds. In both periods, Greece had acted as a buffer between East and West, first destabilising the Ottoman Empire and then serving as an American foothold in confrontation with the developing communist bloc. Politically, it had transformed from a direct democracy, to a constitutional monarchy, absolute monarchy, parliamentary democracy, fascist state, occupied territory, to a prescribed democracy – political conditions that had largely been enforced on the country through demands from prevailing global powers.

Money spent in Greece through the Marshall plan propelled an economic boom. In the period 1950-1973, the country saw a growth rate second only to that of Japan – an average of 7.7%. Sometimes referred to as the Greek Economic Miracle or Greece's

golden age, these conditions were undoubtedly the result of political stability, debt relief, the effect of external aid, and reconstruction efforts. But as US aid in Greece came to an end, it became apparent that growth had done little to change the fundamental character of the Greek economy. Industrial growth had been relatively weak and dominated by foreign investment. Internal growth had been focused in the construction industry (Freris 1984: 157-158). Although Athens has expanded rapidly in the 1960s, construction added little in terms of value to the Greek economy. At the international level, 1971 saw the effective end of the Bretton-Woods system. By ending this institution, the US government indicated it was no longer willing to act as guarantor to other nations, resulting in a series of global shocks. Thus, while growth in Greece had been subsidised by American aid in the 1950s and early 60s, this was no longer the case by the 1970s, and the cycle of investment began to falter. Concurrently, as America withdrew influence, the conservative government it had backed lost support. By 1967, a democratic movement was underway but had the effect to provoke a conservative backlash that resulted in a military coup that held power until 1974. When the regime collapsed, finding itself without a patron, Greece turned to the next obvious candidate: the European Union.

In 1981, as part of a broader social movement campaigning for democracy, Greece joined the EU. In the period that followed, the government once again began to borrow extensively with the result that the debt-to-GDP ratio rose from 28.6% in 1980 to 80.7% by 1990. Much of this was spent on developing a comprehensive welfare system, but the PASOK government also used the allocation of public funds to garner the political allegiance of voters (Mavrogordatos 1997). In 1985, a combination of chronically high inflation, low-growth, and public borrowing led the government close to default. Rather than turn to the International Monetary Fund, the government agreed a loan with the European Commission. To receive the loan, ‘the Greek side committed itself to the

implementation of an economic recovery programme, based on boosting the competitiveness of the Greek economy, harnessing inflation, reducing deficits, and enhancing productive structures through structural reform' (Skilas and Maris 2016: 37). Rather than implementing these reforms, the government chose to tackle its fiscal position by devaluing the drachma. Another programme of reforms was introduced in 1986 in a bid to modernise the tax system, ownership of public utilities, and collective bargaining. Yet the reforms were dropped two years later – only changes to the banking sector were put into place (Christodoulakis 2013: 94). The next round of major reforms came in 1991 as part of a broader convergence plan to join the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Again, these reforms were dropped two years later. In 1994, a more convincing reform agenda was implemented. Many public bodies were floated on the stock market. Greek Telecom, for example, was partially privatised (Chirstodoulakis 2013: 100). Funds raised in this way contributed to an improvement in the government's fiscal position that was necessary to meet the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty, which set targets for application in five key domains: inflation, budget deficit, debt-to-GDP ratio, exchange rate stability, and long-term interest rates on government bonds. In 2001, Greece was admitted to the EMU and over the subsequent years saw reasonable levels of growth and some further, albeit halting, liberalisation. Accompanying accession, Greece received various funds from the European Union offered to promote growth and prosperity, with the result that, 'from the early 1990s, European funding came to engulf the Greek funding policies, thus defining the developmental and economic priorities of the Greek state itself' (Gkintidis 2017:32).

In relating this brief political and economic history of Greece, my aim has not merely been to show the linear succession of events, but how cycles of debt and Western patronage were interlinked. The Greek state came into being already accustomed to

paternalistic interference by the Western powers. First Britain, and then the US, offered funds to Greece, either as loans or aid, to further their political agendas: war loans to undermine the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, as loans to enact liberal reforms between 1900 and 1920, and finally aid to supress communism and create a liberal buffer next to the USSR in the post-World War II period. In return for political allegiance and, crucially, adherence to prevailing economic doctrines, the Greek state received financial payments. In each case, justification for international involvement in Greek affairs was premised upon the idea that Greece had failed to live up to Western expectations. Post-financial crisis, Greece's 'failure' has been attributed, as in the past, to a lack of fiscal prudence, inefficient bureaucracy, and a closed economy dominated by the state. Debt and dependency hinged on the idea that Greece was in the process of becoming liberal. But the historical account presented here shows that the state has been in this process of becoming for nearly 200 years: in the foundation of the liberal constitution in the 1820s, the modernisation programs of the 1870s, market liberalisation demanded by European powers in the 1920s, conditions attached to allocation of aid in the 1960s, reforms prior to EU accession in the 1980s, and the reformist agenda that dominated Greek politics in the 1990s. Each reformist moment was accompanied by the influx of considerable sums of foreign money. Austerity policy, far from being exceptional, actually represents the latest incarnation of the story of Greece as a state of liberal becoming, a past forever reaching towards the present.

Producing Antiquity

To excavate the roots of this reformist agenda further, Hanink prompts us to reconsider the current debt crisis in Greece in terms of a broader debt to history that has served to bind Greece to the West – what she refers to as 'the classical debt' (Hanink 2017). In the early 19th century, a fusion of Enlightenment rationalism and romanticism produced the narrative of classical idealism, in which European intellectuals looked to Ancient

Greece as a source of inspiration and as the progenitor of Western liberalism. Initially, such ideas were forged indirectly through reference to literary texts, either classical sources or contemporary travellers accounts. As interest in Greece eventually developed into direct explorations, these idealised accounts soon came into conflict with the reality of Greece's past and present. Excavations around the Acropolis in Athens in 1886 revealed a series of korai statues[21] but these did not conform to established aesthetic expectations, leading one critic to decry them as 'Chinese' girls (Hanink 2017: 158). By doing so, the critic drew upon a trend that blamed the East for Greece's 'fall into darkness'. Accounts of European travellers expressed comparable sentiments, evoking the corrupting influence of Ottoman rule to explain the Greek social landscape that they perceived as distant from the classical past (Hanink 2017: 234; Gallant 2016). In fact, Eastern influence became an important counterpoint in this developing narrative of Greece, 'a land whose Oriental decadence was only thrown into sharper relief by the visible ruins of better days' (Hanink 2017: 82). Dealing with the irregularities of Greece's past involved whitewashing undesirable elements, sometimes literally. Marbles taken from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin were subjected to chemical treatments that enhanced their whiteness, inadvertently removing traces of the coloured paint that originally covered them (2017: 244): Oriental colour displaced by classical white.

Hanink refers to this as the colonisation of the past: 'European travellers to Greece managed to implement a unique kind of colonial regime of their own, not over the land of Greece, but over Greek antiquity' (2017: 197). This is not to say that locals were simply passive observers in this process, Hanink notes local resistance to the removal and reconstruction of antiquities (2017: 100). However, with the rise of the independence movement, people in Greece were quick to capitalise on classical idealism to garner support, financial and political, for their cause: Western Europe must

[21] Ancient Greek sculptures depicting female figures.

repay its debt to Greece as the birthplace of democracy, philosophy, and drama. [22] Hanink points out that these claims actually repeated those promoted by Ancient Athenians. Having been instrumental in defeating the Persian invasion, Athens quickly began circulating propaganda that asserted its political and economic dominance on the basis of this victory (Hanink 2017: 111). During the independence movement these claims were resurrected – Greece was a buffer to Eastern barbarism – and these claims would be recycled again in the 1960s, when the country was repositioned as a liberal stronghold next to Communist neighbours.

Just as Western scholars had worked to purge conflicting elements from Greece's past, this project was also taken up within Greece once the Greek state was formed. Physically, whole towns were removed from atop ancient sites such as the Acropolis and Delphi (Hanink 2017: 242). Place names were also reconstructed: '*0ld* names have been replaced by *ancient* ones, replacing one history with another'. (Beaton & Ricks 2009: 26, original emphasis). Where formerly parents had named their children after saints, now they named them after ancient Greek characters: Phaedra, Odysseus, Helen, Calliope, Jason, and so on. A unified ethnos was brought into being through the erasure of alternative histories, especially in the north of the country, which shared mountainous borders with what is now Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey (Karakasidou 1997).

Commitment to the classical past at once bound Greece to Western political agendas while also provoking anxiety concerning the country's identity on the frontier of Europe. As Herzfeld puts it, this 'dual self-image is a refraction of this mixture of admiration for a lost past and pity for today's sad relic' (Herzfeld 1984: 442). Classical

[22] The Greek diasporic elite were themselves deeply integrated into the social milieu from which the Enlightenment movement sprang and already committed to these ideals by the time of independence (Kostis 2018: 25).

aspirations also fuelled Greece's irredentist project in the 19th and 20th centuries, the so-called Great Idea. Greece waged successive wars against the Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, Turkey, as the state strove to 'restore' its perceived ancient territory – wars that were largely funded through debts from countries like Britain and France. In terms of internal politics, the idea that Greece had become sullied through its Eastern associations remains vibrant political capital in the present day. In popular accounts, the fact that Greek citizens avoid paying taxes has commonly been explained with reference to Ottoman sovereignty: 'under Ottoman rule, it was a point of pride to avoid paying tax' (Manolopoulos 2011: 64). Liberal failure, in this case the government's inability to collect taxes, has been mapped in terms of this Oriental past. Continual reference to the classical past in media responses and political debates over bailout agreements and austerity measures mark what Hanink calls the ongoing symbolic colonisation of Greece (2017: 205). In these narratives, Greece is treated as a country not quite Western, not quite in the present. As in the past, these sentiments of modernisation and reform operate in tandem with the idea of debt. Financial debts and the classical debt reinforce one another, together binding Greece to the Western political sphere as the state has borrowed to pursue modernisation.

History and the uses of the past thus go to the heart of political discourse in Greece. When Pierre Moscovici insisted that the Greek debt crisis was over, his statement communicated an exceptionality that whitewashed the history of Greek debt. Contrary to this, I have tried to emphasise the cyclical and thematic qualities of these discourses, and argue that the indebtedness of the Greek state is not a modern anomaly but historically typical. Greece is a debtor nation that has long relied upon Western patronage. I further argue that the classical debt is critical not only to the production of Greece's historical and present-day dependency, but also to the way Western patronage

is refigured as a liberal, reformist project. In the section that follows, I examine how debt has been rationalised in terms of the liberalisation of Greece from a clientelist past.

Clientelism: the illiberal other

According to liberal narratives of clientelism, the Greek political economy operates on the basis of nepotism. Instead of functioning 'freely', the economy is subordinate to manipulation such that those in power distribute resources in order to purchase political favours and electoral support. Party affiliation rather than merit dictates the allocation of appointments in state owned sectors. Mavrogordatos (1997) provides an example of this position with his theory of 'machine politics'. He argues that with the expansion of clientelism in the 1980s under the PASOK government, Greece was transformed into a clientelist state par excellence. Clientelism was no longer restricted to individual clients and patrons but came to characterise the essential relationship between state and society itself. The liberal objection to this is that economic productivity is stifled by state interests as resources are redirected from useful enterprises to purchase political capital. Greece's extensive but ineffective bureaucracy, distorted economy, and sudden jump in public borrowing post-1980s are each explained in terms of this analysis.

Perhaps the best summary of this position has been made by Trantidis (2016). In his argument, post-war era statism in the early 1960s created the perfect conditions for rent-seeking and patronage (2016: 26-28). After a brief interlude while the military junta was in power in the early 1970s, pre-existing patterns of patronage were expanded under a rhetoric of socialism: 'by politicizing wide areas of economic and social activity, the policies of nationalization and 'democratization' enlarged the scope for patronage politics' (Trantidis 2016: 38). Posts made to positions in public administration, banks, nationally owned industries, and the penetration of trade unions, civil society groups, and universities by party activists are all examples cited to demonstrate the penetration

of clientelism into the political economy from the 1980s onwards. According to Trantidis, this expansion of the clientelist network demanded fiscal expansion to cover the cost of existing and future clients (2016: 42). In effect, the Greek political economy came to resemble a pyramid scheme with internal dynamics that demanded ever increasing public borrowing. Such conditions ultimately led to the Greek debt crisis though the accumulation of debt that further reinforced a political structure resistant to reform.

The assumption that Greece must reform runs deep in the academic literature.[23] Even famous detractors such as Galbraith (2016) and Krugman (2012), who argue that Greece has been the victim of a misguided monetary project and policy response, do not question the liberal premise of reform. Those more nuanced perspectives (Triandafyllidou & Kouki 2013) that acknowledge the role of structural forces, such as the Euro, still largely adhere to reformist assumptions. Given the strength of this consensus, it is worth stopping to examine why the need for reform apparently has no alternative. As described above, much of the argument is well-grounded empirically and it is not my purpose to deny the existence of clientelist practices in Greece. Looking at the idea anthropologically, however, I want to put a question mark above the moral judgements that accompany this explanation and examine its latent assumptions.

Foremost among these is the idea that Greece must modernise, and by extension that the country is underdeveloped: the idea of Greece in a state of liberal becoming. Discourses of progress, modernity and development harbour strong political agendas that have been well-documented in anthropology.[24] Building on this, I would like to further unpack the idea of political clientelism to reveal deeper assumptions about the Greek crisis and

[23] See the extensive treatment of this issue by Kalyvas et al (2014) and Featherstone (2004, 2005, 2011) for studies of modern Greece that express strong commitments to reform.
[24] The literature is considerable but the essential argument is summarized by Ferguson in '*The Anti-Politics Machine*' (1990).

responses to it. In the mainstream account of political clientelism, state bureaucracy ceases to function because appointments are made on the basis of political allegiance and not competence. Implacable bureaucracy, however, is not merely incidental but instrumental to the function of clientelism. If all citizens have easy and equal access to the state this undermines the system of favours and privileges through which clientelism operates. In this case, state bureaucracy must act deliberately to exclude the majority in order to privilege a minority. Bureaucracy is exclusionary because it operates as a system of power premised upon the control of state resources. But as Herzfeld has pointed out, this control is not simply material but rests on the symbolic capital to insist on admittance to the state – about who can claim belonging within it (Herzfeld 1993: 33). Belonging is also a theme developed elsewhere in his theory of crypto-colonialism (Herzfeld 2002), in which he argues, although not a direct colony of the West, Greece became complicit in colonial expectations. As Herzfeld puts it: 'crypto-colonialism is thus about the exclusion of certain countries from access to the globally dominant advantages of modernity' (Herzfeld 2002: 921). Facing the threat of colonial power, people in Greece adopted and cultivated Western notions of 'Greekness'. The price for admittance was accepting an idealised classical past that at once celebrated Greek ancestry and berated failures to live up to this past potential.

What I want to emphasise here is how both theories hinge on the idea of inclusion. The first addresses who can claim to be included in the state. The second concerns itself with whether the Greek state can be included in the 'West'. In both cases, the exchange is not simply material but equally a negotiation of identity. Distribution of state resources indicates affiliation and inclusion. Drawing a parallel between these two levels of action, between citizen-state and state-West, emphasises another essential point. Clientelism is not something that has happened solely within Greece but between the Greek state and its Western patrons. Viewed historically, Greece has always been

dependent upon external polities. The region that now constitutes Greece has been ruled by the Franks, the Venetians, and the Ottomans. Subsequently, it was overseen by France, Britain, Russia, Germany, the US and, most recently, the European Union. As the historical analysis presented in this chapter illustrates, Greece actively exchanged political allegiance in return for financial support. Despite this, popular understandings of the Greek debt crisis, as well as those held by policymakers, political analysts, and the Western media, disregarded the history of Western patronage rendering clientelism as a local, illiberal problem

Consider Trantidis' overview of clientelism in Greece in which he clearly recognises the influence of foreign states. He acknowledges, 'political dependence on aid' in the 1960s (2016: 27), and the fact that, 'the economic elite remained dependent on loans from state owned banks and, consequently, on political favouritism' (Trantidis 2016: 28) Nevertheless, he locates the development of clientelism in terms of local practices despite the fact that state owned banks were largely solvent only because of international sponsorship. Elsewhere, he cites how active financial and legal persecution of the political left following the civil war had the effect of further entrenching clientelist governance as it rewarded political compliance with access to 'loans, licences and jobs' (2016: 29). But the conservative government was only able to pursue such policies because the it was directly funded by US, which had also bargained with the USSR to withdraw support from communist leaders. Internal politics were thus orchestrated by Western interference, polarising left and right: 'measured in concrete policy outcomes, this strategy translated into a systematic exclusion from the ever-expanding state' (Diamandouros 1997: 26), laying the foundations for exclusionary bipartisan party politics that characterised the next 40 years. Political divisions fostered by Western powers, in fact, stretched back to the first Greek republic's tripartite party system, when Russian, British and French factions vied for political control (Kostis

2018: 42). Clientelist practices were fostered in the West as Greece purchased its Western passport through debt and dependency.

My aim here is not to play a clientelist blame game but to point out how clientelism has been constructed as a local, indigenous phenomenon despite clear historical facts. As others have pointed out, this has been achieved by orientalising clientelism as an Ottoman practice (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011: 23). Yet I would argue that the reasons Western clientelist practices have been left out of the picture reflect deeper exercises of power in the workings of liberal democracy. Reflecting on how Greece has been partially excluded from the West, Tsoucalas (1991) argues that liberalism was seen as a solution to an old question expressed in political philosophy, the respective balance of authority versus production/distribution: making 'distribution a function of production, and rigorously separating both of them from authority' (Tsoucalas 1991: 4) liberated the individual from feudal, monarchical, or dictatorial authority that centralise, and so monopolised, power. According to this vision of economic liberalism, the self-regulating market insulates personal freedom from excessive authority. What Tsoucalas calls attention to are the assumptions necessary to make a belief in such a system possible: objective means of distribution (a free market), neutral rules (free competition), private property, all non-self-regulating forms of power abolished, and that economic distribution cannot be authoritarian (1999: 5). By these last two points Tsoucalas means that the state can act only to enforce a legal system of rights that protects individual interests. Furthermore, any system of distribution that runs according to political principles, such as patronage, are incompatible with liberalism and must be supressed. In effect, this reading of liberalism interprets it not as a political philosophy per se, but as an anti-political philosophy, a state of political neutrality through which power is diffused by the economy. Meanwhile, neutrality and the rational individual form a necessary premise of liberal philosophy:

> individual freedom and inviolability are seen to provide the only rational and ethical foundations for all institutional arrangements... the whole liberal edifice thus depends on the institutional supremacy of a system of depersonalized legal norms. The central new legal concept which summarizes the liberal theory of society is the concept of human rights (Tsoucalas 1991: 6).

The idea that human rights emerge in a selfless field beyond the domain of politics is something that I pursue in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, it suffices to say that 'all social forms that can be considered as subsumable under the ambiguous but omnipresent notions of authority, reciprocity or solidarity are excluded from the realm of economic rationality' (Tsoucalas 1991: 7). In this reading, both self-interested clientelism and solidarity are incompatible with the premises of liberalism that demands disinterested, non-political forms of distribution. This highlights one of the core assumptions of economic liberalism: that the political and economic be kept separate. In this view, political clientelism is a concern because it interferes with the natural function of the economy.

The anxiety that clientelism provokes can be seen in Trantidis' description of his own work, that he summarises as follows: 'how does party politics interfere with economic policymaking'.[25] Apart from the obvious fallacy that politics and economics can be separated, the uncertainty prompted by their admixture is precisely that: a liberal anxiety. Political clientelism, in fact, is liberalism's other and mirror against which it defines itself. In the past, this othering overlapped with Orientalism whereby the East was constructed as irrational, corrupt, and antiquated, versus the rational, liberal and modern West (Hanink 2017: 36). Just as in the past, Greece sits at the intersection of these discourses of political agency. It is not simply that Greece must reform, it is that reformist assumptions have been at the very heart of the idea Greece itself. As an event, the Greek revolution was fundamentally liberal, viewed from the West as the liberation

[25] https://blogs.eui.eu/maxweberprogramme/clientelism-economic-policy/ [accessed 13/09/21]

of a European people subject to despotic Ottoman rule. Yet this belies the fact that Greece was brought into being as a client state and continued to function as such when it joined the EU: a reality incompatible with rhetoric that postures the EU as the de facto archetype of liberal democracy.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that political clientelism was fostered in Greece by Western nations, these exploitative historical relations are difficult to grasp within the confines of liberal narratives of the country's past. The myth of clientelism in Greece at once obscures ethically challenging historical ties while simultaneously projecting the blame for the debt crisis onto alleged illiberal, non-European influences. In fact, Western prosperity rested upon Greece's failure, as extractive cycles of debt supressed economic independence. This same failure was subsequently cited as the rationale for repeated interventions and the imperative that Greece should reform. Commitments to these interventions were secured by conflating Greek nationalism with romantic classicism.

Excavating these attitudes towards the past is important because of the way they framed both the international resolution of the Greek debt crisis and how the Solidarity Movement responded to it. That is to say, debt, and the weight of the past, informed solidarity and the imaginative space it came to occupy. If I have emphasised the subtle interlacing of liberalism and clientelism, solidarity emerged as a rejection of both. On the one hand, solidarity responded to austerity as the focus for disappointments with liberal failures according to which public debt had been repeatedly accumulated. On the other, solidarity was also an objection to the corruption associated with clientelism. Solidarity thus represented a break with the past and novel form of political engagement not driven by accumulation and self-interest. In the next chapter, I address how anxieties, about dependency and debts that can never be repaid, translated into practices

within the Solidarity Movement, and set the foundations for a series of contradictions that the volunteers struggled to resolve.

3 – Ironies of Solidarity

Introduction

At a desk two people sat across from one another. The first, a volunteer in her 70s, sat behind the desk on which a large ring-binder was open. Facing her, sat a man of similar age who had arrived to sign-up to receive food donations. Despite his protestations, Eleni insisted that he had not brought the correct documentation in order to be signed-up as a recipient of the organisation. In response, the man banged his fist on the table and started shouting. As the two began to argue, their conversation went as follows:

It's a great irony from someone lazy that writes 'solidarity', which is a very weighty word.

Yes.

To insult me at the same time that I am suffering. I'm not an idiot, not even a bit. But it's very uneducated from someone who volunteers here. From all of you here.

There are many of us here.

I accept that, I accept it. And I want to tell you honestly, if you don't sign me up, I will go somewhere.

Go where you like.

I will go somewhere. It's shameful what you call solidarity.

What you just said now, 'if you don't sign me up, I will go somewhere'

I will.

That's a threat.

It's a threat.

Why?

I accept it, because you are not solidarity, you are not solidarity.

Why are we solidarity for so many others then?

Only for me you aren't. For me you aren't, as for the others I'm not interested.

So you said. Can you put yourself in our position?

Well, I can. I can. Honestly. With clarity.

Can I say something?

Yes.

When give everything for this here.

For me, you don't.

Wait, you speak and then I speak.

I'm listening.

For these things we do here, going to the supermarket and having celebrations or bazaars, making things at home to sell and raise money, collecting food for those who don't have it. And here we are, and someone treats us badly. That bothers us.

Where is the bad? The bad, where is it?

You make threats continuously. You threaten. Do what you like but I don't like it when people threaten me at the same time that I offer my spirit here. I don't like it.

Here, who am I?

You are Mr. XXXX.

A citizen, aren't I? I'm in the worst situation! I'm in the worst situation. It's this society.

Yes, you are. But you must...

You don't disagree, so why don't you help me?

Because you don't bring the papers we asked for.

In this chapter, I consider how this dispute reflected a greater conflict as solidarity was put into practice. Similar experiences challenged me to look beyond the political rhetoric of solidarity and question ethnographic reports that described it as harmonious, co-operative, and discursive. Rather, Eleni and the man she refused to help each held distinct but divergent understandings of solidarity. Despite being absent, I argue that imaginaries of the state were nevertheless present in repeated disputes over time and bread. Having traced the origins of these competing visions of solidarity, I next attend to their consequences. Solidarity was inherently conflicted not simply because of anxieties about corruption and mistrust concerning the use of collective resources, but because the idea of solidarity itself rested on an irreconcilable tension between equality

and dependency. To frame this discussion, I begin by offering some background on the volunteers and how I came to work with them.

Searching for solidarity

'Do you have summer in England?'. Before I arrived in Greece, this question would have puzzled me. During my first few months in Athens spent in a classroom without air conditioning being drilled by my Greek teacher on verb conjugations, I learnt the meaning of the word summer: '*καλοκαίρι'*. Breaking down etymologically as 'good weather', the word seemed a misnomer as the concrete city baked under the sun. More than once, I was late for my lessons, delayed by trolleys and buses that never came or by traffic diverted around the frequent protests that occurred at this time. I arrived in Athens on the 25th of June 2015, just 10 days before the referendum in which Greek citizens were asked to vote on the terms attached to the bailout offered by the European institutions. Amid this disruption, crowds of people were gathering beneath the Greek parliament that sits at the head of Syndagma square, the political heart of the city. In the square, people were milling around holding banners with slogans painted in bright red: '*όχι σε χρέος, ευρώ, μέχρι το τέλος* – no to debt, euro, until the end'. Smoke from little food stalls intermingled with the crowd. Vendors were selling souvlaki, chestnuts or roasted corn. But where among the crowds of people were the austerity measures that I had come to find? Where was solidarity? Both seemed to be everywhere and nowhere. Like the smoke in the crowd, each were currents moving visibly but impossible to grasp.

Looking for solidarity in Greece, I began with hints from the left-wing British media keen to pin its own battle with national austerity policy on an apparent pan-European resistance. As at many times in the past, European identity apparently hinged on what

happened in Greece: would people resist and vote against austerity. In light of these events, I had arrived at the final peak of the 'Solidarity Movement – *Κίνημα Αλληλεγγυής'*, often likened to a wave. Politics was to enter murkier waters as SYRIZA, an anti-austerity party, leaned further on coalitions with a far-right parties to remain in power, and ultimately, became itself the governor of austerity policy. Amidst these political ambiguities, the work of solidarity continued, if less hopeful than before. I had heard of time-banks, co-operatives, social markets and pharmacies and began searching for a suitable research site.

Looking through the webpages of larger solidarity groups led to some curious connections. One such group, '*Solidarity Now'*,[26] distributed grants from fundraising at international organisations such as UNHCR and UNICEF. The organisation was formed in 2013 with the support of the Open Society Foundations, the philanthropic body set up by George Soros. It's managing director, Epaminodas Farmakis, had formerly been working at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation,[27] returning to Greece after a career working in the American financial sector at companies including Nasdaq and Meryl Lynch. High-finance and philanthropy were not what I had expected to find behind the scenes of solidarity. As I would later be informed by the volunteers that I worked with, charity was not the same solidarity. Yet here was money flowing into the Solidarity Movement from renowned philanthropists, accompanied by money raised internationally from the Greek diaspora in countries like the United States and Australia.

[26] https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/ [accessed 25/09/21]
[27] A major philanthropic organisation in Greece founded according to the legacy of shipping magnate Stauros Niarchos.

Browsing the webpages of these organisations I was interested to trace how the materials and sentiments of solidarity circulated. In the spirit of accountability, Solidarity Now had published receipts for various donations taken and given. In one of the entries listed, I came across a short line stating: five computers donated to the '*Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα* – Byronas Solidarity Network'. The name sprung out at me: Byronas. This was the neighbourhood where I had first lived during the summer when my Greek teacher, Roza, had tried not only to teach me the language but, as she told me bluntly, to fashion my character. The connection was intriguing: a politically left-orientated, but otherwise typical Athenian neighbourhood, somehow linked to remote flows of international capital and philanthropy.

Byronas

Named after Lord Byron, the neighbourhood was first formed almost one hundred years previously. After the Greco-Turkish war, the Treaty of Lausanne dictated the exchange of Christian and Muslim residents of respective countries. In the following years more than a million refugees entered the country, some settling new neighbourhoods in sparsely occupied areas on the outskirts of Athens (Hirschon 1998).

Like much of the city, the buildings in Byronas were angular and geometric. Despite the occasionally winding street, the windows, pillars, and doors of buildings were rectangular or square. Rows of stacked balconies lined the upper level of buildings, adding to the effect. Only the occasional neglected neo-classical building interrupted the pervasive modernism. But the architecture was not oppressive. Athens remains one of the sunniest cities in Europe and most days the light bounced warmly off the muted stone hues of the buildings. Piercing light highlighted even minor details and the

combination of concrete walls and heat allowed everyday sounds to carry. Unlike some neighbourhoods in the city, here there were still trees and many small parks, splashes of green in the otherwise bare streets. During the evenings the central square became crowded with people of all ages: old women in black sat on benches gossiping; friends eating in the small restaurants that surround the square; children playing loudly late into the evening. By day, the squares were nearly as busy. People passed by, conducting their daily business, others sat drinking coffee in the many cafes and restaurants, or stopped briefly to light candles in the tiny Byzantine looking building that resembled a shrine more than a church.

Only a five-minute walk from the square was another small park. It sat in front of the old town hall that was erected in 1934, and coincidentally happened to be located next to the *diktyo* itself. In the park stood a white statue depicting a kneeling woman holding a man lying collapsed in her arms. The man depicted is Lord Byron, after whom the neighbourhood was named. If this dramatic scene belied the mundane circumstances of his death, nevertheless he was regarded as no less a hero for his public support of Greek independence from Ottoman rule. Shortly after I started fieldwork, one of the volunteers led me to the statue declaring proudly that this was the Lord Byron, a great patron of Greece. Above the park a giant mural of his portrait could also be seen, covering the side of one of the tenement buildings. Beneath were written the words:

I won't move back...Only forwards...Now is the time for action...That's why selfish calculations are useless in such circumstances and are, for me, of no account.
I have never been good in calculating opportunities and I will not become so now
Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Δεν θα πάω προς τα πίσω...Μόνο μποστά...Τώρα είναι η στιγμή για δράση...Γι'άυτο ιδιοτελείς υπολογισμοί δεν αρμόζουν σε τέτοιες περιστάσεις και δεν θα υπολογιστούν έτσι από εμένα. Δεν ήμουν ποτέ καλός στην αριθμητική των ευκαριών και δεν θα γίνω τώρα

Λόρδος Βύρων (1788-1824)

Painted in profile, he faced another mural on an adjacent building. A cluster of women in headscarves walk with their back to the viewer, one leading a small child by the hand. Painted in bright colours, the scene leads the gaze towards the picture's horizon at which stands a solitary, half-constructed building, an allusion to the neighbourhood's origins. A short line of writing above the scene stated simply:

Βύρωνας. 1924-2010. Πόλη της προσφυγίας. Πόλη της εθνικής αντίστασης και των κοινωνικών αγώνων

Vyronas. 1924-2010. City of refugees. City of national resistance and social struggle.


«Δεν θα πάω προς τα πίσω...
Μόνο Μπροστά...
Τώρα είναι η στιγμή για δράση...
δεν αρμόζουν σε τέτοιες
περιστάσεις και δεν
Δεν ήμουν ποτέ καλός
δεν θα γίνω τώρα»
Λόρδος Βύρων
(1788-1824)

With the support of the municipality, the murals were painted in 2010 as the effects of the Greek debt crisis began to take hold. Their scale, bold form and bright colours interrupted the otherwise subdued tones of the neighbourhood. During that first round of austerity, the romance of Lord Byron's quote can be read as a prompt to think beyond material calculation and toward idealistic, impassioned action. Equally, the scene of the refugee women leads the viewer to regard the past as a locus of resistance. It was these sentiments of community, identity and resistance, that drew me to Byronas as the site to conduct my fieldwork.

A quick search of the group's name quickly led to their website. On their title page a photo depicted two rows of people, some seated and some standing, before a set of desks. Above the photo was the statement: '*η αλληλεγγύη είναι η δική μας απάντηση στην κρίση* – solidarity is our answer to the crisis'. The website describes the group's aim as to support those in difficulty in the community. Towards this end, the volunteers collect and distribute food to those in need of it. Food was collected every two weeks

outside supermarkets or otherwise donated by independent donors and solidarity groups, and sometimes by the local municipality. To supplement these donations, the volunteers also organised small events such as bazaars or celebrations to raise money that was spent on food, which they might not otherwise able to collect.

Reading further, a small statement on voluntarism appeared on their website:

Εθελοντισμός - Αξία πανανθρώπινη.

Μπορεί να παραλληλιστεί με ένα ανεκτίμητο νόμισμα, το οποίο στη μια του όψη έχει την αλληλεγγύη και στην άλλη την προσφορά χωρίς αντάλλαγμα.
Ο εθελοντισμός δεν είναι ευκαιριακή ενασχόληση. Είναι στάση ζωής, με στόχο να αναζητεί και να δίνει λύσεις, εκεί όπου αδυνατεί το κράτος, στα κοινωνικά, οικονομικά, πολιτισμικά και ανθρωπιστικά προβλήματα.
Ελάτε μαζί μας και θα δείτε τον τυχόν αναξιοποίητο ελεύθερο χρόνο σας, να αποκτά ουσία.
Ενεργοποιείστε τις ικανότητές σας συμμετέχοντας στις δράσεις μας και δίνοντας ιδέες για νέες.
Το χαμόγελο ενός ανθρώπου σε αδυναμία, είναι η μεγαλύτερη ανταμοιβή.

Voluntarism – Value for all humanity

It could be compared to a priceless currency, the one face of which is solidarity and the other the offer of something without expectation of anything in return. Volunteering isn't an occasional hobby. It is a state of being, the goal of which is to search for and provide solutions, where the state is weakened, in society, economy, for civilization and humanitarian problems. Join us and see the possibility of your underutilized free time, to give it substance. Activate your abilities as part of our actions and offer new ideas. The smile of a vulnerable person is the greatest reward[28].

Over the course of her academic career, Rozakou has charted the shifting currents of voluntarism in Greece (2011, 2012, 2016, 2016b, 2017, 2017b). She describes the various attempts to cultivate voluntarism, a quality in which it was seen to be deficient by government agencies that used it as a benchmark of European integration (2011). If some voluntary groups embraced formal recognition, others rejected such advances, objecting that the state would thereby co-opt their efforts for its own agendas. Emerging from the genealogy of such tensions, much the same anxieties characterised attitudes both within and concerning the Solidarity Movement: was solidarity a renewed form of political engagement that rejected state orthodoxy or was it disguised philanthropy with

[28] This last line recalls almost exactly the ending of Dafni's rending of my ethnographic portrait.

a novel face and way for the state to outsource welfare? It was with these ambiguities in mind that I read the *diktyo*'s statement on voluntarism. Declarations such as 'activate your abilities' or 'state of being' could be read variously as call to political action or in terms of a neoliberal rhetoric of self-actualisation. Volunteering at once implied the expectation of nothing in return but was equally its own greatest reward. That the site spoke of voluntarism, typically associated with the field of charity, alongside solidarity was itself intriguing. Politically and ethically uncertain, the *diktyo* seemed a promising field site to explore my research interests.

