

Observations on race and racism in Greece

Ageliki Lefkaditou

Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, Kjelsåsveien 143, 0491 Oslo, Norway; Institute of Health and Society, University of Oslo, Postboks 1130 Blindern, 0318 Oslo, Norway

e-mail: ageliki.lefkaditou@tekniskmuseum.no

In July 2013, I visited Athens for my archival research after only one year of living abroad. My hotel window looked out over Monastiraki Square, a popular meeting place for the buzzing crowds of tourists heading towards the Acropolis and the Ancient Agora or the neighbouring folklore shops and restaurants. That Saturday morning, the muddled sounds of performing musicians, street vendors, and heavy traffic made it almost impossible to concentrate. Suddenly all sound was gone, or at least this is how I remember it. I rushed to the window; a couple of dozens of Golden Dawn supporters, all dressed in black and waving Greek flags and their swastika-like banners, now occupied the square. They stayed there for less than ten minutes, during which time they kept shouting slogans against immigrants and the corrupt political system. A few hours later, while waiting to catch the metro at a nearby station, a similar group appeared on the opposite side of the tracks, and moved against two men with darker complexions. They pushed one of them onto the tracks and left running. It took a few seconds for the frozen by-standers to pull him out and make sure that he was not injured. The whole time I had my camera on trying to capture the attack, but my hands were shaking badly. I was scared and shocked. "What is happening to Greece?" was all I could think of.

My newsfeed has been full of such incidents in the last few years. Alarming reports from international organizations suggest that Greece is one of the most xenophobic countries in the European Union (EU). Resistance to multiculturalism and racist violence in Greece, and elsewhere in

the EU, appear more often than not. The persistent electoral successes of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, the third in power political party, which in the last legislative elections of September 2015 received 7% of the vote (379,581 votes) and elected 18 members in the 300 seats of the Greek parliament, are an obvious sign of the deteriorating social conditions. The forced mass movement of hundreds of thousands of people from war stricken areas - mainly Syria and Afghanistan - towards Greece, the previous migratory explosion following the collapse of regimes in neighbouring countries, and the prolonged and harsh economic and social crisis within Greece, have been used as both simplifying explanations and crude excuses for such phenomena. Conditions of precariousness apply, albeit to different degrees, to those already residing there, as well as to the newcomers, and exclusion from basic services seems to be a common fate.

It is rather challenging to discuss race and racism in Greece in the shadow of a multifarious crisis, on the verge of becoming normalised, especially when the terms *race* and *racism* are rather ambiguous in their own right. "Una faccia, una razza" (one face, one race), a phrase I grew up with, is used to emphasise the close affinity between the peoples of Greece and Italy. Although meant as a gesture of warmth and a tribute to communal values and ways of perceiving, it points to the characteristic merger of nature and culture in the making of the malleable, and thus durable, concept of race. However, *razza*, the term most obviously related to the English race, is not the one Greek people most often use. Instead, they refer to *fyli*,

which has come to signify cultural and ethnoracial belonging. Indeed, in the process of nation-building during the nineteenth century, the word *fyli* gained new meanings related to the Greek nation and later on to the Greek race as a distinct biological grouping, which complemented its earlier religious and cultural or linguistic connotations (Trubeta, 2013). Similarly, the term *genos*, originally referring to the orthodox populations within and outside the Ottoman Empire, denotes the Greek nation, with distinct ethnoracial qualities. Accordingly, *racism* stands here for a broader category, reflecting its usage within Greek society, and comes closer to recent scholarship, which explores the intersections of constructions of race, descent, or national or ethnic origin with class and gender (Brodkin, 2000).

This text, then, mirrors the complexities and concurrencies of *race*, and its derivative *racism*, and points to the merger of ethnoracial, cultural, and civic ideas and ideals since the foundation of the Greek State in 1832. Through this merger, the still dominant national narrative, which integrates the classical past, the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and the Byzantine era with the present times, has established a strong narrative of cultural and genealogical continuity and unity. This identification with the past - mainly classical antiquity - has been haunting Greek society since the nineteenth century as an idiosyncratic construction of an identity caught between Western imagination and a non-Western self. The consequences of this construction for Greece become evident in the entanglements of the phenomenon described as *crypto-colonialism*, which has tied the country's nominal "political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence" with an "aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models" (Herzfeld, 2002, p. 901).

