"Solidarity" and solidarity. Language, activism and social reproduction in the greek crisis

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Abstract: This paper is the first synthesis of ongoing research on three grassroots free health centers for the uninsured in Athens, Greece. It poses two main questions: how and why do individuals mobilize and become health care activists? How do they communicate their choice? This paper claims that health care activism in the observed sites is an exclusionary strategy of social reproduction of the impoverished middle-class and that it takes place, also, through language. Social reproduction is related to four factors: different levels of impact of the crisis among classes; unequal distribution of social, cultural and economic capital; the incorporation of biomedicine and its power structures; and the moral economy of "solidarity". This paper sketches a genealogy of "solidarity" and uses both ethnography and analytical philosophy to trace its use among activists.

Keywords: language; social reproduction; moral economy; activism; Greece.

Resumen: Este artículo es la primera síntesis de una investigación en curso sobre tres centros de salud autogestionados para ciudadanos sin seguro médico en Atenas, Grecia. El artículo plantea dos preguntas principales: ¿cómo y porqué los individuos se movilizan para convertirse en activistas en un centro de salud? ¿Cómo comunican su decisión? Este artículo sostiene que el activismo en los centros estudiados es una forma de reproducción social y exclusión por parte de las clases medias empobrecidas y que esto ocurre también a través del lenguaje. La reproducción social está relacionada con cuatro factores: diferentes niveles de impacto de la crisis entre las diferentes clases sociales; distribución desigual de capital social, cultural y económico; la incorporación de la biomedicina y su estructura de poder; y la economía moral de la "solidaridad". Este artículo esboza una genealogía del concepto de "solidaridad", traza sus usos por parte de los activistas recurriendo tanto a la etnografía como a la filosofía analítica y apuesta por una economía moral del lenguaje.

Palabras clave: lenguaje; reproducción social; economía moral; activismo; Grecia.

Prologue: "solidarity" is just a word...

Athens, Greece. 23 July, 2015

I meet Stella in an empty, antiseptic-smelling consulting room in Drasi, a grassroots free clinic on the outskirts of Athens. She is 43 and has been unemployed for four years. She used to earn a good salary as a secretary in a shipping firm, she had a husband, a dog and a big detached house a few yards from the beach in a relatively affluent suburb of Athens. In 2011, at the beginning of the crisis, she lost her job, got divorced, kept the dog, rented out the big house and moved to a small but free apartment owned by her sister. Now she lives off the rent she earns from her former house, the value of which is now one third of what it was at pre-crisis market values.

During those troubled times, a group of activists and doctors were busy setting up Drasi, a free health clinic in her neighborhood. One night, at a party, Stella met one of the volunteers: a doctor, a friend of hers, who told her that the clinic was a "solidarity" (αλληλεγγύη, allileghi) initiative. They wanted to offer health care at no charge to all the uninsured who had been excluded from the Greek national health service by austerity cuts. He asked her if she wanted to join. A few days later she was volunteering at the clinic. "I couldn't stand still. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to have an effect" says Stella during our first interview. "So you eventually became a volunteer, didn't you? You wanted to help...". "Yes." Stella hastily interrupts me, "Yes, a volunteer... but we are not humanitarian, we want to raise social consciousness... It's solidarity".

1. Introduction

In our times of economic crisis, "solidarity" has become such a common word in the public sphere that its meaning seems to be part of our shared encyclopedic knowledge. The most famous example is maybe the Greek "solidarity movement" (Κίνηση Αλληλεγγύης, *kinisi allileghis*). Apparently, there is no need to explicitly define "solidarity" to our interlocutors. Stella, for instance (see prologue above) told me that she started to volunteer because of "solidarity". She deemed it a transparent, universal notion: there was no need to explain it to a foreign anthropologist. In this paper I argue, however, that "solidarity"

is much less straightforward than it might seem at first sight. "Solidarity", on the contrary, is defined by power relations, it is muddled with class inequality and, above all, it cannot be reduced to a mere descriptive lexical item: it is a linguistic tool used to shape reality and exert power, both symbolic and real. In fact – and this is the point I want to make – its meaning is actually not a matter of verbal description, but rather of action. "Solidarity", in other words, is defined by deeds.

The relationship between "solidarity" and deeds, between language and the world is not a linear one. This paper looks at this relationship and tries to cast some light on it by merging ethnography with contemporary analytical philosophy. I think that philosophy can help us to set a conceptual framework for "solidarity", both as a word and as a set of actions.

This paper is the first synthesis of ongoing research into grassroots solidarity structures in Greece during the economic crisis. It is far from concluded and it is meant more as a preliminary sketch rather than a full portrait. It draws on several months of fieldwork (July 2015 – March 2016) during which I observed three free health care centers, locally known as "social clinics of solidarity" (from now on I will refer to them as KIAs, using their Greek acronym[1]), created between 2010 and 2012 during widespread anti-austerity mobilizations. It poses two main questions: why do certain individuals engage in health care activism? How do they communicate their choice? I think that these questions, which could be the subjects of two separate papers, are mutually dependent, if not symbiotic. I think they could be better reformulated in the following way: how are the reasons for engaging in activism articulated into a moral economy of language? This is my core question. I will analyze the social uses of "solidarity" from three different perspectives: strategies of social reproduction, morals and linguistic philosophy. My aim is to help show how ethics, social action and language compose a triangle that has to be tackled as a whole.

