Teaching Anthropology in 'Crisis' Times at the Greek Borders: Emergency Temporalities Entering the Classroom during the Refugee Crisis in Lesbos

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Abstract

In this paper I examine how culturally-based forms of time in Greece were transformed by the presence of new, emergency-like categorizations of time due to 'crisis'. Reflecting on my teaching of anthropology on the island of Lesbos during the refugees' arrival, I analyze how Greek temporalities got disrupted and muddled by the new ones that the humanitarian crisis created. A stabilized, extended anthropological temporality that was imposed by human relationships, fieldwork and anthropological analysis, the focus-on-the-present temporality that the financial crisis created and a new, hasty, emergency-like temporality that characterized the refugee 'crisis' all entered university classrooms and needed coordination. Academic responses to these, often dissonant, life-rhythms exposed and expressed underlying antinomies related to time but also revealed scientific, political and moral issues, as a hyper-activist anthropology became dominant. Coping with alterity's time-spans in ordinary life, at some times resulted in hasty academic actions, at other times in long pauses.

Keywords: teaching, temporality, crisis, anthropology, fieldwork

Introduction

In the period 2015-2016 the East Aegean islands of Greece became a threshold space for thousands of refugees arriving from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, to Europe. This was perceived nationally and internationally as another period of 'crisis', on top of the financial crisis, which was already present in the country since 2010. Lesvos island, the main entrance point of the refugees, became a place of international interest and a media attraction. It also drew to its soil anthropology students, researchers and academics from all over the world, all wanting to have a glimpse of the 'refugee' spectacle and to have an experience, even short-lived, of fieldwork there. All this was taking place next to the University of the Aegean, an academic institution founded on the island in 1984 (and later expanding to other islands as well), simultaneously with its regular academic activities and during its teaching hours. The spatial proximity of the 'refugee crisis' to the University's anthropology department was to change the latter's routines and temporalities. The sharing of a common visual, acoustic and olfactory space by refugees and students, humanitarians and teachers, solidarians and university administrators brought challenges to its academic community: what was the temporality of this 'crisis' and how did it affect students' and teachers' perception and interpretation of this synchronic event? How was the teaching of participant observation as a long-term process to be transformed, at a site of 'emergency' and how could we combine the rule of anthropological lingering in the field with the desire to quickly grasp this new "uncanny present" (Bryant 2016)? Up to which point could we limit the time distance between facts and analysis so that our hermeneutic circle would not turn into a tiny ring of power that would destroy all rules of knowledge production? Finally, could we invent new, fast ways to (re)imagine what anthropology had to offer in uncertain, dark times (Alexander 2017:1)?

In 2015 I had completed 11 years of work as an anthropologist in Mytilene (the capital city of Lesvos) but it was the first time that I had seen changes in class modules, teaching methods, and field methods which had originated not from the academic staff but from students. The latter, affected by the surrounding disorder, brought pressing questions into university classrooms: "I don't understand what we are doing here. Right now, next to us in Moria there are people that need help. Can we talk about them? Can we do anything about that?" some students would say. Others asked: "[student] why don't we go to Moria? [me] to do what? [student] to see, to talk, to do fieldwork… [me] but you don't know how to do fieldwork yet. [student] So we are going to sit here

and talk about theories [of migration] when the refugee crisis is upon us?" The camp at Moria, established since 2013 just eight kilometers from Mytilene, was now a fieldwork fantasy for researchers of humanitarianism and state control. It had quickly showed signs of being over-researched, being a site not only of scientific interest but also of voyeurism and opportunism (Rosakou 2017). Students at the University of the Aegean could hardly escape its fame, as it was one of the most attractive camps in Europe (for researchers) and least dignified and least wanted camps (for refugees). Moria had become a space for action, an action with blurred activist and academic boundaries, making anthropology teachers confront new issues regarding locality, activism, and 'anthropology at home'[1] and leading them to "pedagogic moment[s] of rupture when [they had to] decide to challenge disciplinary pedagogies and carve out new directions in response to new challenges" (Alexander 2017: 1). Teaching anthropology in this context was for many of us an ordeal, a quest for coordinating different temporalities and paces of social and academic work.

