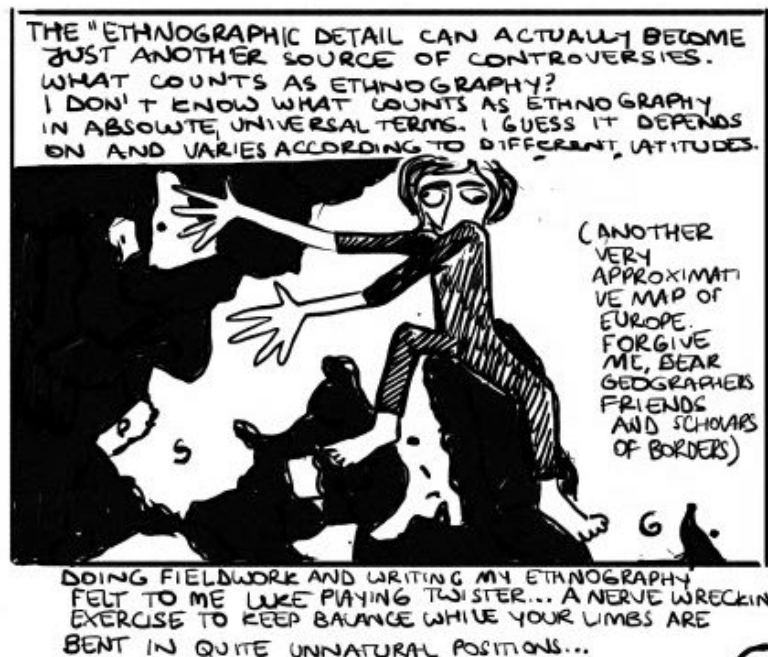




Whose crisis is this crisis?

Letizia Bonanno

May, 2023



This post is part of our [Encountering Precarities](#) series. The thematic thread engages with the multiple and asymmetrical forms of precarisation and vulnerabilisation involving both ethnographers and their interlocutors in and beyond the field.

Whose crisis is this crisis? is a short ethno-graphic reflection on how conflicting, shifting imaginaries of the Greek crisis have shaped the ethnography fieldwork I carried out in Athens between 2015 and 2017. Throughout the seven pages comprising my contribution, I tease out how anthropological theories informing my research questions eventually stood at odds with the actual lived experience of my fieldwork. Following Couroucli (2007), I reckon with the reality of fieldwork where the autobiographical and the ethnographic overlap, often creating uncanny epistemological counter-circuits. Yet, at the same, they can open up unexpected margins for solidarity which often thrives on a shared sense of heightened



precarity and vulnerability.

Benefitting from the affordances that the so-called *graphic ethnography turn* in anthropology allows in terms of self-reflexivity (Bonanno 2019), auto-ethnographic interventions (Theodossopolos 2020) and novel modes of representation sensitive to the subjective dimensions of the ethnographic encounters, my contribution wants to push further such affordances and activate the potential that the graphic medium retains to move critiques that at times are theoretical and political too. In this sense, my work aligns with the broader tradition of political cartooning (Theodossopoulos 2021) and, more specifically, with the Italian comic tradition where pop-culture elements and figures, characters and stereotypes are saturated in order to make them explode in the attempt to unsettle common-sensical, ordinary perceptions of reality (academic, ethnographic or else).

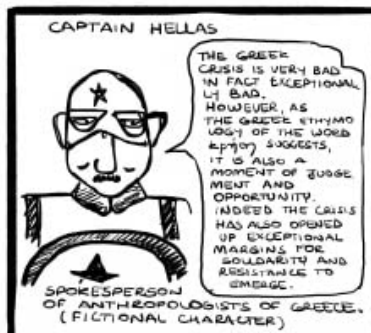
The anthropological debate on the so-called Greek crisis, its supposed exceptionality and the social, collective and grassroots responses it triggered has resulted in a burgeoning wealth of academic articles that, although not explicitly cited, have informed the pages I have drawn.



LUKE GREECE // REFRACTIONS



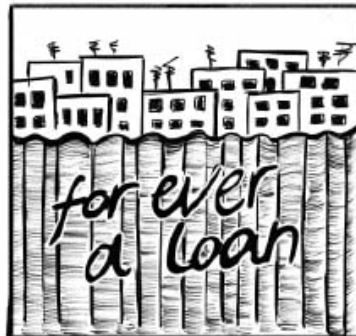
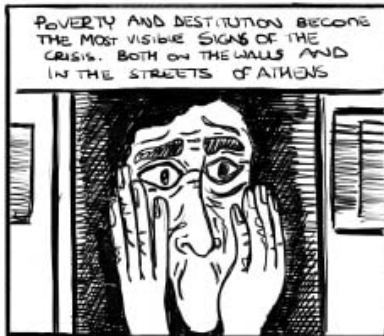
DESPITE MONTI AND THE AUSTERITY, THE CRISIS KEPT HITTING ITALY HARD: USUAL STUFF, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, CUTS TO PENSIONS AND WELFARE SERVICES, PRIVATISATION OF ANYTHING THAT COULD BE PRIVATISED. TIRED AND HUMILIATED (AS MANY OTHERS) TO ASK MY PARENTS € 50 TO GET BY, AS MANY OTHERS I LEFT ITALY. IN 2012 I MOVED TO LONDON, IN 2014 TO MANCHESTER AND STARTED MY PH.D. IN JULY 2015 I MOVED TO ATHENS TO START MY FIELDWORK.