Anxious about confronting these tensions I went to visit the *diktyo* in person, which I found was located in the basement of a *πολυκατοικία,* a multi-story apartment building. Such buildings are typical across Greece, built rapidly from the 1950 onward, initially to accommodate a population influx from rural areas to urban centres. Either side of the *diktyo* were two shops. On the left, the shop was empty but still retained a sign in embossed but faded plastic letters stating '*βιοτεχνία πλεκτών* – artisanal knitwear'; the one to the right, '*εσώρουχα*, SILK, *κάλτσες*, *καλτσών* – underwear, SILK, socks, tights', both unchanged since the 1970s. A bus stop was located immediately outside, next to which sat a streetlamp onto which a placard for the KKE (*Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας* – The Communist Party of Greece) was attached. Although many people were coming and going, little could be seen of the activity inside. Despite the glass frontage that revealed the whole interior, white metal security bars lined the windows making it difficult to see anything clearly. A small space between the glass frontage and street level was protected by a further small metal fence so that without an explicit purpose it would be difficult to notice what was happening inside. All that remarked the exterior was a large hand-painted sign stating simply: '*Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα* – Byronas Solidarity Network'. On the sign, both *diktyo* and *Byrona* were printed in bold, capital

letters, whereas the word solidarity had been painted in flowing script, some containing smiling faces. Looking more closely, a few posters dotted the window close to the door but all that could be seen inside was a desk and the flash of orange-painted walls.

Crossing the street, I went down the little steps leading to the *diktyo's* entrance. Once inside I was met by a group of three people sitting in plastic garden chairs set out loosely in front of a desk. With broken Greek, I introduced myself, telling them that I was a doctoral student conducting research on solidarity. One of them jumped up immediately with a broad grin and told me that were always in need of volunteers. At the same time, I glimpsed a note of scepticism in the looks of the other volunteers sitting behind him. A whistle-stop tour of the tiny space commenced. Immediately visible was a series of desks: here was where they handed out bread, food and clothes. Next, I was led into the back where they portioned out food into smaller bags, later to be placed in shopping bags filled with food. Dimitris, my guide, informed me how the volunteers collected food outside supermarkets and were also given second-hand bread from local bakeries. The whole back space was filled with large metal units full of food, each sorted according to type: kinds of pasta, chopped tomatoes, flour, preserved milk, rice, sugar. Rows and rows of cardboard boxes containing bottles of oil lined the back wall. Among the shelves was a small table on which was set an old-fashioned pair of measuring scales. Across from these were more shelves crammed with clothes, children's toys, notebooks and other boxes of bric-a-brac, all donated by people living in the neighbourhood. A few large fridges and a freezer contained any perishable food that the volunteers could collect. Given the small size of the space, the neatly stacked boxes and carefully folded clothes gave an impression of cramped orderliness. Following this tour of the space and their activities, Dimitiris, the volunteer who had escorted me around the premises, told me that I should come to their weekly meeting

held every Monday at 7.30 in the evening. At the meeting, the group could discuss what kind of work would be suitable for me. Just as quickly as I had been shown in, I was ushered out.

My first shift was spent 'in the back' where the stores of food and clothing were kept. My main task was to decant packs of flour into smaller plastic bags. After I had prepared around thirty such bags, I was shown how to prepare the carrier bags that made up one donation of food. These '*σακούλες* – bags' were distributed to those subscribed to the *diktyo*, each bag identical to the rest. From the surrounding shelves, the volunteers instructed me to place a set number of items in each carrier bag: two packets of spaghetti, one packet of rice, one packet of flour, one carton of UHT milk, one carton of chopped tomatoes, and one large packet of pasta. After the bag was prepared, I carried it to a set of shelves adjacent to the door that led into the front area. At the same time, the volunteers showed me a shopping trolley that was placed next to the main desk. While I prepared the bags, they told me to periodically check if the trolley was nearly empty and refill it if necessary. Working by myself, this first shift passed quietly apart from the times I entered the front to refill the shopping trolley.

From that time on, however, the job that the volunteers allocated me was to help passing out bread to the many people who arrived to collect it each morning. Gathered from several bakeries in the neighbourhood, this was the bread that had been unsold the previous day. Each morning one of the volunteers drove to the bakeries before delivering the bread to the *diktyo* in large paper sacks. When it arrived, the bread was transferred inside and placed under a desk covered with a kind of plastic found in kitchens, decorated with flowers or other cheerful motifs typically. Anna, whom I assisted in in this task, showed me how to place the bread on the table so that it looked

tidy and presentable. Standing either side of the table, we waited until the *diktyo* opened at 10am. Already a small crowd of people had gathered outside, standing both in the street and on the small steps that lead down to the entrance. When the door was opened, the people rushed in and surrounded us at the bread table. Unsure who to give bread to first, I looked to Anna who seemed to be handing out bread to whichever person happened to be nearest. In the crowd, people jostled to be served first, calling for our attention. Over the next half an hour, we worked hard to pass out the bread quickly as more people arrived. Eventually, the flow of people steadied so that by the end of the shift there was relatively little to do.

Similar scenes defined the rhythm of volunteering at the *diktyo*. People waiting outside rushed in each morning hoping to take bread before those around them. Solidarity, rather than harmonious and co-operative, resembled something of a battle as volunteers tried to impose order on those whom they were trying to help. This conflict was yet harder to interpret because there was always bread remaining at the end of each day. What was at stake was not just the bread but what it expressed about solidarity as a whole. It is this struggle to define solidarity that forms the essence of this chapter: for myself as a volunteer-ethnographer confronted with these apparent paradoxes, for the recipients of solidarity, and for those who struggled to provide it.

Astra

The nature of this struggle was crystallized at the pre-summer distribution that the volunteers organised each year. In Athens, where summer temperatures commonly rise above 35 Celsius, the *diktyo* closes between mid-July and September as work becomes near impossible. Many of the volunteers were of retirement age, meaning that the

demands of collecting, packing and distributing foods were considerable in the summer heat. Accordingly, in lieu of regular, weekly donations the volunteers organised a single distribution prior to this closure. Located in the basement of an apartment building, the *diktyo* itself was not large enough to accommodate the hundreds of people who arrived on this day. Instead, the event took place at *Astra.* Once a large cafe and social space, the property had fallen into disuse and was taken over by the local municipality and operated as a multipurpose community space.

On the day of the distribution, the volunteers arrived early to set-up, giving each other lifts to the secluded spot. A winding road led up the small hill upon which the building was perched, overlooking a sports facility dotted with trees. Beyond, the city could be seen stretching away into the distance, filling the view with dappled grey as sunlight hit the sea of concrete. Inside, the volunteers were busy arranging a series of desks. Each was staffed by a single volunteer and marked with a large sheet of paper displaying a number. Households with one member were directed to desk 1, those with two members to desk 2, and so on. A separate desk was set to one side; those problems which invariably arose were resolved separately there. With the tables set out to form clean lines and the piles of folders sitting neatly on them, the air was professional and organised. The beneficiaries were told that the distribution would begin at 12.30pm, but the volunteers arrived hours earlier. In truth, there was little to arrange but the reason for their early arrival soon became clear. By 10am, people were gathering outside. As they arrived, myself and another volunteer began handing out tickets. Numbers in series of ten were called, allowing those with the associated tickets to enter the building. My fellow volunteer tried to encourage the people waiting to form a queue and, somewhat reluctantly, they complied. Others, however, remained chatting in small groups or sitting in shady spots out of the sun. More people appeared and headed straight for the

entrance but were directed to the back of the loosely formed line. A few left their places not having realised that they must first take a ticket. People were calling and shouting, some edging forwards as a sense of anticipation built. Gradually, the queue dissolved as the waiting people crowded around the entrance. All that stopped them from entering was the presence of myself and the other volunteer.

By 11.30am dozens of people were waiting outside and the volunteers decided to begin. The first series of numbers was called and those with tickets rushed forward, pushing their way through the throng, some carrying tickets above their heads. The people waiting periodically asked what series of numbers had been last called, impatient to be pass inside. Someone, having missed their turn, pushed through the crowd trying to get in. Another person trying to leave pulled a hand trolley through the crowd, accidentally catching on people's legs until it finally became entangled with another trolley. Small disputes broke out as people struggled to come and go, and the continued arrival of new people further compounded this confusion. Once inside, however, the feeling was orderly, quiet, and cool. A volunteer directed incomers to the appropriate desks. Their cases were checked and, if everything was in order, they were issued with a small card. A little further down from the building, two vans had arrived filled with supplies. Here, the cards people received were exchanged for large bags of food, along with portions of fruit and frozen chicken. In the heat of the day, unpacking and handing out the bags was difficult and it was only around 4pm that the distribution finally ended. Yet there were still things that remained left to do. Inside, the paperwork had to be packed up, desks and chairs rearranged and the space cleaned. Rubbish had to be cleared away outside and leftover boxes of frozen chickens carried to freezers inside the building. Next, the remaining sacks of food were transported to the *diktyo*, unloaded, and stored. By the time the work was finished, it was nearly 6pm and most of the volunteers had been

working with little or no break. Overall, however, they declared the day a success and after a few congratulatory shots of *tsipouro*. started to head home. They were pleased with how effectively the day was organised. '*Καλά πήγαμε* – we did well'. It was much better than last year, they said.

Waiting for solidarity

During this initial period of fieldwork, what stood out to me was how conflicts over solidarity frequently occurred in relation to time. For the distribution at Astra, I had arrived at 9.30am, by which time a group of people were already waiting outside. By 10am the group had grown to a small crowd. These people arrived more than two hours early, a wait made more notable considering the summer heat.[29] Anticipating this, the volunteers had in turn arrived even earlier so that most of the preparations had been made by the time that I arrived. If this yearly event was an exaggeration, it reflected the same pattern that was evident in the daily rhythm of work at the *diktyo*. Each day I arrived to find that everything had been prepared by the other volunteers who sat chatting as they waited for the work to begin. Outside, a small crowd of people accumulated gradually. Often, as I entered the building some people from the crowd would try to accompany me, only to be directed out again by the volunteers who insisted that they must wait there until 10am precisely. Sometimes the people entering argued, offering statements like '*δεν πειράζει* – it doesn't matter' to which the volunteers would reply firmly '*πειράζει* – it matters!'. Occasionally exceptions were made: an elderly woman, two women with walking difficulties, a woman who had

[29] Lafazani (2018: 900) reports a similar happening in the refugee hotel squat, City Plaza. Despite an abundance of food, when the squat was in its early days, people began to queue one or two hours before meals were served, an occurrence that she interprets in terms on an inability to relinquish habits formed in government camps.

gotten too hot. But these exceptions usually prompted others to enter, insisting that, they too, should be permitted inside.

I contend that these insistences on managing time make sense in terms of the broader bureaucratic apparatus of the state. In his analysis of waiting, Aueryo (2012: 10) maintains that waiting, far from being an absence of activity, is a key site whereby the state produces political subordination. As he puts it, 'properly inspected, these interactions are actually far from mundane, and they can be constructed as an extraordinary sociological object that places subjects' experiences of rights and power at the centre of inquiry' (2012: 8). Time, in this view, becomes a matter of politics and the production of political subjects. In Greece, the power to make people wait has been documented in precisely this context. In Rozakou's work on bureaucracy among 'solidarians' working with refugees on Lesbos, the state's use of time figures strongly: 'gradually the detention period was extended from three to six months, 12 and finally 18 months' (Rozakou 2020). Meanwhile, Cabot's thesis on asylum seekers in Athens employs the idea of 'legal limbo', whereby migrants were made to wait, sometimes indefinitely, for their claims to be assessed (2014). In each case, refugees provide the ultimate example of political suspension: their identities, as citizens, were literally postponed.

Despite these studies, there remain few accounts of waiting among those already acknowledged as citizens by the state.[30] Compounding this lack of ethnographic attention, even studies such as that conducted by Auyero (2012) do not relate these periods of waiting to a broader 'timescape' that marks the flows, rhythms, and disruptions in which people's lives take place. 'Slowly, slowly – *σιγά σιγά'*, goes the much-recited axiom; 'whoever rushes trips - *όποιος βιάζεται σκοντάφτει'*, another.

[30] Although Herzfeld briefly addresses the issue (1993: 14-20), this work is primarily a theoretical discussion of bureaucracy with few ethnographic references.

Protestations from residents about the fast pace of life in Athens work to establish a boundary between metropolitan and rustic life.

Yet despite its alleged rapidity, moving around the city took time. Streets were rarely smooth. Trees were planted in the middle of pavements, which themselves were often a hotchpotch of stones and settings placed at different angles. Remains of old signposts stuck out, collapsed drains opened up, while cars and bins blocked crossings. Mopeds drove on walkways and in places the pavement disappeared entirely, blurring the distinction between pedestrian and traffic flows. Almost everyone had a story to tell about a road accident that they had witnessed. Taking one's time mattered, especially as summer peaked and reaching destinations became exhausting. The slow gait of the average Athenian was therefore a matter of safety and sensibility that reflected the difficulties of the surrounding terrain. People and objects alike slowed things down. A car stopped in the middle of the road blocked traffic around it while the driver visited a nearby shop or kiosk. People clustered in shop doorways, taxis blocked bus stops, and those waiting for buses stood in the street eager to board first. Alighting buses there was a scramble, as people tried to board and others tried to get off. Protests, strikes, and unexpected closures created delays and changed plans. Amid so much speeding up and slowing down, time was a flexible quantity.

Where time is flexible, punctuality is all the more marked. Unlike a relaxed attitude to time in daily life, the slowness of the state compelled people to speed up. At hospitals, post-offices, tax offices, and welfare offices people arrived early, forming small clusters and queues outside entrances before opening times. Arriving early mitigated potentially long wait times and the sometimes deliberately obstructive bureaucracy, which mediate access to public services. I argue it was these habits of waiting that informed the unfolding of solidarity at the *diktyo*. Both volunteers and beneficiaries shared these

expectations of having to wait, especially waiting pointlessly. Although the state was not present, its imaginary was therefore apparent in the ways that solidarity was realised. In this respect, solidarity was not written onto a blank slate but composed of familiar and recognisable elements, much as the state itself draws on and interacts with domains typically considered beyond it. Kinship is an oft-cited example, that Pine describes as one of many, 'moral templates for behaviour between people, and between people and the state' (Pine 2017: 87). Douzina-Bakalaki echoes this in her argument that the family was refigured by work in soup-kitchens (2017: 7-9). Bonanno also describes how social pharmacies worked according to gendered expectations of care. As a redistributive facility, solidarity at the *diktyo* resembled state welfare services, which provided the most immediate referent for this novel space. As Bonanno notes a similar attitude in her ethnography, 'many of those who approached KIA behaved as if it was an auxiliary to the state, yet less than a state facility' (2019: 116). Much the same was true at the *diktyo* as expectations about the state informed the workings of solidarity. In the context of this radical experiment, however, these expectations were not fixed but open to interpretation. In the section that follows, I locate the source of these repeated conflicts between volunteers and beneficiaries in terms of a contested imaginary: if the beneficiaries saw solidarity as the continuation of wider patterns of welfare and dependency, for the volunteers it was equally a political, and sometimes, moral critique of the state.

In the Shadow of the State: remaking political time

When I asked Sotiris why people arrived so early to take bread each day, he replied in a matter-of-fact tone that, 'they are Greek, this is how they think'. With this statement, Sotiris rendered Greekness not only as a cultural critique, but drew a further distinction

between himself and the beneficiaries. As he often told me, people in Greece did not behave rationally. His experiences of living and working abroad had challenged preconceptions that he had held about his own country. In Greece, things were a mess. Abroad, he said, they knew how to organise effectively. Solidarity, as a form of practical engagement, was for him an indictment of the political status quo. As with the other volunteers, control of the rhythm of work was an index of the success by which he judged their efforts. Repeated battles over timekeeping, initially so baffling, were ultimately intelligible when read in the context of this critique of political and social values. In a situation where the state forced waiting as a means of coercion and subordination, the volunteers understood their efforts to work 'on-time' as a form of political resistance.

Although seemingly trivial, conflicts over time can therefore be read as a dialogue on cultural and political values. This conversation drew on pre-existing expectations about state practices: 'bureaucrats complain that their clients waste their time with pointless fussing; clients that the bureaucrats have no sense of responsibility to the public and cost them dearly in hours that would be better devoted to financially productive labour (Herzfeld 1993: 165). By struggling to keep on-time, the volunteers tried to bypass what was regarded as an ineffective, slow state that they perceived had abdicated public responsibility. The strength of the critique was marked in the importance placed on timely, effective work.

On the day of my first shift, the volunteers had asked me to arrive shortly before 10am. Arriving at 9.45am, I found that the others were already inside making preparations. Typically, this excess time was passed gossiping and smoking. Apart from these periods of repose before and after shifts, the volunteers applied themselves vigorously to all the

work they did. Twice a year, at Christmas and Easter, the volunteers organised bazaars, each of which lasted for a few days. During the day the *diktyo* operated as normal but the space was reorganised every evening to accommodate the bazaar. A series of stalls were set out, each selling different items: festive decorations, a selection of books, handmade and second-hand jewellery, bric-a-brac, and so on. Each day as it came time to close the bazaar, the volunteers sprang into action. People began packing and sorting items so they could be stored. All activity was hurried as the volunteers searched for things to do. Without consulting one another, they identified a task and applied themselves to it. In a matter of half an hour, the whole space had been rearranged and returned to its regular state. Weekly meetings were characterised by the same atmosphere of impatience. Starting promptly, the participants often heckled one another when the discussion got side-tracked. Delays and disruptions were met with cries of '*πάμε πάρα κάτω* – let's get on with it!' or '*άλλο* – next!'. When these discussions finally ended, volunteers left abruptly, tidying things away or rearranging chairs as they left. Volunteers were rarely late for a shift that they had agreed to undertake. In fact, I was the only volunteer who was ever 'late'. The gap between my own assumptions about time and those held by the other volunteers was underlined when I arrived a few minutes before one shift to collect food outside local supermarkets. Nikolas, one of the senior volunteers, had interpreted my absence as an indication that I would not arrive at all. Sotiris, meanwhile, with whom I had often worked, assured him that I would come. By not arriving early, I had not demonstrated my reliability in the way that the other volunteers did. Working in a timely manner was thus bound-up in being a good volunteer.

Working quickly and efficiently was a deliberate critique of state practices that were perceived to be slow and obstructive. In this way, time was mobilised to bring a

particular vision of the political into being. Offering time freely was, in fact, what defined those involved as volunteers. Few were currently employed, being either retired or out of work. Solidarity meant empowerment to take on roles as community leaders and a means to rejuvenate public life. Time was a resource available to them and was transformed through their labour into solidarity. Just as time was a source of power for the state, it was equally so for volunteers. Attempting to forge this new kind of political time explains the volunteers' insistence on timekeeping and the strictness with which they enforced schedules. Just as they disciplined themselves to working at set times, they applied the same discipline to the beneficiaries. Regular food donations were scheduled. Each person was assigned a specific day to collect their next bag of food. Although the volunteers might accommodate someone who arrived a day early or late, they complained repeatedly while doing so. Those who gave lengthy explanations concerning their circumstances, or digressed in other ways, were cut short. As well as timing access to the *diktyo* itself, the volunteers tried to condition access to specific forms of help they offered. As well as food, the volunteers also distributed second-hand clothes donated from local residents. Each Tuesday and Thursday various items of clothing would be set out on two tables and covered with a bedsheet. Above the tables was a sign stating '*ανοιχτά ρούχα 11-1 μόνο* – clothes available 11-1 only'. At 11am precisely, the sheet was removed allowing those waiting to look through whatever had been set out that day. When anyone tried to look under the sheet before this time, they were quickly reprimanded. With rules and rebukes, the volunteers thus tried to shape the beneficiaries according to their expectations of timeliness.

As it happened, the ticketing system and door policy that was devised for use at Astra was considered so successful that similar practices were later applied on a daily basis. Subsequently, in the morning when the *diktyo* were officially opened, one volunteer

would stand at the entrance and admit five or so people at a time. During the period of my fieldwork, the tables where the bread was laid out were also rearranged, so that they were moved closer to the centre of the room. This allowed one volunteer to stand behind the table placing the bread upon it. The other stood in front of the table, handing out the bread. Together, each of these innovations made managing the flow of work easier. Where previously a throng of people filled the relatively small basement area, now there were only a few. Before, people had often stood at the table, making it difficult to work out who next to give bread. In this way, the volunteers were continually looking for ways to refine their efforts. Solidarity was something that had to be fashioned and worked out. Doing so, the volunteers insisted on an efficient use that contrasted with their feelings about a deliberately obstructive and inefficient state.

First Come, First Serve

Although these innovations worked to regulate the flow of people entering the *diktyo*, once inside their demands were still at odds with the volunteers' expectations about solidarity. Formerly a large group, the beneficiaries surrounded the table at which the bread was handed out in a small cluster. Despite their insistence to take the bread, for the most part some was left over at the end of each day. Although occasionally no bread remained, the supply was replenished the next day. As the *diktyo* operated each weekday there was generally no shortage of bread available. The apparent abundance of bread therefore sits at odds with the way beneficiaries treated it as a scarce resource. Trying to make sense of this, I argue that it was precisely the same habits of waiting that shaped the volunteers' approach to solidarity that shaped the beneficiaries' reception of it.

If keeping regular, orderly time was an index of solidarity for the volunteers, for the beneficiaries what mattered was to be served first. Much as they approached the state and public services, beneficiaries sought to accelerate their access to the *diktyo*. For them, it was not simply about accessing the material of solidarity but how *quickly* solidarity could be secured. In this respect, both volunteers and beneficiaries engaged in something akin to a game (Graeber 2015), the rules of which played out against the backdrop of state bureaucracy. Herzfeld mentions this in his own writing: participants in the game must variously report their success or failure in traversing the unpredictable bureaucratic system (1993: 16). Welfare, then, is a matter of skill: to know that when a doctor asks you to an appointment prior to surgery that this is, in fact, an invitation to offer a bribe; to know when to be quiet and polite, or when to show anger; to know how to massage the state machinery in order to advance. Like a game, welfare outcomes are not equal but rather a reflection of the abilities, and connections, of participants. By consequence, public services are also of variable quality; not everyone receives the same. Judging success is therefore comparative because each person gauges how well they have managed in relation to others around them. In the face of a diminishing state, being first equates to the best possible outcome.

This attitude was further evident in another temporal conflict between volunteers and beneficiaries that took place in the final moments when the bread was passed out. After waiting, then rushing to be served first, beneficiaries finally took their time when deciding which bread to take. The most common question they posed was, '*είναι μαλακό* – is it soft?'. The response, '*ναι, είναι μαλακό* – yes, it's soft', became something of a chant throughout the day. Nobody wanted to take stale bread when fresher bread was available. But as well as freshness, beneficiaries also sought their preferred kinds of bread from among the many types available. Occasionally, they

would repeatedly refuse each kind of bread offered to them by myself or the other volunteers. One woman in particular never seemed able to decide which bread she wanted to take, much to the frustration of Anna who regarded her with exasperated looks. Taking their time to choose bread put the beneficiaries in conflict with the volunteers who saw the quality of their work in terms of how quickly it could be achieved. Sometimes, it also put myself in conflict with the volunteers, who indicated with disapproving glances or direct comments, that I should not try to cater to the individual demands of the people waiting. Whereas I would spend time trying to offer the bread that matched each person's preference, the volunteers would insist that each person take the bread chosen for them.

Ostensibly trivial, I maintain that much was at stake in these exchanges. Foremost, bread figured as the material currency of solidarity. As in other manifestations of the Solidarity Movement, action was focused on securing material means of survival: food, healthcare, social support. Accompanying this was the significance attached to bread, a deeply rooted symbol of sociality and belonging. In these moments of conflict, access to bread took on new shades of meaning. Vournelis (2013) points to this when he describes the repeated references to food in the politics and protests that accompanied the Greek Debt Crisis. When a member of the Greek Communist Party tried to submit items of bread and milk to the Parliamentary Record, she mobilised food to imply that politicians were out of touch with the true value of things (Vounelis 2011). Anti-middlemen markets that became common during the crisis were partly prompted by the Potato Movement, whereby prices were lowered for both consumers and costs for producers by organising direct exchanges (Vounelis 2013: 358). Yoghurting, where yoghurt was thrown at politicians, was a powerful statement that rested on the dissonance, 'between eating food – traditionally a social activity in Greece based on

sharing, remembering, and exchanging – and using food as a tool of condemnation and ridicule, reflecting the sharp contrast between the protestor's vision for Greece and the government's vision of the country and its people' (Vounelis 2013: 355). In the context of these allusions to food and protest, disputes over bread at the *diktyo* expressed fundamentally different visions of solidarity and dependency. For the volunteers, bread was divisible and anonymous. Equal portions reflected egalitarian understandings of solidarity. For the beneficiaries, bread was not impartial but rather a claim to belonging at once specific and personal.

Bread and Favours

This gap in understandings of solidarity was evident in the way beneficiaries took the bread compared with the way volunteers offered it. Each day, the bread would arrive in large thick paper sacks or sometimes in black bin bags. Once it had been brought inside, Anna, would announce to me firmly, '*δύο* – two', and I would echo this back to her, '*δύο* – two'. This was the number of loaves we would give to each person that day. If we had received a lot of bread, we might give each person three loaves. Alternatively, if there was relatively little, we would give just one. As a fair system, this was imperfect – some loaves were larger, some loaves were 'better', and some people needed more or less bread than others. It was also impossible to predict how many people would arrive, so that towards the end of the day there was often bread leftover. Whereas at the start of the shift we insisted that people only be offered two loaves, towards the end we would give more so that none went to waste.

With so much bread on display, however, beneficiaries were often impatient with this strategy. Frequently, they would ask for more than the number of loaves we offered

them: '*βάλε άλλο ένα γιατί είμαστε έξι άτομο στο σπίτι* – give (us) another one because we are six people at home'. Others were more polite, asking for more '*αν επιτρέπεται* – if permitted'. Invariably, each person took a different approach. One woman was notorious for simply trying to take extra loaves herself, ignoring what she was told by the volunteers and provoking angry comments from them: '*μην το πιάνετε εσείς* – don't touch it yourself!'. Another gentleman would arrive with a display of smiles and compliments, asking after my health or patting me on the back. Conspiratorially, he would lean in and ask if he might take any extra loaves that week. Otherwise, people might criticise myself or the other volunteers outright: '*δεν είσαι καλό παιδί* – you're not a good guy'. Occasionally, there would be displays of anger – a person might be so insulted that we would not give them more bread that they would leave, refusing to take any. In one sense, these approaches were a reflection of individual character. Set next to one another, each was an attempt to manipulate the volunteers, usually through recourse to some kind of emotional appeal. People may have been variously friendly, pushy, funny, or subtle, but all deployed feelings as a way to demand more bread. Used to dealing with implacable bureaucracy, beneficiaries turned to familiar strategies of political engagement in which feelings were used to create a personal relationship with the state, what Koch (2018) describes succinctly as 'personalising the state'. Such was the strategy of the man in the ethnographic scene that opened this chapter, who through a display of anger, attempted to bypass what he perceived as a bureaucratic hurdle.

With demands that played on feelings, beneficiaries sought to lay claims of dependency on the volunteers. Feelings of familiarity or guilt were used to draw the volunteers into a sense of obligation. But these personal confrontations were met with impartiality. Rather than a form of dependency, the volunteers interpreted solidarity in terms of fairness and equality. Bonanno reports a similar feeling among the volunteers in her

ethnography, as described by one of them: ‘we have rules, but they don’t understand the rules. They take it personally. We Greeks never care about rules and that’s why this country is ruined forever’ (2019: 95). Sticking to the rules meant ignoring individual preferences for bread. What mattered was to ensure that each person received, approximately, the same. Considering the variety of foods that were donated this posed something of a problem. When the volunteers received small or irregular quantities of food, there was some dispute about how these should be divided up. In the absence of money as a quantitative reference, value was instead determined as a proportion: it was important that each person received something. Ironically, this meant that the volunteers occasionally kept donations for themselves rather than distributing them to the beneficiaries. A few pieces of cheese or olives, for example, could not be easily divided or distributed. Rather than give them to a minority of beneficiaries and be accused of favouritism, they instead kept these donations for themselves. Alternatively, lists were used to ensure that any distribution of irregular donations ultimately balanced out. Lists were also used when large donations of fruit or vegetables were received, names checked against an index as people came to collect their share.

The importance of equitable distribution was especially evident in one incident when the *diktyo* was given a large quantity of chicken. Stored in freezers, the volunteers had begun to hand these out alongside the regular donations of food. After a few days, it became clear that some volunteers had not kept track of who had received their portion of chicken. Over the next week, the volunteers therefore began telephoning every beneficiary to determine who had received their share and who had not. Given the hundreds of people involved this was no small task but was considered necessary in order to ensure each person had received their fair share.

As a volunteer-ethnographer, handing out bread I found myself caught between these two competing solidarities: the personal claims of beneficiaries and the impersonal intentions of the volunteers. When the volunteers asked or demanded extra loaves of bread, the volunteers insisted that I refuse them. My ethnographic experience of solidarity was therefore one of constant tension. Neither harmonious or co-operative, it was instead pragmatic and conflicted. Caught between these conflicting demands of solidarity, my response was to attempt mediations. When asked by beneficiaries to give them more bread, I pointed out to them that we must reserve bread for other people who might come later in the day. My attempts to resolve conflicts in this way were met with shrugs of indifference and dismissive looks. Requests for more were further complicated by that fact that people would always ask for more regardless of the amount of bread we had given them. If the volunteers received a large amount of bread and decided to give out two loaves to each person, the beneficiaries asked for three. When the amount of bread was smaller so that each person was offered one loaf, the beneficiaries asked for two. Just as beneficiaries tried to be served first and take the best, they also sought to take more than that which was on offer. These demands frustrated the volunteers who accused the beneficiaries of being greedy. Sotiris pointed out to me bluntly: 'when there is only one bag of bread, they don't complain about it'. Others would reprimand the beneficiaries when they asked for more with phrases like '*θα μας φάτε ζωντανούς* – you will eat us alive'. Curious about these demands, I asked Georgia why people consistently asked for more. Speaking quietly, she replied that nobody could possibly need so much bread and that they were collecting the extra loaves to keep in their freezers. When she was herself was faced with a request for more bread by a man who stated that he had five children, she replied bluntly: 'no-one has five children'.

Fractures of Solidarity

Tracing these fractures of solidarity, my intention is not to point out the flaws of an ideology put into practice. Instead, I mean to add nuance to accounts of solidarity that emphasise its harmonious, positive aspects, simply because such descriptions were inconsistent with the reality of my fieldwork. Solidarity as I experienced it was not homogenous but unfolded from the tensions between competing assertions regarding its nature. Yet it is not simply that solidarity cannot be completely described without recounting such conflicts. Rather than incidental, I argue that conflict was *essential* to the production of solidarity at the *diktyo*. Conflicting perspectives allowed the volunteers to discern solidarity as a political aspiration. This assertion can be glimpsed in the surprising intimation by the volunteers that the beneficiaries, whom they aspired to help, were sometimes greedy. Comparative implications of greed and selflessness served to establish an important distinction that the volunteers made between themselves and beneficiaries. If the volunteers thought of the beneficiaries as greedy, they described themselves in terms of selflessness. To be a volunteer, they told me repeatedly, was to give of your time freely with no expectation of return. In this way, greed and selflessness worked as moral poles through which solidarity, as a political alternative, could be distinguished. Solidarity, in terms of *both* its aspirations and failures, therefore set up moral poles according to which the volunteers judged their own behaviour and that of others. This is not to say that the volunteers always thought of the beneficiaries as greedy, but that suspicions about self-interest and corruption informed how beneficiaries were regarded. In fact, I argue, that at times the volunteers saw the beneficiaries as proxies for the ills of the state and the broader status quo against which their project reacted, reading their behaviour as an example of how *not* to be in solidarity.

If distinctions about greed and selfishness played out in these personal confrontations, I argue that for the volunteers this was not just about rehabilitating themselves and those around them, but the state of things in general. Pregnant in these moral failures and successes, was a broader moral critique of politics whereby voluntarism substitutes for an absent, dysfunctional or corrupt state. Similar critiques have been well-described in anthropology, notably in Ferguson and Gupta's analysis of the assumption that drive civil society (2002).[31] If Ferguson and Gupta treat this analysis in general terms, Alexandrakis underlines how this suspicion about the state is rooted in the personal feelings of individuals. Alexandrakis reports how one such person, Andreas, whom he encountered during research, related to him an aversion to 'state spaces', citing the general anxiety interactions with the state provoked for him. Alexandrakis describes it thus, 'people acted aggressively and in their own self-interests: municipal offices where service people and clients yelled, police stations where bribes were paid and officers purportedly abused prisoners, chaotic post offices...Andreas perceived yelling and intense self-serving action as the production of a political status quo: a normative state of affairs to which he considered himself exceptional' (2016: 37). Accompanying this exceptionality, Alexandrakis remarks on Andrea's withdrawal from civic spaces prompted by, 'fear at the idea of participating as an active political subject' (2016: 38).

Both these elements of withdrawal from the state and exceptionality resonate with the moral critique of politics evident in the practice of solidarity at the *diktyo*. The volunteers were quick to remind people that they worked beyond the state's remit: '*δεν δουλεύουμε εδώ, είμαστε εθελοντές* – we don't work here, we are volunteers', or,

[31] A common alignment between solidarity and civil society should not be surprising given that both ideas are rooted in social reform movements of the 19th century. What would later become known as the 'third sector' was originally conceived as a middle way between extreme liberalism and socialism.

'*είμαστε εθελοντές, όχι δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι* – we're volunteers, not public employees'. Such statements were often made in the face of what the volunteers saw as excessive demands for help: when someone from outside the neighbourhood wanted to sign-up to the *diktyo*, when someone demanded extra bread, or someone shouted or was angry after requests for help were refused. Explicitly distancing themselves from the state, the volunteers curtailed the help they were willing to offer, but equally, they signalled disengagement from the status quo of civic practices.

