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Economic crisis and integration: Deconstructing social borders in Rhodes Island

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Crisis Económica e Integración: Deconstruyendo los Límites Sociales en la Isla de Rodas

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Resumen

Grecia se ha situado en el centro de atención de los medios de comunicación a causa de la actual crisis económica y de los flujos migratorios mixtos que utilizan el país como punto de entrada a Europa. Ambos fenómenos convergen en un círculo vicioso que desencadena un proceso de alterización. La crisis económica mueve a Grecia desde el centro geopolítico a la periferia, haciéndola dependiente de la toma de decisiones económicas y políticas externas. Además de estar en la frontera, Grecia es también la frontera de Europa. La perifericidad le atribuye un papel instrumental en la gestión de la migración. Los límites como "umbrales" producen patrones de inclusión y exclusión que se crean por esa percepción de Sí mismo y del Otro. El papel instrumental de Grecia como consecuencia de su periferización amplifica localmente un proceso de alterización. Basado en una función diferente de las fronteras y las periferias, y con el respaldo de narrativas antagónicas, en este artículo se discuten posibles intervenciones en ese círculo vicioso. Una diversidad cultural local en Rodas (Grecia), la comunidad musulmana rodesa, ha sido la receptora de las políticas de gestión de la diversidad con particular énfasis en educación a través del siglo XX. El conocimiento acumulado puede respaldar nuevos esfuerzos para contrarrestar el proceso de alterización.

Palabras clave: Límites, Periferia, Integración, Migración, Rodas



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Abstract

Greece has been the focus of the mass media because of the ongoing economic crisis and the mixed migration flows that use the country as entry point to Europe. Although conceptually different, both phenomena converge in a vicious cycle that triggers an othering process. The economic crisis transfers Greece from the geopolitical centre to the periphery making the country dependent on the external economic and political decision making. Nevertheless, apart from being at the border, Greece is also the border of Europe. Peripherality appoints to Greece an instrumental role for the management of migration. Boundaries as “thresholds” produce patters of inclusion and exclusion creating by that perceptions of the Self and the Other. To that extent, the instrumental role of Greece as consequence of its peripherisation amplifies locally an othering process. Based on a different function of borders and peripheries, namely the endorsement of antagonistic narratives, this article discusses potential interventions in that vicious cycle. A local cultural diversity in Rhodes, Greece, the Rhodian Muslim community has been the receiving end of diversity management policies with particular emphasis on education throughout the 20th century. The knowledge accumulated may support new efforts countering the othering process.

Key Words: Borders, Periphery, Integration, Migration, Rhodes



In recent years, Greece has attracted the focus of the international mass media for several reasons. The economic crisis has conceptually moved the country away from the political decision making centre of the European Union. That peripherisation towards the borders reveals the network of power relations which condense in Greece (Liberati & Scaratti, 2016, p. 124).

The peripherality of the country increases the dependence on the economic and political decision making from the geopolitical centre (Oksa, 1995). At the same time, the intensification of the country's exigencies demonstrates the extent of the network of power relations. On the other hand, Greece's peripherality renders the country instrumental as a borderland gatekeeper (Paasi, 2013). The essence of instrumentality is the "threshold" function of boundaries (Hernes, 2004); in other words, the filtering process of who or what is allowed to pass from the borders. The direct consequence of that function is an intensive process of inclusion and exclusion and the formation of social identities (Cancellieri, 2010; Megoran, 2006). By taking into consideration the extent of the mixed migration flow that arrives at the borders of Europe through Greece, the extent of the process of exclusion is apparent.

Nevertheless, if the hegemonic narrative over the crisis is contested (Wodak & Anguri, 2014, p. 419) consequently the inclusion/exclusion process could be also contested allowing for interventions at the othering process. In order to examine that case, our article will focus on the social formation of Rhodes island in Greece which is the point of convergence of an embedded diversity of a local Muslim community and of a new diversity constituted by refugees and immigrants that arrive on the island. The purpose is to identify the practices concerning the management of the Rhodian Muslim cultural diversity that could form successful integration policies for refugees and immigrants. In that framework, the educational system is instrumental as a convergence point between the mainstream and the diverse.