2. KIAs in context

On 20 October 2009, Giorgios Papaconstantinou, the finance minister of the Greek socialist government, revealed that the state budget had been manipulated by previous administrations. The real deficit was a staggering 12.7%, above the

1 Κοινωνικό Ιατρείο Αλληλεγγύς, *kinoniko iatrio allileghi*.

3% threshold of the Maastricht parameters. Papaconstantinou's declarations are regarded as the official beginning of the Greek crisis: the financial collapse that followed led, only five months later, to the request for a bailout, the first of a long series of injections of liquidity. This did not come without a price: the dire austerity measures that followed are now common knowledge to every average newspaper reader.

I should mention that austerity has been particularly severe in health care. Public expenditure cuts in public health have had a big impact on Greek society.[2] After a bill was passed in 2010, limiting access to free health care only to those who could afford to pay for social security taxes, a third of the Greek population found itself automatically excluded from public health care. Paired with an economy in free fall, civil unrest exploded and several poverty-relief initiatives emerged.[3] Popular canteens, self-managed factories, free legal services and even alternative currency experiments were created to counter welfare cuts and offer alternative access to vital resources. The most successful initiatives are the 40 self-managed free health care centers (KIAs) that have seen the light throughout country. Half of them are concentrated in the metropolitan area of Athens. They basically offer primary care services and free drugs. Many KIAs also offer dental care and psychological therapies.

3. Field and methodological notes

I spent a total of nine months in Athens (July 2015 – March 2016). The first three months were more exploratory in nature and I used this time to look for informants, learn some Greek and choose the clinics I wanted to focus on. The ethnographic data used in this paper have been taken from interviews and observations conducted in three of them: Drasi, Praxi and Agonas (names have been changed). Drasi is in a suburban area south of Athens, in a relatively affluent neighborhood. It was founded in 2011 by a famous cardiologist and is by far the biggest KIA in the country. It has two hundred volunteers, it is housed in a prefabricated structure provided by the local municipality and its operations are subject to a high degree of bureaucracy, at least for the standard of a grassroots initiative. It is open throughout the day. Praxi, on the contrary,

2 See Ifanti et alii 2013 for a general survey.

3 A good survey can be found in Cuesta Marín 2014.

is in a northern working-class neighborhood. It is a very small clinic, led by no more than a dozen volunteers who, however, do their best to keep the clinic open at least a few hours every day. Agonas, an anarchist squat, is in downtown Athens, in a middle-to-upper class neighborhood, and provides phytotherapy and other alternative treatments. Although these clinics are quite different, they do have some common features. The most relevant to our discussion is their internal social stratification: patients are more or less equally represented by both migrants and Greek citizens, and largely come from the popular classes while activists come from the (impoverished) middle or upper classes.[4]

Although I concentrated my ethnographic energies on Drasi, Praxi and Agonas, I also visited other centers and did several comparative interviews in contexts as different as NGOs, private philanthropic organizations, public hospitals, squats and private homes. My fieldwork was multisited (Marcus 1995). This methodological choice was determined by the variety of KIAs in town, from anarchist squats to small neighborhood initiatives with no particular political profile or big health centers led by dozens of doctors and activists. KIAs are indeed a hodgepodge of diversity and that is why I decided to share my time among three of them, instead of choosing only one, as I felt it was necessary to have at least a small sample of the different approaches to grassroots health care activism I encountered.

According to Marcus, one of the core traits of multisited ethnography is "tracking" (Marcus 1995:95), following a "thing" through different places and communities. The "thing" I chose to track is not a material object but rather a word, a concept, a small but dense socio-semantic unit: "solidarity". I did this by concentrating my research on a specific population. As KIAs consist largely of three categories of people – doctors, patients and activists – I focused my ethnography on the latter. This choice is due to the fact that activists occupy a peculiar position: they deal with the bureaucratic tasks of the clinics, they are the filter between patients and doctors, as they allow or deny access to health care provision. They occupy therefore a position of relative power. They are also the most vocal group about "solidarity", a word which they constantly invoke to explain their public engagement. I wanted to understand how this concept is constructed within this group and how it relates to their power position in KIAs.

4 I refer to class in a very loose and intuitive way. For a more articulate vision of the notion of class in our contemporary world and a debate about its explanatory power see Wright 2015.

3.1 A note on language

The working language of my fieldwork was a mixture of Greek and English. Most interviews were conducted in English though. Although I plan to go back to Greece in the near future to do a second round of interviews exclusively in Greek, English proved to be a precious social indicator. In fact, most of the patients, generally from the popular classes, were not able to speak English, while most activists, from the middle class, were. I observed a stark linguistic divide. It clearly marked different endowments of cultural capital between activists and patients, and this, as we will see, is one of the key factors of the internal social stratification of KIAs.

4. The question of solidarity: a short survey of ideas

Solidarity or, locally, *allileghi*, is all but a notion without history. The Greek crisis (2009–present) revived interest in this concept, up to the point of inaugurating a new landmark in the history of anthropology on Greece. Solidarity has become a central word among anthropologists dealing with contemporary Greece, but it has been in close contact with the social sciences for much longer.