Selfish States

I argue that the limits on the help the volunteers were willing to offer, and contests over the nature of solidarity present at the *diktyo*, are intelligible in terms of the imaginaries of debt and clientelism detailed in the preceding chapter. For the volunteers, solidarity represented a break with the past. This break was visible to them in terms of the limits they placed on solidarity. Favours, obligations, and excessive demands threatened a return to practices that precipitated crisis in Greece. Resisting relationships of dependency with the beneficiaries, the volunteers struggled to open up a new terrain for political engagement.

Unpacking this moral critique of politics further, the volunteers contrasted indifference against their personal sentiments as feeling citizens, thereby equating solidarity with selflessness. Unlike the self-interested market and indifferent state, the volunteers framed solidarity in terms of care. As Eleni told me, 'because we care our work is better than what the state does, we try harder'. The Greeks, they told me frequently, are a caring people. Unlike the 'cold' people of northern Europe, they have 'heart' or 'spirit', and were able to express their feelings. Conversely, indifference to happenings in the

public sphere was cited as the reason that the Greek government became so heavily indebted. Citizens avoiding their taxes, state workers shirking their responsibilities: individuals gain versus public loss. Highlighting these imaginaries, my aim is not simply to reiterate stereotypes but to stress how the boundaries of what is felt and what is not-felt, between what is considered personal and impersonal, shapes the interaction between individual and state. Relating care and work, Eleni made a subtle alignment that drew on these imaginaries to criticise the state. Unlike state provision of welfare, volunteers were engaged with their work. By caring, volunteers rehabilitated state labour, which was at once indifferent and self-interested.[32] In fact, as they insisted to me, what they did was not technically work. Rather, they spoke of it with the verb '*προσφέρω* – to offer', in terms of time of effort. Unremunerated, voluntarism was something given freely. Lack of personal interests were precisely what allowed the volunteers to operate more effectively than the state. Without the possibility of reward, solidarity could not be subject to corrupt intentions.

The spectre of corruption, of a state rife with bribes, favours and siphoned funds, haunted the *diktyo.*[33] Greenberg notes a similar anxiety in her account of the transition to democracy in Serbia: 'long standing associations with politics as corrupt and morally suspect made it hard for new democratic actors to justify their engagements as in the service of a common good' (2014: 6). Despite the practical problems it posed, the volunteers therefore did not accept donations of money. When necessary, money was handled carefully so that even small purchases, such as a bottle of milk or some latex gloves, were accounted for carefully, with receipts kept and logged. The *diktyo* accounts

[32] The somewhat paradoxical interplay of care and indifference is a theme I pursue further in chapters 4 and 5.
[33] See Green (2008) for a nuanced account of how local elites in northern Greece struggle with the ambiguity of power and frustrations of corruption in which it was entangled.

were managed publicly at weekly meetings, almost as a kind of display. Yet the anxiety that volunteers might abuse their position still surfaced from time to time. On the day of the distribution at Astra, in the afternoon the volunteers had stopped for a break before they began the task of packing up and cleaning. Someone had been sent to buy sticks of souvlaki with portions of fries. Gathered around one of the tables, the volunteers sat eating and making jokes. '*Φάε, φάε* – Eat, eat!' I was told. As a younger man among so many middle-aged women there was strong expectation that I should eat and for them to encourage me to do so. As we ate, a few latecomers arrived and were politely asked to wait until the meal was finished. Upon seeing the scene, however, one of the late arrivals began criticising the volunteers, remarking that it was inappropriate for them to use the *diktyo* resources for themselves. If the volunteers disregarded the comment and continued to eat, the accusation hung in the air as we did so.

Getting away from a habit of favours and partial treatment posed a continual challenge for volunteers. Not only because of the beneficiaries' expectations about solidarity but also because of the way these expectations were ingrained as habits. Oftentimes, one of the volunteers would instruct me to give extra bread to someone, telling me, '*την ξέρω* – I know her'. Such individuals were greeted warmly and often left with more than the regular share of bread, even on those days when we had been particularly strict rationing loaves. Occasionally, this even extended to bread being reserved on their behalf, placed in plastic shopping bag and kept nestled out of sight. For the volunteers themselves, this was even more common. At the start of each shift, my co-volunteer at the table would typically offer me one of the best loaves offering to keep it aside for me. Otherwise, she also kept a few of the better loaves for specific volunteers with whom she had an informal agreement. Each Monday before or after the general meeting,

volunteers would also pick through some of the donated clothes that had been collected that week, taking the choicest items for themselves.

At the start of my fieldwork, I found these habits puzzling and difficult to reconcile with the selfless rhetoric the volunteers professed. Yet taking bread or clothes from the *diktyo* was not considered a contradiction because this was an expression of solidarity. This fact was underlined to me after the distribution at Astra. At the end of the day when the volunteers were leaving, each took a large sack of food exactly like those that had been given to the beneficiaries. Some of the volunteers insisted that I also take a sack but, not wanting to carry the large bag home, I instead arranged to collect it on a later day. As I was leaving, Sotiris came running after me, asking me why hadn't I taken my sack of food. He had been angry that the others had let me leave without one. As I explained what had happened, he was visibly relieved. The strength of this reaction, accompanied with the general insistence that I should periodically take from the *diktyo's* collective resources, made sense to the volunteers in terms of the idea of mutuality. People should not give without taking because this was made giving one-sided and, in effect, philanthropy. By taking as well as giving, they tried to blur the distinction between volunteer and beneficiary according to principles of equality.

Despite these ideals, in practice the relationships that resulted were not so easily accommodated. One day, Anna forgot to set aside bread for another of the volunteers, Efi, who usually stopped by on our shift to collect it. Surprised to find that we hadn't kept any, Efi began to complain loudly. The other volunteers were frustrated by her behaviour, regarding it as poor comportment and a bad example for both beneficiaries and volunteers alike. On a similar occasion, one of the less regular volunteers, Aggelos, stopped by and filled two shopping bags full of bread even though we had relatively

little that day. While he did so, the other volunteers exchanged disapproving glances and afterwards remarked upon the matter. Taking some bread was fine, but taking large quantities was inappropriate. Voluntarism thus entailed tacit knowledge about how much to take, when, and in what fashion. Knowing how much was too much was a matter of personal judgement necessary to guard against solidarity straying into favouritism and dependency. When one of the volunteers repeatedly kept the best bread for her friends and family, the issue was raised with her. Subsequently, she began showing the other volunteers on her shift how much bread she was taking home as she left each day. The other volunteers checked her bag dismissively, with somewhat embarrassed glances. Such moments were uncomfortable because it put a question mark over their ability to balance give and take from the *diktyo*.

Keeping back the best bread for family and friends put further strain on the balance of solidarity when it raised the suspicions of the beneficiaries. 'What's in that bag?', they sometimes asked. Volunteers, in fact, often did hide bread, either in the back area or in bags kept beneath the bread tables. Yet they did so not only for themselves but rather to offset repeated demands for more. When the table was filled completely with bread, people would generally ask for more loaves. Having less bread visible was a strategy to regulate its distribution. When asked, the volunteers would repeat, '*δεν έχει ψωμί* – there isn't a lot of bread' to further diminish the perceived quantity of bread. As a result, trust between volunteers and beneficiaries was sometimes strained. Some volunteers lied outright, saying there was no bread left in the back and all that remained was present on the table. In this atmosphere, balancing obligations both to solidarity and personal acquaintances was problematic. When we once ran out bread completely, I was asked by one of the beneficiaries if I was sure there wasn't any left, perhaps in the back

she suggested. Knowing there was some left in the back, but reserved for one of the volunteers, I replied to her ambivalently that I did not know.

Struggling with perceptions of corruption, anxieties concerning trust shaped the organisation of solidarity. This was especially clear in the case of money, as evident at fund-raising events held at the *diktyo*. Each year, the volunteers ran a small raffle with prizes collected as donations they had donated personally or solicited from residents in the neighbourhood. The prizes ranged from small trinkets and household items to a small trip to a nearby island. Tickets were sold to friends, relatives and acquaintances. As it happened, shortly before the raffle I met a young Greek woman, Maria, who expressed an interest in the voluntary work I was doing. We agreed that she could accompany me to the next weekly meeting so that I could introduce her to the volunteers at the *diktyo*. Just as when I had first arrived the volunteers made a fuss over her, remarking on how beautiful she was, her polite demeanour, and forthright attitude. Due to her studies and other obligations, however, it transpired she was unable to commit to any regular shifts. Despite this they agreed that she would help by trying to sell some raffle tickets. As the days leading up to the raffle progressed, the tickets in my own sheaf remained largely unsold. With few real acquaintances and lacking the right attitude, I struggled to find people willing to buy any tickets. Maria, on the other hand, was personable, enthusiastic and well-connected. Arriving for the raffle itself, it turned out that she had sold a large quantity of tickets. The volunteers were delighted and lauded her efforts. People bustled around, setting out the prizes, making coffee or handing in money from the tickets they had sold. While doing so, they compared how many tickets that each person had been able to sell. Krystallia had come out on top, managing to sell hundreds of tickets. Maria, too, was among those people who had sold

the most tickets, unlike myself who had barely sold a handful such that some volunteers expressed surprise that I had even been given any tickets to sell at all.

Once all the preparations were finished, the raffle finally began. People sat in a rough circle around the main desk at which Sofia sat: she was the person in charge of the *diktyo* accounts and organising the raffle itself. In front of her, a makeshift cardboard box held small slips of paper each with a number corresponding to one of the tickets sold. Taking turns, the volunteers approached the desk and drew one or two slips from the box. The slips were shown to the others in the circle and the name of the volunteer who had sold the ticket subsequently called out. From time to time, the volunteers nominated one other to approach the box and pick some tickets, drawing everyone into the convivial atmosphere. The prizes were collected on behalf of the winners by those volunteers who had sold the associated tickets. As more tickets were drawn, Krystallia proceeded to win many prizes both for herself and for those to whom she had sold tickets. But as her prizes continued to accumulate, the jokes and congratulations that accompanied them became more strained. This skewed distribution was especially uncomfortable considering that Maria had won almost no prizes even though she had sold a comparable number of tickets. The fact that Maria was totally new compared with Krystallia, who was of the most established and influential volunteers, only served to highlight the underlying anxiety that the raffle had not been fair. In fact, the raffle was held publicly for precisely this reason: to demonstrate visibly that it had been undertaken fairly. Taking turns to draw slips proved to everyone that the outcome was random. Nor was it a coincidence that Sofia had been collecting money from each of the volunteers in the background to all this activity. As she did so, she commented audibly on the amounts, noting them down in her tally. Like the distribution of the raffle itself, the accounting accompanying it was performed publicly for everyone to see.

States of Indifference

When Eleni insisted that the volunteers worked better than the indifferent state because they cared, she situated solidarity not as an outright rejection, but rejuvenation of state work. In the sense that the volunteers employed the documents and bureaucratic imagery of the state, they can further be said to have acted as its proxies. In light of this, how solidarity unfolded in the shadow of imaginaries of the state warrants some consideration.

As Obeid accurately points out by asking 'where is the state?' (2015: 1261), the state's absence implies a presence. Speaking of 'states of aspiration', (2015: 1287), she pinpoints this desire by drawing upon Jansen's (2014) polemic: 'hope for the state'. Recounting memories of community responses to a besieged neighbourhood in Sarajevo, Jansen describes the, 'strong pride in self-organisation, but also in practices that explicitly sought to call the state into being' (2014: 253). In response, he argues that a 'libertarian discourse' in anthropology describes the state only as an imposition from above, ultimately obscuring the desire to be included within the state. That both Obeid and Jansen respond to ethnographic contexts of extreme crisis, the effects of civil war in Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegonia respectively, is not surprising. These examples, where the possibilities of life were threatened, resemble the Solidarity Movement in terms of efforts beyond the state that respond a politics of life and emergency.

Although a challenge to perceived deficiencies of the state, the state also remained present in the way solidarity was imagined and, sometimes uneasily, brought into being. When the volunteers struggled to enforce opening and closing times, it expressed a broader struggle to order the *diktyo*, themselves, and beneficiaries alike, and referenced their commitment to create a new way of doing things. Even if the beneficiaries did not

always share this vision of political engagement, they responded to solidarity in terms of habits formed in dealings with the state. Although it took place outside the state, solidarity therefore remained a powerful locus of state-making, addressing Obeid's questions about 'how imaginations of statehood travel and move, and what meanings they gain along the way' (2015: 1267). In the final part of this chapter, I therefore move to consider how the project of solidarity, as a critical site of relation making informed by the state, ultimately refashioned terms of inclusion.

Solidarity For All[34]

Informed by imaginaries of public corruption, ongoing anxieties about the appropriate use of collective resources were at the heart of tensions among the participants of solidarity. Mistrust further underscores the sense in which solidarity can be said to be premised not only upon cohesive, harmonious relationships but those characterised by conflict. In light of the ethnography presented so far, I want to expand upon the idea of solidarity as rooted in conflict. In addition to the competing ideas about solidarity held by the volunteers and beneficiaries, I argue that vision of solidarity held by the volunteers was itself conflicted. In one sense, the ethics of solidarity implied impartiality such that all people should be treated equally and fairly. For the volunteers, this meant imposing rules, distance, and indifference to personal demands. Yet in a second sense, solidarity equally implied that people should depend upon one another through forms of mutual aid and support. Mutual obligation and dependency emerged from people acting in unity through activities of redistribution. The pull of these

[34] 'Solidarity for All – *Αλληλεγγύη για 'Ολους',* is the name of an umbrella organisation, formed by members of SYRIZA and other activists (Arampatzi 2018: 9), that seeks to connect other groups and generally promote the cause of solidarity. Unrelated to the group described in this ethnography, their title nevertheless captures the ethos of the Solidarity Movement: universal and inclusive claims of solidarity. https://www.solidarity4all.gr/el [accessed 13/09/21]

contradictory demands was evident in the struggle volunteers faced when balancing the pleas of people asking for support against the imperative to treat each person equally, and so, indifferently. Such dilemmas were further compounded by ingrained practices of favours and expectations that distributions would be mediated according to personal appeals. Practically, these tensions manifested in terms of who had access to the collective resources of the *diktyo*: prizes, clothes, food, bread. Access is the key idea here and in closing this chapter, I mobilise it in order to reflect upon a final contradiction: how the practice of solidarity was simultaneously inclusive and exclusive.

Each year the volunteers organised a three-day bazaar in the run up to the Easter holiday. In the months leading up to the bazaar, donations of particular quality were set aside for the event. At the same time, individual volunteers prepared handicrafts: sugared almonds, decorative candles, crocheted necklaces, jewellery, jam, painted eggs, and Easter decorations. On the day, balloons were placed at the building entrance and music played to attract the attention of those passing outside. Inside, the space was rearranged with a series of desks placed around the room's exterior, positioned to display the various items on sale. When the other volunteers accepted my offer to help, I wondered what work I could practically do. When I arrived, it seemed my role was likely to be assistive, occasionally passing items to other volunteers when requested or placing purchased items in festive bags to give to customers. Sitting down behind one of the desks, Konstantinos came to sit with me. As at other events, it appeared that selling and accounting was work chiefly reserved for women. With little to do, Konstantinos and I began chatting as we watched the people who had come to browse the items on sale. Our eyes fell upon a woman who was sorting through items of jewellery, paying attention to an especially bold and expensive looking geometric necklace. As she

examined it, Konstantinos leaned over to me and whispered that I should keep an eye on her. Our role, it transpired, was to watch the customers and make sure no-one took anything unnoticed.

Perhaps an hour or so later, a relatively young couple arrived and were greeted by the other volunteers. The familiarity in their voices indicated that the pair were known to the volunteers. Chatting amiably, the two briefly looked around the bazaar, the man examining books and the woman browsing some jewellery. When I next looked, I noticed that they had entered the back area reserved only for volunteers. As I glimpsed inside, I saw the two sitting and smoking and that Konstantinos had joined them. Returning a few minutes later he seemed agitated as he explained to me that in the previous years the pair had volunteered at the *diktyo*. Some of the other volunteers began to complain about the smoke coming from the back, insisting it did not contribute to the right atmosphere for the bazaar. Soon the sliding door that linked the back and front areas was closed. Yet this only served to agitate Konstantinos further. He quickly found a pretext to go into the back, offering to make coffee for the guests. Having returned to the front, he again left the door open and continued to stand next to it, from where he was able to see inside. After a few minutes, one of the former volunteers poked his head through the door explaining he would shut it so as not to disturb the others with the smoke. Returning to sit with me, Konstantinos was clearly uncomfortable that the former volunteers had been left in the back unattended. Periodically, he glanced at the silhouettes now barely visible through the frosted glass of the closed door.

In general, this door was carefully monitored. A piece of paper had been posted on it: '*μόνο οι βάρδιες μέσα* – only those on shift inside', to ward off the many people

typically milling around the *diktyo* during the day. As the sign indicated, the boundary between the public, distributive face and the interior storage of the *diktyo* could only be traversed by the volunteers. Preparing and distributing these items conferred on them the right to pass this boundary. Despite this, people who were not volunteers occasionally made their way inside. If it was left open, curious people would look inside, asking questions of the volunteers working there folding clothes or portioning out food. If they were especially bold, people walked straight inside only to be escorted out by one of the volunteers. Partly in response to these occurrences, the volunteers repositioned the bread table to partially block access to the door, effectively fencing off the back area. If the door inside was left open, some of the volunteers might comment '*ας πούμε, κλεινούμε την πόρτα* – what do you say that we close the door?'. The problem stemmed from the fact that volunteers continually needed to pass through this door, either to bring out food bags, boxes of oil, sacks of bread, clothes, or fetch or make drinks. In between this coming and going, it was difficult for the door to remain closed for any period of time. In response, as people came and went their passage was marked by volunteers' repeated requests to close the door.

Gaining entry to the interior by becoming a volunteer was not a simple matter of self-election but subject to the approval of the other volunteers. Kristina, a particularly chatty woman, was a regular visitor at the *diktyo*, who often came to collect bread and examine the clothes set out each week. Making her way around the room she would interrupt the volunteers in their activities, offering her opinion on their work. On one occasion, when a man asked me for more bread, she chastised me for not offering him more. Sometimes she would try to help the other volunteers who often dismissed her efforts, assuring her that they had the work well in hand. Often, she helped by tidying the clothes that had been left in a mess after people were finished looking through them.

Beneath the tables on which the clothes sat, open boxes contained an assortment of shoes but these too had been mixed up. One morning, Kristina began sorting through the shoes, placing them in their rightful pairs. As she did so, the volunteers watched with cautious looks of approval. After she had finished, a single shoe remained unmatched. Approaching the door, she peered into the back where the clothes and other household items were kept. Stopped by one of the volunteers inside, she explained that she wanted to find the matching shoe. Thanking her, the volunteer took the shoe, telling Krystina that she would find its twin. Somewhat ruffled, Kristina complained that she was capable of doing it herself. Perhaps in an attempt to smooth over the awkward situation, Konstantinos went into the back and retrieved a piece of frozen fish as thanks for her efforts, which he pushed into her hands as she left.

In one sense, Kristina acted as a volunteer much like the others. Using her own initiative, she undertook to solve problems and maintain the order of the *diktyo*, a disposition that the volunteers actively praised in one other. Yet rather than recognised as useful voluntary work, her activities were instead dismissed as annoying and interfering. Behind her back, the volunteers gave each other exasperated looks, and when speaking to her used the same warm but formal manner they often reserved for 'difficult' beneficiaries. She was not truly a volunteer because she was not recognised as such by the core volunteers. In turn, she was not permitted to enter the back: she could not be trusted with the resources accumulated there. Konstantinos intimated this to me on one occasion while discussing some of the other beneficiaries, 'she had no brains', he told me. Most important still, in their perception Kristina was actually trying to take advantage of the *diktyo's* resources rather than preserve them for others. Necessarily, she had to be excluded despite her attempts to help the volunteers in their work. It had been this same uncertainty about the status of the couple who visited during the Easter

bazaar that had prompted Konstantinos' anxiety. As former volunteers this status conferred on them the right to enter the back but their presence was also transgressive now that they were no longer volunteering.

The underlying concern was that left unattended, people inside could take whatever items they chose. This anxiety surfaced occasionally at the weekly Monday meetings when it transpired that items had 'gone missing' from the stores. The actual items that had disappeared was not made explicit. Instead, the focus of discussion was on how to prevent similar occurrences in the future. After debating the issue, a consensus was reached that from now on the volunteers would leave their bags in a small cabinet behind the main desk towards the entrance of the *diktyo*. For the volunteers working in the front this made little difference as this was already where they kept their personal things. The change mainly affected those volunteers working inside who variously came to sort clothes, portion out food, and take shifts cleaning the *diktyo*. Unlike the shifts in the front that were always undertaken by the core volunteers who regularly attended the weekly meetings, those in the back were seen as lesser roles and performed by more casual volunteers.

Adopting this new policy, however, provoked further tensions among the volunteers. One morning, Panagiota, one of the casual volunteers walked straight into the back carrying her bag with her. At the main desk, Dora remarked upon this and signalled what had happened to Konstantinos. In hushed voices they discussed what to do. Konstantinos suggested that they simply point out the transgression but Dora disagreed: 'leave it because we're in a difficult position now'. As with the case of the two visitors who had sat smoking in the back area, the volunteers were uncomfortable with confronting the issue directly. I argue that their hesitancy to do so makes sense because

doing so would expose the fractures of solidarity: that some were more included than others.

This same tension recurred in situations where volunteers did not appear to understand or respect unspoken rules about access and inclusion. On another day, Aggeliki, one of the core volunteers, was working on her main shift at the front desk when she was interrupted by Iro, one of the casual volunteers. Iro wanted to ask if she could retrieve her bag from where it was stored in the cupboard behind the front desk. Aggeliki, however, was annoyed by the request, furrowing her brows, in return asking Iro why she didn't simply take the bag herself. Aggeliki's annoyance was not only due to the way this interaction highlighted mistrust between the volunteers but because it also revealed how trust was not distributed among them equally.

Inequalities of trust were especially emphasised shortly after this new rule was instituted. Stefania, who usually worked handing out bread, began to show the contents of her bag to the other volunteers as she left each day. When she did so, the volunteers dismissed her gesture, barely glancing inside the bag, and clearly bothered by Stefania's insistence to show then. Unlike Panagiota and Iro, Stefania did not work inside and so had no reason to demonstrate the contents of her bag. As well as this, she was also one of the regular volunteers who often came to weekly meetings and other activities organised by the members. Stefania had taken the message about keeping bags outside too literally, highlighting the issue of trust and so making the other volunteers uncomfortable. In reality, the rule with the bags was not addressed to all volunteers equally, but to the less regular volunteers who were not as integrated and, consequently, as well-trusted.

Returning to the sign that led into the back, '*μόνο οι βάρδιες μέσα* – only those on shift inside', its message implied only those currently working on their current shifts should be permitted entry. Yet this restriction was not respected by the core volunteers who were, in a way, always considered to be working. Rather, they came and went as it suited them, arriving on any day to sort out various matters or keep one another company. Tacit distinctions between the core and casual volunteers thus expressed an underlying tension concerning who could be trusted and to what degree, often indexed by who monitored and had access to the *diktyo*. While beneficiaries and 'non-volunteers' like Kristina were outside this sphere of trust, former and casual volunteers could be trusted to some extent but not entirely.

By creating boundaries and policing access to spaces within the *diktyo,* the volunteers effectively placed limits on solidarity. Recounting matters of access is illustrative of how the volunteers negotiated exclusion in an atmosphere of inclusivity. Reflecting on this, the critical point I want to address is how ideas concerning equality ultimately elicited regulation. The volunteers regulated themselves and each other, with varying degrees of success, just as they regulated the beneficiaries' access to solidarity. Boundary work was effectively a negotiation over who could be trusted to manage collective resources and arbitrate solidarity fairly. This not only explains the importance volunteers attached to the idea of selflessness but also the seriousness with which they attended to systems that mediated access. Interrogating these ideas, however, exposes one of solidarity's essential contradictions. Overshadowing the claim of 'solidarity for all' was the fact that collective resources were ultimately managed by a select few. Such conditions had the effect of reframing but not entirely diffusing anxieties about public trust that solidarity attempted to address. A final irony of this moral schema was that those best placed to prove themselves capable of managing solidarity were precisely

those least in need of its support. Despite the fact that a minority of the core volunteers did depend upon support at the *diktyo,* for the majority this was not the case. I argue that this is more than coincidence. Ideally, solidarity was selfless such that only those who gave but took little who could be regarded as proper volunteers. Those such as Kristina who depended upon the *diktyo* were necessarily excluded.

I**ronies of solidarity**

Lack of visibility, of people or things unseen either in 'the back', under tables or in people's bags, highlights the difficulties volunteers faced in establishing trust among themselves and others. Public handling of money made visible, and so diffused, anxieties over the misuse of collective resources. Framed against a backdrop of clientelism and subsequent austerity, such practices of transparency were a retort to corruption. More broadly, solidarity was a critique of state practices and perceived failings in the public sphere. When the volunteers enforced strict timekeeping on both themselves and beneficiaries or when they treated individuals impartially and attempted to avoid personal obligations, they sought to forge an alternative to the state. Solidarity was not premised solely upon social harmony and co-operation but rooted equally in conflict. As an 'alternative' form of political engagement, solidarity unfolded as a struggle *against* the status quo of which they sometimes saw the beneficiaries as proxies. This was not simply an ideological struggle but one consisting of repeated, everyday conflicts over how solidarity should be organised. As well as conflict, solidarity was also premised upon a number of ironies. If the volunteers aspired to be impartial and egalitarian, practicalities and existing habits spilled over into personal obligations. Solidarity at once meant mutual support but refuting dependency. Solidarity was a political right to which anyone might lay claim but in so doing solidarity

resembled an entitlement. Finally, the volunteers confronted another paradox when they invoked sentiments of care to describe solidarity. Through care, they attempted to personalise an indifferent state. Yet to care, to try hard and give selflessly without any return meant the volunteers had to become indifferent to the demands of beneficiaries. Herzfeld shrewdly notes a similar ambiguity in his writing on bureaucracy: 'indifference to the plight of individuals and groups often coexists with democratic and egalitarian ideals' (1993: 1). In the following sections, I explore this contradiction further, to understand the ambiguities of, as Bornstein describes it, 'caring at a distance' (2012: 23).

4 – Administering Solidarity

Introduction

Just ten minutes on foot from the *diktyo,* another solidarity project had worked to transform a once abandoned cafe into a social hub. Partly hidden among crooked pine trees, the cafe sat at the top of a steeply sloping park at the foot of which was a playground usually busy with children and their parents. Occasionally, the cafe hosted small festivals in support of solidarity. Volunteers from the *diktyo* often attended, setting up stalls at which they sold jars of homemade jam, handmade jewellery and bric-a-brac. Indicating to me that I could help them at one such event, I arrived at the *diktyo* in the late afternoon and was promptly instructed to begin loading small cardboard boxes into a car. Although the solidarity cafe was nearby, transporting the heavy boxes was a problem because of the steep terrain. As a younger man, I had been recruited to help move the items needed at the festival. Once the car was loaded, a few of the volunteers drove the car closer to the cafe while Sotiris and I followed on foot. When we arrived, we loaded the boxes and carried them to a set of tables as the other volunteers watched. Next, we helped carry a stand that would be used to showcase bags that had been made by one of the volunteers. As well as this, we set up a hand-painted cloth sign behind the tables. Hand painted in swirling letters was written '*Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα* – Byronas Solidarity Network' and below this: '*αξιοπρέπεια για όλους* – dignity for all'.

With the items transported, the other volunteers began to arrange the various items for display, debating among themselves how to make the most inviting arrangement. Sotiris and I were left out of this discussion - it was up to the women to make the preparations

for displaying and selling the items, as well as accounting for any of the profits. Apparently no longer of use, Sotiris suggested that we drink some coffee as we waited for the festival to start. The evening was warm and as the sun set, it cast a soft, golden light that filtered through the pine trees. Already people coming to attend the festival had started to mill around and the murmur of their talk, the cries of children playing, and distant sounds of the city overlapped with our own conversation. Sotiris began telling me about the cafe and how it was used by a variety of solidarity groups. On a terrace below us, rows of chairs had been set out facing a set of desks. A panel discussion was taking place as part of the festival program. Four discussants sat behind desks as a small audience listened to them. Half-listening myself, I heard one of the speakers talking about the meaning of solidarity in the context of the ongoing refugee crisis. The drone of her voice interrupted my own conversation with Sotiris as he casually informed me that, here, they did not discuss politics. It only led to arguments, he said.

Sitting in the midst of this festival of solidarity, among the slogans calling for change, Sotiris' comment surprised me. There, amid the slogans and speeches, it struck me that the political not being up for discussion was an idea worth pursuing. In part, the sudden rise of the Solidarity Movement in Greece can be understood as a rejection of mass clientelist party politics according to its alleged economic and civic failures. One of the appeals of solidarity was its affiliation with the local: grassroots action that was practical and action-orientated as opposed to ideological politics that had little real substance. Yet as the radical message of solidarity suddenly expanded, it had enfolded a diverse range of participants, and their unresolved aspirations and failures. Solidarity became an umbrella term referenced by a broad spectrum of participants. Not least among these was the political party SYRIZA, which mobilised solidarity during its

initial contest with, and later arbitration of, austerity policy. Underlying the reach of the idea of solidarity, both Orthodox church and far-right party Golden Dawn organised initiatives under its name. Although such affiliations were not present at the solidarity cafe, what constituted solidarity among those present was nevertheless sometimes conflicted. Sotiris went on to tell me that because the cafe was host to a range of groups, political discussions often became fraught. In this upended and uncertain 'local' politics, disagreements were not productive and compromised the cafe's effective operation.

Occurring early on in my fieldwork, Sotiris' assertions prefigured what came to be an ongoing preoccupation as I tried to understand the *diktyo*: the apparent absence of politics. Emerging anthropological literature on the Solidarity Movement had reported vibrant spaces that abounded with discussion as economic exchanges blended with political ones (Rakopoulos 2014: 197). Other ethnographers reiterated sophisticated discussions of the meaning and action of political engagement (Rozakou 2016b: 190, Theodossopoulos 2016: 169). Despite expectations of finding a similarly radical political space, it quickly became apparent that in my own ethnographic research such discussions were absent. On the volunteers' website in a section about volunteering, it stated in capital letter '*να δώσουμε ο ένας το χέρι στον άλλον για να στάθοθμε μαζί* - helping one another we stand together!', but another section titled '*σκέψεις και απόψεις* – thoughts and opinions' contained no entry. When asked directly about the meaning of solidarity the volunteers would repeat similar statements: '*να είμαστε μαζί, να στηρίζουμε* – to be together, to support one another', '*είναι μια πράξη αντίστασης* – it's an act of resistance', but ultimately too preoccupied with their activities to give my questions much attention. Like the banner that framed their stall at the solidarity festival or signs they attached to shopping trolleys outside supermarkets where they collected

food, these statements of solidarity formed an ongoing but mute background to the volunteers' everyday activities. This chapter is dedicated to those activities, which were the chief concerns of the volunteers: organisation, distribution, and administration. Drawing upon Ferguson's notion of antipolitics (1990), I ask whether solidarity exists outside the sphere of politics and, if so, how this positioning gives shape to solidarity by making certain practices possible while simultaneously refuting others.

Organising Solidarity

Next to the bus stop at which I usually got off on the way to my shifts, a rectangular sign was attached to a lamppost. At its head was the image of a large 'stop' sign, inside of which was printed: 'stop the European Union'. Beneath this in bold letters followed further statements, 'what are you waiting for? – we vote – KKE – everywhere – power and hope of the people'.[35] Signs and posters like this could be found throughout the surrounding streets, either on bus stops or streetlamps, or as banners hung opportunistically. Neighbourhoods that formed to host Greek refugees from Asia Minor such as Byronas have a long history of support for the Greek Communist Party, rooted in the politics of the enforced population exchange. Across from the KKE sign, graffiti peppered the wall of the facing building. Among the colourful tags and doodles, one piece jumped out in black, capital letters: '*σκατά στους εθελοντές ρουφιανούς* – shit on pimp volunteers'.[36] Slightly beneath it, a large anarchist symbol punctuated the statement. After the period of fiscal crisis and bailouts, graffiti became more pervasive throughout the city as public space was transformed into a visible battleground for arguments not only between left and right but within the left itself. More radical

[35] KKE: *Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας* – Communist Party of Greece
[36] *'ρουφιάνος'* – the word can be translated as: snitch, rat, informer.

solidarity and anarchist groups signalled their disapprobation with other initiatives that they perceived as either less critical of formalised power or working directly in co-operation with the state. In this case, the artist's choice of the word '*εθελοντές* – volunteers' raised a question mark about their political commitments and inclusion as members of the Solidarity Movement. Nestled between these conflicting sentiments, the *diktyo*'s own sign stated simply, '*Δίκτυο Αλλυλλεγγύη Βύρωνα* – Byronas Solidarity Network', along with their address and telephone number. Between the swirling letters, smiling faces had been painted, some with hands reaching for other letters. A small, printed flower and a hand with leaves extending from it were the only other decorations, bypassing the explicitly political message that it faced with suggestions of growth and connectedness.

Getting off the bus, one or two older gentlemen would typically be waiting, standing alone or chatting with one another. When I went down the marble steps into the *diktyo*, I would greet whoever happened to be there: '*Καλημέρα σας*! – Good morning!' to which they might nod or respond with a similar greeting. Once inside, I would greet the other volunteers, '*Καλημέρα* – Good morning!', who called back with replies like '*Καλώς τον* – Welcome', '*γεια σου – τι κάνεις*; – Hi, how are you?'. These greetings were important and punctuated the day. Officially, the *diktyo* opened at 10am, but before this time the volunteers would be prepared and waiting, often gossiping or smoking. They chatted about personal matters and exchanged stories. A joke about an inherited Anatolian carpet that did not fit anywhere, for example, made them laugh but they also discussed important happenings in the *diktyo*: things had not gone well the day before and the situation needed to be raised at the next weekly meeting. They talked of how much money had been raised at the last bazaar or how the bi-weekly collection of food at the local supermarkets had gone. Through gossip and chit-chat, useful information was

circulated among the members. Although located in a basement, the *diktyo* was fronted by large glass windows and doors so that it was always bright, emphasised by the fact that most of the walls were painted cheerfully in orange. Just before the *diktyo* opened each day, people gathered outside. Looking at them from behind the desk, they too appeared to be gossiping, although from inside what they said was inaudible.