και καλό ταξίδι.



REVERBERATIONS// SHIFTING IMAGINARIES





EXPLANATIONS // ENCOUNTERS

THE ENTHUSIAST



THE NATIONALIST



THE LEFT INTERNATIONALIST
INTEGRATING INTO
TRANSPANNING (IN THE SHAPE
OF A SQUARE)



CULTURAL INTIMACY
ADVOCATE IN ANTI-GERMANY
FUNCTION (IN THE SHAPE
OF MARIA CALAS)





MANSPLAINATIONS// THE IMMORAL ECONOMY OF THE SOUTH



I am very aware that this is a very Western, in fact totally Eurocentric map. However it serves the purpose of visualising the axes of my positioning and positionality as well as the coordinates of my personal, political and not least academic trajectories.

THIS IS THE OMNISCIENT FINGER, TOOL OF THE PATRIARCHY AND REVIEWERZ, IN FACT ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESSFULLY MANSPLAINING (SEE BELOW:)



HOWEVER THE OMNISCIENT FINGER CAN BE USED AGAINST BOTH THE PATRIARCHY AND REVIEWERZ, ESPECIALLY IN ANTICIPATION OF THOSE "MORE A COMMENT THAN AN ACTUAL QUESTION" THINKING.

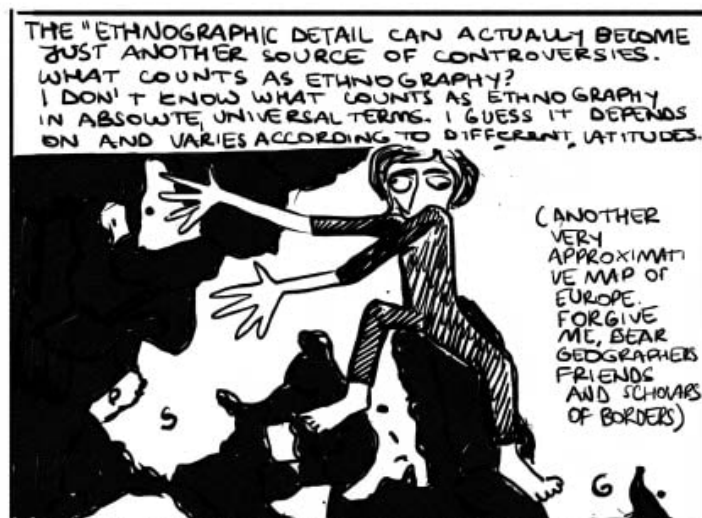
PIIGS IS A VERY UNFORTUNATE ACRONYM USED TO DESIGNATE THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (NAMELY PORTUGAL, IRELAND, ITALY, GREECE AND SPAIN) THAT HAD BEEN IMPACTED BY THE 2008 CRISIS MORE VIOLENTLY. SUCH CRISIS - AS ANY OTHER CRISIS - HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS ORGANIC TO CAPITALISM, IN FACT ESSENTIAL TO THE PROCESS OF CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION. EVEN THOUGH THE CRISIS WAS ECONOMIC, CONSIDERATIONS OF MORAL ORDERS WERE OFTEN MOBILISED TO EITHER JUSTIFY SOME POLITICAL DECISION MADE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL OR TO EXPLAIN WHY THE CRISIS UNFOLDED WITH SUCH EXCEPTIONAL VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH. SOME SAY THAT EUROPE MIGHT BE A MORAL SCIENCE, INDEED DISCOURSE ON "WHO ACTUALLY DESERVES TO BELONG TO EUROPE" STARTED CIRCULATING MORE & MORE.



THE TROIKA (EU, ECB, IMF) AS NOSFERATU (CAPITALISM THAT SUCKS THE BLOOD OF THE WORKERS)



INTERPRETATIONS // THE ETHNOGRAPHIC DEVIL (IN DETAIL)



DOING FIELDWORK AND WRITING MY ETHNOGRAPHY FELT TO ME LIKE PLAYING TWISTER... A NERVE WRECKING EXERCISE TO KEEP BALANCE WHILE YOUR LIMBS ARE BENT IN QUITE UNNATURAL POSITIONS...