Solidarity is increasingly perceived as an endangered species in today's world. This fear may seem to be a recent phenomenon engendered by our contemporary neoliberal regime of individualism and self-activation. If we take a closer look, however, it is much older than this. Curiously, social solidarity has been predicted to be on the verge of collapse more than once in our modern history. In fact, this gloomy awareness of imminent catastrophe lies at the root of the foundations of Western social thought itself. Roberto Esposito, one of today's most influential political philosophers, has profoundly described the "community" as the last defense against the advancing nihilism of social disaggregation (Esposito 2009:136) This same uneasiness with the social transformations of his time nurtured Émile Durkheim's idea of sociology. Durkheim's work, stripped down to bones, originated from a single, crucial question: is solidarity (and, hence, society tout court) disappearing in our contemporary, atomized industrial world? We can think of Durkheim's whole intellectual enterprise as an attempt to rescue and redefine the very possibility of society. According to him sociology has a clear task; it will teach

the "individual what society is […] It will let him feel that there is no defect in exercising solidarity towards others and in not belonging only to oneself" (Durkheim [1888] 2010:110)

Similarly, a few decades later, Marcel Mauss, Durkheim's nephew and intellectual successor, summarized many of his uncle's concerns in *The Gift* ([1925] 1990). His survey of gift-giving across cultures and times is not a *Wunderkammer* of remote habits, but an exploration of a pre-industrial past in search of a "moral conclusion" (Mauss 1990:83) valid for our own times: society wants to "rediscover" its underpinnings: "charity, social service" and, most importantly, "solidarity" (Mauss 1990:87).

Society, Mauss seems to suggest, notwithstanding the challenges of atomization, (or "nihilism", as Esposito would say) wants to remain society and it can do so only with "solidarity". Concerned by the rapidly industrializing world of his time, Mauss envisioned a system of redistribution, a sort of welfare before welfare. For him, the whole point was to find a mechanism of "solidarity" in a world in which traditional social bounds were rapidly disaggregating: "the worker has given his life and his labor, on the one hand to the collectivity, and on the other hand, to his employers. [...] those who have benefited from his services have not discharged their debt to him through the payment of wages. The state itself, representing the community, owes him, as do his employers, together with some assistance from himself, a certain security in life, against unemployment, sickness, old age, and death." (Mauss 1990:86)

This modern form of solidarity actually became reality only after World War II, when "To ensure domestic peace and tranquility, some sort of class compromise between capital and labor had to be constructed" (Harvey 2005 9-10). Those times seem a long way away now. Ours, on the other hand, seem much more like times of insecurity. Maybe with the exception of the 1950s-1970s, social "solidarity" is perceived to be under threat again. The welfare state is ailing and neoliberal nihilism is advancing. The fears evoked by the Greek solidarity movement of today are very similar to those that unsettled Durkheim and Mauss one century ago.

"Solidarity" is, again and unsurprisingly, invoked to counter such a void. But in KIAs, "solidarity" moves beyond the mere linguistic level, since it is also a manifesto, a guide to action, at once a call to action and a set of moral values. A dense and delicate word which, due to the extent of civil society mobilizations,

has become so popularized that it is also often taken for granted, as we have seen above. However, I insist on the need to question its accepted meanings. What is solidarity then? Or, more precisely, what does the word "solidarity" denote? Or, even better, what do people think, say and do with the word "solidarity"?

During my fieldwork I noted that even if they think of solidarity as a transparent notion, activists do nevertheless constantly strive to define it, driven by the need to link "solidarity", as a linguistic item, to actions, behaviors and practices in the real world. It is a notion that needs to be defined by deeds. This double nature of solidarity, between world and language, has been thoroughly analyzed by Kurt Bayertz (Bayertz 1998). He traced four dimensions of "solidarity": it can denote universal brotherhood, common belonging, justice or struggle. Most of the time these dimensions mingle, creating dense semantic clusters. "Solidarity" carries, therefore, both a moral tension (brotherhood, belonging, justice) and an active, concrete commitment to realize itself in the world (struggle).

4.1 Solidarity as a performative utterance

The linguistic dimension of "solidarity" remains however unexplored in Bayertz's analysis as are its uses in everyday interactions. How is the word (and, I insist, the word and not only the abstract concept) used to actually *do* things? Given its peculiar emphasis on language, analytical philosophy can help us tackle this issue. The theory of speech acts sketched out by John Austin will be our starting point.

A very common expression among activists is "I am in solidarity" or "I solidarize". It is widely used as defining formula of their engagement. According to Austin, this sort of sentence is a performative utterance, one that requires the speaker to "do things" (Austin 1962). Austin wanted to show that the truth conditions of a sentence – a classical subject of research in analytic philosophy – do not always depend on abstract logic. There is indeed one particular category of sentence for which this is especially true: performative utterances, sentences that must be completed in the world to be true. Among them, we can find an interesting subset, which Austin calls "commissive", here represented by "I solidarize", the purpose of which is "to commit the speaker to a certain course of

action." (Austin 1962:156) "I solidarize" is an utterance that does not stay put: it activates a concrete action because it activates a whole moral world that requires mobilisation in the real world. "In the case of commissives […] you cannot state that you favor, oppose, etc., generally, without announcing that you do so" (Austin 1962:157). It is not by chance that one of the most famous slogans of the solidarity movement in Greece announces "solidarity" as a "weapon" (όπλο, *oplo*)[5]. In other words, one cannot say it without a simultaneous *passage à l'acte*; it would otherwise be an "infelicitous" statement. Things need to be "done" in the world to make "solidarity" true. But which things? How is this relationship between semantics and society articulated in KIAs?