Most days just before the shift was about to start, one of the volunteers arrived in a car bringing that day's bread. Movement in the people waiting indicated to the people within that the car was outside. Some stood of those waiting rushed to help bring the sacks down into the *diktyo* – whether to be helpful or because they hoped to take the first bread, was never clear. A couple of the volunteers also helped, often with some scuffling when the sacks were put down: '*όχι εκεί, εδώ* – not there, here'. By then, a small crowd was usually gathered outside, filling the steps leading down to the *diktyo*. When volunteers who arrived a bit later for their shifts working in the back, struggled to push their way through the cluster of people. Someone inside might ask, '*Θα ανοίξουμε την πόρτα*; – shall we open the door?', but another replied, '*όχι, θα μπουν όλοι μέσα, πρέπει να μάθουν* – no, they will all come in, they have to learn'. Anna and I put the bread on a table, she stationed behind, taking the bread out of the sacks, and myself in front, sorting it into types. Once the beneficiaries were allowed inside, we worked at rapidly to keep up with those arriving to take the bread. The main challenge was to ration out the bread as best possible. Each day the amount we were given changed, nor did we know how many people would come or when. Face-to-face with repeated demands, it was difficult to refuse requests for more. Joking about it with the other volunteers, I once told them it was hard for me to be tough. Still smiling but with a harder tone in their voices, they told me that I must try to be.

On another set of tables, piles of clothes were laid out. The hour after the *diktyo* opened was typically the busiest time, so the volunteers restricted people from taking clothes until 11am. Before then, the clothes were covered with a bedsheet although this did not prevent a few people from waiting around, either sitting on a couch or chatting in small groups. Despite the rule, one of the beneficiaries might start to look through the clothes before the allowed time, prompting others to copy them. Each person sorted through the various items in a flurry of activity, all looking for something that suited them. Watching this, the volunteers often commented on what a mess the beneficiaries had made of the clothes. Once, I heard one of the volunteers mutter that it was '*χαμός* – a frenzy'. Responding to these comments, a few of the beneficiaries sometimes stopped to reorder the clothes, folding and piling them to resemble how they had been. As they left, they called back to tell the volunteers that they had tidied the clothes, who in turn called back their thanks.

Amid this activity of people coming and going to take bread and clothes, a steady stream of people arrived at another set of tables on which were placed three large folders, each labelled alphabetically. The folders contained the names and records of those in the neighbourhood registered at the *diktyo*. On a large poster behind the desk, it stated in bold letters that the *diktyo* helped around 650 families in Byronas. Unlike the bread and clothes, which anyone was free to take, in order to register people first had to bring tax statements, a personal bill, and unemployment cards issued by the Greek state. Subsequently, these people were then entitled to collect a plastic shopping bag filled with food every few weeks, depending on the size of their household. Accompanying this standard donation of food, the volunteers also gave out bottles of oil, chicken, fruits, or similar items when they had been able to acquire them. For the most part, this was a smooth process but occasionally problems did arise. Out-of-date statements, or

forgotten cards, which the volunteers used to track collections, were common difficulties. Meanwhile, new applicants were asked to attend on Wednesday evenings to go through the sign-up process. Those unable or unwilling to meet the requirements set by the volunteers were either turned away or directed to other similar initiatives in other neighbourhoods.

In the background, various encounters played out as the volunteers attended to those visiting the *diktyo*. A man who wanted to exchange the flour in his bag for lentils was told no, there were rules but, in the end, was given the lentils regardless. When he left, he passed someone just arrived at the entrance holding a bag of second-hand clothes. One of the volunteers sprang up to take bag into the back, telling him '*ευχαριστούμε πάρα πολύ* – thank you very much!'. One of the volunteers not on shift stopped by to collect their donation of food. As closing time neared, there was little left to do. One of the volunteers responsible for cleaning the *diktyo* mopped the floor. Those in the back who had been preparing food parcels had already left, and most of the bread was gone. In the relative quiet, the remaining volunteers sat, chatted, and shared a warmed savoury pastry and a few shots of *tsipouro*. Just after 1pm, a latecomer came to collect her donation of food. The volunteers reminded her that the *diktyo* was already closed but still served her anyway.

Managing Accumulation

On any given day, hundreds of people arrived and left, each either taking or dropping off bags of food, clothes, bread, household items, books, toys, and other deliveries. The matrix of solidarity was thus constituted through the movement, and subsequent organisation, of people and things. Another substantial task was the bi-weekly

collection of food outside supermarkets. Volunteers worked in pairs, standing at the entrances of around six supermarkets in the neighbourhood. As customers passed, the volunteers handed them leaflets that explained the *diktyo's* work and asked for donations. Next to entrance, they stationed a trolley borrowed from the supermarket to collect the donated food, temporarily repurposed by attaching large signs that the volunteers had brought with them. Over the course of a few hours, one or sometimes two trollies were filled, and with the contents subsequently packed into the trunk of a car driven by one of the volunteers. After collections ended, the volunteers regrouped at the *diktyo*, helping to unload the food into the storage area. The back, '*μέσα'*, was filled with large green metal shelving units each of which reached the ceiling. On one side, they formed a small alcove at the centre of which was placed a small table. Beneath the table were empty shopping bags used to package food donations.

All spaces were densely stacked with various kinds of food. Shelves contained layers of spaghetti, rice, *orzo,*[37] sugar, flour, dried legumes, and an assorted of non-perishable foods that the volunteers collected and distributed. Some of the shelves were filled with metal containers of olive oil that were later decanted into smaller bottles. Against the back wall, stacks of cardboard boxes filled with these bottles further crowded the space. Opposite this alcove of shelves, rows of similar units were packed with neatly folded clothes. One of the units contained a series of boxes, some containing children's toys and others with bric-a-brac that was collected and sold at bazaars and other events. Between these two areas there was a small kitchenette used for cleaning, preparing food and making coffee. Next to it, were two large glass-fronted fridges of the kind commonly seen in small shops across Greece. The fridges were used to store olives, cheese, perishable foods and, occasionally, bread. Across from the fridges, was a large

[37] A kind of pasta.

freezer. At times empty, it was otherwise filled with frozen chickens when the volunteers were able to acquire them. Positioned between the freezer and the entrance to the back area, another shelving unit contained shopping bags of food that had been prepared, ready to be carried into the front before they were distributed. Stacks of boxes, some empty and some full, lined the walkways between the shelving units. Bags stuffed with bags filled spaces between the boxes. With all spaces used, the area was a meticulously organised jumble. Despite the cluttered appearance, the area was kept aggressively clean and any spillages dealt with immediately so as not to attract pests.

Viewed from within, the *diktyo* was, at its essence, a store of objects accumulated in the cause of solidarity. If its primary function was to collect and store resources, the second was to give them away. These two faces of the *diktyo* were reflected in the physical partition of the building that was divided in two by a series of large, frosted glass screens that separated the front area where items were distributed from the back where they were stored. However, with no easy entrance to the back, all food, clothes and other items had to be carried by hand, down the steps into and through the front area. Moving smaller collections and donations was not a serious problem. Throughout the working day people living in the neighbourhood stopped by, leaving small bags of clothes. Occasionally, people brought large donations and it was possible to see them arriving and unloading bags of clothes from inside the *diktyo*, provoking exasperated remarks from the volunteers: '*Αχχ Παναγία μου, ρούχα!* – mother of God, clothes!'. If it was never possible to collect enough food, but there was always an excess of clothes. From time to time, the volunteers put up large signs in the window stating that they were no longer accepting donations of clothes. Nevertheless, whenever anyone stopped by to drop off clothes one of them would jump up to take the donation, thanking them

profusely and smiling before carrying the bag into the back. Clothes had to be unpacked, assessed for quality and cleanliness and, once inside, folded and stored.

A carload of food donations, sacks of bread or a sack of clothes were relatively easy to manage. Heavier items were more of a challenge as, for example, when large donations of frozen chickens were secured. Delivered by a lorry, they arrived in rectangular cardboard boxes of a size that meant only one or possibly two could be carried at a time. Parking this in front of the building was a logistic problem given the narrow street and close proximity of busy bus routes. Sometimes it was necessary for the lorry to park, drive away and re-park in order to allow other traffic to pass. Meanwhile, the volunteers and any other people at the time were recruited to form a human chain extending from the back of the lorry directly into the back area. First the boxes were passed down into the small alcove between the street and the *diktyo,* and then from person to person into the back. Here, the frozen chickens were removed from the boxes and crammed into the freezer, carefully arrange to fit as many as possible. The empty boxes were flattened out, put to one side, and later taken out through the front and dumped in the large garbage containers located nearby.

Bringing the food in was only half the challenge. With space already tight, finding room to accommodate the extra food was a logistic problem. When the volunteers once arranged to receive a large donation of peaches, it was therefore difficult to find space for them. The peaches arrived in flimsy wood crates of the kind commonly seen at local markets across the country. First, the tables normally lining the glass screens that partitioned the back area had to be rearranged before the hundreds of crates could be stacked there. As they usually did in the case of large deliveries, the volunteers formed a chain and began passing the crates along. Euripidis, one of the volunteers who had

greeted me when I arrived in the *diktyo* for the first time, positioned himself to take charge of stacking the crates, which needed to be placed carefully so as to make the best use of space and avoid any collapses. The crates were passed from one person to another while Euripidis built them into stacks against the wall. Indeed, it was usually one of the more experienced volunteers that positioned themselves at either end calling commands to those in the middle.

Seeing all the peaches stacked, I worried how long they would keep in the hot summer weather. They had arrived on a Friday and the *diktyo* was closed over the weekend. However, by the following Monday more than two thirds of the peaches had already been given away. Rather than allocate them person by person, the volunteers had opted to let people take as many peaches as they liked. In part, this reflected the difficulty of storing such a large quantity of fruit but equally was the simplest means to give them all away. Doing so, however, had some drawbacks. The volunteers recounted to me how letting people take the peaches freely had led to a free-for-all. Although I had not been present, the other volunteers rolled their eyes as they described the scene to me. People had been pushing one another, sorting through the peaches. Boxes fell over and some peaches spilled on the floor. The whole thing has been '*χάος* – chaos', they told me.

Some months later, in advance of a similarly large delivery of tomatoes, the volunteers discussed the matter intensely at the weekly meeting: how many tomatoes could they accept; how long would they keep; how many should be given to each person? The problem was that families had different incomes and varied by size. The volunteers discussed whether people might need to visit twice if they represented large families, or how much each family needed. If they opted to offer proportional amounts, how could this be tracked? Faced with these questions, the volunteers devised a list of all

individuals registered for food collections, each of whom could take one portion of tomatoes. Once the delivery arrived and the crates had been stacked, a table was placed in from of them. Georgia stood in front of the table with a list attached to a clipboard. As people arrived to collect their regular food donation they were subsequently directed to Georgia, who allowed them to collect their allocation of tomatoes. Ticking them off the list, she directed them to take a small bag and fill it with as many tomatoes as they liked. Despite the table and list, the distribution was not as orderly as the volunteers had hoped. Some of the beneficiaries began to argue that they should be allowed to take more tomatoes. Others began searching through the tomatoes to find those of the best quality, squashing some and spilling others in the process. Georgia hovered nearby complaining to them about their behaviour, visibly aggravated by the mess.

Given the flow of people and things through the *diktyo* each day, solidarity became a logistical struggle for the volunteers as much as a political one. Such tense accumulations have been recognised elsewhere in solidarity spaces. As public interest in the refugee crisis peaked, collectivities working on Lesvos had to ask for a halt to donations, 'until they sorted and distributed the items they had accumulated' (Rozakou 2016: 196). Volunteers at Skoros, an anti-consumerist exchange, struggled with the flow of goods as anti-consumption became a site of overconsumption (Chatzidakis 2017: 155). Elsewhere, Cabot refers to the labour required to sort medicines in social pharmacies (2016: 157). Bonanno (2019) details the fatigue of unwrapping, classifying, repacking, organisation, and storage of medicines. At the *diktyo*, mundane work eclipsed political considerations in the sense that solidarity was expressed foremost through material labour. Calling such work mundane, however, belies the complex moral ordering that accompanied it. In the following section, I argue that the struggle to

impose order on space and things was actually synonymous with the ordering of beneficiaries themselves as volunteers worked to prescribe the limits of solidarity.

Material Solidarities

Those difficulties in ordering the distribution of bread described in the previous chapter eventually prompted the volunteers to reassess the means of giving out bread at their weekly meetings. It was too disorganised, they decided. Sofia commented that they wouldn't act like this elsewhere. Eleutheria complained that we needed to be stricter with them - if we simply insisted that they behave properly, then they would. Another suggestion was a ticketing system like that used at the large distribution at Astra. Discussing this idea, the group consensus was that it would ultimately be impractical. Finally, they decided to reposition the table at which the bread was given away. Now there would be two tables: one inner and one outer. The inner table was placed next to the wall just as it had formerly been but now closer to the partition door which led into the back. The second table was placed in front of the first with enough space for volunteers to comfortably pass between the two. The sacks of bread would be placed under the first, inner table and some bread transferred onto the table itself. Next, one of the volunteers would move the bread onto the second table, in front of which another volunteer would hand it to the waiting people.

Handing out bread in this way did have the effect of making the process smoother, and the volunteers were pleased with the change. Yet this realignment of space had other effects as it subtly reconfigured expectations about solidarity. Recent ethnographic work concerning ethics has reframed it in terms of the material objects of aid and charity. Latent in the background of aid work is a landscape of medicine and medical supplies,

clothes, food, building complexes and offices, tents – a material infrastructure according to which moral interventions take place. Bodies, cards, documents, medicine and food, are not incidental, but are essential in humanitarian encounters. As such, 'the ways in which charitable donations are collected, sorted, and distributed offers a window on the workings of a specific charity and the charity complex in general' (Rice 2007: 17). Yet until recently relatively few ethnographic works have treated the 'infrastructure of humanitarianism' (Donovan 2015) directly, even though it is precisely the materiality of aid that provides the rationale for such endeavours.

Halvorson (2012) attends to this blind spot, taking the bandages made by Lutheran Christians as her example. She describes how, historically, bandages had been predominantly handmade, and consequently perceived to embody the personal sympathies of those who made them (Halvorson 2012: 127). Yet as the agencies that collected and distributed the bandages became increasingly professionalised, irregularities of handmade bandages were reframed as naive and outmoded. Bandages of consistent quality were promoted according to an index of care more in line with standardised conception of charity (Halvorson 2012: 131). In this more formalised ethos, religious devotion was expressed through regularity and utility rather than the sympathetic sentiments embodied by handmade bandages. Attempts to 'update' aid practices were literally woven into how bandages were made and assessed, thereby reconfiguring the moral economy of Christian humanitarianism according to a bureaucratic logic (Halvorson 2012: 132). While Halvorson focuses on bandages as specific objects of charity work, Smirl (2015) encourages us to examine the total physical environment of humanitarianism. In this landscape of aid, she not only locates the assumptions that drive humanitarian work in terms of their physical iterations but, like Halvorson, shows how this dialogue develops over time. Specifically, she draws

attention to the cars, hotels, and humanitarian complexes in which development workers increasingly spend their time (2015: 80-113). Despite an actual fall in the level of attacks on development works internationally, she points out that discourses of securitisation translated into increasingly fortified humanitarian spaces: compounds, secured hotels, armoured cars. As a result, development workers became increasingly insulated from the social contexts with which they supposed to be connected, a disengagement that only served to heighten the very anxieties that prompted securitisation.

Attending to the textures of objects and space at the *diktyo* reveals some comparable insights. The rearrangement of desks for bread distribution had the literal effect of insulating contact between volunteers and beneficiaries. Rather than both standing in front of the desk, now the space was reorganised with a clear distinction between who offered the bread and who accepted it. Incidentally, moving the tables had the effect of further enclosing access to the back area. Formerly, the space around the door leading into the back had been entirely open and so could be approached by anyone. After the tables had been rearranged, space enough remained for only one person to pass at any time. In the new arrangement, the desks effectively formed a corridor that led directly from the door that linked the back area to the front desk where food bags were handed out. Subdivision of the outer space actually reflected the basic division of space at the *diktyo,* which was composed of an inner storage area and an outer distribution area. Moving the desks at which bread was handed out added a further layer to this division, securing the boundary between inside and out.

As described in Chapter 3, who could navigate this boundary was a point of repeated tension that provoked anxiety among the volunteers. Throughout the day, volunteers

were retrieving food donations, shopping bags, clothes, as well as making coffee and liaising with those working inside. The door thus posed a contradiction – with dual imperatives that necessitated that it was kept both open and closed. Tension attached to the door works as a handy metaphor for how solidarity was conducted at the *diktyo*. As both a point of collection and distribution, the *diktyo* was not simply a static space but equally constituted through the flow of people and things. Returning to the example of the bread, if their ultimate goal was to give bread to anyone who needed it, in practice they spent as much effort trying to restrict access to it. The door was a point of tension because although it must be kept open to allow the flow of things it was this very openness that compelled them to keep it closed.

Solidarity, then, was like a door: it both created and restricted access. These two aspects of the operation of solidarity posed a contradiction for the volunteers. Just as they worked hard to distribute the resources that they had collected, they were equally compelled to bound access to the same donations. Repeated demands for more, rooted in the personalised appeals influenced by clientelism as described in Chapter 3, led them to 'securitise' solidarity. This compulsion to regulate people and objects reveals some key assumptions about the project of solidarity as undertaken at the *diktyo*. According to the ethics of solidarity, all people were equal with an the same claim to support. To guarantee this, only volunteers were entrusted the responsibility for distributing donations. By restricting access to these resources, the volunteers appointed themselves as the arbiters of egalitarianism, enforcing the idea that everyone should be given the same. But enforcing equality meant it was necessary for volunteers to set themselves apart. This separation was apparent in the spatial division of the *diktyo* and who could claim to occupy these spaces. Beneficiaries rarely attended weekly meetings at which important decisions were made. In principle, anyone could attend but

invitations were only extended to people who expressed an interest in volunteering themselves.

Aside from a working space, the *diktyo* was also a social locus for the volunteers. At Christmas, Easter and before they closed for the summer, the volunteers congregated in small celebrations over food and drink. On a day-to-day basis, they also used the *diktyo* to socialise, stopping by for ten minutes or half an hour to chat and see how things were going. Sitting in chairs near the those working on shift, they smoked and shared pastries together, commenting on the events of the day and occasionally helping out. Adjacent to the desk was an old couch usually occupied by those waiting to be helped at the desk but occasionally just to pass the time. Chatting among themselves, they might comment on the clothes they had collected or other personal business. In the relatively small confines of the basement, however, too many visitors inhibited the flow of people and things. Frustrated, the volunteers sometimes confronted those whom they perceived to be in the way, prompting them to exit by posing questions such as, '*τι κάνετε εδώ πέρα* – what are you doing here?'. As distributors who facilitated the flow of solidarity, the volunteers perceived themselves as legitimately occupying the space of the *diktyo* in a way that the beneficiaries did not.

Attending to the material space of the *diktyo* brings to the foreground some of the contrary practices this rendering of solidarity elicited. Scenes of people waiting in crowds outside or huddled around a single volunteer embodied the feeling among the volunteers that constant demands would overwhelm solidarity. Rather than create ties of closeness and community, the *diktyo* was instead frequented by discord, contention and increasing distance manifested as boundaries between volunteers and beneficiaries. As they struggled to manage the resources at their disposal, the initial impulse to give

things away equally compelled them to restrict access to donations. Despite the egalitarian message of the solidarity movement this boundary-making served to distinguish between those able to give and those able to receive. Attempts to impose order on objects and space were ultimately synonymous with attempts to impose order on the beneficiaries themselves.

Administering Solidarity

So far, I have discussed how space was used to establish order and insulate volunteers from the demands of beneficiaries. I now turn to another set of practices that they employed to further bound access to solidarity: techniques of administration. Use of lists, desks and the entrance policy were all devices of organisation that served to bound access to the *diktyo* resources by restricting rights of movement and access. During my fieldwork, their use became more extensive, in part because of a general satisfaction with how these devices had allowed them to manage the pre-summer distribution of food at *Astra*. Yet the techniques used at *Astra* were actually a scaled-up version of the way bags of food had already been distributed on a daily basis – what the volunteers considered to be their core work. The desks where administration took place were set up at a right angle to one another. On the furthest desk were an old computer, a small file holder, a telephone, calendar, and scraps of paper. The nearest, meanwhile, was empty save for a pile of three yellow ring binders, each filled with records, and an ashtray. Next to the table sat a shopping trolley. During the day it contained the bags of food that were given away, and at night the three ring binders. Two chairs were positioned behind the desks and three green plastic garden chairs in front. On the wall behind the desks was a noticeboard filled with sheets of paper scribbled with phone numbers and

pamphlets from other solidarity groups – a physical manifestation of the network of solidarity.

In the time that I spent there, Erini was usually the person responsible for the desk on my shifts. Sitting behind the desk, she reviewed the files in the folder as the people in front sat waiting. One day, amidst the general chatter, speaking to a woman opposite she said, '*και ο κύριος Κωνσταντίνος θα πρέπει να φέρει την δήλωση του δεκαέξι, εντάξει*; - and Mr Konstantinos will have to bring the (tax) statement from 2016, OK?'. This apparently ending their discussion, Erini called to another woman standing nearby. *'Ελάτε* – Come!'. When the woman handed over a small card, Erini greeted her '*Καλώς την* – Welcome!', and asked her name. Flicking through the files in the ring binder she located the woman's file and began to skim through it. After looking at the papers in front of her and declaring that everything was in order, she instructed the woman to take a shopping bag from the trolley next to the desk. The plastic carrier bag, donated from a local supermarket, was double tied at the top and heavy, making it difficult to carry over the table. Seeing the woman struggling to lift it, Erini stood to help pass it across. When the woman stood to leave, Erini stopped her and handed her one of the bottles of olive oil kept under the table, next asking her if would like to take some bread from the table nearby. Laden with the food that she has been given, Erini then reminded the woman to return in three weeks and handed her another small card on which was printed the date for her next collection. As the woman left, she offered her thanks, '*ευχαριστώ πολύ*' to which Erini, who had been sitting nearby, replied, '*να είσαι καλά* – you're welcome'. Adjacent to the desk Sotiris was also at work. His role was to assist with whatever issues might arise - fetching items or more bags of food, dealing with questions, accepting donations of clothes and similar jobs. In addition, one of his duties was to collect the small cards that each person has been issued at their last donation of food.

Towards the end of the shift, he counted them and compared this tally with Erini's own count. If there was any discrepancy, the two people on shift would recount the donations that day and try to work out where the error in accounting had been made.

A similar scene was repeated each day when anywhere between twenty and thirty people arrived to collect their donations of food. When the volunteers stated that they supported hundreds of families, this food is the support they referred to. To further unpack these apparently material transactions, I would like to consider them in light of ethnographies of infrastructure. On the surface, infrastructure epitomises the mundane. Roads, bridges, electricity networks, for example, are pervasive but mostly pass unremarked by the people who make use of them. The scale of such networks also explains how until recently they have eluded anthropology's often discreet focus. Upon closer inspection, infrastructure connects to deep political currents and agendas at the forefront of national aspirations (Dalakoglou 2010), contentions over who bears the risks of infrastructure (Joelsson 2021), and use of public funds (Green 2008). Architecture conditions publics (Holston 1989), and infrastructure such as roads or bridges matter as they shape the flow of people and things by alternatively enclosing or opening public and private spaces (Bear 2007).

Such insights were anticipated in Ferguson's (1990) seminal work, '*The Anti-Politics Machine'*. The book begins by examining the perceptible gap between development workers conceptions of Lesotho when compared with ethnographic, historical and political accounts of the country. In doing so, Ferguson describes how development work was placed beyond these narratives in a field of apolitical discourse. Road-building, land reform and reform of farming practices were understood as practical interventions, aimed to improve the material welfare of people. Yet Ferguson also

describes how land and farming reforms were ultimately unsuccessful because they took no account of the reality of land use that was tied into patterns of family and work dependent primarily on migrant work. Development projects floundered because they were not able to address the roots of inequality which were actively produced by government policy both in Lesotho and neighbouring South Africa. Ferguson goes on to argue that despite this 'failure', development projects had profoundly political consequences. Roads built to allow farmers better access to produce markets actually brought remote and politically subversive mountainous regions within closer remit of government influence in the form of tax officers or the military. Development work de-politicised its subjects at the same time as it opened up possibilities for political interventions in their lives.

To better understand the administrative practices that the volunteers mobilised at the *diktyo,* I propose to draw together Ferguson's insights with those from ethnographies of infrastructure, bureaucracy and humanitarianism. Administration, like 'development' or 'human rights' exists outside the domain of politics. According to ideals of liberal democracy, a division exists between the executive and legislative functions of government: politicians debate and propose bills; civil servants enact them. Ethnographers, meanwhile, have shown how such distinctions are messy in practice: public administration operates as a deeply political endeavour (Feldman 2007; Gupta 2012; Mathur 2016). A common theme that emerges from such accounts is that it is from the habits of bureaucracy, as much as the policies and aspirations bureaucracy serves, that governance unfolds. Feldman (2007), for example, argues that it was the aesthetic form of bureaucracy that allowed governments in Gaza to maintain authority while simultaneously bypassing real political engagement with the state. In Gupta's (2012) work, structural violence is located in the arbitrariness of bureaucratic

procedures. For Mathur (2016), a push for transparency as part of Indian state work-welfare policies actually undermined such programs as they came into conflict with techniques of accounting that rendered development impracticable. If we liken administration to the infrastructure of the state, it is easier to understand how physical habits of governance structure the paths that policies, bureaucrats, and citizens are able to take. Infrastructure further works as a useful theoretical bridge, linking the operation of power in both governmental and non-governmental settings.

At the *diktyo*, administrative infrastructure consisted of shelves, partitions, desks, trollies, bags and boxes, as well as the cards, lists, and records used to organise distribution. Latent in the routines of collecting, storing, checking and giving, were the ethical assumptions according to which these distributions were managed. Fairness was chief among the concerns of volunteers as they tried to enact solidarity. Lists, records and standardised donations were employed as a tool to track fairness. Egalitarian ethics were thus inscribed in the form of documents: the lists produced to track the distribution of tomatoes, the ring binders full of tracking donation history or the cards beneficiaries brought to exchange for food. Producing documents was essential to administering solidarity fairly.

Documenting Subjects

Inside the three ring binders kept at the desk were files pertaining to each of the beneficiaries who were '*γραμμένοι* – signed-up' to the *diktyo*. Each file contained a history in which donations were tracked: notes, explanations of any irregularities, as well as copies of the ID, unemployment cards, and tax statements used as proof of income. Each time a donation was made the records were updated. Individual

documents became invalid as the tax year progressed or employment status, or changed as families expanded and contracted, so that files necessitated repeated maintenance. If a beneficiary collected food on the wrong day, this had to be recorded so that other volunteers understood what had happened. Administration was always undertaken by two volunteers. The first completed the core of the paperwork, and the second assisted with general matters, but also produced a separate tally of how many donations were made each day: records generated records.

Hull states that, 'a file is a technology for materially enacting an authoritative decision' (2012a: 127). Documents, then, can be considered literally as bureaucratic objects (Hull 2012b: 6). Elsewhere in his ethnography on the Pakistan urban bureaucracy, Hull goes on to suggest that the manipulation and circulation of files forms a discourse: it is the medium by which the state thinks and acts (2012b: 11). But as with language, the medium of discourse matters. Navaro-Yashin (2007) therefore highlights the affective qualities of documents. She describes how letters generated anxiety not because of the messages they contained but as they were received as physical threats by recipients (2007: 83). In Tanzania, papers documenting the claims of refugees to asylum not only made trauma legible but reworked it into new tensions as they struggled to access asylum (Thomson 2007: 195-198). Such anxieties were ultimately one-sided, as asylum claims were swallowed up by 'the black box' of bureaucracy, which was not transparent even to bureaucrats themselves (Thomson 2007: 200). How documents diffuse authorship, and thereby, responsibility is here reminiscent of Gupta's claim that bureaucracy produces structural violence through arbitrariness. Meanwhile, Pérez's ethnography of the 'archaeological' layering of documents shows how they actually became the medium through which agency was exerted: 'bureaucrats and experts working within Bogota's planning regimes further their interests precisely by appealing

to the agency and obduracy of legal infrastructures' (Pérez 2016: 217). Claims tied to documents were not hidden metaphorically but literally.

In these examples, documents, and the lack thereof, variously generate certainties and uncertainties as they were used to define the boundary between who is included and excluded. The boundary they imply, however, is not drawn geographically but rather as, 'a line drawn internally' (Mitchell 1999: 175). This line can not only be found in institutions of governance but in bodies themselves as affect, trauma, and belonging. Like the letters and asylum applications described above, work cards (Mathur 2016: 64, 94) and identity papers (Tawil-Souri 2012: 160) are treated reverently because of they way they embody hopes for inclusion. For the undocumented, uncertainties of belonging sometimes compel people to produce their own documentation. Alexandrakis (2016: 41) captures these anxieties when he recounts the struggle of Amina, an undocumented migrant in Greece, to secure birth certificates for her son[38]:

> *'Papers became a new point of focus in Amina's life. She began to collect everything — receipts, government forms, bills, etc.—and organised them into folders according to the timeline of her son's birth: one folder contained evidence of her prenatal visits to the doctor; another held evidence of her purchases of baby clothing, diapers and other supplies; still another contained all the papers she received from the hospital; and so forth. For Amina, papers became a powerful site of active labouring, strategizing, imagining and, critically, self-authoring as a Greek mother struggling to prevent the unconscionable violences she now saw as characteristic of the Greek political landscape'.*

Amina, like the asylum seekers in Thompson ethnography, mobilised documents in an attempt to make herself more visible, and so legitimate, in the eyes of the state.

[38] Historically, those borne in Greece of non-Greek descent have not be guaranteed citizenship by the state.

Documents therefore matter not only as the medium of 'administrative control and the construction of subjects, objects, and socialities' (Hull 2012b: 256) but also in terms of the material practices through which these subjectivities are realised. Considering these insights, how did documents generate subjects at the *diktyo*? What was embedded in the cards, lists and records created by the volunteers? Cards that beneficiaries exchanged for food where perhaps the simplest of all the documents used. Small and plain, the only writing visible was the *diktyo's* name and telephone number printed in neat type near the top. Volunteers wrote by hand the date of the next collection as well as any reminders to bring further documentation. As an administrative technique, they served to spread out donations to make them manageable. Beneficiaries might, however, arrive without such cards, stating that they had either been lost or forgotten. On one such occasion, Eugenia scolded a man for not bringing his card. Apologising the man laughed and smiled while telling her that people appreciated the good work that the volunteers did. Sotiris tried to smooth over the situation by telling Eugenia that the man was simply '*άτακτος* – mischievous', a term that carries the connotation of unruliness. Despite her obvious annoyance, Eugenia still offered the man his food along with a new card, insisting that next time he return with it. What this exchange captures are the volunteers' assumptions about orderliness. In fact, cards could be overlooked because they simply referenced the tracking history kept in each file. Cards were thus also reminders, used to encourage beneficiaries to attend the *diktyo* in an orderly fashion. In this sense, they not only organised donations but proper conduct.

Among the other documents the volunteers commonly used, tax statements were collected as a means to determine income and thereby assess need. Along with unemployment cards, the process of documentation established need as something verifiable according to economic measures. At the same time, they had the implicit

effect of linking volunteer's assessments of solidarity with state authority. The volunteers expanded upon this authority with other documents that they had devised among themselves. In one of the drawers beneath the main desk was a single piece of laminated paper. On it was a simple chart formed of two columns. Along the first axis was the number of individuals for any given family and along the second household income. Consulting the chart, any volunteer could quickly calculate how often a beneficiary was entitled to food donations: weekly, bi-weekly, monthly and so on. Latent in the chart were the assumptions that beneficiaries' needs could be standardised, classified and compared. Between the axes that quantified income and household size, were further ethical assumptions concerning appropriate amounts of sustenance or, as the volunteers themselves might describe it, dignity. Paperwork flattened circumstance as personal cases became interchangeable. Records devised to organise distribution had the added effect of transforming ideas about solidarity into acts of calculation.

As much as administration facilitated distribution, it was therefore also a process of classification. Through records and files, beneficiaries were created as subjects that could be acted upon. When asked about their work, the volunteers would state proudly that they supported 650 families in the neighbourhood. The basis of this claim rested upon administrative work that made the beneficiaries intelligible to the volunteers, with whom they otherwise had relatively little contact. In place of personal accounts their histories were told through the documents that accrued in the files: documents made solidarity legible.

Contrasting this version of solidarity with that practiced by other pre-crisis initiatives highlights the politics that were attached to the use of documentation. In these more radical, loosely formed initiatives, enrolment, eligibility and identity checks were not

present: ‘sociality in these spaces occurred beyond legal requirements and bureaucratic procedures’ (Rozakou 2020: 200). The absence of documents, in fact, expressed a rejection of state authority. In contrast, at the *diktyo,* documents acted as objects of governance that generated beneficiaries as a manageable public. But this was not merely a symbolic production – it was through these objects that subjectivites were generated. Copies of official documents were a physical chain that linked volunteers, beneficiaries and state. Desks, chairs and folders were the recognisable artefacts of bureaucratic authority. Sitting at the desk facing a volunteer, beneficiaries were literally situated as subjects.

Administrative Value

Records and record keeping provided a means of tracking fairness, and mechanism for inscribing the egalitarian ideals of solidarity. I argue that out of this necessity, administration emerged as one of the central tropes through which the volunteers understood the value of their work. On the one hand, this was visibly manifest in the records themselves. On the other, in the volunteers who produced them. So many records required that somebody was responsible for overseeing them. Not only the volume of records but their complexity posed a challenge. Tax statements and unemployment cards, for example, required a tacit knowledge of the workings of the Greek state. Not all the volunteers were up to the task: ‘*πρέπει να έχεις μυαλό* – you have to have brains’. One of the oldest volunteers, Panagia, had worked as an accountant before she retired and so was particularly suited to this role. Despite her competence, she began to complain that the work was too difficult for her. She was worried that she had been making mistakes. By tacit agreement, Alexandra, a much

younger volunteer had been nominated to take her place. Formerly employed as a conservator, Alexandra was calm, smart and personable – an ideal fit for the role.