The article will begin from a conceptual analysis of boundaries. The case of Greece will be approached in relation to that analysis before examining the possibility of that in-between area to form identities. The article then, after a brief presentation of the methodology will discuss the results of the UnDRho research in Rhodes concerning the cultural diversity of the Rhodian

Muslims, their stance against the newcomers and the good practices that could be transferred from the management of the local Muslim to the migrant diversity.

Borders: Between Conceptual and Tangible Approaches

Boundaries have always been attracting the focus of social sciences and humanities. Either in their concrete perception as borders or the intangible conception as limits, boundaries perform the same set of roles. The idea of separation and differentiation condenses “an ocean” of meaning and symbolism since borders are instrumental in the creation of social identities (Cancellieri, 2010) or the inclusion and exclusion between and within communities (Megoran, 2006) and consequently in the reproduction of the corresponding set of segmentation, stratification, or even ideas and knowledge (see for example Carlile, 2004).

In terms of their materiality, boundaries can be a concrete reality or concrete-in-thought (Althusser, 1971). The first case is exemplified in borders although it can take the form of less rigid but still established boundaries between social actors, such as the caste system. The Althusserian concrete-in-thought perception of boundaries signifies a process in which boundaries, although coherent as ideas, are nothing more than abstract limitations imposed by the social relations (see also Cohen, 1998; Cooper, 1986; Gouldner, 1959). What really matters, though, is the symbolic impact of boundaries and the common perception is that it is the concrete-in-thought boundary that is vested with multiple meanings. Nevertheless, Lamont and Molnàr (2002) demonstrate the abundance of symbolisms and meanings that even the most tangible borders can interrogate.

In terms of processes, boundaries are instrumental to normative and regulative approaches that are usually connected to the tangible borders but normative borders can also be found in non-constructed forms (Hernes, 2004; see also the contributions in Gagliardi, 1992). Nonetheless, the most replete of meaning form is the case of the social boundaries. Identity and identification depend upon the subtle divisions among groups, strata and persons. Closely connected to the perception of the identity, is the case of the division of ideas. What Hernes (2004) describes as mental boundaries are

in reality the way that every social actor makes sense of the world (see also Zerubavel, 1993; Althusser, 1971).

Social boundaries, however, are not only acts of separation, segmentation or division. They, most of the times, confine diversities in imaginary mutually exclusive spaces and by that they tie them together. If the construction of identity depends upon the confrontation with its respective diversity, then social identity depends on the segmentation provided by boundaries. At the same time, however, boundaries can mediate interactions between social actors (Mach, 1993). That mediation is always regulated. The controlled permeability of the boundaries identifies them as a conceptual “threshold” according to Hernes (2004).

It is exactly the function of “threshold” that reveals the reflection of power relations (Liberati & Scaratti, 2016, p. 124). Boundaries imprint the power relations of the conjuncture since the delimitation of an area of segregation is an act of imposed power in the same way as the trespassing or defence of borders. The study of borders reveals the power relations as they are formed in the conjuncture. In the same framework, a focus on the process, namely a dynamic approach, would point to the peripherisation or the conceptual move towards the boundaries. Oksa (1995, p. 183) defines periphery as the distancing from the centre of wealth, power and connections. In that sense peripherality is much more than a technical instrument in the classification of social space (Paasi, 1995).

In contrast with Hernes (2004), here we use the concept of “doorstep” instead of “threshold” since the concept of the threshold is unilateral. The categorical requirements that constitute somebody participant of the hegemonic part in the power dynamics are set by the “owner” of the house. On the other hand, the “doorstep” has a more equivocal meaning. One can “enter” or “exit”, namely change sides in the power relations. Therefore, the “doorstep” is impartial in terms of power flows.

Greece at the “Doorstep”

The complex economic condition of Greece fuels an ongoing European wide debate over the political and economic situation of Greece. This debate is indicative of a conceptual movement of the country from the political and economic centre of the European Union towards the European periphery.

Since 2010 Greece experiences a cumulative reduction of GDP and significant underinvestment in critical socioeconomic areas.. Along with the still debated reasons behind the eruption of the Greek economic crisis, a significant concern regarding the role of Greece in the European Union has also become an issue of interest. Stemming from both the populist, as a retributive measure against former economic maladministration ([Bild Zeitung, 2015](#)), and the realist political sides, as an actual politico-economic solution ([Sinn, 2015](#)), it has been discussed under the neologism of Grexit, as the plan to abandon the Eurozone or even the European Union ([Wodak & Anguri, 2014, pp. 417-418](#)).