5. Solidarity: meaning(s) in the field

"Solidarity" is not only a weapon. First of all it is a magnet for attracting resources, people and things. We have seen it at work with Stella. She mobilized through "solidarity" and not through "compassion" or "charity". The linguistic formula that directs her actions as a volunteer is a precise one. This very same string of sounds can call in many more people, even beyond Greece's borders, as I noted on a page of my field diary, retrospectively:

> When I first arrived in Athens, I found the town unexpectedly populated by a multitude of foreign anthropologists, young and old, attracted here by a single word, "solidarity" which has also flown me to this corner of the Mediterranean ravaged by a seemingly endless vortex of austerity measures. "Popular resistance" or, in a slightly less engagé flavor, "grassroots initiatives" monopolize most conversations among us, young researchers, activists, international volunteers and adventurers, whose identity boundaries are not always clear-cut and discernible. Apparently we all know what we are talking about in our multilanguage conversations: "solidarity", "solidarietà", "solidarité", "Solidarität", "allileghi". It's our smooth and unproblematic touchstone. Honestly, we are drinking too many kafetakia and clapping and cheering for a taken-for-granted notion. I think that "solidarity" has become a case of collective slapdash enthusiasm.

5 Η αλληλεγγύη είναι το όπλο μας, "Solidarity is our weapon."

A serendipitous experience helped me burst the bubble. After my arrival in Athens, I soon resorted to living in a squat for a couple of months (my self-appointed field grant in a desert of funding opportunities). The gift of free housing implied a growing amount of "commitment" (αφοσίωση, *afosiosi*) in the "community" (κοινότητα, *kinotita*) to defend its "survival" (επιβίωση, *epiviosi*). Assemblies, dumpster-diving expeditions, surveillance shifts or the planning of picturesque riots, along with tacit agreement on the squat's unspoken ideology, were the building blocks of belonging, the quintessential traits of the squat's political project: to create *real* "solidarity". To be "in solidarity" was not a mere constative statement, but, according to Austin's lexicon, a commissive one: to say it meant to do it, no excuses.

However, after witnessing the energetic expulsion of a couple of fellow squatters whose interpretation of "solidarity" deviated from the accepted norm, I soon realized that "commitment" was the word that turned everybody into a labor force essential to the reproduction of the squat's power structure, no matter how clouded everything was by the recurrent narrative of radical equality and difference from an outside world based on private property and exploitative relations.

Clapping and cheering became less and less appealing, at least for me. "Solidarity" was being used to do things indeed, but not necessarily those things that I was expecting. "Solidarity" was starting to look like a linguistic tool for activating actions and producing real world consequences – the reproduction of the squat's power structure, for instance, or my own decision to go to Greece instead of, say, the rainforest – far beyond our own conscious intentions. Shuttling back and forth between the squat and Drasi, a much less politicized KIA, whose activities were disdainfully branded as "fucking humanitarianism" at the squat, exposed me to a surprising degree of similarity. In both places "solidarity" was invoked to do, obtain and represent things in a very carefree and almost overconfident way, for in both places activists defined themselves as "true" people of "solidarity". "Solidarity" was made real, that is "true", thanks to a codified set of actions, be they "anarchist practices" (whatever it may mean) or, conversely, an effective bureaucratic structure managed by 200 volunteers led by allocative efficiency concerns. Actions were an enforced "site of veridiction" (Foucault 2008:32) for activists, a proof that "solidarity", always on the verge of disappearing into dangerous "antisocial behaviors", was "true" and "real". In both

places there was no uncertainty over its meaning, no matter how idiosyncratic and locally molded: "solidarity" was solidarity, a clear word paired with clear actions to which one had to commit.

But to many, this word seemed to be quite opaque:

> July, 2015. Athens, Greece. Interview with Stella.
>
> Stella: "There are different levels of patients. Not everybody understands. For example, many times there are donations, a lot of boxes arrive and a few patients help us to bring them inside. They see that they're heavy and that we're working, they understand that the donations are for them. But many don't lift a finger, 90% just come for their medicine".
>
> "How do you explain it, Stella?"
>
> S.: "I think there is above all a distance in social consciousness. Many patients don't have a political consciousness. I'll give you an example. Before the referendum[6] everybody was talking about it. It was topic number one. Among the volunteers we all had the same opinion, to vote no, οχι, and put an end to austerity. I remember many conversations among the patients, I was listening to them and their opinions were very different from ours. I think that you cannot expect a revolution from these people. But it's not their fault, they're too wasted. And many never studied, you know, otherwise how can you vote yes if you are poor? Can you vote for austerity? Something must be wrong. I think they are too wasted, they only think about what to eat tomorrow, they don't have anything, they only watch TV, that bullshit, you know how corrupted media are in this country. Uneducated people with no political consciousness don't do anything until they explode and then they explode with violence. Because they are not prepared, they revolt when they have lost their last remaining things. Maybe middle-class people are different, we have more options. We know what privileges we are losing every day."