The present article understands the 'refugee crisis' as an event upon another event, preventing the replication of previous local and national social structures in expected ways (Sahlins 1985: 153) and creating its own temporality. The 'refugee crisis's' temporality interacts, informs and transforms other, social and mainly academic temporalities. 'Crisis', this "analytically crippled term" (Bryant 2016: 20), is here treated as a discursive motif that signifies a departure and a "divergence from temporary 'normal' life" (op.cit.) and creates a distinct experience of temporality in itself. Temporality is a notion that,

> …views time as a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices. People are 'in' a sociocultural time of multiple dimensions […] [T]hese dimensions are lived or apprehended concretely via the various meaningful connectivities among persons, objects, and space continually being made in and through the everyday world. (Munn 1992: 116)

I follow 'crisis' at three different levels, those of: a) a 'crisis' site and its own emergent "rhythm of social life" (Durkheim 1965), b) a field site and the temporality that governs its relationships, and c) a teaching site and the temporality that informs knowledge production. 'Crisis' here becomes both a collective and a personal destabilization of time and practices. During this self-reflective socio-temporal research, I examine how differentiated temporal rhythms impinge on interpretive knowledge production, ethnography, and the teaching of anthropology and create – in the midst of hermeneutical circles - a new rhythmic (or arrhythmic) motif. The academic 'taskscape'[2] that developed on Lesvos during the 'crisis' is treated as being accompanied by a new temporality that "lies not in any particular rhythm, but in the network of interrelationships between the multiple rhythms of which, the taskscape is itself constituted" (Ingold 1993: 160).

My inquiries originate from, and concern an understanding of, that midstream moment when a researcher and a teacher finds herself in a spiral of differentiated temporalities of localities of fieldwork, frameworks of analysis and contexts of dissemination which, in their turn, become part of the process of anthropological knowledge. I aim to reveal these temporalities in the context of the Greek 'crises' on Lesvos, and to examine their repercussions in practicing anthropology.

'Crisis' Temporalities

During the Greek financial 'crisis'[3] Greece became part of global geographies of 'crises' (Roitman 2014: 3). 'Crisis' became an ethnic signifier as well as an ethnic experience. According to Roitman (2014), "crisis serves as the noun-formation of contemporary historical narrative; it is […] mobilized in narrative constructions to mark out or to designate "moments of truth" […] [C]risis moments are defined as instances when normativity is laid bare […]". That is, in Greece, multiple 'crisis' narratives combined in the period 2015-2016: a financial 'crisis' first was combined later with a humanitarian ('refugee') 'crisis', resulting in a particular construction of history and with it, a construction of time present, time past and time future.

On some occasions, a past that was once "an accommodating synthesis" of traditions living and dead (Faubion 1993: 152) was disconnected from and rejected as a component of a national self that was based on a fake reality of security and leisure, guilty for the present failure. People's stories of refusal of property inheritance in Greek families to avoid the inherited family debts accumulated during the 'crisis', showed this disconnectedness from kinship structures, family history, a failing state as well as from national history (Knight 2018). On other occasions, the past became an active component of a national self that was historically constructed as possessing a deep local knowledge of refugeeness and uprooting, that no other Europeans possessed. A knowledge that, coming from back in 1923 and the exchange of populations,[4] was perceived as being inherited and owned only

by Greeks (especially elders living on the Greek borders) who exhibited their unique humanitarianism and humaneness during the 'refugee crisis' (Voutira 2003, Topali 2020). The "existential memory work" (Sutton 2008, 85) of the 'crisis' also involved discourses on austerity policies bearing resemblances between the present, the German Occupation of the Second World War and the Great Famine of 1941-43 (Kalantzis 2016) and turned 'resistance' into a socio-political and ethnic treasure. On Lesvos, the experience and stories of dinghies reaching the shores, wet terrified refugees coming off them, dead bodies, life-jackets, shoes, and children's toys washing ashore became incorporated into indigenous 'refugee' histories through an analogic memory work that transformed the disordered, foreign, and traumatic present "refugee crisis" into a "remembered repast" (Sutton 2008), which is ever-present in Greek history, ordered and glorious.