Nearly all the volunteers who worked administering donations of food were women. In part, this reflected the ratio of women to men, approximately 2:1. Yet work was usually divided along gendered lines. At the pre-summerly distribution at *Astra*, the women sat at desks inside reviewing cases and issuing tickets. Both myself and Giorgos had been stationed at the doors to manage the entry of people into the building. The other men had also worked outside, unloading the pallets of food sacks and handing them out to people. Later, when the leftover food had to be unloaded into the *diktyo* itself, we formed a human chain passing sacks of food from the truck outside into the back. Initially, Ereni had been helping but quickly excused herself saying she had become tired: '*λόγω που δεν είμαι άνδρας* – because I'm not a man'. Another volunteer, Vasiliki, remained in the line, however, insisting that she didn't need any help despite repeated protestations from the men. Vasiliki brushed off these comments and continued to help pass the sacks, ignoring their expectations about how her capabilities.

Recent work echoes how solidarity variously draws upon and refashions expectations, particularly about gender. Both Bonanno (2019) and Douzina-Bakalaki (2017: 8-11) describe how solidarity was aligned with expectations about social reproduction in which women were understood to be custodians of the household. Feeding and caring for the community became a natural extension of traditional gender roles in which men were associated with the public sphere and women with private, home life (Rosaldo 1974). '*Ο πρόεδρος μας* – our president' as the other volunteers sometimes jokingly called him was a man. Nikos was the outer face of the *diktyo*, representing the group to other solidarity initiatives and coordinating with them. He was responsible for securing

large donations of food from private donors or the local municipality, and also chaired the weekly meetings setting the order of business. The *diktyo* accounts, meanwhile, were managed by Sofia. She collected money raised from bazaars, raffles, celebrations, as well as managing and paying electricity and other bills. Women were not only responsible for administration of food but, when required, its preparation. Discussing how many people they needed to help prepare food to sell at an upcoming festival, the volunteers discussing the matter said plainly: '*χρειαζόμαστε έξι γυναίκες* - we need six women'. Women were also those responsible for decorating, arranging, tidying and cleaning the *diktyo*, as well as preparing stalls to attend solidarity festivals.

As a relatively young, and not very adept, man, my capabilities represented the opposite of those required for the core, administrative work at the *diktyo*, which was untaken almost exclusively by experienced women. Like other men, I was often called upon to move and carry things, under the watchful eye of the women supervising. Bonanno (2019) describes how repeated criticisms of her comportment both as a volunteer and as a younger person represented attempts to fashion her into a proper, moral woman – an act of social reproduction. In my own case, this socialisation was less severe because, at least in this quasi-domestic setting, there were *less* expectations of me as a younger man. As a volunteer, however, my positionality precluded the possibility that anyone would consider me competent for any serious work, irrespective of whether I possessed the required linguistic and social fluency.

By chance, my value as a volunteer did improve after I set about helping one of the volunteers with a personal problem. Sotiris had worked overseas for many years and built up a foreign state pension. However, after having some problems receiving the payments, he asked me to look into the matter. As a native English speaker, he

suggested it would be easier for me to navigate a foreign bureaucracy. Although it began as a simple fact-finding mission, the matter quickly took on more complex dimensions as we tried to understand the nature of the problem and how to resolve it. Both at the *diktyo* and at cafes, we met and discussed the issue. Reviewing various websites, I began familiarising myself with the benefits system of a foreign country, drafting letters and filling out application forms. The research culminated in a series of phone calls to the relevant pension authority, in which I explained Sotiris' situation and attempted to resolve his problem. During the final of these calls, Sotiris was listening in with headphones so that he could hear the details for himself. Afterwards he was impressed with my ability to navigate the bureaucracy and the various operators with whom I had spoken. The fact that I had demonstrated '*μυαλό* – brains' had bearing on my status shortly afterwards at one of the weekly meetings. The volunteers were short of people to help at the biweekly supermarket collections, and I offered to participate. Sofia, the same woman who managed the *diktyo* accounts, responded bluntly: '*μα τι θα κάνει;* – what will he do?'. Sotiris defended me, insisting I was capable of the task. We would pair up together, he told them. Proving myself capable of navigating bureaucracy had improved my estimation as a volunteer.

Anyone could sort through clothes, assemble food packages or clean, but only some of the volunteers were perceived as capable of navigating the complexities of administration. In this respect, administration formed a discreet hierarchy that distinguished valuable from non-valuable work. This distinction could be read in how space was ordered at the weekly meetings. In keeping with their egalitarian ethos, the volunteers sat in a loosely formed circle. If someone disrupted the circle by sitting in the centre, this provoked comments from the others. Solidarity was open and participatory and these ideals were enforced through jokes and light-hearted complaints. The desks at

which the food distribution was administered formed a part of this circle. Some people sat behind the desks, others in front and others adjacent to it. Clustering of people around the desks happened despite the fact that there was always space elsewhere in the circle. When they arrived, some of the volunteers always gravitated towards the desk, even taking chairs from the other side of the room and moving them to sit there. These volunteers were uniformly those charged with the administering the food distribution and who would normally be sat there during their shift. They also happened to be the most vocal in meetings, dominating the discussion with their comments and suggestions. Just as the volunteers signalled to the beneficiaries, the desks were a physical manifestation of administrative authority to the other volunteers. If solidarity was represented by circle of volunteers, the desks were its focus.

Not all the volunteers attended weekly meetings. Of the attendees, the majority were middle class professionals. Many were retired with professions that included: accountants, psychologists, journalists, small business owners, housewives, and teachers. Some had children who worked abroad as doctors or lawyers, while others had remained in Greece, for example, employed at a bank. It was these volunteers who performed the key roles at the *diktyo* and held responsibility for the food distributions. Collecting food at supermarkets or packaging food in the back were tasks sometimes performed by these volunteers when necessary but also by other, casual volunteers who, aside from a few exceptions, did not attend meetings. Sorting clothes, however, was work rarely performed by the core volunteers, and was instead undertaken almost exclusively by casual ones. The majority of such casual volunteers were ‘Albanians’. This appellation takes some deciphering as not all people born in Greece have automatically acquired Greek citizenship. In any case, a second-generation Albanian living in Greece might have Greek nationality but this is not always considered

equivalent to ‘being Greek’. Almost half of the beneficiaries subscribed to the *diktyo* were Albanian. If it was the casual, Albanian volunteers who cleaned the *diktyo,* it was one of the core volunteers who was responsible for organising the weekly roster of cleaning shifts. Expectations concerning the household had been transplanted into the solidarity context: during the economic boom of the 1990s, it had become common for Greek housewives to hire Albanian women as maids and cleaners.

In the eyes of the core volunteers, like the Albanians working there, I did not possess the social fluency to be considered a completely useful volunteer. Certainly, neither they nor I could be tasked with the work of administration. If both gender and ethnic affiliation were drawn into this estimation of aptitude, a further qualifier overlapped with these: the correct use of language. For Ereni, it was particularly frustrating when beneficiaries left second-hand clothes on the table in a mess, and she complained about it frequently. Used to these comments, the women generally ignored Ereni. On one occasion, she was so infuriated by their apparent indifference that she confronted them, asking: ‘*μιλάτε ελληνικά*; – do you even speak Greek?’.

Living in Greece as first or second-generation immigrants, the people whom she had addressed, of course, did speak Greek. With this comment, Ereni aligned civility with competence in the Greek language. In the context of Greece’s intense ethno-nationalism, of which Greek represents the keystone, Ereni’s statement picked upon tensions of class and ethnicity, alleging that their improper comportment was associated with a deficient knowledge of Greek. Similar assumptions surfaced in other encounters in which Greek was used ‘improperly’. Pantelis, a new volunteer, had been recruited to help with the distribution of some apples. He assisted Georgia, one of the most experienced volunteers who was managing the list while he bagged-up the apples and handed them out. As they worked, one of the beneficiaries began to unpack some her

apples onto the table that both he and Georgia were using. Pantelis began to rebuke her for taking up the space that they had been using. Ereni, the same volunteer, who had shouted at the women around the clothes table, approached him and took him to one side. '*Εδώ μιλάμε όμορφα* – we speak politely here', she told him. Returning to the other volunteers she commented to them in a quiet voice, '*κάνει λες κι είναι απο χωριό!* – he speaks like a villager!'.[39]

Counting and Accountability

If administration was rooted in a desire for fairness and equality it ultimately became critical to the production of value. In principle, it was mere apparatus: a neutral means of organisation and distribution. In practice, administration was enmeshed in webs of identity, power and rights whereby it was conflated with expectations attached to gender, class, ethnicity and nationality. The ideal administrator was, in fact, an older, middle-class Greek (speaking) woman. Administration thus set terms not only on what kind of work was valuable but also what kinds of *people* had value. Just as it ascribed worth to people and different kinds of work, administration was also used to define the value of things. Not all items collected by volunteers were regarded equally. Clothes were abundant, donated by people in the neighbourhood. Set out on tables, no volunteer monitored them, so that beneficiaries were able to take as many as they liked. Bread was accounted for only roughly. With a quick glance, the volunteers would estimate how much they had been given each day and so how much they were able to give to each person. Food bags, meanwhile, were accounted for carefully, their allocation to beneficiaries scrutinised and portioned relative to income. Donations of goods such as chicken, meat, cheese, olives and fruit were also carefully managed, sometimes

[39] Not metropolitan therefore not well-mannered.

allocated using a separate system of records to ensure all beneficiaries received an equitable share. But most painstakingly accounted of all was oil. At the end of each day, the two volunteers responsible for giving out food bags compared accounts to check everything was in order, checking how many bottles of oil had been given away relative to these records.

One afternoon, the figures did not add up and the volunteers proceeded to check and recheck the records. Increasingly frustrated by the disparity, one of them began counting the empty spaces in the boxes in which the oil was kept, trying to determine how many had been taken out that day. Still the accounts would not tally. Next, they resorted to counting how many bottles had been given out across the whole week, telephoning other volunteers to confirm these amounts. In the end, after half an hour of checking, counting and calculating, the problem was finally resolved. At the time, I was perplexed by such care and concern for a missing bottle of oil that could be easily replaced. Price was certainly an issue but only because it meant that oil was scarce. Where clothes and bread were relatively abundant, oil was more difficult to replace and must be donated or bought with money gathered at fundraising events. More important was the fact that the missing bottle represented a threat to the reputation of the volunteers as capable workers and, to an extent, the system of accounting itself. Behind this was also a latent concern that someone, either volunteer or beneficiary, had taken the oil. It was not only that the accounts did not add up, but the fact that a bottle was missing that provoked such a strong reaction among the volunteers. In this place of solidarity, rights to collective resources were ambiguous and it would be easy for someone to take a bottle unnoticed. Like rules, accounting worked as an index of trust, bounding access to resources. Accounting techniques were therefore applied more carefully to those items deemed of

greater value. Yet in a literal sense it was the act of counting itself that delineated what was valuable and what was not.

The Social Production of Indifference

In the context of solidarity where the use of money was strictly prescribed, it was the act of accounting that determined items of value. Worth was determined through administrative procedures: the ability to administrate distinguished valuable from non-valuable work, and less capable volunteers from capable ones. In this manner, administration was used to set boundaries not only between people and things but also between *kinds* of people. Administration was thus the means of ordering solidarity, in terms of both physical and moral orders.

Setting up these boundaries had the effect of excluding some from claims to solidarity. One morning, a man entered the *diktyo*, approaching the main desk at which two volunteers sat working. He inquired casually if they could offer him any help. Leaving their work, they began explaining the process whereby he could be signed-up. As they were talking, he interrupted them and began relating the details of his personal situation. He had moved from Albania three years earlier and was unfamiliar with how things were done in Greece. His plea was personal and emotional as he started to recount the events of his life that had led him to ask for their help. But the volunteers stopped him: *'don't tell us, it's not our business, you need to go to KEP*[40] *and tell them'*. They informed him that first he had to be issued with an unemployment card at KEP and bring this, along with tax statements and proof of address, on a Wednesday evening.

[40] '*Κέντρα Εξυπηρέτησης Πολιτών* – Citizen's Service Centres'. A government body that operates as one of the primary administrative interfaces of the state.

Again, he tried to describe his circumstances but the volunteers only reiterated what they had already told him and sent him away. What stands out in this encounter is how the man's narrative was abstracted through administrative procedures. In a very real sense, his pleas and attempts to elicit compassion were of 'no account'. Help at the *diktyo* was not, officially, offered on a subjective basis but as an impartial right. Despite an aspiration to universal claims of solidarity, in this setting, fairness and impartiality actually worked to depersonalise the man and his attempt to access it. For the volunteers, help became a bureaucratic matter to be resolved in bureaucratic terms. For Albanians, the largest non-ethnic Greek population living in Greece, discrimination was not uncommon. A minority of beneficiaries openly objected that the volunteers helped Albanian residents, implying solidarity was a privilege to be shared among ethnic Greeks only. That such complaints were dismissed by the volunteers, who insisted that the *diktyo* was open to all people irrespective of background, was actually a departure from the institutionalised discrimination non-ethnic Greeks have often experienced in Greece. In light of this, as I sat behind the desk with the volunteers as the scene unfolded, I was confused by their apparent indifference. Although the man's right to help was guaranteed by the volunteers' systematic, impartial approach, his ability to access that help ultimately depended upon how well he was able to conform with the procedures they had set out. Already at a disadvantage as a foreigner, and so unfamiliar with state practices, his difficulty was further compounded by speaking Greek as a second language. Nor did it appear that he was fluent in the 'administrative' language used by the volunteers.

Administration, in fact, formed an implicit barrier to help as much as it was the means of accessing it. Like the desks, doors and partitions that bounded access to food, the same was true of the administrative protocols and regulations according to which it was

distributed. Documents were the most obvious incarnation of this. Proof of address was necessary because only those living within the limits of the neighbourhood were entitled to support. Help was thus mediated by a further criterion, in this case a municipal boundary set by the state that shaped who could and who could not access the *diktyo*. Necessarily, the homeless and undocumented were excluded absolutely by this requirement. People living outside the limits of the neighbourhood were directed to similar solidarity groups operating elsewhere. Although it was rationalised that such people could be equally helped at other organisations, in reality these were often considerably smaller and less well equipped, if they operated at all. Requirements for tax statements and unemployment cards also excluded the undocumented living unofficially in the neighbourhood. If an impartial approach to administering solidarity expanded rights for some, it also implicitly bounded the kind of help on offer behind technical barriers, thereby excluding others.

Solidarity as political philosophy draws energy from the appeal to untie people across difference. Other ethnographies of solidarity have validated this claim by reporting how solidarity initiatives look beyond the ethnic affiliations that are often tightly binding in Greece. Cabot offers the example of Petros, an undocumented man of Albanian origin who was involved in and received help from solidarity initiatives, using his inclusion to argue that: 'solidarity is not grounded on one's relationship to the state (or lack thereof), and also pushes beyond the selectively inclusive ties of kinship, hospitality and nationhood' (2016: 160). My ethnographic account diverges from this assertion, showing how gender and ethnicity are deeply woven into the procedures of administering solidarity. In fact, Petros closely resembles the Albanian man described in the ethnographic vignette above. In this case, what explains the difference in their respective success in accessing solidarity? In answer to this question, I argue that the

volunteers' indifference did not stem from a lack of solidarity but precisely the opposite. By ignoring the personal account of the man's suffering the volunteers rebuffed claims that they believed would draw them into a web of obligations and favours. Strictness and adherence to rules was an egalitarian retort to a corruption and clientelist state. Administration served this agenda because it created distance between volunteers and beneficiaries. In the case of the Albanian man, it neutralised the personal, and latently political, elements of his claims. Through indifference the volunteers expressed their commitment to impartiality, an impartiality perfectly embodied by administrative techniques.

As it drew upon the artefacts of bureaucracy, solidarity at the *diktyo* further operated as a simulacrum of the state. Returning to the idea that the volunteers acted as vectors for state work, documents were a visible manifestation of this rendering of the state's authority. The volunteer's records were a re-inscription of the state's official documents: ID and unemployment cards transferred and copied, literally, to the volunteers' own files. If the idea that the state makes its subjects legible through documents has been widely accepted following the legacy of Foucault, Das insists that this legibility runs both ways. Referring to the example of people living in shanty towns precariously placed on the fringes of Delhi, Das argues that documents were an important medium whereby people insisted on their citizenship (2011: 325). Water and electricity bills acted as proof of life and belonging. Ration cards allowed people not only to be recognised by the state but to lay claims upon it. In each case, Das argues that documents indexed how moral claims to life trumped legal claims of possession and property (2011: 326). At the *diktyo*, the use of documents allowed the volunteers to act as proxies of the state. Yet to add to Das' point, I argue that documents not only made claims to solidarity legible but allowed the volunteers to order them according to an

administrative language of belonging that both volunteers and beneficiaries found intelligible. Yet documents did not merely manifest state authority and claims to belonging, but formed the basis for an adjacent set of claims made by the volunteers about the nature of citizenship that occupied precisely the extra-legal moral space that Das describes, with the key difference that documents at the *diktyo* organised claims conducted on behalf of others and not the volunteers themselves.

Material Care and Anti-politics

Broadly speaking, the political is that which is contestable. It invokes a vision of the world as it might be brought about, usually at the sake of vested interests. In contrast, administration is seemingly benign, a matter of routines and the arrangement of that which already existed and agreed upon. Yet if the operation of power is more obviously displayed in the case of the former, anthropology works to reveal what is interesting and powerful about the mundane. In fact, I argue that power lies precisely at the interplay between the political and the mundane, that is, in the capacity to insist on what is and what might be.

If the central aim of the Solidarity Movement was to advance social justice, what this meant in practice for volunteers was sorting through donations, folding piles of clothes, managing food stores, preparing food parcels, organising their allocation, and, by consequence, creating, checking, and rechecking records. Radical action, in fact, was constituted through mundane routines of collecting, storing, and distributing clothes and food. At the same time, disillusionment with the unfair state and self-interested markets compelled the volunteers to employ impartial administrative techniques to distribute solidarity, thereby placing it beyond the realm of politics and self-interested action. Doing so was an act of distancing whereby the volunteers tried not to impose

obligations or invite dependencies in their relationships with the beneficiaries. However, although administration appealed to the volunteers as the embodiment of impartiality, this elided the ethical and moral sentiments latent in techniques of distribution as bureaucratic discrimination was displaced by bureaucratic indifference. Returning to Ferguson's account of development as anti-politics (1990), I argue that solidarity unfolded in a similar fashion. Despite the overt political message of the Solidarity Movement, solidarity at the *diktyo* had the effect of creating new forms of bureaucratic power and depoliticising questions about who had right to allocate resources. The apparent banality of administration obscured the fact that it was the volunteers who set limits to, and arbitrated, solidarity. Routines, procedures, records, files and desks, made it difficult to contest that which could not be seen: an ethical infrastructure, at once pervasive but hard to distinguish.

Reflecting on this, it is worth noting that while austerity has been critiqued as a form of governing beyond the state unaccountable to the demos (Swynedouw 2018), solidarity represented a concurrent form of governance that took place at a distance from the state. As the discourse of solidarity shifted from overtly political to one of practical action, 'what was sidestepped in the process was the political question of who ultimately defines the common good' (Papailias 2019: 128). In the case of this ethnography, it was the volunteers who prescribed the form and limits of solidarity on the basis of a *moral* assertion: their capacity to administer the public good as neutral agents. Despite their attempts to diminish and obscure the power that accrued to them, the volunteers remained gatekeepers of the common good as they made decisions on behalf of other people.

Conclusion

Approaching solidarity as a material practice, I address not simply what solidarity *is* but what it is that solidarity *does*. Considering the juxtaposition of the mundane and political, Graeber writes that, 'radical projects tend to founder, or at least become endlessly difficult, the moment they enter the world of hard, heavy objects...they are surrounded by endless government regulation' (2015: 85). In typical fashion, Graeber manages to polarise the issue but I would like to consider a more nuanced view of his assertion that makes a distinction between regulation and governance. Regulation, of bodies and objects, is another way of speaking of biopolitics. At the *diktyo* it is striking how biopolitics as governance emerges out of the control, distribution and regulation of objects, and thereby of beneficiaries themselves. In this respect, Graeber's assertion seems to hold but given that the state was only distantly present I would like to qualify it further: it is not that the state governs simply through regulation itself but as it captures, and sometimes monopolises, the power which emerges through the control of objects. Ethnographies of infrastructure and administration therefore coincide when they describe how habits shape access, flows, and inclusion. Although it is easy to overlook, food was at the centre of the workings at the *diktyo*. Who had access to food, and according to what rationale, were assumptions embedded in the habits by which it accumulated, was safeguarded, and given away. Disdain for the political (Rozakou 2017: 199) at once obscured and emphasised the inherent power of such habits. Solidarity, as a space in which politics was everywhere and nowhere, generated a distinctly material form of care (Leitizia Bonanno, personal communication, February 4, 2021) that provided dignity but at its bare foundations (Agamben 1998): food, clothes, and support for the body.

Closing this chapter, I offer some unlikely comparisons. Austerity principles work according to the assumption that the economy, not politics, will maximise the public good. The Solidarity Movement ostensibly makes the opposite claim: that the politicisation of the economy will most benefit people. However, as it was worked out on a day-to-day basis, solidarity also meant denying the political in acts of distribution. According to classical economics, ethics are inherent in distribution as a matter of routine and technique, naturalised as impartial market forces. Distribution at the *diktyo* was also a matter of routine, situated in a field beyond the political much as happens in humanitarian and development work. Solidarity thus coincided with the logic of neoliberalism in surprising ways.

As well as this resemblance, the *diktyo* also resembled the state that it sometimes contested. Both operated according to a bureaucratic ethos, administering rights to their participants. If the rationale for inclusion in the state and the solidarity project differed according to opposing visions of inclusivity, the fact of administration was at the heart of the production of political and moral subjects. In my fieldwork, I found it curious that the very people who were trying to resist austerity told me repeatedly that I needed to be more '*αυστηρός* – strict, austere'. Even if the word '*λιτότητα* – austerity' implies thrift and frugality and not severity as it does in English, I want to use this play on words to think about the overlap between the economy, the state and social as it unfolded in post-debt crisis Athens. Governmentality was enacted at the *diktyo* even though the state was a remote presence. If the volunteers saw themselves as the opponents of austerity policy their habits echoed the sentiments of order, efficiency and self-discipline it embodied. Although state, market and the third sector are often treated separately, the ethnography presented here underlines how these imaginaries mutually inform one another. Of these resemblances, perhaps the most crucial one was in the denial of politics itself. What lay beyond this apolitical horizon is the question to which I now turn.

5 – ‘This Is Not Charity!’

Introduction

‘*Αυτό δέν είναι φιλανθρωπία* – This is not charity!’: this was the response Georgia gave me when I asked her to define solidarity. In this chapter, I unpack this often-repeated statement and examine the kind of giving undertaken by the volunteers. In keeping with my aim to examine not what solidarity is but what solidarity does, I follow Malkki who argues that, ‘it may be more productive to think in terms of structural (even Durkheimian) forms of solidarity, and to attend to the significance of professional dispositions and forms of habitus’ (2015: 25). Building on my previous argument that the volunteers insulated themselves from demands for help through physical and administrative barriers, here I address how they worked to neutralise the dangers of giving through their comportment as impartial agents of solidarity. Neutrality in this context had the effect of making solidarity’s ethical dispositions opaque and hard to distinguish. Reflecting on this, I consider how practicality diffused the ethical tensions of volunteering. As the volunteers framed their work in technical rather than ethical terms, they elided moral judgements that they made as arbiters of solidarity. To begin, I describe the weekly meetings at which the volunteers gathered to discuss the ongoing organisation of solidarity. Apparently mundane, upon closer inspection these were eventful sites that allowed the volunteers to define themselves, and others, as the moral subjects of solidarity.

Monday 31st Oct 2017

Each week, the volunteers gathered in the early evening for an hour or more. Meetings were scheduled to begin at a seven in the evening but rarely did so. Instead, people arrived in a steady stream, both well before and after this time. Those who had arrived early sat and chatted about matters related to the *diktyo* or took the opportunity to complete small tasks related to their regular shifts. When people arrived, they took one of the plastic garden-chairs that had been stacked in the corner and placed them next to those already set out to form a loosely formed circle. Chairs were moved and rearranged as more people arrived. When little space remained, people sometimes tried to sit inside the circle, provoking complaints from others sitting around them. A huddle of people typically gathered around the main administrative desk. With a few chairs already stationed there, it formed a natural hub during meetings. During the meeting, if necessary, they could easily access records or make use of the computer to check information online. Otherwise, the only other person sat at a desk was Nikolas. He was, informally, chair of the meeting, and raised issues that the other volunteers had brought to his attention throughout the week.

At this particular meeting, Nikolas began by raising his voice to cut through the various conversations taking place around him. Supported by others who called for the meeting to start, the murmur of voices eventually dissipated. The first topic addressed was the preparations for an upcoming '*γιορτή* – celebration' in the neighbourhood. The volunteers would attend the event, setting up a stall to cook and sell souvlaki. The questions that needed resolving were as follows: how many people were needed to help prepare the souvlaki; at what time they needed to begin cooking; where should they buy the meat; and so on. In response, people offered suggestions or opinions that were variously rejected or accepted until there was no further objections or modifications to be made. As these points were considered, people continued to arrive, one or two

complaining that the meeting has already begun. Their entry disrupted the ongoing debate, sparking greetings and questions directed to those entering. The topic at hand fragmented further as people began separate conversations so that in the jumble of talk, the original thread of discussion was lost. At the table, Nikolas waited patiently until someone announced above the blanket of voices, '*πάμε παρακάτω* – come on, let's get on with it!'. The next item raised was the recent bazaar. Nikolas informed the group that the total amount raised was approximately 800 euros. Next, he asked various people to report on how the collections outside supermarkets had gone the previous weekend. In turn, this prompted the volunteers to ask how much flour and oil were remaining and whether they needed to purchase more.

Always, the discussion verged on fragmenting, as individual comments sparked hushed dialogues that gradually became more audible, each competing to be heard. Cries of 'ssshh!' punctuated the proceedings and those speaking faced off interruptions with comments such as, '*περίμενε, μιλάω τώρα* – wait, I am speaking now'. Eventually, new topics emerged from those that preceded them. A radical charity group had asked whether the volunteers could offer them any help to support refugees. Eugenia commented sceptically, '*να τους έχουμε όλους εδώ μ'έσα* – to have them all inside here?', implying that the *diktyo* did not have the capacity to support the refugees. Babis countered that if they were living in the neighbourhood then the volunteers should help them as they would help anyone else. These conflicting opinion sparked various related comments until Fotini finally announced loudly, '*σωστά το είπε* – he said it right', settling the issue by seconding Babis' position.

Next, they spoke about another group who, conversely, had offered its help to the *diktyo*. The organisation, '*Μπορούμε* – We Can', collected unused food from restaurants and farmers markets and distributed it to other organisations able to make use of it. Some of the volunteers listening confused it with separate campaign, '*Όλοι Μαζί*

Μπορούμε – Together We Can', run by the *SKAI* TV network. Nikolas attempted to clarify the issue, *'όχι 'Μαζί Μπορούμε', σκέτο 'Μπορούμε'* – not 'Together We Can', just 'We Can'. Despite this, the distinction was still not clear, leading Fotini to try again: '*αυτοί δεν είναι ούτε ΣΚΑΙ, ούτε* εκκλησία – they aren't SKAI or the Church'. Anna asked, in that case, what kind of group it was. Fotini answered, speculating that it was a voluntary group. Turning to the computer to consult the associated Facebook page, she read aloud the group's self-description, finally concluding: '*πάντως κάνουν δουλεία* – in any case, they do work'. Aligning their voluntary work with activity, Fotini orientated themselves in the landscape of solidarity claims and contrasted it with initiatives that they perceived operated according to charitable principles. This was why the details of their discussion mattered because the volunteers at the *diktyo* were not prepared to co-operate with groups run by the church or a right-wing broadcaster. However, *Μπορούμε* was acceptable to them as a voluntary group somewhat resembling their own.

The fine points of this topic encouraged small conservations to begin, as people compared knowledge of the issue. Soon, everyone was talking among themselves until Fotini asked '*τι λέμε τώρα* – what are we talking about now?', to which Eugenia responded, '*τίποτα, άλλο* – nothing, next'. Someone asked if the weekly shifts had been arranged. While this was settled, a few people started to talk about the case of a man who came into the *diktyo* the week before and had made a big scene. Eugenia asked whether he had finally brought his tax statement but no-one was sure. '*Καλά, ας'το* – fine, leave it then', she concluded. In the background, Fotini and Nikolas continued to talk about the supermarket shifts. Meanwhile, Fotini began to phone some of the other volunteers who were not present at the meeting to ask if they could help with the upcoming collection that Friday and Saturday. Her calls overlapped with negotiations over the next few topics: what was happening with the social supermarket in the

neighbourhood, and the preparation of items for sale at the next Christmas bazaar. Following this, they debated whether it would be feasible to collect and distribute some larger household items that they have been offered as donations: blankets, mattresses, carpets. Eirni speculated that it would be very difficult to move such items while others asked where they could be stored. The issue remained unresolved and the discussion moved on with prompts such as, '*παιδιά, λέμε κάτι άλλο;* – guys, shall we start something else?', or '*τελειώσαμε* – have we finished?'. Finally, a few people began chatting about the homemade jam that had been made in preparation for the next bazaar. They asked what kind of jam it was, how much had been made, and where it is being stored. Amid the associated comments and questions, the meeting finally wore itself out. Without any obvious signal, the volunteers got up and stacked away the chairs on which they had been seated. A few people left abruptly, announcing their farewells as they hurried away. Others remained engaged in conversation or discussing the details of the tasks for which they had volunteered to take responsibility for during the meeting. When only a few people remained, it was left to them to switch off the lights and lock the door after they left.

Meetings: mundane matters?

As in the previous chapter, I contest the idea that volunteering was primarily a practical affair. Meetings are emblematic of this challenge, often reported by their participants as mundane and tedious events. In contrast, ethnographic accounts have attempted to look beyond these claims to instead stress how meetings function as collective imaginaries (Abram 2017: 27). As sites for future action, meetings depend upon conjuring external referents to the world, so distracting attention from the form and significance of meetings themselves (Brown et al 2017: 13). That is to say, meetings are always about something else, so that the practice of meetings appears to matter less than that which they reference. At the *diktyo's* weekly meetings, this was recognisable: the most

obvious purpose of meetings was to coordinate the group's activities. Thought of another way, meetings were a way in which the group acted upon the world. Yet these were not the orderly, abstract, or formal meetings of idealised Weberian bureaucracy, as represented in some ethnographic accounts (Evans 2017: 126). Rather, the volunteers' meetings were informal and loosely formed. Alongside this dissonance, is the apparent problematic that meetings are reflexively challenging (Brown et al 2017: 14), as an activity with which anthropologists are familiar with 'at home'. The idea that anthropologists find meetings challenging ethnographic objects and their idealisation as bureaucratic edifices reflects a tendency to collapse the potential meaning of meetings. Yet it is clear that meetings held by the same people, within the same organisation, can bear significantly different implications (Mathur 2016: 123).

An example of this can be found in Lamp's account (2017) of the boundary between formal and informal meetings at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Lamp describes how formal meetings were loci for ceremonial statements on trade agreements, whereas informal meetings were a forum in which actual negotiations about trade conditions took place. Much like Mathur's assertion that meetings made the developmental state in India *visible (*2016: 188*),* transparency was also an issue at the WTO. Informal meetings were seen as problematic because they could not be scrutinised, and therefore were not accountable, despite the fact that it was this very privacy and uncertainty that made negotiations possible. In trying to understand the volunteers' own meetings, these themes of visibility, accountability and degrees of formality are especially pertinent, and the frame I adopt to interpret their operation and significance.

The apparent lack of 'order' at the volunteers' meetings was especially remarkable given the considerable efforts they made to impose procedure and discipline at the *diktyo* in other contexts, both on others (Chapter 4) and on themselves. Lamp's ethnography sheds light on this though distinctions he makes between different types of

meeting: formal WTO meetings lacked ‘content’ because they were primarily directed to people outside the organisation (Lamp 2017: 68). Agendas and the information associated with them were pre-circulated and any irregular discussion proscribed (Lamp 2017: 67). In effect, these meetings were presentations of the end result of the unofficial, informal meetings where agreements were actually reached. Using this to reflect on the volunteer’s meetings, the tension between public and private takes some unpicking.

Meetings at the *diktyo* were ostensibly an open forum that anyone might attend. Contrary to Lamp’s WTO formal meetings, it was informality that indexed transparency and openness as anyone had the right to speak and be heard. Statements were judged, openly, as it were, by the other volunteers as they moved towards a consensus on how to act. Disordered, informal meetings thus contrasted with the order and discipline according to which the *diktyo* was operated at other times. Whereas beneficiaries were encouraged to arrive at specific times, wait their turn, and not shout, at meetings the volunteers arrived at irregular times and talked loudly over one another. During the day, the space inside the *diktyo* was regimented but was flexible in the evening. In this duality of equality, the informal, relaxed (dis)order at meetings enshrined egalitarianism, just as imposed order ensured it in the daily rhythm of work. In this manner, informality demarcated inclusion within the group, order and formality being reserved for those perceived beyond it.

Meetings therefore communicated principles that identified the volunteers and beneficiaries variously as participants of solidarity. The fact that the volunteers could dispense with order among themselves further speaks about the meaning of solidarity and how it enjoined them to a broader sense of moral community. As Jiménez and Estalella rightly point out (2017: 112), meetings reflect unique genealogies. In their ethnographic case, the occupation of central piazzas in Madrid spawned public meetings

elsewhere in the city that unfolded in the period between 2011 and 2012. Manuals devised during the central occupations became reference works that shaped how subsequent meetings were formed (Jiménez & Estalella 2017: 113). At this time, similar occupations were taking place in Athens, often in dialogue with those happening in Spain. Mass protests at Syndagma square, the political heart of the city, led to a similar occupation. Eventually these occupations dissipated into what became the Solidarity Movement, as protest transformed into practice. It was the legacy of these political forms that were latent in the weekly meetings held by the volunteers.

Consensus was a critical part of this legacy. Nobody was, officially, in charge with the aim that decisions were made collectively. Even if this loose format was sometimes frustrating for the volunteers, who were keen to get things done, it was never questioned. Comments might be jumbled but all could be voiced. What was not apparently transmitted from the earlier meetings at Syndagma, however, was any overt political consciousness. The volunteers did not engage in reflexive discussions of their own political situation or speeches to raise political awareness, as so many other ethnographies of solidarity have reported (Margomenou and Papavasiliou 2013: 525, Rakopoulos 2013: 105, Rozakou 2016b: 190, Theodossopoulos 2016: 178, Theodossopoulos & Kirstoglou 2010: 7). Despite the latent political ethic, which dictated their form, the volunteers foregrounded meetings as practical rather than political.