An insight at the meta-narratives of that debate would reveal two flows in the power relations. The first one regards the imposition of financial supervision along with the political rhetoric over the position of Greece in the European Union. The financial measures taken on Greek economy clearly reveal the hierarchical positioning in the hegemony of power. More interestingly, though, the participation in the political debate, irrespective of the stance taken, demonstrates at least a “right to negotiate” the presence of Greece in the European structure. The discourse over crisis is contingent upon normativity and shared values ([Wodak & Anguri, 2014; Sher, 2006](#)). Therefore, the Greek economic crisis triggers a debate over the organisation of the hegemonic politico-economic narrative that concerns almost every social actor. Indeed, the number of personal and institutional opinions ([see for example in Jessop, 2013; Maesse, 2013](#)) concerning that issue demonstrates the extent of the network of power relations in which the presence of Greece at the core of the European Union is central for, as well as the dependence of Greece from the power relations.

The second flow is more abstract in its nature. Colin Hay ([1996, p. 255](#)) appoints a representational function and therefore a “constructed” nature to crisis. He disregards in that way the concrete reality of crisis, but his approach is valuable in making sense of the concrete-in-thought side of the crisis. The contradictions that thrive within the state ([Poulantzas, 1973](#)), give rise to antagonistic narratives of the failure of the state. The binary logic between the “good” and the “bad” policy extents to appointing heroes or scapegoating, identifying victims or perpetrators and ultimately separating the innocent Self and the guilty Other in an othering process ([Wodak & Anguri, 2014 p. 418; Stone, 2002](#)). This is even more so, in the case of the

Greek crisis where a populist rise of divisionary practices has emerged both in Greece and other European countries.

From the dynamic point of view offered by the study of peripherality, it appears, that as Greece conceptually moves towards the boundaries of Europe, becomes more dependent from the network of power relations exemplified in the economic rescue program. As a matter of fact, the increased dependence of the periphery upon external political and economic decision making as well as the dependence on the centre as provider of basic resources is a stable characteristic of the peripheries (Oksa 1995). At the same time, as Greece follows a centrifugal tendency from the geopolitical centre the articulation of the power relations becomes more visible, intensifying by that the othering process. In the present conditions, therefore, Greece is at the “doorstep” of Europe, ready to exit.

Greece as the “Doorstep”

The importance of the previous analysis on peripheries is revealed in their instrumental role for the centre. Similar to Hernes’ (2004) “threshold” function of boundaries, Paasi holds that borders are highly selective. Although, capital and information cross borders easily, their permeability for humans is limited (Paasi, 2013). Borderlands assume that managerial role on behalf of the centre.

Indeed, Greece apart from being at the “doorstep” of the European Union, becomes the “doorstep” too as the entry point of the mixed migration flow towards Europe. Data from the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provide a dramatic glimpse of the flows. Greece received in 2015 the largest percentage of immigrants crossing the Mediterranean with 856.723 persons, compared to Italy with just below 154.000 (UNHCR, 2017). IOM's data demonstrate the diachronic spatial aspect of sea route through the Aegean Sea (IOM, 2017). Greece as the “doorstep” to Europe assumed the role of managing the migration flows towards Europe in the sense of the painstaking process of refugee/immigrant identification, which moreover constitutes the particular manifestation of a hierarchical relationship. Under that light, the borders condense a different power relation and reveal its

internal dynamic which boils down again in extraneous identity appointment, the division between the Self and the Other.

From that point of view, it could be argued that Greece renegotiates its role in the geopolitical core as the “gatekeeper”. Nevertheless, the instrumental role of the peripheries doesn’t change their position in the articulation of power. The peripherisation of Greece entails the management of the mixed migration flows that just like the “management of pain” in the modern urban planning takes place always away from the city centre (Foucault, 1977). The recent statement of the Austrian foreign affairs minister regarding the new “Ellis islands” of Europe (in Ultsch, 2016) is indicative.