The present also emerged in the form of an –almost eternal- emergency condition characteristic of the post-modern period in which "new nonchronological and nontemporal pattern[s] of immediacies" result in a "reduction to the present" (Jameson 2002:707, 709). This extended present of Greek "crises" created a strong "perception on present-ness" (Bryant 2016: 20). For some people this was a condition of being "trapped within a time loop of the present" (Knight 2018; 32) sunk in apathy, passivity and resignation. For others, that present-ness brought, in its turn, an irreducible moral and aesthetic adoration of what many Greek people called the "here and now". This "here and now" had already been idealized in the disemic reasoning present in Greek society, that is a formal or coded tension between official self-representation and representations arising in the privacy of collective introspection (Herzfeld 1997: 14). The former involved a "Hellenic" identity while the latter a 'Romios' identity that 'reflect[ed] the habitual way in which the Greeks have responded to their modern political predicament, namely their position on the "margins" of Europe, both as its spiritual "ancestor" and its political "pariah"' (Herzfeld 1997: 18). In this scheme, the "here and now" characterized the 'Romios' side of Greek society, uncontrollable, chaotic, disorganized, insecure and open to the future (Faubion 1993: 155, Herzfeld 1989). On Lesvos during the 'crisis', the "here and now" became something more: normalized, politicized, ethnicized, almost monolithic, dominant in visual representations, political agendas and collective practices. Almost anyone aimed to "be there, at this moment" and participate in the intoxicating "here and now" that was composed of saving people from the sea, dressing them, feeding them, directing them, watching and managing death. Finally, there was a third group of people that remained socio-politically active but also remained untouched by the allure and haste of the "here and now". All three perceptions of the present had in common a lack of the future as something imagined and anticipated. Even the otherwise open to the future 'Romioi', who defended the logic of the "here and now", could not easily describe an imagined future. Bryant (2016) describes this particular sense that present-ness has in periods of crises as: "[an] uncanny present produced by futures that cannot be anticipated" (Bryant 2016: 20). These were presents that, devoid of –often-both past and future, could hardly anchor people in an environment (to borrow from Merleau-Ponty, 2012). People were suspended in a limited time-space continuum that behaved as an event horizon: past light from inside did not radiate to (en)lighten the 'crisis' experience, while anything approaching from outside the 'crisis' could never really escape its own loop of interpretation.

The future was, indeed, the big loser of the Greek 'crisis', as people were disconnected from anything coming from far away (Europe, the Greek state), or, from much later. There were those that saw some 'hope' in everyday life, perceiving the latter as a generalized condition of "resistance" that would lead somewhere better. But most built a short-term security and a controllable time-span for their plans and desires that involved no anticipation. In work, the social field that suffered the most during the 'crisis', people started perceiving past achievements (e.g. in CVs) as just illusions of a past, active self, that could no longer decisively intervene in its life course (Papagaroufali 2018: 164), illusions that could not "buy their future in advance" (Feldman 2009 in o.p.). These were props of an old order that could only contribute to the "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) of the present-ness of the 'crisis', where neither horizons of expectation, nor thresholds of anticipation could be seen.

Fieldwork Temporality

The 'crisis' on Lesvos created a powerful ethical and academic imperative to study things 'there', at this place where anthropological curiosity and "voyeuristic quasi-pornography" (Kelly 2013:213) formed a troubling combination. Spending a lot of time on the island, I found myself under the spell of this social and mostly academic mandate to observe the 'refugee crisis', even though I never openly expressed such a will or desire. It seemed that just "being there" had turned me into a witness of this particular 'crisis', which in this particular case bestowed upon me the moral obligation to enlighten the world with an almost essentialized, already possessed, ethnographic knowledge. Khoshravi, in his ethnography of border crossing says that: "auto-ethnography gains its narrative power from the concept of witnessing. The significance of the voice of the witness is that the witness