In this brief essay, my aim is to map the various guises under which race and racism operate in Greece. My interest is in contemporary phenomena, which have deep historical roots, but easily lend themselves to essentialising discourses. While most of the emphasis is on the current situation, the essay will point to the trajectory of racial ideas and racializing processes, and to their

connections with broader issues of identity building and belonging. Here, my training as a historian of anthropology comes the closest to my experiences as a person who was born in Greece, has lived most of her adult life there, and ever since migrating abroad has been closely following Greek society, institutions, and academia.

Race and racism in society, culture, and politics

In November 2010, after Golden Dawn's first electoral success at the local government level, which secured its leader a seat at the city council of Athens (5.29% of the vote), many Greek people were astounded. Since the early 1980s, the party had held a marginal and parasitic position feeding on nationalist hysteria and xenophobic agendas, while engaging in occasional but extreme acts of violence against leftists, LGBTQI persons, minorities, and migrants. In many discussions, this sudden popularity reflected a temporary, misguided expression of mistrust towards the traditional political system, its inability to halt the collapse of the Greek economy and avoid the socially unjust austerity measures, and the frustration against the phenomenon of increased immigration.

The persistence of Golden Dawn, even in the face of prosecution of several of its members and MPs for criminal offences including murder, makes it obvious that the fluid and unsafe context of the crisis is indeed conducive to the party's violent, racist, and anti-establishment profile (Kirtsoglou, 2013). The thousands of Golden Dawn voters - predominantly younger males, with secondary school education, mainly working in the private sector or unemployed - are aware of and many explicitly approve its ultranationalist, nativist ideology rooted in biological racism (Ellinas, 2015). In all kinds of public utterances, its representatives argue for the protection of the Greek race against the foreign elements that have invaded the country. Race, nation, and state are merged together, while racial inequality is hailed as nature's law and is expected to be preserved through legislation and,

if necessary, violent prosecution of the perceived aliens. As other scholars have noted, the Golden Dawn phenomenon demands rigorous analysis as the conscious endorsement of its unambiguously fascist ideology, connected both to a long history of ethnic nationalism based on a racial unity of blood and contemporary social ills, exhibits novel qualities and entails new threats.

Although Golden Dawn is currently the principal outlet for manifest fascist and racist ideology and practices, the rise of such attitudes within society has a longer history evident in the treatment of migrants since the beginnings of the 1990s. Albanian immigrants, slightly less than 500,000 and the largest category in the country (almost 50% of all migrant populations), have been the main targets of racial discrimination and violence, although recently people from Asia or Africa experience analogous behaviours with even more direct connections to their skin colour and appearance. The “near-hysterical” responses to the thousands of Albanians seeking asylum in Greece were connected to the stereotype of the criminal that posed a threat to personal security and Greek society as a whole (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). Accusations of being “untrustworthy,” “lazy and deceitful by nature,” or “less intelligent than Greeks,” draw their justification from both racial and cultural explanations with references to head shapes and genes, or cultural inferiority, poverty and backwardness connected to communist Albania (Lawrence, 2005). The stereotypes of criminality, disease, and employment-taking have unfortunately penetrated school environments (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). As research findings show, Greek youths seem to be prone to nationalist, xenophobic and authoritarian attitudes, and intolerance towards immigrants and persons with diverse sexual orientation, all consistent with the popularity that Golden Dawn enjoys today (Koronaïou *et al.*, 2015). The avoidance of presenting racist and discriminatory actions against immigrants as what they are, while instead invoking feelings of reasonable fear and naïve belief in stereotypes because of previous lack of information or contact, is rather common (Figgou & Condor, 2006) and conceals even serious violations of human rights.

The effects of this widespread xenophobia and racism are evident in the working and living conditions of migrants. Big cities and rural areas have attracted individuals searching mainly for informal and temporary jobs under extremely unwarranted conditions. Their rendering as less than humans allows for harsh exploitation and, in some cases, even criminal action. In April 2013, 29 migrants from Bangladesh, who worked in a strawberry farm, were shot (injured) for demanding their six months unpaid wages. The incident reached the European Court of Human Rights and caused an outrage among human right activists and an international boycott of Greek products.