Without explicitly admitting it, Stella's complaints about the patients' lack of commitment reveal a creeping fracture between them and the activists, whose origin is accurately pinpointed by the gap in cultural ("they only watch TV, that bullshit"), economic ("they are too wasted") and political ("you cannot expect a revolution from these people") capital. In other words, class. "Maybe *middle-class* people are different, *we* have more options" revealingly said Stella to me, in a

6 In a referendum held on 15 July, 2015, 61.31% of Greek voters rejected austerity measures.

moment of surfacing self-awareness. *We*, conversely, we have got all those capitals. The class distance between activists and patients to which Stella unwittingly alludes is easily visible at the ethnographic level in many KIAs. In one of them, Praxi, where I managed to make an exhaustive survey of all the volunteers involved, I found that they could all be considered to belong to what we usually name the middle class whereas users mostly came from the popular classes.

"Solidarity" and its performative force seem not to work among patients. They do not act, the veridiction test fails miserably. How can this be? If they understand "that the donations are for them", why doesn't this recognition prompt them to help in return, to take "action"? Stella's bewilderment at such a violation of the force of "solidarity" ("something must be wrong") is explained by a device which, as we have seen, tends to suggest that "these people" are unable to commit to the struggle ("you cannot expect a revolution from these people") because their rational judgement is smothered by pure material needs. They will act, therefore, only when in dire straits ("they revolt when they have lost even their last remaining things"). Consequently, since "It's not their fault", they are stripped of all agency in Stella's account.

5.1 Morals and language

Stella's explanations are highly reminiscent of the "crass economic reductionism" against which Thompson (1971) vigorously protested. Writing about ordinary people's reasons to mobilize – or not t– Thompson remarked that "at some point this infinitely complex social creature [the "Melanesian man" described by social anthropology] becomes (in our histories) the eighteenth-century English collier who claps his hand spasmodically upon his stomach, and responds to elementary economic stimuli" (Thompson 1971:78).

Thompson's purpose was to show that, conversely, the "crowd" in 18th century England did have a distinctive agency whose rationality leaned on a certain moral scheme. This idea was popularized in anthropology a few years later by James Scott in his work on peasants in Southeast Asia (Scott 1976). Both authors, notwithstanding the obvious differences that set them apart, claim that popular mobilisations are largely triggered when a well-established alliance between them and their traditional patrons is violated, when a threshold is broken. A threshold which is much more moral than simply economic.

Thompson developed the notion of "moral economy" to account for this interplay between values and social action, between the spheres of morality and materiality. KIAs are a hot spot of interplay between values and actions, as we have seen above. Not only are KIAs born out of anti-austerity mobilizations under the umbrella of "solidarity", but this original notion continues to inform their narrative and daily practices as a touchstone against which one's stance in the world is measured.

Social action, as the term "moral economy" clearly reminds us, is constantly entangled in a web of values, memories, institutions and power relations. But language also needs to be added to the blend because the active role played by language in driving social action is often underestimated. Language is much more than a simple vehicle, the only function of which is to pass cognitive content from one mind to another, a rack railway that merely needs to be checked and maintained on a regular basis to ensure its smooth mechanical operation. Morals are certainly communicated through language, but language has to be seen as an equally active force. As Alessandro Duranti writes, "What is missing in a definition of speaking as simple exchange of ideas or meanings is the awareness that linguistic communication not only describes reality, but also *constitutes* it (in the phenomenological meaning of the term). [...] Describing the world (or the possible worlds, since a good part of what we say exists only in language) is just a minimal part of what happens when we talk. All the rest is action, both at the individual and at the social level. Language is not only used to describe the world, but also to change it [...] to make our interlocutors accept our point of view or even do what we want." (Duranti 1992:16)

Austin's theory of speech acts, which states that language is used to do things in the world, is an anticipatory idea of much of today's linguistic anthropology, here epitomized by Duranti's words. It is a curious situation. John Austin, an analytic philosopher working at Oxford during the first half of the last century, maybe the most distant figure from anthropology and fieldwork imaginable, initiated a small revolution with *How to do things with words* (Austin 1962), a collection of lectures that left many of his colleagues in disarray. Austin dangerously showed that the social world can burst unexpectedly into language and vice versa, an idea that certain streams of linguistics and analytic philosophy rapidly tried to defuse. As Bourdieu recalls in *Langage et pouvoir simbolique*,

"Linguists have often rushed to find, in Austin's inconsistent[7] definition of the performative, an excuse for dismissing the problem which Austin had set them, in order to return to a narrowly linguistic definition that ignores the market effect. […] In this way they justified to themselves the rejection of any analysis of the social conditions in which performative utterances function" (Bourdieu 1991:73)

By insisting on the social conditions that regulate performative utterances, Bourdieu gives voice to what is just implicit in Austin's work: that language lives fully in the world, shapes it and is shaped by it in return. As a consequence, the act of speaking plunges us into an intricate web of power relations, values, practices, habits, institutions and materialities. We cannot think any longer of "solidarity" as an unblemished, suspended lexical item, one whose "truth" relies on the neutral description in any decent dictionary. KIAS' internal structure reveals the micro-dynamics of power that build the notion of solidarity and its linguistic use

6. Solidarity's backyard: Health care activism as social reproduction

KIAs are, basically, redistribution centers of drugs and health care services. There are four types of social actors involved 1) donors, both domestic and foreign; 2) doctors, dentists and other professionals who prescribe drugs or visit patients; 3) activists, who are responsible for the organization of the structure, and take care of public relations and bureaucracy; and 4) patients, who ultimately benefit from KIAs' services.