has been there, has seen what happened. Witnesses have themselves lived the disaster, and might themselves be victims. They can retell the story and unfold the event with first-hand authority. This does not mean that witnesses, just because they are insiders, possess the only authentic approach" (Khoshravi 2010: 6). On Lesvos, living and/or working on the island, or just "being there" resulted in such strong identifications with the 'victims', that it automatically turned all of us into witnesses as well as (auto-)ethnographers of the "refugee crisis", regardless of experience, identities, expertise and actual fieldwork. Papataxiarchis describes that "[f]rom a volunteer point of view, being on the front line and offering […] services has a special value. It is a mark of distinction. It makes all the difference" (Papataxiarchis 2016: 4). I would add that also from the anthropologist's (teacher, researcher, student) point of view "being there" was a mark of distinction that made all the difference, building promising social, political, and work identities, hierarchies, and careers.

Up until 2015 when I was teaching field methods to undergraduate and graduate students I always talked about the long-term engagement with other people's lives, "hanging around", waiting for things to happen or, finally, learning that what is happening when waiting is what this is all about: waiting was in itself an anthropological action of great importance, sometimes an agential one, rather than "a passive modality of being" (Hage, 2009: 2). I taught slowness and patience as necessary for recording and understanding human relationships, and promoted anti-rapid notions of time inculcated into our bodily anthropological being as we grow up in the academic discipline (to paraphrase Gosden 1994:16). Quotations like "most of the anthropologist's time is spent sitting around, waiting for informants, doing errands, drinking tea, taking genealogies, mediating fights, being pestered for rides, and vainly attempting small talk […]" (Rabinow 1977: 154) were common as was that "observation is the governing term of the pair [participant observation]" (Rabinow 1977: 79). I discussed rapid methodologies and short time frames in the field (months or weeks instead of years), in a hurry, and only when one had "to achieve […] to intervene in peoples lives in new ways, that [we]re intensive, potentially intrusive and involve[d] asking what they might think [we]re irrelevant questions" (Pink and Morgan 2013: 4-5)[5]. During methodology courses I would take students to the city of Mytilene to do exercises that would familiarize them with the practicalities of fieldwork, provide them with embodied knowledge of what they discussed inside classrooms (Hurn 2012: 70), or expose them to emotionally charged conditions as we agreed that emotions played significant roles in "knowledge making" during the ethnographic process (Spencer 2011). I considered time and the bodily and emotional involvement it offered, essential for anthropological work. The logic of witnessing, though, was different: it ignored time and immensely strengthened emotional involvement.

Witnessing affected ethnographic methodology and turned participant observation to a (short-term) active or inactive presence, the latter acquiring an –almost undoubted- "first-hand authority" (Khoshravi 2010: 6). Witnessing was catching the "here and now" of the 'crisis' through activism, volunteerism, interest, etc. In 2015 and 2016, students, adopting a similar logic became far from content with my insistence on long fieldwork durations, slowly formed relationships, fieldtrips to the city of Mytilene to study local cultures and social interaction. They did not ask for methodology classes that would teach them *how* to "be there". Witnessing the 'crisis' as ethnic Greeks, and politically sensitive volunteers, humanitarians and solidarians had already equipped them with this *know how,* or so they thought. What they asked for was a methodology class that would provide them with what they thought they did not already possess: access. "Aren't you taking us to Moria?", "I took this course because I thought that we would enter Moria's camp", they said. Access to refugees and their camps was the currency of the time, and anthropology, as a powerful network of mediators to the 'crisis' and in general, could provide it. As witnessing ensured participation (of a certain kind), observation (and along its temporality) was discredited as being slow, parochial, or even elitist as it implied a return to a western gaze, and its imaginary harmony and comfort (rather than what it, usually, was or resulted in: a hermeneutic strife involving the academic self(-ves)). The old contradiction between participation and observation, fieldwork experience and objective data collection, fieldwork memoirs and ethnographies, processes and products of anthropological work and later from participant observation to the observation of participation (Tedlock, 1991) had faded away and participation without (necessarily the need of) observation became the new trend. Fieldwork discussions, first person confessional accounts, experiential writing, and narrative ethnographic vignettes coming from just "being there", whether observing or not, were valued. The anthropologist did not have to return to the academic and exhibit his records to be celebrated as a hero because he had completed the ordeal of fieldwork. He/she was already a hero for being in the field[6]. That alone was enough to baptize him/her: 'anthropologist'. Pedagogically speaking, firsthand accounts were no longer useful to prepare future ethnographers for fieldwork: they were the only accounts students would respond to, especially if they referred to Lesvos and 'refugees' in this strange kind of "refugee rush" or "refugee fever".