5



IMAGINATIONS// REPRESENTATIONS

(GREXIT WAS THE SPECTRE THAT HAUNTED EUROPE (THEN BREXIT HAPPENED))

WHAT I AM TRYING TO SAY IS AS OBVIOUS AS HARD TO ADMIT...

BEHIND AND BEYOND THE DIFFERENT POLITICS OF REPRESENTATIONS, THERE ARE POLITICS SHAPING REPRESENTATIONS

GREECE HAS NEVER BEEN PART OF EUROPE.

THE GREEK CRISIS IS THE ULTIMATE SIGN OF THE FAILURE OF THE EU

SOMETIMES THESE POLITICS MIRROR AND AT THE SAME TIME INFORM THESE LATITUDES...

I'M FROM A PIGS COUNTRY!

AND BY LATITUDES I MEAN POSITIONINGS AND POSITIVITIES ALONG THE SOUTH-NORTH AXIS,

CRISIS IS JUST ANOTHER WORD, EMPTY WORD FOR ME. THE REFUGEE CRISIS, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS... ALL THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS, IN GREECE AS WELL IN ITALY

I MEAN HOW UP WE ARE ON THE ACADEMIC LADDER OF PRESTIGE, POWER AND REPUTATION

IF YOU ASK ME HOW THE GREEK CRISIS LOOKED TO ME, I'D SAY IT WAS A SHITTY ONE, AS SHITTY AS ANY OTHER CRISIS: IT HAS MADE THE RICH RICHER, THE POOR POORER.

HOW MUCH DEEPLY WE ARE ENTANGLED (OR ENTRAPPED) IN NETWORKS OF POWER

AND THIS IS NOT TO UNDERMINE OF OTHER SCHOLARS OR TO UNDERSTIMATE AND TRIVIALIZE PEOPLE'S SUFFERING AND HARDSHIP. I KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

SEE PAGE 5

ALL THESE ASPECTS ADD TO SOME BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

THIS IS JUST TO SAY THAT MY EXPERIENCE OF THE SO-CALLED GREEK CRISIS, MY FIELDWORK IN ATHENS AND MY ETHNOGRAPHY HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY MY BEING ITALIAN, WHATEVER IT MIGHT MEAN...

WHICH ALTOGETHER CHANGE HOW WE THINK WITH AND THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL

I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS ABOUT CULTURAL INTIMACY OR CULTURAL PROXIMITY OR NEITHER OF THEM, OR THEIR ACTUAL NEGATION,

BUT ALSO HOW WE DO ETHNOGRAPHY AND WHAT WE WANT ETHNOGRAPHY TO DO FOR US

THE FACT IS THAT IT WAS HARD FOR ME TO MAKE SENSE (ethnographically speaking) OF THE MANY IMAGINATIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS ABOUT GREECE...

SEE PAGE 3



. MORE A COMMENT THAN A CONCLUSION .

I KNOW THAT SOMETIMES I CAN BE A BIT DRAMATIC; IT IS NOT BY CHANCE THAT I EARNED THE TITLE OF DRA(CH)MA QUEEN (SEE BELOW). JOKES ASIDE, IT TOOK ME SOME TIME TO RECONCILE ALL THE EXPECTATIONS THAT COME WITH DOING AND WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY.

I'VE FOUND VERY INSPIRING, USEFUL IN FACT ENLIGHTENING WHAT GREEK ANTHROPOLOGIST MARIA LOUROULI SAYS ABOUT THE OFTEN UNFAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR FIELDWORK. SHE SAYS THAT TENSIONS ALWAYS ARISE WHEN ETHNOGRAPHY ENTERS THE REALM OF POLITICS, NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY POLITICS. THESE TOPICS, SHE CONTINUES, SHOULD PROMPT A THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHER AS AN OUTSIDER AND THE COMMUNITY.

THE ETHNOGRAPHER'S IDENTITY AND POSITIONALITY PREDETERMINE THE CONTEXT (AND TO AN EXTENT THE CONTENT) OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTER AND EXCHANGE. 'ALL THIS MIGHT SOUND OBVIOUS TO MANY OF YOU. I FOUND THESE WORDS SOOTHING AND EMPOWERING TOO.



OTHER INFO: I DID MY FIELDWORK IN ATHENS BETWEEN 2015 AND 2017, AT THE HEIGHTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS. I CARRIED OUT MY RESEARCH ACROSS SOME GRASSROOTS MEDICAL FACILITIES AND I'VE ENDED UP WRITING ABOUT PHARMACEUTICALS. HOWEVER MY DECISION TO GO TO GREECE WAS MOTIVATED BY THE FACT THAT THE PSYCHIATRIC SYSTEM WAS INSPIRED BY BASAGLIA AND I WANTED TO LOOK AT COMMUNITY CARE. BUT THEN I LET THE ETHNOGRAPHY SPEAK...

(7)



[Download \(PDF, 16.76MB\)](#)

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