This was not the first or the last incident of violence against migrant workers, but it did raise awareness for the conditions described as modern-day slavery in Greece. While in urban areas the police leads mass deportations, in the villages, the vulnerable migrant workforce survives on the fringes of society at least during the harvesting or tourist seasons. The precarious employment conditions are connected to further spatial and social segregation. Although urban environments remain porous, it is evident, for example, that several deteriorating central areas in Athens have become dwelling places for marginalised groups (Dalakoglou, 2013a). The housing market is both exclusionary and exploitative, while the very recent phenomenon of the establishment of ethnic ghettos is more obvious than ever (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). In the absence of sufficient statistical data or research on intermarriage between Greeks and migrants, my observations suggest that it is rather limited both because of negative stereotyping and social segregation, as well as on religious grounds.

The role of Greek media has been crucial in publicising and nurturing racist stereotypes. The current humanitarian crisis with thousands of refugees and asylum seekers trapped within Greece offers an opportunity for sensational coverings of not only their suffering and inhumane conditions of living, but also of alleged criminal activities attributed to their uncontrollable nature and deviant culture. The protests of some parents against refugee children attending Greek schools

on grounds of health risks, and religious and cultural differences are often sought out at the expense of the welcoming and supportive local communities. This situation is reminiscent of the portrayal of immigrants, especially Albanians, as violent by nature and the explicit association of the rise in criminal activity with the presence of foreigners during the 1990s. The media produced a sense of “moral panic” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004) by deliberately enmeshing cultural and biological stereotypes and provided the stories “used to shape and naturalise Greek nativist racism” (Lawrence, 2005). When it comes to the specific case of Golden Dawn, the role of public media has not been straightforward. During the first years of its electoral successes, a number of private media publicised its “only for Greeks” activism and invited several MPs on controversial lifestyle TV programs. After 2014, when the party went on trial on criminal organization charges, most mainstream media have distanced themselves. Golden Dawn, however, had already developed a very strong online presence taking advantage of its young supporters’ familiarity with social media and online communication platforms. Thus, hate speech and overtly vivid stories of racist attacks against migrants and refugees continue to circulate unhindered on the web. Daring investigative journalism, however, has contributed much in exposing Golden Dawn’s neo-Nazi politics and tactics and in alerting to the rise of racist violence.

The 2015 report of the Racist Violence Recording Network notes that “the involvement of law enforcement officials in incidents of racist violence remains alarming.” The persistent refusal to register or acknowledge cases of racist victimization is the tip of the iceberg of systematic discrimination. The police - especially the units tackling irregular immigration and public protests - has often been implicated in encouraging, allowing, and committing such attacks, including deaths, while in certain urban areas Golden Dawn has done the policing either without much hassle from the official authorities or in obvious cooperation with them (Dalakoglou, 2013b). The finding that in the 2012 elections

approximately half of the police force on duty in Athens voted for Golden Dawn should come as no surprise (Dalakoglou, 2012). As research suggests, the main perception of police officers is that immigration is a problem and “a ‘plague’ or source of irritation, threatening Greece and the rest of the West,” and is openly associated with criminality, insecurity, unemployment, and the collapse of the economy (Antonopoulos, 2006). The official state has previously supported such attitudes either by fostering a culture of impunity, or by adopting a blatantly racist rhetoric that portrayed migrants as dangerous oriental invaders and ticking health bombs (Hamilakis, 2012). One can hardly miss both the irony and the racist implications in the names of the two main anti-migrant police operations, called *Sweeper* in the early 1990s and *Xenios Zeus* (Hospitable Zeus) after 2012. Although aiming to “clean up” the country, what these operations documented was the complete failure of the Greek State to facilitate appropriate documentation procedures for the migrant populations and a comprehensive migration framework (Dalakoglou, 2013a).

Race and racism in legal and institutional frameworks and policies

The Constitution of Greece, adopted in 1975 and last revised in 2008, establishes the respect for and protection of the human being as the prime obligation of the State (art. 2, par. 1). It further ensures the full protection of the life, honour, and freedom of all persons within Greek territory irrespective of nationality, race, language, and religious or political beliefs (art. 5, par. 2). A number of other provisions guarantee individual freedoms and interests, and provide for legal rights and protections, thus setting a basic framework against racist and other discriminatory actions.