In Greece, to rush was described by ethnographers as a component of the 'Romios' identity (Herzfeld 1989), I

discussed above. Now, through witnessing, rushing was becoming part of a newly-formed "Hellenic" identity (the 'Romios' identity was never used by my students), contrasted with a "European" one: the "Hellenic" person was imagined as spontaneous, mobile, fast, humane, living in the "here and now", the "European" as rational, slow to respond, inhumane, living in past time. National and social knowledge of the 'refugee Other' was thought of as possessed by the 'Hellenes' not the 'Europeans'[7]. Through this ethnic knowledge, the difference of the 'refugee Other' was already diminished, being incorporated into Greek normativity, a devouring anthropofagos[8] of anything eastern and non-European. As the divide between field and home became more blurred than ever, witnessing magnified ethnically-oriented[9] lenses of perception and through the authority it attributed, weakened reflexivity.

Teaching Temporality

Even more than in anthropological writings, oral anthropological narratives during teaching make use of the ethnographic present reflecting the ahistorical or synchronic pretence of anthropology (Crapanzano 1986:51). Teaching anthropology often involves descriptions of people, who were described in atemporal terms as the description proceeded, even though they had been originally placed in specific temporal terms, thereby creating a "cold" Levi-Straussian environment of diachronic no-change. However, the ethnographic present also reveals the between-ness of fieldwork and the ethnographer's sharing of time, a time "not *of* but *with* others [that] make ethnography escape our ordinary historical categories" (Hastrup 1990: 57). Thus, teaching narratives, our narratives, create both timeless and essentializing presents, and new –in-between- presents in the quest for structures, models, motifs and patterns that would bridge theory with fieldwork experience. Inside the classroom the production of anthropological knowledge becomes an academic rite of knowledge that is a "machine for the destruction of time" (Gell 1992: 27), but also a creator of another time, of another present that "preserves the reality of anthropological knowledge" (Hastrup 1990: 45). The passing from fieldwork to ethnography and from ethnography to anthropology while teaching anthropology is also a temporal transition, or as Ingold put it:

> [t]he world stands still for no one, least of all for the artist or the anthropologist, and the latter's description, like the former's depiction, can do no more than catch a fleeting moment in a never-ending process. In that moment, however, is compressed the movement of the past that brought it about, and in the tension of that compression lies the force that will propel it into the future (Ingold 2008: 74).

In the year 2015, I was spending more time in the classroom than anywhere I might call the field. Even though I did regard time in the classroom as part of my anthropological practice and an integral part of my hermeneutic circle I never told my students that anthropology was what I was doing with them and preferred to reproduce the idea that anthropology was what I was doing with my colleagues, and mostly with other people in other places, but not with them, keeping them "[l]ocked out of the power-house of anthropological knowledge construction" (Ingold 2008: 89). And until then, students did not demand to expose the "scandal" (ibid: 89-90) of not being recognized as active participants but rather as recipients in the construction of anthropological knowledge.

With the 'refugee crisis' things changed and for the first time, students adopted an active(-ist) stance towards – not only refugees- but also academic knowledge, which they set in motion through in-the-classroom interaction and outdoor fieldwork. Dialogue-based peer learning methods were now easily applied as students were eager to discuss 'neoliberalism' and 'capitalism', 'power relations' and 'resistances', hopelessness and desperation clearly choosing a 'dark'[10] anthropological framework (Ortner 2016) to situate and interpret the 'refugee crisis'. They not only wanted to go to Moria, they also wanted to discuss Moria because it stood in their minds as a symbol for global inequality, governmentality, neocolonialism, and also of a present-ness they needed to bring into their anthropological studies.