Continuing with the theme of anti-politics raised in the previous chapter, and building on the insights gathered here, I want to challenge the idea that despite this lack of overt political content that meetings were simply mundane affairs. When asked about their purpose, the volunteers stated simply that they served to co-ordinate the group's activities. Towards this end, most of the issues they discussed pertained to the collection and distribution of food. Topics usually included who would attend weekly shifts and

supermarket collections, how much they needed to buy if they had not collected enough food of a certain kind, what jobs needed to be done for an upcoming bazaar. As Yarrow puts it, meetings, 'involve a series of situated practices that are not organised, but *organizing*' (2017: 107, original emphasis). This subtle shift in tense has bearing on understanding meetings at the *diktyo*. To say that at meetings the volunteers organised things does not capture the essence of these events. Although they did organise *things* it would be proper to say that they equally organised *themselves*. The importance of meetings as a site through which the people attending them understood themselves as volunteers, and demonstrated this to others, is belied by the apparent boredom the volunteers expressed while conducting them. Most attendees were keen for the meetings to end as quickly as possible, trying to push the discussion forward with their comments. People arrived abruptly and when meetings had drawn to a close, left in a similar fashion, apparently in a hurry to do other things. In the ethnographic contexts previously cited, the alleged emptiness of meetings served a communicative, ritual function at WTO meetings (Lamp 2017: 68), and tediousness at the public occupations in Madrid was integral to the commentary that this political exhaustion elicited (Jiménez and Estalella 2017: 12). Emptiness or tedium was not arbitrary but an essential element that orientated attendees in the political commentary of protests. In light of this, I argue that the discourse of meetings, and volunteering more generally, as essentially practical served a comparably important role for the volunteers.

Closer examination of how work was distributed at meetings is revealing in this respect. To speak of allocation, in fact, misrepresents these events. With almost no formal roles, it was incumbent on attendees to volunteer for tasks. Responding to issues in the course of a meeting, Nikolas would state what tasks needed to be done. In response, people would offer to take on responsibility for the work, depending upon their capacity. For regular shifts distributing food or collecting donations at supermarkets, it was

sometimes the case that one of the volunteers nominated someone else to take on shifts, especially if the volunteer in question was not attending the meeting that week. But these nominations could be, and often were, refused. Instead, the responsibility for tasks was left to an individual's self-initiative. Meetings, then, were not simply the forum in which work was allocated but where people volunteered to work: they were the place where people *became* volunteers.

If meetings were the place where volunteers formed as moral subjects, they were also the site of fundamentally ethical decisions about the terms of solidarity. The two main topics of discussion that occurred at meetings were the logistics of either collection or distribution. Despite their practical appearance, latent in all these activities were various assumptions about equality, dignity, and ethical judgements about rights and responsibilities. In the donation of regular bags of food, these assumptions and judgements had been systematised. Consensus on how to enact solidarity was thereby transformed from conscious consideration into habit and procedure. Such decisions originated at meetings that were the site where volunteers debated this system of solidarity. Even at meetings, however, such assumptions were dormant and rarely voiced in overtly ethical language. Nevertheless, the ethics of distribution emerged when the volunteers acquired large donations of meat or fruit that were not already proscribed within the regular system of allocation. Ostensibly, the difficulties of these irregular donations were logistical: how to store them and how to give them away. More nuanced questions, however, pointed to the ethical implications of such donations: how much should be given to each person and how to account for the fact people represented different sizes of family. What these irregularities, and the discussion that accompanied them, made visible was the fact that the regular system of donations was premised upon moral sentiments that were otherwise hidden in the process of administering solidarity.

The difference rested in the fact that administration was the decisive expression of ethical decisions concerning distribution that had first taken place at meetings.

Situations

Ethical implications latent in acts of giving also came into view when the regular system of distribution was disturbed by individual complications. '*θέματα* – situations' were problematic cases discussed at meetings when individuals or families in some way transgressed the system of allocation that the volunteers had devised. Frequently, the issue was one of documentation: beneficiaries were either unwilling or unable to provide tax statements or unemployment cards when required. If disputes over documents lead to open confrontation, they were reported to other volunteers at weekly meetings. In part, this was practically motivated, because it was beneficial for the volunteers, who worked on different days, to know the background of such cases. Recounting these interactions contributed to a community of knowledge that the volunteers held collectively about the beneficiaries. However, in what sense the volunteers considered certain individuals problematic warrants deeper consideration as it highlights the tensions elicited by these encounters.

In one such example, a man signed up to the *diktyo* had separated from his wife who was now caring for their child. Since then, some of the volunteers had learned that his wife has filed a restraining order that prohibited him from seeing her. The volunteers agreed this was a problem because, as they reasoned, if the woman had responsibility for care of the child, it was she who should receive the food they donated. Yet as it was her husband who was subscribed to the *diktyo,* and if he had no contact with her, they questioned whether it was right for him to continue to receive donations. Compounding this, was the question whether they should now consider this a one-person or three-person household. The volunteers were unsure what do the next time the man came to

collect his donation, whether to allow him his normal donation, change his allocation, or to cut him off entirely.

As a *situation*, this circumstance was challenging because it could not be easily accommodated by the regular system of allocation. As with many others, the man's case hinged on a change of circumstances. This presented an initial problem for the volunteers: if the man should now be classified as a one-person or three-person family. The second problem was that this technical distinction rested upon uncertain ethical judgements that were not easily resolved. Technically, the man remained entitled to his own, now smaller, donation. When some of the volunteers questioned whether they should no longer support this man with donations, this was in response to his perceived failure as a husband. This case was thus problematic because it tested the limits of solidarity and the volunteers' commitment to impartiality. In the end, they concluded that he should continue to receive donations as a single-person household and would extend an invitation for his wife to be subscribed separately. Relating this case, however, my aim is not to emphasise their final decision as much as the factors that gave rise to it. As they discussed the case, the volunteers' key interest had been in determining whether the man was technically within his rights to solidarity. What the intrusion of personal judgements about the man's conduct served to highlight was the latent ethical judgements of volunteering, and so how impartiality was itself an ethical stance.

Tensions between personal judgements and the ethics of impartiality were especially clear in one *situation* discussed in depth at another meeting. Standing to address the other volunteers, Dafni began to relate a series of events concerning the Iakovou family, who had been signed-up to the *diktyo* for some time. The events she reported had been triggered when a man came to collect a bag on behalf of his wife's father. Dafni had told him that Mr. Iakovou or his wife needed to collect the bag in person, either of

whom also needed to bring their own ID card. Dafni was initially suspicious because Mr. Iakovou had not been to collect his bag recently and wanted to confirm their various household members identity. In response, Mr. Iakovou's son-in-law claimed that his father-in-law was suffering from dementia and so had not been able to collect his food donations personally. Among the volunteers, however, there had been rumours that he had, in fact, died. Trying to clear up the matter, Dafni began to search through all the records for anyone listed under the name of Iakovou. She explained to the other volunteers that she had found three files under the name. The records stated that Mr. and Mrs. Iakovou were separated but the phone numbers given on each record matched, as did the number on the third record belonging to their daughter, Althea Iakovou. Dafni then decided to call the number to find out why three people from the same household were subscribed separately. A younger woman answered the phone and had become angry when Dafni questioned her. In the following argument, Dafni said that she heard an older man and woman shouting expletives in the background, people that she presumed to be Mr. and Mrs. Iakovou. Mimicking the accent of the older man, who apparently did not speak with a native-Greek accent, Dafni performed the conversation in such a way as to make the other volunteers laugh. Finally, she recounted how she told the family that they had made her angry and that, 'you, your father and mother are all deleted from the *diktyo*'. Althea Iakovou had responded by asking, '*ποιος το λέει αυτό;* – who says so?', and Dafni had replied, '*εγώ* – me'.

Next, Dafni told the others how she believed the situation was at that point resolved. In the following week, however, Althea Iakovou had arrived in person to collect a bag of food. When Dafni challenged her about their conversation on the phone, Althea claimed to know nothing about it. Dafni then considered that perhaps two people with the same name had been mixed up in their records. The other volunteers discussed this, concerned that they hadn't been careful when checking the names of the family and

editing the records. The matter was further complicated by the fact that various addresses had been listed in Althea's file. The volunteers began to compare suggestions as to how they could determine whether they had been dealing with the same person. In the exchange, Dafni again imitated the threats that Mr. Iakovou had made, prompting more laughter from those listening. Some claimed that they had seen Mr. Iakovou alive recently and others insisted that he really did have dementia. Then the question was raised concerning who would, formally, tell the Iakovou family that their subscription to the *diktyo* had been deleted. Their collective conclusion was that the Iakovou family had been taking three bags a month even though all of them were living together as one household. The family would no longer be given donations but the volunteers needed to investigate further the case of Althea Iakovou so they could be sure that an unrelated person had not become involved by mistake.

More than a reported series of events, Dafni's telling had woven the details of her encounters with the family into a story. She performed the narrative by detailing the unfolding of her investigation to uncover the truth about the Iakovou family. The reaction from the other volunteers had not been frustration or anger but, rather, amusement. Many had encountered similar situations themselves, although Danfi's experience was more exaggerated than most. Transformed into a narrative, the events mirrored and focused these experiences in the minds of those listening. They were amused by the simultaneous audacity, but ultimate failure, of the members of the Iakovou family to take advantage of the *diktyo*. Humour, as an inversion or distortion of prevailing categories, in this case rested on the fact that the Iakovou family were self-interested and incompetent, the opposite of the ideals to which the volunteers aspired. When Dafni parodied the man's voice that she had heard in the background of the phone-call, she emphasised this inversion. It was identifiable as not-perfectly Greek and her imitation implied that the accent was itself an imitation, humour thereby diffusing

the threats that Mr. Iakovou had made. Retelling these events, Dafni had fabricated a moral story in which she had prevailed through her own initiative and determination. Meetings thus made it possible for those who participated to recognise themselves as volunteers and communicate essential values of volunteering to one another. Meetings did not only organise activities but drew participants together as a moral community, in this example by drawing a contrast with people that they perceived unlike themselves.

If in general the volunteers tried to maintain a polite composure, in this case, Dafni has not been able to maintain impartiality. She had told the family, personally, that they would be unsubscribed from the *diktyo*. What stands out in this case, is how neutrality failed at the limit of solidarity, that is, when that the Iakovou family demonstrated a different set of values to Dafni's own. In the following discussion, however, this judgement had been glossed over and was hardly mentioned. Although they did not speak of it outright, the fact that the family had manipulated the volunteers was likely the basis for cutting off their donations. But this moral judgement, as in the previous example, was overshadowed by the volunteers' attention to technical details. The ultimate problem that Dafni had been trying to resolve was how many members of the family lived together and therefore what was the appropriate donation. Although the details of the case were amusing, the emphasis of the discussion had been sorting out what was, technically, true. In particular, the topic that concerned them most was record-keeping. The volunteers returned to this issue repeatedly, trying to establish why there had been multiple addresses on one record, how three files could have been produced for the same family, and, finally, how two people's records had been confused. More than a moral issue, the volunteers were concerned with the issue as an administrative failure and resolving it in such terms. Yet even if personal judgements were less important than technical details, emotions and self-control still indexed the

border of inclusion within the field of solidarity: exclusion surfacing in a moment of anger.

If the moral sentiments of solidarity were most visible at meetings this is because they were private spaces reserved for volunteers. Such is clear when considered in relation to informal 'meetings' that emerged spontaneously in the course of their work. One afternoon, three volunteers sat at the desk chatting when a pregnant woman arrived to collect her donation. Eirini was handling the donations that day and went about sorting through the woman's file. Occasionally, she posed a question to the woman who replied with short answers paying little attention to the conversation. When Erini offered her the donation, she also handed the woman a bottle of olive oil and suggested that she take some bread. The woman accepted her donation silently, stood up and left. Her absent manner and unkempt appearance prompted the volunteers into a discussion. Euripidis asked how many children the woman had. Eirini replied that she had five: two children with her former husband and three children with her present husband. Babis interjected, '*τι αρρώστια είναι αυτό* – how sick is that'. Together they agreed that she had too many children considering that she no means to support them, especially with another child on the way. But where Euripidis and Babis blamed the woman, Eirini insisted that the fault lay with the respective husbands, whom she believed should have acted more responsibly.

Ethnographies of Greece point to the importance of gossip for collating inclusion within the social community (Du Boulay 1974: 201-229, Georgakopoulo 1995)**.** Bonanno reports how the women with whom she worked tried to shape her into a decent woman through the gossip they recounted to her (Bonanno 2019: 136). Much the same narrative work was at play among the volunteers as they sorted correct from incorrect behaviour through the lens of this encounter. However, the discussion at hand had been discreet and shared only among the volunteers immediately sat around the table. When sat

across from the woman, Eirini had spoken to her respectfully, making an effort to be engaging and friendly. There was no indication of her personal opinions concerning the woman's attitude or circumstances evident in her conduct. Conversely, Euripidis noted that the woman herself had been almost rude, '*δεν είπε ούτε ευχαριστώ* – she didn't even say thank you'. The mixture of compassion for the woman's difficult situation and confusion by her lack of manners actually compelled the volunteers to be more polite when dealing with her. Although the subsequent discussion clearly indicated their judgement of her behaviour, these were suppressed in their role as volunteers. At the same time, by discussing the woman's own moral 'failure', they implicitly pointed to their own proficiency as social actors. Suppression of their personal feelings actually served to emphasise these judgements: the volunteers were able to demonstrate their competence precisely because they chose to help the woman as they would any other person.

Moral Community

Gossip, in this example, resembled meetings: both were sites where collective opinions were negotiated. Meetings differed, however, as the place where agreements about the terms of solidarity were officially reached. In the case of the Iakovou family, one purpose for Dafni's report concerning her investigations had been to examine whether she had conducted herself according to the group's expectations. As with gossip, this underlines how solidarity depended upon collective ethical judgements that were supressed in public but emerged, sometimes uneasily, at meetings. Meetings, then, despite the lack of overt moral content, were deeply ethical affairs not only in terms of how the decisions made at them impacted people's lives but equally as a forum in which the volunteers signalled to one another how to act. Both gossip and meetings were mediums of informal communication, the participation in which marked inclusion as a volunteer.

Although meetings took place in public, it was only volunteers who attended. This was because attendance was, effectively, by invitation only. Those who expressed an interest in volunteering might be invited to attend a meeting, 'to see what we do'. Yet in reality, when a potential volunteer attended their first meeting, it was the volunteers who observed them. If the person attending spoke, the other volunteers gauged what had been said, later discussing if the person would be a suitable fit and what tasks they might be capable of. This sense of observation was accompanied by a degree of formality and added friendliness. Informality was reserved for volunteers that had been fully accepted by the group. Meetings themselves were the embodiment of this informality, in contrast to the formality with which they treated beneficiaries and members of the public. Meetings were therefore not only practical sites but the space in which the volunteers defined themselves as participants in a moral community. Mathur reflects upon the contradiction, that for those involved meetings are often seen as mere work. Rejecting her initial assessment of meetings as superficial and ritualistic, she finally concludes that, 'meetings constitute a key means through which a member of the state learns how to act and behave' (2016: 118). Much the same was true at the *diktyo*: meetings were more than the site at which work was distributed, they were the space in which volunteers learnt how to be volunteers.

Σπούτνικ

The nature of the moral community in which the volunteers were participants was further demonstrated when they attended one of the many solidarity festivals that were held in the period of my research. Of these, the Sputnik festival was one of the largest. Hosted each year, the festival was initiated and supported by a magazine of the same name. Both were formed with the explicit agenda of promoting solidarity:

'Spoutnik Magazine organises a celebration of solidarity and participation held in Athens, a celebration of the radical left called Spoutnik Festival that puts forward a different model of entertainment to the commercialisation of entertainment and leisure'.[41]

A more detailed description on the event website read:

'Artistic events and political discussions will alternate during the two-day Festival, seeking to form a point of attraction not only for the public but for young people. A Festival full of historical tributes, theatrical performances, sports activities, and different flavours from around the world. The political discussions aim to open the debate on the Radical Left, the European reality, the developments in the Middle East, the war on the social reality that youth are experiencing today, and what can be done to change it. The aim of the Festival is to offer a platform for young people, artists, groups and creators to present and exhibit their work in its space. At the same time, it aspires to be a meeting place for young people who think and act collectively, LGBTQI collectives, cooperative ventures and immigration groups. Sputnik takes off on the 30/9 with the destination a world that accommodates us all'.[42]

The year that I attended the festival it began in the late afternoon, held in one of the less frequented parks in the north of the city. At the entrance, volunteers charged visitors five euros for a ticket. Inside, the focus was a couple of stages, one larger than the other. Throughout the afternoon, speeches, discussions, small plays and skits were held on the stages that faced rows of plastic chairs, behind which were a collection of small tables ringed with chairs. Flanking the stages were a series of food stalls where various kinds of international cuisine were sold, a choice that emphasised the inclusive agenda of the event. People sat at the tables eating while various performances took place in the background. As the evening went on, the discussions and talks were replaced with live music that continued late into the evening. The volunteers from the *diktyo* set up their own stall somewhat at a distance from the stages and food venues that were the focus of the festival. The stall consisted of a table covered simply with a cloth and a small sign. On the table, the volunteers arranged a selection of homemade jams and jewellery. Theirs was the end of a row of similar stalls set up by other comparable groups, *diktya*, that identified themselves according to the neighborhood in which they operated:

[41] https://www.allaboutfestivals.gr/en/festivals/spoutnik-festival/ [accessed 13/09/21]
[42] http://fest.spoutnik.gr/previous-σπουτνικ-fests/πρόγραμμα-του-σπουτνικ-festival-2016/ [accessed 13/09/21]

Pangrati, Zografou, Elliniko, and so on. The *diktya* varied in approach and size, some able to offer less support and others, for example, organising craft and employability workshops for immigrants and refugees. Of the groups present, however, the *diktyo* from Byronas was among largest and most well-known. Situated at the head of the series of stalls, however, the volunteers were dissatisfied with their placement. Approaching from the main area of the festival area, theirs was the first stall that passers-by visited, so that people were more likely to continue onwards to look at the other stalls rather than stop and make a purchase. In addition, the way that the lighting of the festival fell meant there was relatively little to illuminate the volunteers' stall compared with those of the other *diktya*. Sitting in a small cluster together, the volunteers complained to one another how these factors would hinder their sales. Eventually, they decided to set up a mirror behind the jewellery stand so as to better catch the available light. Of the jewellery, a series of knitted necklaces made by Eleni sold very well. In contrast, few people purchased any jam despite the selection of flavours on offer. Discussing this, Fotini remarked that many of the other stalls were also selling jam and perhaps it would have been wiser to present other items.

Over the course of the evening, the volunteers also remarked that the neighbouring stall had made a lot of sales by offering an assortment of sweet, and savoury pies, information that would be useful the next time they attended a festival. As well as casually observing the activities of the other stalls, the volunteers periodically left to inspect them directly. While looking at the goods on offer, they greeted acquaintances and chatted politely. Similarly, the volunteers received visitors at their own stall. Later in the evening, the volunteers from one of the neighbouring groups came to compare activities and seek advice the more experienced volunteers at Bryonas. Collected together like this, the festival was an opportunity to communicate practices of solidarity with one another. Yet more than this, it was also a place in which the volunteers were

able to perform their attachment to the solidarity project. Assessments of one another's stalls overlapped with assessments of the other groups' reputations. Just as meetings were the space in which those attending defined themselves as volunteers, the festival was a forum at which they were able to communicate their participation in solidarity as part of broader moral community.

Beyond the stages and stalls were a collection of posters and photographic exhibitions set up by the youth groups, the support of which provided the rationale for the festival itself. Unlike the main stages, food venues and *diktya* stalls, these were little attended with only handful of people passing by to visit them. Next to the exhibitions, another set of stalls representing various civic rights groups were spaced along the northern edge of the festival. Many were unattended, presumably the people hosting the stalls were busy participating elsewhere in the festival. By far the busiest of the stalls were those hosted by the *diktya*, but unlike the civic stalls, the volunteers here did not show a great interest in the other activities at the festival. Although they occasionally left to purchase some food, the volunteers at the stalls soon returned and spent their time chatting among themselves. The precise meaning of the volunteers' participation in the festival finally crystallised in a moment towards the end of the evening when a woman representing SYRIZA passed by their stall and tried to hand the volunteers some political leaflets. Brushing the leaflets away politely, Fotini told the woman: 'we already know'.[43]

I argue that Fotini's words make the volunteers' participation in the solidarity festival legible. For them, it was not a space to learn *about* as much as to demonstrate their commitment *to* solidarity. The speeches and performances that formed the political backdrop of the festival were aimed to educate and disseminate the ideals of solidarity to the public. Indeed, the agenda of the festival was specifically educational: to attract

[43] This disinterest perhaps also expresses a disaffection with SYRIZA after its entry to the mainstream and subsequent demobilization from solidarity groups (Karaliotas 2021: 506).

and involve young people in the cause of solidarity. Working in the solidarity movement for years, however, the volunteers had already been exposed to such ideas and discussions. In this way, the festival, as a larger kind of 'meeting', illustrates the layering of participation in, and reproduction of, the moral community of solidarity. As at their group meetings, the volunteers were less interested in political discussion and more in the business of practicing solidarity. Boredom at meetings reflected this sense that solidarity had already been agreed upon and simply needed to be put into practice. Meetings themselves operated according to consensus with actions agreed according to a lack of objections or caveats.

In the context of these implicit agreements about what constituted solidarity, I argue that the often-repeated statement, 'this is not charity', cited by the volunteers was important because it communicated not only what solidarity was but what it was not. When pressed about this statement, the volunteers had little to add. 'This is not charity' was a statement that apparently did not go anywhere, something akin to a mantra. Yet this statement had a definite purpose: to distinguish those participating at the *diktyo* from other groups. Solidarity was not charity, a form of giving premised upon inequality, but rather giving freely upon equal terms. The volunteers at the *diktyo* thus distinguished themselves from church groups that distributed food to the poor, whose giving they saw as hierarchical. Nor did they see themselves as similar to the food distributions organised by the SKAI network, mentioned above, an operation that they perceived to be a liberal-conservative cooptation of the solidarity agenda. 'This is not charity', like the volunteers' attendance at the festival, was not merely a slogan but crucial to the way solidarity was performed publicly to spectators and participants at the *diktyo* alike. Glibert describes the importance of these performances in his ethnographic account of NGO, in which the legacy of clientelism and its close association with charities, "placed a special burden on aid organizations and their staff to continuously

display or enact the qualities and commitments that made their project humanitarian" (2016: 719). Much the same was true of solidarity: attendance at meetings and festivals were critical ways that volunteers brought solidarity into being as a space in the political imagination.

Good work

Signalling commitment to the moral community of solidarity was essential to the successful operation of the *diktyo,* such that it compelled the volunteers to comport themselves in specific ways. This was aptly demonstrated one day in an encounter between one of the volunteers and a woman that she tried to help. Late in the morning, the *diktyo* was quiet as Eleni, Soritis and I saw to our responsibilities. With little work remaining, Anna had already left, so that I was left in charge of the small amount of bread that remained. Abruptly, a woman entered through the front door not stopping to greet any of us but instead approaching the books kept on shelves towards the back of the room. Eleni, Sotiris and I glanced at one another, unsure what to make of this sudden entrance. Remaining in her chair, Eleni raised her voice and asked if she could help the woman. The woman replied that no, she didn't need any help. After a few minutes, Eleni repeated her question but the woman again insisted that she wasn't in need of any assistance. Next, Eleni asked if that was the case, why she had come to the *diktyo*? In response the woman turned to Eleni, shouting a series of insults. She approached the desk, complaining as she did so that the volunteers were bad people. After a few minutes she walked to entrance but then remained there and continued to shout. Finally, she left, announcing before she walked through the door that she would tell everyone what kind of people worked there.

While the woman was shouting, Eleni appeared to remain calm. She did not raise her voice or respond to the woman's provocations. This composure, however, was a front.

Once we were alone, it was clear that Eleni was shaking. Sotiris, who had watched the whole exchange, congratulated her on handling it so well and offered to bring her some coffee or a shot of *tsipouro*. When I asked him why the woman had been so angry, he told me that she must have been looking for a fight. She knew that the *diktyo* was a space open to anyone and so had come in purposefully to vent frustrations that likely had nothing to do with them. Despite this assertion, the woman's accusations troubled Sotiris and Eleni enough to prompt them to raise the issue at the next weekly meeting. Hearing their story, Eugenia remarked sceptically, 'where will she go?', but others exchanged concerned glances. Where the woman would go and what she might say to other people in the neighbourhood was important to the volunteers. How they appeared to those others in the neighbourhood, the people from whom they collected donations, mattered. Attracting donations depended upon positive perceptions of the volunteers and their work.

At another supermarket shift, Georgia and I had once been asked to leave by the supermarket manager. We had been told that customers had complained to the manager, telling her that we had been making them feel uncomfortable. At the next meeting, Georgia reported this outcome to the rest of the volunteers but insisted that the manager's explanation was an excuse to prevent our collections. Whether her assertion was accurate, however, was unclear. During our collection, Georgia attempted to explain our purpose there as we handed out fliers to the passing customer but some of these exchanges had resulted in disagreements. When people had objected to our methods, Georgia had in turn criticised them, either complaining to them directly or uttering critical remarks to herself. Minor confrontations were not uncommon at other supermarket collections when the people addressed questioned the legitimacy of the volunteers' work. Some people insisted that solidarity was simply charity and would only encourage dependency among those whom they helped. Others said that they the

volunteers shouldn't be helping 'all those Albanians' instead of those of Greek heritage. When the volunteers heard similar opinions voiced by the beneficiaries, these were explicitly challenged. Despite these clear feelings about the issue, at the supermarket collections the volunteers simply smiled, accepted the comments, and tried to reason with those whom they faced.

As the *diktyo* depended upon donations from those in the neighbourhood, it was able to operate only if it was deemed to be legitimate and its claims to solidarity accepted as authentic. In the way that they ordered work, the volunteers were committed to resist habits of favours, corruption and patronage but it was equally important that they made the *appearance* of doing so. In her essay, '*Inside the Economy of Appearances'*, Tsing (2000: 142) demonstrates how high-finance conjures investment through illusions of prosperity. Such illusions are not inauthentic, not not-real, but essential to the production of finance: profit must first be imagined. In the moral economy of volunteering, much the same applies. Volunteers first had to demonstrate themselves to be moral figures in order to attract moral investment from those around them. Doing good work depended upon appearing to do good work. Volunteers were therefore careful to cultivate an appropriate image of solidarity.

One of the most respected volunteers was Sophia, who was considered to be both capable and personable. She was smart, firm but friendly, and like Eleni, was always calm and collected. She managed 'difficult' people and situations easily. Both in appearance and capability she was the ideal volunteer. Georgia and Eugenia spoke of her approvingly, telling me that she had been praised by people outside the *diktyo* – that she conducted herself '*με ευγένεια* – with politeness'. Both privately and publicly, the volunteers often discussed one another's behaviour in terms of similar references. A new volunteer might be complemented for speaking 'very nice Greek' or for always smiling and appearing happy. Following Tsing, it is not my aim to suggest these

appearances were inauthentic but simply point out the difficulty and effort required in their production. When confronted with outbursts of anger or more casual disagreements, it was a struggle for volunteers to maintain their composure. When asked, Nikoleta, one of the younger but well-regarded volunteers, said that being a good volunteer meant that she must, '*κατευνάζω τα πνεύματα* – calm the spirits'.[44] Volunteering demanded self-control and the ability to master feelings.

Just as they reinforced 'good' behaviour they also policed what they considered to be negative behaviour. At one of the meetings, Sotiris reported how he had asked one of the former volunteers, Grigoris, to leave the *diktyo*. The matter was discussed with some interest, as Sotiris recounted the event. Grigoris had been at the door of the *diktyo* shouting at those entering and leaving. According to Sotiris, he had been saying 'very bad things'. He had asked Grigoris to leave, telling him that 'we don't shout here'. In private, the volunteers harboured negative feelings about some of the beneficiaries, telling me that some of them were a low sort of people. But such reservations were kept private, not publicly communicated. Moral judgements were separated from the work of volunteering. Keeping thoughts and feelings private and maintaining self-control contributed to the general ethos of impartiality that the volunteers cultivated. Politeness was not only a way of managing personal feelings but demonstrated shrewdness. When they discussed the behaviour of the pregnant woman in the example cited earlier, Babis concluded '*δεν έχει μυαλό* – she's not smart'. She had not been polite, smiled, offered thanks or appeared interested in what the volunteers had told her. With their comments, the volunteers implied it would have been better to behave politely so as to create a good impression among the volunteers on whose help she depended.

[44] The expression implies calming oneself or others with a sense of de-escalation.

Differences between how beneficiaries and volunteers behaved were often a repeated point of reference. When Eleni had been confronted by the man shouting that the volunteers were not 'solidarity', she had countered by asking him why he didn't come to volunteer himself. In so doing, she drew her behaviour and his into a moral schema that elevated volunteering and associated notions of selflessness, sacrifice, and personal discipline. The implication that beneficiaries could not control themselves was bound up in the production of 'good' and 'bad' moral subjects. This discipline to control oneself and one's feelings was the same discipline and order that the volunteers applied to the space around them. If beneficiaries could not be trusted to regulate themselves, it was the volunteers' responsibility to impose regulation upon them.

Whereas the volunteers observed that beneficiaries were irregular in their habits, often arriving at the wrong time or the wrong day, they emphasised the value of regularity and reliability among themselves. A good volunteer was *συνεπής*: consistent, punctual. Time and good work, as discussed in Chapter 3, were also referenced in other ways as the volunteers attempted to work quickly and efficiently each day. When asked, Georgia told me: 'we can't do it otherwise. There are many people who need help and we are so few. We have to do it quickly in order to manage. We have so few hours at our disposal'. Despite Georgia's claim, the volunteers regularly arrived early for their shifts even when there was little to do. The majority were retired and it was they who defined what time they were able to give, just as they collectively defined working hours. Regardless of the time available to them, all tasks were carried out promptly, whether it was handing out bread, unpacking and sorting donations of clothes, portioning out food or unpacking collections after a supermarket collection.

Making effective use of time was a crucial index of what it meant to be a good volunteer, as the following example underlines. For the first six months, I had worked closely with Eleni, often sitting beside her and watching her work. Gradually, however,

she had stopped attending the weekly meetings before it was finally announced to the group that she would no longer be volunteering. The others were initially concerned if they had done something to offend her. When she returned to visit one day, they pushed her for an explanation. Eleni told them that she felt she was no longer able to do her work well. She said that she was getting confused and it was taking too long for her to complete tasks. Whether she was motivated by this or other reasons, her self-analysis points to the value the volunteers placed on working quickly and how such an explanation was acceptable for the group who saw speed as critical to their work.

Speed and effectiveness were closely linked, something that was evident at the Christmas and Easter bazaars. On these occasions, the interior of the *diktyo* was totally transformed and decorated to create a festive atmosphere. Handmade items, bric-a-brac, clothes and books all had to be unpacked and arranged, and then repacked once the events were done. No tasks were allocated but instead each volunteer searched for tasks to do using their own initiative. Some elected to pack items into boxes while others carried and stored them in the back. Others took down decorations, moved tables as some people cleaned tables, each weaving between the bustle of other people. Amidst all this activity, I struggled to find something useful to do. The other volunteers not only had a better sense of what needed to be done but were more determined to undertake tasks without hesitation. 'Knowing what to do' and acting upon it reflected the essential ethos of the volunteers. In fact, their status as volunteers depended upon this ability to identity and pursue relevant tasks. Few had defined roles or obligations: work was by definition, voluntary. Self-initiative was thus at the heart of what it meant to be a volunteer and was praised in volunteers and beneficiaries alike. When, for example, a Syrian refugee who had recently moved into the neighborhood began folding the clothes that had been left in a mess, the volunteers thanked her with smiles and afterwards exchanged approving looks. On another occasion, some peaches had been spilled on the

floor and remnants of boxes left lying around after a busy morning of handing out the fruit. An Albanian man, after collecting his allocation of peaches, had stopped to help clear them up. No-one had directed him to do so and as Erini watched him work, she remarked, '*είναι πολύ καλός τύπος* – he's a really good guy'. Unknowingly, the man had demonstrated the qualities that most resonated with the volunteers and the ultimate mark of volunteering: self-initiative and help unasked for, without any expectation of return.

Practical Ethics

When the volunteers performed solidarity, they privileged its practical form above political or ethical content. Unlike those working in religious or humanitarian contexts, at the *diktyo* the volunteers did not employ moral or affective language to describe their work. Rather, good work consisted of politeness, self-restrain, timeliness, effectiveness and initiative. Despite this, I argue that just as meetings were apparently mundane affairs, the discourse of practicality that volunteers used to understand their efforts obscured the ethical nature of their work: specifically, that the volunteers' attachment to a discourse of practical ethics constituted a moral critique of the state.

Referring to practical ethics, I draw upon the idea of ordinary ethics as theorised by scholars such as Das (2012) and Mahmood (2011): 'morality, in this view, is about training oneself in a particular (set of) practice(s)...and it can be a type of behaviour used to distinguish oneself from other types of people' (Klenk 2019: 8). For the volunteers, their particular set of practices depended upon self-control and the suppression of personal ethical judgements, a comportment that set them apart as volunteers. At meetings, they trained themselves and one another according to this ethics of practice. Speaking of ethics in this context I do not refer to political philosophy but as Mahmood puts it, ethics as a 'non-deliberative' expression of personal disposition

(2011). Yet at the same time I want to juxtapose this understanding of ethics with that proposed by Zigon, who counters that ethics appear in moments of moral breakdown that challenge everyday expectations (2007: 133). According to him, people try to return to the ordinary, latent kind of morality that Mahmood describes. I argue that both these moments, of ordinary and extraordinary ethics, were present at the *diktyo*. The extraordinary was present at meetings when the ethical assumptions of the volunteers were exposed. In their discussion of *situations* and the confrontations with beneficiaries unwilling, or unable, to accept the volunteers' terms of solidarity. Meanwhile, the ordinary appeared in their emphasis on correct personal conduct, a morality that was inhabited through practice.