Forming Identities at the “Doorstep”

The articulation of power relations that condense in Greece lead to the convergence of some tendencies that fuel each other. The aforementioned statement of the Austrian foreign affairs minister reveals that as the politico-economic dependency of Greece from the centre is increasing, the more instrumental will be turning regarding the management of migration. As that management expands, the divisionary othering practices embed and become apparent. One could argue that the othering processes are categorically different as the Other points to Europe in the first case and migration in the second. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude an ideological transposition in the sense of conceptual transfer and incrementation of the othering processes against the weakest link which is not the European Union. In fact, far right political groups in Greece have already made the, not so subtle, connection between the experienced social pressure caused by the politico-economic dependency of Greece and migration (Papanicolaou & Papageorgiou, 2016; Doxiadis & Matsaganis, 2012).

But the articulation of power relations is always contested and the hegemonic narratives are continuously negotiated. Identities are formed in a dynamic process and the externally appointed ones are usually easier to be discerned. The question arising is if it would be possible for the “doorstep” itself to discuss its own forms of inclusion and belonging, especially under the circumstances formed by the mixed migration flows.

That research question, amongst others, has been examined in the framework of the Understanding Diversity in Rhodes: Traditional and New Others (UnDRho) research project. More specifically, it examined the social dynamics in Rhodes; an island in the Aegean Sea at the South-Eastern borderline of Greece and Europe. Purpose of the research was to map the dynamics of diversity at the local level, represented by the functionally integrated local Muslim community, and examine the role it could perform in the integration of the Muslim refugees and immigrants that arrive on the island. The first hypothesis tested concerned the use of the common religion of the two groups as a connecting point towards the integration of the refugees and immigrants. The second hypothesis referred to the use of the experienced cultural diversity per se as a trigger of empathy between the two social groups. In the latter case, in which we focus in the present article, formal education acquired an instrumental role.

The Origins of the Rhodian Muslim Community

In a few years, the Rhodian Muslim community will be present on the island for almost seven centuries. Although, Islam is present on the island since the 9th century AD (Savorianakis, 2000, p. 70), it was the siege and conquest of Rhodes by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1522 that marked the important milestone (Kaurinkoski, 2012, pp. 47-48; Tsitselikis, 2011 p. 27). The Ottomans executed an extensive settlement program (Savorianakis, 2000 p. 69) that lasted throughout the following centuries. Among the settlers, the case of a number of Muslims of Greek ethnic background, from the island of Crete between 1898 and 1899 stands out (Andriotis, 2004; Williams, 2003). The population balance on the island, however, never changed with the Greek Orthodox Christians constituting the demographic majority (Savorianakis, 2000, pp. 58 et seq.).

The contemporary demographic statistics do not allow for a detailed study of the community. The first and last time that religion was recorded in a census on the Dodecanese island complex, namely the administrative region in which Rhodes belong, was in 1951; in other words, during the first census after the integration of the islands to Greece. After Greek statistics authorities discontinued the recording of that index, the size of the Rhodian

Muslim community can only be estimated. As a result, the data are far from consistent (see in detail Chiotakis, 1997; Dimitropoulos, 2004; Kaurinkoski, 2012; Lantza, 2011; Papadopoulos, 2013; Savorianakis, 2000; Tsirpanlis, 1998; Tsitselikis, 2006) but what could be ascertained are some tendencies. On the one hand the number of Muslims on the island was subject to violent fluctuations. On the other hand, the size of the population since mid-19th century, is on steady reduction. The last estimation from 1997 raises the number of the Rhodian Muslim population to around 3.000 persons.

Spatial and Social Boundaries

A retrospection in the social history of the island offers compelling evidence for the ascertainment of the role of boundaries in the formation of identities. Despite the demographic hegemony of the Greek Christians, it was the Muslim population that constituted the political and economic ruling class during the period of the Ottoman administration of Rhodes (1522 – 1912). Indicative of that case were the formed urban spatial boundaries. Muslims settled within the housing space of the walled medieval city that was the administrative and commercial centre of the island. Consequently, the Christian population formed urban cores around the walls. As a “survival” of that spatial limitation, most the Muslim properties today are concentrated in the Medieval town of Rhodes. The fortifications, therefore, signified a tangible social border (Savorianakis, 2000, p. 42) designating the Insiders and their fear of the Others.