As a result of my reluctance to violate the slow temporalities of fieldwork, my not only 'dark' but also 'bright' theorizing, and -my overall- "temporal anesthesia" (Gell 1992: 24-25), attendance at my classes suddenly dropped. If through teaching, a mirror is turned explicitly and publicly on ourselves, as Herzfeld says, through lack of student audiences during the 'crisis' another mirror was turned on me filled with local, ethnic, European, academic, humanitarian and refugee reflections. It was a mirror magnifying my ambivalence regarding the time and space distance required to do fieldwork, to analyse, to teach, and my ambivalence concerning the multiple 'Hellenic' identities, and new divisions between 'us' and 'Others'. I was, finally, more than ever ambivalent about how I could be an anthropology teacher in times of 'crisis' while retaining an ethics of possibility, grounded in "those ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that increase the horizons of hope" (Appadurai 2013: 295).

Some students left the class to join solidarians in northern Lesvos, others stayed in Mytilene choosing to hang out outdoors or attend more revolutionary classes than my own. The rest became restless and brought into class the urgency for an ethnography-in-the-making and for changes in the establishment of the aims of migration courses (or even of the department itself). The messy, however exciting, 'here and now' of dinghies, dead bodies, rescue groups, 'victims' and 'heroes' silenced abstract anthropological schemes and old ethnographies but also rehumanized stories of Otherness inside anthropology classes. Student anticipation for book descriptions (not always so fervent anyway) and my "meta-message(s) about what anthropology as a whole either [was] or should be" (Coleman 2011: 2) grew fainter and a quest for grasping, not the present-ness of the past, but the present-ness of the present dominated anthropological discussions and practices.

The urge "to feel the adrenaline" (as a graduate humanitarian reflecting on her experience put it) was both informative and unsettling, part of the Millennial students' (born between the 80s and mid-2000s) "'Fast Food' manner of attaining information and responses" (Smith and Koltz, 2012: 7). It was affirming recent research on the Millennial Generation that suggested they were easily bored because of their being raised in a multi-media environment that required a rapid shift of attention from one source of information to another, because they craved interactivity and action, and because they required immediate responses to teaching and supervision practices (Oblinger 2003, Roeling et.al. 2010). Anthropology was, or so I thought, about life and death experiences, social values like humaneness and dignity, culturally informed categories like the "refugees" and the "Europeans", the "East" and the "West". Was it also about "feeling the adrenaline"[11]? How could "dark" anthropological theories balance this adrenaline-packed, short-term fieldwork often resulting in fragmentary data, weak historical and cultural contextualization, and, finally, thin descriptions? How could hermeuneutic circles survive haste and its resulting predictability? If the grant proposals' request to know in advance the research's happy ending was posing a risk to the quality of social research (Rabinow 2008: 8), the activistic anthropological 'crisis' and its haste to grasp unhappy realities that would verify its theorizing, run the same risk.

Conclusion: Shrunk Hermeneutic Cycles, Uncoordinated Temporalities

In this article I tried to explore "the coexistence of different events within one durational configuration" (Nielsen 2014: 168), to sink into the temporal manifoldness (Bergson 1965) of simultaneous 'crises' and to follow their power to weaken, or even, destroy hermeneutic circularity. I followed this hermeneutic circularity mainly from the position of the anthropology teacher, even though this position was strongly affected initially by that of the researcher, later by that of the writer and probably others as well. As a teacher, I had to confront student's research questions that concerned a rather shared social experience, that of the 'refugee crisis', on the island of Lesbos. Lesbos was turning from a Greek island and a working and living environment into an –almost obligatory for all social scientists- fieldwork utopia "filled with a collective agonistic desire to unfix and displace the orderly and ordinary terms of despair" (Athanasiou 2020: 38). Sharing it created for students a need for a more active, experiential anthropological knowledge and a more egalitarian student / teacher relationship, even for Millennials (Smith and Kotz 2012). But how was this contemporaneous living in 'crisis' affecting anthropological production and transmission of knowledge?