By working quickly, effectively, and impartially, the volunteers set themselves them apart from the state. In this way, practical ethics was effectively a critique of the state. Ferguson (2004) has described the orientation of this critique whereby the third sector poses itself outside the space of national governance. Drawing upon his own ethnographic examples, Ferguson describes how voluntary work was seen as superior to that done by the state, alternatively 'higher' in moral terms, or 'lower' by being closer to, or grounded in, lived reality (2004: 389-392). This description resonates with Muehlebach's analysis of voluntary work as a form of compassionate or ethical labour, that volunteers understood as superior to other kinds of paid, and therefore selfish, employment (2012: 228). Drawing together these insights on practical ethics and volunteering, and relating them to my own ethnographic experience, I contend that it was the very absence of overt political and moral sentiments that gave saliency to the idea of volunteering as a critique of the state. This claim can be supported with reference to the somewhat ambiguous boundary between what was considered to be charity and solidarity.

When the volunteers insisted that what they did was solidarity and not charity, this reflected anxieties about the historically close relationship between civil society and the state in Greece. Because NGOs, like state welfare, have been implicated in the chain of support for political favours (Frangonikopoulos 2014: 609), it was important for volunteers to distinguish themselves from dependencies associated with clientelism and corruption. The very fact that they insisted what they did was practical rather than moral can itself be read as a commentary on the failure of the state to separate its own political and administrative functions. Narratives of the crisis have situated failures of governance in the inability of the state to run according to a rational logic in which public employees are appointed according to merit, and policies enacted according need. Crisis ensued as agents within the state pursued personal agendas, diverting its 'natural' operations that ought to manage the collective affairs of its citizens.

For the volunteers, this detachment between personal affairs and the practice of solidarity unfolded on a day-to-day basis: when they attempted to treat beneficiaries impartially and systematically; when they set out material and administrative barriers between themselves and beneficiaries; when they were polite, practiced self-restraint and suppressed personal judgements. All were means by which the volunteers sought to detach themselves from patterns of dependency. Practical ethics was thus an attempt to suppress the political/ethical and so played an essential role in making solidarity distinguishable from charity. Reflecting on this, I return to Das who writes: 'we find the ethical within the habitual or the routine where we least expect it to be, namely, in acts of concealment and pretending through which one's knowledge of the constrained circumstances of the other is hidden when offering a larger than usual gift, or in other words to recast debt as a gift' (2012: 141). In the final section of this chapter, I argue that in the context of my own ethnography that the suppression of personal, ethical judgements depended upon a similar kind of concealment in the act of giving.

Charity/Solidarity

Arriving at our supermarket shift one morning, Sotiris and I began setting up. First, we arranged a trolley borrowed from the supermarket, positioning it next to the entrance and attaching signs that stated the *diktyo's* name and purpose. Next, we stood either side of the building's entrance, each holding a pile of leaflets. The leaflets contained a brief explanation concerning the *diktyo* and its activities, along with a list of suggested foods that would make suitable donations. As people passed, we tried to hand them a leaflet while also offering phrases such as: '*μαζεύουμε τρόφιμα για το δίκτυο* – we are collecting food for the *diktyo*'. Some people took the leaflets without looking at them, others brushed them away, and some stopped to ask us questions and offer opinions. In the gaps between people coming and going, Sotiris and I chatted to pass the time. He told me the story of a woman who offered them donations of food frequently even though he knew that she was unemployed: 'she gets it', he told me. When one man left a small bag of food, Sotiris told me that the same man had once come out of the supermarket with a full trolley for the *diktyo*. For the first half an hour, the morning passed smoothly as people leaving the supermarket left donations in our trolley. Our collection was soon disturbed, however, when a man arrived and sat on the pavement a few feet away from us, placing a plastic cup in front of him. As pedestrians walked by, he signalled to them and asked for any spare change. After accumulating some coins, he began transferring them into his pockets. Dropping a few, which rolled under a car, he lay on the ground in an attempt to retrieve them but was finally unable to reach. Taking some cardboard from a nearby bin he used the makeshift tool to draw the coins out, turning to smile at us as he placed them in his pocket. When his cup began to fill again, he transferred these coins into one his pockets.

Noticing our interest, he moved towards up and greeted Sotiris who returned his own greeting. Falling into conversation, the man explained to us that it was better to leave

the cup mostly empty because people were then more likely to give him change. After this brief exchange, he went back to resume his requests for money. Sotiris turned to me and told me that the man was likely a drug addict. He added that as soon as the man had collected enough money, he would leave in order to buy drugs. He commented that it would be more sensible for the man to remain for a longer period and collect a greater sum of money but, because of his habit, he was incapable of doing so. Watching him, we saw that when people left him money, the man thanked them. However, when someone ignored his requests, he insulted them. Sometimes he stood in the centre of the pavement, to slow the people that passed as he made his request for money. Observing this, Sotiris approached him and spoke to him using polite grammatical constructions, suggesting to him that if he spoke more respectfully people were more likely to give him money. Despite this politeness, offering the man cigarettes and laughing along with his jokes, Sotiris became increasingly frustrated. After the man had arrived, it had become difficult for us to speak to the people entering the supermarket. Already having passed the man in the street, they did not want to stop and talk to us. Where we normally might have filled an entire trolley, on this occasion it was barely filled halfway. The man's nearby collection of money had overshadowed our own collection of food, his shouts and threats chasing away people who might otherwise have left donations. Eventually, the man appeared satisfied with the amount he had collected. Without acknowledging us, he picked up his cup and walked away. Although Sotiris was relieved by his departure, the trolley remained half-empty at the end of our shift.

Begging nearby, the man had limited the success of our own appeal for donations. The differences between these two requests for help shed light on the volunteers' repeated assertion that what they did was 'not charity'. Considering this claim in the context of such an encounter focuses attention on the ways that solidarity might be considered distinct from charity. Visually, the volunteers worked to make solidarity more palatable.

On the days when the volunteers collected food from outside supermarkets those participating, and the women in particular, would wear nicer clothes than those worn when working on shifts in the *diktyo* itself. Hair was better styled, dresses nicer and accented with scarves, necklaces or other accessories. Dressing well and speaking politely in this way emphasised their respectability. Collecting at supermarkets, the volunteers always operated in pairs. As Sotiris himself told me, it 'looked' better. Standing together, the volunteers demonstrated that they represented collective interests distinct from individual, personal requests for help, such as those made by the man begging for money. Signs and flyers informed people that they were donating not to individual but collective needs. Collecting on behalf of others, the volunteers thus made giving acceptable in a social milieu where dependency outside the sphere of family was often derided. For the volunteers this was consistent with the rationale that solidarity was not like charity because it did not invite patronage: self-interest was diffused by upholding the common good. Dressing well and composing themselves politely, volunteers made the act of donation presentable. That passers-by were willing to leave donations of food with volunteers but reluctant to give change to the man begging underscores this: he was exactly the kind of person who the volunteers set out to help. Yet it was not simply that volunteers made asking for help respectable, it also mattered that they did so on behalf of others. By acting as intermediaries, the volunteers disrupted the flow of giving, ensuring the anonymity of donations and thereby precluding dependency. Unlike the man who had been begging, they did not collect money. Where money was symbolically aligned with profit and self-interest, instead they collected food, an index of social reproduction and familiarity.

Distance and disinterest allowed the volunteers to distinguish charity from solidarity. Yet in order to do so, it was necessary to, visibly, demonstrate their fitness for such a role. Care which the volunteers put into appearances reflected their efforts to exhibit

their suitability to act as the guardians of solidarity. As the representatives of solidarity, they strived to appear professional, efficient and disinterested. Acting as proxies for those who made donations, it was necessary for them to appear to be neutral and suppress their personal agendas. By asking for nothing themselves, they denied the personal in acts of giving, thereby distinguishing charity from solidarity. In light of these moral moves, I want to return to Das and her idea of concealment in acts of giving, 'to recast debt as a gift' (2012: 141). Distance for the volunteers was the concealment of personal involvement in the donation of food: it allowed acts of giving to happen anonymously. This helps explain why personal restraint was so meaningful to them as an ethics of practice and the why it was important that the volunteers viewed solidarity as a technical, as opposed to moral, project: what was being concealed was the ethical act itself.

Responsibility and Refusal

Concluding this chapter, I want to reflect on the consequences of concealing the ethical in this way, narrating the problem in terms of a dilemma that I faced as an ethnographer-volunteer. Among the hundreds of people who arrived to collect bread it soon became obvious to me that one man was returning twice each morning. After taking bread a first time, he would return soon after, unremarked among the many people coming and going. Noticing this early on, I initially hesitated to mention it to the other volunteers. As the months passed, I was convinced that the volunteers would not approve of this situation and wish me to tell them. My hesitation stemmed from knowing nothing about the man or his need for bread. It was impossible to interpret whether his need was legitimate or, as the volunteers often judged of the beneficiaries, excessive. Considering what to do, I reasoned that each day I was making similar decisions about who to and not to help as I tried to enforce the rules that the volunteers prescribed. Like them, I sometimes gave extra bread when I should not, and at other

times refused requests for more. Finally, I decided to act in my obligation to the volunteers and their sense of ethics. When I told Anna, she looked at me and said forcefully, ‘next time, you say no!’. At our next shift when the man appeared, I identified him to Anna as she had instructed me. In front of the surrounding people, she publicly denounced him and told him that from now on he must only come once each day. Without commenting, he took his bread and left.

Afterwards, the decision sat with me as I considered if it had been the right thing to do both ethically and ethnographically. It is not that I intend to ‘solve’ this ethical problem here but rather to reflect on the recurrence of ethical problems that the volunteers encountered in their project of solidarity. Ethical judgements were bound up in all the work that the volunteers did. Like my own decision to tell the volunteers about the man who came to take bread twice, they were regularly faced with decisions that could potentially impact people’s lives. For myself, knowing nothing of the man’s circumstances, making these decisions was problematic but I enforced the abstract rules of the *diktyo* regardless. As at many other times, it was left to me to draw a line between who was entitled to help and who was not. Conversely, similar decisions did not seem to trouble the volunteers. Anna had been categorical as soon as I informed her about the situation. Requests for more were met with impatience on their part. The volunteers were much more interested in upholding rules than considering their ethical implications. In response to demands for more they insisted, not always successfully, that each person receive the same. When one man countered to such a rejection that he was part of a family of six, the volunteers ignored him and later whispered to me, ‘how do we know?’. Individual circumstances were irrelevant because such decisions were not personal. Rather, they were impartial and indifferent, and most importantly, ‘fair’.

In keeping with their understanding of solidarity, the volunteers tried to depersonalise the process of giving to distinguish charity into solidarity. First, by acting as

intermediaries to put distance between beneficiaries and those who donated to support them. Second, in the distance they placed between themselves and beneficiaries. Exceptions to rules might be made but the system of regular donations and proscribed amounts of bread formed a kind of ethical backstop, a standard that the volunteers could always reference. Keen to repudiate patronage, rules were a rejection of personal involvement. But this attachment to impartiality had the effect that ethical judgements were not personal but abstract and, to an extent, arbitrary. Morally, it was better to ensure fairness through ethical disengagement than be drawn into more ambiguous acts of giving that demanded volunteers enter personally into ethical decisions. By allocating bread in portions, giving was systematised and abstracted in much the same way as it was done through the charts and calculations that determined what help people were entitled to.

My ethical apprehension about choosing who to help clashed with the volunteers' own pursuit of disinterested giving. Our contrast in ways of thinking highlighted my own assumption of ethics in terms of personal need versus the ethics of fairness that the volunteers privileged. The system of rules *intentionally* did not engage with the personal circumstance. Solidarity was an anonymous, impartial entitlement. Enforcing rules irrespective of circumstances was an ethical act in itself: when the volunteers went to great lengths to ensure someone actually lived within the technical boundaries of the neighbourhood or when they discussed in detail whether a family was still entitled to help now their circumstances had changed. From their perspective, it was not the place of the volunteers to make ethical judgments about who was entitled to help and who was not. Instead, it was their role to enforce these rights through the systems and procedures that they had devised to protect them.

Yet this refusal of responsibility belied the fact that it was the volunteers who had set the terms of solidarity in the first place**.** Between the tables, charts, forms, and bags of

food, were assumptions concerning what was an appropriate amount to support each person. Although the volunteers insisted on distance in their interactions, beneficiaries remained dependent upon this support. Ideals of dignity and self-sufficiency ultimately clashed with those of interdependence and mutuality. Moral subjects emerged in which the selflessness and independence of volunteers embodied the ideals of solidarity. But beneficiaries who took without giving, by definition, were aligned with self-interest. Political indifference was matched by a lack of reciprocity in material terms. In turn, because the volunteers made no demands of the beneficiaries, the political message of solidarity was not made clear to them. Political disengagement had the effect to erase the *diktyo* as a communicative space in which the ideas of solidarity could be conveyed. Solidarity as a political ethic was therefore a paradox as it communicated no mandate and demanded no allegiance. Egalitarian ideals were equally ambiguous. All had a right to solidarity except those who fell beyond the bureaucratic terms that defined access to it. Volunteers were ideally equal but distinctions remained between Greek middle-class and Albanian working-class volunteers. Volunteers refused dependency while remaining responsible for dictating the welfare of others. All were equal but it was the volunteers, as arbiters of solidarity, who defined the nature of this equality.

Conclusion

Opening this chapter, I began by setting out the claim that solidarity 'is not charity'. My intention has not been to dismiss this claim but problematise its meaning, and reflect on its potential as an index of the Solidarity Movement. Charity, as much as austerity, was the other against which solidarity sought to define itself. It embodied a form of giving that was self-interested, that privileged the giver, and was historically bound to patronage and dependency: a kind of giving oppressed by the weight of unpayable debts. Anxieties about charity, and the moral danger it implied, were at the root of commitments to equality, dignity, and independence. Through disengagement and

distance, the volunteers worked to neutralise these ambiguities of giving. Doing so demanded that they police the personal, both in others and in themselves, as they developed an ethics of comportment according to which they struggled to become neutral agents of solidarity. If such actions were means whereby volunteers were able to signal their commitment to solidarity to one another, much the same was true at meetings and festivals. Yet in each case, these actions not only made solidarity *visible,* but allowed the volunteers to distinguish it from charity. Doing so meant drawing distinctions between those who could be treated within the field so solidarity and those considered beyond it. Excessive demands and selfishness forced a limit to solidarity, such that neutrality broke down in these critical moments. Despite this attachment to indifference and impartiality, the volunteers congregated as a moral community. Latent behind the appearance of technicalities, solidarity was rooted in ethical dilemmas and the tensions created by attempts to diffuse them. Finally, distinguishing charity from solidarity meant concealing the ethical by denying privilege in acts of giving: ethical discourses were rendered as practical ones, and solidarity as a system of action, not reflection.

6 – Moral Subjects

Introduction

If solidarity was a form of radical engagement that sought to face off the atomising effects of austerity, my ethnography explores the irony that just as it brought people together, it equally compelled volunteers to keep their distance from those they aimed to help. This chapter considers in greater depth the interplay between these respective pulls, to engage and disengage, beginning with an exploration of the motivations that first drew the volunteers to the project of solidarity. Next, I consider ways in which the social sciences represent a concurrent form of moral engagement, examining how their history is rooted in a desire to intervene. Through this history, I explore how anthropologists have struggled with the ethical attachments elicited by their research, and the power that resides in disengagement. Juxtaposing solidarity and anthropology as adjacent moral projects, I then examine how both reference affective politics and disinterestedness in their claims for legitimacy. On this basis, I argue anthropology and solidarity overlap via precarity and nostalgia, in a moral moment when political certainty has been displaced by ethical uncertainty. Unpicking this relationship between politics and ethics, I conclude by arguing that solidarity was a moral project guised as a political one, rooted in the ability to render subjects as ethical, political, or mundane.

'*θα είμαι σπίτι μόνος* – I would be at home alone'

The need to engage was evident one morning, when a delivery of fruit arrived in an unmarked white van that parked in the space of a bus stop located immediately opposite the *diktyo*. Noticing its arrival, two of the more experienced volunteers stationed themselves at its rear, from where they started to unload crates of fruit. After taking them out of the van, they passed the creates across the metal railing and down into the alcove adjacent to the building's entrance. Once down, the crates were taken inside,

handed from one volunteer to another along an impromptu human chain that was formed by those who happened to be inside when the delivery arrived. At the far end of the chain, another of the senior volunteers had taken charge, stacking the crates neatly to store them in such a way that took up the least space. Too old to help pass the crates herself, Georgia had nevertheless watched the work from the side of the room. Once we had finished, she approached one of the men who had helped unload the delivery to offer him some dried fish and thank him for his help. Shaking off the complement, the man joked that he had nothing else to do with his time, otherwise, he said: '*θα είμαι σπίτι μόνος* – I would be at home alone'. Unpacking the man's statement, I would like to use it as a point of reflection on the motivations that ordered solidarity in this ethnographic context.

Ostensibly, as one of the subjects of solidarity the man's presence at the *diktyo* can be understood in straightforward terms as a matter of practical need. Like many others, he relied on solidarity as a substitute for other avenues of state and familial support. Yet in this moment his role as beneficiary blurred with that of volunteer. Helping others, rather than being helped, he expressed less visible needs. Captured in the man's participation in this chain of solidarity, and his own account of it, were two desires: the first, to make use of his time; the second, the desire to be connected. In light of this, I want to consider the ways in which the volunteers, like the beneficiaries, can be considered the subjects of solidarity: how although the volunteers saw those around them in need *of* help, they themselves were also motivated by a need *to* help (Malkki 2015).

When I asked the volunteers about the motivations that led them to volunteer, they offered various responses. Angeliki, one of the younger volunteers, had trained as a heritage worker but like many others in post-debt crisis Greece was without formal employment. In the beginning, ecological concerns had attracted her to the Solidarity Movement. Following a vegan diet, she had become interested in the slow-food

movement, food-waste and recycling, concerns that had eventually led her to the *diktyo*. Ethical motivations were also the reason cited by Anna, a housewife whose husband had formerly been employed in a bank. Her motivation was rooted in the desire to give something back and help those in need. For Georgia, this desire to help people blended with her own need to do something productive. As she told me, '*αποφάσισα να αφιερώσω τον χρόνο μου σε κάτι που θα είναι δημιουργικό, να βοηθήσει τους άλλους* – I decided to dedicate my time to something that would be creative, that would help others'. Like many of the other volunteers, Georgia was retired, having formerly worked as a psychotherapist. Already trained to help people, solidarity offered her the opportunity to make use of her free time, and to continue helping people after retirement. A desire to be connected, latent in those motivations described above, was stated more firmly by Eleni. Formerly an accountant, Eleni was one of the older volunteers and expressed her concern to me about what she would do when prevented by her age from working usefully at the *diktyo***.** Stuck at home and unoccupied, she felt that she would quickly become disconnected and stagnant.

Like the man who had helped passing crates, for the volunteers the distinction between the need for help and the need to help was not always distinct. Unable to find work, Vasiliki had first encountered the *diktyo* as a beneficiary. Not wanting to receive help without giving something in return, she had decided to offer her time as a volunteer. Although her personal situation had since improved, Vasiliki remained a committed volunteer as she found fulfilment in the act of giving. Sotiris related a similar story. Close to retirement age he had found himself unemployed when the debt crisis hit. Struggling to survive on limited means and without a strong personal support network, he had turned to the *diktyo* for help. As it happened, he still relied on regular donations and like Vasiliki had eventually become one of the core volunteers. Acting as one of the central figures at the *diktyo*, he was very much occupied by the work of solidarity.

When I asked him why he volunteered, he said that he enjoyed working there because it offered him a sense of community that he did not recognise elsewhere in public life. Here, he made explicit reference to his experiences of living abroad. Insisting that in other countries people were better connected with one another, a sense of connection that he believed was lacking in Greece. As Georgia once described to me, the volunteers were: '*μια ομάδα πολιτών του Βύρωνα που προσπαθεί να βοηθήσει τους πολίτες που βρίσκονται στη φτώχεια* – a group of citizens of Bryonas that try to help other citizens of Byronas, who find themselves in poverty'. Both her remark and Sotiris' criticism of Greek public life illustrate how the desire to help interfaced with a broader affective politics. The volunteers saw themselves foremost as a community of citizens bound to one another by civic duty. In the midst of crises that threatened the bonds between people, it was their responsibility to support one another.

Solidarity, then, answered to various kinds of isolation and redundancy, to people and resources unused or disconnected. The volunteers regarded it as a positive, creative force in their lives and the lives of others and way to engage with those around them. In this respect, it was not only the beneficiaries but also the volunteers who were in need of solidarity. For them, it expressed a need for community and allowed them to act ethically, as they would say, as citizens. Solidarity as the possibility to foster connection was a powerful imaginary that drew people together. The reach of this imaginary was not confined only to Greece. Just as it had captured the desire for connection among the volunteers, I, too, had been attracted by the idea of solidarity and the possible alternatives it implied. Solidarity as an imaginary had brought me to Greece, just as it had attracted a mixture of other international ethnographers, researchers, and volunteers wanting to engage with the combined impacts of the refugee and debt crises. It is this overlap, between anthropological, humanitarian, and voluntary motivations, that I address in the remainder of this chapter, in an attempt to sort through their similarities

and differences in, hopefully, productive ways. As such, I recount a backlog of motivations that have driven anthropology, and the social sciences more broadly, both past and present. That is, to explore how the desire to connect and improve the lives of others is bound up in broader critiques and structures of power.

Moral Engagements

The respective social sciences each emerged at critical junctures as mediums that sought not only to describe but reshape a changing world. Economics, for example, reacted against aristocratic and religious authority, by promising not only prosperity but individual liberation at the moment of industrialisation. As Hirschman writes: 'modern social science arose to a considerable extent in the process of *emancipating* itself from traditional moral teachings' (2013: 299, original emphasis). In turn, sociology reacted against this narrow view of economic individualism and the disruption that accompanied it, seeking ways to better understand, and therefore strengthen, collective bonds in a time of rapid social change. Therborn remarks of the period: 'new social theories developed in the last quarter of the 19th century which were inductive, social-ethical and interventionist' (1980: 170). Sociology thus emerged as the bearer of solutions that attempted to ameliorate the social pressures elicited by industrialisation.

Nascent anthropology engaged with a concurrent form of rapid social change, but unlike its cousin, unfolding outside the recognised borders of Europe. Where sociology resided 'at home', anthropology was first realised as the science of other and empire in the period that Western powers came to terms with the force of imperial rule. Like early sociology, anthropology saw itself as scientific: 'in the wake of Darwin, Tylor had pioneered a search for the natural, as opposed to divine, origins of civilization, and the laws of evolution that governed civilization's ostensible unilinear progress' (Conklin 2013: 135). In this period, anthropology equated to social evolutionism, operating as a

study of the history of civilisation narrated through living peoples of the world. Necessarily, this was a story of moral progress and superiority as the discipline described and justified the subordination of non-Western people: 'it was possible to reread the processes of economic change, social transformation, and material progress in moral terms and thereby not only to ease the burden of upper-class responsibility, but to shift it to the lower orders themselves' (Stocking 1991: 215). If early anthropology did not seek to explicitly improve but rather justify Western domination, it nevertheless shared sociology's preoccupation with a changing world, and interventionism by way of its association with colonial administration. The need to intervene, however, also emerged in anthropology as it became more established, which can be seen through the lives of some of the discipline's key figureheads.

Boas, for example, challenged prevailing views in anthropology when he opposed social evolutionism, arguing that it was unstainable according to its own methodology. Opposing racial theory, Boas refuted craniometry through the use of statistics, proving that measurements of the head and skull bore no correlation with intelligence or culture (Conklin 2013: 45). Boas recognised this work as fundamentally moral, as was evident when he set out his own history of anthropology: 'the subjective valuation which is characteristic of most evolutionary systems, was from the very beginning part and parcel of evolutionary anthropology' (Boas 1904: 517). For Boas, anthropology was 'science in the cause of man' (Lewis 2001: 450), such that 'method and morality were two sides of the same coin' (Erickson & Murphy 2013: 60). Such sentiments can be felt strongly in Boas' personal writings: 'what I want to live and die for, is equal rights for all, equal possibilities to learn and work for poor and rich alike' (Cole 1983: 37). In keeping with these principles, he challenged popular racism in the United States through various public engagements (Beardsley 1973: 59): publishing articles, book reviews and appearing at civil rights conferences. He openly condemned anthropologists working for

intelligence agencies, and ‘fought to prevent the federal government funding research on race and eugenics’ (Peregrine 2018: 3-4). For Boas, anthropology presented the opportunity to disprove, scientifically, the concept of race as part of a vision of a more inclusive and just society.

Boas’ activism was shared by his contemporary, Marcel Mauss. Founder of the *mouvement socialiste,* he regularly wrote for left-wing publications *Humanitie* and *Populaire,* and was, ‘committed to voluntarism and to social action and advocated an 'economic movement from below', in the form of syndicalism, cooperation, and mutual insurance’ (Hart 2007: 478). Meanwhile, Mauss’ intellectual work can be read as a commentary on the age in which he lived. At the end of ‘*The Gift*’ he stated this clearly: ‘we shall be able to deduce a few moral conclusions concerning certain problems posed by the crisis in our own law and economic organisation’ (2002: 5). Like Durkheim before him, Mauss saw the world as fragmented: ‘he viewed the Europe of the 1920s, exhausted by war and battered by political differences between left and right, as a civilization in crisis’ (Liebersohn 2010: 2). ‘*The Gift*’ can thus be read in light of ongoing debates on monopoly colonialism and international trade, issues which he followed closely through his work as a journalist. He was believed that monopoly colonialism had, ‘destroyed the solidarity of colonial subjects among themselves and between themselves and their metropolitan subjects’ (Mallard 2018: 196). By writing about the *kula* ring and Trobriand islanders, Hart points out that Mauss drew an allegory with the world economy (Hart 2014: 37). Anthropology offered the means to see what had been lost in the transition to modernity, in other words, it was a moral lesson in solidarity. Both for Mauss and Boas, scholarship was therefore a form of critical moral engagement.

If Boas and Mauss were explicit in their moral commitments, these sentiment were present in the work of their less political contemporaries: Radcliffe-Brown and

Malinowski. Although later settling into a position of structural-functionalism that stressed social cohesion, in his early university years Radcliffe 'anarchy' Brown, as he was then known, began by following radical lines of thinking. Reflecting on this past, he stated these interests clearly:

> *'Like other young men with blood in their veins, I wanted to do something to reform the world – to get rid of poverty and war, and so on. So, I read Godwin, Proudhon, Marx and innumerable others. Kropotkin, revolutionary, but still a scientist, pointed out how important for any attempt to improve society was a scientific understanding of it'* (Stocking 1998: 305).

Radcliffe-Brown saw intellectual endeavour in terms of social improvement, an opinion that Malinowski shared:

> *'It is futile and a sign of mental laziness if the man of science pretends he can keep away from ethical questions or that he should not state it when his scientific outlook contributes to the real welfare of humanity'*[45]

For Malinowski what this meant was the improvement of the rights of colonial subjects. For him, anthropology 'could and should contribute directly to solving the problems of governance' (Neihaus 2017: 110). Malinowski supported colonial rule but objected to its conditions, segregation but not outright oppression (Neihaus 2017: 111). In this view, the anthropologist was an elite champion of indigenous rights (Rossetti 1985: 485), able to act as translator and negotiator with colonial authority.

Although less politically radical than Boas or Mauss, Malinowski's support of colonial welfare exemplifies something true for all of them: the anthropologist as advocate. In the United States, the role of anthropologist as cultural mediator would also surface later in the works of Ruth Benedict. Continuing Boas' attack on American racism in her work, '*Race: Science and Politics*' (1940), her ideas were circulated to soldiers enlisted

[45] Malinowski Papers 6/8, 'Colonial Administration Class: Discussion of Miss Perham's Paper, 9 May 1933.

in World War II in the form of a pamphlet: '*The Races of Mankind*' (1943). Her next work, '*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*' (1946) was completed under sponsorship from the war office in a direct attempt to make sense of the United States contentious relationship with Japan amid the legacy of war. Benedict's opinions would prove instrumental to the administration of Japan's military defeat and fed into the United States global strategy whereby it asserted dominance with reference to ideas of cultural pluralism and liberty. Closely linked to Boas and Benedict, Margaret Mead later took the role of anthropologist as cultural guru a step further, entering into public debate directly as she became 'a spokesperson for liberal causes' (Erickson and Murphy 2013: 74). '*Coming of Age in Samoa*' was influenced by currents of feminism to which she had been exposed in her youth (Lutkehaus 2008: 36-38). Written as a commentary on sexual morals, her writing ultimately shaped public opinion in the United States. Regarded as privy to the essence of culture, public regard for Mead reflected the perception of anthropologist as interpreter of humanity.

What each of the anthropologists cited here share is a view of scholarship as critical engagement and medium for betterment of the world. If in the period from the 1920s onwards anthropologists assumed the role of experts and advocates of humanity, this was accompanied by a theoretical orientation that tended to stress internal cohesion over social change. Functionalist accounts focused on individually coherent social entities, reacting against evolutionist and diffusionist theories that mobilised ethnographic comparison to support claims of an underlying cultural universalism. However, by the 1970s, both the premise of functionalism and the anthropologist as expert came into question. Accompanying this reassessment of functionalist theory following the collapse of colonialism, the discipline also confronted a related uncertainty about the role that anthropologists played in producing colonial narratives, past and present. What matters about this reinterpretation of anthropology's past was a new anxiety concerning

the terms of anthropological engagement. The shift to reflexivity dominant in the 1980s reflected a moment when anthropologists increasingly questioned their role as interpreters of culture, as they questioned whether had they really interpreted themselves rather than the people they aimed to describe. In the fragmentation of discourses that followed, the new generation of anthropologists repositioned themselves not so much interpreters of race, as interpreters of racism.

Interrogating this history, I aim to show how the social sciences emerged from the desire to engage constructively with the world. Setting this alongside the volunteers' project of solidarity, both can be viewed in terms of a concurrent desire to connect through positive moral interventions. Yet as my ethnography demonstrates, solidarity proved a struggle for the volunteers: the vulnerability of opening up to others compelled them to close themselves off and place limits on solidarity. A concurrent set of anxieties emerged in anthropology in the 1970s, as the question arose whether anthropology was itself a form of moral engagement: should researchers connect or disconnect from the research subjects? Prior to then, morality was largely co-terminus with culture, embedded and inseparable from the totality of the social fact. Descriptions of any individual aspect of the culture served as a prism through which its entirety could be apprehended. In effect, morality was everywhere and nowhere. With the onset of postmodernism, however, the possibility of conflict within and between cultures meant that morals could no longer be considered static and cohesive, in turn prompting consideration concerning anthropologists' own morals in the process of ethnographic engagement. Disagreements over the extent to which anthropology constituted a moral endeavour came to a head in critical debates of the 1990s (D'andrade 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1995), which gave definition to what would later be known as the ethical turn. Contentious at the time, the proliferation of research attending to explicitly moral themes in the period following this debate only confirms the influence of moral thinking

in anthropology. Since then, both Robbins' 'suffering slot' (2013) and Ortner's 'dark anthropology' (2016) have problematised this trend, questioning the limits of the discipline when morality is placed at its heart.

As a potentially moral anthropology has struggled to realise itself, key questions have hinged on the possibilities of objectivity and engagement. In the original debate between Scheper-Hughes and D'Andrade, the key point of contention was whether anthropologists can apprehend morality without themselves entering into, and thereby shaping, the moral discourses that they aim to describe, and what might be lost when ethnography is practiced as moral commentary (D'Andrade 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1995). Laidlaw locates this apprehension over the role of objectivity in Durkheim's legacy, arguing that his emphasis on norms collapsed moral with culture and so obscured the study of morals as a legitimate field of study (2002: 312). Fassin, however, points out that Durkheim never believed that the study of morals could be objective but, rather, insisted such study could be rigorous (2014: 430). To this end, Fassin reiterates Durkheim's call for a 'science of morality', insisting that morals can be studied systematically. In place of objectivity, he argues for moral reflexivity, that is, for anthropologists to be aware of how moral assumptions drive ethnographic and theoretical engagements (Fassin 2008: 341). To this end, and reflecting on solidarity as a form of both engagement and disengagement, I now consider the moral power that resides in the ability to disconnect.

Disengagements

In previous chapters, I addressed the complexities of intimacy and distance entailed by the impartial ethic of voluntarism as the volunteers struggled to find ways not to care. Redfield remarks upon a similar ethos in his ethnographic work on Medicin San Frontieres, in which he charts the charity's changing organisational ethics. Critically, he

points out that the volunteers' indifferent, impartial stance was not simply an absence of ethical or political orientations, but a 'strategic refusal' that elicited moral subjects (2011: 53). Gilbert takes this further, arguing that the refusal of politics was essential to the creation of humanitarianism for NGOs working in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a process that he calls 'humanitarianization' (2016). Much the same was true at the *diktyo:* refusal of political and ethical attachments allowed the volunteers to define the space of solidarity. Moral projects, then, are defined not only in terms of their engagement, but also in the way they disconnect people and ideas. Ticktin (2011) confirms this when she describes how a 'politics of compassion' led not to greater engagement but disengagement, as bureaucracy isolated asylum seekers from social and political fields. What each of these ethnographies underscores is how disengagement, as an apolitical orientation, variously opens up and closes off potentials of access. In humanitarian contexts, it is a logic of impartiality that empowers non-state actors by placing them beyond the sphere of politics, and allowing them to navigate conflicted spaces through an ostensible refusal of allegiance. Such was true in the case of solidarity: disengagement guaranteed that the solidarity project would not be misdirected by personal interests. As neutral agents, the volunteers could legitimately mediate collective welfare.

Disengagement then, as an ostensible suspension of power, remains a powerful position able to alter the field of political action. For the volunteers in my ethnography, this posed a contradiction of responsibility whereby they tried to engage but also disengage: to care but not to care. Furthering this analysis of solidarity as equally a politics of engagement *and* disengagement, I would like to consider what kind of power resides in the refusal of responsibility. Where it implies an exemption from the standard terms of dependency, disconnection can be rendered as a kind of privilege. In her description of NGOs, Smirl (2015) details how risk is distributed unevenly between international

workers and their local counterparts. Where the former could be extracted under conditions of extreme danger, the latter could not. They remained situated, as it were, and bound to the threat of conflict. By describing this, Smirl draws attention to the importance of who can be included within the boundaries of impartiality. Ironically, in this case, humanitarian neutrality was the power *not* to be included and so the freedom not to be in danger by denying attachments, physical or moral. Smirl thus focuses attention not only on the power of disengagement, but on how that power is distributed: who has the power to disengage.