Most important, however, were the intangible social boundaries. The Ottoman public administration has been formed around ethno-religious segmentation. The Millets, that translate as “nations” from Turkish, were ethno-religious communities constituting tiers of administration. Muslim, Christian and Jewish millets as semi-autonomous operators of the administrative system were responsible for the religious affairs and several social provisions of the respective community (Appiah, 2007; Tsitselikis, 2006; Waltzer, 1999). After 1912, the Dodecanese islands were conquered by the Italian empire. The millets continued playing a role but merely as religious communities. Their administrative rights were gradually truncated, especially after the turn to the fascist regime. The 1947 Paris Peace Treaty ceded the Dodecanese island complex to Greece. Their administrative

incorporation in 1948 discontinued any aspect of the social segmentation pertinent to the millets. Nevertheless, the cultural diversity embedded in the multicultural society of the island has been acknowledged in practice through special provision regarding the operation of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious communities of the island and their property (Georgallidou, Spyropoulos & Kaili, 2011).

In the pre-modern Rhodian society during the Ottoman rule, the social boundaries had been instrumental for the social and political administration and very apparent. The spatial boundaries constantly reminded the embedded social organisation and the articulation of power relations condensed at the local level. The “survivals” of the millets inscribe the othering process in the memory of the space (Legg, 2005) and the “institutional memory”.

The Evolution of Education

The educational system is also a manifestation of that othering process that requires special focus. Although it is not a “survival” of the segmentation, it constitutes a close memory of social boundaries. Before a detailed analysis, the issue of the language of the Muslim community needs to be clarified.

In general terms, the Muslim community of Rhodes is a bilingual one. More specifically, older members of the community and members in rural and suburban areas speak a local dialect of Turkish simultaneously with a variety of Greek. Younger generations use a newer version of this dialect; while, children speak Greek, accompanied by passive knowledge of Turkish. This doesn't apply to the Muslims of Greek ethnic background that arrived in Rhodes at the end of the 19th century from Crete who only speak Greek (Georgallidou, Spyropoulos & Kaili, 2011). Georgallidou (2004) accounts for the particular evolution of bilinguality with the abandoning of the closeness of the of social relations' system as long as the Muslim social organisation microstructures are constantly assimilated to the social and cultural environment of the island.

The evolution of bilinguality, however, is also connected with the development of education of Rhodian Muslims.. For centuries, the millets were responsible for the administration of the educational system. Each community was responsible for the delivery of basic educational provisions

to its members. The central government had no interest for the content of the curriculum. After 1912, the educational system followed largely the previous course of organisation. Italian language was added to the curriculum, alongside the typical courses of the community schools. Despite the gradual expansion of the Italian curriculum, the central administration left intact each community's special courses until 1937 when any other course beyond that curriculum was discontinued (Tsitselikis, 2006 p. 523; Lantza, 2011 p. 74).

After the end of the Second World War, the brief British administration (1945-1947) returned to the communitarian educational system. The continuous retrogression of the communitarian education system ended with the integration of the Dodecanese into Greece and the introduction of a modern, centrally organised, common curriculum. As a response to the cultural diversity of the island, in the field of education, alongside the general curriculum, a parallel special one was introduced for the Muslim schools. The parallel curriculum included special religious courses and courses in both Greek and Turkish (Tsitselikis, 2006). The operation of the parallel curriculum was generally depended on the diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey and was soon discontinued (1972) as a reaction to the closure of the Greek schools in Turkey. Since then, there exists no special educational system for any religious community in the island.

Making Sense of Diversity: Identities and Education

The previous analysis of historical facts and contemporary data has been taken into consideration in the methodological approach of the hypotheses of the research project. The nature of the research required a qualitative approach. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted along with non-participant observation and content analysis of the interviews for triangulation purposes. The population of the research was constituted by Rhodian Muslims older than fifty-five years old since they were expected to have personal experience of the last period in which their cultural diversity had particular othering effect on their everyday life. Preliminary research on local newspapers and the interviews conducted demonstrated that the period in question would be during the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974

(Kokkinos, Kimourtzis, Karamouzis et al. 2016). That cohort was approached initially with Life Narrative interviews. We intentionally use here the term Life Narrative instead of Life History (Bryman, 2004 pp. 322-323) to stress the subjectivity of the interviews that project contemporary perceptions to a retrospective analysis. Purpose of Life Narrative was to help the interviewee identify, before rationalising, moments in which social borders were appointing to his/her cultural diversity the identification of the Other. Following Life Narrative, a semi-structured part of the interview focused on the reception of the new diversity on the island, namely refugees and immigrants. That sample of fourteen single and couples' interviews was produced through a snowball technique. The same technique was used for the quasi-control groups of the younger generation Rhodian Muslims and the immigrants. Non-participant observation reflected the semiotics of the relationship networks, the interaction during the rapport building, the interview itself and the follow-up communication. Finally, content analysis was applied on the transcription of the interviews to approach from a quantitative point the same concepts.