Greece has also signed and ratified a number of international and regional treaties, which take precedence over national law, and are concerned with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Among them, the

1950s European Convention on Human Rights stipulates the enjoyment of rights and freedoms “without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with national minority, property, birth or other status” (art. 14). The 2014 anti-racism law punishes any person who by any means “incites, causes, induces or encourages to acts or actions that may cause discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons, identified on the basis of race, colour, religion, genealogical origins, national or ethnic origins, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability” (art. 1, par. 1). Additional legislative and policy measures and initiatives demonstrate a determination from the part of the current government and the civil society to combat deep-rooted racism. Still, the lack of conceptual clarity and coherence in many legal documents may lead to arbitrary interpretations and unequal treatment, as we will see next.

“You are born Greek, you don’t become Greek” is the phrase that summarises the prevalent criteria for granting Greek citizenship. With the exception of the first constitutions drafted during the war of independence (1821-1832) from the Ottoman Empire, which combined territorial, religious, linguistic, and origin criteria in the determination of a Greek national, all subsequent laws have been predominantly based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, with very few exceptions based on *ius soli* (Christopoulos, 2006). In 2010, after years of protest from migrant communities and human rights organisations and a year of public deliberation on a draft bill, a new immigration law endeavoured to establish that the children of legally residing immigrants who were either born in Greece or had completed 6 years of schooling could become Greek citizens. By that time, an estimated 200,000 children of migrants, who were born in Greece or had migrated there at a very young age, had no official documentation and were deprived of the fundamental right of freedom of movement.

The fervent public and political debate around this law revealed the long-established understandings of Greekness in terms of

ethnoracial origins, an emerging islamophobia and mistrust of multiculturalism, and the perception of migrants as persons of ambiguous moral qualities due to their previous status of illegality (Andreouli *et al.*, 2017; Figgou, 2016). At the same time, others argued for progressive regulatory frameworks and appealed to European humanitarianism and tolerance, or conversely to an ideal of organised Western societies with efficient but strict migration policies. In 2013, the State Council declared the provision concerning migrant children unconstitutional on the grounds, among other, that it merely enacted formal criteria for citizenship without providing for a genuine bond with the Greek state and society, seen as an enduring unit with a certain cultural background. Two years later, in 2015, an amended and more conservative version of the 2010 law, which emphasised schooling in the sense of cultural bonds and removed birthright citizenship for second-generation immigrants, was passed by the parliament. Yet, the lack of comprehensive immigration policies and the complex exclusionary naturalisation procedures still prohibit the social integration of migrants, and sustain the status of precariousness and the stereotype of criminality for hundreds of thousands of people.

The persistent differential treatment between persons of Greek descent – *homogeneis*, of the same *genos* – and persons of other descent – *allogeneis*, of different *genos* – in the Greek Code of Nationality provides a good case for considering how citizenship acquisition (or withdrawal) processes become a tool for discriminatory practices and reinforce the conception of an ethnoracially homogeneous society. Although the two categories have historically remained rather vague and thus serving diverse political and ideological aims of the Greek State, the term *homogeneis* generally refers to someone who belongs to the Greek nation through common national consciousness in terms of language, religion, common traditions, and customs. However, in practice, the principle of descent from a Greek national suffices for inclusion, while the ambiguous concept of national consciousness has previously been

used to exclude both individuals with left-wing affiliations, as well as members of ethnic minorities (Christopoulos, 2006).

In the current legal framework, the conditions of naturalisation for *homogeneis* are remarkably less strict, expensive, and time-consuming than the ones applying to individuals of other descent. This summary procedure, often called definition of nationality, may arguably be seen as at odds with the fundamental principle of equality irrespective of ethnoracial criteria upheld by international law. This principle has been grossly and systematically violated in the case of mass denationalisations mainly affecting Turkish members of the only officially recognised minority of Greece, the Muslims of Western Thrace, protected by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (Sitaropoulos, 2004). On the basis of the differentiation between citizens of Greek and no Greek descent, a recently annulled provision of the nationality law, allowed for the withdrawal of nationality from *allogeneis* who left the Greek territory with no intent to return. As a result, 60,004 people lost their nationality on arbitrary grounds from 1955 to 1998 in an attempt to legally substantiated ethnic cleansing (Sitaropoulos, 2004). Ever since the annulment, the denationalised minority members have not been reinstated and a significant number leaves as stateless persons within Greek territory having the option to follow the naturalisation process for foreigners. This absurd and long episode in Greek legal history has traumatized the relationships between the minority, the local communities, and the State, and remains as evidence of the serious repercussions of institutionalised racism.