Academic attachments: uncertain ethics

Setting out this thesis, I argued that solidarity represents more than a positive, creative engagement. Rather, the solidarity present in the ethnographic setting of my research possessed others faces that were conflicted, contentious, and detached. Using the ambiguity of engagement and disengagement visible in this instance of solidarity, I want to reflect on how anthropology, as a comparable moral project, has sometimes confronted similar ambiguities. Keeping in mind the question of who has the power to disengage, I return to debates on objectivity that characterised the so-called ethical turn in anthropology.

Much of the debate in the ethical turn has centred on the idea of academic neutrality. The essential point can be summarised neatly in the following problematic: should, or could, anthropologists abandon prior attachments to neutrality? This attachment to neutrality first coalesced nearly a century earlier when anthropologists began to challenge the overt moralism of evolutionary narratives. At its heart, this challenge was scientific, expressed as a commitment to detailed, rigorous, and structured analysis. Functionalism and the culture concept further coincided with academic neutrality as anthropologists produced ethnographic accounts that they believed superseded personal

judgements. In essence, culture was considered relative and deserving of study as a cohesive body of ideas and practices. By the late 1980s, this commitment to academic neutrality was increasingly recast as reflexivity: domination of the anthropological subject could be mitigated by a critical, authorial voice. Ethnographers were not merely participants in the field, but equally participants in the production of anthropological texts: ethnographic authority was rooted in engagement, not its opposite. Thereafter, the researcher-as-self crystallised as an analytical prism in reference to which critical insights could be gathered.

Fassin, who has charted much of the development of the ethical turn and the possibilities it implies, has explicitly left the forces that prompted these debates an open question (2012: 5). In answer, I argue that the collapse in academic neutrality upon which the ethical turn rests went hand-in-hand with the development of the self as a key referent in anthropological thought. Anthropology had once been the domain of an intellectual elite populated by members of the upper classes insulated by their connection to the establishment. With the collapse of privilege, the pretence of academic distance could no longer be sustained. Anthropologists became situated and less easily detached from the moral subjects that they aimed to describe. Robbins describes exactly this sharpening of ethical focus, when he recounts his initial experiences of fieldwork (2013: 450). Like his interlocutors, he struggled to resolve the conflicting legacy of colonialism with 'traditional' cultural mediums. For Robbins, functionalist, cohesive theory could not capture the complexity of these encounters in which sometimes contradictory ways of thinking flourished.

In this respect, what marked the development of processual approaches to ethnography was the possibility of conflicting perspectives. Peoples, and later people, were not cohesive, bounded entities but fragmented, multi-faceted and contradictory. The realisation of conflict was further established with the emergence of Foucault as a de

facto theoretical anchor for the discipline. Since then, domination has become a standard trope by which to apprehend the world: as Ortner famously argued, hegemony displaced culture (2016: 50)**.** This is not to say that imperial rule was harmonious. Colonialism was by nature an extractive regime premised upon systematic exploitation but as Hamdy & Bayoumi note, 'those who speak in the name of impartiality are often in positions of power and wield the term to make their privilege appear inevitable and natural' (2016: 225). In this view, academic neutrality can be understood as a gloss, that allows the researcher to look past their own position of power. Indeed, even though ethnographers were not blind to the impacts of colonialism, such realities were often filtered out of idealised academic accounts (Kuper 2014: 20), prompting the question as to why themes of domination and suffering only came to preoccupy anthropologists after structures of colonialism had, at least partly, dissipated.

In answer to this question, I propose that as colonialism collapsed, so too did the prevailing ideological order upon which it was founded. Postmodern critiques of the self emerged in dialogue with radical social movements across the world following the World War II and subsequent collapse of colonial rule. Marxist and feminist discourses focused attention on patterns of exploitation that had not been previously recognised because anthropologists had historically worked within the boundaries of colonial certainty. In the absence of consensus, ethnographers were forced, or perhaps able, to see the world in a way no longer dominated by the colonial narrative. Ethnographic realties, by consequence, were messier and relativistic: conflict elicited ethical questions. Scheper-Hughes effectively prompted the debate on academic neutrality when she claimed that ethnography was a moral project, well-positioned to function as a critique of politics (1995:418), a claim that has since been restated by Biehl and McKay (2012: 1212). Scherper-Hughes' moral challenge to anthropology was not solely theoretical. A powerful writer, her renderings of the intricacies of exploitation and

possibilities of resistance were an explicit literary device aimed to mobilise the sentiments of readers: ethnography was not only a moral but affective exercise. Ticktin, who provides one of the most critical voices in the ethical turn, underlines this when she writes: "the study of humanitarianism – with its focus on suffering and humanity – paved the way for anew type of intellectual-moral engagement, one which relied on a particular kinship between the role of anthropologist and humanitarian" (2014: 277).

The ethical turn thus expresses a fundamental shift in the way that researchers engage with the world, one that does not hold people at distance under the guise of academic neutrality but demands engagement with them. This shift, which foregrounded personal ethics in academic engagement, was accompanied by a breakdown in political certainty, something Kuper remarks upon in his historical overview of British anthropology: 'in Europe, intellectuals were coming to the conclusion, some rather reluctantly, that Marxism represented an unlikely source of freedom and progress. There was a shift to a more personal politics, a politics of identity and representation' (2014: 136). Geertz also refers to this, 'shattering of larger coherences, or seeming such, into smaller ones, uncertainly connected one with another' (2012: 218): a so-called 'world in pieces'. If his purpose in describing this 'disassembly' was to reflect on the theoretical terms through which anthropologists engage with the world, he stops short of addressing how this fragmentation became wrought into the discipline itself. In response, I argue that as the over-arching political consensus failed, an autonomous moral subject emerged as the primary idiom of ethnographic reflection: an individual subject defined by ethical intentions. This change was exemplified by Scheper-Hughes' critique, which demands that the anthropologist undergo an ethical transformation of the self to better address a conflicted and violent world. What had emerged from the collapsed legacy of colonial, and, subsequently, cold-war political certainty, was morality.

If anthropologists have generally been slow to describe their own development as moral subjects, one exception can be found in recent debates on precarity. As the professional stability of academia erodes (Fotta, Ivancheva & Pernes 2020, Montoya & Pérez 2016), anthropologists have increasingly applied theoretical insights prompted by ethnographic work to discussions of their own lives (McKenna 2016, Montoya & Pérez 2016, Rahman 2018, Voicu 2021). Literature on precarity is driven by ethical uncertainties concerning the practice of anthropology in conditions of exploitation not only in ethnographic contexts but 'at home'. Certainty is the critical term here, the ethical being founded in its opposite: uncertainty. Outside the professional certainty of academia and no longer supported by the political certainty of colonialism, detachment was less easy to maintain as the boundaries between subjects and researchers blurred. Anthropologists' lives had become precarious and no longer insulated from the forces they described: precarious lives led to precarious viewpoints.[46]

Outlining the changing terms of anthropological engagement serves to illustrate how the recognition of attachments between researchers and research participants elicited ethical dilemmas. Considered in this way, I argue that detachment amounted to a denial of ethical obligations: privilege, premised upon colonial authority, insulated anthropologists from ethical concerns. Detachment then, was a form of power, as it rendered the terms of ethical engagement. Power, then, is visible at the point of precarity, in the ethics provoked by conditions of uncertainty. Amidst the tangled workings of voluntarism and precarity, anthropologists and volunteers can be said to

[46] It is not simply that anthropologists' lives have become precarious in recent year but that they have lately recognised them as so. Anthropologists living in the early half of the 20th century lived turbulent lives, caught up in legacy of the two World Wars and subsequent collapse of the colonial order. Boas' professional life, for example, was tenuous as he bounced between various academic posts before finally settling at Columbia. Mauss served as an officer in World War I, while Radcliffe-Brown was obliged to take up posts in Australia and South Africa during the World War II. Yet such complications and tensions were not immediately expressed in their academic work.

represent adjacent moral subjects occupied by concurrent logics of the self and potentials for political action, a comparison that I explore in the remainder of this chapter.

In her review of literature on precarity, Muehlebach states that: 'precarity has inserted itself into the heart of anthropology' and that 'the world is speaking to us in a heightened ethical register' (2013: 299). Similar feelings are echoed in Kalb's description of anthropological work: 'dedication is joy as well as self-exploitation...a losing labor of love' (2021). According to these renderings, much as the volunteers at the *diktyo* might say, work comes from the heart. Here, emotive language recalls the sentimental pull of voluntarism and posits anthropology as a compassionate form of labour premised not upon remuneration but rather as a kind of 'social' work. Pregnant, then, in both imaginaries is a moral moment in which the meaning of work depends increasingly upon a contingent sense of personal ethics, and whereby the self is defined and cultivated towards good ends. Considering these overlapping orientations, it is not surprising that anthropology and voluntarism further resemble one another in terms of their ambiguous attachments to neutrality. When the volunteers at the *diktyo* experimented with novel forms of political engagement, they faced challenges to their own neutrality as agents of solidarity. Postmodern critiques of the self have driven similar anxieties in anthropology when they prompted a reconsideration of the political terms of academic engagement. Both also depend upon on representations of the other, often in need, and the desire to understand and navigate what is different. In this respect, anthropologists, like volunteers, can be said to be needy: dependent on others to help them guide and interpret unfamiliar social terrains, legitimate the object of their work and, thereby, define themselves as ethical subjects. Solidarity, where it represents itself as addressing and healing a suffering social body overlaps with long-standing preoccupations in anthropology, prompted by similar perceptions of fragmentation and

exploitation that unfold in a dramatic confrontation between the economic and the social. Responding to the idea that the social can rehabilitate the economic, anthropology and solidarity ultimately mirror one another as each lay claim to a moral critique of politics with a subsequent scaling of the political to the plane of individual responsibility.

Here, I want to point out the resemblance between ethnography as a moral critique of politics with anthropological critiques of humanitarianism. Civil society, development and voluntarism can all be read in terms of a call for a moral rehabilitation of politics (Ferguson 2004: 387). Yet while anthropologists have elaborated sophisticated critiques of such moral politics, the fact that the ethical turn in anthropology itself reflects similar shift in thinking has not been clearly stated. Anthropologists, like volunteers, are moral subjects, subject to similar forces with the consequence that voluntarism can be used as a lens to reflect on the moral preoccupations of anthropology. Voluntarism indexes a shift in responsibility beyond the state, that is, to a refashioning of rights and obligations that emphasises individual over collective responsibility. Muehlebach elaborates this in her examination of voluntarism, when she describes morality and neoliberalism not as opposites but counterparts, summarised by the title of the work itself: The Moral Neoliberal (2012). In the neoliberal-charity complex, responsibility becomes a personal act. It is not a collective responsibility, particularly of the state, but played out at the individual, personal level. Muehlebach thus shows how economic imperatives do not erode morality but depend upon the cultivation of moral subjects. While this move toward individual responsibility has been described in ethnographic contexts, the emergence of a potentially moral anthropology represents a parallel shift in understandings of accountability and responsibility. The ethical turn, like voluntarism, reflects a change of thinking away from collective norms, instead privileging personal reflections and judgements.

Nostalgia

According to this analysis presented here, anthropologists and volunteers have much in common. In the case of volunteering at the *diktyo*, these continuities make sense because ideas about solidarity and the social have a shared genealogy, rooted in a vision of the world fractured by conflicting social and economic imperatives. Orientated by this conflict, both sets of discourse can be said to be retrospective as they reference an idealised past when the economic and social complemented one another. Picking up this theme, first raised in Chapter 2, that anthropology is in some sense nostalgic, here I further this argument in relation to the idea that introduced the present chapter: that the volunteers did not simply give, but were also needy moral subjects.

Nostalgia and need coincide in a desire for the left and alternative political aspirations. By the time of my fieldwork in 2016, the momentum of the Solidarity Movement had faltered. SYRIZA had lately conceded to the demands of the Troika, and the Greek government had set about implementing austerity measures attached to terms of the bailout agreements. The party's failed promise to resist international debt demands and radicalise the economy was the latest in a series of political disappointments for the left in Greece. Prior to this, the socialist agenda of the PASOK government, and accession to the EU, promised prosperity and democracy, both which turned out to be short-lived. These failures further rested upon imaginaries of a persecuted left when communist politics were suppressed in the post-World War II compact. In 2016, solidarity captured the receding political horizon of the left in the wake of rounds of austerity that solidified neoliberal modes of governance in Europe.

Anthropologists were party to these disappointments, which, I argue, had conditioned how solidarity was situated in the resultant ethnographic literature. Arampatzi, for example, describes solidarity not only as a theoretical object but political tool, and

counterweight to, 'left melancholy, currently widespread on the left' (2018: 11). Such sentiments were part of a broader conversation that included an international audience of activists, scholars, and policy workers that participated in their production. Cabot describes, for example, how, 'an international left descended on Athens' (2020: 236) in 2017 for the *Documenta 14* arts festival that aimed to highlight the creativity of life in Athens during conditions of crisis. Although promoted as a positive celebration, the festival soon became embroiled in debates that questioned whether it was an international spectacle more akin to poverty tourism than artistic collaboration. At a similar congress, Cabot (2020: 237-239) argues that what Herzfeld describes as crypto-colonialism (2002) collapsed with leftist politics to romanticise Greece as a site of resistance: 'in the fascination with Athens that has emerged over the last few years among an international left, there are also aspects of the love of the 'good' oriental: a people seen to fight and resist austerity and welcome refugees on the margins of Europe' (Cabot 2020: 236). Positioning herself on the border of these disputes, Cabot highlights the problematic insider/outside dialectic of these engagements, although ultimately polices the same border that she tries to contest when she distinguishes between who belongs and who does not.

If Cabot describes this romance of the left in terms of its international interlocutors, I argue that the same romance overlapped with sentiments within the Solidarity Movement. Both participated in a common moment and navigated concurrent political sentiments. Each was also rooted in radical movements of the 1970s: postmodernism in anthropology, and resistance to military rule and subsequent democratisation in Greece. As cultural politics moved on in 1980s and early 1990s, anthropology was a companion to multiculturalism and a political mood that propagated more inclusive visions of governance in Europe. In Greece, this took shape in the form of deliberate promotion of civil society and voluntarism by European policymakers (Rozakou 2011: 6-8). By the

late 2010s, however, the ambiguity of these desires for inclusivity had surfaced as the potential of solidarity as a radical alternative dissipated and the movement was occupied by a nostalgia for past, leftist resistance. Similarly, contemporary debates in anthropology take place in the shadow of the critical movements of the 1970s and the radical thoughts of anthropologists that preceded them. Yet this nostalgia for past critiques rests on a deeper nostalgia that Berliner places at the heart of ethnography itself, 'participant observation functions precisely as a nostalgic question for intimacy and sincerity with locals' (Berliner 2014: 28).

Trouillot traces a similar argument, taking issue with the idea of postmodernity itself (2003). According to him, anthropology is fundamentally retrospective: postmodern anthropology cannot be understood except in reference to 'modern' anthropology and hence the legacy of Enlightenment thinking (Trouillot 2003: 11). In this account, the discipline has never shaken off an intellectual framework that emerged out of utopian visions of the past that converged with representations of the noble savage (Trouillot 2003: 14-20). Here, I add to this argument by highlighting how the form of solidarity described in this ethnography is, in essence, nostalgic because it invokes a pre-industrial time, not corrupted by market forces. In the context of Greece's revolutionary past and the proliferation of political discourses that reference suffering and compassion, this nostalgia has been updated, sentiments that collide with the present mood in anthropology, aptly summarised by Sahlins: 'wiser now, we trade in out naïveté for melancholy. Ethnography in the wake of colonialism can only contemplate the sadness of the topics' (Sahlins 1993: 6). If Papataxiarchis notes that idea of solidarity captured desires caught, 'between recapturing a *glorious past* of economic security, employment and consumption and pursuing an *alternative utopian future*' (2018: 244), he stops short of identifying how academic accounts participate in the production of such longing.

If, as I have argued, solidarity and anthropology operate in the present moment according to a moral critique of politics, it is because each reflects a disillusionment with political certainties. At the same time, both also express an anxiety about privilege as livelihoods have become more insecure. Muehlebach (2012: 228) pinpoints this anxiety when she describes how elderly volunteers proved themselves valuable at a time when their status as productive members of the state was increasingly in question. A concurrent 'ethical citizenship' was evident in my own ethnography. In the face of contracting middle-class prosperity in Greece, efforts by the aged volunteers to control the workings of solidarity can be read in terms of the apprehension that those who offered help were in a position not so distant from the people who received it. Idleness was regenerated into moral authority at a time that their political and economic capital had receded. Much the same is true of anthropology, which as a discipline has increasingly set its value outside the domain of profit and interest, asserting its relevance through an appeal to ethics, that is, the ability to describe, and so promote, moral subjects.

The Moral Moment

When Ortner (2016) questioned the limits of the anthropology of the good and Robbins (2013) raised similar concerns about the suffering slot, their primary concern was the theoretical foundations of anthropology**.** I argue more explicitly that the 'politics of compassion', so carefully outlined by Ticktin (2011), is at work in anthropology as much as the ethnographic context that she describes. Along with the social sciences and humanities in general (Robbins 2012), anthropology is caught up in a proliferation of moral discourses that privilege the individual, that reflects a retreat from political certainties, a trend that Fassin refers to this as a general moralisation of politics (Fassin 2012: 13). This helps explain something that Thomassen has remarked on (2008: 263),

that as the field of political anthropology has declined in influence, this has been matched by an expansion of research in moral anthropology. To underscore the nature of this moral moment, concurrent both in voluntarism and anthropology, I end by referencing the example of Mahmood's study of the piety movement in Egypt.

Often noted for the intellectual tact with which Mahmood navigates seemingly opposed themes of Islam and Feminism, for the purposes of my argument what matters are the resemblances between the solidarity and piety movements. Both operate according to a moral critique of politics, responding to the perceived corruption and immorality of the state. Mahmood's ethnography describes the sophisticated ethics of comportment that members of the piety movement followed as they trained themselves as moral individuals. Piety was not political action, but a re-composition of the self in ways of doing well. Echoes of this logic of wellness were present in the Solidarity Movement when the volunteers rendered themselves as ethical subjects: solidarity as practice not politics. In this respect, solidarity and piety resemble secular regimes of wellbeing that have proliferated in recent decades (Allain & Marshall 2017, Biswas 2012, Cook 2016, Jiménez 2008, Hejtmanek 2020, Heywood 2016, Kern 2012, Laspia 2004, Linder 2007, Sassatelli 2015, Sidnell 2017), whereby individuals seek to transform the self. Shared across these discourses of wellness, piety, and solidarity, is a retreat from politics that demands the rehabilitation of the self to the world rather than vice versa. Each emphasises a state of transition, that is, of ethical becoming. In these instances, ethics are necessarily precarious and cannot easily be fixed: a tenuous condition under threat that must be proved. In this rendering, ethics stands as in inverse of politics: personal as opposed to collective, uncertain versus certain, pragmatic rather than idealistic.

Framing the ethical

Considering solidarity and anthropology as adjacent moral projects, in this chapter I have addressed the politics of disengagement and the power that resides in the refusal of ethical responsibility. Concluding this discussion, I want to reflect on the ways in which political and moral discourses can be variously guised as, and participate in, one another. As Tickin argues, 'moral demands have increasingly filled the space of political action' (2006: 34). Elsewhere, she traces the roots of this to development of 'a universalism based on the individualism of human rights' (2011: 72), contrasting the figure of the new humanitarian against that of the worker and left solidarist politics it evokes. My ethnography adds a layer of complexity to this analysis. Solidarity differed from humanitarianism due to clear political aspirations that demanded a radical restructuring of social, economic and political orders. Yet in practice, solidarity resembled humanitarian logic: it made no demand for change, instead attending to the immediate alleviation of poverty in strictly material terms. Solidarity therefore interlaced political and moral sentiments in surprising ways.

In light of the ethnography presented here, I contend that solidarity was a moral discourse guised as a political one. To support this assertion, I reference Ticktin who, writing of the state, argues that, 'the power to draw the line and decide who and what is included and excluded from the juridical and political realms is what actually constitutes sovereign power' (2006: 38). Thinking of the interface between moral and political discourses, the volunteers possessed a concurrent power to that of the state, founded in their ability to variously define what was ethical and what was mundane: that is, the power to dictate the boundaries of morality through the adjudication of moral subjects. This was the power the volunteers possessed when they insisted that their project was practical or when they refused to engage with claims placed on them by the beneficiaries. It was also evident when the volunteers bounded the space of *diktyo* in

physical and bureaucratic barriers, and when they insulated themselves from emotionally demanding work. These processes of bounding and closing off, of disengagement, expressed a broader politics of refusal and a way to negotiate the limits of solidarity.

Moving between apolitical, ethical, and political registers allowed the volunteers to make simultaneous but apparently contradictory claims: the claim to care amid organised indifference; the radical language of solidarity alongside the statement, 'we don't talk about politics'. Solidarity resembled state power but at the same time allowed the volunteers to place themselves beyond it, as they defined themselves variously as political or apolitical subjects. Concurrently, the power that the volunteers possessed was to choose when and when not to care. Like the state, solidarity drew upon affective imaginaries of belonging that played out in practices of administration whereby some were included and others excluded. Politically, it demanded universal inclusion but practically this necessitated the policing of moral subjects. Similarities in the operation of state power and solidarity thus go to the heart of the interface between discourses of morality and politics, and how they capture, and interrupt, one another.

Addressing the overlap between solidarity and anthropology, this chapter is anchored in my experience of ambiguous engagements as an ethnographer-volunteer. Making use of an analysis of voluntarism, it shines a light on how the affective politics of volunteering and anthropology share an entangled genealogy. Like the volunteers described in this ethnography, anthropologists appeal to neutral, ethical and political registers as they arbitrate categories of the social. Anthropologists, too, are engaged in the production of moral subjects that reflects a moment in which forces of compassion, disaster, fear, and crisis drive understandings of the way people relate to one another. If this 'humanitarian' logic, that I define as the force of moral discipline, has come to preoccupy anthropology this is not simply because anthropologists increasingly

confront humanitarian subjects, but because they also see the world in comparable terms. As with solidarity, much contemporary anthropology participates in a moral critique of politics that reflects a nostalgia for the left premised upon a longing for political and economic certainty. Anthropologists further resemble volunteers as the relevance of their discipline is increasingly signalled by an appeal to ethics through the description, and promotion, of ethical subjects. This insight matters because such moral orientations shape the questions that anthropologists are capable of asking when their commitments are driven according to categories of inequality, exclusion, repression, and so their inverse: equality, inclusion, and freedom.

Conclusion – States of Indifference: Administering Solidarity

This thesis addresses the problematic that the conceptual terrain shared by ethnographers and volunteers in the Solidarity Movement obscures the working of solidarity. In this respect, solidarity requires careful treatment because of what it has in common with anthropology, and the affective pull according to which it operates. Departing from a previous generation of research concerned primarily with emic debates about the ethics of solidarity, my ethnography instead interrogates the ambiguities that volunteers faced when they put a specific incarnation of solidarity into practice: confronting not what solidarity *is*, but what solidarity *does*. Tracing the material workings of solidarity in this way revealed the irony that it was precisely ethical anxieties about dependency, which figure so strongly in debates about solidarity, that compelled volunteers to try and detach themselves from the people they tried to help. If caring meant finding ways not to care, as a form of engagement, solidarity ultimately gave rise to its opposite: disengagement and detachment. In the ambivalent period after its zenith, this incarnation of solidarity thus developed into something procedural and bureaucratic.

Of bureaucracy, Herzfeld writes: 'indifference is the rejection of common humanity' (1993: 1). Accepting this assertion situates indifference as the opposite to solidarity, that is, unity secured by an appeal to things held in common. The ethnography presented here offers a more nuanced understanding of solidarity: one less radical, more bureaucratic, and in some ways, indifferent. Just as I have challenged the idea that solidarity is uniformly 'positive', I also challenge the idea that indifference is uniformly 'negative'. It is not simply that indifference excludes and solidarity includes. Rather, both share a similar power that resides in the negotiation of access. Like the door that separated the inner and outer space of the *diktyo*, solidarity kept certain people, and

ideas, in, while keeping others out. This ambiguity of solidarity was matched by the ambiguity of the indifference the volunteers cultivated. Indifference, that I have previously described as a politics of disengagement, was the medium according to which they tried to ensure equality, fairness, and dignity. The central irony of solidarity was that not everyone could be included, equally, at all times, and that the best way the volunteers found to support those around them was to keep them at a distance.

Confronting such ironies of solidarity reveals much about the operation of power. Although solidarity was a retort to the indifference of the state, the two overlapped in critical ways. State and solidarity were both imaginaries according to which relatedness and belonging were mediated. In each case, administration and regulation were the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Where they differed, however, was in the attitude towards power. Fassin & Lézé (2014: 9) have written about how the interface between the political and ethical has not been well-understood. I argue that the *diktyo*, as a site where these boundaries were blurred, focuses attention upon the way these fields interact. Whereas the state operates via overt claims to power, monopolies of force and justice, solidarity at the *diktyo* operated as the denial or diffusion of power. It was in this sense that I have described the volunteers' efforts as anti-political. George Konrad once wrote: 'Eastern Europeans identify politics with fraud, with something that's no business of theirs' (1984: 92). I argue that the ethnography presented here can be understood in light of a similar imaginary, as the volunteers struggled with the powerful position they occupied as the arbiters of solidarity. Detachment was a contradiction: a moral position that denied itself. In this respect, solidarity overlapped with humanitarianism: both resting on universal moral claims. The power of solidarity did not emerge through direct governance because the volunteers' authority was not guaranteed by the state. Rather, their power was rooted in the force of moral discipline: a power not of coercion but compulsion. If morality can be understood as about defining

the potential of life, my ethnography draws attention to how these limits come to be defined and by whom: who has the power to define some matters as ethical and others not.

In Solidarity

Like other imaginaries with mass appeal, the idea of solidarity draws its power from an expansiveness that, while widely applicable, makes it hard to pin down. Solidarity's universal claim to sociality, and the way it captures desires for inclusion and belonging, make it particularly delicate in this respect. In this thesis, I have shown another face of solidarity, an inverse side of limits and boundaries. In this ethnographic instance, solidarity was not only the power to connect people and things, but to disconnect from them**.** Concluding this thesis, I want to consider what lesson this insight has for understandings of anthropological engagement.

Considering this question, I return to an undercurrent of sentiment that can be discerned in many ethnographies of the Solidarity Movement, that the ethnographer must be in solidarity with the participants of their research. As Jansen writes, the, 'replication of the hope of our subjects…promises a lasting political purpose for anthropology' (2014: 240). In the case of the Solidarity Movement, both in terms of its aspirations and disappointments, these shared hopes have proven particularly acute. Yet the ambiguities of solidarity present in my ethnography force me to ask: what might be lost if anthropologists cannot disconnect from their sympathies?

An anthropology conducted in solidarity is one premised upon similarity, not difference, and so places a limit on how research can be articulated, and perhaps of keener significance, how people relate to one another. In his research on extreme nationalist and neo-fascist movements in Norway, Titelbaum struggles with such a limit. Pondering the meaning of solidarity between ethnographer and research participants in such

circumstances, he writes: ‘the moral virtue of collaboration, reciprocity, and advocacy fades in the study of oppressive or privileged populations. In such cases, showing solidarity with those we study may make us accomplices to acts of symbolic or real violence’ (2019: 414). At the same time, he describes how his intention to remain neutral in this research was finally challenged as he was gradually drawn into the lives of people who maintained ideas contrary to, and remote, from his own (2019: 419).

As Titelbaum notes, the salience of his work emerges not from similarity but difference: ‘the social and political cleavages between myself and nationalists sowed both insight and emotional strain’ (2019: 421), leading him to conclude that moral conflict should not be avoided but embraced. Solidarity with the people in his research was not an erasure of difference, but emerged from moral compromise. Following Teitelbaum, I see my ethnography as an act of compromise, rooted in tense ethical engagements that I struggled to resolve. I contend that solidarity for the volunteers constituted a similar compromise, arising from the gap between the ideals that they aspired to and the limited solidarity that they were able to offer, that is to say, from the difficulties they faced trying to forge something in common with people different from themselves. If there is a lesson in this, it is that a fully interrogative anthropology depends upon the mediation of such differences. We cannot always agree, with one other, or with the participants in our research. Choosing to co-operate with people only like ourselves, we face an analytical and moral limit. Rather, it is the conflict in our perspectives that affords us an opportunity to learn from one another. This was the final irony of solidarity, that those ideas that draw us together most forcefully, at the same time threaten to erase our differences.

Appendix

Ethnographic portrait given to the volunteers – translated from the original Greek

The *diktyo* is located in the basement of an apartment building close to Pangrati, and is open each weekday in the morning. When I arrive on a typical day there are usually some older gentlemen sitting on the steps of the adjacent apartment building. They greet me as I pass: 'Good morning!'. 'Good morning!', I reply as I go down the marble steps that lead into the *diktyo*. These greetings are important and punctuate the day, as people come and go. Officially, the *diktyo* opens at 10am, although often the volunteers arrive before this time, gossiping and smoking while they wait. They chat about personal matters, making jokes, and exchange stories, but also discuss issues important for the *diktyo*: things didn't go well yesterday, it was chaos, and the matter must be raised at the next meeting. They talk about how much money was raised at the last bazaar, or how the bi-weekly food collection at the local supermarket went. In this way, the volunteers circulate important information among themselves. Although located in building's basement, large windows let in light and the walls are painted cheerfully in orange. Outside some people have gathered and appear to be talking among themselves, but from inside we cannot hear what they say.

A little before 10am, one of the volunteers arrives in a car filled with sacks of bread. It is yesterday's unsold bread, collected at bakeries in the neighbourhood. Movement in the group of people waiting signals to the volunteers inside that the bread has arrived. Some of those waiting rush to help carry it inside, either to be helpful or perhaps hoping to be the first to take some bread. Inside, some of the volunteers carry the sacks and there is a little fuss as one of the volunteers instructs those helping where to place them,

‘not here, there!’. Outside, a small crowd waits, as people fill the steps leading down to the *diktyo*. One of the volunteers that works in the back area preparing donations of food arrives, struggling to pass the waiting crowd. As she comes in, one of the volunteers asks, ‘shall we open the door’, to which her companion replies, ‘no, they will all come inside’.

Meanwhile, I begin helping to place the bread on the table from where people will collect it, trying to arrange the bread so it that looks presentable. At 10am, one of the volunteers opens the door and allows five or six people from the crowd to enter. Each group rushes to the bread table and stands around it, making it difficult to know whom to give the bread to first. Depending on the amount of bread we have, the other volunteers tell me to give out one or two loaves to each person. This is the difficulty: the amount we have changes and we don’t know how many people will arrive that day.

Not everyone is satisfied with what we give them: ‘we are five people at home’, one of them tells me when I try to offer him two loaves. Others ask, ‘are you closed tomorrow, what will we do then?’. ‘There isn’t enough bread’, one of the volunteers tells them. ‘There is’, the person insists and I try to explain that because other people will come later, we must keep some bread for everyone. Some go away angrily. Others try to take the bread themselves and my co-volunteer tells them in a loud voice: ‘don’t touch it yourselves!’. However, if they ask repeatedly, we sometimes give them more – it is hard to say no. I joke with the other volunteers that is difficult for me to be strict, but they tell me that I must be.

Nearby, on another table, piles of clothes have been arranged neatly. Some of the those who took bread pass by the table and begin to look through the clothes, provoking cries from the volunteers, ‘we open the clothes at 11!’, but the comment is ignored. One of the volunteers gets up and asks them, ‘do you know Greek?’. The volunteers insist that

people must wait until 11am and some remain smoking, and others chat. As the time approaches although it is not yet 11am, some of the people waiting begin to look through the clothes anyway. In a little while, the volunteers comment on how messy the clothes have become. In response, a few of the women begin to fold the clothes until they are tidy again. As the women leave, they call to the volunteers that they have tided the clothes, and in return, the volunteers thank them.

As people take bread and clothes, others arrive periodically at another table on which there are some large folders, containing files each organised alphabetically. They contain the names and records from those in the neighbourhood that are subscribed to the *diktyo*. Behind the table, a poster states in large letters that the *diktyo* helps around 650 families in Byronas. In contrast with the clothes and bread that can be taken freely, those who wish to receive regular bags of food must first provide a tax statement and unemployment card. Every few weeks, depending upon the size of the family, it is then possible to take a bag of food. Each bag contains pasta, rice, flour, conserved tomatoes, and sometimes lentils or sugar, oil, or other food, chicken or fruit. In general, distributing the bags goes smoothly although sometimes there are problems. One person brings an out-of-date statement, while another man forgets the card used by the volunteers to track their distributions. One of the volunteers scolds him, telling him that it is the second time consecutively. Another volunteer who has been following the exchange tries to make light of it, commenting that the waiting man is simply mischievous. Responding to this, the man offers his apology, laughing and smiling and tells the listening volunteers that people will not forget the good work that they do here, but the first volunteer appears unmoved.

Others come to sign-up but because they do not live in Byronas, the volunteers direct them to other groups. Alternatively, those who are from the neighbourhood are invited to return on the next Wednesday evening to provide their details. One of the volunteers

explains the procedure but is quick to clarify to the person listening: ‘we don’t work here, we are volunteers’. This distinction is something repeated on other occasions: ‘we are volunteers, not public employees’. Inevitably, some disagreements arise: a man shouts and bangs his hand on the table, telling the volunteer facing him that the diktyo ‘is not solidarity’. He insists that he is Greek and asks how they can refuse to help him. The volunteer listening to his complaints tries to be patient. However, this confrontation is the exception, most of the people taking donations have little to say except for polite thanks.

Sometimes these exchanges are interrupted by visits from locals who stop to leave bags of second-hand clothes and other items. At these times, the volunteers leave their activities to take the bags and offer their gratitude: ‘thank you very much!’. In the background, one of the women who has been looking at the clothes follows the volunteer who takes the bag into the back area. She begins to peer inside but is stopped by the returning volunteer: only those who volunteer are allowed inside. Subsequently, the door remains closed. As these activities continue, other volunteers not on their shift stop by, either to chat, arrange things with the other volunteers, or to collect bread for themselves.

As the end of the shift approaches, little remains to be done. The volunteers sit and talk among themselves, sometimes with those others who have stopped by to pass the time, often sharing a small pastry and shots of *tsipouro*. Just after 1pm, a woman enters to collect her regular donation of food. The volunteers remind her that the *diktyo* is now closed but, despite what they say, give her the donation anyway.

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