As said above, I chose to focus my research on activists because their role seemed to me particularly suited to an analysis of language and narratives in relation to power issues and moral values. And, also because it is through activism that certain phenomena of social reproduction occur. Activists occupy a peculiar position of responsibility, highly sophisticated in the case of Drasi, a clinic of 200 volunteers with a fully fledged division of labor. The sustainability of KIAs pivots entirely on the work of their managers. As a bureaucratic force, they keep a tight rein on KIAs' activities and image, control the availability of

7 Inconsistent because Austin's lectures are unsystematic and concepts openly evolve in the course of the book.

drugs and doctors, keep track of patients and allow or deny access to care. In fact, at Drasi only people with an unemployment certificate or other "qualifications" (which are checked every time) are given free health care, although other KIAs are not nearly as strict in this respect.

Figure 1. The reception of a big KIA. Athens, summer 2015. (Photograph by the author)

6.1 Narrating "solidarity": the power to define

If we take a closer look at the activists' narrative microcosm, we come across the sharp distinction between them and the patients. A schema will be a handy tool.

Actors	Reasons to act	Modality of action	Domain of the motivations	Role as actors	Thing offered
Patients	Needs (material)	Necessity	Material	Receivers	Ø
Activists	Solidarity (immaterial)	Free choice	Moral	Gift-givers	Time + organizational skills
Doctors	Solidarity (immaterial)	Free choice	Moral	Gift-givers	Time + medical skills
Donors	Solidarity (immaterial)	Free choice	Moral	Gift-givers	Materials

According to the activists, there are givers, motivated by "solidarity", an immaterial, moral reason, and there are receivers, motivated by pure material needs. In other words, in their vision, patients would *receive out of necessity* and doctors and activists would *give out of solidarity*. The class polarization identified by Stella seems to be directly reflected in the polarization of the reasons to act.

Their model can be challenged by a closer ethnographic look. One of the key elements to consider is how the internal social stratification of KIAs originated. I think that it can be explained by a combination of three factors. First of all the crisis has proved harder for the poorest layers of the Greek population.[8] The popular classes include the biggest percentage of people excluded from free health care and consequently they are KIAs' main users. This is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. Different levels of penetration of the crisis among social strata do not totally explain the social stratification we encounter in KIAs. We can well imagine that working class people could have joined forces to create free health centers for themselves. But they did not. Why, then, did those who were least affected by the crisis – individuals from the middle and upper class – found the KIAs?

6.2 The incorporation of biomedicine: a powerful regulating filter

A crucial factor is the incorporation of biomedicine and its power structure. KIAs offer free health care through exactly the same medical system as welfare: industrial drugs, general practitioners and specialists who give the orders ("come in", "please undress", "cough", "you are ill", "take this pill" or "you are healthy, you can go"). It might seem trivial, but it is not. In fact, for a few decades now critical medical anthropology (Baer *et alii* 2003 or Singer 2008, for example) has been warning us of the inherent structure of power and class domination of "medicine under capitalism" (Navarro 1976). The incorporation of the biomedical paradigm in KIAs also involves the parallel adoption of its power structure. What I wish to highlight here is that its effects are not limited to the body or to doctor-patient relationships, even though these are, of course, important and indeed many KIA consulting rooms are almost

8 See again Infanti *et alii* 2013.

indistinguishable from those in any public structure. The consequences of the incorporation of biomedicine go much further, because biomedicine directly influences the way activists are recruited. Managing a KIA requires activists to take responsibility and have the skills required to properly catalog drugs, organize meetings, keep track of visits and patients, be acquainted with the medical jargon and so on. The incorporation of biomedicine entails, therefore, a varying degree of bureaucratization.

Figure 2. Volunteers catalog newly arrived drugs in a big Athenian KIA. Athens, summer 2015. (Photograph by the author)

However, bureaucratic skills are not all that is required. KIAs need doctors, chemists, psychologists and other medical professionals. They need to be able to get in touch with them and invite them to offer their services. People who have studied at the same schools, live in the same central neighborhood, go to the same clubs, have similar tastes or can count doctors or dentists among their friends are in a totally different situation than unskilled workers living in a social housing complex on the outskirts of town. They can invite doctors to a KIA they volunteer in or, as Stella's debut in activism testifies, be invited by doctors to join one. Our unskilled laborer is much more likely to know a KIA only by its waiting room, hat in hand.

It is a question of social and cultural capital. Access to the position of health care activist in a Greek KIA is filtered through these forms of capital. As a result, only certain individuals are eventually able to join this group. A group that, as we will see in the next paragraph, is a pool of accumulation of symbolic capital and social reproduction.