As already confirmed in previous researches the Rhodian Muslim community is well integrated in the local society (Kaurinkoski, 2012; Tsitselikis, 2011). Muslims are functionally integrated with subtle social borders defining the points that are not crossed by the religious communities (Georgallidou, Kaili & Celtek, 2013; Georgallidou, 2004). Our research deepened on the qualitative characteristics of that peculiar Otherness identifying three ways of making sense of the cultural diversity that corresponds to a generational breakdown of the interviewees.

Older members of the Rhodian Muslim community tend to focus on the distant past by reproducing images of grandeur. Cultural diversity, in their case, revolves around the socially constructed memory of their presence on Rhodes and is reproduced as pride and commemoration of their historic origin. That narrative, although replete of religious connotations reproduces the past social hierarchy of the millet system. Having lived under the regime of the semi-autonomous religious communities the older Muslims

interviewed make sense of social categories in a way that resembles the boundaries set by the millet system; namely social hierarchy signified by religious connotations. The family roots from the soldiers of Suleiman the Magnificent and his father Selim I or the extensive references to the social roles played by members of family (Imams, tax collectors etc.) or description of the former family property were common issues of discussion.

{Husband} [The grandmother] knew the Quran by heart. So, did my grandfather and my grand grandfather too, since he was also a Hadji. All the family is here... it is like 400 – 500 years, or so... let's say 600 years. When the Magnificent [Suleiman] came in 1522, came also my first grandfather. He was a soldier by that time. [his surname] comes from him. It means standard bearer, he was the standard bearer of the Magnificent.

{Wife} Our surname too. My father... grandfather was a soldier as well. And he is buried there [Murat Reis mosque]. There are three graves and their names are there.

{Husband} The Muslims came here, let's say they were our family, the first ones. After them came more and more. When the Magnificent came here, there were no Turks Muslims here. So, he [Suleiman the Magnificent] was giving to the officers or whatever high rank officials... some land or a village to bring their families here and flourish. This is how people here flourished. (Interview with M.S and S. S.)

If one takes into consideration that the Murat Reis mosque was a burial place for the Ottoman high rank officials that have fallen in disfavour (Crabites, 1933 p. 78), the previous excerpt demonstrates how the embeddedness of the social division of the millet system survives today in the way that memory is “re-enacted” during the narration.

The case, however, with middle aged and younger Rhodian Muslims is different. For them the millet system is a distant historical fact rather than a memory. The way that they make sense of the cultural diversity is not just

exemplified by religious or language issues but depends on them. Middle-aged Muslims, having been schooled during the parallel curriculum period they balance between the memory of a profoundly divisionary practice, namely the parallel curriculum, and the full participation in the social life they experience as professionals. On the one hand, they are concerned about the younger generations and their diminishing knowledge of the Turkish language, although filtered through the benefits of multilingualism. They consider that development as deterioration of their community's cultural capital. Interestingly, their concerns regard solely the issue of language and not that of religion.

If we are talking for every man's mother tongue, it is good to keep it alive. It is not bad irrespective of the country they live. It is not bad. It benefits both sides. Look, to know a language resembles to being another man. Whatever language this is. (Interview with M. K.)

I think that children should have a connection with the mother tongue. To know one more language is definitely good from any point of view. If this [Turkish] is actually needed today... I don't know how to evaluate, in a positive or negative way. [...] I believe that it would be good to be taught the language, to know the language. There are... for example Rhodes is a tourist island, there are many people who come from the opposite shores [Turkey] as tourists, there is this tourist development in the islands during Summer, there are many people from tour operators that ask if there are young Rhodians that could handle the Turkish language very well to help them. (Interview with S.T.)

On the other hand, none of the interviewees suggested the return to the previous educational system with the parallel curriculum. In fact, one of the respondents was adamant about the insufficient educational results achieved by that dualism.