Race in contemporary science

The publication of *The genetic history of Greece. The DNA of the Greeks* (2013), and its diverse interpretations and appropriations within and outside academia, will serve as our entry point to the contemporary uses of race, and race-like concepts, in science. The book, the first on this topic and symptomatic of other similar

endeavours internationally, is a semi-popular recounting of past and present research on the genetic makeup of the area's populations. Costas Triantaphyllidis, the author, is an acknowledged Greek scientist, currently emeritus professor of genetics and human genetics. In the discussions that followed the book's presentation, as well as in the book itself, the author stressed that DNA studies are not meant to substitute historical, archaeological, and other evidence, but rather to complement them by acting as equally reliable witnesses of the historic and prehistoric past. It could not be otherwise, as historiography, archaeology, and folklore studies have been the protagonists in substantiating the dominant national narrative, while physical anthropological research from the late 19th and the 20th century complemented it by taking the task to prove the genealogical, mental, and biological affinity with ancient Greeks (Lefkaditou, forthcoming; Trubeta, 2013).

The influence of the scientific and popular writings of geneticist Luigi-Luca Cavalli-Sforza and his collaborators is evident in the whole book, and not least in the predominant phylogenetic trees and principal component analysis diagrams representing the common roots of humanity, but at the same time the differences between the populations under consideration (Sommer, 2015). What the author reads in these results - based on the analysis of either classical genetic markers or DNA markers - is a consistent grouping of Greek samples with Western Mediterranean or European populations, and a clear distancing from everyone to their North, East, and South. The genetic similarity between contemporary Greeks and inhabitants of Southern Italy and Sicily is suggested to confirm the continuity between ancient Greeks, who had settled in the area known as Magna Græcia since the 8th century BC, and modern Greeks. By contrast, the the author indicated that modern Greeks are not descendants of the Slavs, while the genetic differentiation of Southern Slavs from the Northern Slavs should probably be attributed to the admixture with Greek populations that migrated towards these areas. Finally,

by reconstructing the results of numerous studies on European prehistory, he variously describes Greece as the entrance point of Neolithic settlers to Europe, but simultaneously claims that the origins of most Greeks are found in the genealogical lines of Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, which makes them one of the first indigenous populations of Europe. Therefore, he concludes that the DNA imprint of the Greeks is persistence and supports their continuity in both space and time.

As expected, Triantaphyllidis's insistence on the continuity and discreteness of the Greeks and his reluctance to acknowledge possible affinities with neighbouring populations has come under criticism in academic reviews. Nevertheless, the author firmly defended his work by pointing out that all studies published in highly reputable scientific journals and based on large and representative samples have been included in the book. The book, however, is a sort of meta-analysis, which produces a specific story about the origins of the Greeks and their relationships to other populations based on an interpretation of the results of the individual studies considered. This story is then as strong and as reliable as the interpretation of these results. The number of studies included is impressive, but the level of scientific expertise and bibliographic sources required to scrutinise them renders it almost inaccessible to the non-expert. What remains accessible is the author's heavy-handed summaries of these studies. In these summaries the critics saw the book as a project with a clear commitment to the national ideology of continuity, which rests on established imagery and extends to include discourses on the current situation of the country. Yet, the author vehemently denied the association of his work with racial science and politics. Instead, by referencing Cavalli-Sforza and his co-workers, he emphasised that humans are polymorphic, while for the most part human genetic variation is continuous and clinal, and therefore the concept of race has no classificatory importance for geneticists.

Even though all this is included in the book, the news of its publication combined with a language of purity, internal homogeneity, external

differentiation, and continuity with ancestral roots spread like wildfire on media accounts. The separation of Greeks from neighbouring populations and the implied special tie with Western Europeans, along with the latter's indebtedness to Greece as the birthplace of Western civilization, resonated very well with proliferating nationalistic, xenophobic, and racist sentiments within Greek society. One after the other websites, some of which with explicit extreme right-wing orientations or even affiliations with Golden Dawn, reproduced quotations and images from the book under titles such as "Greek DNA pure by 99.5%," and "Greek DNA - A unique phenomenon to which the whole world bows." The public appeal of genetic accounts is a double-edged sword. As various versions of the disclaimer "This is not politics, it is science!" were mundanely reiterated during public events and the author's responses to critical reviews, a sense of anxiety to disassociate genetic accounts from their possible political appropriations became evident. As has happened elsewhere, population geneticists with "their choice of research projects and practices of public dissemination suggest a strategy of generating public interest but disavowing responsibility for its interpretation" (Nash, 2008). The attempts to "objectively" reconstruct accounts of origins and national belonging fail not because the DNA sequencing technologies or methodological tools are not sufficiently advanced, but because scientists often disregard the complications of science being in constant interaction with its social and cultural environment.