6.3 Social reproduction in KIAs

I use the notion of social reproduction as defined by Susana Narotzky. She advocates "the spirit but not the letter" of the original Marxist formulation (Narotzky 1997:169). In its original definition, social reproduction is the process by which certain relations of production, namely those between labor and capital, are reproduced within society and over the generations. Narotzky points out, however, that not everything circulates as a commodity. Non-commodity resources are "nonetheless allocated in ways that are significant for the positions of individuals within society […] Relationships other than the labour/capital one must be explained as fundamental parts of the social reproduction process of capitalist societies." (Narotzky 1997:168-169).

What Narotzky says becomes immediately evident in the case of the Greek KIAs. KIAs, as we have seen, are informal redistribution centers of resources. Health care and drugs are allocated through a gift-giving act, rather than a market-based circulation mechanism.

As we will see below, certain social relationships, like the class barrier between the popular and middle-classes, are reproduced within KIAs. This happens because some factors (like the incorporation of biomedicine, as we have seen in the previous chapter) trigger them. In other words, activists, who are mostly from the middle-class, will be able to hoard symbolic capital [9] and then convert it into other forms of capital: social or even economic

At this point a historical parallel might help to clarify things. The historian Sandra Cavallo, in an impressive body of work (Cavallo 1980, 1983, 1991, 1995, 2000), has drawn a map of the reasons driving benefactors in philanthropic institutions in Turin in the 16th and 17th centuries, unraveling a dense web of moralities, power games, social reproduction strategies and public discourse representations. The point she wants to raise closely recalls many of Narotzky's

9 I refer to symbolic capital as defined by Bourdieu in *Raisons pratiques* (Bourdieu 1998).

conclusions. Cavallo's thesis is that "participation in the management of hospital and other structures of poor relief favoured the creation of networks of interest allowing the establishment of contacts, business links and influence over work and career opportunities. The post of benefactor or governor also offered obscure individuals, perhaps excluded from other jobs in the public sphere, the possibility of obtaining and exercising patronage" (Cavallo 1991:52-53)

Mutatis mutandis, Cavallo's findings are closely mirrored by KIA activists in today's Greece. If we look at KIA volunteers and their life histories, we can find striking similarities with Cavallo's account of charity institutions in early-modern Turin. In particular a common process of accumulation of symbolic capital is discernible between the lines. Activists' life histories tell us how this capital is spent and, what is most important for us, converted. As stated by Bourdieu (1986), the different forms of capital – cultural, economic, social, symbolic – are in fact convertible items, in a very similar way to the currency market. We can for instance save money (economic capital) to buy a luxury car and gain prestige and distinction (symbolic capital) or, conversely, we can use a part of our symbolic capital (being a well-regarded activist) to obtain things of different nature. A job, for example:

> Athens, November 2015. Interview with Stella
>
> Stella: I didn't tell you that I found a job one month ago. They pay me in black, of course. But it's better, it's well paid because there are no taxes that go to save German banks... not like the jobs you get from companies. It's babysitting, four days a week. It's good, it keeps me busy, I can pay for my cigarettes and gasoline [...] I got it from a doctor, she's a volunteer here at the clinic and she was looking for someone to take care of her children. Her husband is a doctor too, they're never at home. So since she knows me she asked me if I wanted... Of course I do!
>
> "Did you already know her?"
>
> S.: No no, we met at the clinic.
>
> "So you were not friends".
>
> S.: No, I met her at the clinic last year.

Stella's joining the local group of activists let her find a job which is now helping her make ends meet. Stella did not have to overcome any linguistic, social or cultural barrier: she was skilled (she used to work as a secretary), has

got friends who are doctors and lawyers and since she speaks very good English she became the clinic's communication officer. Because she had access to an area of privileged socialization, she met and made friends with a doctor ("we met at the clinic") and the fact that they both belonged to a select group of people allowed her to gain the doctor's trust and get a job. Stella's history is only one example of the ways social and symbolic capital are accumulated and spent by activists. I rapidly realized, during my fieldwork, that these phenomena were quite widespread.

At Praxi, for example, I met Evelina, 50, a former French teacher. She resigned from her job after the private school where she was employed lowered her pay from 12 to 2.84 euros an hour. An old law obliging private schools to pay their teacher the same salary as public ones had just been abrogated as an austerity measure. Evelina, who could not agree to work for such a low salary, resigned. She could afford it, since her husband had a steady job in the insurance industry. It is now more profitable for her to give private French and Greek lessons for 10 euros per hour to well-off clients or expats wanting to improve their Greek. Many other language teachers at the same private school resigned for the same reason. Their departure left vacant positions which have been taken up by young teachers who have little option but to accept less than 3 euros an hour in a job market where youth unemployment fluctuates between 50 and 60%. These are no longer Evelina's problems. She knows she will never have a pension because she is too young to qualify and too old to find another job. But working for 2.84 an hour "it's immoral and in any case I think that right now nobody in Greece is going to have a pension, even those who currently have a job." Because she resigned she now has plenty of time to spend as a volunteer in Praxi, in her neighborhood. She had been invited to join in by a friend of hers, a cardiologist. She speaks French and thanks to the clinic's international contacts she has been invited a couple of times in Paris by two French NGOs dealing with health care rights, all expenses paid, to talk about the solidarity movement in Greece. The last time she had been able to travel to France was twenty years ago. After getting involved in Praxi, Evelina is now not only able to travel again but has access to the public sphere for the first time in her life.