Courses were half in Turkish and half in Greek. This is why, I didn't have... one didn't have the opportunity to continue for higher studies.

Because one didn't know well neither Turkish nor Greek. (Interview with H. K.)

Younger Rhodian Muslims have a different experience from the middle-aged members of the community regarding education. They attend the common curriculum without any special provision for language and religious courses, except for their right to abstain from the latter. The young Muslims interviewed referred to the need to learn their mother tongue as well as take religious courses, although, from a contextual point of view, they seemed to resonate a socially expected opinion rather than their own. Making sense of cultural diversity for them revolves around the manifestations rather than the transcendental choices pertinent to religion. The aforementioned integration of the communities' internal micro-structures in the wider network of social relations places them in a context of pre-described choices with which they cannot empathise. It is exactly that lack of empathy with the symbolic shell that brings them in awkward moments.

After the introduction, just from the name, the other person asks "Sorry, what?". When I tell them about my religion, they look at me in the beginning in a reserved way. Until they get to know me and understand that I am not the stereotypical Muslim who is religious and always there and only believes this and that... until they understand who I really am and get to know me... I faced that and I always face that. (Interview with I.S.)

OK, as a child, for example, other students... I'm talking for the primary or the junior high school now ok? Other children were making the sign of the cross, for example [during morning prayer]. I did not. I should not do it. And I was feeling strange. (Interview with G. N.)

Interestingly, some of the interviewed young Muslims have developed an unconscious strategy to accommodate their diversity in the educational

environment. Although entitled to abstain from the religious courses, they chose to stay and attend the class. They would participate by providing their own opinion or attempting a comparative approach between religions. The interviewees along with two young informants who provided information without providing an interview stressed the fact that they would stay in the classroom with their own initiative. Their participation in the discussion was usually impulsive and sometimes encouraged by the teacher. In any case both the interviewees and the informants would narrate those incidents as “small victorious moments”, despite the fact that they have taken place from five to fifteen years earlier. In those moments, their diversity became functional and valuable for the group. The indirectly divisionary educational practice, namely the religious courses that concern mainly the Christian Orthodox doctrine and practice, did not deepened an identity separation but lead to a new sense of belonging.

Take me as an example, when we were attending religion courses. I am supposed, as a Muslim, to be out of the class, not to attend, because it doesn't concern me. It doesn't concern me because the course is not for my religion. Nonetheless, because of religious [spiritual] interest... for Christianity etc., because we wouldn't learn for other religions in general. I would attend, and I liked it. I liked the idea to attend religious courses, I would attend them. And many times, without thinking about it, I was raising my hand [participating in the course] to say something. [...] Some would admire that... some classmates were thinking that this is nice. But OK, I told you it doesn't mean anything that I was attending the class. I was attending from interest to see what the other religion is saying. (Interview with G. N.).

Education and the New Other: Inclusivity at the “Doorstep”

In the framework of the inclusion/exclusion function of borders, Rhodes constitutes an interesting case since the negotiation of the identity of the newcomers, namely of the refugees and the immigrants, happens on a social basis which already negotiates the integration of a *sui generis* Other, namely

the Rhodian Muslims. The functional integration of the latter provides insights on processes that should be avoided or elaborated. In that framework, the two initial hypotheses of the research project were not confirmed. Neither the common cultural feature, namely the Muslim religion, nor the common experience of diversity could become the convergence point between the two social groups with the view to the integration of the immigrants. Therefore, it was confirmed that empathy alone doesn't have the potential to overcome the externally appointed identities in the othering processes.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the Muslim community of Rhodes is standing against refugees and immigrants. On the contrary, a humanitarian approach has been recorded in every single interview. The issue is that this humanitarian approach is directed solely towards the coverage of the immediate needs of the newcomers. Different approaches are identified when the issue of integration came into the discussion. In that case, older and middle-aged members of the community were concerned about the finiteness of the island's resources against a massive migration influx or the economic hardship Greece and Greeks are going through during those circumstances. Younger members did not hold unanimously the same opinion. The concerns expressed by some of them resonated the issues mentioned by older members of the community. Others, however, were much more open to negotiate the integration of refugees and immigrants, even though they were aware of the practical difficulties. The following excerpts from interviews with younger Muslims are indicative of the antitheses.

Do you believe that there is space here in Rhodes to integrate into the society? [...] to coexist with us here, to be able to find a job, to go to school.