In Greece during its 'crises' researchers, teachers and students had to incorporate the quick and unsettling pace of the 'crisis' into the already unsteady interplay between experience, insight, and writing. On Lesvos, entering academic classrooms involved, moreover, the need to incorporate anthropological experience and understanding of everyday 'crises' into theorizing and teaching. The emergent character of the 'refugee crisis', combined with the university's proximity to this 'crisis' made the fusion of the perspectives of the researcher, the writer and the teacher difficult (or, for others, too easy). Methodology, theory, and pedagogy were equally challenged by the overall emergency. Someone would expect this complex situation to produce an enhanced sense of "suspicion, both [our] own and that of others, that [we] are not quite getting it right" and strengthen our certainty for a social reality and analysis that is "turtles all the way down" (Geertz 1993: 29)[12].

However, things moved to the opposite direction. In encounters with the Other during the 'crisis', his/her "preunderstanding" (Gadamer 1987:87) often remained undisturbed as encounters were happening too quickly and prefigurations of the Other –through witnessing- were too strong to be doubted. There was hardly "fieldwork in the field *and* beyond it" (Cohen 1992: 351-352), and seldom worlds of "between-ness" (Tedlock 1983: 323) exposing the dual nature of anthropological experience, writing, and teaching. There was not enough time for either reflexivity or reconstruction of interpretations based on personal experiences and memories. There were no anthropological "presents" (experiential and discursive) as the fieldwork's short but adrenaline-filled unique present dominated all. Anthropologists did no longer have to mediate between worlds separated in

time, neither between worlds separated in space. Lesvos created a time-space continuum inside which cultural mediation became so common (and, seemingly, so easy) that it raised no questions other than that of access to the field. Inside this continuum, the time span between anthropological field experience, writing, and teaching became extremely short. Presence (perceived as the one in the field) became the source of an absolute, unproblematized authority.

In this context, the process of "becoming" (Hastrup 1986: 9-10), "a metaphor for a kind of participation that can never be complete and which is not [an] immediate consequence of physical presence" (Hastrup 1990: 49), this integral part of the hermeneutic circle, weakened. Experiences, memories and intentions had to quickly melt and form "conclusions". Through fast-track 'interviews' and encounters, the cultural critique of the 'refugee crisis' rested incomplete and its conclusions lost the incomprehensiveness of "prophesies" (Hastrup 1990: 56), foretold by anthropologists and *later* incorporated in collective representations. There was no *later* on. Anthropological knowledge (or should I say "truth"?) produced in the past was easily applied in the present, leaving the future intact.

The presentness of the 'refugee crisis' entered classrooms and dominated the back and forth in the dialectic between teacher-world and the student-worlds. The anthropological "object" had changed and we could not "find our feet" with it. It was not anymore *about* the refugees, the humanitarians, the solidarians, the coast guard, the police. It was *us* that had become the enigma, anthropologists (teachers, researchers and students) fighting for access to Moria, performing witnessing and verifying "being there". The problem was our new timescapes[13], and with them, our new methodologies, discussions, analyses, and understanding. It was our transition from a passion for moving in circles between our worlds and other worlds, to a passion to get "there", from an unknown present and future to an enhanced experience of present-ness. We were breaking up the rules of our own game. As I, and my historical context, was becoming the Other the quest for "coherence"[14] rose again, but in a new, rather traumatic, way. The "dark anthropology" of the Greek 'crises' was producing a new hermeneutic circle in front of my eyes, shrunk, introverted, and spinning fast. Under its big shadow some of us rushed to a giant leap of faith, others stood hesitantly and wondered: this version of dark anthropology was really dark, but was it really anthropology?