7. Conclusion: Towards a moral economy of language

If Thompson revealed the moral dimensions of social action among the poor, Evelina and Stella's life histories reveal that material reasons also intervene in the moral choice of becoming a health care activist. The notion of moral economy should not be restricted to a single social class or interest group. In a recent article, Palomera and Vetta (2016) make a similar claim. The authors criticize "a sort of common sense that restricts the concept [moral economy] to a particular social actor – probably deriving from the fact that Thompson himself originally talked about the moral economy of the English crowd. We instead argue that analytical mileage can be gained by using it in relation to broad social fields of thoughts and action" (Palomera and Vetta 2016:3). So starting from an idea originally formulated by Booth (1994), they highlight that all economies are moral economies (Palomera and Vetta 2016:7). We can widen their claim and say that not only every economy, but also every moral is a moral economy. Activists' reasons to act do not depend only on an immaterial, free ethical choice, but are intertwined with material ones. This does not mean that activists behave only following a strict utilitarian paradigm of profit maximization. It simply means that morality and materiality cannot be separated and tend to mingle in complex, entangled, even "disturbing" (Crespi 1999:14) ways. There is, therefore, a moral economy of the English crowd and one of benefactors in early modern Turin, a moral economy of peasants in Southeast Asia and one of health-care activists in contemporary Greece. And there is a moral economy of "solidarity" as well.

Through Evelina and Stella's histories and the mechanisms of social stratification and reproduction they revealed, it should be clear by now that "solidarity" is a rather problematic notion. It is a linguistic tool that can shape reality. "Solidarity", a simple word, has the power to create the world through its enunciation, "constituer le donné par l'énonciation" (Bourdieu 1977:40), because of the relative power position occupied by activists in KIAs. Their linguistic power ("*this* is solidarity" and "this is *not* solidarity") is exerted vis-a-vis patients deprived of it

The established meaning of "solidarity" depends, therefore, on a locally act of baptism, so to say. "Solidarity" becomes meaningful only through specific actions associated to the speech act of saying "*this* is solidarity". A similar

idea, in the philosophy of language, has been put forward by Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* (Kripke 1981).[10] His problem was the following: what assures us that a name unambiguously refers to *this* real object? In our case, what assures us that "solidarity" is solidarity? Kripke rejects the idea that names can be substituted by a definite description that is a description of the main features of the object we want to name. The idea, for instance, that "Napoleon" would be perfectly replaceable by a series of definite descriptions such as "the emperor of the French in the early part of the nineteenth century" (Krikpe 1981:28). According to Kripke, naming consists instead of an "initial baptism" (Kripke 1981:96): things are not described, they are indexically constituted, that is pointed out by a speech act. In our case, as we have seen, "solidarity" cannot be univocally substituted by a definite description like, say, "act of gift-giving aiming at raising social consciousness", as Stella tells us, but is instead recurrently baptized by someone who says "*this*, what I *do*, is solidarity". It is an act of authority and force that is repeated over time by those who have got the power to impose its meaning by the force of their own speech acts.

Hilary Putnam's idea of the "division of linguistic labor" may be the right perspective of the continuous attempts to name made by KIA activists. According to him, "the extension of a term is not fixed by a concept that the individual speaker has in his head, and this is true both because extension is, in general, determined *socially* - there is division of linguistic labor as much as of 'real' labor - and because extension is, in part, determined *indexically*" (Putnam 1975:245).

Putnam's words take us back to Austin, to KIAs and enable us to close our loop. "Solidarity", as a word, is backed by a constant effort of naming and re-naming, a performative action of several, repeated speech acts. The notion of social reproduction to which I alluded a few lines above can now be fully addressed in its linguistic force. In fact (and this is my main claim) "solidarity" is used by activists to socially reproduce themselves. Let's look at Evelina and Stella's cases. They acquired a position that gave them several benefits. These may well not compensate what the crisis took away from them, but this is not the point. The whole point is that becoming a health care activist is restricted

10 Kripke originally developed his argument only for proper names, but in this paper I am not following it to the letter of it. From time to time even ethnographers should remember that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (Paul, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3:6).

by class hurdles because it gives people access to a position that has a variety of benefits. It is a resource that must be protected and whose access must be restricted to fully exploit its accumulative opportunities. The incorporation of biomedicine and other factors, as we have seen, makes social reproduction in KIAs a structural condition.

The content of "solidarity" is therefore not suspended in the logosphere as a clear lexical item accessible to all; rather, it is determined, on the one hand, by the linguistic labor of "experts" (activists, in our case) who hold the power to define what "solidarity" is and what it is not and, on the other hand, by the real labor of everybody else who reproduce "solidarity", as defined by activists. This naming power, as we have seen, is constituted by their class position vis-a-vis patients.

The interplay between morality, materiality *and* language at stake in the KIAs I observed should now be clear: morals need a name to be used in the world. Morality and materiality meet in language and we can conclude by saying that any moral economy is, first of all, a moral economy of language. We can do things with words, certainly, but what we do goes well beyond what we *say* we do. Socially reproducing one's class position vis-a-vis, say, patients, could be counted among such things. We must recognize that language is an active tool and unlike the neutral element of addition, it is a powerful sign that can revert the result of a whole equation.

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