[...] The image we have at least from television is that themselves want to go to European countries such as Germany or other European countries, they don't want to stay here [...] now if they can integrate or not, this is a big issue. Firstly, they are too many, all of them [...] they are not five or ten. From that point onwards, indeed from the

moment they want to go to other countries, I don't think that they could integrate here as you mentioned, namely to go to schools etc. Since Rhodes is a special case, because of the Muslim community, could that play any role in the help we could provide as... Governments cannot do anything; how could the Muslim community of each area do anything? (Interview with G. N.)

Do you think, there is space here in Rhodes for them to integrate or to assimilate?

There is always space. The point is that... it will take them a lot of time and many years... to find the best, how can I say that... the suitable groups, the suitable... the suitable persons in order to integrate.

Where could they find them?

Difficult. Difficult. I mean, in the beginning, they may... until they integrate, they may experience racism, they will hear a lot. Until they assimilate to the society.

Here in Rhodes there is a Muslim community, could it be a different case?

It will not be different, because the Muslim community of Rhodes is dispersed. It is virtually inexistent... it is not united. In general, its members don't have the best relations among each other. (Interview with I. S.)

The second interviewee, although understanding the difficulties starts with an affirmation which means that he is ready to negotiate issues of integration and consequently of belonging in Rhodes. In contrast with the above, the young Muslim informants who didn't provide an interview were much more open to the integration of refugees and immigrants by insisting on the need for school attendance.

The latter brings us to the critique of the educational policy that has been implemented and its potential application for the case of the new Others. The parallel curriculum, regardless of the reasons for which it has been designed, proved to be counterproductive in terms of integration of the cultural diversity in Rhodes. It prolonged the communitarian educational system and

embedded by that the social boundaries and the external appointment of identities. At the same time the parallel curriculum proved to be counterproductive in terms of achieving educational goals as confirmed by the interviewees who either avoided any request for its re-introduction or openly expressed their disappointment from that system.

As for the current educational system, seems that falls short in preserving the continuity in the community's cultural capital. On the other hand, the subconscious strategies employed by young Rhodian Muslims to render their cultural diversity useful for the small community of the class, proves three issues. The first one regards the need to overcome the exclusions imposed by social boundaries. Indeed, to the extent that diversity is not entrenched and ghettoized in the local society it will always struggle to achieve full integration. The second one regards the personal empowerment. Participants in a culturally diverse capital are empowered both psychologically and socially when they are offered the opportunity to become useful to the social group for what they are, namely culturally diverse members of the same group. The third issue is the other side of the coin of the previous case. The participation of the cultural diversity in the smaller or wider social group, and in the classroom as in the present case, enriches significantly the educational experience. It appears then, that the exposition of social actors in processes of mutual and productive cultural exchange can be the initial point in the deconstruction of the social boundaries and the gradual development of a new sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The economic crisis in Greece has already moved the country to the conceptual periphery of the European Union increasing by that the country's dependence on the economic and political decision making of the centre. In combination with the fact that Greece is in the actual geographical periphery of Europe, the consequence is the instrumental use of the country for the

management of the mixed migration flows. That “threshold” function of the boundaries, namely the filtering action between entrance and exit is substantial to the formation of patterns of inclusion and exclusion and consequently of binary identities between the Self and the Other.

In that “perfect storm”, the reaction to the othering process is essential as an attempt to intervene in the continuation of that vicious cycle. In Rhodes island, Greece, the centuries-long presence of a Muslim community constitutes a local *sui-generis* Other, functionally integrated in the local society, and at the same time a case of examination for the inclusion and exclusion policies of the past. The way that the Rhodian Muslims make sense of their diversity is subject to intergenerational differences. With the exception of the older members of the community who make sense of their diversity in the form of survivals of the millet system, middle-aged and younger members of the community find the premises of their diversity in the cultural capital and the way in which it is currently accommodated. In that sense, the educational system is essential in understanding the patterns of full integration to the society. Divisionary practices such as the parallel curriculum have been proven counterproductive and it can be safely ascertained that it would be counterproductive in the case of the integration of refugees and immigrants. Contrariwise, the convergence, in the same point and process, of the bearers of different cultural premises may effectively expose and deconstruct the social boundaries towards the formation of a common new sense of belonging.

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