Notes

[1] Manos (2010) described the effect of his position as a local researcher doing fieldwork 'at home', and his "continuous oscillation between 'personal self' and 'ethnographic self' on the production of cultural knowledge at the Greek northern borders (Manos 2010: 111). On Lesvos most of us were both "locals" and "strangers", "strangers" to the local community as Greeks coming from other parts of Greece and "locals" compared to foreigners who were residing in the island during the 'crisis' (academics, students, humanitarians, solidarians etc.) Our differentiated degrees of "strangeness" did not seem to disturb the control of local knowledge produced by Lesbian "locals" and its transmission to wider audiences, and until recently did not raise much local critique. It always required, though, an oscillation between multiple 'ethnographic selves' molded by their simultaneous action in different contexts and temporalities.

[2] Ingold (1993) defines 'task' as "any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment as part of his or her normal business of life. In other words, tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling. Every task takes its meaning from its position within an ensemble of tasks, performed in series or in parallel, and usually by many people working together. […] It is to the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking, that I refer to the concept of taskscape" (Ingold 1993:158).

[3] A collective mobilization during the financial turbulence that was accompanied by fantasies of "resistance" and a sense of great desperation (Knight 2013a, 2013b, Papataxiarchis 2018: 229).

[4] As a result of the Treaty of Lausanne that sanctioned the compulsory exchange of minorities between Greece and Turkey over one million Orthodox Greeks arrived in Greece as 'refugees' from Asia Minor.

[5] For studies on rapid ethnography see also Bentley, M. E., G. H. Pelto, W. L. Straus, D. A. Schumann, C. Adegbola, E. De La Pena, G. A. Oni, K. H. Brown and S. L. Huffman (1988), Manderson, L. and P. Aaby (1992), Millen, D. R. (2000), Hughes, J., V. King, T. Rodden, and H. Andersen (1995).

[6] For a discussion of the anthropologist as hero see Sontag (1994) and Hartman (2007).

[7] Inside my office, however, and during personal conversations with students the bipole of 'Europe'/'Hellenes' changed and future temporalities dominated for a while: plans about Erasmus placing, and hopes for studies in European graduate schools de-essentialized both 'Europe' and 'Hellenes' and created a fluidity in their contents. The ambivalence between Greek self-knowledge and self-representation (Herzfeld 1989), was organized around the instability of the meaning of the 'Hellenes' concept that was oriented to the East or the West, to Europe or outside of it, to collective or individualistic formations, towards the present or, seldom, towards the future.

[8] According to Khosravi (2010) the two dominant ways in which groups deal with outsiders are the anthropophagic stranger (drawing on the Greek for eating, *phagia*) and the anthropoemic (drawing on the Greek for making, *poesi*) response, the first entailing the consumption of the other, the second its expulsion.

⁹ For the researcher's distancing from local categories and perceptions of reality, even if one's cognitive project is 'activist anthropology' (or especially in that case), and for his/her attention to avoid the confusion of emic and etic categories during anthropological analysis and writing in 'times of crisis', see Papataxiarchis 2018.

¹⁰ Order defines "dark anthropology" as an "anthropology that emphasizes the harsh and brutal dimensions of human experience, and the structural and historical conditions that produce them" (Ortner 2016: 49).

¹¹ After 2017 and until the moment I wrote this article, things had completely changed. Almost nobody wanted to talk about Moria anymore or visit the area. "Refugees" became far from popular and all discussions about the "refugee problem" inside university classrooms initiated by students came to an end. The spectacle of the "refugee crisis" had finished, leaving many questions unanswered regarding the urge for "adrenaline" that moved people to Lesvos and students out of university classrooms.

¹² This Geertzian snippet from an indian story vividly describes the endless anthropological digging for interpretations upon interpretations of social constructions, even if one knows that he/she will never reach the bottom of them.

¹³ According to May & Thrift (2003) timescapes are networks of representations, technologies, disciplines, and rhythms in time carried out by individuals and collectivities (Bear 2014, 2016). According to Massey (2005) the term timescape evokes the mutual interdependence of time and space.

¹⁴ For a discussion of "coherence" as a main source of evaluating our methodology in the field see Gadamar (1987: 134-135).

Disclosure statement

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