Similar to other contexts both the critical discussions and the enthusiastic responses that this book raised are indicative of the political potency of genetic accounts. However, avoiding the stereotypical presentation of public debate as one in which academic contributions are more insightful and reflective, while the public is responsible for distortions and misrepresentations is important. In this specific case, all kinds of reactions - encouraging, positive, hopeful, dismissive, and caricaturing - emerged from all sorts of settings. What is more interesting is that all engaged parties seemed to instantly recognise a close link

between the language and practices of contemporary research on human diversity and the old, but not forgotten, race science. The persistent use of categories such as Caucasian, Negro, or Mongoloid, or the continuous presence of the concept of race, even within scare quotes, as well as the prevalence of phylogenetic trees, maps, and diagrams that emphasise separation and isolation reinforce such readings. I would argue, though, that there is something even more profoundly racialized than the use of these concepts and images.

DNA is portrayed as the most fundamental archive of social and cultural practices, and thus human population geneticists are those with the keys to a unique, and most reliable, vista to human past. While genetic history studies make societies and cultures legible and visible through biology, ethnicity and nationhood become racialized when societies and cultures are understood as fixed, eternal and essential. This perception that binds culture and nature together, turns culture into “a second nature of habit and collective consciousness, in which a culture belongs to people and individuals belong to their culture in a relationship of naturalized belonging” (Wade, 2014, pp.593-594). As the distinctions between nationhood, culture, ethnicity, and race become so blurred that render them indistinguishable, the Greek case suggests that these categories do not simply overlap, but may well be significantly coextensive.

Concluding thoughts

Race, both the concept and the word, is salient in societal, political, and cultural discourses, though more cryptically so within scientific discussions. In turn, racism is deeply institutionalised and ingrained in the workings of social groups, legal frameworks and official State practices. Previous governments have encouraged racist rhetoric and xenophobia in an attempt to capitalise on their historically close association with the extreme Right, although Golden Dawn has proven much more effective in benefitting from the conditions of a generalised crisis. The case of

Greece is not, however, a marginal and ephemeral phenomenon in the periphery of Europe. On the contrary, it testifies to the instrumental use of neo-fascist and racist groupings and ideologies by contemporary State and supra-State oligarchies, as the first facilitate the re-inscription of the harsh effects of global capitalism on people’s vitalities in terms of ethnoracial conflicts (Brodtkin, 2000). The crypto-colonial constitution of Greece enables the reproduction of orientalist and occidental stereotypes, and the production of individual and collective subjectivities conditioned by the moral imperatives of an eternal ancestral debt and a more recent financial one (Hamilakis, 2016). In its most recent reincarnation, the eagerness of Greece to safeguard the borders of Europe feeds on both internal fears of identity loss and the willingness to prove the country’s importance for European security.

The picture painted in this paper is rather gloomy. The current hardened reality in Greece has also resulted in the harsh stereotyping of Greeks as lazy, irresponsible, and unworthy of their ancestors, and in turn to a perception of, mainly northern, Europeans as cruel, cold-blooded and ungrateful partners. Greek people, or Greek society, do not have any genes for racism, corruption, or untrustworthiness, as much as they do not have any genes for hospitality, democracy, or grandeur. Solidarity clinics, communal kitchens, hundreds of volunteers in refugee camps, open homes, worker collectives and direct producers-consumers markets are only few of the initiatives testifying to another reality that exists side by side with the one described here. The current government, despite its apparent failures in handling the refugee and immigrant flows, has almost consistently adopted less xenophobic and racist attitudes, and has begun to put in place appropriate anti-discriminatory legal frameworks and policies. The reactions of the scientific community towards the publication of the book on Greece’s genetic history point to a more sober appraisal of scientific practices and a disillusionment with race as a valid concept to describe human diversity. These are all positive signs, and a good reminder that though it

is important to call things by their name, one should resist superficial and uncomplicated readings of whole societies. This is the crude essentialism we should be fighting against.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my colleagues Jon Kyllingstad, Hallvard Fosshem, Henrik Treimo, and Ellen Lange for their critical reading of my essay. The Research Council of Norway funds this research (Project no.: 220741/F10) under the Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change (SAMKUL) programme.

References

- Andreouli E., Figgou L., Kadianak, I., Sapountzis A. & Xenitidou M. 2017. "Europe" in Greece: lay reconstructions of Europe in the context of Greek immigration debates. *J. Community Appl. Soc.*, DOI: 10.1002/casp.2301.
- Antonopoulos G. A. 2006. Greece: policing racist violence in the 'fenceless vineyard.' *Race Class*, 48: 92-100.
- Baldwin-Edwards M. 2004. Albanian immigration and the Greek labour market: economic symbiosis and social ambiguity. *Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 7: 51-65.
- Brodtkin K. 2000. Global capitalism: What's race got to do with it? *Am. Ethnol.*, 27: 237-256.
- Christopoulos, D. 2006. Greece. In K. Groenendijk, E.Ersboll, H. Waldrauch & R. Baubock (eds): *Acquisition and loss of nationality, vol.2 Country analyses*, pp. 253-288. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.
- Dalakoglou D. 2013a. The crisis before "the crisis": violence and urban neoliberalization in Athens. *Social Justice*, 39: 24-42.
- Dalakoglou D. 2013b. 'From the bottom of the Aegean Sea' to Golden Dawn: security, xenophobia, and the politics of hate in Greece. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 13: 514-522.
- Ellinas A.A. 2015. Neo-Nazism in an established democracy: the persistence of Golden Dawn in Greece. *S. Eur. Soc. Polit.*, 20: 1-20.
- Figgou L. 2016. Constructions of 'illegal' immigration and entitlement to citizenship: debating an immigration law in Greece. *J. Community Appl. Soc.*, 26: 150-163.
- Figgou L. & Condor S. 2006. Irrational categorization, natural intolerance and reasonable discrimination: lay representations of prejudice and racism. *Brit. J. Soc. Psychol.*, 45: 219-243.
- Hamilakis Y. 2016. Some debts can never be repaid: the archaeo-politics of the crisis. *J. Mod. Greek Stud.*, 34 : 227-264.
- Hamilakis Y. 2012. Hospitable Zeus. *London Rev. Books*, 8 August. Accessed 24 February 2017. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2012/08/08/yannis-hamilakis/hospitable-zeus/>
- Herzfeld M. 2002. The absence presence: discourses of crypto-colonialism. *S. Atl. Quart.*, 101: 899-926.
- Kirtsoglou, E. 2013. The dark ages of the Golden Dawn: anthropological analysis and responsibility in the twilight zone of the Greek crisis. *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, 38: 104-108.
- Koronaïou A., Lagos E., Sakellariou A., Kymionis S. & Chiotaki-Poulou I. 2015. Golden Dawn, austerity and young people: the rise of fascist extremism among young people in contemporary Greek society. *Sociol. Rev.*, 63: 231-249.
- Lawrence C. M. 2005. *The European Union, immigration and inequality: "Albanian" labor in the political economy of rural Greece*. CUNY Academic Works. http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1753
- Lefkaditou A. (forthcoming). Yet Another Greek tragedy? Physical anthropology and the construction of national identity in the late nineteenth century. In R. McMahon (ed): *National races: transnational power struggles in science and politics, 1840s-1940s*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Nash C. 2008. *Of Irish descent: origin stories, genealogy, and the politics of belonging*. Syracuse University Press, New York.
- Sitaropoulos N. 2004. Freedom of movement and the right to a nationality v. ethnic minorities: the case of ex Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code. *Eur. J. Migr. Law*, 6: 205-223.

- Sommer M. 2015. Population-genetic trees, maps, and narratives of the human diasporas. *Hist. Hum. Sci.*, 28: 108-145.
- Triantaphyllidis C. 2013. *The genetic history of Greece: the DNA of the Greeks* (in Greek). Kyriakidis Editions, Thessaloniki.
- Trubeta S. 2013. *Physical anthropology, race and eugenics in Greece (1880s-1970s)*. Brill, Leiden.
- Wade P. 2014. Race, ethnicity, and technologies of belonging. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 39: 587-96.



This work is distributed under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>